

Disney · PIXAR

# ELEMENTAL

“What if the elements we all know were alive?”

~ Peter Sohn, Director, “Elemental”

## PRODUCTION NOTES

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 Fireland 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 favorite 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 neighbors 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.”

Directed by Peter Sohn, produced by Denise Ream, p.g.a., and executive produced by Pete Docter, “Elemental” features a screenplay by John Hoberg & Kat Likkell and Brenda Hsueh with story by Sohn, Hoberg & Likkell and Hsueh. The voice cast includes Leah Lewis as the fiery Ember; Mamoudou Athie as the Water-guy Wade; Ronnie del Carmen as Ember’s soon-to-be retired dad, Bernie; Shila Ommi as Ember’s love-seeking mom, Cinder; Wendi McLendon-Covey as Wade’s stormy Air Ball-loving boss, Gale; Catherine O’Hara as Wade’s welcoming mom, Brook; Mason Wertheimer as Ember’s admiring neighbor, Clod; and Joe Pera as an overgrown city bureaucrat, Fern. With original score composed and conducted by Thomas Newman, Disney and Pixar’s “Elemental” opens in U.S. theaters on June 16, 2023.

### POPULATING ELEMENT CITY

#### **Artists, Storytellers and Technicians Create Fire-, Water-, Air- and Earth-Residents; Voice Cast Helps Bring Them to Life**

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 wrong 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 realize 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.”

#### **Character Lineup:**

**EMBER LUMEN** is a clever 20-something Fire woman with a great sense of humor who can be hot-headed at times. What she lacks in patience she more than makes up for in love for her family. As the only child of immigrant parents, Ember is keenly aware of how much they sacrificed to give her a better life. She’s determined to prove herself to them and looks forward to taking over the family business, Fireplace, when her father, Bernie, retires. Says screenwriter Kat Likkel, “Ember is a proud Fire person and is thrilled that her father trusts her to someday take over his shop. But then she’s thrown a curveball and it shakes up everything.”

The curveball, of course, is a Water guy with a go-with-the-flow perspective on life, who inspires her to take a closer look at herself and her hidden creative passions. The idea is

rooted in director Peter Sohn's own life. "Going into the arts was slightly more difficult in my family," says Sohn. "It was assumed I'd get a professional job like a doctor or a lawyer or a businessperson, and I was not heading down any of those paths. I wanted to get into the arts and my parents didn't understand that world or how one could make a living doing that. But this story is not about Ember's parents saying no—she's telling herself no. It was really interesting to bring that struggle that was very external for me with my parents to an internal place for Ember.

"Having been raised in the city, Ember has a certain level of street smarts," continues Sohn. "But she's not always great at connecting with others and she can get flustered. Her temper isn't necessarily the big problem she thinks it is, however. Wade offers up his own theories."

Leah Lewis was called on to provide the voice of Ember. "We loved her smoky voice," says Sohn. "She has a really feisty, fiery personality. She also has a wonderful tenderness to her and she can toggle back and forth so naturally.

"She was in a movie called 'The Half of It,'" continues Sohn. "I remember her performance: when she got frustrated, it felt real but fun at the same time. It wasn't a scary, explosive anger that you might expect a Fire character would have. Leah had an anger that allowed you to empathize with her frustrations."

In "Elemental," it's Lewis who empathizes with Ember's frustrations, allowing the audience to do the same. "Ember is very fiery, but she has a reason for it," says Lewis. "Her family has worked very hard to provide this life for her in Element City. She wants to prove to her parents that she has become the woman they've always wanted her to be. She's fiercely loyal to her family and fiercely loyal to her life and her identity as a Fire person.

"She's well aware that the city wasn't really made with Fire people in mind," Lewis continues. "I think that's part of her edge in the way that she moves around. She's very cautious and a lot of the elements are cautious around her. If Water meets an Earth element, a bunch of grass might grow on Earth. If Ember bumps into that Earth person, it's 'poof' and all of the grass on him is gone."

Bringing Ember to life technically was one of the film's biggest challenges. According to Sanjay Bakshi, visual effects supervisor, their efforts were about much more than creating fire. "The balance of making the characters stylized but representative of the elements was a tricky line to walk," he says. "Ember looks like fire, but she doesn't look like the fire that

#### **Tapping Zurich**

*To achieve Ember and the other Fire characters' unique, stylized look, Pixar tapped resources at Disney Research Studios in Zurich, Switzerland. Researchers with expertise in visual computing, machine learning and artificial intelligence helped shape ideas into technological innovations. "We engaged them early on to work on our machine learning technique called Volumetric Neural Style Transfer [NST]," says visual effects supervisor Sanjay Bakshi. "The idea is to use a painting to stylize a simulation. So, we did these paintings of what the flames should look like and then we ran this machine learning technique on the realistic fire simulation to stylize it and make it more of a 2D representation."*

*According to Bakshi, the technique was applied to every frame of the movie that features Ember. "What's also interesting is that it uses graphics processing units [GPUs], which are used in machine learning. We didn't really use them here for final rendering here at Pixar until now," he says.*

you photograph. It's a very carefully curated depiction of fire that makes her believable but also invites you to look in her eyes and see her expressions and really get captivated by her performance."

According to character supervisor Junyi Ling, building Ember's range of expressions was challenging considering her fiery makeup. "You want to keep true to the design of the character," she says. "Ember has a specific look. But at the same time, her flame—in her eyebrow, lips—is like a fluid.

"The shape of the fire is also iconic," Ling continues. "Each Fire character has an iconic shape that's constantly moving. Three predominant cones form the shape of Ember's hair. Their fire is always moving through space, but that movement is actually respecting these shapes without feeling like geometric solid shape anymore. It's this like moving fluid that constantly goes back to the iconic shape so that the audience can recognize her quickly."

Animators developed a new approach to build performances for Ember that set the stage for all of the Fire characters. The fact that Ember is Fire—not on fire—was always top of mind. According to effects supervisor Stephen Marshall, creating a character that is fire effectively eliminated any interior structure for the character, making the entire character an effect. "There's a transparency," he says, "well-designed transparencies within layers and layers of fire."

The look of Ember's flames is highly curated, allowing for the character's expression and ensuring that the speed of her flames—real fire is quite fast, says Marshall—isn't distracting. "We put a lot of effort into designing a system in which animation could have as much control as possible," he says.

Directing animator Allison Rutland says the animation team created performances that capitalized on the fact that the character is made of fire. "It really was about how adding enough drift, enough shape-change to her head to keep that constant motion on the base geometry to match the amount of constant motion that's in play as a volume."

Adds directing animator Gwendelyn Enderoğlu, "We ended up building more and more controls throughout the first half of production. We added controls to Ember's rig to dial in these curated settings that effects was discovering so we could change the speed of her fire—like if it's a sad, quiet moment, her fire shouldn't be quite as active and we'd slow it down a little. Or we could tighten up the silhouette if she's really moving quickly and it's giving us a kind of blurry result in the default render—we could trim some of that away."

David Bianchi, director of photography for camera and layout, and his team studied touchstone films that Sohn suggested. "It was a lot of '80s cinema, 1.85:1 aspect ratio," says Bianchi. "Ember's flames will reach two to three feet higher at times—lower at other times. There was a going to be a lot more character to fit within a frame. We were concerned that her animated flames would be cut off with a more rectangular view of the film versus 1.85:1, which is taller and a little closer to square."

For Jean-Claude Kalache, director of photography-lighting, and his team, lighting a character that's made of fire called for a deep dive into how fire looks in varying levels of light. At times, filmmakers tweaked what might happen in real life to align with what the brain wants to see. And Ember, says Kalache, is emissive. "She's a light source—she's a

like a light bulb,” he says. “Early tests suggested she’s around 100 watts. But since her performance and emotions drive the brightness and the colors, it didn’t make sense for lighting to override what animation was doing, so we developed a system that allowed us to expose everything in the environment except for Ember.

“I like to think of Ember as an emissive character on a dimmer switch,” Kalache continues. “When she’s angry or has a temper she can be dialed up—but not too far or you’ll lose details. Then when she’s vulnerable or guilty, you can dial it down.”

**WADE RIPPLE** is not afraid to show his emotions—in fact, his emotions are hard to miss. An empathetic, 20-something Water guy, Wade is observant, a good listener and literally bubbling with compassion for others. He is close with his family—a lively and strangely weepy bunch who seek out opportunities to share their feelings. “Wade is a sap,” says director Peter Sohn. “He’s the type of character that will cry at a diaper commercial—he really feels his way through the world. What I love about him is that he’s a transparent character—literally and figuratively—you can always feel what he’s feeling. There’s nothing to hide with Wade.

“We loved the idea of him playing two roles for Ember,” continues the director. “One, he represents a safe place that won’t judge. Wade is also a mirror character—we play off his reflectivity. In many ways, Wade was created to help Ember see herself. He doesn’t exist to teach her anything or guide her in any way, but as a mirror so that Ember could see a new version of herself.”

