

***Cars* (franchise)**

Cars is an American animated film series and media franchise set in a world populated by [anthropomorphic](#) vehicles created by [John Lasseter](#), [Joe Ranft](#) and [Jorgen Klubien](#). The franchise began with the 2006 film, [Cars](#), produced by [Pixar](#) and released by [Walt Disney Pictures](#). The film was followed by the sequels [Cars 2](#) (2011) and [Cars 3](#) (2017). The now-defunct [Disneytoon Studios](#) produced the two spin-off films [Planes](#) (2013) and [Planes: Fire & Rescue](#) (2014).

The first two *Cars* films were directed by Lasseter, then-[chief creative officer](#) of Pixar, [Walt Disney Animation Studios](#), and Disneytoon Studios, while *Cars 3* was directed by [Brian Fee](#), a storyboard artist on the previous installments. Lasseter served as [executive producer](#) of *Cars 3* and the *Planes* films. Together, all three *Cars* films have accrued over \$1.4 billion in box office revenue worldwide while the franchise has amassed over \$10 billion in merchandising sales within its first five years

History

The *Cars* franchise began with the original [Cars](#). At the time, it was Pixar's least well received film by reviewers.^[1]

The short [Mater and the Ghostlight](#) was released as an extra on the *Cars* DVD on November 7, 2006.^[2] A series of shorts called [Cars Toons](#) were produced and aired on the [Disney Channel](#) to keep interest up. The brand had sold nearly \$10 billion in merchandise by the time of the release of [Cars 2](#) in 2011.^[1]

In 2007, [Cars Four Wheels Rally](#) ride opened in [Disneyland Paris](#).^[3]

In the summer of 2012, the 12-acre [Cars Land](#) theme area opened at [Disney California Adventure](#) in Anaheim as the main component of \$1-billion park renovation.^[1]

A third film, [Cars 3](#), was announced on October 8, 2015, and was released on June 16, 2017

Cars 2 (2011)

Main article: [Cars 2](#)

Cars 2 is the twelfth Pixar film. The story starts with Lightning McQueen competing in the World Grand Prix, organized by [Sir Miles Axlerod](#) ([Eddie Izzard](#)), a three-race event taking place in three countries: [Japan](#), [Italy](#), and [England](#), with his racing rival being Italian formula car [Francesco Bernoulli](#) ([John Turturro](#)).

Along the way, Mater is mistaken for an American spy by British spy [Finn McMissile](#) ([Michael Caine](#)), and falls in love with junior agent [Holley Shiftwell](#) ([Emily Mortimer](#)). The three uncover a plot to sabotage the World Grand Prix, which is seemingly led by [Professor Zündapp](#) ([Thomas Kretschmann](#)) and a group of [lemon cars](#). When the event reaches its conclusion in London, Mater deduces that Axlerod is the mastermind behind the plot, as he started the event in the first place and had intended for cars everywhere to run on oil as revenge for the lemons' reputation as "history's biggest loser cars", implying that Axlerod is also a lemon.

With the plot foiled and the villains defeated, Mater is knighted by the Queen of the United Kingdom ([Vanessa Redgrave](#)), and a new race is held in Radiator Springs. Mater is invited by Finn and Holley to go on another mission, but chooses to stay in Radiator Springs. While his weapons get confiscated, he gets to keep the rocket engines he acquired, as the two agents take off in [Siddleley](#) ([Jason Isaacs](#)), the British spy jet.

***Cars 3* (2017)**

Main article: [Cars 3](#)

Cars 3 is the eighteenth Pixar film. The story focuses on Lightning McQueen, who deals with a new generation of race cars taking over the world of racing. Jackson Storm ([Armie Hammer](#)) is an arrogant high tech racer who leads the next generation. As everyone begins to ask him if he might retire, Lightning struggles with keeping up with these racers and during the final race of the season, he suffers a violent crash.

Four months later, a recovering Lightning mourns the late Doc Hudson and travels to the new Rust-eze Racing Center, now under the management of Sterling ([Nathan Fillion](#)). Sterling assigns Cruz Ramirez ([Cristela Alonzo](#)) to train him on the simulator, which Lightning accidentally destroys after losing control. Cruz's unconventional training methods and lack of racing experience frustrate Lightning, as they race on beaches and a demolition derby. Cruz reveals that she had always wanted to be a racer but never found the confidence to do so. In Thomasville, they encounter Hudson's old crew chief Smokey ([Chris Cooper](#)), who trains McQueen and explains to him that Hudson found happiness in mentoring him. Smokey's training methods inspire Ramirez as well.

