



Dug (left, voiced by Bob Peterson), Russell (Jordan Nagai), and Carl Fredricksen (Ed Asner) head to the jungles of South America in Pixar's tender and delightful animated film *Up*.

Soaring adventure

Up — Pixar's latest animated film — is light as a balloon and as solid as a house



From the ads, *Up* looks like sugar-coated *Gran Torino*.

No racial epithets or gang violence, but still: one grumbling old grouch, one kid and the ramshackle house the coot tended to his cherished, now-deceased wife in?

I half-expected Clint Eastwood to materialize, growling: "Get off my lawn — and away

from my balloons!"

Yet no amount of rudimentary movie math (in this case, irascible codger + plucky adolescent = inner youngster restored) sufficiently braces you for the emotional heft, the storytelling gusto, of this latest Pixar triumph.

That's probably because we don't meet Carl Fredricksen (voiced by ornery powerhouse Ed Asner) when he's a gruff anti-social retiree, but rather when he's still a boy, electrified by the newsreel escapades of famed — and ultimately disgraced — adventurer Charles Muntz.

It's around this time, with decades left to unspool in front of him, that he meets the similarly spirited Ellie (Elie Docter). They'll fall in love,

marry, fix up a house and share a life marked by joys, disappointments and — with the finality of her death — devastating heart-break.

These opening minutes are delivered with such tender, elegant skill they resonate throughout a comedy that is at turns brilliant and breathtaking, deliriously funny and uncommonly soul-affirming.

With Ellie gone, and their beloved house about to be claimed by developers, Carl hatches an escape plan: fastening hundreds of helium balloons to his abode, he rips away from

not just the moorings, but from all that's weighted him down in life. Destination: the grand, jungle-bound adventure he and Ellie always dreamed of, but never took.

Accidentally along for the ride — and key to Carl's re-ignition — is a doughy wilderness explorer named Russell (Jordan Nagai) who Carl discovers out on his porch after his home has already left terra firma.

Despite the obviousness of this set-up, though, director Pete Docter (who helmed *Monsters, Inc.*) and co-director

Bob Peterson never take the easy route. *Up* earns every lump in your throat and every laugh, investing moviegoers deeply in the relationship between two inadvertent thrill-seekers who don't realize how perfect they are for each other until they're stranded in the South American wilds.

Once there, the movie pours on the dazzle and cranks the fun factor, as Carl and Russell find themselves in the midst of a Jules Verne-esque yarn, complete with a megalomaniacal villain (Christopher Plummer), talking dogs (actually they're just wearing translation collars — to hilarious effect), magisterial landscapes and exotic multi-coloured creatures.

Of course, arguably none is more exotic, given the usual restrictions of Hollywood extravaganzas, than Carl himself.

And, in fact, some have wondered if this bold bit of cartoon casting — anchoring a summer blockbuster with a septuagenarian — might dispel some of its mass appeal. Because, you know, it's so much easier to relate to kung-fu pandas and talking fish than the elderly.

To those doubters, I say — in the words of Carl — "Bah!" *Up* will enthrall film-goers from ages seven to 75 and all demographics in between.

What a magical, marvellous movie.

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★★★★½

Up

1 hour, 39 minutes

Starring:

The voices of Ed Asner, Jordan Nagai, Christopher Plummer

Directed by:

Pete Docter and Bob Peterson