

YOUTH

TV show's rural charm

Displaced celebrities raise the profile of pastoral locales, **Xing Wen** reports.

Dirty hands, happy mind! That's the advice being touted by celebrities on a recent reality TV show. The stars, drawn from sport, stage and screen, are seen living and experiencing a self-sufficient rural life in the show, *Ha Ha Farmers*, which has been airing on MGTV, an online video platform based in Changsha, Central China's Hunan province.

The group includes actors Jia Nailiang and Jin Han, pop star Wang Yuan, singer Yang Chaoyue and former national fencing team member, Dong Li. All of them experience a farmer's day-to-day life in rural areas, learning how to plow fields, sow and reap crops, and fish.

Jin explains why he was willing to join the show. "My childhood was spent in the countryside. The show reminds me of the days when my grandfather rode his tricycle and took me to the wheat fields. He picked off the wheat and handed the grains for me to eat. That's the flavor I remember from my childhood."

He was also impressed by the industriousness and frugality of the villagers, which helped him understand how laborious the process of farming can be.

Jia says it was a great opportunity for him to get away from the fast pace of urban life and reconnect with nature.

"Sometimes when you fail to come around to an idea, maybe nature can help straighten you out," says Jia.

So far, the celebrities have visited tranquil villages in Xishuang Banna and the county town of Tengchong in Southwest China's

Yunnan province with the show's production unit.

Yuan Baili, director of the show, explains her reasons for choosing the two locations.

"Xishuang Banna boasts various tropical fruits and the unique culture of the Dai ethnic group, while Tengchong features a sea of cole flowers and magnificent snow-capped mountains," says Yuan. "Imagine what an idyllic life it is when farmers are cultivating the land in such picturesque villages."

In Tengchong's Shajiaba village, the celebrities lived in a simply decorated farmhouse with a big yard where they fed cows and pigs in their pens, and cooked meals using an outdoor stove that needed to be heated by burning wood, crop residue or charcoal.

Yuan also says she hopes that, by immersing these celebrities in such bucolic surroundings, the show can help vitalize the development of rural tourism and promote the agricultural products that abound in these locations, such as pineapples, bananas, honey and organic vegetables.

Yang Xingzhong, head of the Shajiaba village, says he plans to eventually turn the farmhouse used by the entertainers into a hostel.

"Cole seed oil provides a major source of the village's income," says Yang. "Through the show, audiences will get some idea of the beautiful sights here and they may then wish to come and see it for themselves, enabling us to explore a new way to fuel the economic development of the village."

In recent years, reality shows that



Above: Jia Nailiang (left) and Yang Chaoyue cook meals on an outdoor stove at a farmhouse. **Top:** Celebrities attend the recent launch event for the reality show *Ha Ha Farmers*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

focus on leisurely pastoral lifestyles have become increasingly popular among Chinese viewers.

For instance, the second season of the show *Back to Field*, which relocates a group of celebrities to a rural household in Tonglu county in East China's Zhejiang province, has notched up over 2 billion hits on MGTV's streaming platform, according to box-office tracker Maoyan.

Hong Yi, a white-collar worker based in Beijing, is an avid watcher of such reality shows.

The 24-year-old says the programs help urban residents to relax and enjoy the pleasure of

going back to nature. "We often face, or have become part of, the 'phubbing' phenomenon (being snubbed in favor of scrolling through a phone) in our daily life, so I'm really touched when I see the participants of the show sitting around a small table and chatting with one another cheerfully in a place with fresh air, green fields and clear lakes," says Hong. "To feel a strong bond with people in such a social setting is the life that I yearn for."

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Chinese fashion designer's exhibition opens on US West Coast

LOS ANGELES — Chinese couturier Guo Pei's exhibition, *Couture Beyond*, opened to the public this month at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana in Southern California, featuring 40 extraordinary creations from her most dramatic runway shows.

Organized by the Bowers Museum in collaboration with Guo's Rose Studios, SCAD FASH Museum of Fashion and Film, and the SCAD University for Creative Careers, the event represented the premiere of the exhibition on the United States' West Coast.

Running until July 14, the exhibition traces the evolution of Guo's design sensibility over the past 20 years and underlines the Chinese designer's impact on the fashion world and beyond.

As one of China's most renowned couturiers, Guo has been dressing celebrities, members of royalty and the political elite who turn to her for show-stopping, magnificent creations. She is the first Chinese designer

invited to join France's Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture.

Guo's designs were worn by performers at the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the annual CCTV's Spring Festival Gala.

She was launched into the international spotlight as the designer of pop singer Rihanna's omelet dress for the Met Gala in 2015.

"While incorporating contemporary innovation, I try my best to showcase the finest of traditional craftsmanship and Chinese culture via my creations," says Guo, adding that Chinese designers' impact on the world's fashion industry grows with the deepening of China's reform and opening-up and the expansion of its influence over the past few decades.

"I love my homeland, I love Chinese culture; that's the inspiration for my design," she says.

XINHUA



Chinese couturier Guo Pei's high fashion exhibits are on display at the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana in Southern California.

ZHANG SHUO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

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