

## Interview: Cancer, Cameos, Cuts With ‘Fanboys’ Director Kyle Newman

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 3, 2009 - 4:55pm

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CHICAGO – Kyle Newman’s “[Fanboys](#) [7]” has had one of the most legendary post-productions in the history of film. The director opened up to HollywoodChicago.com about the six-year journey of his labor of love on the eve of his world premiere: a day that Newman admits he once thought he would never see.



Jay Baruchel (Windows), Dan Fogler (Hutch), Chris Marquette (Linus), Sam Huntington (Eric) and Kristen Bell (Zoe) star in Kyle Newman’s Fanboys.  
Photo credit: John Estes

The definition of a “fanboy,” courtesy of “Fanboys” director [Kyle Newman](#) [13] - “It’s a term for a group of people, no matter what age, who are really into sci-fi, fandom, comic books, a certain genre of film. And they are unafraid to wear that on their sleeves. I don’t think fanboys are closet nerds. They are people who embrace it, sometimes flaunt it, and are proud of who they are.

They are heavily represented in the online community. They’re tech-savvy. They’re cutting edge for what they’re into. They’re people unafraid to talk about what they’re into. Even at a nice dinner, they’ll talk about Star Wars, Go-Bots, whatever.”





Kyle Newman

*Photo credit: Linda L. Crispian*

Newman was going to make it to Chicago for an in-person interview but rumors of snow the following day forced him to stay in L.A. and do a phone interview. As he said, “Tomorrow is the premiere and I’ve been working on it for six years. If there was anything that delayed my trip, I’d regret it forever.”

And what a long, strange trip it’s been.

When “Fanboys” wrapped in the spring of 2006, it was a tender comedy about a quartet of friends who travelled cross-country to break into Skywalker Ranch and see an early cut of “Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace”. They weren’t merely criminals. One of them, Linus ([Chris Marquette](#) [5]), was dying of cancer and he had been waiting his entire life to see [George Lucas](#) [19]’ prequel. His friends were committed to making that dying wish come true.

The film co-starred [Jay Baruchel](#) [10], [Dan Fogler](#) [6], [Sam Huntington](#) [15], and [Kristin Bell](#) [12], and featured cameos by [Seth Rogen](#) [16], [Carrie Fisher](#) [4], [Billy Dee Williams](#) [2], [Ray Park](#) [20], [Kevin Smith](#) [11], and [William Shatner](#) [18].

Test audiences adored the movie. The Weinstein Company did not. As Newman says, “Here, I’ve made a movie that I’m really proud of. I screened it in London to 1400 fans at Star Wars Celebration to three standing ovations and I videotaped it and I showed everybody, but I guess nobody ever showed Harvey [Weinstein].”

“Fanboys” was originally scheduled to be released in the fall of 2006. The first delay was to February of ‘07, then August of that year. Then the floor fell out as rumors of reshoots and massive changes surfaced online, pushing the film back until at least 2008.

Newman himself was baffled. “I’m getting all this support online and they’re talking about changing it and it just didn’t all add up. I was afraid. I knew I had made a great movie. The actors, producers, writers - we were all happy with what we had pulled off. We were smart about how we cast the movie. We had tremendous foresight considering the people we cast who took off. We were on the right track.”



Jay Baruchel, Kristen Bell, Dan Fogler and Chris Marquette star in Kyle Newman's Fanboys.

*Photo credit: John Estes*

It turned out that a year-and-a-half after the first shoot, director [Stephen Brill](#) [21] came in to do massive reshoots. The cancer plotline was eliminated entirely and the film was turned into a generic road movie. And it was not pretty.

Newman pulls no punches, saying that “There was a lot of negative stuff and the people they brought in to work on the film were, in a very low class way, criticizing the actors and the casting and the directing and kind of demeaning Star Wars fandom. Here we’d done all this grassroots awareness and built support and, suddenly, there are polls on StarWars.com debating “How worried are you about the fate of Fanboys?””

“It was very disheartening to watch everything that you’ve done positive be undermined in a week by a bunch of idiots, this team that was brought in to do this. Mainly just the director who they brought in to re-shape it who was opening his mouth online and really offending our core audience. So, I was shocked. I was like, “Oh my God.” It was just getting out of control and here we are on the sidelines and I’m watching the movie fall apart. I’m watching our fanbase dissipate.”