Wade works as an inspector for Element City. He’s not exactly a go-getter when it comes to his career path, though he does take his job very seriously—even if it means issuing tickets to good people. “It may seem like he doesn’t have a lot of direction in his life,” says story supervisor Jason Katz. “He goes from job to job—he’s a bit of a flibbertigibbet, but he also is completely comfortable with who he is. It’s rare to meet someone who—right out of the gate—has a desire to connect. Wade is very loving. His emotional IQ is off the charts—he’s a good listener. He’s just a big, cuddly guy—as much as you can cuddle Water.”

Sohn says that technically, Wade was the toughest character to pull off. “He is Water,” says the director. “But as we worked for the right look, it was so easy to make him anything but water. If the movement was too slow, he looked like jelly. When we first started to test lighting the Water characters, we could see right through them.”

According to character supervisor Junyi Ling, the design for Wade is the culmination of a series of small choices. “There are color choices, shape choices—the shape of his hair, his lips, body—he’s a unique character,” Ling says, adding that it was important that the stylization of all characters was consistent. “We wanted to make it clear that Wade and Ember are in the same movie, too.”

Adds character supervisor Jeremie Talbot, “One big challenge that Peter [Sohn] laid out for Water, Fire and Air characters was that they shouldn’t look skeletal. Our tools are usually based around building characters that have flesh and bone. Fire and Water don’t have knees and elbows that are in fixed places like humans. When Wade takes footsteps, his foot can come and go—his whole leg can disappear into a blob and then come back. It’s

controllable by the animator to reinforce the idea that he is Water. It was a real challenge to loosen up our characters to allow them to work in a more dynamic way.”

#### Water Works

*Filmmakers wanted to create a character that was water, which wasn't easy considering the optical properties of water: reflection, refraction, dispersion. "Water is an amorphous substance that is in constant motion, which made shading water characters a challenging task," says visual effects supervisor Sanjay Bakshi. "In order to create visually appealing characters, we must determine which rules of physics to follow and which to disregard."*

*"We developed an artificial meniscus layer that accentuates the facial features of Water characters, making their expressions more visible," continues Bakshi. "Additionally, to achieve better control over the hair simulation, we created a dynamic target field through procedural animation based on Wade's hair shape, which is then used as the attraction point for a constrained liquid simulation operating within a reduced dynamics space."*

Artists wanted to give Wade identifiable characteristics and have fun with his look and style. Says Maria Yi, character & look development art director, "A lot of attention, love and care went into Wade's hair. We wanted it to have movement, without being too distracting. It's a friendly reminder that this character is made out of water."

The character effects team played a key role in ensuring that Wade's signature style could be maintained while also looking like water. "The character moves a lot," says effects supervisor Stephen Marshall. "His hair can shift from side to side to support his movement in the shot. We had to come up with a hair simulation that was very targeted so it would lock on to the animation as much as possible.

"We identified three shapes that appear and disappear on the top of his head," continues Marshall. "That's his most important feature for his hair simulation. It can't just be static. It has to feel like water. It has to be dynamic like water."

According to animation supervisor Michael Venturini, Wade's eyebrows were also a key aspect to Wade's overall performance. "Peter didn't want that graphic feel of eyebrows painted on the water," says Venturini. "He wanted them to have a transparency or a shimmering highlight. We used the eyebrows a tremendous amount to express Wade's feelings, so there was a lot of iteration on how to get the look of Wade's eyebrows to feel holistic with the rest of his design, and emotive at the level that we wanted. His eyes called for similar attention because they are extra glassy to get that watery feel. We wanted his eyes to pop and his brows to read clearly so you could really feel his expressions."

Mamoudou Athie was called on to voice Wade. "I saw him in this film called 'Uncorked,'" says Sohn. "He had this tremendous charm and a sort of spark. He also had a really interesting range where he can go deep but then he can go high in this relaxed way. It really hit that watery go-with-the-flow energy. It all just felt smooth and flowy. And then I found this one clip of him from a show called 'Oh Jerome, No' when he was crying. His crying was so caricatured and funny, but it still felt real. That's what sold me."

Athie respected the character's honesty. "Wade is the best—he's the kind of guy I would like to be," says the actor. "I know that sounds strange, but I think his open-heartedness

and his willingness to share exactly how he feels all the time is what I aspire to be like. There's something really beautiful about his earnestness and his acceptance of everyone."

Athie found the story and its themes very relatable. "I'm an immigrant myself, so it spoke to me immediately in that sense," he says. "But the parent-child relationship and that feeling of responsibility to make our parents proud really hit me. My parents are very supportive of me—even when there's not a lot of reason to be. That sacrifice a parent makes for their children so they can have a better life is something Pete [Sohn] and I connected with very deeply."

Jean-Claude Kalache and his lighting team had no idea Wade and the Water characters would be as complicated as they were. "To be honest, I thought Ember was going to be the hardest thing we've ever done," he says. "Wade was by far the hardest thing we've ever done."

"It's as if you put a chrome ball in a CG environment," continues Kalache. "It's a mirror and would be very distracting, showing you the whole environment. We did early tests with Wade reflected in an environment, but you couldn't see him—his eyes, his mouth, his teeth. You see everything else, and it looks 100 percent like water, but it doesn't look like a character. It took a good year working very closely with the character department—there was so much back and forth. He needed to be integrated into the background. We convinced Pete [Sohn] that Wade is going to be a chameleon and whatever he is in front of, he will change."

Wade has more than 50 controls—allowing filmmakers to tweak everything from the bubble activity within the character to the incorporation of edges to his nose, tongue, teeth—filmmakers referred to this edge as a meniscus. The ability to read the character's performance—his emotions—was paramount. "We developed areas that are 'animation-safe' on his face where highlights would fall off," says Kalache. "You'll notice the majority of the time his face is fairly clean. Every now and then we'll put up one highlight so it gives you a wobble and it feels like water."

In scenes in which Wade and Ember appear on screen together—which is often—filmmakers developed a protocol that would allow for the look of reflection of Fire on Water—ensuring it wouldn't be distracting. "In some very specific shots, we would light Wade's bubbles to have Ember's colors so you would appreciate that proximity," says Kalache. "In others in which she's vulnerable, we actually projected a slide of her onto him—physically, it makes no sense, but it serves the story moment beautifully."

**BERNIE LUMEN** is a Fire element with a big crackling personality that burns with pride. He's passionate about his homeland, about his daughter, Ember, and about Fireplace, the shop he runs in Element City. He and his wife, Cinder, left Fireland two decades ago to provide a better life for their only child, bringing with them little more than a blue flame that represents their past and people. Their neighborhood shop has become a destination for Fire elements, and Bernie is patiently awaiting the day Ember will take it over.

"What I love about Bernie is that he's a character that has nothing but wonderful intentions for Ember," says screenwriter John Hoberg. "I think an easier route would've been creating that overbearing dad who didn't approve of his daughter. We've seen that before, but that's

not Peter's story—Peter's dad was lovely. We wanted that quality portrayed in the film. So, what we landed on is that Bernie left his homeland to start a better life, but his father didn't approve. And that moment has haunted Bernie. Everything he's been trying to do since then is prove that he is not letting go of who he is—his shop is an homage to Fireland. But because of that, Bernie unintentionally puts pressure on his daughter to one day take his place without realizing the similarities it has to his own dad's missteps."

Ronnie del Carmen voices Bernie. "I've known Ronnie a long time and he's always been sort of a father figure to me," says director Peter Sohn. "He's an incredible artist and a very soulful human. He has a way of layering empathy into characters and into situations in the way he breaks things down that I've always admired. Ronnie brings a tenderness to Bernie. He can also play that gregarious shopkeeper with a bit of fragility that the character needed."

Del Carmen adds, "[Pete] only wanted my own voice and lived experiences to show through in Bernie. And it is more like just playing around with the character. I am so grateful to him for having me play Bernie. It was easy because I had to just be myself and let the character and Bernie's story guide me."

Bernie's background as an immigrant is an important aspect to his personality and one del Carmen connected to. "My family migrated here to the U.S. from the Philippines," he says. "A hoped-for dream to better our lives and pursue dreams. That's my dad's pledge to us. Through separation and hardship, he got us here. My own wife and children are with me because of this long shot he made. Bernie wants what is best for his family as well—and he emigrated with his young family in spite of the huge challenge and sacrifice [that would] bring. [That is] an emotional base that I can resonate with Bernie's character."

The film opens with Bernie and Cinder's emotional journey that gives way to Ember's own adventure—all accompanied by composer Thomas Newman's poignant score. "Pete [Sohn] didn't want to open the film with this big number," says editor Stephen Schaffer. "It's about these immigrants' long journey to finding their eventual and happy home. What [Newman] has written is just beautiful in the way that it supports the story—you can instantly feel the love these two characters have for each other."

"'Elemental' speaks to all families," says del Carmen. "We're all small islands who are different from the next family, but 'Elemental' shows how we're all the same beyond what makes us appear to be so separate. We care for our children the same as any family. We want our parents to be proud of us. In that way I hope the movie can help the world find these good things that we share more than what keeps us apart."

