

Buckle Up: A First Look at NBC's New Series 'Revolution'

Imagine having every electrical device switch off one day, and never work again. Nearly every aspect of daily life, large and small, comes screeching to a halt. Then life continues to deteriorate for the next 15 years, retreating back into a way of life that hasn't been experienced since the dawn of the 20th century.

Couple that hardship with the fact that the traditional U.S. government has collapsed, and an unseen man known only as General Martin is in charge, sending men on horseback to root out the remaining defiant citizens and crush any source of rebellion forever. Could average citizens find the strength, the will and the means to fight back and reclaim their beloved way of life? Or, is this the best the former USA has in the future?

That's the compelling storyline behind a new, high-profile NBC drama series called *Revolution*, which debuted Monday night, amid an avalanche of publicity surrounding its high-profile creative team of mega-producer J.J. Abrams (TV's *Lost*, *Fringe*, *Person of Interest* and *Alias*, as well as the *Star Trek* film reboot and the last *Mission: Impossible* movie) and director-producer Jon Favreau (an openly staunch conservative who has helmed a string of hit movies ranging from *Elf* to the first two *Iron Man* movies).

The show debuted its pilot before a large and appreciative audience at Comic-Con. The results were an intriguing mix of family drama and often-intense action that nonetheless featured what seemed to be conservative political undertones. Frequent mentions of family as a source of strength amid hardship, and of the importance of freedom, were laden in the dialogue, while the leader of the evil government search party

looking for a fugitive appeared to resemble President Obama.

When the leader saw a heroic citizen pull a gun on him, he also noted that owning guns was a “hangable offense,” a fact that was portrayed with a combination of sadness and loss. In a truly unusual move that may prove to be just an optical illusion for this writer, that search-team leader, played by Giancarlo Esposito of *Breaking Bad* fame, bears a striking resemblance to President Obama—a visual connection shared by an African-American couple seated next to me at the screening.

The core plot of the first show follows what happens when that search-team leader, Captain Neville, arrives on the farm of the Matheson family, looking for the father and his brother, who may know something about the blackout years ago. When the father won’t reveal his brother’s whereabouts, he’s killed in a battle that ensues when the Matheson family and neighboring farmers open fire with arrows and a shotgun, as well as breaking out in a sword fight.

The father, Ben, gets mortally wounded in the melee, so Neville takes his son, Daniel. As Ben lies dying, he tells his daughter, Charlotte, or Charley for short, to go to Chicago and locate his brother Miles. By the end of the first episode, some surprises are revealed, which portends that *Revolution* will be an action-packed complex puzzle like Abrams’ series *Lost* and *Fringe*.

On the panel discussion after the screening, Writer Eric Kripke (who last created the dark drama *Supernatural* for the CW network) said, “It’s an epic, quite like *Lord of the Rings*.

“When you lose electricity, you lose so much of what we’ve become accustomed to in life,” Kripke said. “Even proper mass water distribution depends on it; and, when you lose that access without an explanation, and have to wonder if the government caused it to happen for a reason, well that’s an interesting area to explore and takes us back to all sorts of

themes of how much oppression do you take before you stand up for rights and freedoms? There's a lot going on here, so buckle up."

While the show's emphasis on family and freedom hopefully bodes well for future episodes, parents and others should be forewarned that the violence in the show is frequent, yet mostly handled tastefully and in an entertaining old-fashioned manner such as swordfights.

However, one particular scene in which it is implied that a couple of thugs are dragging off one of the heroic teenage girls to rape her is unnecessarily unpleasant, even though it winds up with the potential victim choking her attacker and his getting shot with an arrow as well. The pilot episode also had some light foul language, one or two "h" words, a "b" word and a light exclamatory profanity.

As the seemingly villainous Captain Neville, Esposito took pains to note that his character will be nuanced. This appears to reflect that the show will not devolve into a simple anti-government screed either.

"Neville is trying to bring order to a society that is teetering on the edge of complete chaos," Esposito said. "He thinks he's doing the right thing, but the question rises if he's actually helping, or if his tactics are causing bigger problems. It's an interesting parallel to what's going on today with the government and our threats to the nation."

Overall, the use of a daring young heroine who shoots arrows may remind viewers of *The Hunger Games*. Here's hoping it remains both creatively original and restrained enough for viewing by families and discerning viewers. Only time will tell.

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