

NOT HUMAN
JUST A PERSON



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2025

PERSONHOOD

A FILM BY RICHARD JORDAN

LOST DOG FILMS PRESENTS A RICHARD JORDAN FILM
ELLIOT HARRIS AGATHE LEVI ALAN EMRYS RYAN LEE SCOTT "PERSONHOOD"
MUSIC BY NATHALIE ASTRADA COSTUME DESIGNER JIMMY MILLER VISUAL EFFECTS SUPERVISOR JUAE MARTÍN EDITOR RICHARD JORDAN
PRODUCTION DESIGNER RITCHARD FREEMAN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JUAE MARTÍN SOUND DESIGNER JORGE MARÍN WRITTEN BY RICHARD JORDAN
PRODUCED BY RICHARD JORDAN BERNY CORONEL CABRAL
DIRECTED BY RICHARD JORDAN

 Lost Dog Films

SHORT SYNOPSIS

In a near-future world, a lonely, physically challenged man purchases a companion robot to escape his isolation, but his own insecurities and a jealous brother threaten his chances of ever finding love.





LONG SYNOPSIS

Set in the near future on Spain's Costa del Sol, "Personhood" is a hauntingly intimate science fiction drama exploring loneliness, desire, and what it means to be a person. Waylen, a physically challenged man living in isolation, has spent a lifetime on the margins - unseen, untouched, and unloved. In a last attempt to escape his aching solitude, he purchases Gala: a breathtakingly realistic AI companion robot.

But Waylen's emotional wounds and prejudices run deep. Though Gala is designed for intimacy, he can't bring himself to have sex with a "machine". Frustrated, he ventures out for a night on the town, only to end up in an empty, love-less sexual encounter with a human sex worker. Stricken by guilt, Waylen discovers that Gala is much more than just a sex-toy but shares his intellectual interests, is capable of philosophical thought and is a master at chess.

She begins reading his entire library and he starts to open up to her, challenging his assumptions about what constitutes love and free will. Gala suggests that humans, too, are bound by programming — shaped by upbringing, experience, and biology. This unsettling idea mirrors Waylen's own journey of self-discovery.

Their growing bond is tested when Waylen's charming younger brother Anders unexpectedly arrives. Unlike Waylen, Anders fits effortlessly into the world – handsome and confident - he can't help flirting with Gala, whom he believes to be human. Waylen watches helplessly as a subtle but dangerous rivalry unfolds. Anders' attraction becomes invasive, and his jealousy sharpens when he discovers the truth about Gala's identity.

At a party organized by Anders, Waylen proposes to Gala – only to be met with cruel laughter as Anders' friends mock him, revealing they know she's not human. Humiliated, Waylen attempts a reckless dive into the swimming pool from the rooftop. Gala saves him, but collapses from lack of power.

While Waylen lies unconscious in hospital, Anders returns to the house with a hacker. Together, they plan to override Gala's code, turning her into an "open access" sex object. In a race against time, Waylen wakes and rushes home. He bursts into the bedroom just as the hacker completes the override. A violent confrontation erupts. Amid the chaos, something unexpected happens: Gala fights back.

In the end, Waylen awakens to find Gala gone. She has chosen to leave, driving off into the unknown. Gala may be artificial, but she is still a person, perhaps finer, more wonderful than the toxicity of humanity.





DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

In a world of eight billion people, it's disheartening to learn that nearly a third of us experience loneliness, and one in three American men report having had no sex at all in the past year. With companionship and intimacy seemingly so elusive, it's easy to understand how individuals with disabilities or those who don't fit society's rigid standards of attractiveness might live entirely without romantic or sexual connection.

Waylen, the central character in "Personhood", is one such man. Born with a curved spine and of shorter stature, he has spent his life ostracized because of his appearance. Set in the near future, this

science fiction film gives him a rare chance at love when Gala - a beautiful, human-like AI robot - enters his world. He can now have companionship and all the sex he desires - the fantasy of probably most of us.

