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Bio information: **JOHN SURMAN**

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**FILE UNDER: JAZZ**

One of Europe's foremost jazz musicians, **John Surman** is a masterful improviser, composer, and multi-instrumentalist (baritone and soprano sax, bass clarinet, and synthesizers/electronics). For 45 years, he has been a major force, producing a prodigious and creative body of work that expands beyond jazz. Surman's extensive discography as a leader and a side man numbers more than 100 recordings to date. Surman has worked with dozens of prominent artists worldwide, including **John McLaughlin**, **Chick Corea**, **Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath**, **Dave Holland**, **Miroslav Vitous**, **Jack DeJohnette**, **Terje Rypdal**, **Weather Report**, **Karin Krog**, **Bill Frisell**, **Paul Motian** and many more. Surman is probably most popularly known for his longstanding association with the German label **ECM**, who began releasing Surman's recordings in 1979. Surman has won numerous jazz polls and awards and a number of important commissions. Every period of his career is filled with highlights, which is why Cuneiform is exceedingly proud to release for the first time ever this amazing document of the late 60s 'Brit-jazz' scene.

Born in **Tavistock**, in England, Surman discovered music as a child, singing as soprano soloist in a Plymouth-area choir. He later bought a second-hand clarinet, took lessons from a Royal Marine Band clarinetist, and began playing traditional Dixieland jazz at local jazz clubs. Surman found his instrument of choice, however, when he discovered baritone sax. He recalled in an interview:

"When I was 16 or 17, I saw two saxophones in a music store, an alto and a baritone. They were both the same price, and I thought, "Wow, all that much more saxophone!" (Laughing) But I really liked the look of the instrument. It was a very old French instrument that had been reconditioned. So I gave it a try. I sort of worked my way down to low C and my whole body vibrated. It was pretty much my first sexual experience (Laughing)."

Surman attended the **London College of Music**, where he studied clarinet. In an interview with Tom Erdmann, he explained that "in those days, you weren't allowed to study the saxophone. It wasn't considered a legitimate choral instrument." Surman later learned to play synthesizers, and began incorporating them in his music by the mid-70s - a radical notion for jazz.

Early in his career, Surman was recognized as a world-class talent, the most innovative voice on baritone sax since **Gerry Mulligan** in early 50s. **The Penguin Guide to Jazz** credits Surman: "In the early 1960's, he had modernized baritone saxophone playing, giving an apparently cumbersome horn an agile grace that belied its daunting bulk and adding an upper register much beyond its notational range..." Surman lived in London during the 1960's and thrived in the exploding music scene. '60s London was the world's center of popular music, and Surman was a key figure in its core, working with dozens of notable jazz and rock musicians. First appearing on a 1966 **Peter Lemer** recording on **ESP**, during the 60s, Surman played with **Mike Westbrook**, **John McLaughlin**, **Dave Holland**, **Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath**, **Alexis Korner**, **Mike Gibbs** and many others. He listened to everything and worked with scores of bands in London's melting pot, playing everything from free jazz to hard bop, mainstream jazz, blues, the then-emerging jazz rock, and South African township music.

By the end of the 60s, the British Jazz emerging from London was recognized world-wide as one of jazz's most vital and creative manifestations. In 1968, **Miles Davis** visited **Ronnie Scott's** and subsequently recruited two Surman collaborators, **Holland** and **McLaughlin**, for his American band. Surman's activities intensified; he appeared on at least 8 recordings, including a compilation live at Ronnie Scott's, and then played the '68 **Montreux Jazz Festival** with his **Octet**, winning its award for best soloist. He began recording solo albums, his first in '68 featuring pianist **John Taylor** and bassist Dave Holland. Surman would surpass these activities in 1969, his busiest year of the decade. He appeared on 11 recordings that year, including McLaughlin's **Extrapolation**, and by the end of the year, he left England to begin working as part of a new, Belgium-based unit called **The Trio**, which would prove to be a watershed in Surman's career, launching his international profile.

He had already begun to expand his musical base beyond England before leaving more permanently with The Trio. Norddeutscher Rundfunk (NDR) was founded in 1924. In 1958 Hans Koller was established as director of the NDR Jazz Workshop, which broadcast on radio and subsequently on television, putting together programmes that brought German musicians into contact with an extraordinary array of visiting Americans and, in due course, the younger generation of British players. Surman's first encounter with NDR was a duo session with pianist Joachim Kuhn on January 24, 1969. Three months later he was back in Hamburg at the invitation of the series producer to record as a leader for NDR.

