

TV review

'Jack'

By Rick Sherwood

In many ways, "Jack" just might be as fine and comprehensive a look back at the life and times of John F. Kennedy as ever can or will be made. It features an astounding collection of archival and personal film footage, interviews with friends and associates and an impressively objective assessment of both the public and private sides of the former president.

But most of all, it works because it sets out with a definite focus and is consistently fair in its execution. It neither fawns nor attacks, and is respectful in its approach but never turns a blind eye to controversy. That delicate blend is something lacking in so many other attempts to chronicle Kennedy's life.

This two-hour project could have fallen victim to many temptations. Instead, it chooses to remain a relevant examination of Kennedy's personal motivations and style rather than a subjective and sensationalized recollection of his actions and inactions. It is well segmented and very clear in its path, features exquisite construction and editing that fully examines each issue, and never jumps around with the kind of redundan-

JACK
CBS
CBS Entertainment Prods.
Executive producer Peter Davis
Producer-director Nick Davis
Editor/co-producer Tom Haneke
Production executive Randi Schwartz Davis
Coordinating producer Ainslie Binder
Associate producer Lee Cohen
Music Adam Guettel
Editor Tom Haneke
Airdate: Wednesday, Nov. 17, 9-11 p.m.

cy that too many such specials rely on to carry them through.

There's no narrator, per se. Producers very wisely chose to allow soundbites from Kennedy's friends, relatives and associates to help tell the story, using their words as voice-overs rather than the usual series of talking heads. That device allows the comments to help move the story forward rather than getting in the way.

This is solid documentary filmmaking that's entertaining, effective and tremendously insightful. It avoids all the overly familiar footage, never sets foot in Dallas and rarely dwells on unsubstantiated rumor or hearsay. It offers up little-known information and some rather interesting tidbits that have gotten lost in time, and turns out to be an impressive chronicle of the Kennedy years that truly has something important to offer. Even if you skip all the others, this one is worth watching. □