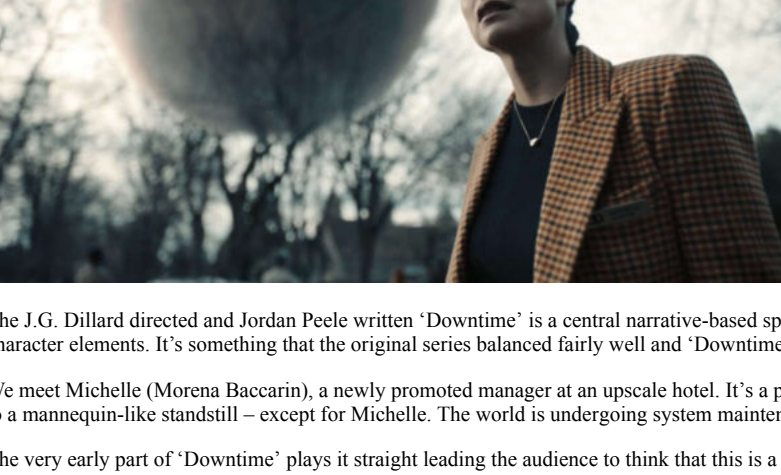


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'Downtime' Presents A Quick and Classic Feeling Episode That Blurs the Lines Between Real and Artificial

Published on July 3, 2020, by [Murjan Rawls](#) - Posted in [Reviews](#) 0



The J.G. Dillard directed and Jordan Peele written 'Downtime' is a central narrative-based aprint. In most of the first season of the revived CBS iteration, many of the episodes offered a critique on current events. Every once in a while, it's nice to pull back from that and dive into the more sci-fi character elements. It's something that the original series balanced fairly well and 'Downtime' drops the audience into its story immediately.

We meet Michelle (Marena Baccarini), a newly promoted manager at an upscale hotel. It's a position that's she's always coveted and handles herself fairly well as depicted quailing down a minor tiff with some irritated patrons. All of a sudden, a big orb appears in the sky and every person comes to a mannequin-like standstill - except for Michelle. The world is undergoing system maintenance.

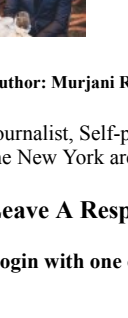
The very early part of 'Downtime' plays it straight leading the audience to think that this is a story about being devoted to working over everything else. However, it is revealed that there is something more at stake. Michelle is a product of an artificial world and that she's a man named Phineas. Phineas is revealed to have had a heart attack and currently in a coma by the 'customer service rep.' Phineas is so locked into the artificial world that he believes that his avatar is his true life. Pondering un-synching, the episode plays out to Michelle's paranoia. At the beginning of the day, she was celebrating the pinnacle of her career, but now being confronted with the fact that it's all a comfortable construct!

In a Matrix-esque premise, 'Michelle' has to decide if she wants to go back to a life she doesn't necessarily remember having or continue in her avatar within the internet. There is a part of 'Downtime' where it slows down and drives an emotional premise home. In a conversation with Ellen (Sandra Swan), Phineas' emergency contact, and wife, she appeals to what his life was. Both with a memory of their proposal and the fact that they have a family. This wrinkle attempts to add some heartfelt stakes to Michelle/Phineas' choice.

The success factors of 'Downtime' come together in keeping the runtime short and having a confined premise to one character. Michelle has to make a choice and it's not an easy decision to make. Do you go back to a life that's unfamiliar to you or do you choose bliss? In other instances such as *Black Mirror*, these types of stories serve as a warning that we should heed about technology. The combined efforts of Dillard and Peele are not concerned with driving home a message, but more so a character-centric story.

Photo Credit: CBS All Access

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Journalist, Self-published author of five books, podcast host, and photographer since 2014, Murjan Rawls has been stretching the capabilities of his creativity and passions, Rawls has a portfolio spanning through many mediums including music, television, movies, and more. Operating out of the New York area, Rawls has photographed over 200+ artists spanning many genres, written over 700 articles ranging displaying his passionate aspirations to keep evolving as his years in media continue.

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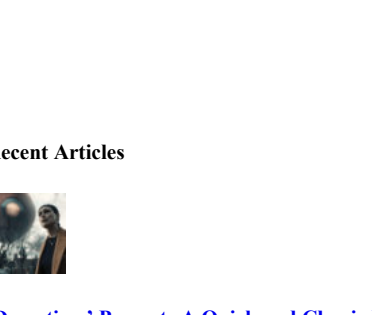
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