

February 4, 1992

## Assassination vids rush to market in 'JFK' wake

By Paul Verna

NEW YORK (BPI) — Home video suppliers are capitalizing on the success of the Warner Bros. film "JFK" by rereleasing or repromoting programs related to the life and death of the 35th president of the United States.

One label has gone as far as tagging the release of a video biography of President Lyndon Johnson to the publicity surrounding the current Oliver Stone epic. Another company is hawking a tape that focuses on who *didn't* kill John F. Kennedy.

While some of these firms have only recently jumped on the promotional bandwagon — reacting directly to the tide of public interest generated by "JFK" — others saw it coming ahead of time.

Rhino Home Video, for instance, launched a repromotion of its 1990 title "Best Evidence: The Research Video" a couple of weeks before the release of Stone's movie. A statement from Rhino announcing the repromotion said, "Now it's November 1991, 28 years since that fateful day — and

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Oliver Stone's upcoming feature film 'JFK' is preparing to open. Never before has the documentary 'Best Evidence' been more impactful and timely."

"Best Evidence" is based on a book of the same name by David Lifton.

Reader's Digest is also reviving a Kennedy videotape in its catalog, called "John Fitzgerald Kennedy: A Celebration of His Life and

Times."

The demand for Kennedy material on video is not limited to documentaries. Starmaker Entertainment currently owns video rights to "Kennedy," a 1983, 4½-hour miniseries starring Martin Sheen. Until the rights revert to Prism Entertainment this spring, Starmaker is taking advantage of Kennedy hoopla.

Another company calling attention to a Kennedy title is VIEW Video, which is featuring "JFK: The Day the Nation Cried" — an award-winning biography of the late president — on the cover of a 250,000-piece mailer. VIEW president Bob Karcy said the company's efforts have paid off: "We've sold more copies of 'JFK' in the last 60 days than in the past year

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## Hughes teams with Thomson in DBS venture

NEW YORK (AP) — The Hughes Electronics division of General Motors Corp. said Monday it had chosen Thomson Consumer Electronics, maker of RCA and GE brand televisions, as a partner in a satellite-based TV broadcasting system.

Thomson, the Indianapolis-based division of France's Thomson SA, will make the satellite receiving dishes, TV set decoders and other technology for the system, scheduled to go into operation in 1994.

The other partner in the system, called DirecTV, is News Datacom, a division of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. Ltd. that provides security systems for pay TV services to prevent theft of

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## Kennedy

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and a half.*

Karcy said that some retailers, including Trans World and Blockbuster outlets, have responded by stocking the title in countertop displays and special JFK sections.

Other retailers are taking note as well. Peter Balner, president of Union, N.J.-based Palmer Video, said, "We're placing all our JFK videos in a prominent position in the store. Most of the stores have six or seven tapes available on JFK."

He added that JFK-related videos amount to a special product category, albeit a temporary one. He figures the interest will last at least until the video release of the Stone epic.

All this publicity bodes well for the eventual video release of Stone's "JFK" by Warner Home Video. Although a street date has not been set, industry insiders expect it in the fall, possibly with extra footage not contained in the theatrical version.

*Paul Verna is a reporter for Billboard.*