

All that is solid

Jordan and Kim
Jordan and Kim
Jordan and Kim
Jordan and Kim
Kill the spiders

Jordan and Kim
Kim, come on
Pull em down
Jordan and Kim

Legs twitching
Kill the spiders
Nah, they won't hurt you
they won't hurt you

Kim, come on
Kill the spiders for me
Kick em out
Jordan and Kim
Jordan and Kim
Come on Kim, come on

Jordan and Kim
Squash these spiders
Jordan and Kim
Pull em down
Kill the spiders

Kill the spiders for me
Kill the spiders
Before I went to the toilet
and he used to say
nah they won't hurt you
they won't hurt you
So sometimes
he would go in there
and kill the spiders for me

But he used to just pull
them all off the walls
he just used to pull them
down and scrape them
with his work boots
But sometimes
you'd go in there
and you'd sit on the toilet
and you could see
all these little legs
you could see
these little legs twitching
where he'd squashed these spiders
and ugh
horrible
and I still can't bear them

Melts into air

Jocelyn Pook and John Smith
collaborated on *Blight* in 1994.
The film depicts the destruction
of East London for the
the M11 Link Road.

Pook and Smith's
homes in Leytonstone
were both destroyed to make
way for the motorway.

"To be modern," philosopher
Marshall Berman proclaimed,
"is to experience personal and
social life as a maelstrom,

to find one's world and oneself
in perpetual disintegration and
renewal, trouble and anguish,
ambiguity and contradiction:
to be part of a universe in which
all that is solid melts into air."

Berman was reflecting on the
nature of modern life in the city
having witnessed his home in
the Bronx destroyed to make
way for an expressway.

"To be a *modernist*," he
continues, "is to make oneself
somehow at home in the
maelstrom, to make its rhythms
one's own, to move within its
currents in search of the forms
of reality, of beauty, of freedom,
of justice, that its fervid and
perilous flow allows."

Construction of the M11 Link
was delayed by years following
a long and bitter campaign by
local residents to protect their
homes from demolition. Pook
and Smith made themselves at
home in this maelstrom and
made its rhythms their own.
Blight's "rhythmic, emotive
soundtrack," writes A.L. Rees
"is partly musical and partly a
collage of the residents' voices.
Shots and sounds echo and
cross-link in the film's 14
minutes to reinvent a radical
documentary tradition."

It has a living entity of itself
You know that house has a spirit
 Sorry
 Chair rails all the way
 down the stairs
Then all the picture rails came by
 Then coving went up of course

 Sorry
 Red brick tiles
 Smash
 Plaster roses
 Sorry
The imitation primroses
 Crash
 Knock the wall down

 Knock it down quickly
 Wood chip
 Splinters everywhere
 Joists
 Gouge it out
Covings and skirting boards
 Bang smash
 Bang smash
The lincrusta wallpaper
 Kick em out
 You're a trespasser

 We are sorry
 We are sorry
 we've got to
knock your house down
 We are sorry
 you've got to
 move your mother
 We are sorry
 we've got
to destroy this community

 I don't really remember
 I don't really remember
 Bright green and cream
 I don't really remember
 much
A sort of sickly yellow colour
 I don't really remember
 Bright white
 I don't really remember
 much
 Dark brown

 I don't really remember
 much about
 Mushroom
 I don't really remember
 much about the
The most hideous red wallpaper
 I don't really remember

Late in Ric Burns' eight-part,
seventeen-and-a-half hour *New
York: A Documentary Film*,
Berman eulogises the radical
reinvention of visual and sonic
traditions that arise from acts of
creative destruction.

As his Bronx home was torn
apart, Berman witnessed how
drab elevated trains that rattled
by were graffitied in exuberant
protest reliefs and mottoes, "A
grey day, a grey neighbourhood,
an El Train and it's like a
rainbow, it's thrilling."

Another global incarnation born
from this suffering in the Bronx
was the music and poetry of rap.
"A kid rapping with small
speakers and a drum track in the
subway shouting the story of his
life... These are parables of a
city that's being ruined, that's
being destroyed, and that's
saying, 'We come from ruins,
but we're not ruined.'"

Berman later wrote, "Not only
had their suffering not destroyed
their idealism; in some
mysterious way, it had created
idealism. Their capacity for
soul-making in the midst of
horror gave the city a new aura,
a new tincture of bright lights...
in the midst of falling apart,
[they] found ways to rise."

