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### DVD Review: Here's Edie: The Edie Adams Television Collection



It's exciting to be able to see an entire TV series for the first time in decades, especially one with such a rich entertainment history behind it.

The series was never, ever able to be seen anywhere after its original airing, as the episodes were stored in a vault until Edie Adams' son Josh lovingly put them together—along with lots of choice extras—on [this 4-DVD treasure trove](#).

The guest list alone is staggering: Sammy Davis, Jr., Bobby Darin, Peter Falk, Sir Michael Redgrave, Don Rickles, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Sid Caesar, Nancy Wilson, Al Hirt, Bob Hope, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Louie Nye, Soupy Sales, Spike Jones, Buddy Hackett, Stan Getz, Lionel Hampton and several visits with up-and-coming comedians like Dick Martin, Dan Rowan, Mitzi McCall and Charlie Brill. A roster of this level makes the show like *The Ed Sullivan Show* without the spinning plates.

But *Here's Edie*, or later, *The Edie Adams Show*, is as different from variety shows of its day as Kovacs' shows were from comedy shows. First of all, Adams had complete control of the show, rare for many performers, especially females, in those days. So every episode is a personal reflection of the artist herself: a classically trained soprano who had a grasp of popular entertainment as well as an acute intelligence, sensitivity and eclectic sense she was eager to present.



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When *Here's Edie* was broadcast from April 1963 to March 1964, audiences and industry insiders knew the headlines about her situation well. Kovacs' passing left behind a labyrinth of debt. Live concerts and this series were literally Adams' most visible means of support and recovery. Her devotion to Kovacs is evident in the occasional use of blackouts, which were still unusual until the dawn of *Laugh-In*.

The feeling we're about to see something unusual is evident from the first moments. Adams, in silhouette, trills her Kurt Weill theme music a la the *Star Trek* theme (in the next season the show would open with the same trill but the visual becomes the more familiar caricature that some may remember from Adam's chain of salons).

I wish there would have been more information about some of the regulars who appear. Don Chastain, who played the husband on the short lived *Debbie Reynolds Show*, sometimes is mentioned as a guest. Speaking of Chastain, he flubs the lyrics to "Put On a Happy Face" and it stayed in the show—a lost charm of early television that humanizes the performers and draws them into the show. Adams often pauses before her cues and sometimes seems uncomfortable in the comedy sketches—but not in the ones that were part of her very popular nightclub act and any others in which she could disappear into character.

It's to Adams' credit that she didn't overpolish the shows. Time and budget was a factor, surely, but the audience of the early '60s was rooting for her all the way. "I decided that there wouldn't be much comedy in my television shows because I still wasn't feeling very funny," Adams wrote in her autobiography, *Sing a Pretty Song*. "I was afraid to do comedy unless I had a comic editor nearby, and Ernie has always done that for me."

Among the many standout segments in the series include a moody filmed New York segment set to the song "Lonely Town;" the marvelous London location sequences, particularly a haunting scene in which Adams sings in front of a bombed-out block of buildings; and a rendition of "Everything's Coming Up Roses" told with a series of stills showing a day in the life of the singing star (even the unglamorous parts).

If you have a problem with smoking, close your eyes, cover your ears and hum Adams' theme song during the Muriel/Dutch Masters cigar commercials, one of them featuring a young Conrad Bain.

The *Here's Edie* DVD set captures a dazzling period of show business over which a curtain was drawn, almost to the day of the last show. The Beatles had appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show* a month earlier and the youth movement would change entertainment markedly.

Coincidentally, *Here's Edie/The Edie Adams Show* begins and ends with comedy bits poking fun at rock and roll: in the first episode, comic Dick Shawn lampoons a rock singer of the period and in the last show, Adams and her guests lampoon the mop-topped Beatles. So many thought that this new music was a passing fad, and these sketches are examples. Of course, history would prove otherwise.

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