Written by Jorge Solis
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Available in stores October 25th on DVD and Blu-ray, from Sony Home Pictures Entertainment, ATTACK THE BLOCK became the cult hit of this recent summer, and one of the best reviewed films of 2011. Moses (John Boyega) and his street gang suddenly find themselves pitted against an invasion of savage alien monsters. FANGORIA spoke with first-time writer/director Joe Cornish about the influences of his film's premise and dialogue, the low-budget special effects, and how audiences have responded to his movie.

FANGORIA: The inspiration of the film came from an incident where you were once mugged. Tell me more about the how you came up with the premise.

JOE CORNISH: Well, it was a whole lot of influences really. It was that experience of being robbed by some young kids, not dissimilar to the ones in the film. It was also weirdly seeing SIGNS, the M. Night Shyamalan film all those years ago. I always loved the idea of an alien siege movie. And I always remembered reading about an unmade script that John Sayles wrote for Steven Spielberg in the late 70s, called NIGHT SKIES. He never made it. Bits of it became E.T.; bits of it became POLTERGEIST and GREMLINS. But when I saw SIGNS, I thought what would happen if something like that happened around here, where I live. And that was immediately interesting to me. And then I figured, "What would happen if those kids that robbed me were at the center of an event like that?" And that was immediately interesting. All the skills they had built up for survival, and perhaps using for negative reasons, there might be potential for a story to turn that negativity into positivity. I just thought it would give that story a very new feel and a new environment to put it in. That was the idea really.

FANG: Moses develops from a hoodlum to hero. After the death count begins to rise, he finally understands that his actions have consequences. Tell me about working with John Boyega?

CORNISH: I think John is an incredible discovery! I think I am very lucky to have found him. We auditioned 1500 kids around South London. John stood out immediately. He hadn't done anything on camera before. And I saw him in a play. He was on stage for 10 minutes. He just looked right. He was dedicated, committed, and you know, really ambitious. He was brilliant. He was so confident. I didn't have to spend too much time directing him. He was very natural. When I looked at the rushes, and when I put the film together, I was amazed at how much detail he was giving me. He did a lot of work outside of my direction, on his own. I think he's brilliant. He's going to be a star. I'm really proud to have had him, to put him in his first film. I can't say enough good things about him.

FANG: The dialogue is in tune to its urban environment. Tell me about the use of slang in the dialogue.

CORNISH: That was always something that felt an element of science fiction to me. It reminded me of something like CLOCKWORK ORANGE, or it reminded me of something I really enjoy in science fiction, which is these private words, made-up words that only people-in-the-know understand. So I thought that was an interesting overlap between real urban culture in South London, and the kind of thing you find in sci-fi. Also, I immediately thought that I hadn't really heard it in a movie before. If I had heard it in a movie, it tended to be used in a very dense, quite confusing way. So I was interested in simplifying it a bit, making it accessible. Everything in ATTACK THE BLOCK is kind of heightened, like in a comic book movie. So I thought maybe if we did that with the slang, it might travel more internationally than it previously had. It might stop being an obstacle and start being something cool and popcorny. So we worked very hard in the research to get the slang right. I'm a comedian. I love language. I love messing around with language. Some of it really made me laugh, the way they mangled grammar not very affectionately. So it was for me part of the attraction and the fun of writing it. I did loads of research. Most of the stuff in the script is taken from reality. And then, the cast had a chance to adjust it all. People, distributors were worried about it. There was concern, but I think the film has proved that it's not a concern. It's actually one of the cool things about the film hopefully.

FANG: There is social commentary about the economy, mentioning Blockbuster Video closing down. Moses and his friends understand their social identity in their lower class. Pest (Alex Esmail) even wonders what it will take for people to notice the kids of South London. Tell me more about the social commentary in the movie.

CORNISH: That was very much inspired by classic sci-fi. I think all good sci-fi is saying something about the present, whether it's INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, which was an allegory for McCarthyism, or whether it was GODZILLA, a way of culturally dealing with the atomic bomb. But particularly, it was John Carpenter's movies, ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13 and THE THING. Those works have strong allegories as well. Obviously, NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, the ultimate original zombie movie, has a very interesting racial and sociological subtext. So I think all science fiction, worth its salt, is using fantasy to explore reality. One of the key things in the film is that in most alien invasion movies, the world knows and the military gets involved, and it plays out on a very big scale. But something that's terrific about Carpenter's work, he usually has a quite limited, closed off environment. So I thought it was an opportunity to do both, to have the fact that people turn their backs on kids like this, and in environments like this. For me, I felt I could make interesting social commentary out of that. And it would also be useful in terms of a science fiction story, keep the narrative compact and keep the characters isolated.

The movie is really about the energy that young people have, particularly teenagers, and how powerful and strong they are when they get together. When they're in difficult circumstances, they can develop a skill set that can be used in a negative or positive way. The movie is trying to say to people, "Pay attention to these young people, they're very important. If you don't take care of them or give them opportunities, then you can end up having problems."

