



EVENTS

Attack the Block

Attack the Block

Directed by: Joe Cornish

©: StudioCanal S.A., UK Film Council,

Channel Four Television Corporation

A Big Talk Pictures production

Made with the support of: The National Lottery through the UK Film Council's Development Fund and Premiere Fund

Presented by: StudioCanal Features, Film4, UK Film Council

Executive Producers: Matthew Justice, Tessa Ross, Jenny Borgars, Will Clarke, Olivier Courson, Edgar Wright

Development Services: Jack Barth

Produced by: Nira Park, James Wilson

Line Producer: James Biddle

Associate Producer: Lucy Pardee

Senior Production and Development

Production Manager: Nicky Earnshaw

Production Co-ordinators: Emma Olich-Smith, Fiona Garland

Unit Manager: Sharon McGuinness

Location Manager: Vinnie Jassal

Post-production Supervisor: Michael Solinger

1st Assistant Directors: Ben Howarth,

Dan Channing Williams

2nd Assistant Directors: Harriet Worth, Tom Rye

Script Supervisors: Paula Casarin, Ruth Atkinson

Casting Director: Nina Gold

Written by: Joe Cornish

Director of Photography: Tom Townend

2nd Unit Directors of Photography:

Julian Morson, Peter Talbot

Camera Operators: Chris Plevin,

Rodrigo Gutierrez, Peter Field, Simon Baker

A Camera Operator: Julian Morson

Steadicam Operator: Julian Morson

1st Assistant Camera: Sam Renton, Ashley Bond

Central Loader: Elliot George Dupuy

Gaffers: Julian White, Martin Duncan

Key Grip: Rupert Lloyd Parry

Stills Photographers: Matt Nettheim, Liam Daniel

Visual Effects by: Double Negative

Additional Visual Effects by: Fido

UV Room VFX Sequence by: Method

Special Effects Supervisor: Sam Conway

Creature Effects by: Mike Elizalde

Creature Effects Created by: Spectral Motion Inc.

Editor: Jonathan Amos

Assembly Editor: Daniel Gethic

1st Assistant Editor: Tom Kemplen

2nd Assistant Editor: Rob Duffield

Visual Effects Editor: Tom Kemplen

Production Designer: Marcus Rowland

Supervising Art Director: Dick Lunn

Art Director: Andrea Coathupe

Set Decorator: Dick Lunn

Graphic Designer: Andy Bottomley

Graffiti Artist: Lachlan Hansen

Storyboard Artist: Nicholas Pelham

Production Buyer: Anna Kasabova

Costume Designer: Rosa Dias

Make-up and Hair Designer: Jane Walker

Special Make-up Effects Designer: Paul Hyett

Prosthetic Make-up Artists: Stuart Conran,

Demetris Robinson

Title Sequence by: Matt Curtis

Laboratory: Technicolor Ltd.

Music by: Steven Price

Additional Music: Felix Buxton, Simon Ratcliffe

Orchestra Leader: Everton Nelson

Conductor: Geoff Alexander

Orchestrators: David Butterworth, Andrew Fisher

+ panel discussion with actors Michael Ajao and Jumayn Hunter, hosted by Dr Clive Chijioke Nwonka

Joe Cornish's 2011 sci-fi comedy about a group of youths defending their south London housing estate against an extra-terrestrial attack has achieved cult status. To mark the publication of Dr Clive Chijioke Nwonka's forthcoming book *Black Boys: The Social Aesthetics of British Urban Cinema* (Bloomsbury), this special event will look at how the film remains a powerful exploration of race and class, social stigma, housing, Black British identity and nationhood.

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Joe Cornish first made his name as co-presenter (with Adam Buxton) of Channel 4's *The Adam and Joe Show* (1996-2001), fondly remembered for re-enacting big-screen blockbusters with the aid of cuddly toys. Although technically far slicker and entirely live-action, his uproarious aliens-versus-hoodies feature debut *Attack the Block* betrays a similarly encyclopaedic genre knowledge, especially the Roger Corman-influenced films of the 1970s and 1980s that never allowed their high IQs and sociopolitical awareness to breach the fundamental requirement that they move like electrified greyhounds, preferably clocking in at under 90 minutes to facilitate drive-in double-billing.

