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Bio information: **CHEER-ACCIDENT**

Title: **FEAR DRAWS MISFORTUNE** (Cuneiform Rune 276)

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**FILE UNDER: ROCK / POST-ROCK / AVANT-PROGRESSIVE**

*"Imagine a confluence of the grandeur of Yes, the range of This Heat, the irreverence of Ween, the poignancy of Elliott Smith and the mischief of Andy Kaufman, and you'll be getting close to the net effect of Cheer-Accident's musical output..." – Signal to Noise*

*"...Chicago's ruling experimental collective. ...a band that's required listening for anyone seeking an education in underground music"*  
– Punk Planet

*"There are few ensembles that can make noise sound both as mysterious and as strangely inviting as Cheer-Accident. Depending on concrete sound constructions and minimalist drones as frequently as on warped lo-fi pop structures and post-rock crescendos, this Chicago-based group has built a body of work over the last 10 to 20 years that makes even the most adventurous musical peers seem sadly sophomoric..."*  
– Delusions of Adequacy

Widely recognized as "Chicago's ruling experimental collective" [*Punk Planet*], **Cheer-Accident** are the elder statesmen of and the provocative catalysts behind Chicago's fertile and stylistically-diverse music scene – a scene that gave birth to post-rock, math-rock, post-punk and other important late 20<sup>th</sup> Century indie rock genres. At the helm of the Windy City's underground since the early 1980s, remaining ceaselessly innovative while releasing approximately 15 recordings (including lps, cassettes and CDs), playing countless concerts (often combining music with performance art), collaborating with numerous other Chicago players, and creating a weekly Chicago cable TV show since 1993, the Dada-esque **Cool Clown Ground**. Led by drummer/composer/ vocalist **Thymme Jones**, Cheer-Accident revels in its self-ordained multiple roles as fearless musical explorers, mischievous court jesters, curious alchemists and artistic catalysts. It may well be the most fearless and defiantly independent band of musical provocateurs on America's so-called 'independent' music scene. Mixing and juxtaposing musical elements to create unprecedented combinations, introducing familiar ingredients to unfamiliar contexts, Cheer Accident push, prod and probe at the boundaries of musical conventions, genre form, audience/artist interaction, and, at times, good taste, with a combination of devil-may-care bravura, intellectual seriousness, the iconoclasm of **Frank Zappa** and unbridled, child-like creativity and naïveté. By "cheer accident", the results of these daring boundary-bursting experiments are brilliant, and bold.

Stylistically, Cheer Accident's music traverses the entire experimental rock map, mutating between – and sometimes within – each release, from post-rock to classical minimalism (**Steve Reich**), avant-progressive (**Art Bears**, **Henry Cow**) to art pop, math-rock (**Don Caballero**, **Battles**) to post-punk and more. In the words of *Signal to Noise*: "Imagine a confluence of the grandeur of Yes, the range of This Heat, the irreverence of Ween, the poignancy of Elliott Smith and the mischief of Andy Kaufman, and you'll be getting close to the net effect of Cheer-Accident's musical output..." Their wide-ranging music has brought them acclaim from radically disparate corners of the rock world. Widely recognized as a pioneer of math rock, Cheer Accident is also embraced for its affinity to progressive, punk, pop, and post rock. *Punk Planet* recommended Cheer Accident to its readers as "a band that's required listening for anyone seeking an education in underground music." And indeed, here is where the core of Cheer Accident's brilliance lies: their music epitomizes the creative spirit, the true essence underlying *all* underground music. In a recent cover feature on the band in *Signal to Noise*, America's premiere magazine devoted to experimental music, writer **Hank Shteamer**, speaking of *Introducing Lemon*, the band's pre-Cuneiform release, claims that Cheer Accident's music epitomizes Chicago's experimental rock scene:

*"Introducing Lemon...is hands-down the best weird rock record ever to emerge from Chicago—and that's no faint praise, considering that the town has churned out countless sterling examples of same over the past two decades. But Lemon has them all beat, topping Gastr del Sol's Camofleur for the visionary genre-blurring, Tortoise's Millions Now Living Will Never Die for atmospheric beauty and Shellac's At Action Park for sheer skronk factor. And by incorporating both exuberant horn-abetted grooves and insular high jinks, the record references two other important, yet utterly disparate strains in its hometown's musical history: those of Chicago (the band) and the Art Ensemble of Chicago." – Hank Shteamer, Signal to Noise, December 2008*

The Cheer-Accident CD released here, **Fear Draws Misfortune**, is, on sheer musical terms, an even stronger album than *Introducing Lemon*. The band's newest recording and first release on Cuneiform, *Fear Draws Misfortune* is a coherent and cohesive artistic statement containing 9 tracks of astonishingly beautiful, lush and captivatingly complex post-rock/art rock. For this recording, band members **Thymme Jones** (drums, keyboards, trumpet, vocals), **Jeff Libersher** (guitar, bass, trumpet, vocals), and **Alex Perkolup** (bass, guitars) team up with 15 other musicians and vocalists from the rock/jazz/improv/avant-classical undergrounds of Chicago and beyond (contributing violinist/vocalist **Carla Kihlstedt** hails from Oakland's **Sleepytime Guerilla Museum**). Together, this team interweaves superb musicianship with lush vocals, and utilizes an epic and panoramic range of ideas, styles and studio techniques to create a masterwork of creative art rock that should bring the band attention well beyond Chicago's shores.