**CINDER LUMEN** is Firetown's resident matchmaker, utilizing her natural gift that allows her to smell true love in a Fire person's smoke, whether they know it or not. She boasts numerous matches throughout her tenure—she's proud of her track record—but this brusque, no-nonsense and traditional mom has yet to find a match for her daughter. "Cinder is empathetic and understanding of what Ember is going through," says producer Denise Ream, who considers the character a favorite. "Cinder believes in love—that's especially important to Ember's journey."

Shila Ommi lends her voice to the loving matriarch. “She is fantastic,” says Ream. “Shila is such a great actress—funny and warm. She was able to capture Cinder’s charm in a genuine, natural way. I really, really love her performance.”

Ream adds that finding someone with an accent was important to reinforce that Cinder and Bernie came from someplace else. “But we didn’t want to indicate a specific place in real life,” says the producer. “Shila is from Iran—so she modified her accent slightly to make it less specific but still unique. She did a really great job.”

For Ommi, the role was delightfully familiar. “Cinder was the first character I’ve played in my 25 years of acting that was almost completely myself—with the exception of her having a *Firish* accent,” she says. “Like Cinder—and much to the chagrin of my friends and family—I am a committed matchmaker, though in my case, intent always supersedes success. Also, like Cinder who had to emigrate from Fireland, I emigrated from Iran with my family at the age of 10 at the onset of the 1979 revolution. So, much like Cinder, I know how it feels to look to the future, and love your host country and your new life so much, and yet harbor a deep sadness and longing for your country of origin, and remember how special and rich your life used to be before you were forced leave it forever.”

According to the actress, director Peter Sohn had very specific hopes for the character. “Cinder’s voice needed to express the warmth, complexity and richness of a real human being, and not just any human being, but his mother!” says Ommi. “Mrs. Sohn, Pete’s mom, is who Cinder’s character was based on. I felt tremendous honor, gratitude and responsibility for having been his choice to voice such a dear and important character for him. Pete is such a brilliant voiceover artist himself that every single time he would suggest an adjustment, it was an aha-moment for me. I would think, ‘Of course, that’s so much better!’”

Cinder and the other Fire characters presented a challenge for the camera and layout team, headed by David Bianchi, who says there were a lot of educated guesses happening as the production got off the ground. “The layout team doesn’t have all these bells and whistles,” he says. “We learned a lot after several sequences regarding the growth of the Fire characters. We’d frame them in a certain way and then animation would come in—then it gets rendered with pyro and NSTs and we’d see 15 percent growth in the character’s screen size that we’d have to recalibrate. We learned to back off, even in layout, knowing we would need some space so that these characters weren’t completely filling up the frame.”

**GALE** is an Air element with a big personality, a lot of bluster and a fluffy pink complexion. As Wade’s boss, she expects a lot from her employees—she’s no pushover. Outside the office, Gale is a serious superfan of the Windbreakers, an Air Ball team who play at Element City’s Cyclone Stadium—they’re finally in the playoffs (toot toot!). “We’ve always imagined that she kind of blows with the wind,” says screenwriter John Hoberg. “She might be happy and then furious—she can turn on a dime. But she’s got a good heart and she’s full of life.”

Character supervisor Jeremie Talbot says establishing the shape of the Air characters was important. For Gale, that meant creating what looks like a hair style. “We needed to provide guides indicating how big the cloud puffs are on top of and around the side of her

head versus in her cheeks and where her mouth is,” he says. “Animators needed to be able to perform with those characters with an idea of what they would look like in 3D before the effects folks turned it into a real cloud.”

According to effects supervisor Stephen Marshall, Air characters like Gale are volumes. “They’re like a mix between a cloud and wind,” he says. “There are instances in the movie when they actually break apart—they’re wispy, airy—and then they form again. Those are super-challenging shots because there are so many layers in an Air character including a base cloudy-puffy component and another layer that provides more wispy detail. These have to be mixed together so they don’t feel like separated elements. Clouds tend to soften things in the way that they’re rendered—when you start softening things, you lose detail.”

Crowds animation supervisor Lindsay Andrus and her team had fun imagining how Air elements would congregate. “The fun thing about the crowds department is that it’s like our playground,” she says. “We’re populating the city. We wondered if the Air characters might float down the street—higher than the rest of the elements. They’re the lightest. If Water elements can slide down water slides to get from one place to another, we thought that Air characters might travel by air ships, hot air balloons. Crowds is responsible for all of the vehicles, too.”

Wendi McLendon-Covey lends her voice to Gale. Says Ream, “We wanted this big, blustery personality. If you watch her in ‘Bridesmaids,’ she is hilarious! It was such a treat to work with Wendi.”

The actress was able to dial into the character’s passion. “Gail is a huge fanatic about her sports,” says McLendon-Covey. “They’re watching the Air Ball playoffs and if anybody has a sports fan in their house, they know how important the playoffs are. No one is a better fan than Gail and no one can scream like Gale. I feel like I screamed until it stripped my vocal cords. But that’s OK. That’s how you do it in a stadium.”

McClendon-Covey says director Peter Sohn wanted her to make the character her own. “He told me to ‘bring your special spice to it,’” she says. “He was very collaborative and very complimentary, which is great.”

**BROOK RIPPLE** is Wade’s loving and supportive mom. She’s wildly driven and successful with an eye for talent and a guiding hand. An architect with boundless empathy for the plights of others, Brook never passes up an opportunity for a good cry. In fact, her whole family is tender-hearted—sharing feelings and expressing emotion is the name of the game in the Ripple household. “Wade’s family is a really progressive one,” says Sohn. “They’re very well off—they live in a pool penthouse, we call it, complete with a doorman. They’re all in the arts, too, which is especially appealing to Ember.”

Filmmakers reached out to Catherine O’Hara to voice Wade’s endearing mom. “Who doesn’t love Catherine O’Hara?” asks animation supervisor Michael Venturini. “There was a long line of animators who wanted to animate her scenes and those who ended up animating Brook won the lottery.”

“Early on,” Venturini continues, “we were trying to figure her out—understand how she complements Wade. Turns out, they’re a lot alike. He’s just a chip off the old block. And she’s hilarious.”

O’Hara found she and Brook have a lot in common. “I come from a large family of very happy criers,” she says. “We cried at everything—we loved to tell each other stories that would make us cry. Then we’d laugh about how much we cry. It’s a good thing—it’s such a beautiful release when you need to cry.

“I’m pretty much a go-with-the-flow person,” O’Hara adds. “When I work, I’m totally into my work. When I go home, I’m totally home. I can be refreshing or, if I have to, rain on your parade. I am probably most like Water and not just because I’m Pisces.”

**CLOD** is a young Earth kid who lives in Firetown and tends to show up whenever Ember is around. Clod has a sweet crush on his fiery neighbor that he doesn’t even try to hide. He’s street smart with a caring, gentle heart, and is always throwing corny lines Ember’s way—earning little more than a smile and friendly dismissal. And yet, he persists. Screenwriter Kat Likkel likens the character to an iconic Disney character. “Clod is a little bit of a Jiminy Cricket,” says Likkel. “He sees something in Ember that she doesn’t yet see herself. He really helps her in his innocent, crushy way.”

Mason Wertheimer provides the voice of Clod. “He has a great personality,” says Ream of the young actor. “He’s a little cheeky, which is nice for that role. Clod provides comic relief and really broadens the world Ember lives in.”

Wertheimer, who turns 12 just before “Elemental” opens, shares a few characteristics with Clod. “When I was in first grade, I wrote about persistence—and my mom posted the project on our fridge, probably because it was a big word for a little kid,” says the actor. “Clod is persistent, and I think that’s an admirable quality. It takes strength and courage! Clod knows what he wants in life, and he goes for it.

“Clod isn’t shy, that’s for sure—and neither am I,” continues Wertheimer. “If Ember lived where I live instead of in Element City, I would definitely ask her to my school dance like Clod. Also, my mom tells me sometimes that I don’t need to be in a hurry to be a grown-up, and I have a feeling that she’d give Clod the same advice.”

According to character supervisor Junyi Ling, creating the Earth characters meant breaking them down to the most basic element. “Because dirt is made up of loose, solid granules, it doesn’t behave like something that you can animate,” says Ling. “We spent a lot of time figuring out how to make characters that look like dirt move, stretch and compress in a way that’s not jarring. They’re fun characters with plants growing on them.”

Adds tailoring & simulation supervisor Kristopher Campbell, “Earth characters are dirt and the vegetation is their decoration or their clothing. They might have oak trees, apple trees, conifers, bushes, flowers or a combination. One character has a tree-stump nose: I imagine that this is something that the character can change—like if they’re going out they can take off their work nose and put on their evening nose.”

**FERN** is an overworked, exhausted, by-the-book bureaucrat who has really grown into his job—literally. As a vine-covered Earth element who almost never leaves his desk, his office is a tangle of his extensive leafy tentacles. Fern is dry, sarcastic, slow-moving and does not suffer fools.