Accordingly, *Attack the Block's* premise about an alien invasion and the ensuing siege of a single South London housing estate has umpteen nods to John Carpenter's *Assault on Precinct 13* (1976), *Escape from New York* (1981) and *The Thing* (1982), Walter Hill's *The Warriors* (1979) and *Streets of Fire* (1984), Joe Dante's *Gremlins* (1984) and the John Sayles-scripted *Piranha* (1978) and *Alligator* (1980), with a dash of French *cinéma du look* (*Diva*, 1981; *Subway*, 1985) and a Children's Film Foundation romp thrown in for good measure. However, Cornish never falls into the trap of creating gags around lazy name-checks.

Here the milieu is wholly convincing. The 'block', the fictional Wyndham Tower estate, hosts not just the film's hoodie protagonists but also their families (their higher-achieving female siblings being one of many passing nods to current sociological debates), to whom they have to make implausible excuses for staying out late. The mid-teenage gang members are viewed with suspicion by actual gangster Hi-Hatz but with admiration by nine-year-old wannabes Gavin and Reginald. 'Mayhem' and 'Probs', as they style themselves, have the excuse of extreme youth, whereas affluent white dopehead Brewis's attempts at blending in ('primatology, mammatology, all that shizzle') attract derision from everybody except his dealer Ron (Nick Frost), who would regard even the outbreak of World War III with amiably befuddled equanimity.

Cornish draws superb performances out of his inexperienced central quintet, especially John Boyega (taciturn Moses) and Alex Esmail (livewire Pest). Their knife-point mugging of trainee nurse Sam (Jodie Whittaker) risks audience alienation at the start, but likeable personalities quickly assert themselves with the aid of pungently witty dialogue (which Cornish developed with the cast and extensive pre-production research in local youth clubs) and the unsurprising revelation that their apparent menace is based more on bravado than being genuine hard cases like Hi-Hatz. But there's also justified resentment about the cards dealt them in life, expressed generally through a longstanding (and mutual) hatred of the police, and directly through Moses's paranoid speculation that the alien invasion might have been government-sanctioned as part of a plan to wipe out London's Black population.

Music Supervisor: Nick Angel
Orchestra Contractor: Isobel Griffiths
Sound Designer: Jeremy Price
Production Sound Mixer: Jim Greenhorn
Sound Mixer: Clive Derbyshire
Boom Operators: Tristan Tarrant, Peter Margrave
Re-recording Mixer: Mark Paterson
Supervising Sound Editor: Julian Slater
Stunt Co-ordinators: Paul Herbert, Tony Lucken
On-set Police Advisers: Simon Morgan, Raffaele D'Orsi, Lucy D'Orsi
Multimedia Consultant: Lee Thomas
Dialogue Coach: Jill McCulloch
Armourers: Richard Hooper, Joss Skottowe, Greg Corke, Dave Evans
Pogo the dog supplied by: Animal Ambassadors
Shot at: 3 Mills Studios

Cast:

