



PREVIEW

Elemental

Elemental

Directed by: Peter Sohn
©: Inc. Disney Enterprises, Pixar
Production Company: Disney, Pixar
Created & Produced at: Pixar Animation Studios
International Sales: Distributed by [World Sales]
Executive Producer: Pete Docter
Associate Executive Producer: McKenna Harris
Produced by: Denise Ream
Associate Producers: Krissy Cabara, Becky Neiman-Cobb
Production Manager: Jesús Martínez
Post-production Supervisor: Dana Mulligan
Post-production Manager: Heather Eisner
Script Supervisor: Cara Brody
Casting by: Kevin Reher, Natalie Lyon
Casting Associate: Kate Hansen-Birnbaum
Screenplay by: John Hoberg, Kat Likkell, Brenda Hsueh
Story by: Peter Sohn, John Hoberg, Kat Likkell, Brenda Hsueh
Story Supervisor: Jason Katz
Directors of Photography: David Juan Bianchi, Jean-Claude Kalache
Lighting Key Designer: Carlos Felipe León
Visual Effects Supervisor: Sanjay Bakshi
Animation Supervisors: Michael Venturini, Kureha Yokoo
Directing Animators: Gwendelyn Enderoglu, Allison Rutland, Benjamin Po An Su
Effects Supervisors: Stephen Marshall, Jon Reisch
Lighting Supervisors: Amy Rae Jones, Luke Martorelli
Layout Lead: Jahkeeli Garnett
Edited by: Stephen Schaffer
2nd Film Editors: Greg Snyder, Amera Rizk, Kevin Rose-Williams, Jennifer Jew
Production Designer: Don Shank
Character & Look Development Art Director: Maria Yi
Sets Art Director: Daniel Holland
Colour & Shading Art Director: Jennifer Chia-Han Chang
Graphics Art Director: Laura Meyer
Visual Development: Daniel López Muñoz
Character Supervisors: Junyi Ling, Jeremie Talbot
Character Designers: Alice Lemma, Anna Laura Scott, Yingzong Xin
Set Designer: Paul Abadilla
Sets Supervisor: Jun Han Cho
Set Designers: Lauren Kawahara, Kyle MacNaughton, Nat McLaughlin, Hye Sung Park, Meghan Sasaki
Lead Story Artist: Le Tang
Original Score Composed and Conducted by: Thomas Newman
'Steal the Show' Music by: Ari Leff, Thomas Newman
'Steal the Show' Lyrics by: Ari Leff, Ari Leff
'Steal the Show' Performed by: Lauv
Supervising Orchestrator: J.A.C. Redford
Score Coordinator: Julia Newman
Music Editor: Shinnosuke Miyazawa
Score Recorded by: Moises Garcia, Jeff Gartenbaum
Orchestra Recorded by: Tommy Vicari
Score Mixed by: Shinnosuke Miyazawa
Additional Sound Design: Jonathon Stevens
Sound Designer: Ren Klyce
Production Sound Mixers: Paul McGrath, Marilyn Morris, Vince Caro
Re-recording Mixers: Ren Klyce, Stephen Urata
Additional Re-recording Mixer: Nathan Nance

+ Q&A with director Peter Sohn, producer Denise Ream and actors Leah Lewis and Mamoudou Athie

It's easy to imagine the wind having attitude or fire being angry. A happy bunch of flowers could absolutely brighten the day of a lonely pot of dirt. And water might be calm and collected one day and in a big hurry the next. 'What if the elements we all know were alive,' asks director Peter Sohn.

Disney and Pixar's *Elemental* is an all-new, original feature film set in Element City, where Fire-, Water-, Earth- and Air-residents live together. The story introduces Ember, a tough, quick-witted and fiery young woman, whose friendship with a fun, sappy, go-with-the-flow guy named Wade challenges her beliefs about the world they live in and the person she wants to be.

Sohn says the story, which is very personal to him, started with a drawing of a Fire character and Water character interacting. He imagined an unexpected friendship between them – a relationship sure to trigger awkwardness, banter and funny missteps. 'I started layering in my relationship with my wife – I'm Korean and she's American, half Italian,' Sohn says. 'I hid the relationship from my parents at first because they – in an old-school way – wanted me to marry someone Korean. My grandmother's dying words were literally "Marry Korean!"'

Sohn's old-school parents eventually came around, finding they had a lot in common with their eventual daughter-in-law's family. They also inspired another important aspect of the story, says the director. 'It's about understanding our parents as people. From that understanding comes an appreciation for the sacrifices that they make for their kids. My parents emigrated from Korea in the early 1970s, so I was born there and raised with Korean traditions, language, culture in the very American New York City. That led to some culture clashes along the way between first and second generation. I took for granted the trials and tribulations they must've experienced.'

Like Sohn, Ember is a second-generation immigrant – only her parents emigrated from Ireland to Element City where Ember is born and raised. 'She goes on a journey of understanding her own identity and,' says the director, 'with that, the meaning of what her parents have given her.'

A highlight of Ember's journey – and in many ways the impetus for it – is a fun and fateful friendship with a Water guy named Wade. 'In the beginning, Ember has disdain for the city, but Wade helps her begin to fall in love with everything it has to offer,' says Sohn.