At the Florida 500, Lightning begins racing, but remembers Cruz's racing dreams and has her take his place in the race. Using what she's learned on the road, Cruz found the confidence to catch up to Storm. She wins the race along with McQueen and begins racing for Dinoco, whose owner, Tex, purchases Rust-eze. Under the merged Dinoco–Rust-eze brand, Cruz becomes a racer, sporting #51, and McQueen decides to continue racing, with a new paint job in memory of Doc Hudson, but trains Cruz first for the season.

Possible fourth film

Regarding a possible *Cars 4*, *Cars 3* producers Kevin Reher and Andrea Warren told *CinemaBlend* that "If there's a good story to tell I mean our heads kinda break after having gotten this one done, like oh my God, what could you do the further adventures of? But like any sequel, from [Toy Story 4](#) to [Incredibles 2](#), as long as there's a good story to tell, it's worth investing; we do love these characters, we love them as much as the public does."^[5] Regarding which character would be the main protagonist in the movie, Reher and Warren stated that "if Cruz is a breakout character, kind of like Mater was", "she [would] be involved in a 4".^[6] Owen Wilson stated at a *Cars 3* press event that possible stories have been discussed for a *Cars 4*, though he would personally like for a fourth *Cars* movie to delve into aspects of the [thriller genre](#), akin to *Cars 2*.^[7] In an interview with [Screen Rant](#), [Lea Delaria](#) expressed interest in reprising her role as Miss Fritter while promoting the release of the short movie *Miss Fritter's Racing Skool* with the *Cars 3* DVD and Blu-ray release.^[8]

In December 2023, it was revealed that Pixar is working on new media related to the franchise. During a recent interview at the 2023 Porsche Rennsport Reunion Event, the creative director of the saga, Jay Ward, revealed that they are developing new projects related to the franchise: "There are more *Cars* things brewing, I can't say much more yet. *Cars* has got a life that will keep going. I am working on some real fun projects right now that you will see in a couple of years. It takes us a while to make them

Cars Toons: Mater's Tall Tales (2008–2012)

Mater's Tall Tales is a series of short animated films featuring Mater, Lightning McQueen, and their friends. The first three shorts premiered on October 27, 2008 on [Toon Disney](#), [Disney Channel](#), and [ABC Family](#).^[12] Not exclusive to television, the episodes have also been released on DVDs/Blu-rays or as in front of theatrical films. A total of 11 episodes have been released with *Time Travel Mater* (2012) being the most recent.^[13]

All shorts in the series follow the same tall-tale formula: Mater tells a story of something he has done in the past. When Lightning questions Mater over whether the events in the story actually occurred (or in some episodes asks him what he did next), Mater always claimed that Lightning was also involved and continues the story including Lightning's sudden participation. The shorts end with Mater leaving the scene, often followed by characters or references to the story that was being told, suggesting that story might be real.

Cars Toons: Tales from Radiator Springs (2013–2014)

Tales from Radiator Springs is a series of short animated films featuring the various residents of the titular location. The first three two-minute episodes - *Hiccups*, *Bugged*, and *Spinning* - premiered on March 22, 2013, on Disney Channel, and have been available online since March 24, 2013.^[14] A fourth short in the series, titled *The Radiator Springs 500 ½*, was released in spring 2014 on the digital movie service Disney Movies Anywhere. It premiered on August 1, 2014, on Disney Channel. The short has a running time of 6 minutes rather than the usual two-minute running time.^{[15][16]}

Cars on the Road (2022)

Main article: [Cars on the Road](#)

On December 10, 2020, during Disney's Investors Day event, Pixar announced that an animated series starring Lightning McQueen and Mater traveling the country while meeting friends, new and old, was in development.^{[17][18]} On November 12, 2021, it was announced that the show would be titled [Cars on the Road](#), and that Owen Wilson and Larry the Cable Guy would reprise their respective roles as Lightning McQueen and Mater.^[19] It was released on [Disney+](#) on September 8, 2022, as part of [Disney+ Day](#).

Mater and the Ghostlight (2006)

Main article: [Mater and the Ghostlight](#)

Mater and the Ghostlight is a 2006 [Pixar](#) animated short created for the [DVD](#) of the 2006 film *Cars*, which was released on October 25, 2006, in Australia and the United

States on November 7, 2006.^[21] The short, set in the *Cars* world, tells a story of Mater being haunted by a [mysterious blue light](#).

