



Bio information: **MIKE OSBORNE**

Title: **DAWN** (Cuneiform Rune 392) Format: CD / DIGITAL

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Archival Release *Dawn* Unearths Important Early Sessions By Seminal British Alto Saxophonist Mike Osborne Shining Light On First Stirrings Of Truly Native English Jazz

In the history of British jazz, there were few voices as unmistakable as **Mike Osborne's** alto saxophone. It could be found in big bands as disparate as those of **Mike Westbrook** and **Chris McGregor**; in major small-group sessions led by **John Surman**, **Ric Colbeck**, **Alan Skidmore** and **Harry Beckett**; and, most importantly, his own handful of albums as a leader. *Dawn* presents Osborne in both his earliest session extant, as a co-leader with Surman of an almost-traditional quartet from 1966, and in 1970 with the first known recording of his mighty trio with the transplanted **South African** rhythm team of **Harry Miller** and **Louis Moholo**. These unearthed 1966 and 1970 recordings, first released by **Cuneiform Records**, not only fill in important gaps in Osborne's own discography but in the history of British jazz as a whole.

Osborne's story is one of the tragedies of British jazz. Within 15 years of his first recordings, simmering mental illness had taken over and forced him away from his musical compatriots in vibrant London and brought him back to his native Hereford (near the Welsh border), where he lived under care until his death in 2007, his saxophone silent for decades. But during his career, Osborne was one of British jazz's most versatile players, working with members of the various spheres creating a new indigenous British jazz: the **Spontaneous Music Ensemble** circle; the crowd around the South African **Blue Notes**; members of the **Canterbury Scene**; and the modernists centered on **John Surman**. *Dawn* presents Osborne in two of these settings, one recorded during the first birthing pains of British jazz and the other when its reach and reputation had already been established.

Dawn presents Osborne in reverse chronological order. The first six tracks are by his trio, his main vehicle as a leader and featuring his most long-standing partners in Miller and Moholo (whether under Osborne's leadership or in other groups, this trio recorded together nearly 20 times from 1970-77). The band only made two albums during its lifetime, *Bordercrossing* and *All Night Long*, both for the legendary British label **Ogun** (run by Miller and his wife **Hazel**). *Dawn*, three tracks each from August and December 1970, is significant for presenting the trio years before these sessions and demonstrating that the group's sound, marked by Osborne's tart melodicism, Miller's brawny lines and Moholo's propulsive freedom, was established at the beginning of their partnership. The material played by the group is a fascinating selection: From the first portion, "**Scotch Pearl**" would appear years later on *All Night Long*, followed by the evocative "**Dawn**" and closing with what sounds like a deconstruction of **Herbie Hancock's** "**Jack Rabbit**"; two of the December 1970 pieces are hitherto unknown, bookending a fascinating version of "1st", which would appear four years later on the eponymous debut of **S.O.S.**, the saxophone trio of Osborne, Surman and **Alan Skidmore**, the template for later groups of the same type such as **World Saxophone Quartet** and **ROVA**.

Listeners will travel back four years earlier with *Dawn's* second half, taken from a period when names now famous were just coming out from the shadow of Britain's traditional jazz scene. Osborne, 24, is there in his first document, Surman, 21, in only his second, supported by Miller and the "elder" of the quartet, drummer **Alan Jackson**, who would play alongside the others in the years to come with **Mike Westbrook** and in Surman's own groups. This was an era of formal suits and allegiance to the innovations in American jazz happening on labels like **Blue Note** and **ESP-Disk'**, reflected in the performances and the material. The quartet plays pithy versions of **Pharoah Sanders'** "**Seven By Seven**" (taken from the saxophonist's 1964 debut for ESP-Disk'), **Carla Bley's** "**And Now The Queen**" (made famous by her then-husband pianist **Paul** in two versions recorded for ESP-Disk' in 1964 and 1965) and **Booker Little's** "**Aggression**", previously only played by **Eric Dolphy's** 1961 quintet. There is one original, Osborne's "**An Idea**", presaging the composer's way with soaring melodies. This part of *Dawn* may only be 20 minutes but don't let its length blind you to its preciousness; the importance of hearing Osborne and Surman in such a formative stage cannot be overstated, given their later contributions (in Surman's case, still continuing to this day).

