

# TV Review: ‘Survivor’ Meets ‘LOST’ on NBC’s Strange ‘Siberia’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 1, 2013 - 12:31pm

- [Brian Tallerico](#) [2]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [3]
- [Lost](#) [4]
- [NBC](#) [5]
- [Siberia](#) [6]
- [Survivor](#) [7]
- [Television](#) [8]

CHICAGO – Every Summer needs a guilty pleasure. (Anyone else watch “The Glass House”? Just me? OK. Moving on.) This Summer’s guilty pleasure could easily be NBC’s truly bizarre “Siberia,” premiering tonight at 9pm CST. This hybrid of “Survivor” and “LOST” has some truly rough edges but also contains an addictively strange premise that could separate it from a lot of the bland network offerings this season. Sure, most of the new must-sees are on cable this season (“Ray Donovan,” “The Bridge,” “Low Winter Sun”) but those programs are intense. If you want something left of center, you may come back to NBC.



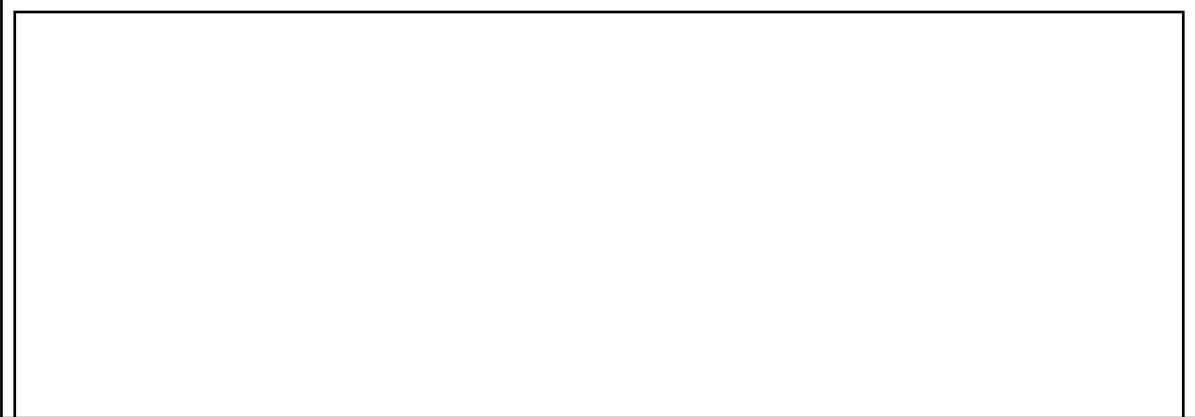
Television Rating: **3.0/5.0**

For at least the first half of “Siberia,” viewers unfamiliar with the conceit of the show are likely to think it’s a reality program. The editing, the to-camera interviews, the host, the structure — it feels like a “Survivor” clone, a genre unto itself in the last decade. 16 international contestants board a plane and end up in Siberia. They’re in the wilderness of Tunguska, a part of the world so desolate that the gulags there didn’t even need fences. Where would escaped prisoners possibly go?



Siberia  
Photo credit: NBC

The contestants on this reality show are told that all they have to do is survive. 16 people in the middle of nowhere with limited supplies and, this is key, no rules. None. There won’t be immunity challenges. There won’t be special rewards. Occasionally, a magic box will reveal an item that could be useful. In the premiere, it’s a clue to where to find food. The contestants start fire, boil water, cook their food, and begin to form alliances and their own society. If anyone wants to leave, all they have to do is go to an area where helicopters will pick them up. As soon as they cross that line and push the button to call for help, their chance at half a million dollars is gone.



Siberia  
Photo credit: NBC

What would happen if this premise were real? Would a mini-society start up? And how long would it take before power struggles turned it into "Lord of the Flies"? These questions go largely unanswered as "Siberia" gets pretty freaky pretty quickly. Strange sounds are heard in the middle of the night and a cameraman ends up injured. What is happening in Tunguska? Watch "Siberia" this Summer and find out.

As someone who has seen WAY more bad reality shows than any human should have to endure, the talking head segments on "Siberia" are enjoyably realistic. The line between scripted and reality TV blurs every day as contestants on shows like "Big Brother" are clearly coached in interview segments. The alliances, personalities, etc. of "Siberia" really could be a part of a normal reality show. Some of the editing betrays the concept more quickly than I think the producers intend and some of the performers are more clearly acting than others. Although it was smart of the producers to cast the piece with actors and actresses largely unknown, at least in the U.S. (apparently one of them is a TV star from Australia and the host is a radio personality from L.A.).

I'm most concerned about how quickly and bizarrely "Siberia" could wear out its welcome. The premiere has a uniquely original energy but what does this show look like in a few weeks? And how do they possibly make these characters interesting beyond the premise? "LOST" worked because it was character-driven above all else and the writing and performances here seem built entirely around the concept. Only time will tell if that changes. But, and I wouldn't have predicted this going into my review given the track record of the networks during the season that cable has taken over, I'll return to "Siberia" for at least another week.

*"Siberia" premieres on NBC on Monday, July 1, 2013 at 9pm CST.*



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