

WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

Russian Man 'Trapped' on Chinese Reality TV Show

The reality TV **ordeal** of a Russian who joined a Chinese **boy band** show by accident – and made it to the final despite urging fans to vote him off – has finally ended after nearly three months.

Vladislav Ivanov, a 27-year-old from Vladivostok, was kicked out of the Produce Camp 2021 on Saturday after viewers ignored his **pleas** to leave and backed him all the way to the final.

Ivanov, who speaks Mandarin, joined the show as a Chinese translator. But he said he was invited to sign up as a contestant after the directors noticed his good looks. “They asked if I’d like to try a new life,” Ivanov said during the show.

He appeared to regret his decision almost immediately but could not leave without **breaching** his contract. His lack of enthusiasm played out in **half-hearted** singing, rapping and dancing alongside the other, more eager contestants.

“Becoming a member of a **boy band** is not my dream as I can’t sing and dance,” Ivanov said in Chinese on the show. “I hope the judges won’t support me. While the others want to get an A, I want to get an F as it stands for freedom.”

Performing under the **stage name** Lelush, he urged the public to vote him out, saying he did not want to be among the 11 winners of the show, who are contractually obliged to form a **boy band**. “Don’t love me, you’ll get no results,” he said on one episode. But viewers took to his **dour** persona and kept him in the running for nearly three months.

Idol-training shows, a TV genre originating in Korea that puts hundreds of aspiring young performers through rigorous **boot camps** and audience votes, have become massively popular in China.

In this one, contestants were **corralled** into dorm rooms on an island in Hainan province and had their phones confiscated for most of the season. Anyone who wanted to break their contract and leave midway through the season, which began in mid-February, had to pay a **steep** fine.

While critics have questioned the transparency of the voting on such shows, Ivanov appears **to have struck** a genuine **chord** as an anti-hero for Chinese audiences. Fans, some earnest and some ironic, called him “the most miserable wage slave”, and celebrated him as an icon of “Sang culture”, a popular concept among Chinese millennials referring to a defeatist attitude towards everyday life. *Turn to page 2*

06/05/21 / Keyword: Chinese reality TV

Vladislav Ivanov says he regretted his decision to join Produce Camp 2021, a Chinese reality TV show, but fans refused to vote him out.



Should the ECP coaches form a boy/girl band?

Useful vocabulary

ordeal: a very long, unpleasant experience

boy band: a pop group made up of young men

plea: an urgent emotional request

to breach: to break a law/contract

half-hearted: without enthusiasm

stage name: a name used for professional purposes

dour: having a severe manner

boot camp: a short, intensive rigorous course of training

to corral: to gather together and confine (people/animals)

steep (context): excessively expensive

to strike a chord: to make people agree or approve of something

gruelling: extremely tiring and demanding

Let's chat about that!

1. Would you like to appear on a reality TV show. Why (not)?
2. What about being rich and famous? Explain your choice.
3. The text mentions modern slang. What are your favourite slang expressions (in any language). Can you explain what they mean?
4. Do you use social media? Why (not)? On which ones do you follow ECP?

Popular Chinese slang terms

Do they mean the same as in English?



The 996 work schedule 996工作制 Jiǔjiǔliù gōngzuòzhì

It refers to working from 9am to 9pm, six days a week, representing the overtime culture prevalent in Chinese Internet companies.

Simplifying life 断舍离 Duànshělí

It's a popular lifestyle nowadays, followed with zero waste and green life. It means to cut off all unnecessary things to live a simple life.



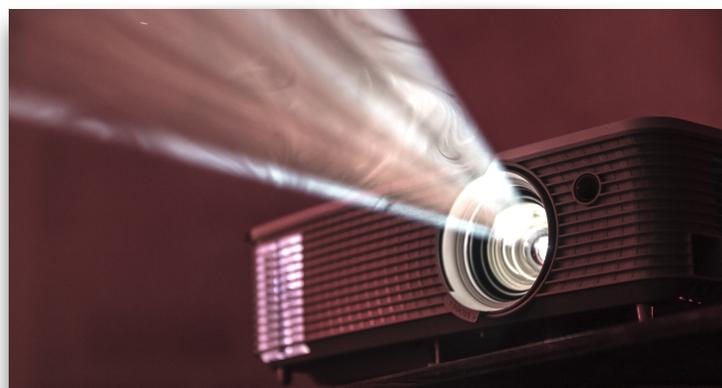
Green with envy 柠檬精 Níngméngjīng



It means someone is jealous of others (literally "lemon spirit"). Now it is often used to express self-deprecating admiration of others' material and/or emotional life.

LIVE! English Events

Come and socialise in English!



Cinema Nights

Friday 28th May & 25th June at 18:15
Send a WhatsApp to John on 657731354



Coffee Saturdays

8th May & 5th June at 11:00
Connect here: <https://zoom.us/j/97583959914>

"Don't let him quit!" one viewer commented on a video of a dejected-looking Ivanov performing a Russian rap. "Sisters, vote for him! Let him 996!" another fan commented, using the Chinese slang for the **gruelling** work schedule that afflicts many young staff, especially in digital startups.

The unlikely star made it to the final episode of the show on Saturday where he failed to earn enough votes to join the band. "I'm finally getting off work," a relieved Ivanov said on his Weibo account on Sunday.

On the Chinese social media site Weibo, a hashtag related to his departure was viewed more than 180m times and reposted more than 59,000 times, including by the Russian embassy.

"Congrats, have a good rest," the embassy said.

Adapted from the-guardian.co.uk by ECP Coach Darren Kez Kurien



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