At the time of the recording of this show, Surman had just finished recording his second album as a leader, *How Many Clouds Can You See*, so **Flashpoint** is a unique chance to get an expanded view of his formative work as a leader and also at the early work of his musical compatriots who appear with him here. For this occasion, Surman led a ten-piece ensemble featuring the cream of modern British jazz players: **John Surman** - soprano and baritone sax, **Kenny Wheeler** - trumpet and flugelhorn, **Alan Skidmore** - tenor sax and flute, **Ronnie Scott** - tenor sax, **Mike Osborne** - alto sax, **Malcolm Griffiths** - trombone, **Harry Miller** - bass and **Alan Jackson** - drums, as well as two Austrian musicians, **Fritz Pauer** - piano and **Erich Kleinschuster** - trombone.

Heard and seen on *Flashpoint* for the very first time since the original broadcast over 40 years ago are five great performances, including two excellent Surman compositions that he never recorded elsewhere. Also captured here are rare performances of pieces by Pauer and Kleinschuster. Surman states that "choice of material was up to me...and I wrote several pieces especially for the workshop—but it was customary to invite a few participants to bring a piece of their own if they wanted to; hence the pieces from Erich and Fritz."

High quality audio recordings from these musicians from this period are quite rare and video footage is basically non-existent. Captured in crisp, clear black and white footage and in excellent mono sound, this release is an exceptional and hugely important document that will blow the minds of Brit-jazz fans and will open the ears, eyes and minds of those who don't know the great and distinctive work of these fine musicians!

For more information, please see:

[www.johnsurman.com](http://www.johnsurman.com)

## PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS



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WHAT THE PRESS HAVE SAID ABOUT: JOHN SURMAN

WAY BACK WHEN CUNEIFORM 2005

"Critical reappraisal of modern British jazz circa 1969-72, long overdue, can't hurt John Surman. His long association with ECM chronicles a nurturing and productive relationship... What it has obscured is the passionate soloist who has done as much to expand the baritone saxophone as Steve Lacy did for the straight horn. *Way Back When* is thus both a good surprise and a healthy reminder. ... Surman went into London's Tangerine Studios on October 9 to record with friends John Taylor (electric piano), Brian Odgers (bass guitar), and John Marshall (drums), with Mike Osborne (alto) arriving slightly late in the game. ...

**The hand of Miles is not so invisible**, with ticking drums and a warm cushion of electric piano drawing inevitable comparisons to *In A Silent Way*. **Roughage makes the difference**. The four-part title suite features Surman on soprano with what sounds to be discreet electrification. ... John Warren's "Owlshead" gives them more to chew on. **Surman finds the honeycomb and coffee flavours in the warm melody, and anticipates the vigorous poet to come.** ... – Randal McIlroy, *CODA*, Issue 325, Jan/Feb 2006

"You could make a case for John Surman as England's Wayne Shorter... To hear Surman at his youthful best... the previously unreleased *Way Back When*—a 1969 studio session teaming Surman with altoist Mike Osborne...provides a splendid introduction. ...when he switches to baritone for "Owlshead" and "Out and About"—oh, boy, there wasn't an American baritonist taking the horn up as high or down as low and exhibiting as much muscle and smarts until Hamiet Bluiett. ...along with Cuneiform's McGregor and Graham Collier releases, *Way Back When* illuminates a lost chapter in British jazz—one lost on American listeners even then." – Francis Davis, *The Village Voice*, June 13, 2005

"...this is a fine, if exploratory, jazz-rock set from Surman. It sits really nicely as an example of the times but also in the brave new world populated by EST, Acoustic Ladyland and other groups. Actually laid down several months before Nucleus' groundbreaking *Elastic Rock*, it suggests how fast things were moving on the UK scene at the time. ... Surman had played with Odgers on McLaughlin's *Extrapolation* and Marshall would become a regular collaborator... Marshall who perhaps sounds most at home in this setting. His great strength lay in his ability to combine the power of rock with the moving rhythmic pulse of jazz and he drives this music... The two tracks with Osborne are more jazz than jazz-rock but in a way more assured... The altoist combines beautifully with Surman's baritone on John Warren's 'Owlshead' and his playing has a mellower sound than was his norm. ...his presence seems to push Surman harder and the range he pulls from his baritone is astonishing. Music that matters as much now as then. [3 stars]" – Duncan Heining, *Jazzwise*, Issue 89, August 2005

"Cuneiform have done it again. It still startles me that a tiny record company in Maryland, USA is turning out some of the best reissues and rediscoveries of 60s and 70s British Jazz (think Brotherhood of Breath, Graham Collier, Nucleus) as well as giving a home to more recent work from people like Paul Dunmall.

