

**LA** **the** **magazine**

**teen**  
**FESTIVAL**

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A Star Is Born**

**Soul Surfer's Co-Star  
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Not Just A Pretty Face**

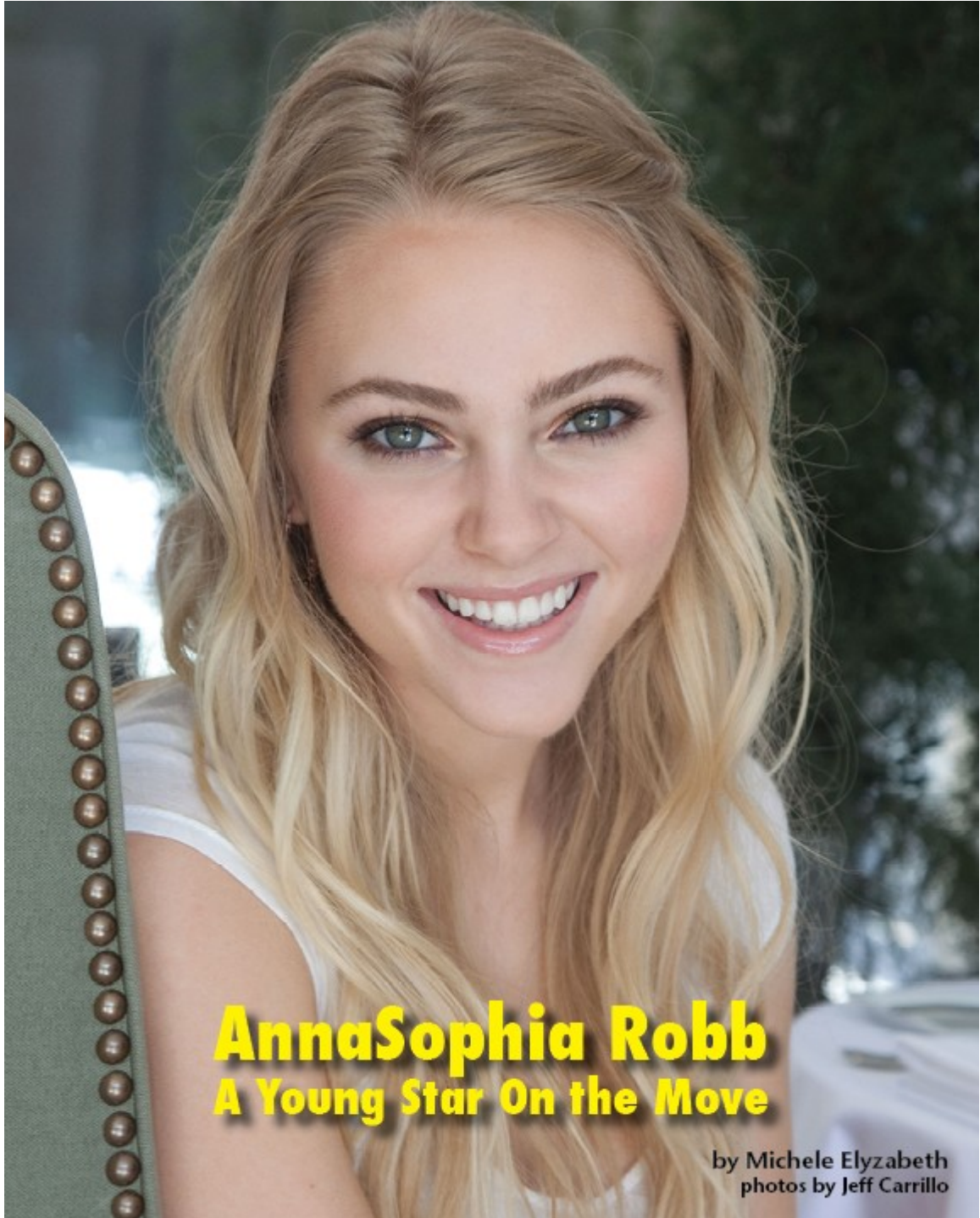
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**AnnaSophia Robb**  
**A Young Star On the Move**

by Michele Elyzabeth  
photos by Jeff Carrillo

There is an all new generation of talent in their teens or about 20-something ready to take over. Most of these actors started working very early on, some as early as 9 or 10 years old. A number of them have already proven themselves and even been awarded for their work on the big and small screen with many having starring roles alongside Academy Award-winning actors. But their lack of recognition with the Academy appears to be largely because of their age. Neither the media nor their peers have really given them much respect. In fact, because of the minimal attention, we don't really know them by name. It is a well known fact that The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences are not too fond of nominating children or teens. In the history of the Academy Awards, only a handful has received an Oscar. And why is that I wonder?

