

## DVD Review: The Insignificance of 'Important Things With Demetri Martin'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 21, 2009 - 10:12am

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CHICAGO – The inaugural sketch in the first season of Comedy Central's "Important Things With Demetri Martin" takes place on a movie set where an actor knows his lines but can't summon the proper emotions to make them believable. The character calls his unfaithful girlfriend some nasty names in what is supposed to be a fit of fury, but the words coming out of his mouth are said in a nonchalant, nearly cheery tone. If you didn't know any better, you'd assume he's arguing with her over who forgot to pick up the dry cleaning rather than who's been sleeping with whom.



DVD Rating: **2.5/5.0**

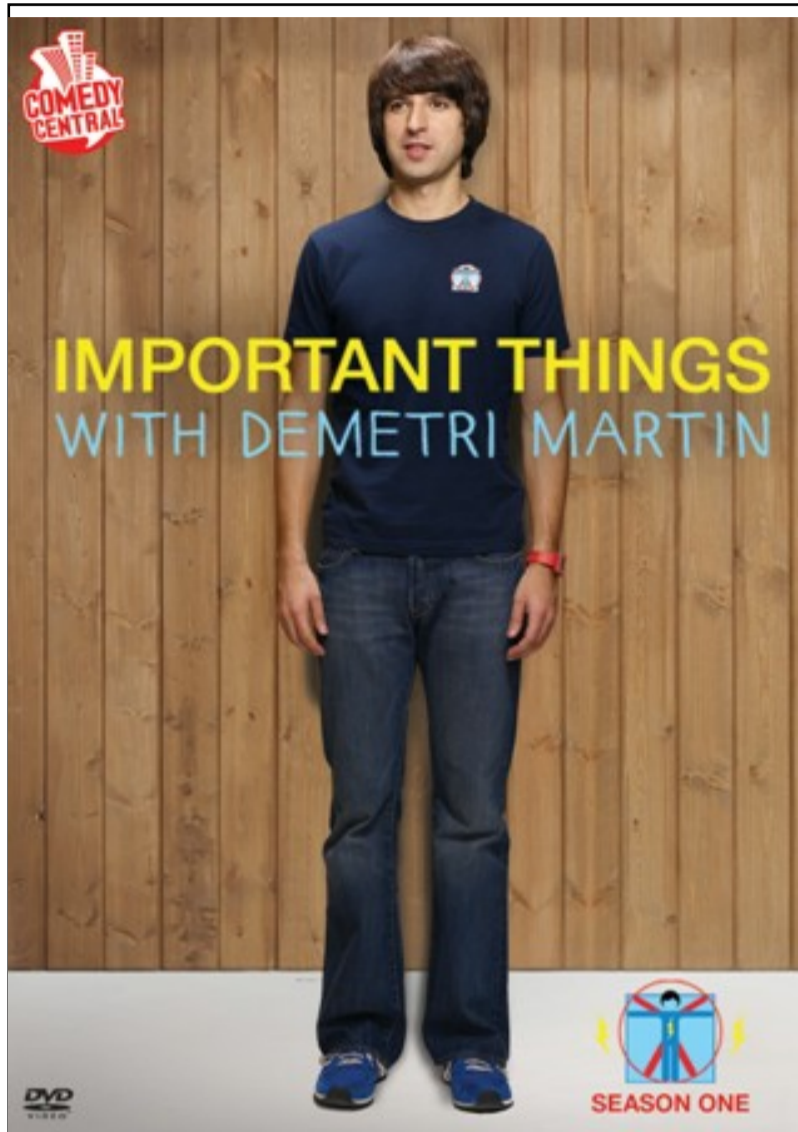
Oddly enough, the premise of that fictional bit gets to the heart of what prevents this modestly charming series from being more than merely something to watch when nothing else is on. For all his cleverness and experience working crowds, Martin appears remarkably uncomfortable on camera, almost as if he were trying to remember his next line instead of milking the one at hand for all its giggly possibilities. Particularly in segments that allow him to do a standup routine, there's an absence of punctuation in his voice to the point where every joke sounds like a throwaway gag from a meatier act. Martin isn't delivering punch lines. He's giving his audience verbal love taps.



Important Things With Demetri Martin: Season One was released on DVD on September 8th, 2009.

Photo credit: Paramount Home Video

Subdued recitations of one-liners have been successful for other comics, namely Steven Wright. But the important difference between Wright and Martin is that Wright's extremely deadpan demeanor contrasted in every way with the extreme silliness of his material. Martin, on the other hand, doesn't completely commit to that contrast. He'll tell a moderately goofy joke in a calm voice and then let a moderately goofy grin form on his face. Instead of seeming the least bit subversive, his act comes across as cute.



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Photo credit: Paramount Home Video

To its credit, "Important Things" contains enough variety for viewers who might be less than impressed with Martin as a standup. Animation, musical numbers, long-form sketches, commercial parodies and oddball segues suggest that the show's star has a solid writing staff behind him and reveal his knack for ridiculous physical comedy. For my money, 10 seconds of Martin playing a martial arts expert struggling to open a new pair of headphones is more rewarding than any of his spoken gags. A phony infomercial for rat poison involving rodent-on-rodent jihad is as naughtily absurd as anything on "Saturday Night Live" or "Real Time With Bill Maher."

Those moments, and a few others, help explain what Conan O'Brien and Jon Stewart saw in Martin and his writers when they hired them for staff positions on "Late Night" and "The Daily Show." O'Brien, of course, was barely a performer when he was tapped for his own show in the early '90s, and he spent years getting whacked by critics before finding his comfort zone. Maybe something similar will happen to Martin. He seems to be aware of what's funny. He just hasn't figured out the best way to present it.

For fans of "Important Things," the DVD contains 20 minutes of deleted scenes. For aspiring comedy writers, commentary from the cast and crew hints at how difficult it is to put on a weekly comedy program, let alone a good one.

*'Important Things With Demetri Martin: Season One' is released by Paramount Home Video and stars Demetri Martin. The DVD was released on September 8th, 2009. It is not rated.*

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