

Surviving for humanity

► The cast of *The Zone: Survival Mission* embarks on a series of challenges weekly on 'behalf' of humankind

BY JOHN TAN

AMONG the many entertainment contents to come from South Korea, Korean variety shows tops when it comes to making viewers crack up.

Successful programmes like *Running Man*, and *Knowing Bros* are evidence that fans enjoy watching celebrities participate in entertaining activities. And the appetite continues to grow each year.

The past two years alone have seen a new bunch of hilarious and sensational variety programmes. One, in particular, is Disney+'s latest variety series, *The Zone: Survival Mission*.

Starring comedian Yoo Jae-suk, actor Lee Kwang-soo, and SNSD's darling Kwon Yu-ri, the show establishes the trio as representatives of the human race in this disaster-simulated virtual space called The Zone.

And throughout the eight episodes of the series, the three are forced to overcome unforeseeable obstacles - all within a limited amount of time.

Speaking exclusively to *theSun*, the cast members open up about both the joys and difficulties that came with shooting the series.

How is this variety show different from the previous ones you worked on in the past?

Yoo Jae-suk: "The thing that really differentiates our show from other variety shows is that we embrace situations. If you were to look at a lot of variety programmes, it is about escaping and running away from certain situations.

"And here we thought, 'let's do the opposite. Let's persevere, survive and push through the situation. And I think that is what really differentiates *The Zone: Survival Mission* from other variety programmes."

Which challenge did you enjoy shooting the most - the ghost challenge in episode 1 or the water challenge in episode 2?

Yoo Jae-suk: "For me, it is definitely the ghost challenge. I have been answering this question all day long. It is the same answer - because I am only really afraid of ghosts, the cold, being hungry and heights. These are the only things that I am afraid of."

Kwon Yuri: "These are two grown men and they are just way too scared of ghosts."

Lee Kwang-soo: "Yeah, as I am getting older, I noticed I am getting more scared of ghosts. Even if I am 70 or 80, I am still going to be scared of ghosts."



(from left) Yoo Jae-suk, Kwon Yuri and Lee Kwang-soo. - ALL PIX BY DISNEY+ HOTSTAR



The zombie challenge in third episode.

Speaking of challenges, what was the most difficult obstacle to overcome throughout the show?

Yoo Jae-suk & Lee Kwang-soo: "Definitely the ghost! For real!"

Kwon Yuri: "Oh god! These two guys are really pathetic. And that was the greatest challenge. I had to make sure that I took care of these two pathetic guys. And push through each of the survival [challenges]. They are my 'ghosts'. They are 'K-zombies' that made it really challenging."

Did you learn anything new about yourself from filming the show?

Yoo Jae-suk & Lee Kwang-soo: "For both of us, nothing much since we already know who we are. So, we discovered the same old sides that everyone has seen in previous shows."

Kwon Yuri: "Viewers will definitely discover a whole new side of me. I am very rough, tough and impatient here. I can also be really a strong and powerful person in situations. So, viewers are definitely not going to see the side of me they are used to seeing in Girls Generation. They are going to see a whole new side of me, and that is going to be entertaining."

Yoo Jae-suk: "Yeah, she should actually restart her career."

Kwon Yuri: "Haha no, it is these two guys who actually bring out this side of me."



Actor Lee Kwang-soo during the zombie challenge.



Yuri during the water challenge in the second episode.