Nam June Paik - Tate and FACT, Liverpool
Reviewed by Denis Joe February 2011

FACT (Foundation For Art & Creative Technology) is one of Liverpool's success stories, having started out showing films at the Unity Theatre, and now has its own, impressive cinemas and galleries based in Wood Street. FACT is on Wood Street, and is situated amongst bars and nightclubs in some of the city's side streets, parallel to the more famous Bold Street and just a five minute walk from Central Station.

Once it gets dark visitors to Liverpool will need only look up at sky and see the laser arc, commissioned especially for this event, by Peter Appleton, that joins FACT to Liverpool Tate gallery, both of whom are exhibiting works by Nam June Paik (July 20, 1932 – January 29, 2006) until 13th March.

Nam June Paik was a Korean-born American artist, and having worked with a variety of media is considered to be the first video artist. In fact it is perhaps safe to say that Paik pioneered the use of electronic visuals, such as TV, in the art world.

This exhibition is showcasing over 90 works that cover all stages of Paik's work that show him as the world's first multimedia artist, who has worked alongside composers such as John Cage and Stockenhausen, classical cellist Charlotte Moorman (who, in 1967 was arrested for going topless while performing in Paik's Opera Sextronique), Laurie Anderson, Dali and Allen Ginsberg.

FACT showcase two major works, including the Laser Cone (link to video: http://www.youtube.com/user/factliverpool

) and early video and TV works. Entry to the FACT exhibits is free. In the Tate Liverpool there is a grander overview of Paik's works including some of his early music scores, large scale video instalments, robot sculptures as well as some of Paik's collaborative works with the German artist Joseph Beuys (admission £6 and £5.50 concs).

One of the problems that works by Paik and other multimedia artists is how quickly the work becomes dated. The reason for this, perhaps, lies with the eagerness of the artist to use new technology; to test its limits. Through that testing technology is further developed to meet increasing demand for novelty and application. This is noticeable in much of the early works and particularly in the music of Paik.

But that is also the reason why this exhibition is so important. It shows a linear development, not just of the works as art, but also as new technology.

Paik was a pioneer in the true sense of the word. He utilised new developments in art and society. In 1988 he created a work for the Olympic Games being held at Seoul, perhaps South Korea's notice to the world that the post-military government were intent on becoming a serious economic power in the region. The work, a giant tower made up entirely of over a 1000 monitor screens, was given the title '**The More The Better**', a title that would go against much of today's thinking and one that suggested that Paik was not only a great artist but also a great humanist.