Dawn continues Cuneiform's valiant efforts in presenting crucial documents of British jazz, coming on the heels of releases like **S.O.S.'s** *Looking For The Next One* and **Surman's** *Flashpoint: NDR Jazz Workshop (April '69)*, both of which have expanded Osborne's discography and helped keep his musical memory alive. With jazz becoming increasingly international, it is vital for the foundation of each country's oeuvre to be known; those who appreciate British jazz and wish to learn more about its history will seek out **Mike Osborne** for the creative force he was during his (sadly) truncated career. *Dawn*, Osborne front and center, in contexts that would define his future, is a musical Rosetta Stone but also simply wonderful music.

BIOS

MIKE OSBORNE (b. September 28, 1941, Hereford, United Kingdom – d. September 19, 2007, Hereford, United Kingdom)

UK alto saxophonist **Mike Osborne** came up in the British scene just as it was escaping the shackles of America through the work of players like **Joe Harriott** and **Stan Tracey**. Osborne's main influence was American alto saxophonist **Jackie McLean**. His first recordings sessions were as part of the horn section of **Mike Westbrook's Big Band**, recording on *Celebration* (**Deram**, 1967) and *Release* (**Deram**, 1968). He then went on to be part of the bands and on the first albums of his Westbrook partner, baritone/soprano saxophonist **John Surman**. The late '60s found him on sessions led by drummer **Selwyn Lissack** and bandleader **Mike Gibbs**. Osborne recorded his debut album, *Outback*, in 1970 for the obscure British label **Turtle**, a quintet session with the multi-national quintet of trumpeter **Harold Beckett**, pianist **Chris McGregor**, bassist **Harry Miller** and drummer **Louis Moholo**. The following decade saw him performing and recording with Beckett, saxophonist **Alan Skidmore**, rock guitarist **Mike Cooper**, vocalist **Norma Winstone** and becoming a fixture in **McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath** big band, along with continuing work with Surman and Westbrook. His second album was a sextet session, *Shapes*, for **FMR**, recorded in 1972 with Miller, Moholo, Skidmore, Surman and American bassist **Earl Freeman** but not released until 1995. Other credits during this period included a wonderful duo with the much older Tracey, participation in bassist **Barry Guy**'s first iteration of the **London Jazz Composers Orchestra** on *Ode* (**Incus** 1972) and trumpeter **Kenny Wheeler**'s large ensemble album *Song For Someone* (**Incus**, 1972). The early partnerships with **Miller/Moholo** and **Surman/Skidmore** led to Osborne's most visible projects during the later part of the '70s: Osborne's own trio, which made a pair of albums for Miller's **Ogun** label (1974's *Bordercrossing* and 1975's *All Night Long*); and **S.O.S.**, the all-horn trio that only made one eponymous Ogun album during its short existence. The later '70s were marked by membership in **Miller's Isipingo** band, **Brotherhood of Breath**, another duo album with Tracey and a quintet album, *Marcel's Muse* (**Ogun**, 1977) with Miller, trumpeter **Mark Charig**, electric guitarist **Jeff**, and drummer **Peter Nykyruj**. Unfortunately this period also included increasing mental instability, spurred on by drug use, which made Osborne increasingly paranoid about his abilities and led to less performing. By the early '80s, Osborne had left London and music behind to resettle in his native Hereford, where he lived under care until his death in 2007 of lung cancer.

More info: <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/sep/21/guardianobituaries.obituaries> - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mike_Osborne
<http://www.allmusic.com/artist/mike-osborne-mn0000524917/biography>

HARRY MILLER

(b. April 26, 1941, Cape Town, South Africa – d. December 16, 1983, Holland)

Bassist **Harry Miller** moved from South Africa in 1961, working around London, before becoming a crucial part of the nascent indigenous British jazz scene from the mid '60s onwards. His discography in the '60s-70s was with **Mike Westbrook**, **John Surman**, **Alan Skidmore**, **Mike Osborne**, **Bob Downes**, **Chris McGregor** and **Elton Dean**. Miller was a one-third of Osborne's steady '70s trio and later worked with his rhythm section partner **Louis Moholo** in a trio with saxophonist **Peter Brötzmann**. He led his own band, **Isipingo**, with varying personnel (Osborne being a regular member), for a few sessions. In addition to his work as a player, Miller's place in British jazz history was cemented with his founding of **Ogun Records**, with a discography approaching 100 releases (LPs and now CDs). Miller died in a road accident in Holland, where he had relocated in the early '80s.

