

Netflix's 'Survival of the Thickest' is a welcome women-led comedy



CHENNAI: Newly released Netflix comedy series “Survival of the Thickest” is about a woman's struggle in the viciously competitive world of fashion with a side serving of body positivity, failed relationships and laughs.

For all her struggles — a cheating boyfriend included — our protagonist Mavis (Michelle Buteau) weaves through life with comic panache. Buteau, on whose book of essays the screen work is based, also created the show.





Michelle Buteau attends the Netflix New York Special Screening of Survival Of The Thickest at Metrograph. (AFP)

In the opening scene, we see her flitting about a magazine studio dressing models and dishing out snippets of positivity as she tries to make a mark as a 38-year-old stylist in New York. The good times will not last, however, as she soon learns of her longtime partner's infidelity and embarks on life on her own — cue the coming-of-age series that the show was billed as.

Happily, the show celebrates Mavis's position as a plus-sized woman and explores the ups and downs that come along with it. "If someone cheats on Halle Berry, they're like, 'Oh my God, how (did) that man cheat on Halle Berry?'" she laments in one touching chat with her best friend, "but if someone cheats on someone like me, a thick girl with problem areas? They're like, 'Oh yeah, I get it.'" Mavis is not off the mark and Hollywood is infamous for sidelining plus-sized women, pigeonholing them into comedic roles to be made fun of. This series is turning the tide and giving women of all body shapes the respect they deserve — in this respect, "Survival of the Thickest" is very welcome.

It places Mavis at the center of the plot and makes her a superb heroine, who is adorable, funny — although much of the banter is R-rated — and driven. Earlier, Buteau was a scene stealer as a romantic lead in "Marry Me" and "Always Be My Maybe" so this is no new proof of her acting chops.

However, the series could have been edgier, wittier and have had a far wider mix of storylines — I would have liked to see some background characters get their moment in the spotlight.