

George Clooney Directs
Dec 15–20

George Clooney, MoMA's 2020 film benefit honoree, has crafted an enviable career: his effortless charm both onscreen and off, and serious dedication to his craft, both in front of and behind the camera has been encapsulated in TV and film for audiences around the world. On the eve of the release of his seventh directorial effort, *The Midnight Sky*, we are pleased to offer our members a look back at three of his earlier films.

Confessions of a Dangerous Man. 2002. USA. Directed by George Clooney. Screenplay by Charlie Kaufman. With Sam Rockwell, Julia Roberts, Drew Barrymore. 114 min.

Roughly 20 years after inimitable game show innovator and host Chuck Barris published his unauthorized autobiography—and multiple attempts at a film adaptation fell through—the project came to life when George Clooney signed on to direct. Clooney's filmmaking debut is a cavorting, stranger-than-fiction account of Barris's double life as intrepid television producer and CIA agent. Clooney's nimble direction of Charlie Kaufman's screenplay balances absurdist, dark humor with existential quandaries—and creates a perfect platform for Sam Rockwell's freewheeling portrayal of the completely uncategorizable Barris.

Image caption: ***Confessions of a Dangerous Man.*** 2002. USA. Directed by George Clooney. Courtesy Photofest

Good Night, and Good Luck. 2005. USA. Directed by George Clooney. Screenplay by Clooney, Grant Heslov. With David Strathairn, Clooney, Patricia Clarkson. 93 min.

In his second directorial outing, George Clooney orchestrates an incisive portrayal of the real-life media sparring match between Senator Joseph McCarthy and CBS primetime anchor Edward R. Murrow in the lead-up to the 1954 Senate-McCarthy Hearings. Deftly capturing the smoke-filled scramble of a Cold War–era television newsroom in sharp black and white, Clooney seamlessly blends his star-studded cast with archival television footage of McCarthy, injecting a necessary sense of gravity. The film succeeds as a cautionary tale not only about the power of lies in politics but, more significantly, about the limitations of investigative reporting under capitalism.

Image caption: ***Good Night, and Good Luck.*** 2005. USA. Directed by George Clooney. Courtesy Photofest

The Ides of March. 2011. USA. Directed by George Clooney. Screenplay by Clooney, Beau Willimon, Grant Heslov. With Ryan Gosling, Clooney, Paul Giamatti, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Evan Rachel Wood. 101 min.

Clooney returns to the civic stage to investigate the moral responsibility of public figures and the inner machinations of a modern political campaign in this Obama-era drama. Stephen Meyers (Ryan Gosling), a bright young campaign aide, is a true believer in the lofty ideals of public integrity preached by presidential candidate Governor Mike Morris. As Meyers works feverishly to secure the Ohio primary for Morris, a dangerous secret comes to light and the gears of the

American political process slowly chew Meyers up as his loyalty—and his ideals—are tested. The strong ensemble cast does plenty of sparring as the story progressively gets darker and more cynical, and Clooney cannily casts himself against type as Morris; his upstanding exterior hiding a ruthless opportunist.

Image caption: **The Ides of March**. 2011. USA. Directed by George Clooney. Courtesy Photofest