This release gathers material recorded by John Surman in 1969...the master tapes were lost for over 30 years. Till now, that is. ...this recording is just a snapshot of where Surman and his mates (John Taylor, Brian Odgers, John Marshall and Mike Osborne) were at the time. ...it's a rewarding listen...

**Way Back When is cool, supple music.** The use of electric bass and piano suggests rockist tendencies, and...there's a strong whiff of *In a Silent Way* in the air. The title track...theme...turns up as "Glancing Backwards" on John McLaughlin's *Where Fortune Smiles*...

**Surman's thorough investigation of his instrument's range makes for some lovely moments, but it's the fluid dynamic of Marshall's drumming and the glistening, sweetly melodic funk of Taylor's electric piano that offer the most pleasure here.**

Things shift up a gear when the much missed (and under-recorded) Mike Osborne turns up. ... Lyrical, fiery and restless, his playing prods Marshall, Odgers and Taylor into animated four way conversation... Nice.

**A must-have for anyone interested in 60's Brit jazz or the early days of fusion. Thank God for Cuneiform...**

– Peter Marsh, *BBC: Music*, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), June 7, 2005

"Cuneiform is a trusty US label that does a roaring trade in contemporary American jazz, and modern progressive rock. They've also cornered the market in re-releasing important and long-lost albums from the fertile late 60's / early 70's British Jazz scene, what some might call the 'Golden Years of Brit-Jazz'. ... Cuneiform continues to assiduously document British music that has long-since disappeared from sight, and occasionally digs up tapes that have never seen the light of day. John Surman's 'Way Back When' is an example of great music that has been buried for decades... 'Way Back When' will transport you directly back to late 1969 and the eve of the jazz-rock revolution. ... The electro-space jazz of Miles Davis' 'In A Silent Way' is never far away... Surman flails on soprano sax with his customary boiling intensity. ... 'Way Back When' is invigorating, exuberant and alive to the possibilities of jazz integrating with rock, made at a time when those worlds were just beginning to collide. It's a very welcome addition to Surman's large discography and well worth tracking down. Thumbs up, Cuneiform. Keep digging!" – Kami, "Golden Years Revisited", *funhouse*, July 10, 2005

"...1969's *Extrapolation*... showed what an imaginative and impeccably accomplished saxophonist John Surman already was.

This session, from a few months after *Extrapolation*, sees Surman joined by that album's bass guitarist, Brian Odges, plus the widely admired and influential John Taylor on electric piano and John Marshall on drums.

...the tapes...make fascinating listening. Odges and Marshall straddle jazz and rock, sometimes sounding like a looser Jimi Hendrix rhythm section, or that of Soft Machine...

Surman and Taylor were already ahead of the pack in exploring sonic possibilities, especially texturally. ...Taylor could have slipped easily into a Miles Davis band of the era, while Surman was developing his own language and drama on soprano and baritone. ...”

– John Shand, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 17, 2005

“...John Surman has always been quite an explorer and has covered almost every style one could imagine.

This lost 1969 album sees John very much in a Soft Machine cum Nucleus, Canterbury meets jazz field, with a then virtually unknown but now veritable supergroup cast...it’s a fine album, and certainly worthy of release, helping to cement some long lost history together, as a missing link between many other projects.” – Alan Freeman, *Audion*, Issue #51, Spring 2006

“...hearing these 1969 sides, recorded and released only months apart from Davis' own aforementioned record, one can not only hear Mile's influence, but the more agitated sounds he would reveal a year or two down the line. ... *Way Back When* is an exemplary pre-fusion document, rugged and impassioned in a way that later crossover attempts lacked.