'We found ways to introduce her to the city like some of my favourite comedies do – serving up opportunities for laughs.'

Set in a city that brings elements of different backgrounds together, *Elemental* demonstrates that opposites do indeed attract. 'It's a comedy filled with heart,' says producer Denise Ream. 'It's a story about relationships – between Fire and Water, between parents and their kids and between all of us and our neighbours who might not look like us. It's part comedy, part family journey and part culture clash.'

According to Ream, more than 100 first- or second-generation immigrants from Pixar came together to speak with filmmakers about their experiences. 'It was phenomenal,' says Ream. 'Most of us, wherever we are, come from somewhere else. There were so many emotional stories about what people went through to come here – their families' experiences. I don't think you can really explain the impact of something like that on a story.'

Production Sound Editor: Samuel Lehmer
Supervising Sound Editors: Coya Elliott, Ren Klyce
Dialogue/ADR Supervisor: Rich Quinn
Sound Effects Editors: Benjamin A. Burt,
Steve Bissinger, Kimberly Patrick
Foley Artists: Shelley Roden, Heikki Kossi
Foley Mixer: Scott Curtis
Foley Editors: Dee Selby, Nicholas Docter
Voice cast:
Leah Lewis (*Ember Lumen*)
Mamoudou Athie (*Wade Ripple*)
Ronnie Del Carmen (*Bernie, Ember's dad*)
Shila Ommi (*Cinder, Ember's mum*)
Wendi McLendon-Covey (*Gale, Wade's boss*)
Catherine O'Hara (*Brook, Wade's mum*)
Mason Wertheimer (*Clod, Ember's neighbour*)
Ronobir Lahiri (*Harold*)
Wilma Bonet (*Flarietta*)
Joe Pera (*Fern, bureaucrat*)
Matt Yang King (*Alan/Lutz/Earth pruner*)
Clara Lin Ding (*little kid Ember*)
Reagan To (*big kid Ember*)
Jeff Lapensee (*sparkler customer*)
Ben Morris (*wood immigration official*)
Jonathan Adams (*Flarry*)
Alex Kapp (*customer/delivery person/Earth landlord*)
P.L. Brown (*doorman*)
USA 2023
101 mins

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When director Peter Sohn set out to build a world in which Fire-, Water-, Air- and Earth-residents would live and interact, he knew it would be a bold undertaking. But he had no idea just how bold. 'I did not know what I was getting into at all,' the director laughs. 'I knew that the characters would be complicated, but I guessed wrongly which characters would be the most difficult. I knew that there would be a lot of obstacles, but I totally came into it with a hopeful naiveté and excitement.'

Of course, Pixar Animation Studios was built on that kind of naiveté – the kind that allows storytellers like Sohn to push the boundaries of what is possible. Think *Toy Story* and the impossible idea of having toys come to life in three dimensions using computer technology, and – just a few years later – the crazy conceit of creating fur-covered creatures in *Monsters, Inc.* Technological feats are a hallmark of the studio – feats that have made possible stories of forgetful fish, super-powered parents and emotive skeletons.

'Traditionally, when you're doing a movie like this, you've got one world and one culture with one general type of character that you get to invent,' says production designer Don Shank. 'For this show, we had four.'

Prior to *Elemental*, a film with two main characters that are visual effects in and of themselves – one Fire and one Water – was decidedly not possible. Sohn's edict was steadfast: Ember is Fire – she's not on fire. And Wade, naturally, is Water – not a vessel holding water. There would be no virtual skeleton-like rig anchoring either character, yet they would need to be able to move, and perhaps more daunting, emote in a way that was believable and appealing, allowing audiences the ability to connect with the characters.

'When we saw Peter's pitch, we knew that it was a big reach,' says visual effects supervisor Sanjay Bakshi. 'Every frame of this movie has a fire or water simulation happening – often both. The scale of the effects is unprecedented for a Pixar film.'

According to associate producer Krissy Cababa, the effects efforts almost doubled for *Elemental*, which called for more than 50 effects artists. 'We added a whole new department to our pipeline,' she says. 'We have two effects teams for this show – one handles those effects we'd normally see like explosions or floods, which are already pretty significant in *Elemental*. The other, character effects, took on all of the Fire-, Water- and Air-characters. That team touched every shot in the movie.'

Says effects supervisor Stephen Marshall, whose team is responsible for the character effects, 'As an effects artist, you kind of have a certain wheelhouse, and you know what to do. But characters are a whole different ball game because you have to make sure that the effects aren't distracting so that audiences can read the animated performances. There's a high level of scrutiny on the characters, plus the sheer number of shots we're touching is very different from any other show.'

In order to realise these complex characters – and the similarly complex backdrop – an additional phase of production was introduced to run simulations on the characters in every frame of the film. Additionally, filmmakers adjusted the pipeline to allow more time after animation to tackle the massive effects and complex lighting needs.

All of it, of course, was in service to the story. Artists, storytellers and technicians worked hand-in-hand to make possible Sohn's vision of a spirited Fire woman and her special journey of self-discovery alongside a chill Water guy. 'If you took Peter Sohn and separated him into two characters,' says story supervisor Jason Katz, 'you'd get Ember and Wade.'

Production notes