

BIOGRAPHY

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 a.m. 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. Trained as an engineer, Stéphane sharpened his chops off the books, after hours, immersing himself in a hard-edged milieu. 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. Prior to the 2018 *New Playground*, Spira released four 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, and 2014's *In Between*.