

REVIEW: 'Jessica Jones' Season 2 Episodes 11 – 13

⌚ March 15, 2018 🚩 Chris Compendio (<https://mcuexchange.com/author/chriscompendio/>)



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In season 2 of *Jessica Jones*, everyone has gone off the deep end. Every one of our characters is desperate, and the worst of everyone really comes out. And as a result, this uneasy band of characters is entirely fractured at the end of it all. On paper, this sounds like an excellent character-driven story that fits in well with the theme of this show—but man, this season was a bit of a slog to binge.

As I said, characters are desperate—Jessica is struggling with the blood she has on her hands, and it relates to her relationship with her mother, Trish's inferiority complex has led her on a journey for her own powers, Malcolm struggles to fight his potentially reemerging addiction and Hogarth is dealing with her legacy and mortality, not to mention her revenge quest against a pair of people who wronged her.

Again, all interesting pieces for this puzzle that is a television series, but so much of the investment in these stories are dependent on an absurd irrationality from all of these characters, with people changing their minds about their intentions every damn episode, with character relationships being difficult to track, motivations that don't register until a character does something extreme, characters not telling each other things for inane reasons, and new characters this season that simply aren't interesting.

Episode 11 had a return of **David Tenant's** legendary villain Kilgrave, and I assume that I will disappoint everyone reading by stating that I don't think this worked. He appears as hallucinations to Jessica after she accidentally kills the prison guard abusing her mother (amongst previous inmates), basically acting like her shoulder devil without a counterpart shoulder angel. Tenant is always a joy to watch, but I found it odd that his influence on Jessica didn't emerge until the third to last episode. The actual dialogue and scenes between Jessica and fake Kilgrave were actually pretty well done—this episode feels like a play at points, and I mean that to be a compliment. But at the end of it all, it just came across as a misfire of fanservice.

You don't necessarily need a Kilgrave-level character every season of television to make it compelling, but I only wish that the characters that came after had some dimension. Luckily, Alisa fits the bill, but I feel like I'm on anesthesia every time Karl, Oscar, Pryce (who I nearly forgot about until right before I published this review) or Griffin (who thankfully is not in this last batch of episodes) appear on-screen. An extended flashback between Alisa and Karl is utterly pointless, showing nothing more than "these two are in love," something the show always reminds us verbally anyway, and "this is why they live near the beach." Karl's most defining characteristic is that he wears band t-shirts, and even then I felt that him shooting the gas tanks to blow up the lab and himself to be out of character—he's always defending his actions, so when did he ever feel guilty to that extreme level?

There's not too much for me to say about episode 12 without this review turning into a mere recap, but I did appreciate how it had Jessica ask the dramatic question, "do I even deserve these powers?" It's a bit reminiscent of *Captain America: The First Avenger*, with Erskine telling Steve Rogers why he was chosen for the program, and of course the Spider-Man "with great power" mantra that this season of television has been referencing occasionally. Forgetting the fact that I'm shocked that Detective Costa and the rest of the police force somehow still trust Jessica throughout the course of the entire season despite the shady shit that she does, this episode worked a little better. Yes, Alisa probably does have to die at this point, and yes, Jessica is really the only one who can enact that to make it right—and yes, Jessica is going to struggle making that decision to the last second, and yes, of course she didn't.

Not to mention, there was some oddly satisfying, violent and 110% messed-up justice from Hogarth towards Inez and Shane. Though, consider taking this woman's lawyer awards away.

But if we're going to be talking about characters switching back and forth, let's get to that last episode. Jessica goes from verbalizing her potential escape plans from her mother to being completely in with abandoning her life. Alisa goes from still trying to convince people that she is in control (she's not, for Pete's sake) to deciding to give up on the Ferris wheel, and Trish makes the unbelievably crazy decision to kill Alisa (nice shot, by the way) yet at the end wonders why Jessica is not returning her text and phone calls. Meanwhile, Malcolm finally proves himself by helping Hogarth get her leverage, and while these are great character beats, they are totally disconnected from the rest of the show, unlike in season one where all plot points converged brilliantly. In the end, with everyone broken, we do get a bittersweet image of Jessica at the dinner table with Oscar and his son.

Here's the thing about the Netflix model of releasing all of the episodes at once—binge-watching everything in one go could make the viewer suffer from some whiplash. There's little time to fully digest these character decisions and their changing and fluid motivations, and worst of all, these Marvel/Netflix shows have sometimes suffered from repetition. I've been seeing comments that this may have worked better as a weekly show instead, and after finishing the season, I am inclined to agree.

You don't always need one central, clear villain—that's going to get boring if every season is the same. And I really like the concept that our main characters really were the villains, to themselves and to each other. But without a careful hand guiding this character development, and by making the plot dependent on everyone's irrationality, our characters come across more as assholes instead of "villains." The writers of not only this show but the rest of the Marvel/Netflix shows need to learn how to work with the format, because I'm starting to fear that this Defenders venture will not be sustainable.

3 stolen RVs out of 5. There was nothing blatantly or offensively terrible in this last batch of episodes, and while there were interesting themes, it did nothing more than to make me feel disdain for all of these characters by the end.

