



Mary Jane Paul is a one-woman show: a successful TV news anchor, entirely self-sufficient – an all-around powerhouse who remains devoted to a family that doesn't share her motivation. As Mary Jane juggles her life, her work and her commitment to her family, we find out how far she's willing to go to find the puzzle pieces that she, and society, insist are missing from her life as a single Black female...BET

## BEING MARY JANE (2014) REVIEW & TV PREVIEW – 2-14-2014

2-14-2014 - Written By: David L. \$Money Train\$ Watts – Journalist/Film Reviewer  
 FuTurXTV & HHBMedia.com - David Velo Stewart – Editor – HHBMedia.com - \$\$\$\$

David L. \$Money Train\$ Watts • FuTurXTV • HHBMedia.com • [info@hhbmedia.com](mailto:info@hhbmedia.com) • [www.hhbmedia.com](http://www.hhbmedia.com) • David Velo Stewart

“She’s Not Perfect...she’s relatable” is a quote that from a viral fan of BET’s new hit drama **Being Mary Jane**. That simple and direct quote in my opinion best summarizes **Being Mary Jane’s** overwhelming appeal with women, primarily African-American, who love watching ABC’s **Scandal**, OWN’s **Have And Have Not**, VH1’s **Love and Hip Hop** and **Single Ladies**, Bravo’s **Real Housewives of Atlanta** and **Blood, Sweat & Heels** and WE TV’s **Braxton Family Values** and **SWV Reunited**. Mara Brock Akil, who created the popular and equally successful **The Game** and **Girlfriends**, has struck gold again for BET when she created this entertaining and controversial drama **Being Mary Jane**. And I say the word controversial not because there is explicit sexual content, but controversial in that **Being Mary Jane** is another dramatic series, like **Scandal**, where the smart, sexy and independent lead Black female protagonist Mary Jane Paul (Gabrielle Union) is managing a stressful career and complicated personal life while being in love with a married man. **Being Mary Jane** aired last year as a two hour pilot that introduced us in the first scenes to Mary Jane letting in her drunk boyfriend Andre Daniels (Omar Hardwick) inside her house for a late night booty call. The next morning Mary Jane literally steps on the wedding ring of Andre and rightfully goes off on him for lying about being single. And it did seem kinda contrived that Mary Jane would actually step on Andre’s ring. Even a drunk brotha would put his ring in his wallet or front pants pocket than his front shirt pocket. But maybe for Mara she did not want Mary Jane doing the normal snooping activity of looking through Andre’s cell phone while he was asleep.



From then on we learn about Mary Jane’s co-workers at her TV network like Mary’s over worked and ambitious producer/best friend Kara (Lisa Vidal) and her “in-the-closet” news anchor/best friend Mark Bradley (Aaron D. Spears). Kara and Mark are hugely important to **Being Mary Jane**, because unlike HBO’s **Newsroom**, there really are no other co-workers that have significant speaking parts. I have no doubt that **Being Mary Jane** will have Mark come out on air with a more dramatic moment than Robin Roberts on GMA or Don Lemon on CNN. I think a “Mark is out” plotline is inevitable this season or next. And I think that creating a bond between Mary Jane and a powerful Hispanic career woman like Kara could actually attract a sizeable number of Hispanic viewers if handled right by Mara. Kara needs a few more scenes by herself like when she says keeps saying she is sleeping with their station’s intern Carlos (Edward Solis). We should actually see them flirting or maybe Mary Jane calls Kara and we cut to a scene of her not picking up her phone because she is in bed with Carlos as they speak in Spanish.

In the pilot we also learn that Mary Jane is constantly has to take annoying calls from her ill and long suffering mother Helen Patterson (Margaret Avery). She has to deal with her father Paul Patterson (Richard Roundtree) whom is growing fed up with caring after Helen. Mary Jane's younger brother is Paul Patterson, Jr. (Paul Britt) who is a talented architect intern with a side hustle of slanging weed. My only problem with the Paul character so far is that he is supposed to be a weed dealer, but deposits over \$78,000 of those drug sales in his bank account. Mara clumsily tried to have Paul explain to his dad that the bank made a mistake and he really has \$7,800 in his account. And when Richard does not believe that Paul could even have \$7,800, then he says he took out student loan. I felt bad watching these poorly written scenes because even a part-time drug dealer like Paul would not keep his illegal money in a bank that could be easily confiscated by the police or the IRS. And I am glad that Richard Brooks is getting some much needed work playing Mary Jane's older brother Patrick Paterson. I feel Patrick could be a pivotal role in ***Being Mary Jane*** as a former club owner and recovering drug addict. He rightly sweats Mary Jane for dating a married man. But it is hard for Patrick to be a great moral compass for Mary Jane when he still needs come to her TV station to borrow money from her to feed his coke habit. Patrick also fell off his sobriety far too easy for me. I felt if Patrick had been denied a loan from his former club partners and a loan by his father and Mary Jane to start his food truck idea than yeah I could see Patrick turning back to drugs. But Mara just never establishes a credible reason or some serious personal letdown for why Patrick would abandon two years of sobriety. The only other prominent Mary Jane family member is Patrick's young pregnant daughter Niecy Patterson (Raven Goodwin). I would have more sympathy for Niecy as an urban teen character if there were truly any meaningful scenes of her struggling at being a young mother to her 1-year old kid that she already has with her baby's daddy.