There are marked differences between Surman and Davis' approaches though. Surman's burly baritone work has outre tendencies that Davis would never have entertained. The same driving rhythmic intensity is here however. This group can whip up a propulsive frenzy as easily as they can ease back into the groove and steer the listener into more introspective territory. An essential document in the annals of electro-acoustic jazz, *Way Back When* is not only a must have for fans of the genre, but an exceptionally executed program of stirring late 1960's jazz. [4 stars]”

– Troy Collins, *Junkmedia.org*, May 31, 2005

“Surman’s music comes from that late ‘60s nexus when hard-bop, the avant-garde, and progressive rock overlapped. *Now* features catchy melodies, crisp and punchy rhythms mixing swingin’ and rockin,’ and the shimmering, lyrical electric piano of John Taylor...along with Surman’s hearty, bittersweet soprano and lissome, churning baritone saxes. Another thumbs-up.” – *Primetime A&E*, June 2005

“...While many look to Miles Davis and his associates in the late '60s as the progenitors of jazz-rock fusion, the truth is that a wide range of artists were exploring the juncture of these two styles...Nucleus would emerge in '70 with the seminal *Elastic Rock*, and Soft Machine would make the move...to the longer-form and more experimental classic *Third* the same year. However, a recently discovered recording by British saxophonist John Surman shows that the British jazz community had been melding jazz and rock at least a year earlier. ... While Taylor and Osborne get the opportunity to stretch out, this is clearly Surman's date, with the leader taking the lion's share of the solo space. Even this early in Surman's career, it is clear that he had a distinctive voice on the baritone saxophone that extended its range beyond traditional limits, and a facile soprano approach that had some precedence in Coltrane but, for all of Surman's ability to create his own wall of sound, was more consistently lyrical.

*Way Back When* fits comfortably within the Nucleus/Soft Machine purview, yet for all its similarities, remains distinctive through Surman's voice... '69 was also the year that Surman collaborated on John McLaughlin's classic debut, *Extrapolation*, and one wonders if, had *Way Back When* been released in its time, Surman would have been catapulted to greater fame in North America.”

– John Kelman, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, May 30, 2005

“Most listeners know John Surman for his spacious baritone and soprano saxophone work on around thirty ECM releases... The recently discovered *Way Back When* dates back to 1969... it's plenty good enough to provide a snapshot in time back to the dawn of fusion.

The four-part “Way Back When” series unrolls as fairly standard early fusion fare, not unlike what the rolling jams that Miles Davis was doing at the time. ...

This might not be the best place to start if you're new to John Surman, but it's quite illuminating about his roots and entertaining in general.”

– Nils Jacobson, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, June 4, 2005

“...wondering why it took so long for a recording of strikingly good sound quality to be reissued 35 years after the fact. ...This was a jam session recorded prior to Surman's exit from London...

Also featuring two prominent British jazz musicians, drummer John Marshall and pianist John Taylor, this effort conveys the ensemble's enthusiasm for Miles Davis' early steps in the jazz-fusion movement. ...alto saxophonist Mike Osborne, joins Surman on the final two tracks. And it doesn't take long to discern that Surman...was a man on a mission. Breathing fire and brimstone, Surman puts his young improvising chops into tenth gear atop a gorgeous yet somewhat haunting primary theme that resurfaces repeatedly during the title track. ...A lust for newness and creativity sparks this highly listenable blast from the past. ... a joyous sense of reality.”

– Glenn Astarita, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, June 17, 2005

“Britain in the sixties was a musical maelstrom. ...British musicians were beginning to cast their own voices and give the music new extensions in ideas and approaches. John Surman was one of them.

... Surman was to leave for Belgium... Before his departure, he called Brian Odgers, John Taylor, John Marshall, and Mike Osborne to lay down some tunes. ...the tapes were...forgotten. ...they have since been rediscovered... And that is something to be thankful for.

Surman shows amazing dexterity in exploring the range of the saxophone. He scoops the bottom and extends the upper register, the latter tearing in and escarping the monument he has constructed. He goes past the melody and returns in constant, if passing reference, dwelling on the theme in detail at the end of each dramatic path that he has set up. He is up front and centre, driven by the pulsating bass of Brian Odgers and the crisp, trenchant pulse of John Marshall on drums.

...the thing that drives the music and continues to give it a vital presence is the way the quintet cleaves in understanding. The recording is a rough mix, without cleanups and production niceties, but that does not diminish its impact. Matter of fact, it retains character.”

