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Betty White: In Black and White review, Betty White: In Black and White DVD review

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Betty White: In Black and White!

Comedy | 2010 | Buy the DVD

Reviewed by Will Harris
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There are two really strong reasons right now for a studio to dive into the television archives and release all of the Betty White material they can find: 1) she's one of the hottest comedienne in the business, and 2) she's 89, so just by virtue of playing the odds, if you don't want to make it a posthumous release, you'd better get on the stick and get it out there ASAP.

Johnny Legend is a production house which, in the grand scheme of things, is still one of the new kids on the block, but they're doing a really nice job of digging up TV obscurities and putting them back in the public eye, which is what they've done with "Betty White: In Black and White!" For viewers who haven't really considered what Ms. White was doing prior to her stint as one of "The Golden Girls," let alone what kept her busy prior to playing a happy homemaker – so to speak – on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," this set will prove to be a major eye-opener.

From 1952 through 1955, White starred with Del Moore in "Life with Elizabeth," a sitcom which focused on a married couple but, rather uniquely, offered three vignettes per episode rather than as a single story. It's somewhat surreal to see White playing a mostly-demure housewife – but, then, it's almost as odd to see her as a brunette! Simultaneous to "Life with Elizabeth," you may be surprised to learn that White also hosted her own daytime [variety show](#), "The Betty White Show," in 1954, an effort which found her singing up a storm, doing product promotions, and, as in the episode offered on this disc, making children's wishes come true. It's hard to call it anything but quaint, but it's fascinating to see this side of White.

1957 brought a new sitcom: "A Date with the Angels," with White once again playing the wife, this time to Bill Williams. Unlike "Life with Elizabeth," however, "Angels" followed a much more traditional sitcom format, incorporating two teenagers, played by Jimmy Boyd (best remembered today for singing "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus") and Sheila James, who would later go on to play Zelda on "The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis." It's a slight show, but it's fun to watch, especially given the guest appearances by Richard Deacon ("The Dick Van Dyke Show") and Nancy Kulp ("The Beverly Hillbillies"). Unfortunately, it only lasted about six months... but, if you can believe it, White returned to TV only a week after its cancellation with *another* series called "The Betty White Show," this one was in primetime and with more of an opportunity for her to play comedienne rather than hostess.

Although episodes of all four of the aforementioned shows appear on "Betty White: In Black and White!," it must be said that the quality isn't spectacular. Still, given the odds of seeing full-season sets of any of these series (I'd guess that, in most cases, you wouldn't even be able to find all of the episodes, anyway), it's still a fascinating look back at the early career of a comedy legend.

Special Features: None. This isn't unexpected, really, given that Johnny Legend doesn't tend to offer bonus material on their releases, but you just can't help but think how much fun it would've been to hear Betty White reminisce about these shows.



STARRING

Betty White, Del Moore, Jack Narz, Bill Williams, Jimmy Boyd

DIRECTOR

Various



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11 Movies to Look Forward to in 2011

blog.bullz-eye.com

To give you a better idea of what's coming to theaters this year, I've assembled my 11 most anticipated movies of 2011 with the hope that you might discover one or two titles to add to your own must-see list.

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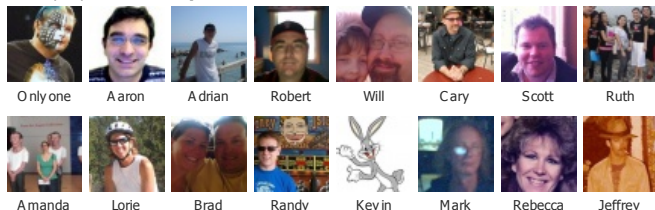
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