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Media Notes by Howard Kurtz

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Honeymoon is history

It's hardly a news flash that President Obama's media coverage has turned sour. But he still outshines his recent predecessors.

Obama wound up 2009 with balanced coverage -- 49 percent positive, 51 percent negative -- according to the *Center for Media and Public Affairs*, which studied the network newscasts, Time, Newsweek and the New York Times front page. But he swooned from 59 percent positive in the first four months of the year to 39 percent positive from August through December.

The researchers, from George Mason and Chapman universities, found the president drawing 46 percent positive evaluations on the NBC, ABC and CBS evening newscasts. By comparison, those networks were harder on George W. Bush (23 percent positive), Bill Clinton (28 percent) and Ronald Reagan (26 percent) in the first year of their terms.

In a sharp contrast, Obama drew 22 percent positive coverage on the first half hour of Fox News's "Special Report," which most resembles a newscast. The study found his evaluations "consistently negative" all year, skidding to 14 percent positive in the past four months.

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