– Jerry D'Souza, *All About Jazz*, www.allaboutjazz.com, June 2, 2005

“... Now refurbished and elucidated with song titles and a recording date, it provides insight to the influx of fusion in England and how quickly Brit jazzers had become their own players. ...hear Surman, Osborne, and Co. bidding farewell to an era.”

– Andrey Henkin, *All About Jazz & All About Jazz NY*, www.allaboutjazz.com, June 2, 2005

“... Judging by this session the electric sounds of Bitches Brew and In A Silent Way were big influences because this is the same sort of pulsing Jazz-rock Miles Davis was shocking the world with at the time. “Way Back When” is a theme Surman would later redo in 1971 as “Glancing Backwards” with John McLaughlin and Dave Holland. **In this 1969 version Surman is on fire, playing his soprano with singing, rubbery precision while John Taylor shows surprising ability at funky electric piano and Brian Odgers and John Marshall keep marvelous free-floating time. On the two other pieces Surman switches to baritone and is joined by one of Britain’s greatest saxophonists, Mike Osborne. ... The majority of John Surman’s recordings are heavily structured so it’s really good to hear him in an informal blowing format for once. Mike Osborne blows so hard, it’s scary. ...**” – Jerome Wilson, *Cadence*, November 2005

**“The CODA Top Tens of 2005: Randal McIlroy... John Surman *Way Back When Cuneiform*”** – CODA, Issue 325, Jan/Feb 2006

**“...my year-end list for records released in 2005. ... 51. John Surman: *Way Back When (1969, Cuneiform)*”** –Tom Hull, *TomHull.com*

“...Cut in October of 1969...the vintage album now stands reconstructed.

Six tracks, four of which make up a multi-part title suite, have the casual ambiance of a jam session... The band sounds deeply enamoured with the fusion proclivities of the era. ...

Surman sticks to soprano for the first piece, nurturing a simple melodic kernel before spooling out coiled, undulating tonal ribbons that snake across a spacey modal backdrop. ... The disc’s b-side fares better with the blistering alto sax of Mike Osborne added to the band. Here Surman hefts his baritone on “Owlshead,” spurred by Osborne’s soaring, careening precursor solo. Hunkering down he blasts forth with brow-furrowing salvos that capitalize on the high-calibre firepower of his horn. ...

While probably not a starting point for new listeners interested in exploring Surman’s sizeable oeuvre, this set still has its charms. ... **fans of the British saxophonist would do well to pick up a copy.**” – Derek Taylor, *Dusted*, www.dustedmagazine.com, June 9, 2005

**“...This previously unreleased studio session captures John Surman in a period of transition. Surman was a rising star and innovator on baritone sax, featured on John McLaughlin’s *Extrapolation* sessions earlier that year. ...**

**With “Way Back When,” a four-part suite, Surman investigates then-current fusion influences with his soprano horn.** Part 1 reflects the exotic sound of Miles Davis’ *In A Silent Way*, emphasizing John Taylor’s electric piano and John Marshall’s drum pulse. ... On Part 3, the interplay between soprano and Brian Odgers’ electric bass suggests parallels with Soft Machine (circa *Third*). Marshall...plays aggressively and relentlessly throughout.

**... This enjoyable session will interest fans of Surman and the British scene of the time, and provides context for Surman’s later career.”**

– Jon Andrews, *Downbeat*, Volume 72–Number 9, September 2005

“...having recruited some close friends to join him, he[Surman] makes a series of memorable valedictory statements. ...His partners, pianist John Taylor, drummer John Marshall and, on two tracks, altoist Mike Osborne were also taking their places as star voices in British jazz...”

**The compositions are mostly Surman’s, including the four-part title track, which begins like something Soft Machine may have laid down in 1972 but soon develops into a series of inventive Surman outings on soprano sax. ...**

They also include the longish ‘Owlshead’, composed by John Warren, which allows Surman the opportunity to show his dexterity on the baritone sax. ...however it is Osborne who exercises his chops and reels off a solo that builds from a measured and melodic approach to a slightly more energised attack... Osborne solos are always worth catching I’ve never heard him put a finger wrong...this ought to be treasured. Surman, of course, performs with similar agility and ‘lan, taking the unwieldy horn into freakish high registers then digging back into its muscular foundations. ...