John Boyega (*Moses*)
Jodie Whittaker (*Sarr*)
Alex Esmail (*Pest*)
Franz Drameh (*Dennis*)
Leeon Jones (*Jerome*)
Simon Howard (*Biggz*)
Luke Treadaway (*Brewis*)
Jumayn Hunter (*Hi-Hatz*)
Danielle Vitalis (*Tia*)
Paige Meade (*Dimples*)
Sammy Williams (*Probs*)
Michael Ajao (*Mayhem*)
Nick Frost (*Ron*)
Maggie McCarthy (*Margaret*)
Gina Antwi (*Dionne*)
Natasha Jonas (*Gloria*)
Flaminia Cinque (*Italian woman*)
Selom Awadzi (*Tonks*)
Adam Buxton, Haneen Hammou (*documentary voices over*)
Paisley Thomas (*Roxanne*)
Jacey Salles (*Biggz's mum*)
Yvonne D'Alpra (*Pest's nan*)
Karl Collins (*Dennis' dad*)
Joey Ansah, Adam Leese (*policemen*)
Lee Long (*Patrick*)
Jermaine Smith (*Beats*)
Dylan Charles (*police constable*)
David Cann (*detective superintendent*)
Terry Notary (*lead creature performer and movement coach*)
Karl Baumann, Tony Christian, Donna William, Arti Shah (*creature performers*)
UK 2011©
88 mins
Digital

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SIGHT AND SOUND

In common with its models, the film favours old-fashioned mechanical special effects to create the 'big alien gorilla-wolf motherfuckers' around whose invasion the plot revolves. These inspired combinations of shaggy black fur, glowing green fangs and lolling gait are simultaneously menacing and strangely beautiful, especially in a slow-motion shot of a group of them chasing a sword-wielding Moses down a corridor. Cinematographer Tom Townend turns exclusively nocturnal locations into a riot of neon-drenched colour reminiscent of Andrew Laszlo's work for Walter Hill, while the electronic throb of Steven Price's score betrays an unmistakable John Carpenter influence.

Films this cine-literate are rarely this unpretentiously enjoyable, but it's easy to see why it brought the house down at its South by Southwest festival premiere – even with people who struggled with some heroically uncompromising accents.

Michael Brooke, *Sight and Sound*, June 2011

Dr Clive Chijioke Nwonka (host) is Associate Professor in Film, Culture and Society at UCL, and a Faculty Associate of the UCL Sarah Parker Remond Centre for the Study of Racism and Racialisation. Dr Nwonka's research centres on the study of Black British and African American film, with a particular focus on the Black aesthetics, images of Black urbanity and the modes through which Black identities are shaped within forms of Black popular culture. Nwonka is the author of the book *Black Boys: The Social Aesthetics of British Urban Film* (2023), the co-editor of the book *Black Film/British Cinema II* (2021) and is the author of the forthcoming *Black Arsenal: Race, Cultural Memory and Black British Identity* (2024).

Michael Ajao is an actor/voiceover artist/writer from South London. He broke into the industry when he made his debut in the film *Attack the Block*, directed by Joe Cornish, at the tender age of 12. Since then he has made numerous appearances on stage, TV and film. His latest appearance was in the critically acclaimed Edgar Wright film *Last Night in Soho*, which you can now stream on Netflix.

Jumayn Hunter is a British actor known for martial arts, a big energetic personality, and cerebral performances in both cult film and mainstream blockbusters. His childhood, spent experiencing a unique blend of cultures in Florida, Jamaica, Paris and more, built the foundation for an acting career early on, with his debut being in theatre in the play *Afterbirth* by Deborah Paige, quickly followed by *Macbeth* by Max Stafford Clark. JR broke into mainstream television with *The Bill* and *Casualty* and had his feature film debut with *Fallout*, which launched his love for acting and solidified a career. Performances in *Eden Lake*, *Cherry Tree Lane*, *Attack the Block*, *Piggy* and *Quartet* followed soon after.

His skilful portrayal of complex characters led to notable collaborations with Idris Elba in *Guerrilla* and *Yardie*, and Steve McQueen in his *Small Axe* project. Showing his ability to seamlessly move between genres, he's been seen in indie sci-fi *How to Talk to Girls at Parties* with Nicole Kidman, and in mainstream comedy with Sarah Pascoe's *Out of Her Mind*. With a wealth of experience under his belt, he's now planning his own projects; working with the likes of Netflix, BBC, SKY, Far Eastern, Continental African and South American and Bollywood cinema, he is hoping to produce some truly unique and polarising cinema for the future.