ONE-SHOTS:

- Well, at least Turk Barrett is back, baby.
- If you were bothered by a lack of Kilgrave this season, at least there was that scene with TOO MANY OF THEM.
- I'm surprised and happy that there wasn't some absurd plot twist with Costa being a dirty cop in IGH's pocket, or something.
- What the hell was that RV guy doing that had him distracted to **lose an RV?**
- A really interesting element that I'd like to see these shows explore is the idea of random people wanting powers after "The Incident."
- Dorothy Walker is an unimaginable bitch.
- I don't know why I'm late to notice this, but there sure are a lot of scenes in these Netflix shows near the waterside or at piers, or something.
- The phrase "everything changes and nothing changes" is a good summary for how insane this season was at times.

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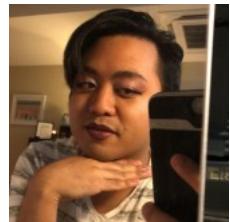
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My mission in life is convincing the world that "The Winter Soldier" is one of greatest movies of all time. I studied screenwriting at Carnegie Mellon University, and taught a class about the MCU and its creative influences. I write opinion features and record podcasts about popular culture for my website @BadHaircutProd, I interned for Paste Magazine, and am also writing for Flixist. Secretly hoping to be the next famous "Chris" in the MCU.

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I really enjoyed the second season, and I thought most of those decisions listed as "irrational" made total sense in-universe. Even Trish shooting Alisa. She wanted to be the hero and protect Jessica. She knew Jessica would never kill her mom (and she was right) so she wanted to step up. Was it the right choice, no not at all. But, following Trish's arc all season it made total sense. She also didn't really think through the consequences and Jessica was right that it should have happened that way, but just not with Trish pulling the trigger.

Jessica's reversal on her mom happened when she thought she lost her a second time while they were helping that family. It was pretty clear that in that moment she realized she didn't want to lose her mother again, either by killing her or by sending her to the Raft. Family makes you do crazy things, man.

Alisa realized it was the end of the road after she thought about what Costa said on the phone (he was on speakerphone) and her maternal instincts to not harm Jessica. She rightly realized that if she took Jessica with her then she would just be screwing Jessica's life up and it would be her fault. It was a mature decision.

The Kilgrave stuff worked for me personally because it made sense that this would be the time he came out into her head. The guard was the first person she had killed since Kilgrave so he was basically all her anxieties about becoming a monster (like him, and like her mom), which was the main issue for her all season. Also, earlier in the season when she had that trippy dream in IGH, you can see a lot of purple lights in those windows that clearly hinted that he was just around the corner in her mind.

I will give you that Malcolm and Jeri's storylines barely had anything to do with the main plot points, but, especially in Jeri's case, they were just so damn good. Moss had an A+ acting game this season.

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"Dorothy Walker is an unimaginable bitch."

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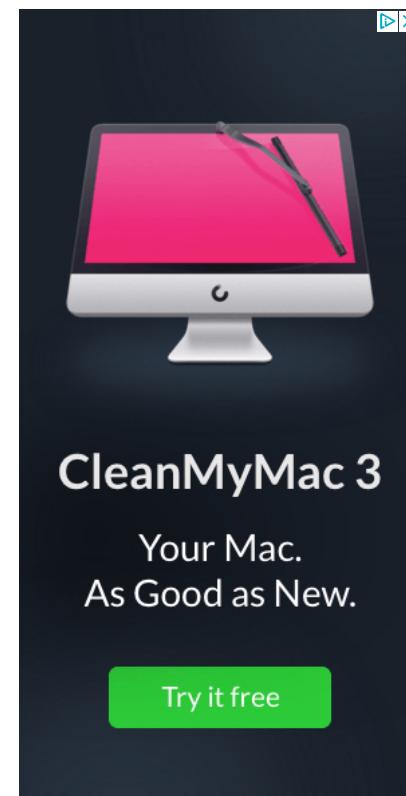
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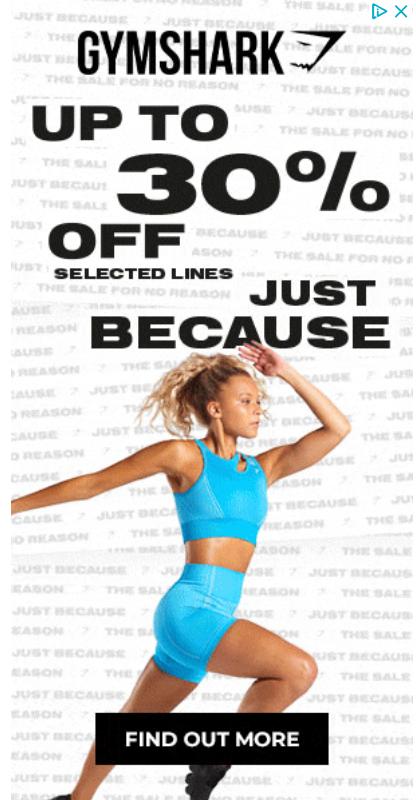


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