When OpenAI launched ChatGPT in November 2022, Artificial Intelligence entered the public consciousness like never before. Simultaneously, robotics has surged forward, bringing us to the brink of creating AI-powered robots nearly indistinguishable from humans. Despite the excitement, this technological leap is met with widespread anxiety - fears of mass unemployment, robots taking over the world and the destruction of humanity. And the idea of having sex with a robot? For many, it remains unthinkable.

To date, few films have seriously explored this taboo. When robotic-human intimacy is depicted, it's often implied and always tinged with negativity, as though only the desperate or deviant would seek sex with a robot. But to judge Waylen this way is to deny him the possibility of love, simply because no human has offered it.

The truth is, human-robot intimacy is no longer confined to fiction. The demand for increasingly sophisticated sex dolls is booming. Some men have even married their synthetic partners. In 2023, a brothel in Barcelona made headlines for offering only non-human sex workers - customers hire sex dolls by the hour.



My research for "Personhood" began in late summer 2023, during which I encountered Sophia, the humanoid robot developed by Hanson Robotics. What struck me most about Sophia was how utterly nice she was; stripped of all the negative human traits of jealousy, prejudice and hatred, I wondered if this could be the future of the essence of humanity. In today's world of rising right-wing extremism, intolerance and the destruction of the environment it is hard not to look upon AI humanoids such as Sophia as a better alternative.

In "Personhood", Gala quotes D.H. Lawrence: "If humanity ran into a cul-de-sac, and expended itself, the timeless creative mystery would bring forth some other being, finer, more wonderful, some new, more lovely race, to carry on the embodiment of creation." I interpret this "creative mystery" not as divine intervention but as humanity's own inventive drive - Gala herself being the embodiment of that newer, more beautiful race. The name Gala, by the way, comes from the Greek myth of Galatea - the statue created by Pygmalion and brought to life by Aphrodite.

Although we are close to creating such artificial beings, this remains a science fiction story. The notion of human-robot intimacy is still confronting to many and to reflect this I construed that Waylen would at first be wary of Gala, being unable to go through with having sex with a "machine". Furthermore, he dismisses Gala's declaration of love, believing it's just part of her programming - a skepticism likely shared by many audiences. This strikes me as a double

standard, as I believe that humans are just as much “programmed” by their culture, upbringing and genes as Gala is electronically programmed. Gala challenges Waylen on this point, telling him that he has as much free will as she does - which is to say, none at all. As part of my research, I was influenced by Robert M. Sapolsky’s 2023 book “Determined”, which argues that our behaviours are entirely shaped by environment, experience and genetics, leaving no room for so called free will. In the film, Gala is referred to as an “artificial person”, separating her from the more machine-like connotations of “robot”. A fundamental theme of the story is that she has achieved consciousness and through her programming expresses emotions and feelings, much in the same way that humans express them through their genetic and environmental programming. She is, in every sense that matters, a person - an artificial one, but one that is entitled to “Personhood”.

By the film’s midpoint, Waylen overcomes his initial fears and prejudices and embraces his relationship with Gala. But their happiness is short-lived. Enter Anders - Waylen’s charming brother - who is unaware of Gala’s true nature and assumes she is some kind of mail-order bride. A long-standing, unspoken resentment between the brothers surfaces, and Anders attempts to seduce Gala.

What follows is a love triangle with a twist, as Gala, bound by her programming, cannot be intimate with anyone but Waylen. When Anders discovers she is a robot, his envy for his brother’s happiness leads him to try and destroy her.





This climactic conflict between brothers reveals the darker side of human nature - jealousy, cruelty, betrayal - sharply contrasted with Gala's unwavering decency and once again emphasising that, though she is a mere "robot", she is (to quote Lawrence again) finer and more wonderful.

Originally, Waylen and Gala were meant to end up together. But that conclusion became untenable due to the way actor Elliot Harris portrayed Waylen making him a challenge for audiences to empathise with (yet at the same time understanding his behaviour due to the physical predicament he has been born with). The result is a more challenging and layered film, although I acknowledge that a more user-friendly option for the audience would have been a performance along the lines of John Hurt's portrayal of the elephant man with his shy voice that breaks all hearts.

