

**SAXOPHONIST STÉPHANE SPIRA'S FOURTH RELEASE AS A  
BANDLEADER, *IN BETWEEN*,  
EMPLOYS A DYNAMIC, CATCHY TWO-HORN FRONTLINE FOR A SERIES  
OF MEMORABLE ORIGINALS AND REINVENTED CLASSICS  
FEATURING GLENN FERRIS, JOHNATHAN BLAKE & STEVE WOOD**



"Methodically, without any wasted notes, Spira's debut as a bandleader could be the first chapter in a long and beautiful story - a love story...he's developed a full, hot, slinky sound, devoid of clichés but imbued with a close listen to the masters: Coltrane, Wayne Shorter and Stan Getz." - Culture Jazz

"Where so many of his colleagues find themselves lost in a maze of electronics, or embrace a style and a look to pull a cosmopolitan audience out of the crowd in the subway, Spira prefers to make an album by drawing on the classics...with rare intelligence." - Infratunes

"For throwing yourself off a bridge, entering a magical universe: a heartbroken romance in music." - Jazz News

"Lyrically singing with his soprano sax... a dreamy and introspective road trip, soaked with melancholy, an album that's more like a book—a page-turner, in fact, where everything connects and flows..."

- Guy Zinger, All About Jazz, on Stéphane Spira's *Spirabassi*

## CHECK OUT EPK, HERE.

French-born, New York-based saxophonist Stéphane Spira grew up with jazz the old-school way: in late-night jams and cutting sessions. A protégé of longtime Chet Baker pianist Michel Graillier, Spira's jazz career has taken him from 4 AM basement sessions in the underbelly of Paris, through acclaimed collaborations with trumpeter Stéphane Belmondo and pianist Giovanni Mirabassi, to the cutting edge of New York jazz. Spira's fourth album as a bandleader, *In Between*, features more of the strikingly translucent, disarmingly catchy compositions that continue to characterize his work.

The performances here center around a tight harmonic interplay and lively, intuitive interaction between Spira and trombonist (and Steve Lacy collaborator) Glenn Ferris, anchored and spiced by a similarly integral rhythm section, Steve Wood on bass and Johnathan Blake on drums. There's irony in the album title, inspired by the cosmopolitan dynamic between the Paris-born bandleader, now based in New York, and the American-born, Paris-based Ferris. As usual, Spira matches a terse lyricism to a slightly smoky tone on tenor sax and a similarly thoughtful, considered, Steve Lacy-inspired clarity on soprano, all the while engaging the rest of the band both rhythmically and melodically throughout a diverse mix of numbers that span the emotional spectrum. In addition to nine originals here, Spira radically reinvents Duke Ellington's Reflections in D as a mystical tone poem before swinging it hard, and transforms the Baden Powell/Vincius de Moraes classic Samba en Preludio into a haunting dirge driven by Wood's starkly funereal arco work. The album winds up on a cleverly humorous note with Grounds 4 Dismissal, Wood's wry, historically allusive joust for bass and drums.

The album's opening track, Cosmaner, wastes no time in setting the stage with a wickedly catchy shuffle theme that's equal part Rio and New Orleans, with nifty handoffs from tenor to trombone and Wood's bass filling in all the implied melody. Likewise, Glenntleman serves as a bright feature for Ferris' bluesy soulfulness. Dawn in Manhattan gives the group a long launching pad to build from balmy ambience to a slinky implied clave underpinning Spira's warmly casual soprano and Ferris' sly, low-down lines. In the same vein, Ferris channels Wycliffe Gordon in laid-back, drolly acerbic mode on the chromatically-fueled In Transit, divergent horn voicing's coalescing to a lively conversation before Wood shifts

from hypnotically circular riffage to resonant atmospherics.

Spira offers a nod to Coltrane on Flight, with its unexpected rhythmic shifts and purposeful tenor work over Blake's flurrying, colorful volleys. The vivid ballad A Special Place has Ferris elegantly leading the band out of lushly misty Brazilian ambience into a purist blues ballad, Blake again playing colorist with his misterioso brushwork, Spira adding his signature spacious, judiciously considered phrasing.

N.Y. Time, a kinetic jazz waltz, has Spira leading an allusively moody modal groove, Ferris adding an incisive solo before Blake takes it shuffling into the shadows. With its shifting counter rhythms and tight, purist horn harmonies, the album's title track alludes to Monk without being derivative. And the aptly titled Classic juxtaposes a bluesy Wood solo with a neat horn chart that diverges and then regroups, up to a triumphantly emphatic chorus: it's "in the tradition" without being overly reverential, a quality that in many ways defines Spira's work.

For more information, please visit, [www.spirajazz.com](http://www.spirajazz.com).

### **ABOUT STÉPHANE SPIRA**

Trained as an engineer, STÉPHANE SPIRA sharpened his chops off the books, after hours, immersing himself in a hard-edged milieu. Working in electronics during the day, he nevertheless found the time to compose and play. Perhaps since he honed his chops in the depths of the jazz underground, Spira was spared the awkwardness of growing up in public: Spira's "remarkable maturity" (Radio France), has not gone unnoticed by the critics. Having dedicated himself exclusively to jazz since a final engineering gig in the Arabian desert in the mid-zeros, Spira has three previous critically acclaimed albums as a bandleader: First Page, Spirabassi (a duo collaboration with pianist Giovanni Mirabassi) and Round About Jobim, a tribute to the father of bossa nova featuring Lionel Belmondo's acclaimed Hymne au Soleil ensemble. Spira continues to divide his time between New York, his latest musical home, and Paris.

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