

Pleasure Forever

Alter (Sub Pop)

What ever happened to rock? Now that getting signed to Sub Pop is easy like Sunday morning, listening to Pleasure Forever's second full-length is a dark delicacy for the label's increasingly cute menu of harmlessly light tastes. With their most recent feast, *Alter*, Andy Rothbard and company serve up elegant and sinister courses of hearty, aural dishes. Sabbathesque guitar riffs wrestle with pounding drums and brooding keys for the very last wing of pheasant on the banquet table, as melodies flow like fine wine. **Eric Shea**



Placebo

Sleeping with Ghosts (Hut Recordings/Astralwerks)

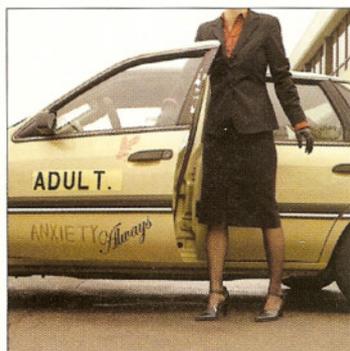
Brian Molko's voice just keeps on getting better. Thankfully, *Sleeping with Ghosts* evolves past its opener, an oddly remedial "fast and angry" Social Distortion knock-off titled, "Bulletproof Cupid." From the piston-hipped Hail Mary of "The Bitter End," to the shoe-gazing sentimentality of "This Picture," SWG becomes a treatise in variance. Placebo's dirty electricity has been smoothed out and teched-up by producer Jim Abbiss. Lightning-bolt big guitar rock is well augmented by demure electronic texturing on an album thematically concerned with relationships, but none of them is what you'd call normal. Placebo continues to pull blue-ribbon winners from the darker side of the toy box. **Mark von Pfeiffer**



Adult.

Anxiety Always (Ersatz Audio)

Adult.'s husband and wife duo, Adam Lee Miller and Nicola Kuperus, have created an album deserving of its title. The tracks are indeed anxiety-ridden; creating a futuristic, electronic sound that is much darker than their previously released singles collection, *Resuscitation* (2001). Kuperus' vocals manage to be melodic yet severe, adding to the intense layering of beats by Miller. The underlying tension is coupled with catchy melodies and lyrics. **Catherine Siphron**



Timo Maas

Music For The Maases 2 (Kinetic Records)

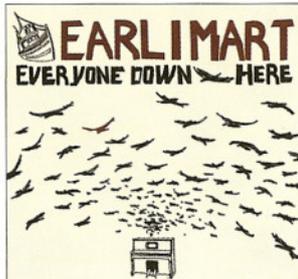
Timo Maas is the antidote to the hands-in-the-air DJ. Managing to crank dance floors while maintaining integrity, Maas relies on quality, not gratuitous formulaic build-up-and-breakdowns. Translating this understanding to production, Maas has also lent his talent to numerous remixes. A select few are collected here on the second installment of *Music For The Maases*. Re-workings of Kelis, Garbage, Moloko, Placebo, Moby, and Fatboy Slim, among others, showcase the funk-fueled, energetically percussive style that Maas has perfected to an art form. **Lily Moayeri**



Earlimart

Everyone Down Here (Palm)

Watching a great band evolve is extremely gratifying, especially if the result is anything like Earlimart's third full-length album, *Everyone Down Here*. Their solid composition doesn't fall victim to over-production, as their warm sound is kept intact. With tracks of delicate low-fi melancholy juxtaposed with straightforward, "good times," melody-driven rock, the quartet fully exercises their artistic freedom, not allowing themselves to be confined to one sound. But don't be mistaken, what you can always expect is one really good sound. The band's fearless exploration is constantly elevating them to new levels. **Adriane Lee**



Yo La Tengo

Summer Sun (Matador)

Like each of the ten albums preceding it, *Summer Sun* breaks complacent Yo La Tengo forecasts and follows the trio's trajectory of unexpected musical whimsy. Varying in warm shades of lo-fi calm, the thirteen tracks convey a paired-down sensibility that's both expansive and intimate. From the sweet lilting bounce of "Tiny Birds," and the groovy Brady-era soundtrack stylings of "Georgia vs. Yo La Tengo," to the jazzy incarnations of "Let's Be Still," *Summer Sun* gently washes over your ears with a hazy hum. **Mar Yvette**

