

Top-quality 'Jack' leads JFK pack

Channel-hopping and never stopping . . .

The real Kennedy: If you watch only one of the multitude of specials marking Monday's 30th anniversary of John F. Kennedy's assassination, make sure it's "Jack," a splendid CBS documentary that eschews tabloid speculation and substitutes it with vivid words and pictures.

"Jack" is so good it looks like someone made a mistake putting it on a commercial network in prime time. It is wholly about JFK — not the assassination, not the conspiracy, not his wild sexual dalliances. Just the man himself.

This two hours paints Kennedy as shrewd, energetic, ambitious, witty, charming, chauvinistic, vain and, yes, philandering. But it manages to steer clear of both the saintly, adoring gloss and harsh negativity.

Producer Peter Davis brilliantly has used the material at hand to craft a magnificent portrait, utilizing warm home movies and news and backing it with the words of Kennedy himself and those who knew him best. The result is both intimate and informative.

This very easily could have been a piece of fictitious puffery. Instead, it's honest without being mean-spirited.

"Jack" is a program to treasure, mostly because it doesn't have any agenda other than to convey the human behind the myth. You



TELEVISION

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emerge from watching it with a far greater sense of what the man was really like.

Young and mighty: The hottest new show on television this fall isn't on NBC, ABC or CBS and isn't on in prime time. It isn't even for adults.

No, the runaway freshman hit is none other than "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers," a live-action half hour about a handful of teenagers who can change their shapes and identities at will.

How hot is "Power Rangers"? So hot that it finished No. 1 in its time period in Los Angeles (3 p.m. weekdays on KTTV-Channel 11) for the month of October, beating even "Oprah Winfrey."

In San Francisco during October, "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" scored an astounding 99 percent share of all kids age 6 to 11 during its time period. That means maybe one or two kids in the entire city were tuned elsewhere.

What's more, the official line of Power Rangers toys is so popular that toy stores literally can't keep the toys in stock. The Japanese company that produces them was not prepared for the huge demand, and the word is that stores may not be restocked until after Christmas.

THE FACTS

- **The documentary:** "Jack."
- **When:** 9 tonight.
- **Channel:** KCBS (Channel 2).
- **Starring:** John F. Kennedy, in home movies and news footage.
- **Our rating:** ★★★★★

★★★★ — don't miss it; ★★★ — worth your while; ★★ — has its moments; ★ — if you must; ○ — don't bother.

Move over, Ninja Turtles. The Power Rangers have arrived.

You blink, you miss: Is it just me, or are more network prime-time series programs getting pulled from schedules quicker than at any time in history?

CBS yanks "South of Sunset" after a mere week. ABC deep-sixes "The Paula Poundstone Show" just two weeks after its premiere. Another handful of shows get three or four weeks before seeing pink slips.

What's going on here? Well, it simply has gotten to the point where the networks can't afford to fool around anymore. If a show isn't performing, poof, it disappears, because time slots are too valuable to be wasted in the recessive 1990s.

But still, at some point the quick hooks defy logic. You can't expect to build an audience if folks don't know what's on from week to week. But top-rated CBS — No. 1 in viewers and paranoia — is exhibiting all the patience of a toddler.

Ray Richmond talks about television on the "Channeling" Newsline. Call (818) 883-6397, Ext. 8888. New message every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.