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TITLE: [BETTY WHITE IN BLACK AND WHITE!](#)

Info:

Release Date: December 7, 2010 (Video Services Corp.)

B&W/1953-1958

MSRP: \$14.95

Packaging: Amaray case

Number of Discs: 1

Number of Episodes: 7

Running Time: 154 minutes

Running Time of Features: N/A

Audio: English mono

Subtitles and Captioning: None

Special Features: None

Introduction:

Betty White is a very colorful actress, but it all started in black and white. In *Betty White in Black and White!*, we get to see a sampling of Betty White's work in the earliest days of television. The DVD release from Video Services Corp. includes two episodes of *Life With Elizabeth*, two episodes of *A Date With the Angels*, an episode of the 1954 series, *The Betty White Show*, and two episodes of the 1958 series of the same title. The DVD showcases work that is rarely seen on TV today, and the 1958 series *The Betty White Show* was believed to even be completely lost until recently. But now, you can get a sampling of all four of these series on this DVD.

Episodes:

There are two *Life with Elizabeth* episodes included. In the first episode, we get to see Elizabeth's husband Alvin (played by Del Moore) take photos of her in different positions,

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Elizabeth prepare for Alvin's first day of work, and in the third segment (the best of the episode), different ailments cause chaos in the household. In the second episode, Alvin studies nursery rhymes to prepare for his niece's visit, Elizabeth prepares for Alvin's first business trip, and Elizabeth and Alvin take a trip to visit Moosie (which is hindered by her fear of spiders).

The 1954 version of The Betty White Show was a daytime variety show with singing (her voice is actually pretty good), tap dancing (not by Betty though), letter reading, a house band (lead by Frank De Vol), and jokes. There is a very special surprise for an unsuspecting child from an area orphanage (almost like the kind you would see on Oprah these days) at the end of the episode. There is even a taped message in place from Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis about muscular dystrophy. You never see anything like this on TV these days, as this type of series didn't make it far past the infancy of television. The live TV series includes original sponsor spots placed all throughout the episode in a very seamless manner, almost like Paul Harvey's radio show.

Date with the Angels was Betty White's next series, airing for just a few months on ABC in 1957 and 1958. In here, Betty plays Vicki Angel with Bill Williams as her husband Gus Angel. This was a much more conventional sitcom than Life with Elizabeth, and in my opinion, it seems to be a great series. In the first episode, "Return of the Wheel," Vicki and Gus have a little bundle of joy on the way... kind of... when their teenage nephew Wheeler (played by Jimmy Boyd, the unmistakable voice of the song "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus") comes to stay with the Angels, making life unbearable for Vicki and Gus. The second episode, "Tree on the Driveway," features Richard Deacon and Nancy Kulp, as Vicki takes on city hall. The episodes include their original sponsor openings from Plymouth.

The DVD ends with two episodes of the 1958 version of The Betty White Show, which replaced Date with the Angels one week after it was canceled on ABC. It, too, was sponsored by Plymouth (and these sponsor elements are intact). This is a variety series that was very different from her previous variety series. In this serious, we see something that feels more like the The Carol Burnett Show, almost in a stage-like manner. There are two episodes of this series included, "Vacation" and "Jealousy"

The set is mostly unedited, but there is something that isn't quite right about the episode of the 1958 series The Betty White Show episode "Vacation." It only runs at 17:13. Still, I don't believe that this was a deliberate effort by somebody to leave something out, and is probably a result of problems with the quality of the source. It is hard to tell if something is actually missing, but clearly something has to be. The runtimes for the episodes are as follows:

Life with Elizabeth - Episode 1 (26:05)
 Life with Elizabeth - Episode 2 (26:33)
 The Betty White Show - 1954 episode (24:58)
 Date with the Angels - "Return of the Wheel" (26:09)
 Date with the Angels - "Tree in the Driveway" (26:04)
 The Betty White Show 1958 - "Vacation" (17:13)
 The Betty White Show 1958 - "Jealousy" (23:10)

Packaging:

The packaging for the DVD is very basic, with a black and white photo of Betty on the front and very detailed information about her earliest days on television and the content of the DVD. Inside, the single disc has the same artwork as seen on the cover art.

Menu Design and Navigation:

There is really just one very basic menu on the DVD. It has a black and white photo of Betty (same as the cover art) with a pink background, and lists all of the episodes, along with a Play All option. The theme song from Date with the Angels plays in the background. Unfortunately,

chapters are not placed within each episode.

Video and Audio Quality:

The video and audio quality of the DVD is really pretty bad. But, this is to be expected from a series like this one. There was no intent to preserve any of these series (it was the infancy of TV, after all), and these episodes appear to have not been cleaned up at all. There is grain and debris all over the place, and the mono audio has a lot of hiss, crackle, and pop in it. There are a lot of drop outs in the video and audio as well. Still, as bad as it can be, it is important to remember that the series was taken from the best possible surviving elements, and in some cases, it is surprising that there are even any elements left at all. The episodes are not closed-captioned or subtitled.

Special Features:

There are no special features on this disc. It would have been nice to have some sort of retrospective on Betty White's career (so far, anyway).

Final Comments:

I definitely wouldn't call any of these series Betty White's best work (and I think most would agree), but it is still fun to see these series and where she got her start in television. I've seen many public domain sets containing her early work, and I think that this disc is a good comprehensive view of that work. While it would be nice to see more episodes of each of the shows, I believe that most fans would be satisfied with this sampling, as her earliest work was much different than the Betty White that we know going from The Mary Tyler Moore Show to Hot in Cleveland (and beyond). This set is worth checking out if you can pick it up for the right price (under \$10), and any Betty White fan will want to see this, for the curiosity factor if nothing else.

Final Numbers (out of 5 stars - [How our point system works](#))

Video Quality: 2/5

Audio Quality: 2.5/5

Special Features: 0/5

Menu Design/Navigation: 4/5

Overall: 3/5

-- Reviewed by [skees53](#) on 11/30/10

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