

Actor Zhang Yishan engages in ordinary life to stay atop his game. Xing Wen reports.

Clad in an orange T-shirt bearing the words "master chemist" on the chest and sleeves, actor Zhang Yishan appears energetically dressed in the clothes of the fashion label he launched at the end of last year.

Speaking in the Beijing dialect, the 26-year-old describes his experience posing for his first photo album, which was published on Tuesday.

"These photos were shot during my trip to Italy. I look natural and relaxed, rather than tired," Zhang says.

The album title, *Shan Wai You Shan* (Mountains Beyond Mountains), is derived from a Chinese saying that roughly translates as "there's always someone better than you".

The name is intended to convey Zhang's philosophy of life — that is, to stay humble.

"Talented newcomers often emerge in China's entertainment circles. I won't push myself to tower over young actors," Zhang says.

"I'm not that ambitious. I like acting, and I can earn money from acting to support my family. How wonderful is that?"

He has learned to stay down to earth because he has experienced many ups and downs during his years in the entertainment industry.

The actor rose to fame after playing a mischievous boy named Liu Xing in the sitcom *Home with Kids* (2003). He spent the following years starring or playing guest roles that failed to make a splash.

That is, until the summer of 2016, when he performed in the hit online crime-thriller series *Yu Zui*. The series earned 8.2 out of 10 points on Douban, China's leading TV and film rating website.

"Zhang is no longer a child star ... He's actually a low-key but promising actor," a netizen

“Being in the spotlight all the time and not experiencing real life will quickly ruin an actor's career.”

Zhang Yishan, actor



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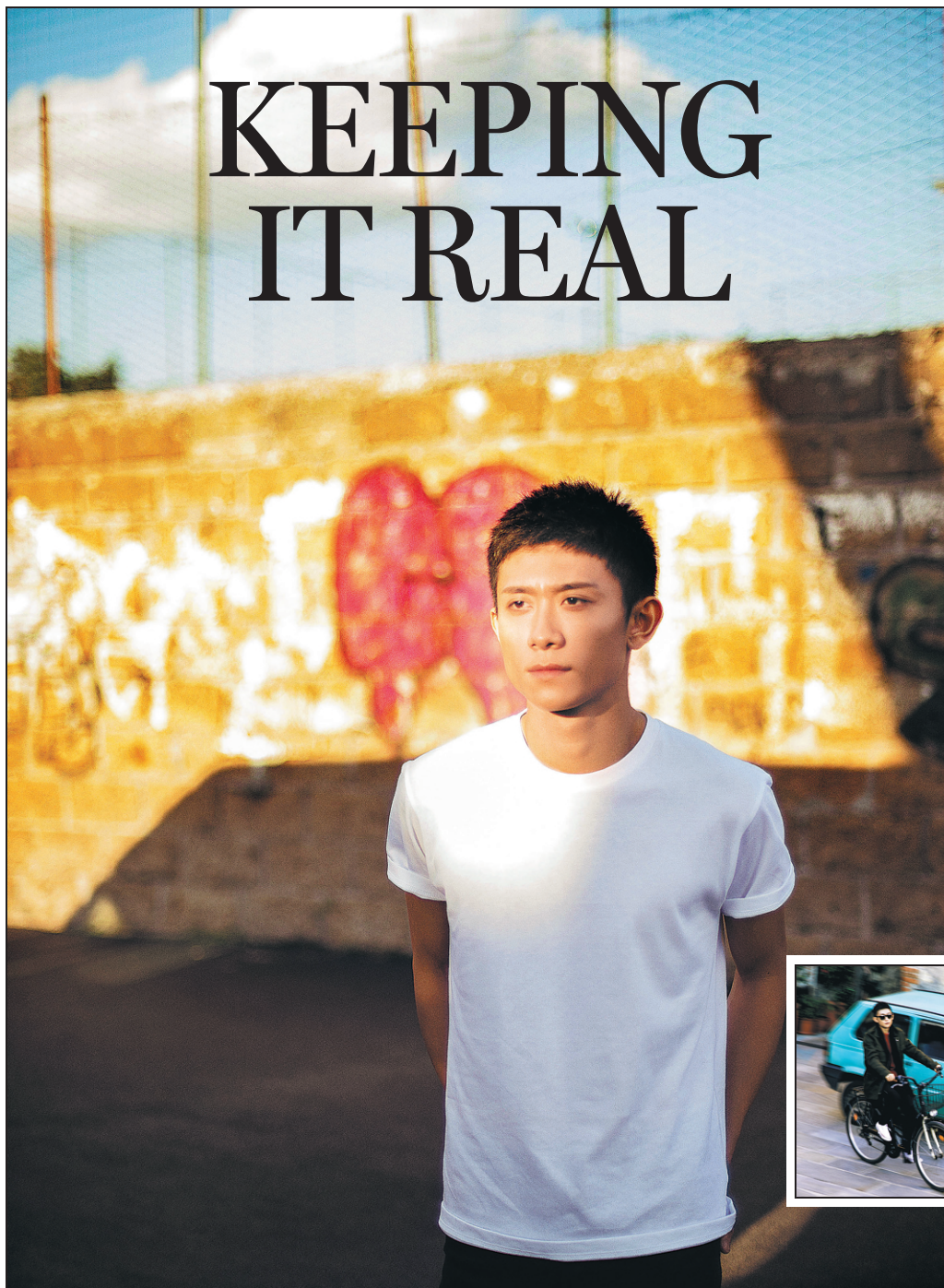
posted on Zhihu, a Chinese question-and-answer website, after watching the drama.

