

Pixar are well known for their easter eggs and each one has a backstory. A113 is a reference to the CalArts classroom number where many animators studied. The lamp and the ball are from Luxo Jr. one of Pixar's earliest shorts. But arguably the most popular Pixar easter egg is - the Pizza Planet Truck. It has appeared in all (but one) Pixar movies, making it a game for fans trying to find where it's hidden. Or at least to fill up online articles about the movie for free publicity. But why?

Obviously, it's a reference to Toy Story 1 but out of all the things from Toy Story 1 to become a recurring easter egg, why specifically the truck? If any movie is set in another world or in another time Pixar have to get pretty inventive in hiding because it's a truck! But why the truck? If you wanted an easter egg from Toy Story, why not make it the alien, or this spider-baby, or the little binoculars guy, or Woody's hat? Why this very big awkward truck?

Well I think there's more to the story of the truck, so let's start from the beginning.

Toy Story 1

Before we can look at the truck, we need to look at Buzz Lightyear. I've covered a lot of this before but as you know Buzz is the shiny new toy and Woody is an old pull-string doll and they had to be created in tandem with each other.

Originally Buzz was going to be just a little guy with Woody being a ventriloquist dummy and a lot more villainous to begin with. Yeah I'm glad they changed this. Even in its inception, the conflict between Woody and Buzz was at the very core of this story. Which leads to the pizza planet truck.

Woody and Buzz are lost at a petrol station, and just to rub the situation in his face some more, Woody has to pretend it's a spaceship, just to convince the deluded Buzz to get inside the truck in order to get back to Andy. It's a very early sign of Woody and Buzz trying to work together before, the first step to becoming close friends later, and it began with a truck.

Toy Story 1 came out in smack dab in the middle of the 90s. Which is also around the peak of Chuck E Cheese in the US since its revival out of bankruptcy in the late 80s. These days they might be seen more as a joke or for it's horror counterparts, but in the 90s it was the pizza place to be if you're a kid, thanks to it's "eatertainment" combination of restaurant and arcade. So in Toy Story, Chuck E Cheese serves as the inspiration for Pizza Planet. Except, back then Chuck E Cheese didn't deliver pizzas, because why would they do that?

Obviously, other pizza places did home delivery, but the point of Chuck E Cheese was to go there for the ball pit, the arcade, the other thing. No-one goes to Chuck E Cheese for the pizza. Even when they did begin delivering pizza in 2018, they did so under the fake name Pasqually's Pizza & Wings to avoid the association.

So if Pizza Planet is the in-universe "eatertainment" place, why would it have a delivery truck? On the one hand, this is probably just a general blanket reference to all pizza stores, an amalgamation of all of their classic traits, not Chuck E Cheese specific. After all, Buzz has to get there over there somehow. But on the other hand, this may be partly due to the original version of this scene that got scrapped.

Since it was originally meant to be a sort of direct Pizza Hut parody, we can guess what happened. They had a pizza place, and a delivery truck to get the characters there. Then they just swapped out the pizza place but kept the truck. This makes sense to me. Apart from the mini-golf thing, in fact, no-one knows why it was a mini-golf thing.

Story co-creator, Andrew Stanton, said:

"It seems too obvious now [...] it's hard to believe Pizza Planet was an eleventh-hour change."

So now we have the Pizza Planet Truck. A loose 90s reference, a remnant of a last-minute script change, with a space theme just to wind up Woody. But how did it wind up in *A Bug's Life*?

A Bug's Life

While *Toy Story* was a massive achievement for CG animation, early Pixar had pretty uncanny looking humans. For example all the other kids from the birthday party and in *Pizza Planet* are just reskins of Andy. Other than Andy and Sid, the human characters are often obscured, like only focusing on their feet. Which neatly fit the toy-point of view of the story but also informed a lot of what stories early Pixar told. So while Pixar gradually improved the background human characters over time, the focus of the stories were put on non-human things, like bugs.