**I don’t know who resurrected this album but, bless them, it is well worth hearing as an example of the state of UK jazz or jazz rock at a time when many eyes and ears were focussed on Miles’ ‘In A Silent Way’. All the time phenomenally exciting sounds were emanating from players such as these. ...**” – Paul Donnelly, *Ejazznews.com*, May 26, 2005

**“Long before ECM swallowed up saxophonist John Surman and...he actually recorded some great albums. Among these gems is *Way Back When*... The master tapes were thought to be long lost until 2003, when...they were found, which may have something to do with Toronto’s own Michael King... The album itself is a wonderful journey of discovery for those unfamiliar with Surman’s work prior to moving on up in the world of jazz. His signature swirling lines are present, mostly on alto, and the baritone howls are always very warm. ... Deep grooves and tightly executed solos make for an essential album...”** – Tom Sekowski, *Exclaim!*, September 2005

“Another intriguing document from way back in the form of a previously unreleased John Surman recording from 1969... the ambience...reminiscent of the Miles Davis band that made *In a Silent Way*.

**... it’s John Warren’s eloquently languid Owlshead, for Surman’s baritone and Osborne’s alto, that grips the attention most, with the latter unfurling a solo of typical fluency over John Marshall’s crackling drums. As for the emphatic two-sax melody of *Out And About*, it hints at Surman’s distinctive 1970s sets for Decca/Deram... [3 stars]”** – John Fordham, *Guardian Unlimited*, June 24, 2005

**“... *Way Back When* is an early fusion album by British saxophonist John Surman. ... The music is a bit rough around the edges, but this is a generally exciting document of a time when the idea of integrating eclectic and acoustic instruments in an improvising ensemble was new and a fresh style was being simultaneously explored in the US and in England.”**– Stuart Kremsky, *The IAJRC Journal* Vol. 40, No. 2. May 2007

“Despite a tough time at retail and major label cutbacks it’s been an unusually fertile year for new jazz albums that, as you can see from the choices of our writers, covers a refreshingly diverse range of artists both new and familiar. ...the continued reassessment and reissue of the **trove of British jazz albums from the 1960s and 1970s, including many lost gems and half-forgotten curios, is to be applauded. ... REISSUE/ARCHIVE...3. John Surman *Way Back When Cuneiform*”**

– Jon Newey, “Albums of 2005”, *Jazzwise*, December 2005 / January 2005

““What you are hearing accurately reflects the sound of the ‘60s.” That’s saxophonist John Surman on the long-lost jam session tapes just released as *Way Back When*. ...

**Miles Davis’ moody electronic jazz had a big influence on what Surman and his sidemen were up to, but mid-‘60s hard bop figures just as strongly on this 1969 session. ...**

**The main attraction...is Surman, who sticks largely to the soprano horn and claims most of the solo space with his swirling, extended**

lines. ... **This will...interest committed fans of the London scene and Surman's music.**” – Aaron Steinberg, *JazzTimes*

“I can't really explain why a swinging cd with historical value is better than simply another cool album. Yet, **I have been rollicking for days because of the recent release of a long-lost LP-project from 1969. British saxophonist John Surman can be heard as a true inspirator... Anybody who likes the Miles Davis-classic 'In A Silent Way' should buy Surman's 'Way Back When'.** ...

**A nice footnote from the early days of fusion (also called rockjazz or jazzrock back then), is the contribution of British musicians.** Guitarist John McLaughlin and bassplayer Dave Holland were quickly 'discovered' by Miles, but no one would mark their influence on late sixties jazz music as being 'British'. That will surely change with the emergence of John Surman's new lost album as released on the Cuneiform label.

... Soft Machine-drummer-to-be John Marshall plays his hi-hat exactly as spacy and funky like Tony Williams would do it, the electric piano in the hands of John Taylor has a slight resemblance to Joe Zawinul's. It doesn't take Brian Odgers much effort to play with a heavy bass guitar sound in this 'Bitches Brew'-like setting...recorded two months before Miles recorded that album. ...”