He became a hot topic on social media last year after co-starring with actress Zhou Dongyu in the romance series *Shall I Compare You to a Spring Day*.

Zhang has over 20 million followers on Sina Weibo and averages around 500,000 likes for every recent selfie.

He says he enjoys the surge of fame, which may bring opportunities.

"But the happiness of being



popular with audiences is greater when I visit remote villages for charity, and the young and old people know my name and the roles I've played," he says, grinning.

He gives his performances scores that take viewers' feedback into account.

"My job is to entertain people, to help them unwind after busy workdays," he says.

"I like to select scripts that have mass appeal. I won't limit myself to certain types of roles."

Zhang has played a wide range of characters, including a basketball player, a soldier, a gangster and a person living with schizophrenia.

He knows he lacks life experience as a young actor, but he has a method to compensate.

"I often ride around on a bike, or go shopping in the supermarket or enjoy barbecues, where I can observe how people dress and walk, and their facial expressions," says Zhang.

He particularly enjoys observing commuters returning from work.

"For all I know, people may be wearing masks to conceal their real feelings in the office, but they freely show their emotions after work."

He applies the lessons he learns from observing people to his work.

"Being in the spotlight all the time and not experiencing real life will quickly ruin an actor's career," Zhang says.

Contact the writer at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn



Zhang Yishan releases his first photo album.

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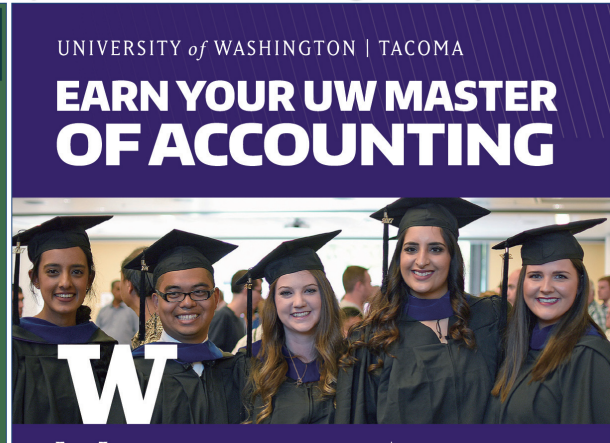
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