

## Interview: U.S Premiere of ‘Humanpersons’ at 35th Chicago Latino Film Fest, April 3, 2019

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 2, 2019 - 1:45pm

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CHICAGO – The 35th Chicago Latino Film Festival (CLFF) continues this week with the special U.S. Premiere of “Humanpersons,” a searing Spain/Panama/Brazil co-produced drama on human trafficking, specifically for the harvesting of transplant organs. Writer/director Frank Spano, a Spanish/South American filmmaker and actor, completed this second feature recently, and filmed some scenes in the State of Illinois. He will make an appearance at the premiere, which will be at 6pm on April 3rd, 2019. For more details and tickets, [click here](#). [22]

The film involves James (Luis Fernandez), who was born in Medellín (Columbia, South America), but has lived in Illinois for 35 years. He is part of a successful criminal enterprise involving, among many other things, organ trafficking. James is sent back to Colombia by his boss to secure a human liver for a high-profile client, and that boss is holding his son hostage as motivation to complete the job. Once in Medellín, he runs into childhood friend Antonia (Maria Cecilia Sanchez), now a social worker who re-educates homeless children. The encounter forces James to reconsider his actions as the noose tightens around him.



'Humanpersons' at the 35th CLFF on April 3rd, 2019, Directed by Frank Spano

Photo credit: [ChicagoLatinoFilmFestival.org](http://ChicagoLatinoFilmFestival.org)

Writer/director Frank Spano, based in Madrid but originally from Venezuela, began his career as an actor, but for the last 25 years has also pursued writing, directing and producing. He has a Masters in Latin American Theatre, and trained at the Madrid Septima Ars Film School. His first feature film, "Horas menos" (2011) won Best First Work and the Audience Award at the Madridimagen Film Festival, and Best Feature at International Festival of Las Palmas de Gran Canarias. He has recently announced his third film, "Gauguin and Canal."

The 35th Chicago Latino Film Festival (CLFF) will take place from March 28th - April 11th, 2019, and will feature over 100 feature-length and short films from Hispanic and Latino countries and the United States, primarily shown at AMC River East 21 (see website for other venues) All of the films will be shown in their original language, with English subtitles where appropriate. The audience will also have the opportunity to participate in discussions with visiting filmmakers after most of the screenings. For a PDF version of the full schedule, [click here](#). [23]

HollywoodChicago.com talked with Frank Spano on the eve of the U.S. Premiere of "Humanpersons," about the themes of survival in a desperate world.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** What situation or inspiration made this film your next project? Did it come from a specific event or just the overall situation?

**Frank Spano:** It was five years ago, when I read a newspaper article about the human-trafficking-for-organ-transplant issue, and this pushed me toward research, and I spent four years writing the script. In that time, I found that the problem was increasing, but media coverage of it wasn't going into detail. Within this context, I created the circumstance, and the film 'Humanpersons' is the result.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** This is a film of desperation. Desperation from the person who wants the transplant organ so turns to a criminal element to get it, desperation from a crime leader who exploits his grandson, and the desperation of poverty inside all of it. How does desperation make us, as human persons, less viable as a species?

**Spano:** For me, the important thing is the awareness of what is going on, and how close this situation is to everyone's lives. Everybody has organs, and when they are healthy we don't think about them. But if they're not, it becomes a personal and family issue in many ways. It's a moral debate, because my question in the film is 'what are you willing to do as far as giving your own or obtaining a human organ if your son or daughter needed one?'

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Which character do you think has the best survival instincts by the end of the film, either good or bad, and what strengths give them that will to survive?

**Spano:** The title represents exactly what you asked. Those instincts are the human person. At this moment, we are in a world that is like the animal nature of a wolf, in the right scenario it could easily devour us. Everybody is a victim in that example, everybody is a potential criminal and everybody has to have hope. I know that the film is an emotional trip, but my goal as a filmmaker is to put that hope into humanity.



Writer and Director Frank Spano of 'Humanpersons'

*Photo credit: Garro Producciones*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Since the film is set mainly in Columbia, known until recently for its drug trade, what factors made that country the



ideal setting for your story, as far as providing a bridge to the American demand?

**Spano:** As I was writing the film, I realized that within its setting in Columbia, there was also a world problem, with the demand for organs fueling it. But it's also a market issue ... if you have money, you can buy anything, and that includes organs. This is not a South American problem exclusively, it also is a North American and global issue. I don't have the answer, I ask the questions in the film, basically to raise awareness.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You made a transition from actor to writer/director. What has the years of working for other directors taught you most about your time behind the camera?

**Spano:** I am an arts person – that's what I studied in university – and yes I began as an actor, but I've always been a storyteller. My journey from in front of the camera to behind it was natural. Part of my language of an actor was to tell a story as well, so 20 years ago it just became part of everything I do. This is my second film as writer and director, and my life as an actor before this was part of the learning process.

When I made my first film, the question was 'how do you feel doing your first movie?' And I would answer, yes it's my first film as writer/director, but I have over 20 years in the overall business [laughs] ... a lot of effort was behind it.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Finally, what is your best pitch to a potential audience member to come see your film tomorrow night at the Chicago Latino Film Festival?

**Frank Spano:** First, this is our U.S. Premiere, so everyone will get to be part of that special event. We also shot part of the film in Illinois, in the Rockford area, so the premiere is also for sharing the film with the local cast and crew. My invitation to the audience is to come and have a special emotional trip in a drama about everyone.

*The 35th Chicago Latino Film Festival presents the U.S. Premiere of "Humanpersons" on Wednesday, April 3rd, 2019 (6pm), at AMC River East 21, 322 East Illinois Street, Chicago. Writer/director Frank Spano will make an appearance on behalf of the film. For more general information on the 2019 CLFF, taking place from March 28th - April 11th, [click here](#). [24]*



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**Source URL (retrieved on Mar 28 2024 - 7:37am):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/29286/interview-us-premiere-of-humanpersons-at-35th-chicago-latino-film-fest-april-3-2019>

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