– Remco Takken, *Kinda Muzik*, www.kindamuzik.net, July 2005

“...a nice blast from the past. Baritone saxophonist John Surman, all of 25 at the time...convened some of his friends for a session... the master tape went missing till recently. ... **On Soprano sax, he careens on the first four tracks, creating a kind of suite that gives its title to this record. On the two longer tracks (with Osborne), Surman shows his extraordinary command of the bigger horn, clearly reaffirming his position as master of that axe. For that reason alone, this disc merits four stars...**” – Marc Chénard, *La Scena Musicale*, July 2006

“...British jazz from the late 60s and early 70s is back in favor... Fueled by the spirit of Trane and the paths laid down by Miles Davis and others' experiments with electricity, names such as **Michael Garrick, Henry Lowther, Michael Westbrook, John Surman, and Ian Carr created seminal recordings for the time.** Though most of this material has been out of print for many years...labels such as BGO and Vocalion or “rescue missions” by the likes of Cuneiform **thankfully have brought back this marvelous music.**

**One of the most exciting recent discoveries is this October 7, 1969 date by John Surman. ...relaxed and inspired on these six tracks.** Surman's colleagues, pianist John Taylor, bassist Brian Odgers, and drummer John Marshall—and later, the...alto saxophonist Mike Osborne—are in fine form on this mostly modal, electrified jazz journey.

... On the first part, “Way Back When”, the quartet works its way through four different views of rhythmic flow/groove mixed with a familiar theme (later appearing as “Glancing Backwards” on John McLaughlin's *Where Fortune Smiles*)... The first section is a funky groove propelled by Marshall's rim shot clicks that reminds of Miles' *In A Silent Way* ...amidst Taylor's rainbow Rhodes colors and Surman's billowing soprano. ...

... The session concludes with the uptempo “Out And About”, which looks to Surman's future works. ...the band is on fire... **Arguably a relic of its era in terms of the overly modal vamps and sound colors, this is a must if you have any interest in this fertile period of UK jazz and the way that Surman used to play. Indeed, the results here are far and away from Surman's safe location these days. Bravo, Cuneiform.**” – Jay Collins, *One Final Note*, www.onefinalnote.com, August 8, 2005

“...during the 1950s and 60s...British jazz and improvised music was brimming with vitality and value. ...innovations in contemporary composition and improvisation during the 1960s had an extraordinary effect on both the *structural* and improvisational direction of jazz in England... **by the latter part of the decade, the bands led by reedmen Scott, Hayes, John Surman, bassist Graham Collier and drummer John Stevens were at the forefront of European improvised music.** ...

**To my ears, electric jazz with rock-based rhythm (okay, "fusion") has sounded more natural and, consequently, more invigorating coming from English musicians than in the American counterpart, primarily because there was a significant amount of cross-pollination between improvisers and rock musicians that did not occur when American jazz musicians "plugged in" and played Fillmore.** ... Before heading to Belgium in late 1969...Surman met up with Mike Osborne, John Taylor, John Marshall and bassist Brian Odgers to record a session... **Cuneiform has released this as *Way Back When*, a crucial puzzle-piece in Surman's discography that shows him at the close of the 60s equally interested in electric jazz forms as he was (and is) free improvisation and orchestral arrangement. The title suite (re-recorded with John McLaughlin as “Glancing Backwards” for 1971's *Where Fortune Smiles*, released on Dawn) is a jazz-rock masterpiece, Surman's soprano and Taylor's electric piano blending for a clarion call that leads into a visceral, acrid soprano solo, supported by edgy blocks of rhythm from Marshall and Odgers' droning electric bass, Taylor...providing an atmospheric texture to a tune that is, in its other incarnation, rather dense. ... Surman switches to baritone and is joined by Osborne's alto for John Warren's “Owlshead” and the leader's “Out and About,” the former a nicely funky tune that...circumvents rock trappings to offer an elegant alto solo, one of the better Osborne solos on record. ... **thankfully these watershed recordings and the environment they represent are once again seeing the light of day.**”**

– Clifford Allen, *Paris Transatlantic Magazine*, www.paristransatlantic.com, July 2005

“Cuneiform's combing of vaults, archives and collections for Brit Jazz rarities has yielded some real treasure...

Dating from 1969, **Way Back When** was Surman's last session before he left the UK. ...this date with Marshall, pianist John Taylor and bassist Brian Odgers...**is a prime example of how well a simmering Miles-inspired groove meshed with the English melodic lilt with which the saxophonist is closely identified. Still well within the long shadow of John Coltrane, Surman's quicksilver soprano dominates the four-part title piece.** On the final two tracks, Surman switches to baritone and goes heads-on with the explosive alto saxophonist Mike Osborne.”

