

JAZZTIMES

Eighty-Eights from the November 2006 issue

MATT SAVAGE TRIO

Quantum Leap (Savage)

If this album had arrived unannounced and unidentified, you would think you were listening to a schooled, seasoned jazz pianist. You would notice the unique astringent voicings, the slightly halting, asymmetrical phrasing, the unexpected elasticity of meter, the dense, formal chordal patterns suddenly shot through with impulsive right-hand ripples and cascades—and you would assume you were listening to a pianist well on the way to forging an effective personal language.

You would encounter deep ballads like “Serenity” and assume they were standards, and later learn that they are originals. You would discover interpretations of actual standards like “All the Things You Are” and “Lullaby of Birdland” that are intriguing in the sharp angles of their approaches and the liberated spontaneity of their departures. In another standard, “A Child Is Born,” you would hear a darkness not found in other versions, and then hear it become light.

Matt Savage, now 14 years old, was diagnosed with autism when he was three. He has made extraordinary progress in a special program for autistic children, and has been performing brilliant jazz in public since he was nine. It should be fascinating and uplifting to hear his story as it unfolds.

-Thomas Conrad

