

BY DUNCAN H. BROWN

# MOVIE REVIEW

## Good Night and Good Luck starring David Stathairn and George Clooney

**G**ood Night, and Good Luck is a stunning, moving look back at a broadcaster in the 1950s who stood up to authority in order to say what he thought was true. It stands in painful contrast to the broadcasters and journalists of today, who seem more interested in ratings and staying safe and "balanced" than in speaking the truth, no matter how unpopular that truth might be with the politicians who are spinning, bobbing and weaving around that truth.

Edward R. Murrow was at the top of his game when he took on U.S. Representative Joseph McCarthy, whose House Committee on Un-American Activities was cutting a broad swath through people's rights and lives. Murrow found evidence suggesting that McCarthy wasn't telling the truth in his accusations and claims, and decided to pursue it. His producer Fred Friendly supported him on it, and together they struggled to tell the story, regardless of the personal consequences to themselves and their careers. This included going to CBS head William Paley to make their case to be allowed to continue with the story in spite of the pull-out of sponsors.

The black-and-white photography makes this movie especially effective, though no doubt Ted Turner will colorize it when it's shown on TBS. There are also some stark cultural differences between then and now; foremost for me was that everyone in the movie is smoking cigarette after cigarette; we even see TV advertisements saying how healthy and stimulating smoking is for you. We've come a long way, baby.

As Murrow, David Stathairn is

masterful. He gives a restrained, measured performance. His Murrow is not an orator, and he isn't given to colorful emotional outbursts. But his quiet, forceful style makes the message he ends up delivering all the more believable.

George Clooney is very well-behaved as Fred Friendly. He reminds us that there is a talented actor behind all those action thrillers he's glided through with his good looks and breezy manner. In this movie he is dedicated, thoughtful, and supportive of Murrow's decision to delve into McCarthyism. He knows there may be bad consequences, but he does it because he knows it's right.

Frank Langella is also great fun as Bill Paley, head of CBS. He has a finger in the air to test which way the wind is blowing, and has the ultimate courage to let his employees follow the truth wherever it takes them. Men and women of his integrity seem sadly missing in today's mainstream media.

George Clooney directed this movie, and was also one of the producers. This is an impressive piece of work; he's to be applauded for helping to create it.

This movie is still relevant today as we continue to struggle to find the balance between truth and spin, between politics and real life, between corruption and integrity, and between character and appearance. None of these struggles belongs to one particular political party; it's the tension (and challenge) to be found in all of them. *Good Night, and Good Luck* is a fascinating and inspiring film.

[*Good Night, and Good Luck* and *Memoirs of a Geisha* start Friday at the CoEd in Fairfield.]