

= The Constant =

" The Constant " is the fifth episode of the fourth season of the American Broadcasting Company 's (ABC) serial drama television series Lost , and the 77th episode overall . It was broadcast on February 28 , 2008 , on ABC in the United States and on CTV in Canada . It was written by executive producer Carlton Cuse and co @-@ creator / executive producer Damon Lindelof and directed by executive producer Jack Bender . " The Constant " was watched by 15 million American viewers and is widely regarded as one of Lost 's best episodes . It was nominated for three Primetime Emmy Awards , a Directors Guild of America Award , and a Hugo Award .

In the episode , Desmond Hume (played by Henry Ian Cusick) and Sayid Jarrah (Naveen Andrews) are being flown by Frank Lapidus (Jeff Fahey) to the freighter where Lapidus ' mission is set . After going through turbulence , Desmond 's consciousness unexpectedly travels through time between 1996 and 2004 . The helicopter reaches the freighter and Sayid and Desmond are introduced to communications officer George Minkowski (Fisher Stevens) , who is " unstuck in time " like Desmond . The writers took twice the time expected to develop the episode 's script ; the biggest concern was the avoidance of a temporal paradox when dealing with time travel .

= = Plot = =

Desmond , Sayid and Lapidus experience turbulence while flying the 130 kilometers (about 80 miles) distance from the island where they were stranded to Lapidus ' team 's freighter , the Kahana . Desmond 's consciousness travels back eight years to 1996 , when he is serving with the British Army 's Royal Scots Regiment . Moments later , when his consciousness returns to the present day , he neither knows where he is nor recognizes his companions , and has no memory of his life since 1996 . After the helicopter lands , Desmond continues to jump between 1996 and 2004 . He is taken to the sick bay , where a man named Minkowski is strapped to a bed because he is experiencing similar problems . Minkowski explains that someone sabotaged the radio room two days earlier and that Desmond 's ex @-@ girlfriend Penny Widmore (Sonya Walger) has been trying to contact the freighter . Sayid uses the satellite phone to contact Jack Shephard (Matthew Fox) on the island and explains that Desmond appears to have amnesia . Daniel Faraday (Jeremy Davies) , a physicist from the freighter , asks Jack whether Desmond has recently been exposed to a high level of radiation or electromagnetism . Jack is unsure , and so Daniel speaks to Desmond and asks him about his situation . Desmond responds that he believes that he is in 1996 and is serving with the Royal Scots . Faraday understands and tells Desmond that when he returns to 1996 , he needs to go to the physics department of The Queen 's College , Oxford University in England to meet with Daniel 's past self , and gives Desmond some mechanical settings to relay , along with an extra phrase that Daniel assures him will convince Daniel 's past self that the story is legitimate .

Desmond 's flashbacks become more frequent and longer . In 1996 , Desmond tracks down a younger Faraday at Oxford , who takes Desmond into his laboratory where he is experimenting with a time machine . Setting his electromagnetic device with the settings that Desmond has given him , Daniel places his laboratory rat , Eloise , in a maze and exposes her to electromagnetic energy . The rat appears to become comatose , then awakens and runs the maze . Daniel becomes excited because he had just built the maze and had not yet taught Eloise how to run it . Desmond realizes that , like the rat , he is caught in a time warp that is moving his consciousness between two different bodies at two different points in time and space . Eloise dies of a suspected brain aneurysm brought on by the exposure to the time lapse . Desmond becomes worried that he will die like Eloise , and Daniel instructs him to find something or someone ? a constant ? who is present in both times and can serve as an anchor for Desmond 's mental stability . Desmond decides that Penny can be the constant ; however , he must make contact with her in 2004 . To find out where she lives , Desmond gets her address from her father Charles (Alan Dale) , who is at an auction buying a journal owned by Toward Hanso written by a crew member of the 19th century ship called the Black Rock .

In 1996 , Desmond finds Penny , who is still distraught over their break @-@ up and is not willing to

see him . However , he gets her telephone number and tells her not to change it because he will call her on Christmas Eve 2004 . In 2004 , Sayid , Desmond , and Minkowski escape the sick bay and begin to repair the broken communications equipment . Meanwhile , Minkowski enters into another flashback , and dies . Showing signs of suffering the same fate as Minkowski , Desmond telephones Penny , who tells Desmond that she has been searching for him for the past three years and they reconcile before the power is cut off . Having made contact with his " constant " , Desmond stops alternating between 1996 and 2004 . Back on the island , Daniel flips through his journal and discovers a note that he had written , " If anything goes wrong , Desmond Hume will be my constant . "

= = Production = =

" The Constant " is the second Lost episode to deal directly with the concept of time travel after " Flashes Before Your Eyes " from the third season . While promoting that episode , Lindelof said that it uses the flashback device " in a way we never have before and never will again " and while promoting " The Constant " , he said that it " upholds that pledge , unpledges it , then repledges it . " Lost 's writer @-@ producers enjoy science fiction themes such as time travel ; however , they were careful not to create a paradox . The rules for time @-@ travel in the series are outlined in " Flashes Before Your Eyes " ? although , Lindelof has said that " The Constant " is a more important episode in terms of explaining time travel on the show ? by Ms. Hawking (Fionnula Flanagan) , who explains that certain events are inevitable and the universe will eventually correct any errors . Had these rules not been established , the writers feared that viewers would lose interest because the stakes of the characters would be lessened . The writers hoped that " The Constant " would further establish that there are no parallel universes or alternate realities . Lindelof reminisced that " just breaking that episode was such a massive headache " and Cuse added that " it was definitely like doing the hardest New York Times crossword puzzle for the week " .