Insects were comparatively easy for CG animation, like Pixar's first short, 1984's *The Adventures of André & Wally B* and that other bug movie. And when dealing with crowds, you can get away with one character design, make a couple of alterations, and they'll blend in much better than the Andy-clones of *Toy Story*.

This led to the development of a sort of Ant Generator, which would duplicate the ants and then randomly assign height, weight and colour to create variants to fill a scene. And this generator would contribute to the particle systems that animate dust in *Toy Story 2* and the fur in *Monsters Inc*. Pixar are very creative when it comes to cutting corners.

Case in point, when Flik travels to Bug City, it's located underneath a trailer, next to which is the *Pizza Planet Truck*. Given the truck was originally designed for the perspective of small characters, its placement here for even smaller characters makes sense. But then John Lasseter says:

"We always figured this is where the guy lived"

If you're someone who believes in all Pixar movies taking place in the same universe, like the old lady in *Brave* is actually a grown up Boo from *Monsters Inc*, this one's for you.

So this is probably just a joke, right?

In concept art for the trailer, it does feature *A* truck, but clearly not actually "always planned" to be *THE* truck. Maybe instead of creating a brand new truck from scratch to fill a scene that's barely 7 seconds long, they just saved themselves the time and reused the *Pizza Planet Truck*, turning it into a silly little background gag, rather than the intentional beginning of a long standing easter egg.

A subtle connection to Toy Story, alongside this Pizza Planet cup.

And given this was already such a technically complex movie, with crowds of ants and a deadline to hit, I can see why the appeal of a convenient copy & paste truck would be a win-win.

It's very commonplace for animators to reuse animation to save time and money, and Pixar are no exception.

And recycling assets became vital to the troubled production of Toy Story 2.

Toy Story 2

Toy Story 2 was originally meant to be a straight-to-video sequel, a strategy employed by Disney from the 90s where the movies had much lower budgets compared to their cinema counterparts, but gained greater profits.

For example, Aladdin cost around \$28 million and made \$300 million, and The Return Of Jafar, the straight-to-video sequel, made the same on a budget of just \$5 million.

There was debate whether it would be hand-drawn or CG, whether Tom Hanks and Tim Allen would be in it, or whether Pixar would even produce it themselves.

For a while, animation was being handled by Pixar's video game department, since across two games, they had made just as much original animation as the first Toy Story.

Eventually Toy Story 2 was bumped up into a feature film but it was felt the sequel wasn't coming together. It had to be completely overhauled but with Disney's immovable deadline Pixar had nine months to complete the entire film. This meant Pixar had to do even more creative corner cutting.

The alien trench is from Bug's Life. The tree in Jessie's song is from Bug's Life. Bug's Life characters are used as toys. The toy cleaner is from the short Geri's Game. The cluster of arms are taken from a bunch of characters. This whole sequence in fact is from a deleted scene from Toy Story 1.

Hell, one of the new characters added to the cast is literally another Buzz. So naturally, the truck was used again. Twice actually, as it's also used as this white van during the road crossing scene.

In fairness Toy Story 2 probably reused less of Toy Story 1 than might be expected. It wasn't a simple drag and drop as there were general upgrades and improvements to a lot of the models, like those weird little mouth tucks.

So production wise, the Pizza Planet Truck in Toy Story 2 was born out of necessity, while in-universe, it's a neat call back to Toy Story 1. But it also makes it a convenient spot to reintroduce the aliens. These guys were the Minions before Minions, and apparently huge in Japan, but there wasn't really a place for them in this film. The options were, they're already in Andy's room, which wouldn't really give them a chance to shine, a huge crate of them in the airport luggage scene, but that would be technically difficult, or as an ornament in the Pizza Planet Truck, which made the most sense, since they came from Pizza Planet.

Three movies in a row used the Pizza Planet Truck, and three times is a pattern. But Woody has also appeared in all three films and he didn't become the big easter egg. So why the truck? Well it might be because of what happened in the next movie.

Monsters Inc

During test screenings for Monster's Inc, audiences felt that during the final encounter with Randall and the door-chase scene wasn't enough.

