

**I**N MY LAST LIFE, WHEN I only went to see bands that I liked, I used to say I wouldn't go to a festival if you paid me. Ha! By the time I've wriggled off of my petard I'm too late for the interesting **SPACE** but just in time for the totally uninteresting **SOLAR RACE**, a band with a neat line in promotional kneeling pads and a horrible line in squawk'n'squall.

**SPEEDWAY** are next. They look like "Blue For You"-era Quo with short hair, and surprise surprise... **TONGUE** twist by in a blur of khaki skirts and cacky songs. Finally, breaking the monotony and the alphabetical progression, **CABLE** pile on some pressure with a set of quietly confident anguish that's tortured without being tortuous.

**UNDERSTAND**'s vice is to versa that formula. I need a break, and **JOYRIDER**'s opening number is no reason to miss Stereolab on The Maker stage. **PROLAPSE**, of course, are an awesomely good reason for missing their last numbers. Things get good almost too late, but just in time for **FLYING SAUCER ATTACK**, who may prove to be a reason for never listening to Stereolab again. Their songs share the same open-ended beauty, but the Saucers mix them with an unfettered glee the 'lab never aspire to. They know a million ways to hit a guitar without abusing it once, feedbacking out of experimentation rather than frustration.

Their first song starts soft as a breeze but finishes hard as a hurricane and then it's whirlwind all the way. At one point the riff from Gary Glitter's "Rock 'n' Roll Part Two" creeps in, adding some glam wit which is repeated on the stunning encore, with two drummers hitting one kit while the bass player grabs a straight sax and makes like Roland Kirk's sexy sister. A perfect end to a far from perfect day.

Saturday starts better. I arrive in time to see **SPEEDY** close their set in a blurry flourish and **HARDBODY** running and skipping through a brassy, Lycra-clad gamut of - at last! - Pop. But a glance at my schedule brings down the gloom - 15 bands in 12 hours! My word limit fails me. From now only only the best are good enough...

**SCARFO** have almost as many ways of assaulting a guitar as Flying Saucer Attack, but use them to almost exact opposite ends. They've come far fast from their Shelley-with-Welly, Jammy Buzzcock beginnings. Like the following band of late bloomers, **AC ACOUSTICS**, there's an air of optimum design about Scarfo. With them it's perfect power pop;

with the Acoustics it's murder-soaked feedback, drenched Velvet 'n' Beach Boys. Both bands may have plateau'd, but they're so high above their peers they're dizzying to behold.

The more normal **DELICATESSEN** act, the stranger they seem. Their sound is straighter now than ever it was, thanks to a new bass player who strips fripperies from the song and goes for the cut, and to the ever-brightening, superstar showing off of Neil Carlill. But the sheer weirdness won't go away. Neil's surrealist revulsion at sex still makes Momus sound like a "Carry On" film. "CF KANE" still sounds like a paeon to female circumcision. Delicatessen may rock like a dream, but they still swing like a hammock nightmare. Thank God.

And speaking of god, to old fashioned Christians like me, Sunday is a day of rest. Carlsberg obviously respect this and offer a line-up of almost surreal mellowness. I only have to compromise myself three times all day.

First offenders **PULLOVER** tread a schizophrenic line between the epicene and the epic and just about avoid falling over themselves, thanks to some spirited slag-off lyrics and drop-dead gorgeous dress sense. Two people wearing Elastica T-shirts leave. Go figure.

