



**HOPE**, Video by Helen Park

by David Finkelstein

2002, Un-rated, 7 minutes

Park calls her video an "image-based video-poem" and that is exactly what it is. Like a poem, "Hope" explores a series of related feelings by creating a series of images: birds and planes in flight, smoke emerging from a rooftop, kids in strollers and on skateboards, people's hands in motion as they walk, and parents touching their children. The final images are of a little boy's hand which flies up like a bird as he runs, and of an antenna on a roof, as if poised for flight. The melancholy, yearningly spare rock music of The Dirty Three creates a poignant mood for this study of flight as a release and a transcendence.

Park has an extraordinary musical sense of editing and the images follow the structure of the music quite closely, completely changing tone on the song's bridge. This is both a strength and a weakness; the song is quite beautiful but also a bit wandery and long-winded. Both the song and the video could benefit from a bit of trimming; cutting out everything inessential. Park's technique of isolating and highlighting movement-images culled from ordinary life is powerful and poetic. By blowing up images and occasionally playing them backwards, she makes them leap out at the viewer in a fresh way. However, the sketchy, out of focus camerawork and the general crudeness of her digital effects do not particularly add to the work's expressiveness.

Despite some shortcomings, "Hope" is an evocative visual poem in which quotidian sights are elevated into expressive visual metaphors.

**ROCK STAR**, Video by Helen Park

by David Finkelstein

2002, Un-rated, 9 minutes

Set to haunting, lovely, lyrical music for piano, strings, and winds, this video shows footage of alternative rock bands performing in clubs in New York City. The footage is generally drastically slowed down and has some simple digital color effects added.

This disarmingly simple concept has a powerful and mesmerizing effect. By slowing down the gyrations of rock singers and setting their movements to an aching lyrical score, Park is able to peer inside the ritual of the rock performance and examine its heart. She has a sure eye for selecting and editing footage: we rarely see singers actually singing or instrumentalists playing. Instead, Park shows us the moments in between, when the singers are primarily listening to the music, allowing it to surge through their bodies convulsively, or the moment of wild release just before a performer decides to leap out into the crowd or tear off his clothes. The slowness and the romantic music allow us to see inside the singer's experience. These performers embody the Grotowskian ideal of an actor as one 'burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames.'

The genre of rock performance certainly is artificial and has its own stage conventions, but one of those conventions is to allow the performers to inhabit a space where a certain kind of free, very real chaos is allowed to erupt in an uncontrolled way. The video's lovely musical score heightens the extraordinary vulnerability of these men and women, who, buoyed by the crowd, open themselves to ever-greater frenzies. Park's sensitively musical editing reveals the performers to us in wave after wave. There is a religious, ritualistic aspect to rock performance, which is revealed here, so that the performance is almost a kind of possession ritual. In the democratic world of alternative rock, men and women, butch and femme types, equally expose themselves to this ecstasy. "Rock Star" uses the simplest of means to reveal the sublime transfiguration which rock stars and audiences jointly seek.