Says Maria Yi, character & look development art director, “The core of the Earth characters is actually made out of dirt—that’s their body and soul. They can grow cactus on top—any kind of plants. Giant trees, pine trees—which is like our hair, nails, clothing or jewelry.

“First,” continues Yi, “we had to figure out what kind of dirt—if a character is sandy, it makes sense that he would grow more dry plants compared to a tropical rainforest’s wet, dark dirt.”

According to Campbell, that stylish vegetation—like the hair or costume on a human character—had to be built, styled and simulated. “For the Earth characters, we essentially tailored all of the vegetation,” he says. “The main trunks came out of the characters modeling department, but anything that’s smaller than a trunk—branches, twigs, leaves—was all generated in our department.

“One of the reasons we did that was so that we could hook each of the details into a motion system,” continues Campbell. “The motion on the trees is pretty realistic—we wanted it to feel like the real thing atop these characters.”

Joe Pera provides the voice of Fern. “He’s a comic,” says producer Denise Ream, “which works so well to capture Fern’s wooden approach to his bureaucratic job.”

Filmmakers felt that Pera’s innate sense of humor would help him bring the impassive character to life—but not too much. “I guess I talk slow and boring enough that they thought I could pull it off,” he says. “It was a challenge though because they wanted me to talk even slower and more boring than usual. Hopefully it’s funny, too, but slow was the main objective.”

The role was a career realization for the stand-up comedian. “It was my main goal in life to play a tree and now that my dream has come true, I’m not really sure what to do with myself,” he jokes. “It was a real nice time working with Pete though. He also showed me the microphone James Earl Jones recorded Mufasa with—now that was a treat. But overall, I just felt very lucky to be able to contribute to this special film and be a part of Element City. It’s fun to know that while exciting stuff is happening for the rest of the characters, Fern is in his office, diligently doing paperwork.”

### **ON LOCATION** **Filmmakers Create Multi-Cultural World for Elements**

When director Peter Sohn was a kid in science class, the future storyteller’s imagination was already in full swing. “In middle school when you learn about the periodic table, I never saw it as a periodic table,” says Sohn. “I always saw it as apartment buildings. There

was something so funny about the skyline of the periodic table—these little squares being someone's home. Argon might live next to hydrogen—they would be neighbors.”

Decades later, Sohn would reflect on the idea as he developed the story and look of “Elemental.” “I boiled it down to classical elements—fire, water, air and earth—it’s hard to make fun of barium,” he jokes. Throughout the city, there are nods to Sohn’s early inspiration. “Pieces of the city actually feel like a chemistry set with test tubes,” he says. “One park is shaped like the periodic table.”

The city celebrates all elements. “It’s a very hopeful city in terms of forming interesting elemental relationships,” says Sohn. “Water can help Earth grow materials to fuel Fire. Air gives oxygen to Fire. Of course, sometimes there can be friction between elements, too.

“There’s a hierarchy to Element City,” continues Sohn. “The first community that arrived was Water—that’s the basic infrastructure of the city. The next group would be Earth—the city is built on a delta where earth and water meet. From there, Air would come and then Fire. There are two advantages for this: Element City represents an obstacle to Ember since its water-based infrastructure makes it harder for a Fire element to navigate, but it also reveals an undiscovered beauty and opportunity for her.”

## WORLD-BUILDING

Production designer Don Shank was tasked with extracting whatever was in Sohn’s imagination to create the world of “Elemental.” Shank and his team referenced a number of locales to capture the essence of Element City. “It was a more difficult challenge than we thought,” says Shank. “We were looking at big cities all over the world—in particular those based on canal systems like Venice and Amsterdam. And while Peter said it was not based on New York—it’s an immigrant story and New York is his hometown. We all fall back on what we know when discovering our stories.”

Element City, like a lot of large cities, is made up of districts. Firetown, which was the last to be established, is home to Ember, her family and many Fire characters. The rest of the city has dedicated districts for Water, Air and Earth—though since those elements have been there for generations, the areas are more diversified. Since the city itself was founded by Water elements, a canal system serves as the central mode of transportation—aptly called the Wetro—though each element has introduced their own methods of moving about the city over the years. “It’s not supposed to be a melting pot, really,” Shank says. “We didn’t want to create this homogenous world. We wanted to celebrate all these different cultures and characters living and working together.”

According to the production designer, artists had several tricks up their sleeves to help quickly identify the different districts. Water is generally blue, fire is red and orange, earth is green or brown. “Air tends to be purple, translucent, lavender or pink,” adds Shank. “But it’s subtle—no place is all one color. We didn’t want to be on the nose.”

Other methods of differentiation involved the style of buildings. Earth areas, says Shank, feature a lot of vegetation and terraces. “The shape of a building might look like a giant pine tree,” he says. “Water areas feature lots of waterfalls—water rushing down the sides of buildings. Structures in these areas might look like glass—translucent and sparkly. For Air areas, we leaned into things like propellers—anything we could do to show air flow. We

took a lot of inspiration from kites, clouds and vapor. Cyclone Stadium is shaped like a giant tornado.”

Sets supervisor Jun Han Cho describes a rich and detailed environment. “It’s a very complex world,” he says. “We wanted to push colors. We wanted to push shapes. The nice thing about creating new worlds is that we had a lot of freedom.”

Jean-Claude Kalache, director of photography-lighting, and his team were also inspired to infuse some magic into the city—especially at night. “After dark, Element City is very vibrant,” he says. “We wanted it to twinkle. All of the window lights have a little bit of warbling brightness and darkness. So, there’s life in the buildings themselves.

“There’s also a bit of mist at the low level of Element City because it’s surrounded by water,” continues Kalache. “We wanted to remind the audience that there is danger for Fire characters with this mistiness in the air in Element City versus the dryness and the safety of Firetown.”

### **DOWNTOWN FIRETOWN**

For Firetown, artists incorporated shapes reminiscent of cooking like pots and ovens, with a lot of metal and stone—materials that Fire characters can interact with without causing damage. “The Firetown neighborhood was originally established by Earth residents,” hypothesizes Shank, “but has been adopted by Fire over the years. There are Earth buildings that have been retrofitted. I think it makes Firetown more interesting.”

The textures and palette of the materials were selected to underscore who was using them—without being too on the nose. “We couldn’t go too realistic,” says color and shading art director Jennifer Chang. “We didn’t want to char the whole thing. But we liked textures that might come from torching it like a crème brûlée. We played with pattern and specularity of objects. All the set design was pushing the idea of the shape of the flame—the triangle, diamond or a candlelight feeling to it. The shading considered all of the wear and tear—how flame would interact with this furniture in this world, while expressing it in the theatrical way.”

Artists capitalized on every opportunity to showcase Firetown as home to the Fire elements—right down to the streets. Says sets shading lead Tracy Church, “We wanted to make the street look like soot, which can be challenging for lighting because black is very hard to light. Maria Yi [character & look development art director] and Don Shank, the production designer, did some visual iterations and paintings—they found that fire looks best against a black background. And soot doesn’t necessarily have to be dirty—it can be stylized.”

According to David Bianchi, director of photography for camera and layout, there was a specific camera plan designed for shooting in Firetown. “We predominantly shot on the wider end of our lens palette,” he says, “which allowed a crisper image. It mimics Ember’s comfort with Firetown. Everything is in focus for her. When Wade enters the picture, we start to change the lens palette.”

Fireplace, Ember’s family shop, was designed with a host of fireproof materials and an array of items for sale that would come in handy in a Fire element’s household. It’s also a bit of a hangout in the neighborhood. Like any good neighborhood, Firetown had to be

**Commented [HCK1]:** Would love to list a few items here — Laura Meyer should have a list.

populated with crowds characters—characters that add life to the community and help define it. Just like Ember and her family, these characters are Fire. But according to crowds animation supervisor Lindsay Andrus, the team approached Fire characters much like they would approach crowds characters in any production. “We have three body types—medium, round and stout,” she says. “We can switch out the heads for all of these base figures to vary the character looks. Plus, we had one Fire kid and one Fire baby. We didn’t get to animate the Fire baby very much, but it’s really cute.”

Andrus adds that while a Fire character in a crowd might not mimic the effects work of a hero character like Bernie or Cinder, there was a lot of effort behind maintaining the shape language. “We didn’t want to see hard points on any of the Fire characters—no elbows or knees,” she says. “If they’re moving fast—a hand might disappear and reappear like a flame shrinking and growing.”

### **BODY OF WATER**

According to color & shading art director Jennifer Chang, artists wanted to create a contrast between Fire and Water and a big part of that was in the look of the environments. “If Firetown is represented by the reds, oranges, yellows—warm and dry—then the water district is the opposite of that,” she says. “It’s full of water, and it’s a cooler palette. Everything’s more slick, more reflective, more translucent, more transparent. And it’s a world that represents some danger to Ember. When she’s in that world it’s uncomfortable.”

