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She may have finished fourth on the reality TV competition, but the 23-year-old musician learned the importance of artistry – and her Mandarin got way better.



(Photo: Star Media Entertainment, Warner Music Singapore)

After spending months in Shanghai participating in the Chinese electronic music competition Rave Now, Singapore singer-songwriter Jasmine Sokko has never been more confident about speaking in her mother tongue.

"I was way more freaked out about speaking Mandarin on stage than anything else, even performing my music, because I was struggling to understand what the judges were saying," Sokko told CNA Lifestyle from Shanghai.

"I memorised a whole chunk of responses in Mandarin. It felt like I joined a real life listening comprehension test instead of a music competition," she said. "But I've gotten so much better in my Chinese since."

The 23-year-old musician placed fourth in the finals of the electronic music talent reality show, which concluded last Friday (Feb 1). Experienced DJ Jiang Liang of Guangxi, China, was eventually crowned champion and won the honour of performing at Belgian electronic music festival Tomorrowland 2019.

Sokko was the only Singaporean – and the only woman – among the programme's Top 15 contestants. "I didn't think I would make it far," said Sokko. "I had never once attempted a Chinese cover (of a song). I was so afraid of sounding really unclear. But apparently, people think I sound exotic. I'm still confused but I'm honoured and grateful."

At the finals, she shared the stage with her teammates Anti-General and Dollarzoo, their celebrity mentor Lay Zhang of Korean boyband Exo, and special guest Coco Lee in performing the brand new track New Spring.

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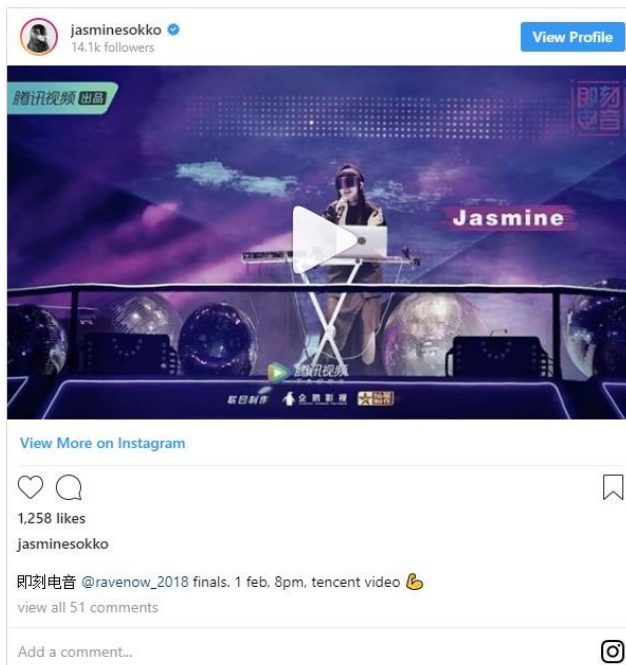
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Sokko also debuted an orchestral remix of her original track, #0000FF, joined by Chinese singers Sunnee and Zining of Chinese girl group Rocket Girls 101.

As the only finalist from outside of China, the electronic musician has no regrets about her performance in the competition.



"It was clear to me that Rave Now is but a stepping stone towards my dream, and coming first doesn't mean you're better than the rest. There were a lot of factors involved in the ranking process that were out of my control," she said.

WORK-REST BALANCE

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Aside from tips on production and audio mastering, perhaps the biggest lesson she learned on the set of Rave Now was the importance of rest.

"I thought work culture in Singapore was rather intense and fast-paced until I came to China. We filmed non-stop from two in the afternoon till 7am the next day," said Sokko, who took a semester off her undergraduate studies at Singapore Management University to work on her craft.



"There was never a concrete schedule announced to us. We only found out what we were doing on the day itself, so I've mastered the art of sleeping almost everywhere. Even during filming, since I wear a visor."

And there's more work to be done. Fresh from introducing herself to the Chinese audience, Sokko is ready to release new music this year, possibly towards a "mixed Mandarin-pop electronic" sound. The follow-up to Hurt, her debut with Warner Music last August, will arrive next month. "My new track, Tired, is coming out on March 1, and I am so excited to share this little introvert anthem with everyone," she said.

But for now, after spending months alone in a foreign land, writing and performing for strangers, in the thick of winter, Sokko is ready to come home.

"I was in Shanghai the entire winter. I feel like the amount of time I spent layering myself into a ball of fur could have contributed to the creation of a new song," she quipped. "I miss heading out in one layer in my all-year-round summer home."