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# JFK translates to ratings magic

*Rather looks at assassination;  
miniseries follows young Jack*

**S**ome reviews for a busy television weekend:

**The Kennedy Files:** Back we go to Dallas once again to review the JFK assassination evidence that continues to confound us 30 years later. And clearly, it still bugs eyewitness Dan Rather something awful.

Tonight's "CBS Reports" documentary "Who Killed JFK: The Final Chapter?" (airing at 9 on KCBS, Channel 2) is a skillfully produced compilation of every Texas Schoolbook Depository discussion and conspiracy theory ever served up.

The two hours benefit from three decades of evidence as well as computer enhancement, with anchor Dan Rather concluding that it was quite possible — indeed, even likely — that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone.

In other words, 30 years of personal accounts and intelligence information later, we're back to square one.

This special provides the cleanest, most enhanced look at the famed 8mm Zapruder film ever shown. But how much more can you say about it? Here is Kennedy's neck getting pierced. Here's his head being blown apart. There goes the limousine, speeding off. The end.

I mean, you know that the experts have spent far too much time dissecting this thing when you hear one say tonight, "Notice the trajectory of the President's blood stream and brain matter . . ." in making a point about bullet direction.

The man's dead. Enough already!

Despite the usual excess of spec-



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## TELEVISION

Ray Richmond

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ulation, what makes "Who Killed JFK" a thought-provoking show is its massive list of folks offering their personal reflections to the oft-seen footage that lends it a chilling vibrance.

The beginning sequence showing Kennedy's shooting and its immediate aftermath is extremely effective. The second hour gets all scientific and becomes a blur of talking heads contradicting one another.

Among the revelations is the fact that Oswald actually had 8½ seconds to shoot Kennedy rather than the long-debated 5½, along with the newfound plausibility that the "magic" single bullet wasn't so magical after all.

JFK assassination fanatics will find plenty to hold their interest in "Who Killed JFK." As for the hope that this is the final chapter — well, don't bet on it. Expect a new chapter to arrive sometime in

1998, just in time for the 35th anniversary.

**Young Jack:** After sitting through every minute of the ABC miniseries "JFK: Reckless Youth" that airs at 9 p.m. Sunday and Tuesday, a single word comes to mind: so?

This dramatization of Nigel Hamilton's best-selling 1992 book of the same name is a whole lot of staging and trumped-up dramatics in search of a payoff. And it doesn't help that as young Jack Kennedy, Patrick Dempsey's Massachusetts accent sort of comes and goes like a directionless transient.

OK, so Kennedy had a thing for the ladies from an early age. He was kind of rebellious and contemptuous of authority. He was sickly growing up. His arrogance formed early, and his domineering papa Joseph taught him to follow his wandering libido wherever it took him.

Oh yeah, JFK was also a war hero (we knew that) and tended to be ultra-competitive with his brothers.

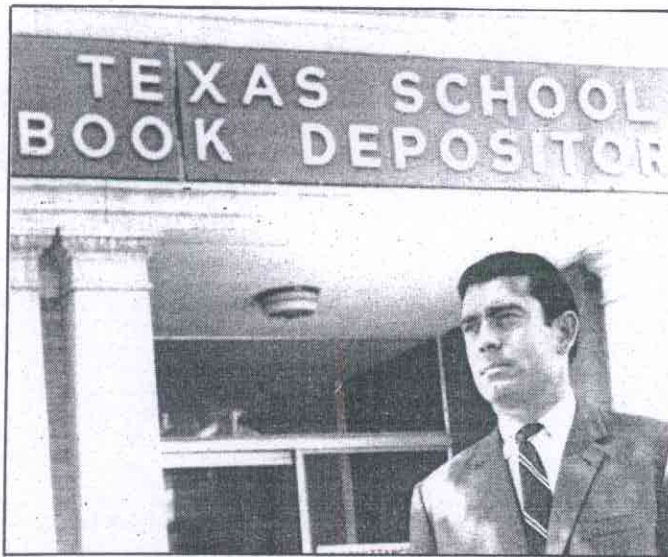
This is a miniseries? It made a better book.

Television is clearly anxious to put anything Kennedy up there on the screen, knowing how the name alone translates to ratings magic. But "JFK: Reckless Youth" is far from TV's finest Kennedy hour, a jumble of unfocused story lines and soapy sensibility.

And what a thoughtful way for ABC to honor JFK on the 30th anniversary of his slaying. Respect can wait. This is sweeps.

"Reckless Youth" follows Jack from the age of 3 through his ascendancy to the U.S. Senate. In the truncated view of this miniseries, JFK was a free-spirited, skirt-chasing party boy who somehow transformed himself into a courageous leader during World War II, when his brother Joe Jr. was killed and he became a naval hero on PT-109.

During his formative years, there is plenty of rogue behavior and defiance of his all-powerful dad (well-played by Terry Kinney) that included an affair with a married Danish journalist, suspected of being a Nazi spy (Volanda Ji-



Dan Rather, who stood outside the Texas School Book Depository in Dallas for a 1967 report on the Kennedy assassination, re-examines the murder on "Who Killed JFK: The Final Chapter?" at 9 tonight on KCBS (Channel 2).

lot).

Dempsey is a solid enough actor in the part aside from his accent, making up for a disastrous turn by Diana Scarwid as his mother Rose. Scarwid embodies the God-fearing Rose with all the sheer charisma of a rusty nail.

But more than any of the performances, "Reckless Youth" quite simply isn't all that interesting. The period detail and production values are exquisite; the subject matter just sort of sits there

like a yellowed newspaper.