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(Man... or Astro-Man? headline downstairs at the Middle East this Saturday, September 6; call 864-EAST.)

## jazz

★★★ Adam Berenson, **DIALECTICAL CONSTRUCTS** (Dream Play). Don't let the academic chill of the title put you off. Pianist Berenson's music is heady and abstract, to be sure, but it's also warm and inviting — more Mark Rothko than Josef Albers. Berenson's spare lyricism is built of oblique melodies toyed with in series of variations. On "Ricerar," percussive chords alternate with tuneful fragments in an unpredictable dialogue. The spaces in his improvisations provide plenty of room for trio members bassist Scott Barnum and drummer Bob Moses to act as equal partners in the music. On "Very Soon Mankind Will No Longer Be a Useless Passion (Broadway Melody of 1996)" Barnum's furtive strumming and surprising rhythmic tangents from Moses blend into a group improvisation of nocturnal mystery, where melodies and tempos are briefly glimpsed before scurrying away into silence. In their emphasis on glacially slow tempos, unresolved tensions, songlike melodies, and intimate interplay, the trio sometimes recall the great Paul Bley trios of the 1960s. But Berenson's music has a hushed urgency all its own.

— Ed Hazell

**Tonite! Thursday, Sept. 4, 8pm!**



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