Attack the Block Knowledge Organiser

Institutional Information
1. Director: Joe Cornish
2. Writer: Joe Cornish
3. Production Companies : Big Talk, Film4, The UK Film Council, and Studio Canal
4. Executive Producer: Edgar Wright, director of Shaun of the Dead and Hot Fuzz

Character	Description
1. Samantha (Sam) Adams	A **trainee nurse** and new resident of the Block. Is **mugged** on her way home on fireworks night. Resents the young gang who mugged her but comes to **work with them** for the greater good.
2. Moses	**Protagonist:** A quiet and loyal teenage **gang leader** and orphan looking for respect around the Block. Age unknown for most of film. **Criminal** as he mugs Sam. Kills the first Alien that lands and as a result is **responsible for the alien invasion**. Becomes the **hero** by the end of the film.
3. Pest	One of the **gang members** who looks up to and takes 'orders' from Moses. Is often the **comedic relief** in the film and offers audience some **insight into life of a teenager** by expressing what Moses does or cannot.
4. Dennis	A **hotheaded pizza delivery boy** and the **brashest** member of the gang.
5. Jerome	A **schoolboy** and the **most academic** member of the gang
6. Biggz	The **youngest** member of the gang. Throughout most of the film, Biggz is trapped in a **dumpster** after he's cornered by the aliens
7.Brewis	A **student stoner** and one of Ron's customers
8. Ron	The **local drug dealer** who lives in the penthouse of the Block and knows everyone
9. Hi-Hatz	**Antagonist:** feared gang member who **runs the Block** in terms of crime and drugs. **Psychopathic, prone to violence** and **owner of the weed** grown by Ron at the top of the Block.

Social Context

1. The plot was inspired by an event where **Cornish** was **mugged himself**, and after adding the science fiction angle into the plot, Joe Cornish **interviewed various kids in youth groups** in order to find out what kind of **weapons** they would use if a real alien invasion occurred.

2. Film was released two months after the **London riots of 2011**. The representation of the working classes in the British Media has always been **pejorative** (disapproving), but this event gave rise to iconic images which were used to demonise certain people, particularly **black teenagers**.

3. Cornish explores social issues, such as:
a. **poverty in a capitalist society**
b. **police racism**
c. **poor parenting**

Cultural Context

1. **Hybrid of genres**
   a. **social realism** (gritty urban films) such as Fish Tank regarding the **setting** and **characters**
   b. **sci-Fi movies**, regarding the **themes** and **aesthetics** (ET)
   c. **comedy**
   d. **Action-adventure, explosions** and **chases,** such as in Die Hard

2. **American 80s movies (particularly external night shots).** Cold blue/green light, not the amber street light colours we have in UK

3. Part of a movement of **British genre parody films**, such as Hot Fuzz & Shaun of the Dead – **juxtaposing a normal setting with an extraordinary situation**. Hollywood genres can be made in England! **Edgar Wright**, who directed the above films, was executive producer on AtB.

Technological Context

1. **Mostly practical effects,** which makes for better interaction with the actors. The 'head alien' was played by Terry Notary.

2. In **post-production**, the practical effects were **augmented,** such as:
 a. **light** was taken out of the **fur**
 b. Mouth was altered: **addded more teeth** – going down into the throat; **animated over-extending** jaw, like snakes
 c.**More agility to limbs**

3. Other **post-production effects** include:
 a. **Sinking teeth** into Pest's leg
 b. **Roar** – combination of lots of **animal sounds** and **women's piercing screams**

4. Some additional aliens were completed completely using **CGI (Computer Generated Imagery)**

Institutional Context

1. **British, independent** film – **smaller budget** than Hollywood films

2. Now more able to make sci-fi films, as there is now **cheap technology** to create, upload, share and distribute and films

3. Implications of a **smaller budget** include, **fewe**r:
a. **action sequences**
b. **special effects**
c. **famous stars**

4. Independent filmmakers are more able to **take risks**, as they **do not have to please a big studio or guarantee big profits**.

	Micro-features:		
	Technique	Example	Effect
Cinematography (including lighting)	1. **Low-key lighting** outside	Provided via elements such as lamp posts, fireworks and car headlamps	Realistic portrayal of estates; conventional of **hoodie horror** genre
	2. **High-key** lighting – often unnaturally	In corridors	Unsettling; other-worldly – **sci-fi**.
	3. Odd **spotlights** and bright lights	Block itself features odd spotlights and bright lights from flats	Resemble lights from a spaceship – convention of **sci-fi** genre.
	4. **Blacklights**	In the weed room	Unusual and unsettling – **80s/sci-fi**
	5. **Dark colour palette** – blues, greys and blacks	Buildings; gang clothing	Drab, looks uncared for, poverty - conventional of **hoodie horror** and **sci-fi** genres
	6. **Extreme Long Shot**	Tube station; Wyndham Tower	Establishing setting and genres
Sound	1. Local **dialect** and **accents** used	Throughout	Clearly indicates **urban location** and **characters' social background**
	2. **Sound effects** replicating 'normal' sounds	bikes, weapons, fireworks	Clearly indicates **urban location** and **Bonfire Night**; fireworks used to 'mask' invasion from rest of world
	3. Soundtrack utilises elements from **hip-hop** and **grime**	Throughout, including "Get That Snitch"	Clearly indicates **urban location** and **characters' social background**
	4. **Unnatural sound effects**	Aliens	Disturbing; unnerving; conventional of **sci-fi** genre
Mise-en-scene	1. Costum: **Hoodies, bandanas**	Gang	**Stereotypical of teenagers** from **South London estate**
	2. **Props:** ecognisable items belonging to teenagers	BMXs, moped, mobile phones, hoodies and caps	Realistic portrayal of estates; conventional of **hoodie horror** genre. BMXs conventional of **80s sci-fi films** (and revivals)
	3**. Practical effects** (enhanced post-production)	Aliens throughout	Unsettling and recognisable as a key **sci-fi** trope.
	4. **Weapons**	Fireworks; samurai sword; gun	Weapons that teenagers shouldn't, but could, have access to – realistic; links to crime in **social context**
	5. **Smoke**	In corridor	Tension; conventional of **sci-fi** genre
Editing	1. **CGI**	Effects on alien	Achieve the "blackest black" fur; UV teeth and overextending jaw – otherworldly, unnerving – **sci-fi**
	2. **Fast cuts**	Frenzied aliens throughout, particularly early in the film	Don't get a clear view of the alien – **POV of characters**
	3. **Delayed POV shot**	Sam first sees the gang	The shot holds on the characters' face and we experience their reaction first, before a delayed POV shot reveals to the audience what the character is seeing, creating **tension – 'Spielbergian' convention**