



Bio information: **LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION**

Title: **DAMAGED GOODS** (Cuneiform Rune 518)

Format: CD / DIGITAL

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

FILE UNDER: **JAZZ / EXPERIMENTAL / FUSION**

***Listening to Location Location Location's debut, "Damaged Goods",  
it would be so easy to get the wrong impression...***

Listen to Location Location Location's debut, *Damaged Goods*, and it's easy to visualize the three musicians sweating it out in the recording studio, locking in on a groove and just jamming. With, it should be noted, occasional breaks to contemplate the basics, then add subtle overdubs: some bit-crunched guitar here, a marimba there, perhaps a harmonized line or a spacey reverb effect. But essentially live, essentially just three guys in a room, giving their all.

But that's not how it went down at all.

Recorded during the darkest days of Covid-19, *Damaged Goods* is actually the ultimate pandemic project. Not only were guitarist Anthony Pirog, bassist Michael Formanek, and drummer Mike Pride safely socially distant during the recording project, two of them have not yet met in the flesh.

Nonetheless, Location Location Location is a band.

"I think that's probably just our personalities, the way that we work, and the way that we wanted to hear it," explains the Virginia-raised Pirog, who was living in Monterey, California during the sessions. With Pride and Formanek on the East Coast, and getting together not in the cards, the three made *Damaged Goods* by sending sound files and audio notes back and forth while trusting the others to do their best.

"The whole thing was pretty new," Pirog continues. "I was really excited because I'm a fan of both of their work, both composing and playing. So that was a big thing to deal with in terms of 'What are you getting from the piece to react to? Are you initiating the piece? How do you supply that and have it be something that people can add sound to?'"

"But when I sat down to record, it wasn't like I composed my parts. I'd press 'play', and I'd react to things as I heard them. So it wasn't that hard, actually, as long as I didn't get into pop-overdubbing mode and hyperfixate on things under the microscope."

It's obvious that both Formanek and Pride were on the same page. "Improvising like this definitely presents a set of potential challenges," says the bassist. "But I've got to say that in this project I never felt that anything was stifled at all, or disconnected. When I would hear something from Mike or Anthony it just immediately gave me thoughts about what to do. In most cases I'd just dive in there pretty fast. The initial ideas were mostly pretty quick, pretty immediate. So in a weird way it didn't feel like we weren't improvising in real time, if that makes any sense. Which was a little surprising to me!"

"Everybody listened really deeply, and nobody tried to put a certain personality on it," Pride says. "We were just experimenting, and then at the end we liked what we had, and we had a record."

A very fine record, it should be mentioned.

Astute listeners might twig to one grand conceptual statement: in the spirit of working within limitations, Pirog opted to use super-saturated fuzz tones throughout *Damaged Goods*, and a different brand of fuzzbox on

each track. Unsurprisingly, this adds both coherence and diversity to the mix, and if the guitarist opts to provide a detailed gear breakdown it could also serve as a useful shopping list for his fellow fuzz-o-holics. (Full disclosure: I've already ordered a Collector Effectors Shattered Horn pedal based on Pirog's enthusiastic recommendation. This could get expensive.)

Mostly, though, the three performers simply wanted to stimulate each other's creativity while inspiring themselves to come up with beautifully odd and oddly beautiful sound sculptures.

Want complexity? Cue up Pride's "79 Beatdowns", a skittering journey through a variety of sonic landscapes, including a conversation between acoustic and electric bass, some truly demented time signatures, science-fiction guitar, and more.

"I sent Michael and Anthony the main chart, with the melody and the chords, but then I also wrote a bass line, and then I wrote a countermelody, and then I wrote a counter-bass line, and just gave them everything—and they could just do whatever they wanted, says Pride, who notes that his use of compositional "scenes" probably derives from his early training as a filmmaker. "And they came up with so many great ways to use or interpret the material that it became this episodic thing. It could have just been the head twice, some blowing, and then the head twice again and out—but it wasn't that."

Pirog's brief "Apperception" mines somewhat similar terrain; based on a 12-tone scale but played with free-jazz drumming and a buzzy, prog-centric six-string sound, it's anything but academic.

"I think about that stuff a lot," says the guitarist. "I look at guitar pieces that Elliott Carter has written, or Morton Feldman's guitar piece... I like to listen to that stuff, but I don't *live* there. But the interest is present, for sure. I wouldn't sit down and say 'I'm going to write a 12-tone piece.' It's more intuitive than that, but I'm leaning into that realm, into that kind of harmony."

Prog elements also appear on Formanek's "Verdegris", a stately, even anthemic tune that would fit comfortably between King Crimson and Pink Floyd on any playlist. Is the title a punning reference to a well-aged format? Formanek isn't saying, but he allows that before his work with improvisers like Tim Berne, Mary Halvorson, and Tomas Fujiwara, he might have listened to his share of what was once considered progressive music.

"Yes, some Crimson, and different bands in British prog music... I kind of have some connection to that, but when I write, I don't usually think about 'Well, I'm going to use something from this genre or that genre,'" he says. "Like, genre and style are two things that I don't generally engage directly with, but they kind of slip in sideways."

Formanek also slips some of his own guitar playing into *Damaged Goods*' title track, by way of a crunchy, looped part over which Pirog layers howling feedback and stratospheric single-note excursions. The guitarist also gets to wax lyrical on "Branch, Breezy", which is *not* a eulogy for the late and much lamented trumpet player Jamie "Breezy" Branch—it was written before her untimely death—but is certainly imbued with her questioning spirit.

"She was one of my best friends, and any time I played with her it was great," Pride says, and both of his bandmates report similarly inspirational encounters.

Which brings us back to the idea that Location Location Location is a band, although not in the usual garage- or basement-dwelling sense. When will these three meet on-stage?

"We'll have to get that figured out," says Formanek. "I think the main thing—and we all feel this—was that this was really a labour of love. And, for me, this is just such a beautiful manifestation of that."