There’s nothing quite as uncomfortable as meeting that special friend’s family for the first time, as Ember discovers when Wade invites her to dinner at his mom Brook Ripple’s home. Says sets supervisor Jun Han Cho, “Wade’s mom’s apartment is a very exclusive penthouse, so we wanted the elegance and grace of someone who can afford something like that. At the same time, we wanted to have fun—her apartment is essentially a big indoor pool. There is a feeling of contemporary architecture—concrete, glass—but there are also pool noodles, lane lines and pool floaties for furniture. It all makes you enjoy the fact that Water people would, of course, live in an indoor pool. It’s so fun, but it also adds to Ember’s discomfort out in the world—how does a Fire character sit on a pool floaty without popping it?”

### **COMING UP FOR AIR**

According to sets supervisor Jun Han Cho, the key word for the world of “Elemental” is dynamic. “Most of the environments in past movies are stationary places,” he says. “Leaves in the trees move, but the architecture tends to be still. On this show, there’s actually a lot of kinetic architecture. We wanted to highlight that. This is not a static world.”

It’s fitting that Cyclone Stadium would lead the pack in terms of kinetic architecture. “It’s a space for a game that is totally made up,” says Cho. “And Air Ball players can move in three dimensions, so we have a lot of pieces that are moving in that set. First of all, there are a bunch of fans inside the stadium. Below the seats, there are these gills with lights behind them that open and close in waves across stadium, adding excitement. Outside the stadium, while it’s static, the overall shape is meant to feel very dynamic—it’s a cyclone captured in time. To put it in motion, so to speak, there are little panels that sparkle and shimmer. Everything is alive and organic and awesome.”

Contributing to that level of awesome in Cyclone Stadium are the crowds. According to crowds technical supervisor Paul Kanyuk, the stadium features the film’s largest crowd

shots at about 40,000 characters. “There’s a shot where Ember first walks through the tunnel into the stadium and you get a big sweeping POV with tens of thousands of characters. That was the sequence that defined how big we had to go. It was third in the production order—incredibly intimidating, but I also appreciated it because it meant that we hit our biggest challenge as a department up front.”

Kanyuk and his team had to figure out how to actually fill the immense number of seats. “It had to be done programmatically,” he says, “based on the seating geometry. We had to carve up the seating into regions: we had what we called the inner donut—the area right around Gale in her box seat. That part of the crowd had the most detail.” The farther from the inner donut, the less detail needed.

While watching the Air Ball game, Wade notices his team needs some support and he initiates a giant wave—literally—inside Cyclone Stadium to gin up the Windbreaker fans. The sequence required collaboration between shot effects, character effects and crowds. According to Kanyuk, the crowds team couldn’t hold back. “This moment is what the sequence was built around,” he says. “Wade gets the crowd excited and the Water characters literally create the wave. We were careful about the placement of characters in groups so that it would look random but still have enough coherence that you would buy a big ring of Water characters forming the wave. We created what we called the nearest neighbor’s clustered spatial casting with all these controls to stretch it out and create islands and isthmuses of casting—basically to make it all plausible.”

Kanyuk says technology was built to create the curve and arching that was decidedly not human, generating the right shape and triggering the transitions. “That was all programming,” he says. “We couldn’t find a way to do it other than math.”

Adds effects supervisor Jon Reisch, “It’s hard enough to create a crashing ocean wave that’s art directed—hitting certain cues at certain times. But this wave is being emitted from Wade. All of these Water characters contribute to it—create it. Getting the control that we needed over a big dynamic simulation like a crashing wave was really tricky.”

### **GAINING PERSPECTIVE**

Element City—a world only possible from the rich imaginations of the artists and technicians at Pixar—is a huge source of pride for the production team. “There was a huge world we wanted to show off,” says David Bianchi, director of photography for camera and layout. “It’s all about the scope.”

Bianchi incorporated large-format photography in the film, leaning into a trend in the industry. “I’m able to have wider field of views for longer lenses,” he says. “I wanted to get more field of view on ‘Elemental’ without using wide-angle lenses throughout the film. I didn’t want a distorted look—once you start going wider angle, you lose the ability to have depth of field, so large-format photography makes your 50mm lens look like a 25. You get the same field of view as the 25, but you have all the properties of 50. In some cases, we could use a wider lens to get a richer, more cinematic look. That large format was the biggest touchstone key for me to turn the camera a little bit on its head for Pixar. There were other properties of large format that I didn’t want on our film, so I cherry picked, which is the beauty of animation.”

### GETTING THE RIGHT EFFECT

The effects team behind “Elemental” not only had their hands full with two main characters that were effects in and of themselves, they also had a vast world built for and by each of the elements. For the first time in Pixar’s history, the effects team was essentially doubled—half focused on the character effects while the other half tackled the environments—“everything from water, fire, rain, explosions, electricity, destruction and floods,” says effects supervisor Jon Reisch, who headed up those environmental effects. “But between those two halves of our team was some really interesting interplay and dynamics. Ember and Wade are very heavily stylized and caricatured with an amazing amount of shading. How do you integrate them with very physical effects—a flood or raging fire—that are designed to convey emotion, danger, dread? Imagine Wade in the middle of a flood—he has to feel like he’s part of the same world. Getting those two things to talk to each other in the same frame was really challenging.”

Beyond the crashes, floods and destruction, Reisch and his team also had to help bring Element City to life with water features, fiery details, airy décor. “We wanted to make sure we brought that flavor of the Fire characters and their culture into Firetown,” he says. “We have these sweeping shots from Firetown looking back towards Element City. Every single rooftop has effects fires and smokestacks that really provide a visual signpost of where you are in the city. Even the streetlamps themselves have fires in them. We worked really closely with the sets department.”

### A GOOD SIGN

Pixar Animation Studios is known for its attention to detail. Helping to find that magic in the details for “Elemental” was graphics art director Laura Meyer. Meyer was responsible for creating all things graphic for the film—“anything with letters on it,” she says. The film offered ample opportunity to have fun with the graphics—in fact, director Peter Sohn specifically requested funny, punny graphics. “He has such an amazing sense of humor,” says Meyer, who created what she calls a “homegrown” look. “I used very few typefaces straight out of the box—I did most by hand. I wanted it to fit into our environments, which are so stylized.” Meyer’s objective? “Imperfect and organic,” she says.

Her efforts called for more than her artistic talents. “I honestly spent more time researching to come up with good puns,” she says. “I had a running list of anything and everything remotely sarcastic anyone said. People would send me ideas.”

Beyond the puns, Meyer—a one-person team—was responsible for everything from the prominent signage—like the Fireplace sign of Ember’s family shop and the motion graphics in Cyclone Stadium—to the verbiage aboard the Wetrol—the water-themed transport system. “The Wetrol schedule is there—it looks like a periodic table—and there are loads of ads,” says Meyer.”

### MUSIC NOTES

#### Filmmakers Call on Thomas Newman for Film Score; Singer-Songwriter Lauv Performs, Co-Writes Original Song “Steal the Show”

Filmmakers at Pixar Animation Studios have long understood the power of music in helping to bring a story to life. Indeed, world-building extends far beyond the buildings and background characters—the soundscape selected for a film adds depth to the characters’

journey and helps define emotional moments. For the “Elemental” score, filmmakers called on a tried-and-true member of their musical family: Thomas Newman. Newman’s Pixar credits include 2003’s “Finding Nemo,” 2008’s “WALL•E” and 2016’s “Finding Dory”—the celebrated composer was nominated for an Oscar® for his work on both “Finding Nemo” and “WALL•E.” When it came time to find the perfect song for a key sequence in the film, Pixar filmmakers teamed up with multi-Platinum chart-topping singer, songwriter, producer and multi-instrumentalist Lauv, who worked with Newman and songwriter Michael Matosic on the film’s original single, “Steal the Show.”

### SCORE!

Director Peter Sohn capitalized on Newman’s experience and artistry to amplify the story’s emotional core. According to Sohn, Newman’s score brilliantly captures the unexpected connection between Ember and Wade, Fire and Water—opposites by all accounts. Not only that, says the director, but it eloquently accompanies the story’s deepening relationship between father and daughter. “As a fan of Tom’s scores,” says Sohn, “one of my favorite aspects of his work is how he finds a way to present the inner thoughts of characters through music and present more sophisticated energy to an emotional moment. This was something that we were very excited to have Tom help out with and I am so moved by the work he created for the film.”

Newman’s edict was to create music that spans the film’s emotional spectrum. “You have the utterly ludicrous all the way to deeply profound,” he says. “As a composer, you always want to help tell the story: ‘Elemental’ is full of puns that are there for laughs; at the same time, there are some really deep issues.”

The music also conveys the unique cultural undertones of the story—without leaning on any existing cultural hallmarks. “From Fire, Water, Earth and Air, how could we create something that was unique to the world of the film and wasn’t going to appropriate anything from our human world?” asks Sohn. “Through Tom’s amazing breadth of experience, we believed in his skill to create something very unique for the different communities of our film. The surprise for me was how he was able to unify the different cultures through our main character. How we could feel the music of the Fire culture through Ember, and then feel what she was going through when leaving her comfort zone and enter a city that wasn’t built for Fire.”

