

What We Can Learn About Ourselves from 'Worldwide Handsome'

It's not about ego or even humor. It's the affirmation that we all need.



K-CULTURE WITH JAE-HA KIM

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Last night, Jin was on “The Tonight Show” to promote his debut solo album *Happy*. As expected, the BTS member was charming and funny, and he performed a spot-on live rendition of his single “Running Wild.”

Jin: Running Wild | The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon



But as good as the song was, the best part (for me) was his interview with host Jimmy Fallon, where Jin was matter-of-fact about his good looks. Because, let’s face it, he is *incredibly* handsome. A knock out. Excessively attractive. Gorgeous. Stunning. Shall I continue?

I honestly don’t think Jin cares whether you think he’s handsome or ugly. What he wants is for others to believe that they have something exceptional about themselves.

His effusive praise for his own looks is so refreshing for a variety of reasons. When I read comments from some K-pop fans (and also fellow journalists), one of the most common adjectives I see used to describe Korean artists is *humble*. And to be honest, that descriptor makes me cringe a bit — not because it’s not true, but because there’s an

expectation that Asians shouldn't brag about their accomplishments. That we should be self-effacing. That we should be thankful. That we shouldn't be noticed. And also maybe that we should be apologetic for being successful.

Then there's Jin, who in 2017 — as BTS' popularity was soaring in the United States — famously started addressing himself by the nickname *Worldwide Handsome*. Most on-air personalities and talk show hosts chuckled when he called himself that — *because what?* — while his bandmates laughed or rolled their eyes as his puckishness.

It did turn off some people: *How dare this very handsome man point out that he's very handsome?!*

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For me, what Jin did is an extension of what [#SonOfJae](#) had been learning in taekwondo since his kindergarten days. At the end of every class, his [관장님](#) (grandmaster) had all the students declare: *I am the best!* The thunder of these children's voices reciting this affirmation was incredibly powerful. Because no one had told them yet that they should be *humble* or *modest*.

Were these kids actually the best at anything? *Who knows? Who cares?* They were growing up believing that they could accomplish anything they set their minds to do. They didn't have to be deferential about their abilities.



#SonOfJae competing in a taekwondo tournament. He won 1st place. (Photo credit: Jae-Ha Kim)

On “The Tonight Show,” Jimmy asked Jin what it meant to be a torchbearer at this year’s Paris Olympics. Instead of giving a modest answer, Jin stared at a picture of himself in France and — with a poker face — said, “Oh, very handsome guy.”

Jimmy: Are you talking about the picture or me?

Jin: Picture. [Laughs] Sorry!

Jimmy: Who came up with that nickname, *Worldwide Handsome*?

Jin: Because I’m so handsome, I gave it to myself.

Do I think that Jin actually believes that he *is* the most handsome man in the world? *No*. I’m not sure he even thinks he’s the best looking member in BTS — and I doubt that he even cares where he ranks within the group.

Jin Talks BTS Surprising Him After His Military Service and 'Worldwide H...



I remember watching a segment many years ago where the septet was goofing around. I think it was **Suga** who said that Jin is the best-looking member of BTS, but if you put him in a room full of Korean actors and models, he'd just look like an ordinary man. (Suga wasn't being mean. He was putting into perspective where the members stand in the real world.) Jin, who is known for having a whip-smart retort for just about anything, nodded in agreement.

I think that's the true Jin, who in reality is more modest about his appearance than he lets on in public.

But I also think it's true that just as he sang about the power of self love and courage in "**Epiphany**," Jin's declaration of his handsome face is his way of encouraging others to love who *they* are. I honestly don't think he cares whether you think he's handsome or ugly. What he wants is for the rest of us to believe that we have something exceptional about *ourselves* to love and embrace.

Many of us spend so many hours (years?!) beating ourselves up about what is wrong with us that we don't value our own worth. I know this is corny, but if you're willing to be a bit vulnerable, answer this: If you were asked to describe yourself, what would you say?

I'll start. I'm *Worldwide Resilient*.

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