As the movie "Soul Surfer" is finally getting ready for its nationwide release on April 8th, I wanted to find out more about the cast and, especially, about AnnaSophia Robb. I knew that the director/producer Sean McNamara tried to make this film almost immediately after the nonfiction book of the same title was published in 2004, but for one reason or another the film wasn't made until 2010. Inspired by her true and heroic story, Sean McNamara stayed with the project until he had everything in place. The well publicized tiger shark attack on the 13 year old Surfer champion Bethany Hamilton in 2003 captured the attention of the world. What would happen to this teenager in the prime of her life? How would she cope? For Bethany, it all started with the true miracle of surviving the vicious attack during which she lost over 60% of her blood, which resulted in losing her left arm. Then came the struggle of rehabilitation, which was as mental as it was physical. But, with the support of her family and the devotion to her Christian faith, she was able to learn how to function again. She, as well as the Hamilton family, was involved during the entire filming process, so much so that she doubled as herself in some of the surfing scenes.

When it came to casting, McNamara chose Anna-

Sophia Robb for the role of Bethany. Even though we may not be that familiar with her name, AnnaSophia Robb is far from being a novice. Born in Denver, Colorado, December 8, 1993, she attended a Christian school and started singing in her local church by the age of five. Having demonstrated a natural aptitude for performing, she subsequently studied Irish Step and Jazz dance. By the time she turned eight, she joined an acting workshop and was signed by a local agent. It was not long before AnnaSophia and her mother would visit Hollywood where she hit the audition circuit and within a short time landed her first job in a "McDonalds Happy Meal" commercial. In 2004 she went on to make her TV debut in the Nickelodeon series "Drake & Josh," followed by a starring role in the television movie "Samantha: An American Girl Holiday" playing opposite Mia Farrow. Almost immediately after she starred opposite Jeff Daniels in her first feature film "Because of Winn-Dixie" in 2005. She proved then that she had a natural talent that would only bloom larger with time and roles. That same year she was cast in Tim Burton's remake of "Charlie and The Chocolate Factory," where she played the role of Violet Beauregarde opposite Johnny Depp. Continuing with her career, she was cast in Disney's "Bridge to Terebithia" where she would demonstrate her singing talent. She recorded "Keep Your Mind Wide Open," which debuted at #90 on the Billboard chart. In 2007, she appeared opposite Hilary Swank in "The Reaping" and in 2008, in the action film "Jumper" to be followed by her starring role in "Sleepwalking" opposite Charlize Theron. She gained respect with her craft and became a breakthrough actress in Hollywood. In 2009, she starred in "Race to Witch Mountain" before taking on the challenging role of Bethany Hamilton opposite Dennis Quaid and Helen Hunt in 2010. LATF met with AnnaSophia Robb at the newly renovated hotel Luxe Sunset Boulevard in Bel Air. We had the opportunity to talk one on one with the actress just a few hours before the LA premiere of "Soul Surfer."

**In the past eight years or so you have been working consistently with one or two projects per year. How do you manage to keep a balanced life?**

It's been hard, but it's totally worth it. I'm very happy that I've been able to maintain my life back in Denver where I live and go to school. I have a tutor who comes with me on set when I'm working. I keep in constant communication with my teachers so that I get all of my work. It's been kind of difficult in my High School years with filming *Soul Surfer*. I'm definitely going to college. I'm in my Junior year now and staying in school!

**Since you go to a regular High School, how do other students react when you're starring in films?**

I have such a great group of friends. I love all of the kids at my school. Everyone's really excited about the movie and have been very supportive. But no one makes a big deal out of it. When I'm there, I'm just another one of the kids in the hallway.

