

TV Review: NBC's 'Revolution' Could Be Next Great Network Drama

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 17, 2012 - 10:31am

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CHICAGO – Great television often comes from a “what would you do” premise. What would you do if you were one of the few survivors of the crash of Flight 815? What would you do if you were unable to provide for your family other than to cook meth? What would you do if the zombie apocalypse became reality? There's great storytelling potential in putting viewers in fantastic situations and then grounding them in reality. NBC's “Revolution,” finally premiering tonight after months of hype and even online availability, is just such a show and the premiere may have some flaws but also sets the foundation for what could become the next great network show. It's way too soon to tell after one episode if this will be the next “LOST,” but the potential is there.



Television Rating: **4.0/5.0**

As with many great shows, “Revolution” comes to NBC Monday nights courtesy of some undeniably talented people. J.J. Abrams (“LOST,” “Alias,” “Star Trek”) has rightfully had his name all over the advertisements as Executive Producer but the show was actually created by the very-talented Eric Kripke, who brings some of the same quirky sense of character that he brought to his underrated “Supernatural” to this program. It also helps to have Jon Favreau (“Iron Man,” “Cowboys & Aliens”) directing your pilot as it adds a Hollywood sheen to the production that's not always there on network TV.



Revolution

Photo credit: NBC

Enough with the pedigree. What do these talented people present in "Revolution"? It's a real simple pitch — one day, everything stops. And "Revolution" wastes no time in getting its high-concept hooks in viewers. A panicked Ben Matheson (Tim Guinee) hurries to download something clearly vital on to a flash drive while his wife Rachel (Elizabeth Mitchell) joins him in mounting fear. Ben calls his brother Miles (Billy Burke) and tells him that everything is going to turn off. Without warning, all the power in the world comes to a stop. Lights go out, cars stop, batteries die, and planes fall from the sky.

Flash forward fifteen years. Governments have toppled to be replaced by militias who are all looking for the "One Ring to Rule Them All" in this world — power (Abrams recently said that the original pitch reminded him of "The Lord of the Rings" which is a clever parallel to consider when watching the pilot). If someone could figure out why the power went out and maybe even how to turn it back on, they would rule the universe.



Revolution
Photo credit: NBC

Of course, while some are looking for power, others are merely looking to survive. We quickly discover that Ben has helped build a quaint village that seems to be doing pretty well until the nefarious Tom Neville (Giancarlo Esposito) comes looking for him. After an altercation, Ben's son Danny (Graham Rogers) is kidnapped and his daughter Charlie (Tracy Spiridakos) is on a quest to get him back.

As with many shows this complex, the pilot has a lot of set-up to get out of the way but the economy of the storytelling here is impressive. There aren't numerous scenes of what a power-less life would be like as Favreau & Kripke let viewers connect a lot of the dots on their own after a brief montage to bridge "present day" and the time after the power goes out. There's a confidence to the writing here that's akin to "LOST" in the way the program never feels like it's talking down to the viewer or sacrificing character for the sake of its high concept. Just as "LOST" was about the people on that island more than their predicament, "Revolution" seems like it will value the character arcs of Miles, Charlie, and Danny more than the specifics of their sci-fi situation.

To connect with a show like "Revolution" we have to not only ask ourselves what we would do in that situation but care about the characters stuck in it. Abrams has helped assemble a stellar cast, led by the incredibly charismatic Burke & Esposito, two actors who could quickly become the most interesting hero & villain combo on network TV. The supporting cast works as well with Spiridakos getting the most time to make an impression in the premiere while the writers make it clear that this will be an ensemble series with faces that may at first seem minor becoming important voices in the future.

Perhaps most importantly, "Revolution" ends with a fantastic twist. It's one of those scenes that leaves you with more questions than when the show began but doesn't feel like a cheat. The most important test of a pilot is if it's engaging enough to get you to watch the second episode. I'm looking forward to that hour of television more than any next week. Could it all turn into melodramatic hokum? Certainly. But with this charismatic of a cast, this engaging of a premise, and this talented a production team, I'm pretty confident that people will be talking about "Revolution" well into next year.

"Revolution" stars Billy Burke, Tracy Spiridakos, Graham Rogers, Tim Guinee, Elizabeth Mitchell, Zak Orth, JD Pardo, David Lyons, Maria Howell, Daniealla Alonso, and Giancarlo Esposito. The show was created by Eric Kripke, produced by J.J. Abrams, and the pilot was directed by Jon Favreau. It premieres on NBC on Monday, September 17, 2012 at 9pm CST.

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [20]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com



[19]

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [19]

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