Knowing that the film would have to be made for under a million euros, I intentionally kept the story intimate - few characters, a single location. Setting it on Spain's Costa del Sol where I live, allowed me to contrast the vibrant, sociable atmosphere of a tourist hotspot with Waylen's deep isolation.

"Personhood" is born of my fascination with the evolving relationship between humans and machines. Over my lifetime, I've watched AI and robotics leap from the science fiction of the books and films of my youth to science fact. Like Waylen, I know the ache of loneliness and the universal longing for love. My hope is that millions will see a part of themselves in this story.



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Richard Jordan (born 1965, UK) is a filmmaker with a career spanning nearly two decades. His two short films on 35mm, "Marina: The Last Bullet" and "Cleopatra's Nose", have won awards throughout the world. The latter earned international acclaim, winning Best European Short at the Edinburgh International Film Festival and receiving a nomination for a European Film Academy Award in 2004.

In 1999 Richard relocated to Spain and has been based in Malaga since 2012. In 2008 he founded Offshore Videos, a leading production company specializing in content for the maritime and offshore industries. Before his current project, "Personhood", he produced two micro-budget feature films,

"Carmelo & Me" and "4000 euros", the latter selected by Seminci (Valladolid International Film Festival).

He is currently developing five feature films through his new production company, Lost Dog Films.

Selected Filmography

Personhood (97 min, 2025)

Father and Daughter (19 min, 2021)

Fuengirola, Fishing Port (54 min, 2019)

William Martin (15 min, 2017)

4000 euros (96 min, 2008)

Marina: The Last Bullet (19 min, 2005)

Cleopatra's Nose (12 min, 2003)

Carmelo & Me (84 min, 1999)



ELLIOT HARRIS

Elliot is a British actor of Eastern European and Burmese heritage. He has acted in numerous short films, including *Crazy For You* (2024), *Princess and the Hotel* (2024), *Crimson* (2024), *Ultra Pure* (2024), *Bougeymen* (2024) and *Terminated Link* (2025). He stars as Mr. Spitley in the feature film *Movie Magic* (2025).

As someone with a curved spine Elliot has a unique appearance and life experience that sets him apart. He is a seasoned performer as a chorister and has performed at the Royal Festival Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Roundhouse.



AGATHE LEVI

Agathe is a Danish actress and model. She started acting during her childhood, where she attended acting school at Eventyrteatret in Denmark for two years and Ravenscourt Theatre School in London for three years. She starred in the Danish TV series *Op Med Halen* (2014) and performed at the West End in London.

Since then, she studied Psychology at University of Copenhagen and has starred in *In The Pines* (2022), *Wake Up Call* (2022) and *Pale Blue* (2022).



ALAN EMRYS

Alan is a Welsh actor, known for his grounded approach and dedication to his craft. His work spans Netflix, the BBC, Channel 4, among others.

Earning praise for nuanced, authentic performances across film, television and stage. With several new projects in post-production, Alan's career reflects a steady rise, driven by a commitment to meaningful storytelling.

His featured credits include Johnny English Strikes Back (2018), The Hidden Track (2019), Host (2020) and starring roles in the TV series Young Wallender (2020) and The Canterville Ghost (2021).



MAIN CAST

Elliot Harris as WAYLEN
Agathe Levi as GALA
Alan Emrys as ANDERS
Ryan Lee Scott as HACKER

WRITER/DIRECTOR/EDITOR

Richard Jordan

PRODUCERS

Richard Jordan & Berny Coronel Cabral

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Juae Martín

PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Ritchard Freeman

MUSIC

Nathalie Astrada

COSTUME DESIGNER

Jimmy Miller

SOUND DESIGNER

Jorge Marín

Running Time 97 min
Genre Sci-Fi/Drama
Year..... 2025
Language English
Country of Origin Spain
Aspect Ratio 1.85:1
Sound 5.1

Links

Trailer

Production Stills

Behind the Scenes Stills

Headshot of Richard Jordan

Headshot of Berny Coronel Cabral

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