

## Directing *The White Giraffe*

Gabor Csupo is to take to the director's chair for the new family feature film *The White Giraffe*. The movie will be based on Lauren St. John's first children's book of the same name.

The story tells of Martine, an orphaned young girl emigrating to South Africa to live with her grandmother on a game preserve. The tale is filled with African magic and mystery as Martine searches for the truth behind the legend of the white giraffe.

The book is loosely based on St. John's own childhood experiences in Africa, as she was born in Gatooma, Rhodesia (now Kadoma, Zimbabwe) in December 1966.

"I grew up on a farm in Zimbabwe that was in part a game reserve and had a pet giraffe ... I moved to the farm from suburb when I was five. We were in 100 acres of land, completely surrounded by animals – two ostriches, 60 impala and a giraffe called Jenny," St. John told freelance journalist, Danuta Kean, in an interview last year.

St. John studied journalism in Africa, before moving to London where she worked as a golf correspondent to *The Sunday Times*. She's authored several sports books including *Greg Norman: The biography* and *Seve: Ryder Cup Hero*; as well as a biography *Hardcore Troubadour: The Life and Near Death of Steve Earle*. Her autobiography, *Rainbow's End: A Memoir of Childhood, War & an African Farm*, has just been published, almost a month before the release of *The White Giraffe* by Disney Books for Young Readers/Walden Media - which has only been published in the UK so far.

Walden Media has optioned feature rights for the story, and the film will be released by 20th Century Fox and Walden Media under the Fox Walden banner.

It's reported that 13-year-old AnnaSophia Robb is to star in the lead role. This will be the second time Robb has been under the directorship of Csupo - the two having previously worked together on the film *Bridge to Terabithia*. Some of Robb's other well-known performances include her role of Violet Beauregarde in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Csupo is probably better known for his work in animation, having produced the *Rugrats* and *The Wild Thornberrys* movies as well as a number of the TV series episodes. He's also produced over 50 episodes of *The Simpsons*. *The White Giraffe* will be Csupo's third live action film after *Bridge to Terabithia* and *The Little White Horse*, which is currently in production.