Cuse and Lindelof admitted they took some inspiration from the final episode of Star Trek : The Next Generation , " All Good Things ... " , where Captain Picard jumps between three time frames . The Lost writers compared Minkowski 's role to Q , as " someone who is undergoing and understands the same events as our protagonist " . Faraday , on the other hand , was the expert that always appears in time travel fiction ? as Lindelof put it , " He 's our Doc Brown here , who basically is gonna tell the protagonist to go and find him in the past " . Whereas the average Lost episode took two weeks to plan and write , " The Constant " took five because the writers experienced difficulty when determining its effect on future stories . Popular Mechanics analyzed the possibility of time travel using Lost 's rules . Michio Kaku claimed that " the show 's producers did their homework " . According to Kaku , " there 's no law of physics preventing this kind of time travel ? just a lack of know @-@ how ? [but] it would take a very advanced civilization to really do this " . Cuse stated that " we [the writers] try to use enough science to give a sense of credibility " . " The Constant " was the first episode set on the Kahana , but the writers decided to avoid using the new setting just to give new information ? Lindelof has declared that " you would have mindless exposition unless the characters were in a constant state of crisis " . According to Lindelof , Desmond 's confusion prevents the characters who arrived from the island from asking questions to the freighter 's crew .

Shooting occurred in the second half of October 2007 . The scenes on the freighter in this and later episodes were filmed for several days on a freighter ten to fifteen minutes off the west coast of Oahu , Hawaii , where Lost is filmed . Instead of docking the ship and returning to the ocean each day , the actors and crew slept on the freighter in areas that were not being used for filming . The Oxford scenes were shot at St. Andrew 's Cathedral in Honolulu . In 1996 , Desmond has short hair and no facial hair and in 2004 , Desmond sports long and untamed hair with a full beard . Cusick did not cut his hair ; it was hidden underneath a short @-@ haired wig by " really talented hair and makeup folks " , according to Carlton Cuse . All freighter scenes were shot before Cusick shaved most of his beard for the 1996 scenes . A fake beard was glued onto Cusick for the episodes " Ji Yeon " and " Meet Kevin Johnson " while his beard grew back . The equations on Faraday 's chalkboard were

written by a physicist who was hired as a consultant by the producers . The way the transitions between the 1996 and 2004 scenes would take place was frequently discussed during production . The producers took the advice of editor Mark Goldman , who suggested sudden cuts with " no fancy effect , and in some cases , no sound cut " , similar to the way " All Good Things ... " was edited . The original ending would set up the following episode by having Charlotte (Rebecca Mader) drop a bag containing a gas mask at Faraday 's feet . But the producers thought it did not work after the emotional scenes between Desmond and Penny , and decided to finish with Faraday reading his diary .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original American broadcast , " The Constant " was watched by 12 @. @ 893 million viewers , ranking Lost eighth in weekly ratings . The episode was watched by a total of 14 @. @ 998 million viewers , including those who watched within seven days of broadcast , making it the most recorded show of the week ; this number went toward the year @- @ end season average . It received 5 @. @ 4 / 13 in the key adults 18 ? 49 demographic . The Canadian broadcast was watched by 1 @. @ 529 million people , making it the sixth most watched show of the week . In the United Kingdom , " The Constant " was watched by 911 @, @ 000 viewers . 770 @, @ 000 Australians tuned into Lost , placing it seventy @- @ fifth in the weekly ratings chart .

= = = Critical reaction = = =

The Constant received universal acclaim from both critics and fans and is often cited as the best episode of the entire series . Time named " The Constant " the best television episode of 2008 , and according to Oscar Dahl of BuddyTV , " lots of people " referred to it as " the best Lost episode ever " . It was listed as the best episode of Lost by IGN , Los Angeles Times , and ABC2 , and was also featured in similar lists by TV Guide , and National Post .

