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**Here's Edie: The Edie Adams Collection** (MVD Visual DVD Set)/**The Ernie Kovacs Collection + Ernie Kovacs: The ABC Specials** (Shout Factory! DVD Sets)

Picture: C+ Sound: C+ Extras: B+ Episodes: B+

True innovators in any medium are few and far between, but it makes matters worse when they and their work gets lost to history, in the shuffle and even becomes literally lost as films and tapes are not archived properly. This can include teams and even married couples. In television, couple was more daring, surreal, bold and abstract in their time than Ernie Kovacs and Edie Adams. In the early days of live TV and black and white videotape when that was a new medium originally created to save money on film costs, the couple pushed the limits of what was considered the norm at that time.

They would blur the lines between advertising and the actual programs in odd ways on purpose, spoof people and events in ways that came out of nowhere and understood that TV was not just radio with picture like so many had, but that it was a new medium to do something new with. The result was some remarkable, surreal and still enduring work that influenced everyone from David Letterman, to Frank Zappa to The Beatles and Andy Warhol. We lost Kovacs far sooner than we should have, but Adams made the brilliant and (as was the case with her and Kovacs to begin with) visionary decision to (as only the likes of Jerry Lewis was doing at the time) start an archive of all the film and tape of everything her and her late husband had made. The result is one of the most important independent archives of TV history survives and has now been issued on three terrific, extended DVD releases (and we hope counting).

First we look at **Here's Edie: The Edie Adams Collection** not only offers

her own series that ran from 1962 - 64 in a 4 DVD set, but adds clips from the Kovacs show from 1951 - 56 and a 1965 promo film focusing on her music album and feature film projects of the time. One of the most beautiful performers of her time, her Marilyn Monroe impersonation was always as hauntingly chilling as it offered an uncanny accuracy beyond words that captured the legend better than most, but it was her quasi-Mae West impersonation promoting a certain cigar producer that gave her and her husband rare, unheard of creative control and both of them knew what to do with it. I was already thrilled and stunned with the Kovacs DVD sets that came out, so when this Adams set was announced, I thought it was great news and as a result, we have here one of the best classic TV on DVD releases we will see all year and comes with a great booklet on all of it.

Her talent was more than recognized as top rate at the time to the point



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that guests on these shows include Dick Shawn, Peter Falk, Sir Michael Redgrave, Don Rickles, Cesar Romero, Rowan & Martin (her and Kovacs work definitely influenced **Laugh-In**), Buddy Hackett, Bob Hope, Zsa Zsa Gabor in wild peak form, Mitzi McCall & Charlie Brill, Sammy Davis Jr., Cliff Norton, Terry-Thomas, Spike Jones and Soupy Sales. In addition, she also attracted some of the greatest music talent in the business including Jerry Fielding, Andre Previn, Duke Ellington, Stan Getz, Hoagy Carmichael, Lionel Hampton, Al Hirt, Nancy Wilson, Count Basie, Bobby Darin, Woody Herman, John Raitt and Johnny Mathis among others. Hard to believe this shows has barely been seen in 50 years and has all this guest talent on top of Adams herself, but that is how great this set is. Don't miss it!

Yet this was all preceded by Adams work with her husband and two sets (so far) have been issued of their groundbreaking, landmark work on his show. **The Ernie Kovacs Collection** and **Ernie Kovacs: The ABC Specials** (a single DVD on the larger set) offer more rich, amazing, ahead-of-their-time work from the talented power couple over the beginning of their careers and the six DVDs cover six eras:

1) **The Early Years** has episodes of ***It's Time for Ernie***, ***Ernie In Kovacsland***, ***Kovacs On The Corner*** and ***Kovacs Unlimited***, plus bonus May 1951 baseball film he did in his own style, a film on how that was made, George Schlatter & Jolene Brand interviewed about working with Ernie (et al), *The Mysterious Knockwurst* short, a 1952 8mm film on the set with the Kovacs by Andy McCay and a featurette on his 1987 ATAS Hall of Fame induction (Academy of Television Arts & Sciences) all show how early he established his undeniable legacy.

2) **The NBC Morning Show** adds footage from the surviving 75 kinescope copies of his self-named show and we get a nice selection of them plus five bonus clips.

3) **The NBC Evening Show** adds footage from the evening/nighttime version of his show and we get a bonus clip of test footage from his *Superclock* skit.

4) **The Late 1950s** offers the ***Color Carnival*** version of his show with no dialogue whatsoever, 1959 ***Kovacs On Music*** show and panel game show ***Take A Good Look*** (1959 - 1961) with two bonus features attached to that show: a sales film and clues to one of the mystery guests, plus a clip from the Paul Killiam-produced ***Silents Please*** with Kovacs on silent movies and a short of Kovacs on the set of making the spy film ***Our Man In Havana*** that includes a commentary by Eric Grayson.

5) **The ABC Specials** (sold separately as noted) was more groundbreaking work from 1961 to 1962 when 8 specials were produced. 4 through 8 survive and are presented here in their entirety. Cigars commercials are the bonus feature.

6) **Classic Pieces** rounds out this amazing set and includes other loose, surviving skirts from his morning and evening NBC shows, with bonus footage that includes more cigar ads, an unusual trailer for the Kovacs film ***Operation Mad Ball*** (May 1957) and 1959 promo for the film ***It Happened To Jane*** entitled *It Happened To Ernie*.

This set also has a high quality booklet with text and tech info, but a few essays as well explaining details of the Kovacs careers and work here, plus work that (at least for now we hope) work that has not survived including shows for the long defunct DuMont network. This has been out for a little while and though it sold decently, it should still be a set everyone is talking about and it would be nice if the **Edie** set boosted this one as well.

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The 1.33 X 1 image on both sets is usually in black and white, usually on videotape and sometimes in kinescopes, but they look as good as they likely are ever going to while the lossy Dolby Digital 2.0 Mono in all programs (save maybe some simple stereo on the rare, recent recording) is in clean, decent shape for its age, but like the video, kinescope and film footage, can show its age and some minor flaws throughout.

- Nicholas Sheffo

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