

**metro** film cover story

**Rough ride ... June Havens (Cameron Diaz) and Roy Miller (Tom Cruise) in *Knight and Day*.**



Cruise says. "In *Mission: Impossible*, the plot was in front and in this film it's not about that, because now audiences are so well-versed in the spy genre, this can be more a spoof with a focus on the characters and the comedy and romance, so audiences can relax more and have fun."

In fairness to the actor, it's hard to believe this rough patch could wipe out his entire legacy, which consists of 37 films spanning 28 years. "He's one of the most important movie stars of the last 30 years," says Mangold, who worked with Cruise for the first time on this film.

Undaunted, Cruise is now prepping *Mission: Impossible IV*,

'I realised over time ... people will write what they want to write.' Tom Cruise

to start shooting with director Brad Bird (*Ratatouille*, *The Incredibles*) in September, and is also developing a comedy spin-off movie with Ben Stiller to expand on his hip-hopping, foul-mouthed *Tropic Thunder* character Les Grossman. He recently caused a sensation when he revived the character in a series of promos for the MTV awards with Rob Pattinson and Taylor Lautner, followed by a hilarious bump-and-grind performance with Jennifer Lopez at the event, which attracted more than a million hits on YouTube.

Whether or not he's having a comeback or a career crisis, Cruise says he'll face it the same way he faces everything.

"I've always tried to think positive and confront it and get through it," he says. "My mother is 73 and very active and she has really confronted a lot in her life. But she's been a wonderful example to our whole family because she's always like, 'The sun is shining tomorrow, get up and get at it.'" He pauses, then adds: "And I think that is something for everybody to remember."

Jenny Cooney Carrillo travelled to Seville and New York courtesy of Fox.

**KNIGHT AND DAY**  
Director **James Mangold** Stars **Tom Cruise, Cameron Diaz**  
Rating M. Out Thursday.

# Marathon not a sprint

Whether he's on the comeback trail or at the crossroads with *Knight and Day*, actor and tabloid target Tom Cruise insists he won't let critics undermine him, writes **Jenny Cooney Carrillo**.

Apparently Tom Cruise never got the memo that his career was hanging by a thread. On the eve of the release of his much-hyped action-comedy film *Knight and Day*, the 47-year-old actor gives no hint he's feeling any pressure as he spends two hours meeting fans and press on the red carpet at the world premiere in Seville, Spain, where part of the film was shot.

And when Metro follows him to New York for that portion of the tour, he's unwilling to engage in the debate that has filled the media in recent weeks.

"I had the benefit as a young actor to work with Paul Newman in *The Color of Money* and I knew that I wanted to do this for the rest of my life, so to have Newman tell me, 'Just stay the course, do what you want to do, keep your integrity and don't worry about the noise because the noise seems very loud at times,' were the words that had the greatest resonance in me," Cruise explains as he sits in a 36th-floor suite of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel overlooking Central Park.

Recently, the noise has been deafening, especially criticism of the actor's flagging career five years after his infamous Oprah couch-jumping, which seemed to be highlighted by disappointing box-office receipts in the US for *Knight and Day*. But Cruise, looking relaxed and young for his age in jeans and a denim shirt, is adamant he's in it for the long haul.

"After *Risky Business*, people were saying, 'He's not going to make another movie past his teen years,' and so many times after films like *Top Gun* or *Born on the Fourth of*

*July* or *Rain Man* I read stories of 'He's not going to make another movie,'" he shrugs. "These movies now are looked back on and thought of as classics but many times people were talking like it's over and I realised over time that's just the way it is; people will write what they want to write and create a story and that's OK."

In *Knight and Day*, directed by

James Mangold (*Walk the Line*, 3:10 to *Yuma*), the actor plays covert agent Roy Miller, a super-spy who attempts to smuggle a breakthrough gadget on a plane. He inadvertently involves June Havens (Cameron Diaz), a woman who rebuilds classic cars and is on the same plane heading to her sister's wedding. The pair are forced into an unlikely partnership that takes

them on an adventure, including chases and gunfights on rooftops and trains in Austria, on motorcycles in Spain and on an aircraft somewhere over Kansas.

"When you're dealing in this kind of genre, we all go back to Hitchcock, who invented the genre with the classic composition and spirit of *North by Northwest* - and then we put our own spin on it,"

## Tom-foolery not enough to put Cruise back on top

The movie star's plans to storm the box office have hit a snag, writes **Louise Schwartzkoff**.

Perhaps it was a bad idea for Tom Cruise to hitch his comeback to a character who hijacks a plane, kills almost everyone on it, repeatedly drugs his love interest, drags her unconscious body around the world and undresses her without consent.

Whatever the film's final results at the box office - and early ticket sales in the US have been disappointing - *Knight and Day* is unlikely to contradict the public's ideas about Crazy Tom.

Then again, Cruise has regained traction in recent years through welcome self-parody. On *The Late Show with David Letterman* in 2008, he cheerfully listed 10 of the craziest rumours he had heard about his own life. "I believe all emotional and psychological disorders can be cured with Vicks



Leaping Tom ... as Les Grossman; the infamous couch jump on Oprah.

VapoRub," he said with a chuckle. "After jumping on her couch, Oprah hammer-locked me 'till I coughed blood."

Then came his well-received cameo in Ben Stiller's comedy, *Tropic Thunder*, as the fat, bald and foul-mouthed studio executive Les Grossman. When Cruise donned a fat suit to reprise the role at last month's MTV Movie Awards, his performance drew glowing reviews and sparked plans for a Les Grossman movie.

All this tomfoolery was part of

the campaign to rehabilitate his career - and his to appeal to audiences. But has it worked?

Well, no. Not if the crucial early ticket sales from *Knight and Day* are an indication.

The anticipated blockbuster made little more than \$20 million during its first weekend and over \$10 million on its second. Not exactly a box-office disaster but well behind *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse*, *The Last Airbender*, *Toy Story 3* and *Grown Ups*.

Some say *Knight and Day*'s title

is old-fashioned and cheesy. Others say its US publicity should have used photographs of Cruise and his co-star, Cameron Diaz, rather than silhouette-style cut-outs. There is talk that neither Cruise nor Diaz have a following among young audiences - which, if true, would be a problem, given *Knight and Day* is the sort of big and loud romp teens love.

Whatever the reason for its slow start, the film is no quick-fix comeback vehicle. Perhaps Cruise should have pinned his hopes to *Mission: Impossible IV*, scheduled for release next year.

Failing that, there are persistent rumours of a *Top Gun* sequel, some 24 years on.

