

YOUTH

Rocket Girls' bumpy ride on new show

Members of the all-female pop group are jettisoned out of their comfort zone, **Xu Haoyu** reports.

Last summer, 11 young women, with an average age of 20, survived the cruel knockout talent competition, *Produce 101*, and formed a pop music group named Rocket Girls 101.

In December, it was arranged for them to live in the Sahara Desert and the Carpathian Mountains as part of an online adventure reality show, *Hengchongzhizhuang Ershiwu* ("the 20-something adventurers"), produced by Tencent Video.

During the trip, there were tears and there was laughter — tears due to the unfamiliar and extreme conditions that challenged their physical and psychological strength, and laughter born from their sisterly concern for each other and the courage they summoned to conquer the difficulties they faced.

"Before their departure for the desert, our production team asked these young women how they perceived the rampaging age of the 20-something and they provided their own answers," Xie Dikui, director of the show, said at a promotional event in Beijing on Jan 11.

Wu Xuanyi, 23, responded to the question: "At my age, I am fearless of pain or failure."

Another participant, 20-year-old Meng Meiqi, said: "Being a

20-something means I can do what I want without regard to the danger or the consequences of my actions."

Fellow cast member Lai Meiyun added: "At the fresh age of 20, I can enjoy the present with all my heart, no matter what it brings to me."

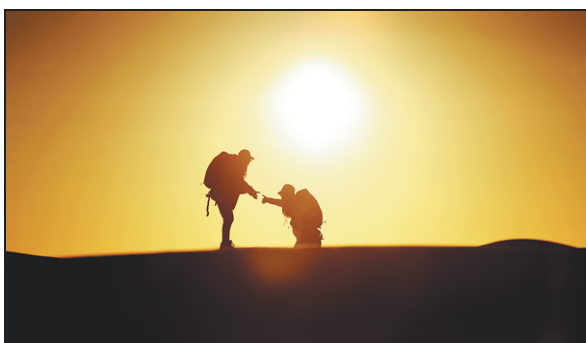
Whatever their thoughts, nobody can deny that they had an unforgettable experience during their four days and three nights in the dry, hot desert.

They could not use their cell-phones because there was no signal and little electricity; they could not do their makeup in the harsh conditions; and gone were the cute outfits in lieu of functional, outdoor gear designed for tramping around the desert.

Moreover, the food was, according to their accounts, "terrible". For example, they initially hated the dry baguette, but after several days of thirst and hunger, they cried over how delicious they thought it was.

Many of them showed signs of depression, but they eventually got through the challenges together, and in the process, solidified their friendship.

Yang Chaoyue, 20, is seen in the final edit crying so often that it is unsurprising that it was she who provided the show's first "drama queen" moment.



Top: The young members of Rocket Girls 101, a pop music group, in the Sahara Desert for the shooting of an adventure reality show. **Above:** The participants lending a hand to each other often on the way. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

After 16 hours of traveling from Beijing to Tunisia and spending time in the desert, Yang just could not take more Western food.

After having half a plate of grilled tuna, she started to pull her hair and twist her body, muttering, "I have to eat rice. I feel sick. I need chili sauce."

Her meltdown reached its pinnacle with her suddenly pounding the chair and bursting into tears. Her

teammates, however, did not abandon her to her tantrums, but gathered around to comfort her.

The show's director Xie uses four words to describe the young women's mood swings during its filming — "excited, anxious, exhausted and relieved".

"How to define the age of 20-something? It's the once-in-a-lifetime experience," he says. "It

might be a bit crazy and a bit aggressive, but it helps you to break through the barrier and outgrow yourself."

Being pop idols, singing and dancing on stage, members of the all-female group can easily get drowned in cheers and screams, and woo fans with their winks and smiles. Off-stage, however, they are still just ordinary people with the same vulnerabilities as the rest of us, Xie says.

With the show, he says, the production team hopes to encourage more young Chinese to step out of their comfort zone. The show made them realize that many young people have the desire to take adventures but they are hesitant and scared to take the leap.

"These girls bear all the features of the younger generations of Chinese," Xie says, adding that he wishes to see more youngsters "communicate with constellations, and with oneself, to explore a wider world".

The show is being aired from Jan 13 through early March on a Tencent platform, with a new episode every Sunday.

Contact the writer at xuhaoyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Academic gifts prize money to children

NANJING — Qian Qihu, an academician from the Chinese Academy of Engineering who recently won the country's top science award, has decided to donate his full prize money to help poor children receive an education.

Qian, together with another academician, Liu Yongtan, was awarded 8 million yuan (\$1.18 million) each for their outstanding contribution to scientific and technological innovation earlier this month.

Qian set up the theoretical system for China's modern defense engineering and contributed to creating a below-ground defense infrastructure.

Qian said on Jan 16 he has decided to use the money to set up a student aid fund in his hometown Kunshan, East China's Jiangsu province, to help more poor children gain access to schools.

Since 2006, the 82-year-old professor has personally assisted 17 poor students in the city with funding of more than 200,000 yuan, according to local officials.

"To serve the country and society is the duty of a soldier. Receiving the award is definitely an honor but it also means more responsibility," says Qian, who is a professor with the Army Engineering University.

Qian's charitable behavior has been praised by numerous Chinese internet users.

Many people paid tribute to him online and said they were deeply touched.

XINHUA

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