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... - ENTERTAINMENT - COLUMNISTS - RICKY FLAKE

Thursday, Dec. 23, 2010

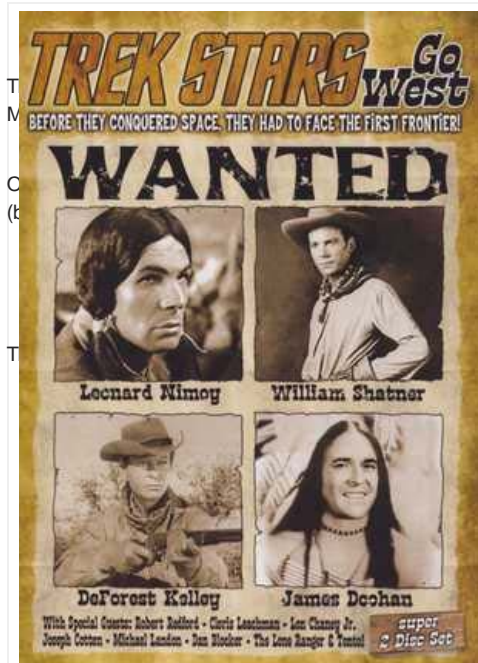
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Short reviews set the stage for 2010 Top 10 plus

It was quite difficult, but here's my partially successful try at presenting a number of short reviews before taking a week off to formulate this year's Top 10 Plus List. I send my wishes for a Merry Christmas and a blessed new year for all readers.

'Trek Stars Go West,' Various Westerns (MVDvisual, HHHH)

These two collections of vintage TV performances were released, along with another called Betty White in Black and White, on Nov. 9. This one, a two-disc package, reminds us that many actors who moved on to movies or television roles began as bit players in the many Western series that dotted the TV landscape of the time. Highlights include a color "Bonanza" episode in which Leonard Nimoy appears as a shady gambler whose motivation puts him in opposition to series star Hoss Cartwright (Dan Blocker), and a two-part episode of "Outlaws" that pits chief thief William Shatner against corrupt businessman David White. Disc two's best bit presents DeForest Kelley as a young rancher who needs The Lone Ranger's help in that series' fourth episode. Trek and Western fans will dig this package.



'The Early Works,' Dennis Hopper (MVDvisual, HHH1/2)

started like others of his generation in TV dramatic roles. On this package, beginning with a standout offering as an epileptic young patient in "Medic."

"Night Tide" and an early episode of "Petticoat Junction" featuring Dennis as a beatnik poet. Hopper fans need to snag this DVD.

'Andromeda,' California Guitar Trio (Inner Knot Records, HHHH)

and this "short shots" column is time to give CGT's twentieth-anniversary release its due. The three outstanding mostly acoustic guitarists (Bert Lams, Paul Richards and Hideyo Moriya) are backed on some of these atmospheric compositions by progressive-rock all-stars like Julie Slick (bass), Eric Slick (drums) and Tony Levin (Chapman stick).

Highlights of this atmospheric release include the beautiful string arrangement on "Portland Wind," the flamenco-flavored "Hazardous Z" and the twangy, slide-driven "Middle of TX."

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