More info: <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/harry-miller-mn0000010162/biography> - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Miller_\(jazz_bassist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Miller_(jazz_bassist))

LOUIS MOHOLO-MOHOLO

(b. March 10, 1940, Cape Town, South Africa)

Drummer **Louis Moholo-Moholo** came to London as part of the mixed-race South African jazz quintet **The Blue Notes**, "led" by **Chris McGregor**. The Blue Notes, together and apart, became important contributors to English jazz of the '60s onwards. Moholo's discography is remarkably diverse, sessions with **Steve Lacy**, **Kees Hazevoet**, **Roswell Rudd**, **Mike Osborne**, **Elton Dean**, **Keith Tippett**, **Peter Brötzmann**, **Irène Schweizer**, **Cecil Taylor**, **Evan Parker** and many others. Moholo has recorded as a leader since the mid '70s in various partnerships (particularly duos) and most recently has been leading his **Dedication Music Orchestra**. After decades of living in Europe, Moholo and his wife returned to his native South Africa a decade ago. He remains extremely active internationally as a performer, recording albums with both his own ensembles and other musicians such as **Wadada Leo Smith**, and performing at jazz festivals worldwide.

More info: <http://www.louislohlofoundation.co.za/> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Moholo - <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/louis-moholo-mn0000227171/biography>

JOHN SURMAN

(b. August 30, 1944, Tavistock, United Kingdom)

Born in the UK and now based in Norway, the saxophonist/bass clarinetist **John Surman** is one of Europe's most famous jazz musicians. His early work was as part of **Mike Westbrook's** big bands but he quickly graduated to a leadership role, waxing albums for **Deram** in the late '60s. He was on **John McLaughlin's** debut album *Extrapolation* and then left England for the continent, expanding his contacts to like-minded Europeans like the **Kühn Brothers**, **Michel Portal** and **Eddy Louiss**. During the '70s, Surman led a marvelous trio with American ex-pat bassist **Barre Phillips** and drummer **Stu Martin**; was one third of the all-horn trio **S.O.S.**; and worked with future wife, Norwegian vocalist **Karin Krog**. In 1976, Surman began a relationship with **ECM Records**, which resulted in his debut for the label, *Upon Reflection*, in 1979. Since then he has made numerous albums for ECM, whether under his own name or with Phillips, bassist **Miroslav Vitous**, pianist **Paul Bley**, guitarist **John Abercrombie**, trumpeter **Tomasz Stanko** and many others. Surman has a long-standing duo with drummer **Jack DeJohnette** and has written many pieces for big bands and jazz orchestras in the new millennium.

More info: http://johnsurman.com/?page_id=6 - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Surman

ALAN JACKSON

(b. January 5, 1940, London, England)

British drummer **Alan Jackson** has had a long career as a versatile member of numerous cutting-edge jazz groups. In the 60s, he worked with **Mike Westbrook's** big band, **Howard Riley's** trio, **Keith Tippett's** quintet, and the cooperative **Sounds Five**; in the '70s, with **John Surman**, **Harry Beckett** and **Graham Collier's** band, as well as backing up visiting Americans like **Ben Webster** as part of the house band at **Ronnie Scott's**; in the '80s-90s, on a variety different of sessions; and with **Mike Garrick's** groups in the new millennium. Based in London, he is active as an educator and performer.

More info: <http://www.samnadel.co.uk/tag/alan-jackson/> - <http://www.jazzacademy.co.uk/tutors.html> - <http://www.discogs.com/artist/294577-Alan-Jackson>

PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS

Digital [High-Resolution] versions of these images are available for download on the **Mike Osborne** artist page @ www.cuneiformrecords.com