– Bill Shoemaker, *Point of Departure*, www.pointofdeparture.org, Issue #2, November 2005

“...sax maestro John Surman's *Way Back When* is another strong release from the purveyors of avant-prog and jazz, Cuneiform Records. ...**Way Back When is a sax and electric piano lovers dream, and something that should surely appeal to fans of Nucleus, Soft Machine, and Miles Davis.** Surman is joined here by...the legendary John Marshall on drums, who had yet to join Ian Carr's Nucleus or the Soft Machine....

**The opening four part tour-de-force "Way Back When" is fusion gem,** with steam rolling rhythms from Marshall & Odgers while Surman squeals and squonks alongside the dreamy electric piano of Taylor. ... Taylor lays down some gorgeous solos on Part 3...**recalling the best of Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, and Joe Zawinul.** The near 14-minute "Owlshead" sees Surman and Osborne working together...the two combine for some fat reed layers undetermined by jazzy rhythms and atmospheric touches from Taylor. ... **The CD ends with the pulsating yet symphonic jazz sounds of "Out and About" ...that mixes classic be-bop with British jazz quite nicely. ... Marvelous stuff!**

**OK, I'm gushing a little, but this is seriously cool stuff. Kudos to Cuneiform for unearthing this long lost nugget of superb British jazz-rock. ... [4.5 stars]”** – Pete Pardo, *Sea of Tranquility*, www.seaoftranquility.org, June 13, 2005

**“This is quite a find: a lost October 1969 session led by the notable British reedman John Surman, with John Taylor on electric piano, Brian Odgers on electric bass, and John Marshall on drums. Mike Osborne plays alto sax on the last two cuts. Listening to this, it’s clear how fast Miles’ electric concept rocketed across the pond** (although...it was partly the British Invasion that seduced Miles in the first place). Surman plays gripping soprano sax on the opening four-part title suite—the main melody of which appeared...as ”Glancing Backwards” on John McLaughlin’s (actually Surman’s) *Where Fortune Smiles* LP. Here’s it’s mellower and more psychedelic... Part 3 is John Taylor’s moment, and it’s a thrill to hear the future, Kenny Wheeler sideman deploy his early harmonic concept on Rhodes. ... **Surman describes *Way Back When* as a “jam session”... but it is remarkably coherent and well-realized. And despite the obvious late-‘60s sonic stamp, it has a certain timelessness. Lesser musicians couldn’t have pulled that off.**” – David Adler, *Signal to Noise*, Issue 39, Fall 2005

“... One has to hand it to the jazzers for being more truly underground, often more rashly hedonistic...more dedicated to the music per se – regardless of fame, fortune or fashion – than most rockers. ... So **in 1969, while Woodstock...was...happening notably overground, major talents such as Surman (arguably the foremost baritone saxophonist in the world) jammed away in basements regardless, creating brilliant, absorbing, subtle music on a ‘take it or leave it’ basis.** On 7<sup>th</sup> October of that year Surman, John Taylor, Brian Odgers. John Marshall...and Mike Osborne gathered... The tape-recordings...were found in 2003 and are now released unadulterated. **It’s great music...mixing the subtle intensity of Coltrane-era jazz with the smoother fusion ambience that had just been presented to the world by Miles Davis’ In A Silent Way....”** – Rychard Carrington, *Songbook* #8, Summer 2006

“The Beatles haircut and Sgt. Pepper mustache make him look even younger than he was; **the electric bass and piano suggest they were thinking of fusion, but Surman goes elsewhere: his soprano sax on the title suite was completely distinctive, and his baritone sax on the balance goes places no one else imagined. A-”** – Tom Hull, *Static Multimedia*, July 2005

“...**John Surman, captured by the U.S. based Cuneiform Records on a marvelous new CD, “Way Back When”... It’s just the latest in a series of superlative British Jazz reissues...lost classics...** “Way Back When” was recorded around the same time as Miles was brewing up the masterpiece “In A Silent Way” and John Taylor’s keyboard splashes...conjur up the same feeling. ... **Surman’s playing is testing the edges of “out there” but, unlike his different but equally rewarding playing on “How Many Clouds Can You See?” from a year or so earlier...lands more on the side of melody.**” – Johnny Nostalgia, *The Fold Bulletin*