

ALL MUSIC GUIDE

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by Jonathan Widran

Considering the heights he's scaled throughout his childhood, it's hard to believe it took teenage jazz piano prodigy Matt Savage five recordings to name one *Quantum Leap*. For most kids, overcoming an early diagnosis of autism would be story enough. For most freakishly talented young musicians, playing at eight and nine with [Dave Brubeck](#), [Chick Corea](#), and [McCoy Tyner](#) -- and headlining New York's Blue Note and Birdland by 12 -- would be icing on the crazy cake. So besides creating another absolutely astonishing, refreshing and engaging (even for only casual jazz fans) straight-ahead collection of mostly originals with his trio (both adult musicians, the appropriately named bassist [John Funkhouser](#) and drummer [Steve Silverstein](#)), where's the leap? It's in their new deal with Palmetto Records, which is connected with MRI/RED distribution; this will be the first Savage disc to be distributed worldwide. Aside from the exciting melodies and rhythms ranging from playful swing ("Give Me a Break," "Free and Easy") to stride blues (the witty "Couch Potato Blues") and gracefully romantic ("Dreaming of You"), the most remarkable element in this 15-track collection is the effortless maturity of Savage's composing. He includes a scattering of covers of tunes by inspirations like [George Shearing](#) (the buoyant "Lullaby of Birdland"), [Thad Jones](#) ("A Child Is Born"), and even "Monk's Dream," but the real fun comes when Savage and his trio play it "Free and Easy" on tuneful originals like the crazily percussive and hypnotic Caribbean trip to "Curacao," the swirling dance of "Closer Than You Think," and the sly "Hide and Seek." "Blues in 33/8" is another crazy-cool gem that finds him and [Silverstein](#) making up the metric rules as they go along. [Brubeck](#) once heralded Savage as "another Mozart" but the ever growing Savage is moving even beyond that to set new standards for up-and-coming generations.