According to Newman, that was the best part. “The most fun is discovering the vocabulary and different musical colors,” he says.

Producer Denise Ream is a longtime fan of the composer. “I’m so excited for people to hear this score,” she says. “Thomas Newman is a pro—just so unbelievably experienced. It’s been really wonderful to observe him—he’s incredibly thoughtful. The choices he makes are anything but literal, so he surprises me a lot.”

Adds Sohn, “He was amazing to work with on all levels. His thoughtfulness on character motivations and his brilliant artistry in capturing feelings deepened the movie to a level I never thought was possible. I am forever grateful for that experience.”

### “STEAL THE SHOW”

“Elemental” invites audiences to journey alongside Ember and Wade as they realize that maybe they’re not so different after all. Thanks to Wade, Ember is able to see Element City for the first time without trepidation. The occasion is aptly captured in song, compliments of singer-songwriter Lauv, who collaborated with Newman for “Steal the Show,” an original song that can be heard in part during the film and in full during the end credits. Original songs tend to come together during the latter half of production—and that was the case for “Elemental.” But Sohn had embraced the magic of Lauv long before “Steal the Show” was even conceived. “They loved my song, ‘I Like Me Better,’” says Lauv, “and used it in initial versions as a placeholder.”

Explains Sohn, “At Pixar, we remake our films several times through the course of a production,” says the director. “What I mean is that we create rough story reels through drawings, rough vocal performances and temporary music to find the film.”

So, if it's real  
Then darlin' let me know  
I wouldn't mind  
If you steal the show  
~“Steal the Show”

The film follows Ember and Wade from the moment they meet, which is awkward at best. But that all changes as Wade pulls Ember out of her comfort zone, showcased in a charming sequence that called for just the right music to strike the right tone. “I love

Lauv’s music,” says Sohn, “so when we finally got the chance to work with him, I referenced his music and how we were using it.”

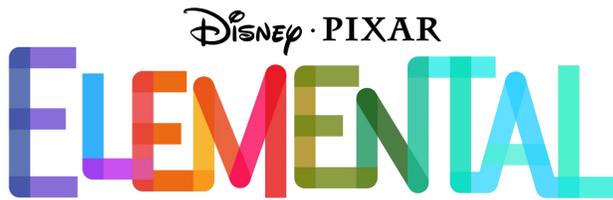
Pixar also shared a rough cut of the movie with Lauv who worked with Newman on a song entitled “Steal the Show.” Says Newman, “I came to him with fragments of ideas that had begun as score. so it began with that general vocabulary. And then he wrote these beautiful melodies and I tried to use them later in the movie. We fed off each other.”

For Lauv, the experience was unlike anything he’d ever tackled. “This was one of my favorite songs ever to write because the process was really different,” said Lauv of the creative process. “I sat down with Thomas Newman and he gave me a couple of sounds that he was working with and I asked, ‘Can I have a couple of minutes in a room, pull up a piano and turn on the microphone?’ I had melodies, chords and a couple of key lyrics totally freestyled after watching the scene. It was a very in-the-moment thing.”

Songwriter and frequent Lauv-collaborator Michael Matosic was called on to contribute to the lyrics, and Lauv worked with Newman to polish the song. “It was really cool to go back and forth with Thomas and build the whole soundscape,” says Lauv, who liked the addition of “real strings” and a children’s choir. “It was really cool to go back and forth with Thomas and build the whole soundscape and then I combined it with very classic Lauv sounds.”

Says Sohn, “He captured the beauty [Ember and Wade] saw in each other and how it could be something more. We were so emotional when we first heard his song. It was overwhelming and we feel absolutely indebted to what he gave the film.”

Adds Ream, “It’s a great pop song that resonated with everyone—we can’t wait to share it with audiences and music fans. I’m totally in love with this song.”



### TALENT BIOS

**LEAH LEWIS (voice of Ember)** is known for her breakout performance in the Netflix feature film "The Half of It." Deadline praised the film's "exceptionally bright young cast led by the beguiling Leah Lewis," while Rolling Stone raved, "Lewis is an actress with the rare ability to locate the truth in every scene." Written and directed by Alice Wu, "The Half of It" launched globally on Netflix after winning the Founders Award for best U.S. narrative feature at the Tribeca Film Festival. Lewis voices the role of Räv in Paramount's animated feature film "The Tiger's Apprentice," which releases in 2024 and features the voices of Sandra Oh and Michelle Yeoh. Lewis recently wrapped the fourth and final season of the CW series "Nancy Drew," which releases on May 31, 2023.

Adopted from a Chinese orphanage as an infant, Lewis is poised to emigrate into living rooms everywhere with her triple talent as an actress, singer, and dancer.

Lewis acknowledges that her life would have been quite different had a Florida couple not come to Shanghai and brought her back to Orlando at six months of age. By the age of 3, Lewis had already demonstrated a love of performing, taking Russian ballet at Central Florida Ballet and putting on private family shows. She began taking acting lessons at age 4, appearing in her first TV commercial for Nature's Own bread. This led to national spots for Disneyland, Kraft and The Home Depot. In her first youth musical, Lewis surprised everyone with her perfect pitch, and from there came singing lessons, including opera and jazz, as well as salsa, hip-hop dancing, gymnastics, fencing, scuba diving and other diverse activities.

On stage in school, Lewis played Molly in "Annie" and Gabriella in "High School Musical," and also performed on Fox TV during the halftime show for the Orlando Magic. Since then, she has steadily earned work in TV and film, including her very first onscreen role as Spoon in the feature film "Fred 3: Camp Fred." She went on to appear in the Disney TV movie "Madison High," in which she played Peyton Hall, a home-schooled transfer student who just wants to fit in, despite her fierce intelligence and competitive nature. Lewis enjoys playing "an independent, confident character." She has continued to appear in several other projects including the Julia Louis-Dreyfus series "The New Adventures of Old Christine," the animated/live-action series "Paloozaville" with John Lithgow, and "The Watermelon Seed," a Mandarin-language production shot in L.A.'s Chinatown district. More recently, Lewis appeared in the CW's "Charmed," "Guidance," ABC's "Station 19," Fox's "The Gifted," Hulu's "Light as a Feather," and ABC's "The Good Doctor." She also appears in the feature film "How to Deter a Robber."

In addition to her acting, Lewis is an incredible singer, having appeared on season 4 of

NBC's "The Voice." She has also shared the stage with Natalie Cole and Sting in a benefit to raise funds for UNICEF, and performed at the House of Blues in Hollywood and for various other annual fundraisers. She sang a solo at her high school graduation in Orlando and was a member of her high school Thespians, where she played Mulan and did all the choreography. In her free time, Lewis enjoys photography, drawing, writing and spending time with her family and friends.

**MAMOUDOU ATHIE (voice of Wade)** is an Emmy®-nominated actor based in Los Angeles, Calif. He recently wrapped two prestige projects debuting in the near future: Maggie Betts' "The Burial" for Amazon Studios, alongside Jamie Foxx and Tommy Lee Jones, and Yorgos Lanthimos's film "And" for Searchlight, alongside Emma Stone, Jesse Plemons, Willem Dafoe, Margaret Qualley, Hong Chau and Joe Alwyn.

In film, Athie was most recently seen on the big screen alongside Chris Pratt and Bryce Dallas Howard in Universal and Colin Trevorrow's "Jurassic World: Dominion," which brought in \$143 million at the box office for its opening weekend.

In television, Athie can be seen as the lead in the James Wan produced Netflix series "Archive 81," which received a stellar 95 percent on Rotten Tomatoes and premiered No. 1 on the streaming service.

Previously, Athie was nominated for an Emmy for outstanding actor in a short form comedy or drama series for his role in the FX series "Oh Jerome, No." He was also seen as the lead in Prentice Penny's feature "Uncorked" for Netflix opposite Courtney B. Vance, which is currently 93 percent on Rotten Tomatoes. Athie also led the Amazon and Blumhouse feature "Black Box." He is known for his roles in Jason Reitman's feature "The Front Runner" opposite Hugh Jackman, as well as in two seasons of James Ponsoldt's dramatic Facebook series "Sorry for Your Loss" opposite Elizabeth Olsen.

His credits also include roles in Netflix's "Unicorn Store," the Sundance smash hit "Patti Cake\$," and a breakout role as Grandmaster Flash in Baz Luhrmann's Netflix series "The Get Down."

Athie graduated from Yale School of Drama's MFA program and was given the prestigious "Rising Star" honor at the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival.

**RONNIE DEL CARMEN (voice of Bernie)** is an animation writer and director who co-directed and was one of the story writers for the 2015 Pixar film "Inside Out," for which he was nominated for an Academy Award for best original screenplay. He was the story supervisor on Pixar Animation Studios' 10th full-length computer-animated film, "Up," and directed its accompanying short film, "Dug's Special Mission." He joined Netflix in 2020 where he is writing and developing an original animated feature as part of an exclusive overall deal. The movie will be rooted in the lore and mythology of the Philippines.

