



## Sundance: 2011 Film Directors To Watch *(EXCERPT)*

By THE DEADLINE TEAM | Thursday January 27, 2011

**Maryam Keshavarz:** This Iranian writer-director's first feature *Circumstance* showed in Sundance's U.S. competition to strong critical responses and scored a pickup deal by Participant Media. The project, about teen girls discovering Tehran's underground scene while grappling with conservative family pressures, had a 4 1/2-year journey to the screen. Says producer Karin Chien, "Nothing was easy about making *Circumstance*. Maryam worked under overwhelming restrictions and at huge personal risk to tell this story. While facing down obstacles that would have crippled most directors, her commitment to her vision never wavered, not for a moment."

After graduating from Northwestern University, Keshavarz briefly went back to Iran and returned to the U.S. again for a doctoral degree. "From an early age, I have been a translator of culture: East for West, and West for East," says the director. "Hailing from a family where my grandfather was a political poet who was often jailed in Iran, I was interested in the intersections of politics, history and artistic expression."

After 9/11, she made an experimental short titled *Sanctuary*, which was a surreal fantasy about an Iranian woman navigating life in New York after the disaster. It won Keshavarz the Steve Tisch Fellowship to pursue an MFA in Film Direction at NYU/Tisch. There, she directed her first feature documentary, *The Color of Love*, an award-winning film. In 2005, Keshavarz went to Argentina to shoot *The Day I Died*, about an adolescent love triangle. It won two prizes at Berlin. Keshavarz is un-repped at the moment but has been swarmed by agency interest at Sundance.