

JAMES LEGROS IN *DROP BACK TEN*.

SECOND CHANCES

IT'S BEEN AN INTERESTING FIVE YEARS FOR FILMMAKER

Stacy Cochran and her film *Drop Back Ten*. It started in 2000 when her agent convinced her to submit a rough cut of the film to the Sundance Film Festival. To her surprise the film — about a down-on-his-luck journalist who stumbles onto a big story while on a movie set — was selected for the Dramatic Competition. Though the news was a professional milestone, it fell on partly deaf ears, as Cochran was nine months pregnant with her third child. Unable to attend the fest, she left the selling to her agent and the tub-thumping to her editor and cast. Unfortunately the film didn't have much of a chance, as screenings plagued with technical malfunctions and negative buzz kept it off distributors' radar. It never sold.

For most filmmakers this would have been the end of the story. They would have buried the print in a 10-foot hole and moved on. But Cochran couldn't let go. "I can't quite say why I'm consumed with continuing this," Cochran admits with a chuckle, "but the only priority is excellence. I felt like I had to approach what for me would be an excellent version [of the film]. I knew I was nowhere near it, and I couldn't live with that."

After toying with the edit and screening the Sundance version to a few festivals overseas, Cochran had had enough and shelved it for a few years. Then last year, with her newborn girl going into kindergarten, she decided to completely reedit the film with her original editor, Nancy Novack, and described the process of sifting through and reworking the footage as like playing with a Rubik's cube. Cochran also hired Pat Irwin to compose a new score and got Depeche Mode to let her use their song "I Want It All" for the end credits. Now she's hoping that her new cut, combined with her cast's increased star wattage — Josh Lucas, Amber Valletta (*Hitch*) and Jodie Markell

(who stars in George Ratliff's '07 Sundance entry *Joshua*) are all bigger names now than when the film premiered — will entice buyers to take a second look. (The film also stars Tate Donovan and James LeGros.)

Thinking back on the edit, Cochran believes the biggest change from the Sundance version is that Harriet (Courtney Jines) — Min-dy's (Valletta) shy daughter who wears a bandaid over one eye — is more prominent. "In the unfinished movie her importance is muted and murky," Cochran explains, "that was one of the key things I had to make work. So one of the last things I did was ask Courtney to record this new monologue [that she says at the end of the film]. That little monologue gave her story — and the rest of the characters — the sensation of being in a state of balance, floating evenly, at last."

Cochran, who is currently looking to put her reedit into a festival, also recently teamed with ad agency Droga5. The company is producing Cochran's new feature scripts and also helping to sell *Drop Back Ten*. Whether that is a theatrical, video or TV deal, Cochran admits, is anyone's guess.

Regardless of the film's future, Cochran is happy it's now in a condition that pleases her and says if she had to go through the last five years again she wouldn't change a thing. "As much as it was the worst how-to Sundance story imaginable, I would never say I wish that hadn't happened. Who knows? In another five years I could look back and say this went exactly the way it was supposed to. I've been with my kids for the past five years and I've been writing. God, if things went as they were supposed to, I would have missed a lot." — Jason Guerrasio

To learn more about *Drop Back Ten*, contact Maggie Meade at mmeade@droga5.com.