**When you were 9 or 10 years old, how did you choose the movies you worked on? Did someone else help you choose?**

I was really blessed with the career that I've been able to have so far. I had great guidance and fantastic representation. Everything seemed to fall into place for the roles that I played. Now that I've gotten older, we've started to pick and choose the roles.

**How hard was it to remember your lines?**

How do you remember history or your times tables? You just know them after you read them.

Memorizing is hard if it's long, but once the lines get into my head, I remember.

**You've worked with many incredible actors. In a few words, describe the following: Mia Farrow.**

Mia Farrow is definitely my hero. Because of her I want to get into activist and nonprofit work.

**Johnny Depp.**

So chill! I was very young when I worked with him, but I remember really liking Johnny. He always had such a good vibe and was kind to everyone.

**Hilary Swank.**

Lovely. She treated me as an equal at 10 years old.

**Charlize Theron.**

She was so collaborative on set with me every day. As beautiful as





she is on the outside, she's even more beautiful on the inside.

**Are there any specific actresses you'd like to work with?**

Yes! Natalie Portman. She's always been one of my heroes. Especially because she's also been acting since she was young and she went to college. I'm also very curious how she balanced school and work since I'm going through that right now.

**Out of everyone you've worked with so far, who was the most fun?**

Helen Hunt and Dennis Quaid were amazing on set. Especially Dennis! He's such a goof and he's so wonderful to be around. It was a lot of fun when we all went surfing together.

**I understand you had to learn how to surf for 'Soul Surfer.'**

Yes, and I'm still learning. Surfing is a life-long sport. I think it's probably one of the hard-

est sports in the world because you're dealing with nature, your body, and balancing. Every wave is different, but I love it and can't wait to go back out and surf again.

**Do you have any fears with surfing?**

I totally have fears! I'm afraid of sharks, the reefs, and falling. There are all sorts of things that could go wrong. Bethany has always told me not to look down, so I don't. I enjoy the moment.

**What attracted you to the story of 'Soul Surfer'?**

It was an incredible role. Like most people, I already knew about Bethany's story. First I thought about it as an actress, what a role it would be to portray someone who has lost their arm, what would that do to you and how would your relationship with your family change? At the same time, I thought, "what a beautiful story of inspiration."

**Did you realize the difficulties you were going to encounter?**

No, I never really think about that. I just want to go one hundred percent because I love

the story. It never seems like a difficulty. It's a gift and a challenge. The more difficult the role is, the more interested I am in playing it. **You had to convince the public that you had lost your arm. How challenging was that?**

The CGI guys did most of the work with their special effects! Bethany never thinks that not having an arm is a disability. When you meet her, you forget that she doesn't have an arm. It's



photo courtesy of FilmDistrict and TriStar



photo courtesy of FilmDistrict and TriStar

not a big deal. To me, this film is about someone who has had this difficulty in her life and she overcomes it through her faith, family, and determination. Every challenge she meets, she conquers. I have never met anyone like Bethany. She's the strongest woman I have ever encountered.

**How was it working with Sean McNamara?**

Sean has the most beautiful soul! He is so upbeat about this project. He set a tone of excitement and family from the beginning. The crew really bonded, especially since everyone loved the water and we were all out on the beach. There were long days and we had a short amount of time to film a lot of footage, but it was always so much fun and such a pleasure. Sean was always involved and active with the crew, showing music and film clips. He would go out in the water when we were shooting. Sean was so jazzed about everything!

**What do you expect from the movie?**

I don't know. I don't have any expectations. I try not to think about that.

**I read that you're an activist. Are you involved with animals?**

I'm definitely into animal rights, as well as the environment. There are so many different problems in the world and I need to take time to find my niche. I've worked with the Dalit Freedom Network and The Make a Wish Foundation. I recently started working with Peace Jam and am hoping to start a club at my school. Maybe this interview will help my principal say, "Alright!"

**What is your next big project?**

The SAT's! I've just got to get through my Junior year!

I had the opportunity to see "Soul Surfer" and it is a great movie, a great story, and a great performance from AnnaSophia. I would not be surprised if she becomes an Oscar recipient in the very near future.

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