

Welcome Home

[Matt Savage](#) | Savage Records (2010)

By [JACK BOWERS](#)

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Pianist [Matt Savage](#), a child prodigy if ever there was one, recorded his first album as leader of the Matt Savage Trio (with adult rhythm section) when he was nine years old (he'd recorded for the first time at age seven while studying at the New England Conservatory in Boston). In 2004, when he was twelve, Matt received his first ASCAP Young Jazz Composer Award for his composition "The Wild Rose" (from the CD *Cutting Loose*). Later, he received the same award for his composition "Serenity." Now a seasoned veteran of eighteen and newly enrolled at the Berklee College of Music, Matt has released his ninth album, *Welcome Home*, on which he has expanded the usual trio format on the five-part *Big Apple Suite* and four other selections to welcome such notable guest artists as alto saxophonist [Bobby Watson](#), trumpeter [Jeremy Pelt](#), bassist [Joris Teepe](#) and drummer [Yoron Israel](#).

In spite of their formidable presence, this is Savage's album all the way, as he not only plays with a maturity well beyond his years but wrote and arranged every number, at the core of which is the lyrical *Big Apple Suite* with echoes of George Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" amplifying its opening and closing movements. The music, he writes, is about his travels, "about changing homes incredibly quickly . . . and still calling it home. It's about the fear of the inevitable . . . and the thrill of promise. It's about returning home as much as it is about going away. And, more than that, it's about enjoying every minute of it."

It's the sort of enjoyment that seemed improbable when Savage was diagnosed at age three with pervasive developmental disorder, a form of autism. That curse became a blessing of sorts once Matt's musical talent was uncovered and his celebrity grew, leading to widespread media attention, countless interviews on television and radio and appearances in a number of documentaries whose purpose was to explore the genesis and enigma of musical savants. Through it all he has remained basically the same, a likable young man with a remarkable gift that he is happy to share with others. On *Welcome Home* he shows that the gift has blossomed and that he is ready to reach for even higher goals.

While Savage is in fast company here, he appears to be unfazed and confident, letting his music (and musicianship) speak for itself. Watson and Pelt (each of whom performs

on the album's last nine tracks) are clever and engaging, especially on the buoyant "City Is Alive " and "Welcome Home (Boston)," but Savage more than holds his own whether soloing or comping, which he does with assurance whenever the front- liners are center stage. In sum, another large and decisive step forward in young Matt Savage's ever-evolving musical development.



Track Listing: Our Town; On the Farm; Picturesque; Seasons Change; Night Falls; Big Apple Suite (Big Apple Blues / The Night Goes On / The City Sleeps / The City Is Alive / Finale); Inner Search; Welcome Home (Boston); You Are Here.

Personnel: Matt Savage: composer, arranger, piano; Bobby Watson: alto saxophone; Jeremy Pelt: trumpet, flugelhorn; Joris Teepe, John Funkhouser (1, 4, 5): bass; Peter Retzlaff, Yoron Israel (1, 4, 5): drums.