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Betty White has always been funny

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Memo to young TV viewers/moviegoers who have recently discovered Betty White with "The Proposal" and "Saturday Night Live" and her new sitcom "Hot in Cleveland": She wasn't always old, but she's always been funny.

As proof, a new disc with several of her 1950s programs leads this look at TV shows new to DVD this week.

"Betty White in Black and White!"(VSC, 1953-58, b/w, \$14.95). White's first starring role was in "Life With Elizabeth," a nontraditional half-hour domestic sitcom in which three skits about a wisecracking married couple (White and Del Moore) are introduced by a narrator. And she won an Emmy for it.

Then came the first "Betty White Show," a live daytime program with White singing, bantering with her band members and guests, and doing commercials for Geritol!

"Date With the Angels" is a more traditional sitcom about newlyweds (White and Bill Williams, two years after he starred in "The Adventures of Kit Carson").

And finally comes "The Betty White Show," a prime-time variety program, with White singing and performing physical comedy in two episodes that have never before been released. (Note how much White's character Olga the cleaning lady resembles Carol Burnett's later charwoman.)

This is a terrific collection, showing off White's emerging talent as a young performer, and it's also great fun for vintage TV buffs.

Extras: full frame, seven episodes

"Dennis Hopper: The Early Works"(VSC, 1953-58, b/w, \$14.95). This disc contains several early appearances by Hopper in TV guest spots, including "Medic," "Public Defender," "The Loretta Young Show" and as a groovy beatnik on "Petticoat Junction." The bonus film "Night Tide" is a pretty good moody murder mystery.

Extras: full frame, four episodes, movie: "Night Tide"

"Trek Stars Go West" (VSC, 1953-58, b/w and color, two discs, \$19.95). This collection features "Star Trek" stars William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, James Doohan and DeForest Kelley in pre-"Star Trek" television guest roles on five Western series: "Tate," "Bonanza," "Outlaws," "The Lone Ranger" and "The Last of the Mohicans." Others who show up include Cloris Leachman, Lon Chaney Jr., Jack Warden and Robert Redford!

Extras: full frame, seven episodes, movie: "White Comanche"

(The preceding DVDs won't be available in stores or on Amazon.com until early December but are available now at www.seeofsound.com for a reduced price, \$11.21 for "White" and "Hopper," \$14.96 for "Trek.")

"Perry Mason: Season 5, Volume 2" (CBS/Paramount, 1962, four discs, b/w, \$54.99). Mason (Raymond Burr) continues to stonewall prosecutor Hamilton Burger (William Talman) and stare down witnesses in this second half of the fifth season.

Despite some clichés that have been spoofed over the years, this show is still a lot of fun. Guests

here include Burt Reynolds, Otto Kruger, Zasu Pitts, Victor Buono; the "Attack of the 50 Foot Woman" herself, Allison Hayes; and Salt Lake native/U. grad Parley Baer.

Extras: full frame, 15 episodes, trailers

"Men of a Certain Age: The Complete First Season" (TNT/Warner, 2010, two discs, \$39.98).

First, despite the presence of Ray Romano, this is not a sitcom and it's nothing like "Everybody Loves Raymond." Think hourlong drama with wiseacre comedy.

Romano does play another loveable shlub who seems to spend most of his life under a cloud, but this show aims for "realism," using profanity you don't hear on the commercial networks, and it's equally about his two pals, played by Andre Braugher and Scott Bakula.

Romano's character is going through a divorce and trying to stay in his two kids' lives, Braugher is an overweight married father with diabetes, Bakula is a womanizing actor who's having trouble getting work, if not women.

And the show is slow and brooding, and the one-liners are definitely on the sardonic side.

Extras: widescreen, 10 episodes, deleted scenes, audio commentary, featurettes, bloopers, trailers

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