

# TV Wednesday: Bomb Girls

BY CHRIS LACKNER, POSTMEDIA NEWS JANUARY 4, 2012



Bomb Girls, premiering tonight, blasts away all the negative cliches that exist about Canadian television.

**Photograph by:** Handout, Global

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Bomb Girls blasts away all the negative cliches that exist about Canadian television. Ambitious, intelligent and rewarding, the miniseries is exactly what our original TV should strive for: high-end production values, great storytelling, sharp casting, and the exploration of something that is definitively our own.

The six-part series, premiering Wednesday, offers a fictionalized account of an important, often overlooked, part of Canadian history: when Canadian women took over the work in our munitions factories during the Second World War. Not only did they replace the men who went off to serve, but they provided them - and Canada's allies -with the vital weaponry needed to sustain the war effort. While Canadian men were risking life and limb overseas, Canadian women faced their own hazards -- and risked their own limbs -- working in bomb factories.

Bomb Girls offers all the requisite fireworks. The music, fashion and cultural trappings of 1940s are all on fine display here. While far from the world of Mad Men's Don Draper and New York City, Bomb Girls

accomplishes similar feats as that heralded series: It brings to life an era; offers complex, intriguing characters; and provides an often shocking window into the gender dynamics of the not-so-distant past.

Meg Tilly anchors the ensemble cast as fierce factory shift matron, Lorna Corbett. Walking a fine line between serving as the factory girls' guardian and being a stern authority figure, Tilly's nuanced character is the co-heart of the show. Norma has two sons on the battlefields of Europe and an empty, loveless marriage at home, so her work in the munitions factory has become almost a fanatical crusade. Empathetic, conflicted and occasionally overbearing, Tilly's performance as Corbett is a scene-stealer.

The other co-heart of the show is South Africa's Jodi Balfour, who plays rich socialite Gladys Witham, a young woman whose world view is altered forever by her decision to seek work in a bomb factory. Gladys' lust for life and occasionally reckless decisions offer a linchpin on which much of the series' drama revolves. The striking Balfour has made Vancouver her home, with stints on other Canadian-shot series, such as *Supernatural* and *Sanctuary*. *Bomb Girls* could bring a new sheen to her rising star. At the very least, Balfour and Tilly will likely both contend for Geminis.

In tonight's opening episode, Gladys takes an office job at Victory Munitions, the factory at the heart of the series' action. Her world is blown wide open by the unlikely sisterhood she finds there, but she soon finds herself faced with a big decision: whether to defy her family and societal expectations and join the working girls on the dangerous floor of the factory.

Exploring everything from sexism and racism to class warfare, *Bomb Girls* offers us a glimpse into an important part of our past -- and an entertaining drama in the process. Drop in tonight and watch the series launch.

*(Global, Wednesday 8 p.m. ET/PT)*

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