

Spate of Kennedy Videos

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The 25th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination on Tuesday has triggered new interest in the late President. Some home video companies are taking advantage of the blossoming Kennedy mania with the release of new titles and the repackaging, repricing and remarketing of some old ones.

Most of the videos available are documentaries that previously have been shown on TV or are peppered with TV footage. Here's a guide to help you through the thicket of releases.

New releases:

"J.F.K. Remembered" (Vestron, \$19.98). 54 minutes. Released Nov. 2. An ABC News documentary, hosted by Peter Jennings, focusing on Kennedy's White House days. Laced with interviews of politicians, historians and friends, it's an informative, balanced analysis of political events during his Administration—such as the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and the early days of the civil rights movement. The race-riot footage is particularly chilling. The program also plays up facts we sometimes forget—that the nuclear arms race and American intervention in Vietnam War both started during the Kennedy Administration.

"Four Days in November" (MGM/UA, \$29.95). 123 minutes. Released Sept. 13. This 1964 documentary about the assassination and its aftermath is still one the



President John F. Kennedy during speech in July, 1963.

most thorough, harrowing accounts of that tragedy. Offers revealing glimpses of Kennedy assassin Lee Harvey Oswald and Jack Ruby, who killed Oswald. A solid, no-nonsense documentary that, according to some film historians, is one the best ever made.

"John F. Kennedy: The Commemorative Video Album" (CBS-Fox, \$19.98). 110 minutes. Released Sept. 29. Made-for-video documentary based on CBS News footage, this one accentuates the positive. The accounts of Kennedy's presidency and assassination are presented more vividly in other videos but the main attraction of this documentary is Rose Kennedy reminiscing about her son's boyhood.

"The Life and Times of John F. Kennedy" (Kodak, \$24.95). 60 minutes. Released Aug. 15. Narrated by Cliff Robertson, this might have been called "Saint John." It's pleasant, folksy fluff—the way friends and family would like J.F.K. remembered. This unblemished look at Kennedy also glosses over the assassination.

"Life in Camelot: The Kennedy Years" (HBO, \$19.99). 53 minutes. Released Nov. 9. More fluff, this time made in conjunction with Life magazine, making use of its photo archives. The most interesting footage here deals with Kennedy in the '50s—particularly his courtship of Jackie and his senatorial campaign in Massachusetts.

Previous releases:

"Marilyn: Say Goodbye to the President" (Key Video, \$59.95). 71 minutes. Absorbing, no-holds-barred, 1985 BBC documentary that probes actress Marilyn Monroe's affairs with John and Bobby Kennedy while charging that those liaisons were shadowed both by the Mafia and Teamster Jimmy Hoffa—a bitter Kennedy enemy. Using interviews with key witnesses, it raises questions about her death—officially called a suicide—contending there was a cover-up to protect Bobby Kennedy.

"The Speeches of John F. Kennedy" (MPI, \$19.95). 60 minutes. This sampling of his campaign and presidential speeches gives you a good feel for the Kennedy charisma and for his political ideology.

"Thank You, Mr. President" (Worldvision, \$11.95). 55 minutes. Narrated by E. G. Marshall, this 1984 documentary features excerpts from Kennedy press conferences, emphasizing his wit and illuminating his policies. Valuable because it drums home the point that J.F.K. was the first President to use TV extensively.

"The Kennedys" (MPI, \$19.95). 100 minutes. Narrator Cliff Robertson, aided by rare footage, presents a thorough history of the Kennedy clan, going all the way back to Ireland in the mid-1800s.

"The Plot to Kill J.F.K.: Rush to Judgement" (MPI, \$19.95). 60 minutes. Based on the book by Mark Lane, this 1965 documentary presents Lane's famed conspiracy theory and suggests that the Warren Commission's probe was more of a cover-up than an investigation. Still intriguing after all these years.

"The Two Kennedys" (MPI, \$59.95). 115 minutes. Contends that the Kennedy brothers were murdered as a result of a conspiracy, spearheaded by the likes of the Mob and oil barons. Holds your interest, but it's not as exciting as its theme and point of view would suggest.

"Declassified: the Plot to Kill President Kennedy" (VidAmerica, \$14.98). 58 minutes. Builds a strong case, using FBI and CIA files, that the Mob orchestrated Kennedy's murder. Regarded as of the best videos dealing with assassination theories.

If you're bored by documentaries, you may find these dramas easier to take:

"Kennedy: The Presidential Years" (Prism, \$79.95). 278 minutes. Due out Nov. 30. This 1983 miniseries features Martin Sheen as J.F.K. and Blair Brown as Jackie. It's both an admirable summary of his presidency and a fairly compelling drama.

"The Missiles of October" (MPI, \$59.95). 155 minutes. This 1974 TV movie is a surprisingly taut dramatization of 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, starring William Devane as J.F.K. and Martin Sheen, this time playing Bobby (he's better as J.F.K.). Memorable for Howard da Silva's caricature of Khrushchev.

"P.T. 109" (Warner, \$69.95). 163 minutes. Starring Cliff Robertson, this 1963 drama chronicles Kennedy's heroics as a P.T. boat commander in the Pacific during WWII. Routine war movie with Kennedy portrayed as insufferably noble.

"L.B.J.: The Early Years." (Fries, \$69.95). 96 minutes. Will be released Tuesday. Kennedy is just a background figure in this account of Lyndon Johnson's life before he became President. The segment focusing on L.B.J., the fledgling politician, is the most fascinating. Randy Quaid was justifiably lauded for his portrayal of Johnson in the TV movie.

TONIGHT 8, SAT. & SUN. 2:30 & 8-