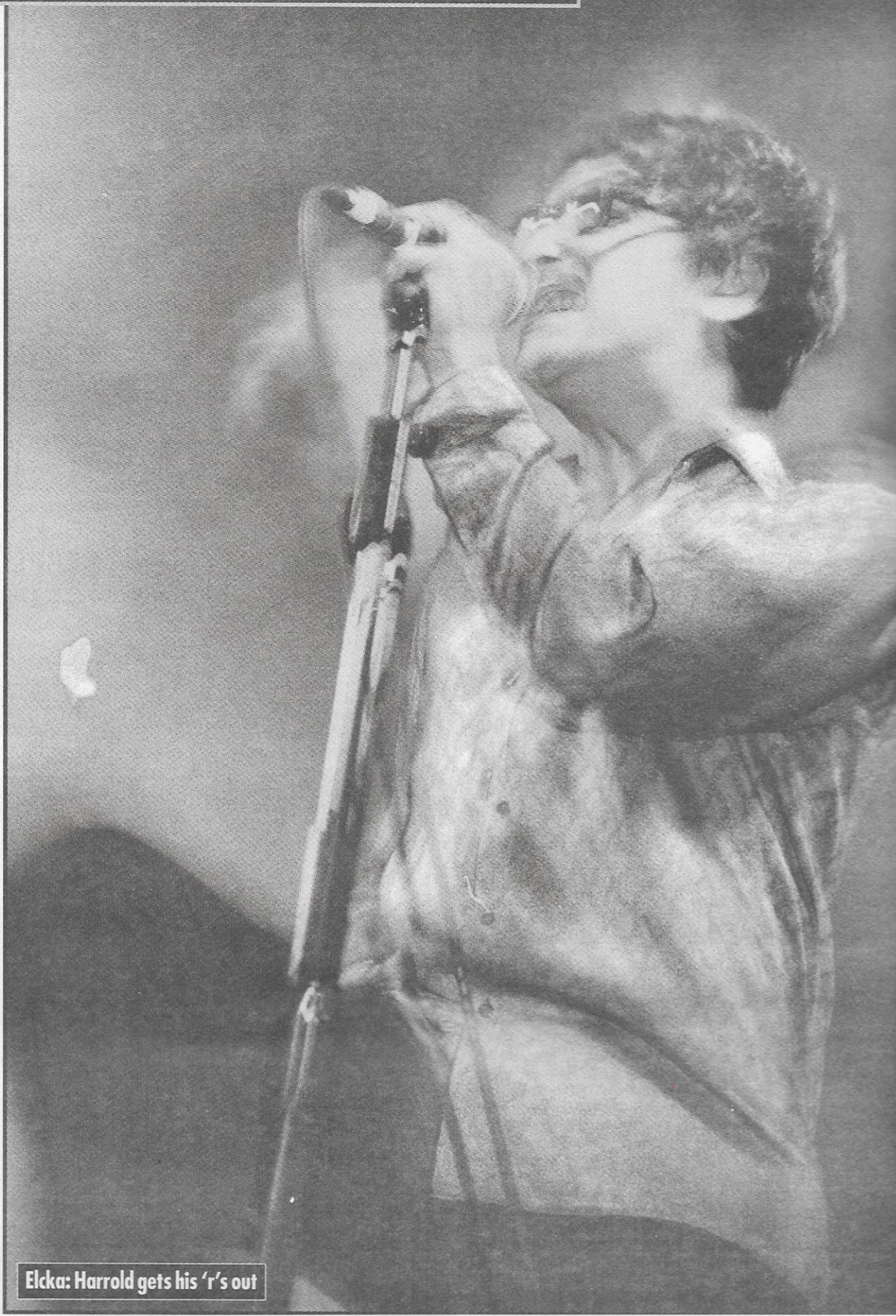
**SUPER FURRY ANIMALS** are my second succumbing and they're another bunch of two-faced pop tarts. The bad side is all panting Weezer impressions, but the best side shows when they let themselves get carried away, singing songs about galvanised chrome frisbees covered in lovely layers of bubblegum and beeping Moog. Worth risking any god's wrath for.

Quite what pop god makes of my deserting his chosen ones Pavement for **ELCKA** I don't know. He can wreak hideous revenge, though. Like giving My Life Story all the instruments and Elcka all the good tunes. Their songs scream for an orchestra. As it is they more than get by, hurtling through the loudest set I've heard all weekend and throwing away more great ideas in one song than most bands have in a lifetime. They're hurrying because they've got so much to give... And by golly we're going to get it. And by God we love every too-short minute of it, guilty gluttons that we are.

I save my religious conscience by promising not to pick up my pen again. With the losers left to go on it'd only be in anger, anyway. Let's end on an up note, shall we?

(ML)

## CARLSBERG STAGE



Elcka: Harrold gets his 'r's out



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**SPECIAL THANKS:** Adrian Pettett, Ian Gittins, Pete Brealy, Robert Tame, Mike Stead, Mike Lamond, Liann, Nikki, Briony, Chris, Suzie, Lisa, Phil Nicholls, Tony Judge, Robin Allan, Specialised Security, and all the bands who turned up at the Maker signing tent

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