Del Carmen was born in the Philippines on Dec. 31, 1959, in the city of Cavite, Philippines. After high school, he worked in the painting department on set for Francis

Ford Coppola's 1979 film "Apocalypse Now," which was filming in the Philippines. He graduated from the University of Santo Tomas with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in advertising. He moved to the United States in 1989 and worked as a storyboard artist and designer for "Batman: The Animated Series" and for DreamWorks as a story supervisor on their first animated features "The Prince of Egypt," "The Road to El Dorado," "Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron" and others. He joined Pixar in 2000 where he worked on "Finding Nemo," "Ratatouille," "WALL•E," "Up," "Coco" and "Inside Out." He was also part of the company's brain trust and creative leadership.

**SHILA OMMI (voice of Cinder)** was born in Tehran and has lived in Los Angeles since 1979. She has starring roles in Apple TV+'s "Tehran" and "Little America," and the upcoming Netflix series "Kaos." Ommi has directed and produced award-winning plays in Los Angeles, and for over two decades she has toured internationally, performing plays in Persian under the stage name Shila Vosough. As a voiceover artist, Ommi has narrated documentaries, virtual reality tour exhibits for the Getty Museum, and voiced characters for animation series and feature films.

Ommi directed the multi-award-winning feature film "Wake Up Sleeping Beauty," a psychological drama about a young Iranian American woman waking up from cultural trappings and curses and coming into her own power.

Actor, comedian, and producer **WENDI McLENDON-COVEY (Gale)** is a master of comedy. With perfect timing and an unforgettable presence both on stage and on camera, she has been captivating audiences her entire career. As fan-favorite matriarch Beverly Goldberg on "The Goldbergs," New York Magazine's Vulture called her "The Greatest TV Mom of 2015" for her performance in the third season. For this role, she has been nominated for two Critics Choice awards. She is now a producer on the show.

Many know McClendon-Covey from her starring role in "Bridesmaids," the 2011 groundbreaking female comedy. The ensemble cast garnered a SAG Award® nomination for outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture and a Golden Globe® nomination for best motion picture—comedy or musical. In addition, the film won an AFI award in 2012 for movie of the year. There has not been a comedy film since with this incredible amount of critical acclaim.

McClendon-Covey can be seen in films such as Steve Harvey's "Think Like a Man Too," opposite Kevin Hart and Regina Hall, and before that, she starred in Tyler Perry's "The Single Mom's Club" with Terry Crews and Amy Smart. She also starred in Adam Sandler's Happy Madison production "Blended," opposite Sandler and Drew Barrymore. McClendon-Covey is the lead actress in the independent film "Blush," which debuted at the Sundance Film Festival in 2019 and was released worldwide in 2020. Additionally, McClendon-Covey can be seen in movies "Barb and Star Go to Vista Del Mar" alongside Kristen Wiig and Jamie Dornan, "Sylvie's Love" with Tessa Thompson, and "Sick Girl." McClendon-Covey can also be seen in the independent film "Paint" alongside Owen Wilson.

True comedy fans will recognize McClendon-Covey from her five-year arc on “Reno 911,” a cult classic mockumentary about law enforcement. The reboot was released in 2020 and has earned an Emmy nomination. Other television work includes “Lovespring International,” “Modern Family” and “Rules of Engagement.”

McClendon-Covey started at the world-famous Groundlings Theatre in Los Angeles, where she excelled at both improv and sketch comedy. She resides in Los Angeles with her husband.

**CATHERINE O'HARA (voice of Brook)** is a prolific, multi-award-winning actress, writer and comedian whose film credits include lead and supporting roles in “Beetlejuice,” “Home Alone,” “Home Alone 2: Lost in New York,” “After Hours,” “Heartburn,” “The Life Before This,” “Penelope,” “Away We Go,” “Where the Wild Things Are,” “A.C.O.D.,” “The Right Kind of Wrong,” “The Nightmare Before Christmas” and many more.

O'Hara has collaborated with Christopher Guest and co-writer Eugene Levy four times on the critically acclaimed mockumentary films “Waiting for Guffman,” “Best in Show,” “A Mighty Wind” and “For Your Consideration.” Her performance in the latter won her the 2006 National Board of Review Award for supporting actress.

O'Hara has made many guest appearances on top-rated television series including “Six Feet Under” and “Curb Your Enthusiasm.” Her role in the HBO’s “Temple Grandin” earned her Primetime Emmy®, Satellite and SAG Award nominations.

O'Hara first performed with Toronto’s Second City Theatre. Later, she created the iconic sketch comedy show SCTV with fellow alumni including Eugene Levy. O'Hara won an Emmy Award and earned four Emmy nominations for her writing on the show.

In the final two seasons of the hit CBC series “Schitt’s Creek,” O'Hara received an Emmy Award for outstanding lead actress in a comedy series, a Golden Globe Award for best performance by an actress in a comedy television series, a SAG Award for outstanding performance by a female actor in a comedy series, a Critics’ Choice Award for best actress in a comedy series, a TCA Award for individual achievement in comedy, and multiple Canadian Screen Awards for best performance by an actress in a continuing leading comedic role, among others. O'Hara also garnered a SAG Award in the best ensemble category alongside her cast mates Eugene Levy, Dan Levy and Annie Murphy.

**MASON WERTHEIMER (voice of Clod)** is an animal-loving NYC middle schooler. When he’s not recording voiceovers or competing in debate tournaments, he enjoys playing ice hockey, baseball and soccer. Big thanks to Bonnie Shumofsky Bloom and Lucius Robinson at Stewart Talent; Natalie Lyon and Peter Sohn at Pixar; Mama/VO audition director, Josey Miller; Daddy/skating buddy, Jeff; and especially his hilarious little brother, Ryan.

**JOE PERA (voice of Fern)** is a standup comedian, writer and filmmaker from Buffalo, NY, now living in New York, NY. Pera is best known for his Adult Swim series, “Joe Pera Talks with You,” which The LA Times refers to as “TV’s quietest, most artful comedy.”

Pera has performed his subdued standup on “Conan,” “Late Night with Seth Meyers” and Comedy Central. After his animated special “Joe Pera Talks You to Sleep,” which many have found to work, he followed up with other projects for Adult Swim, including “Joe Pera Helps You Find the Perfect Christmas Tree” and “Relaxing Old Footage with Joe Pera.” Through his production company, Chestnut Walnut, Pera has also directed a number of film and TV projects, including Conner O’Malley’s “Truthhunters” pilot for Comedy Central. Season 3 of “Joe Pera Talks with You” is now available to stream on HBO Max, and Pera can be seen on season 5 of “Search Party.”

Pera’s new book “A Bathroom Book for People Not Pooping or Peeing but Using the Bathroom as an Escape” is out now from Macmillan Publishers, and on the USA TODAY’s best-selling books list.

Pera’s new sleep podcast “Drifting Off with Joe Pera,” a collaboration with composer Ryan Dann, can be found on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Patreon. New episodes release on the first Sunday of each month. Pera’s first standup special “Slow and Steady” will be released later this year.

#### FILMMAKER BIOS

**PETER SOHN (Directed by/Story by)** joined Pixar Animation Studios in September 2000 and has worked on Academy Award-winning feature films including “Finding Nemo,” “The Incredibles” and “WALL•E.” Sohn made his directorial debut on the Pixar short “Partly Cloudy,” before going on to direct his first feature “The Good Dinosaur.” He was also an executive producer on “Luca,” which debuted on Disney+ in June 2021.

In his role as a creative VP, Sohn is involved in key creative decision-making at the studio and consults on films in both development and production.

In addition to his contributions as a filmmaker, Sohn has lent his voice talents to Pixar’s feature films. In “Ratatouille” he voiced the character of Emile, and in “Monsters University,” he is the voice of Scott “Squishy” Squibbles. Audiences can also hear Sohn in “Lightyear” as Buzz’s dutiful robot companion cat, Sox.

Prior to Pixar, Sohn worked at Warner Bros. with “Ratatouille” director Brad Bird on “The Iron Giant,” as well as at Disney TV. He grew up in New York and attended California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). He lives in the Bay Area.

**DENISE REAM, p.g.a. (Produced by)** joined Pixar Animation Studios in October 2006 as the associate producer on the Academy Award-winning feature film “Up.” Ream continued on to produce 2011’s “Cars 2,” working alongside director John Lasseter, and Pixar’s original November 2015 feature film, “The Good Dinosaur,” with director Peter Sohn.

Prior to Pixar, Ream worked in visual effects production beginning at Boss Film Studios, a company who specialized in 65MM effects. She went on to work at Industrial Light and

Magic where she spent 13 years in production. During her tenure there, Ream worked as a visual effects and animation producer on a number of projects including “Daylight,” “Eraser,” “Deep Impact,” “Amistad,” “The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle,” “Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone,” “Timeline” and “Tears of the Sun.” Ream also served as the visual effects and animation executive producer on “Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge of the Sith” and spent her last year at ILM as an executive in charge of production for “Mission Impossible 3,” “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest,” “Lady in the Water” and “Transformers.”