In Entertainment Weekly , Alejandro Garay wrote , " One of my favorite episodes of 2008 was Lost ? s ' The Constant . ' It was a beautiful episode that made us fans fall in love with the show even more . The creators managed to build momentum with smart narrative , by using the romance card to develop such a complicated topic as time traveling . It was exquisite , mind @- @ blowing , impeccably done , and unforgettable . " Bill Keveney of USA Today wrote that it is " arguably the most highly praised episode of [the] well @- @ received fourth season " , while his colleague Robert Bianco deemed Henry Ian Cusick worthy of an Emmy Award nomination . Patrick Day of the Los Angeles Times called the episode a " mind @- @ blowing tour de force " . Maureen Ryan of The Chicago Tribune called it a " for @- @ the @- @ ages episode " with " a classic Lost moment " in Desmond and Penny 's phone call and " an especially spine @- @ tingling performance " by Cusick . Verne Gay of Newsday wrote , " last night 's forty @- @ four minutes of Lost were among the most satisfying forty @- @ four minutes in front of the tube in my life . " He added that " it wasn 't merely a brilliant episode , which pushed the mythology forward more rapidly and richly than any episode in my memory , but it was an emotional release ? I actually cried when Penny and Desmond finally ? connected " and " there wasn 't one , single , solitary false note " . Alan Sepinwall of The Star @- @ Ledger said that " it was brilliantly executed , as both a brain @- @ twister and as a love story " with an " outstanding " performance by Jeremy Davies . Jeff Jensen of Entertainment Weekly described the episode as " the best single outing since season 1 's ' Walkabout ' " and named the phone call between Desmond and Penny the best moment of the season excluding any moments from the then yet @- @ to @- @ air season finale . Nikki Stafford of Wizard described " The Constant " as " mindblowing " and cited it as " the reason the hardcore fans love Lost . " Matt Roush of TV Guide said that " the time @- @ tripping went into overdrive with this week 's brilliant episode ? [which] worked beautifully as a showcase for Henry Ian Cusick as the tormented Desmond . It was almost a

stand @-@ alone episode , a Twilight Zone / X @-@ Files @-@ style adventure with a start , middle and killer finish . "

Kristin Dos Santos of E ! " loved every minute " and admitted that " this was one of [her] all @-@ time favorite episodes , what with the undying love business and this indisputable fact : Henry Ian Cusick can frakking act " . " The Constant " received high praise from IGN reviewer Chris Carabott calling it " a brilliantly executed hour of television " and " one of the finest episodes in the series " . He gave it 10 / 10 , tying it with " Pilot ? Part One " and " Through the Looking Glass " as the best reviewed episode of Lost . LTG of Television Without Pity gave the episode an " A + " ? the highest grade for any Lost episode . Erin Martell of AOL 's TV Squad loved the episode and its unique flashback structure . " The Constant " strengthened her love for Desmond and Penny 's story , saying " my heart won 't break if none of [Jack , Kate , Sawyer and Juliet] end up together [but] if Desmond and Penny don 't reunite , I will be devastated . " Oscar Dahl of BuddyTV gave " The Constant " an excellent review , saying that " my mind has never spun this fast after a Lost episode " and the writers have " really outdone themselves " and " do not get enough credit for constantly tinkering with their story structure " . Jay Glatfelter of The Huffington Post said that this " episode of Lost not only continued this season 's thrilling momentum ; it proved to fans that even in its fourth season , it still leaves us with our jaws hanging open ? this was the make of possibly one of my favorite Lost episodes ever . " Glatfelter also praised the characters , Daniel " more and more becoming one of [his] favorite characters " and calling Desmond " the most intriguing character on Lost [with] the best love story on the show and dare I say on television today " . Daniel of TMZ graded the episode as an " A + " , considering it to be one of the best Lost episodes . In his review , he compared television to film ? specifically " The Constant " to No Country for Old Men , the 2007 Academy Award winner for Best Picture ? and decided that television is far superior . Karla Peterson of The San Diego Union @-@ Tribune wrote that " [I was] almost as touched and relieved by the reunion as Desmond and Penny are " ; however , she did not review " The Constant " as favorably as other critics , giving it an " A ? " . Dan Compora of SyFy Portal gave " The Constant " a mixed review . He described it as " an entertaining episode [with] a fine acting performance by Henry Ian Cusick " , but criticized Desmond 's repetitive story arc , criticized Frank 's character , said that " Jeff Fahey is a fine actor , but so far , his character just hasn 't really evolved enough for me to care yet " and concluded , " this episode didn 't seem to really raise or answer anything of major importance , so I can 't help but feel that it was nothing more than mid @-@ season filler . " Ben Rawson @-@ Jones of Digital Spy graded it with four out of five stars , and wrote that " a refreshing shift in Lost 's tone enabled loyal viewers to have their hearts warmed by the long distance smoochfest between Desmond and his beloved Penny " .

= = = Awards = = =

" The Constant " was nominated for Outstanding Cinematography for a One @-@ Hour Series and Outstanding Music Composition for a Series (Original Dramatic Score) at the 60th Primetime Emmy Awards . Academy of Television Arts & Sciences , (July 17 , 2008) It was Lost 's representative episode for Outstanding Drama Series and was indeed nominated , losing to Mad Men . Henry Ian Cusick and Jeremy Davies each submitted this episode for consideration on their own behalf for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Drama Series . This episode was also considered for Outstanding Directing and Outstanding Writing for a Drama Series . The episode was nominated for the 2009 Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation , Short Form . Jack Bender was nominated for the Directors Guild of America Award for Outstanding Directing ? Drama Series .