Chris Marquette, Dan Fogler and Sam Huntington star in Kyle Newman's Fanboys.

*Photo credit: John Estes*

The internet community that adores “Star Wars” and supported “Fanboys” went to work. An online campaign called “Stop Dark Weinstein (From Ruining Fanboys)” popped up and thousands of fans e-mailed the Weinstein Company.

It led to more delays but also started to build buzz around the movie. The Weinstein Company brought Newman back on board and let him and the original creative team back in the editing room. The cancer subplot came back.

The idea that one of these young men was dying was always essential to Newman. "It was a rallying call for these guys. While the trip, in conceit, was very zany, it had this emotional core to it because it was coming from a grounded place. I thought the movie was unhinged without it.

You couldn't get behind these guys. To me, it became soulless. There was no heart and little purpose. And there was no ticking clock. Ultimately, where did it end up? It ended with them watching the movie on a laptop and then throwing it out the window and saying "That sucked" and driving off. It didn't culminate in anything. There was no substance. It was hard to watch."

Kyle Newman has been a Star Wars fan his entire life. In fact, he claims that his first memory is of Star Wars when he was under two years old. It wasn't the movie itself, but the energy that the film created. "I remember my brothers and sisters, my cousins, everyone had gone to see it. There was this electric energy."

Newman felt that energy again when "Phantom Menace" was coming out and that inspired "Fanboys".

Of course, a lot of the anticipation leading up to "Phantom Menace" disappeared when fans saw the movie. But Newman is still a fan. "When you're a kid or a teen and you're seeing these movies and you're hearing the idea of prequels, you're imagining what they're going to be in your head. I think, invariably, it will never live up to the expectations of your own imagination tailored to what you want it to be. I probably like them more than most people it wasn't really the medium in which it was presented. I was more interested in what the story was. Star Wars could be oral tradition, they're such good stories.

So, I went and found out all the spoilers. I eased into it. It wasn't like a big culture shock. "Whoa, that wasn't what I imagined." So, I think that was a factor. I think people who did that - eased in after 20 years of anticipation...if you don't do that, you're bound to be let down."



Fanboys Poster  
Photo credit: The Weinstein Company

"Star Wars" isn't Newman's only love. He also admits excitement for the upcoming "Star Trek" movie, saying, "The cast is incredibly exciting. I like that new trailer. A good buddy of ours, Zachary Quinto, is playing Spock. I'm incredibly excited for him. I think it's a perfect role for him. I think the cast is great. There's a lot of life left in Star Trek. I think they're gonna kick off something good."

And Newman loves "Close Encounters, Blade Runner, 2001, Alien, Aliens, and all those type of films, Goonies, Gremlins - but Star Wars holds a unique place. It exists in different mediums. I think the reason that Star Wars has such longevity is the fan community. The people have responded to it and taken it on themselves to keep it alive.

George Lucas was smart in recognizing that there are a lot of people who want to play in the world he created. So, let them write books and comic books and design toys and video games and expand the series into television. I think he knows the universe has gotten bigger than anything he can control."

It seems like everything about "Fanboys" has been about anticipation, that of the characters for "Phantom Menace" and now for the film itself. The anticipation will finally pay off when "Fanboys" is released on Friday, February 6th, 2009. But that may not be the last version you see. Newman admits that there are some changes in the current version that he's not thrilled with and there may be a director's cut on DVD some day.

“It was give-and-takes. I got to put the story in but I had to give up on little nuance beats which I think make the story richer. If I was ever to do a master cut, it’s all waiting there.”

“Fanboys” may finally be coming out, but the end of this story may yet be unwritten.

*‘Fanboys’ stars Jay Baruchel, Dan Fogler, Chris Marquette, Sam Huntington, Kristin Bell, and Seth Rogen. ‘Fanboys,’ which was written by Ernest Cline and Adam F. Goldberg and directed by Kyle Newman, opens on February 6th, 2009.*



[22]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [23]  
Content Director  
[HollywoodChicago.com](#)  
[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [22]

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