It is this act of radical
reinvention that unites the Bronx
and *Blight* and all who cultivate
new protests against forgetting.
As Leytonstone melted into air,
Pook and Smith's sonic and
visual experimentation made a
thrilling new form of reality, of
beauty, of freedom, of justice,
from the ruins of their
community.

Cherry Smyth celebrates
this formal innovation
in Pook's dramatic score and
Smith's masterful editing,
introducing "warning flash
frames of red, green and blue to
the thud of bricks, which mount

Pastel green and cream
I don't really remember
much
Blue with a bit of red
with a bit of sort of like cream
I don't really remember
much about
That turkey colour you know
I don't really remember
much about the wallpaper

What was it like
What was it like
I can't remember anything
Oh, I remember
I can't actually remember it
I remember as well
Oh, I remember
I can't remember anything
I don't
I don't
I don't really remember
I don't
I don't
I don't
I don't
I don't really remember much
about the wallpaper
I don't
I don't
I don't really remember much
about the wallpaper and that, but
you always had a typical tiled
Fifties fireplace

I don't
I don't really remember
I don't
I don't really remember
I don't
I don't really remember
I don't
I don't really remember
I don't really remember much
about the wallpaper and that
but you always had a typical tiled
Fifties fireplace
and an open fire
and all that
and a really nice maroon uncut

Twenty-eighth of June
Nineteen-O-Seven
Sixteenth of September
Nineteen-Sixteen
Oh, I'm just a week off
seventy now
I'm eighty-eight
Jordan and Kim
The number is twenty-seven

to streaks of colour as figurative
details of domestic life are
subsumed by mechanistic
force." Erika Balsom adds,
"*Blight* evinces a tremendous
formal precision while
simultaneously foregrounding
an urge to embalm time, as
Smith acts as a witness to the
difficulty of the present."

Berman insists we dwell in the
difficulty of the present to
remember that modernism is
still happening, both in our
streets and in our souls. "The
innate dynamism of the modern
economy, and of the culture that
grows from this economy,
annihilates everything that it
creates – physical environments,
social institutions, metaphysical
ideas, artistic visions, moral
values – in order to create more,
to go on endlessly creating the
world anew. This drive draws all
modern men and women into its
orbit. And forces us all to
grapple with the question of
what is essential, what is
meaningful, what is real in the
maelstrom in which we move
and live."

"The process of modernization,"
Berman concludes, "even as it
exploits and torments us, brings
our energies and imaginations to
life, drives us to grasp and
confront the world that
modernization makes, and to
strive to make it our own. I
believe that we and those who
come after us will go on fighting
to make ourselves at home in
this world, even as the homes
we have made, the modern
street, the modern spirit, go on
melting into air."

Twenty-eight years since *Blight*
was made, East London
residents march to protest
plans for a new four-lane
tunnel with a dedicated lane
for highly pollutant lorries in
one of the most polluted
boroughs. Amidst the rainbow
of banners is twenty-seven-

Seventy-four
Twenty-third
of the fifth

year-old Naima Omar who asks,
soberly, “Why do we have to
build another tunnel?”

Seventy-three
January the twentieth
Nineteen-ninety
Two, Sixty-Six
I’ll be sixty-eight in December
Forty-seven coming up forty-eight
Seven years
seven years
yeah

Watching the film today, Smyth
notes how, “*Blight* reverberates
now as a plangent plea to stop
destroying our planet home and
to design more earth-centred
dialogue between architecture,
infrastructure and community,
beyond our speed and growth
dependency.”

Jordan and Kim
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“Come on,” as Henry and Alex,
Jan and Richard,
Daphne and Trudy,
Pam and Tony,

Jordan and Kim
Jordan and Kim
Come on Kim, come on

Jack and Sheila,
Louise and Dolly,
who voice the lyrics

Jordan and Kim
Jordan and Kim
Come on Kim, come on

of this creative destruction,
put it twenty-eight years ago:
“Come on

Homes not roads
Homes not roads
Homes not roads
Homes not roads

Homes not roads
Homes not roads
Homes not roads
Homes not roads

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Homes not roads
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Kill the spiders
Kill the spiders for me

Kill the spiders
Kill the spiders for me”