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Here's Edie: The Edie Adams Television Collection (MVD Visual, NR)

Written by Sarah Boslaugh
Thursday, 26 December 2013 11:18

| Print |



It's enough to make you wish the variety show would make a comeback.



I have to confess that until recently, my knowledge of Edie Adams consisted primarily of two facts: she was the sexpot in the Muriel Cigar ads ("Why don't you pick one up and smoke it some time?") and was married to television pioneer Ernie Kovacs. That impression was quickly corrected after viewing the four-DVD set *Here's Edie: The Edie Adams Television Collection*, which includes all the episodes of her television variety show and a number of well-chosen extras.

Here's Edie, which in its second season was called the *Edie Adams Show*, was a variety show airing on CBS from 1962 through 1964. Each episode was built around Edie's vocal and acting talents (she studied at Julliard) and also featured a variety of guest stars in comedy sketches, musical numbers, and sometimes more unusual fare, like Michael Redgrave delivering the "St. Crispin's Day" speech from *Henry V*. Every episode was different, apart from the Muriel ads and Edie saying "Thank you, good night" at the conclusion of each show.

The mash-up of different styles and tastes was one of the appeals of the variety show — the first episode included Edie singing Kurt Weill's "Bilbao Song" in German and "My Ship" in English, as well as the jazz standard "When my sugar walks down the street," and a wordless Gershwin medley; Dick Shawn doing a comedy routine about those crazy kids and their crazy dances; Andre Previn playing a Gershwin medley on piano; and Edie doing imitations of Marilyn Monroe and Jeannette McDonald. Later shows featured performers like Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Peter Falk, The United Nations Children's Choir, the Grenadier Guards and the Third Air Force Band (both marching bands), Allan Sherman, and baseball star Maury Wills (who does a comedy skit as well as singing "Wayfaring Stranger").

It's enough to make you wish the variety show would make a comeback — not that that's going to happen with hundreds of television channels and countless other sources of entertainment content targeting highly specialized audiences. Still, it's sort of amazing to think that an Edie Adams fan tuning into the show in the early 1960s might also hear a performance of Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5* (a classical piece for soprano and an orchestra of cellos) or opera star Lauritz Melchior delivering an aria. You won't get that kind of variety on *Saturday Night Live*.

Not surprisingly, the musical numbers stand up the best, while the comic bits have not aged as well. The incorporation of tobacco commercials, with no clear break between the commercials and the rest of the show, will astound younger viewers (cigarette ads were banned on American television in 1971), but that's just one of the many things that makes this show a real time capsule of its period. For that reason, as well as the number of outstanding performer who appeared on the show (including Edie herself, of course), *Here's Edie* is must-see TV for anyone interested in American popular culture in the period.

Here's Edie is distributed on DVD by MVD Visual and includes 720 minutes of programming on four discs. The picture is soft, but the sound is pretty good, and the quality of the performances comes through clearly. Extras include a 16-page booklet, a number of Edie's performances from *The Ernie Kovacs Show*, promos by Sid Caesar and Edie Adams, and a Muriel Cigar promotional film. | Sarah Boslaugh

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