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Calif., Ream graduated with a bachelor’s degree in English literature from the University of California, Berkeley. She lives in the Bay Area.

**PETE DOCTER (Executive Producer)** is the Oscar-winning director of “Monsters, Inc.,” “Up” and “Inside Out,” and chief creative officer at Pixar Animation Studios. Docter directed Disney and Pixar’s Oscar-winning feature film “Soul” with producer Dana Murray and co-director Kemp Powers.

Starting at Pixar in 1990 as the studio’s third animator, Docter collaborated and helped develop the story and characters for “Toy Story,” Pixar’s first full-length animated feature film, for which he also was supervising animator. He served as a storyboard artist on “A Bug’s Life,” and wrote initial story treatments for both “Toy Story 2” and “WALL•E.” Aside from directing his four films, Docter also executive produced “Monsters University” and the Academy Award-winning “Brave.”

Docter’s interest in animation began at the age of 8 when he created his first flipbook. He studied character animation at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia, Calif., where he produced a variety of short films, one of which won a Student Academy Award. Those films have since been shown in animation festivals worldwide and are featured on the “Pixar Short Films Collection 2.” Upon joining Pixar, Docter animated and directed several commercials, and has been nominated for nine Academy Awards, including best animated feature-winners “Up,” “Inside Out” and “Soul,” and nominee “Monsters, Inc.,” and best original screenplay for “Up,” “Inside Out” and “WALL•E.” In 2010, “Up” was also nominated for a best picture Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Powerhouse writers, producers, showrunners, and creators **JOHN HOBERG & KAT LIKKEL (screenplay by/story by)** have become a staple in the entertainment industry over the last 20 years, proving that you can be successful in Hollywood and remain married, an anomaly in the business. From feature films to sitcoms, animation and musicals, Hoberg and Likkell have constructed original stories and unique characters, and brought worlds to life on the big and small screens that have captivated audiences of all ages.

This year Hoberg and Likkell have a handful of exciting projects on the docket in addition to “Elemental.” Up next in television, Hoberg serves as executive producer and writer on Dan Fogelman’s untitled new drama series for Hulu starring three-time Emmy Award winner Sterling K. Brown (“This Is Us”). The series is produced by 20th Television, with

Dan Fogelman, Sterling K. Brown and Jess Rosenthal executive producing alongside Hoberg.

In addition to their work in film and TV, Hoberg and Likkel are working on an original musical alongside the Michael Cassel Group (Hamilton International Tour) which is currently underactive development.

Hoberg and Likkel have a long history at ABC and ABC Studios, securing three consecutive overall deals covering a span of eight years. Since joining the studio in 2010, they have written and supervised pilot scripts and held executive producer credits on a plethora of projects. In 2017, they were executive producers and showrunners on ABC's critically acclaimed comedy series "Downward Dog," which was the first network half hour to ever premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. They also served as showrunners on the Emmy Award-nominated musical series "Galavant" for ABC. Additional writing and producing credits for them include "black-ish," "The Neighbors," "Better Off Ted" and "My Name Is Earl," to name a few.

Hoberg and Likkel currently reside in the Los Angeles area, with their two dogs.

**BRENDA HSUEH (screenplay by/story by)** began her career writing on the first three seasons of "How I Met Your Mother," and then worked as a co-executive producer on Apple TV+'s "The Afterparty" and "Mr. Corman."

In the feature film space, Hsueh wrote the upcoming "Ghostbusters" film from Sony Pictures, and will make her feature directorial debut with "Match," a live-action sci-fi romantic dramedy.

In addition to her work in writing and directing, Hsueh also works as a producer and started her own production company Shoes Off Productions, which produces both television and feature film projects.

**THOMAS NEWMAN (Original Score Composed and Conducted by/"Steal the Show" song: Music by)** is widely acclaimed as one of today's most prominent composers for film. He has composed music for more than 80 motion pictures and television series and has earned 15 Academy Award nominations, one Emmy Award and six GRAMMY® Awards.

He is the youngest son of Alfred Newman (1900-1970), the longtime musical director of 20th Century Fox and the composer of scores for such films as "Wuthering Heights," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," "The Diary of Anne Frank" and "All About Eve." As a child, Thomas pursued basic music and piano studies. However, it was not until after his father's death that the younger Newman, then age 14, felt charged with the desire to write. He later studied composition and orchestration at USC with Professor Frederick Lesemann and noted film composer David Raksin, and privately with composer George Tremblay. He completed his academic work at Yale University, studying with Jacob Druckman, Bruce MacCombie and Robert Moore. Newman also gratefully acknowledges the early influence

of another prominent musician, the legendary Broadway composer Stephen Sondheim, who served as a great mentor and champion.

A turning point in Newman's career took place while he was working as a musical assistant on the 1984 film, "Reckless," for which he soon was promoted to the position of composer. And so, at the age of 27, Newman successfully composed his first film score. Since then he has contributed distinctive and evocative scores to many acclaimed films, including "Desperately Seeking Susan," "The Lost Boys," "The Rapture," "Fried Green Tomatoes," "The Player," "Scent of a Woman," "Flesh and Bone," "The Shawshank Redemption," "Little Women," "American Buffalo," "The People vs. Larry Flynt," "Oscar and Lucinda," "The Horse Whisperer," "Meet Joe Black," "American Beauty," "The Green Mile," "Erin Brockovich," "In the Bedroom," "Road to Perdition," "Finding Nemo," "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events," "Cinderella Man," "Jarhead," "Little Children," "The Good German," "Revolutionary Road," "WALL•E," "The Help," "The Iron Lady," "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," "Skyfall," "Spectre," "Victoria & Abdul," "The Highwaymen," "Tolkien," Steven Spielberg's "Bridge of Spies," "1917," "Let Them All Talk," "The Little Things," "Operation Mincemeat" and "A Man Called Otto." Newman also composed the music for HBO's acclaimed six-hour miniseries "Angels in America" directed by Mike Nichols. He received an Emmy Award for his theme for the HBO original series "Six Feet Under." His upcoming film projects include director Peter Sohn's "Elemental" for Pixar, and director Marc Forster's "White Bird."

In addition to his work in film and television, Newman has composed several works for the concert stage, including the symphonic work "Reach Forth Our Hands," commissioned in 1996 by the Cleveland Orchestra to commemorate their city's bicentennial, as well as "At Ward's Ferry, Length 180 Ft.," a concerto for double bass and orchestra commissioned in 2001 by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. His latest concert piece was a chamber work entitled "It Got Dark," commissioned by the acclaimed Kronos Quartet in 2009. As part of a separate commission by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the work was expanded and adapted for symphony orchestra and string quartet, and premiered at Walt Disney Concert Hall in December of 2009. In October 2014, Newman and musician Rick Cox released "35 Whirlpools Below Sound," an evocative, contemporary collection of avant-garde electronic soundscapes which the two collaborators developed over a period of 25 years, and which constitutes a fascinating departure from Newman's work in film music. Newman also was commissioned by the prestigious Joffrey Ballet in Chicago to compose the score for a new ballet adaptation of the Steinbeck novel "Of Mice and Men," which premiered in April of 2022.

For as much as **LAUV ("Steal the Show" song: Music by/Lyrics by/Performed by)** is known for his intriguing and inventive soundscapes, the multi-Platinum chart-topping singer, songwriter, producer, and multi-instrumentalist asserts himself as a storyteller, first and foremost. His stories continue to enchant audiences everywhere by converting the magic around him into generational anthems.

After introducing himself with viral sensation "The Other," Lauv landed a global smash in the form of "I Like Me Better." It tallied over 2 billion streams, reached the Top 10 on Top 40 and Top 5 on Hot AC radio, went sextuple-Platinum in the US and platinum in twelve other countries. He served up the Gold-selling 2018 compilation "I Met You When I Was 18 (The Playlist)" and a procession of hits, including the Platinum "I'm So Tired..." with Troye

Sivan as well as Gold-certified singles “There’s No Way” featuring Julia Michaels and “F\*\*ck, I’m Lonely” featuring Anne-Marie]. In 2020, his Gold-certified full-length debut album, “How I’m Feeling,” bowed in the Top 20 of the *Billboard* Top 200 buoyed by “Who” featuring BTS, “El Tejano” featuring Sofia Reyes, “Canada” featuring Alessia Cara, and “Mean It” with LANY. NME hailed it as “a powerful, beautiful debut,” while FADER coined it “replay-able pop.” Additionally, Teen Vogue called the record “21 tracks of emotionally cathartic pop bangers that unpack everything from modern-day romance to love song fatigue.”

In between selling out headline tours and supporting Ed Sheeran in stadiums, Lauv performed on “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon,” “Jimmy Kimmel LIVE!,” “The Late Late Show with James Corden,” and more. Lauv kicked off 2022 with an entirely new chapter of music that celebrated the innocence of youth, untangled the complexities of adulthood and once again pushed the boundaries of pop. He tells his most personal story yet on his second full-length album, “All 4 Nothing.”