FANG: The music is a unique blend of horror, sci-fi, and hip-hop. Tell me about the music of ATTACK THE BLOCK.

CORNISH: The music was inspired by Carpenter, his electronic stuff, and also by John Williams, his big escapist scores. I had never seen a movie set in this environment that used orchestral music before. So that was the first thing, I was keen to hearing an orchestral, a proper score on a movie like this. For the electronic component, I listened to all of Carpenter's scores, and I realized he is quite particular in the way he does it. He doesn't tend to use a snare drum or a 4/4 beat. He uses a base drum and a high hat. His films never turn into pop promos. You always stay absorbed and engaged in the action. We tried to be inspired by that

really. I was very lucky this band, Basement Jaxx, a very big British dance band, agreed to do the score. And they just kinda nailed it; they got it. They figured out the riff, the theme very early on. As soon as I heard that, I knew they got the idea. They worked with this guy, Steven Price, who worked on the LORD OF THE RINGS films, and was music supervisor for SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE WORLD. He worked with them to create what I think is a good conventional movie score. It's not all pop records and source music. It's a proper score that is elastic and shapes to the action, but at the same time, it's percussive and it has real atmosphere, amazing detail. I recommend to people to get the DVD and Blu-Ray. And if you got a good home cinema system, and a good surround sound system, we worked very hard to make this kick-ass! So please turn it up, calibrate your surround sound system well, get your woofer working, and you should dig it!

FANG: The aliens are purely black, focusing on their glowing fangs. Tell me about the special effects of the movie.

CORNISH: Well, we didn't have the money to do CGI creatures and at the same time, as a filmgoer, I'm just bored of CGI creatures. They seem just a little bit the same. I had an opportunity to do something different. It satisfied our financial restrictions, and what I like aesthetically, to go a little bit old-school. We had a performer in a costume, this guy called Terry Notary, who's a very brilliant creature performer. He worked on AVATAR, RISE OF THE PANET OF THE APES, FANTASIC FOUR, and the HULK movies. The costume was built by Spectral Motion, who worked with Guillermo Del Toro, and they're one of the best practical effects people in the business. We used CGI to rub out details on the creatures, so that they become shadows, completely black. That actually informed the whole way we shot the movie. We came up with that idea very early and we designed the look of the movie, the cinematography to help that creature work. We almost looked at the movie like MARY POPPINS, PETE'S DRAGON, or one of those movies that integrates two dimensional animation with live-action. We thought if we had high-contrasting dark shadows, we could really make this animated character blend in with the live-action in an interesting way. The teeth are mostly practical. We used some CGI to enhance the teeth in certain shots. That's how I feel CGI is best used, to perfect and enhance something, rather than build it from ground-up. So I hope, at the end of the day, we created a creature the like of which people have never seen before.

FANG: Since the release in the states, there has been growing line of fan art on Tumblr dedicated to the movie. What were your expectations with the audience?

CORNISH: Well, I fantasized that kind of thing would happen. I find it amazingly exciting and

rewarding; and it does. I look at Tumblr a lot. I Tumblr search and I love the GIFs people create. I think it's very interesting the moments people choose. I love the way people grab particular stills and put graphics on them. You know, I'm one of those people. I spent my whole teenage years, my 20s, I still do. I do that as well. So to see people do that with my movie, it's fantastic.

I'll tell you the other interesting thing about Tumblr and GIFs in particular. When you sit in the effects process, you have effects meetings and you review shots; they're played to you in a loop, exactly like a GIF. So you'll be watching a shot over and over. For example, when the creatures are chasing after Moses down the corridor, you'll watch those 7 seconds over and over again; you'll perfect it. It's interesting those same loops exist in GIFs. It's a lesson to effects people and directors that you have to be really on top of the detail. People will really examine your work frame by frame. I think that kind of scrutiny elevates the whole thing. We worked very hard so that you can take any frame in ATTACK THE BLOCK and hopefully it will be detailed, good composition. Hopefully you can take every frame and build a comic book out of it.

FANG: What are you working on now?

CORNISH: I'm working on the promotion of ATTACK THE BLOCK, the DVD and Blu-Ray release! I'm working on another idea. I've been researching for a few months. It's quite a different subject and I'm going to keep it secret.

FANG: Tell me about THE ADVENTURES OF TINTIN.

CORNISH: TinTin is a very courageous boy reporter. He is one of the most famous comic book characters in Europe. He was created by a Belgium artist, called Hergé, and the books were created between the very late 20s and the late 70s. They're extraordinary! I recommend any comic book fan to check them out, especially Americans who aren't necessarily aware of it as Europeans. Obviously, Mr. Steven Spielberg and Peter Jackson have produced this new movie that I am one of three writers on. It's coming out Christmas in America and I think it's going to be pretty incredible.