I do firmly believe that when ***Being Mary Jane's*** director Salim Akil said after reading his wife's pilot script that the first person he thought about was Gabrielle Union. I mean let's face it Gabrielle was already dealing with a lot of highly publicized "baby mama" drama with her boyfriend Dwayne Wade and his ex-wife. And I am sure that ***Being Mary Jane*** had most likely wrapped shooting when the new "baby mama" drama scandal had erupted. I truly think Gabriel would have many real, fresh and honest emotions to pull from when she plays Mary Jane. Now granted Salim was referring to Gabrielle Union as one of Hollywood's most talented, bankable and available Black actresses. It would be hard to ignore Gabrielle's personal life as a Mary Jane motivator.

**Being Mary Jane** is by far BET's best original drama series. And in my opinion Kevin Hart's **Real Husbands of Hollywood** is BET's best original sitcom or program. I think BET got robbed at the 2014 Golden Globes and Emmys because **RHH** should have got and won nominations as Best Comedy. Brooklyn Nine-Nine was not all that and not funnier than **RHH**. So the importance of BET having a hit drama is actually a big deal to the network. **Being Mary Jane** debuted a few weeks ago to positive reviews and big TV ratings and that allowed BET to aggressively start airing spots showing that it was beating similar women appealing TV dramas. Recently the show lost its #1 status in black households, but either way **Being Mary Jane** has allowed BET to fight the Black Twitter hype and ratings that OWN stole with Tyler Perry's shows last year. BET also learned from their negative and litigious Facebook debacle over **The Game's** FB page. BET created engaging native ads of their viral social media campaign of #IamMaryJane. The show is giving BET's Mary Jane fans a chance to upload their videos talking about why they see themselves as Mary Jane. And lucky viewers will see their videos on BET. Looking forward BET could do more branding campaigns with Revlon or other sponsors wanting to reach millions of Black female viewers who like watching **Being Mary Jane**.



My only real problems with **Being Mary Jane** is her relationship with Andre. I really wish Mara or Salim had shown in the pilot how they got together. I think they saved a lot of production money just going straight into their relationship as a couple, but I wish as a viewer they showed why they were initially attracted to each other. What was it that made Andre want to now cheat on his wife with a popular cable news celebrity? And how did Andre get awkwardly get around saying he was married? Why are these things important? Because in most recent and **Episode 5 of Being Mary Jane** we see that even after she got Andre to file for divorce with her wife and move in with her that it is not enough. Mary Jane attends a Jack & Jill Fundraising Gala and we see her seriously considering hooking up or being romantically smitten with her "off and on again" booty call ex-boyfriend David Paul (Stephen Bishop). And the only real obvious reason that we are lead to believe that Mary Jane would want to be with David, even though she knows she has Andre waiting for at home, is that David is about to sell his tech start-up for \$12 million, David is praised by her parents and David is shown doing a manly thing of pushing away a rude brotha who was verbally harassing Mary Jane at the Gala.

Even after David has clearly told Mary Jane that he has moved on from their last sexual encounter and has been dating someone else for two months, **Being Mary Jane** still showed me previews of **Episode 6** where Andre is upset that Mary Jane still has strong feelings for David. If this Gala episode had happened earlier when Andre was still trying to work things out with his wife than I would have no problem with Gabrielle keeping her options open. But to again have Mary Jane attempt to steal another man who is already in a committed relationship because he appears to be on the “come-up” is pretty dumb.



**“WHO WANTS TO BE MARYJANE? SHE A SIDE PIECE. THIS SIDE PIECE EPIDEMIC IS GETTING OUT OF CONTROL. JUST LEAVE IT AT SCANDAL PLEASE!”...JASMINE JONES...YOUTUBE**

Comments like the one above posted on BET’s #IamMaryJane PR video could prove in the long wrong a true impediment or distraction to **Being Mary Jane** taking off with non-minority viewers if it is perceived in the public or social media that Mary Jane is more of an opportunist, a gold digger or a “**Scandal** wannabe side piece”. There will not be a backlash with BET’s fans who love **Being Mary Jane**, but with TV critics’ months from now who will not reward BET’s breakout show with Emmy or Golden Globe nominations for the show and most importantly Gabrielle Union. But overall I want to see the final three episodes of **Being Mary Jane** to see if the show actually ends up as truly new empowering dramatic TV series for Black women and women in general or will this be a step backward in the media perception of Black women on TV. Right now I would have to give **Being Mary Jane** \$\$\$\$ for its potential and its solid marketing efforts from BET.