Miss Fritter's Racing Skool (2017)

Miss Fritter's Racing Skool is a 2017 Pixar animated short created for the Blu-ray, 4K Ultra HD and DVD of *Cars 3*, which was released in the United States on November 7, 2017.^[8] The short, set in the *Cars* world, follows the "blindsided testimonials from the Crazy 8's, touting the transformative impact Miss Fritter's Racing School has had in reshaping the direction of their lives".^[22]

Pixar Popcorn shorts

In December 2020, two *Cars* short films were announced as part of Disney+'s [Pixar Popcorn](#) series, which was released on January 22, 2021.^[23] As with most of the shorts present in this series, none of the characters have voice roles.

Unparalleled Parking (2021)

In this short, the cars have a friendly [parallel parking](#) competition.^[24]

Dancing with the Cars (2021)

In this short, the residents of Radiator Springs show off their dancing skills at Flo's V8 Café.^[24]

LEGO Pixar: BrickToons

On September 4, 2024, a series of LEGO short films based on some Pixar films, was released on Disney+. The series included an episode related to *Cars*, called "Trust Yer Ol' Pal Mater". In celebration of Lightning McQueen Day on September 5, the episode was released on the Disney Jr YouTube channel that day, too and received 1,6 million views in its first two weeks

Planes (2013)

Main article: [Planes \(film\)](#)

Planes is an animated *Cars* spin-off film produced by Disneytoon Studios. The first film in a planned duology^[25] where the main characters are planes, the film was released in theaters by Walt Disney Pictures on August 9, 2013.^[26] The film was directed by [Klay Hall](#) and executive produced by [John Lasseter](#).^[27] In the film, Dusty Crophopper, a small-town cropdusting plane, follows his dreams by competing in a world air race despite his fear of heights.

Planes: Fire & Rescue (2014)

Main article: [Planes: Fire & Rescue](#)

A sequel to *Planes*, titled *Planes: Fire & Rescue*, was theatrically released on July 18, 2014.^[28] This film is also produced by Disneytoon Studios. Bobs Gannaway, co-developer of [Jake and the Never Land Pirates](#) and [Mickey Mouse Clubhouse](#), and co-director of [Mickey Mouse Works](#) and [Secret of the Wings](#), directed the film.^[29] Lasseter again served as executive producer. In the film, Dusty is now a world-famous air racer, but learns he will never be able to race again due to an

engine problem. After accidentally starting a fire, Dusty decides to become a firefighter and trains at Piston Peak Air Attack.

Cancelled projects

To Protect and Serve

A fifth *Tales from Radiator Springs* short film, titled *To Protect and Serve*, was announced to be in development for a 2015 release.^[31] However, it was never released.

The short would have been focused on Sheriff as he takes a mandatory vacation and leaves two rookies (voiced by [Wendi McLendon-Covey](#) and [Aziz Ansari](#)) to take over his duties as police officer. This, however, causes problems in Radiator Springs as the rookies over-do every aspect of their job in an attempt to score commendations, turning the town into a hotbed of taped-off crime scenes. Sheriff soon senses an imbalance and returns home to right the "justice" that has been served.

Untitled *Planes* sequel and spin-offs

At the [D23 Expo](#) in July 2017, [John Lasseter](#) announced a third film in the *Planes* series. Tentatively titled *Beyond the Sky*^[a], the film would have explored the future of aviation in [outer space](#). The film had a release date of April 12, 2019.^[32] It was removed from the release schedule in March 2018,^[33] and on June 28, shortly after the announcement of Lasseter's departure from Disney,^[34] Disneytoon Studios was shut down, ending development on the film.^[35]

Prior to its closure, the studio was planning several more spin-offs of the franchise focusing on boats, trains and other vehicles.^[36] In November 2022, concept art for one of the proposed films, tentatively titled *Metro*, was leaked online.^{[37][38]}

Reception

Box-office performance

Earning over \$1.7 billion, *Cars*, including its *Planes* spin-off films, is the eleventh-highest grossing animated franchise.

In its opening weekend, the original *Cars* earned \$60,119,509 in 3,985 theaters in the United States, ranking number one at the box office. In the United States, the film held onto the number one spot for two weeks before being surpassed by [Click](#), and then by [Superman Returns](#) the following weekend. It went on to gross \$461,983,149 worldwide (ranking number six in 2006 films) and \$244,082,982 in the United States (the third-highest-grossing film of 2006 in the country, behind [Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest](#) and [Night at the Museum](#)). It was the highest grossing animated film of 2006 in the United States, but lost to [Ice Age: The Meltdown](#) in worldwide totals.^[39]

Cars 2 has earned \$191,452,396 in the United States and Canada, and \$368,400,000 in other territories, for a worldwide total of \$559,852,396.^[40] Worldwide on its opening weekend, it made \$109.0 million, marking the largest opening weekend for a 2011 animated title

