

'A Call to Spy': Gripping World War II thriller shines a light on brave women



CHENNAI: In her debut solo outing as a director, Lydia Dean Pilcher offers “A Call to Spy,” which landed on Amazon Prime Video this week and tells the story of three women who did their bit to secure victory for the Allies in World War II.



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Based on real events, tragic and thrilling, Sarah Megan Thomas produces and scripts an amazing plot that held my unwavering attention for the whole two hours. Thomas also has the most solid role as Virginia Hall, an American with a prosthetic leg whose gutsy side is revealed as she is placed in Vichy France to help create mayhem in the enemy ranks. In one of the final scenes we see her painfully trekking through the

snow-capped Alps — an escape she was loathe to undertake. But having been discovered by the Nazis and with her photographs pasted on every wall, she had no choice.

With a desperate Churchill facing the threat of German invasion across the English Channel from France, he enlists Vera Atkins (Stana Katic) to enroll women to gather intelligence as part of the war effort. She recruited many women, but “A Call to Spy” is about two of them — Noor Inayat Khan (Radhika Apte, an Amazon regular) apart from Hall. A British citizen of Indian origin, Khan, born in Moscow and raised in France, was the subject of a docudrama and a book. However, Apte has only a small amount of screen time in her latest outing, and she fails to make a mark, with Thomas and Katic clinching the meatiest parts. But Apte gets two unforgettable lines. Asked why she became a signal woman, Noor says: “I play the harp and the piano, and signalling is like music; there is rhythm in it . . . And this is my war. I am a British citizen. I grew up in France. It’s my home. I can’t let the Nazis do what they are doing.”

With Kim Jennings designing the sets, authentically recreating London on a set in Philadelphia and Lyon, and Paris on a set in Budapest, “A Call to Spy” is not just a splendid evocation of 1940s war-battered Europe, but also a homage to the women whose incredibly daring role in the resistance is what legends are made of.
