

Film Review: 'The Perfect Candidate' is a tongue-in-cheek look at the power of women



VENICE: Saudi director Haifaa Al-Mansour's latest effort, "The Perfect Candidate," which competed for the top Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival this year, is set in a town close to Riyadh and the ease of working on home ground clearly shows in the work.

Like her first film "Wadjda," "The Perfect Candidate" is also about defiance, this time it is a young doctor, Maryam (Mila Alzahrani). She is bent on furthering her career, but when things do not go her way after a missed opportunity to fly to Dubai for a medical conference, she decides to contest the local municipal election. She feels she could at least get the broken road to her clinic repaved — saving those who travel there, especially in emergencies. Earlier, a clear display of her grit is visible when she coaxes an elderly man into letting her treat him. At home too, her two reluctant sisters Sara and Selma come around to helping Maryam when she begins her campaign.

Haifaa's work may be a rather simplistic way of examining the age-old impediments many women face. But one cannot miss the tongue-in-cheek approach she takes. Beginning with a shot of Maryam driving a car, the movie shows her emerging from behind a curtain during the campaign to chastise unruly men. Narrated with wonderful subtlety, "The Perfect Candidate" also has a perfect actress in Mila, who without being dramatic gives us a taste of a woman's true power.