"This is another change that we made kind of late in the game, was kind of really pumping up this Randall's comeuppance"

"We realised in early preview we weren't quite there yet"

So the moment where Boo fights back and the colour changing scene was added in to show her triumphing over her fears. There was also the addition of what happened to Randall after being thrown through the door.

This scene is literally the one from Bug's Life but just dressed up to look like the bayou. The human characters are just the child animatronics and Randall has some very basic animation. Instead of his slivery lizard-like movement, he just tweens in like a bad Flash cartoon. I don't have to stand for this, I'm leaving. Speaking Obviously, late stage alterations are commonplace in movies, like this scene that had to be changed following 9/11. But it seems there was never really a plan to include the Pizza Planet Truck in Monsters Inc. It's only here because it was used in Bug's Life.

However, it was clear Pixar were now more mindful of easter eggs, such as starting the tradition of intentionally placing references to their future movies. Monster's Inc has an easter egg of Finding Nemo.

Here the truck zips past during the escape plan. Now its placement here could be simply: they needed a vehicle and its appearance is so brief, there's no point in making something brand new for it so they just added the truck in. But given Luigi from Cars, yet another future movie easter egg, is also in Finding Nemo, I think it was this moment that now cements the truck's place as a Pixar tradition, as confirmed in Cars when the truck appears twice. Which makes The Incredibles an interesting omission.

The Incredibles

To date, The Incredibles is the only movie to not include the Pizza Planet Truck, this is confirmed by Pixar director Lee Unkrich. What happened there? Given the number of scenes set in the city and the number of other cars, it's bizarre they didn't just add it in there. It is found in The Incredibles video game and in the sequel, so did they just forget to put it in the movie?

Production on The Incredibles began the year 2000 and concluded around 2004. So there was a crossover of productions.

Given that from Bug's Life to Monsters Inc, the Pizza Planet Truck's inclusion was out of production necessity and last minute changes, it's possible that, while The Incredibles was being made, the truck just wasn't seen as this mandatory Pixar tradition yet. And by the time things were wrapping up on The Incredibles, well they weren't going to suddenly delay production just to add a truck in, were they?

When Brad Bird joined Pixar, following the box office failure of *The Iron Giant*, he was effectively given the golden keys to write and direct a Pixar movie solo, instead of multiple writers and directors like before. So maybe there was this out-the-loop element, that Brad Bird did things his way outside the Pixar norm of specific easter eggs. Except *The Incredibles* hides Doc Hudson, a future movie easter egg to *Cars* which came out after *The Incredibles*. So it's odd that some traditions were adhered to, and others weren't.

Brad Bird himself said:

"I don't know. I was busy making the movie. I didn't think about the Pizza Planet [Truck], so I would not be surprised if it was not in there and I would not be surprised if somebody got it in there when they were building the sets."

Wait, this means the truck could be in *The Incredibles*?!

There's a theory it's this car here. So I scanned through the fight scene and found this other angle of the same vehicle and it doesn't look like the truck to me.



There's also this shot of Mr Incredible heading over to the island and do you see something in the clouds? It looks an awful lot like the Pizza Planet Truck. Is it really though? It's hard to be conclusive, it makes for a pretty compelling case.

And this would be one of the few abstract ways the truck is hidden. Most of the time however, it is still a truck or at least transformed into some kind of vehicle.

But Pixar have made enough vehicles in its vast library of assets, they don't need the truck. In fact, with software and technological advances, they would have had to remade the truck over and over again. And even then, since *Wall-e*, none of the main characters from the respective movies even interact with the truck until *Elemental* (unless you count this brief glance in *Coco*).

So what's the point? If they don't need it and they don't use it, why the truck?

Looking back at the early works of Pixar movies, the truck was a handy shortcut. It played a part in helping animators focus their attention on the other more demanding parts while under strict deadlines. And while it's purpose as, well a truck, isn't needed so much anymore, it has still come to represent the resourcefulness and ingenuity that makes Pixar Pixar.

It's now one of the many background elements that adds depth and hidden details that we like to point out:

Whether it's

Reused characters, this takeout box or a big awkward truck that delivers pizzas.