Cheer-Accident was founded by Thymme Jones (piano), **Mike Greenlees** (drums), and **Jim Drummond** from **Tar** (vocals) seconds after the clock struck to welcome 1981 at a New Year's Eve party. The group added trumpeter **Kevin Njjaastad** and drummer **Steve Past** to its ongoing, fluid lineup and began recording cassettes (reissued in 2004 as *Younger Than You Are Now*). Three months after forming, it named itself Cheer-Accident after a line of greeting cards that Jones saw in his hometown (Palatine, Illinois) Hallmark store. For the next several years, the group operated as a fluid community of up to nine musicians, and recorded numerous cassettes that ranged from quirky pop songs to intricate extended rock compositions to free improvisation and noise.

*(This press release is continued on the next page...)*

During the late 1980s, Cheer-Accident's lineup solidified as a dissonant, hard-hitting power trio consisting of Jones (now on drums), **Chris Block** (bass) and Jeff Libersher (guitar). The group released two cassettes, *Life Isn't Like That* (1986) and *Vasectomy*, on **Complacency**, a label that Jones co-founded with **Illusion of Safety's Dan Burke**. Finally, on July 17, 1987, the band gave its first live performance at The Igloo in Chicago – and revealed itself to be, from the moment its stepped on stage, a visceral rock machine. A year later, Cheer-Accident released its first full-length lp on Complacency, called *Sever Roots, Tree Dies*, which was produced by **Phil Bonnet**. The power trio served here as a mere foundation for a sprawling and musically mature work which utilized studio production and a multitude of instruments (including Mellotron) to realize ambitious, epic, progressive rock compositions. The following year, Cheer-Accident enlisted **Steve Albini** as its engineer and in 1989 recorded *Dumb Ask* (Complacency 1990), which recaptured the group's stripped-down, live trio sound while combining elements of Red era **King Crimson**, Western Culture era Henry Cow, '80s Chicago post-punk, and **AC/DC**. The record is recognized as one of the early masterworks of math-rock; *Signal to Noise* says: "...*Dumb Ask* ups the complexity factor enough that this Cheer-Accident lineup deserves to be considered as a math-rock pioneer alongside contemporaries like Don Caballero, **Bastro** and **Breadwinner**."

In 1990, Cheer-Accident recruited Bonnet on second guitar and, the following year, recorded its 3<sup>rd</sup> lp, *Babies Shouldn't Smoke*, which further pushed the polyrhythmic dissonance of its music further. Around the same time, Jones began a long-standing collaboration (continuing today on *Fear Draws Misfortune*) with **Scott Rutledge**, who started writing lyrics to multiple Cheer-Accident tunes that were 'just lying around'. Several bassists passed through the band's ranks in the 90's; Block left in 1992, and was succeeded by **Dan Forden** (1992-1994), who played on Cheer-Accident's 1<sup>st</sup> album that was *not* self-released: *Not a Food*. Produced by Albini and released by the Chicago-based **Pravda** label, *Not A Food* captured national attention for the band. The *Chicago Tribune* praised the album as "Adventurous, Abrasive, Arresting. ...a dark prickly gem that evokes The Jesus Lizard and "Red" era King Crimson with its mesmerizing merger of polyrhythmic guitar dissonance and crack musicianship." Bassist **Dylan Posa (Flying Luttenbachers)** appeared on the band's next Pravda CD: 1994's *The Why Album*, an album of finely crafted and heartfelt pop songs that shocked both of the post-punk and avant-rock worlds that they had been straddling. Their next Pravda release, 1997's *Enduring the American Dream*, was a 72 minute epic that ranged from lo-fi pop to noise collages to extended form rock compositions which Pravda described as "Better than drugs and cheaper." The band's fun-loving and prolific '90s lineup would end abruptly and tragically, however. On January 31, 1999, Cheer-Accident went into the studio to record the basic tracks for a new album, *Salad Days*. Less than 48 hours later, Bonnet was found dead in his car of a brain aneurysm; his death left the band's future in question.

Cheer-Accident's '90s lineup had not only been committed to progressing in terms of musical complexity, but also went far down the path of exploring extra-musical possibilities. Some concerts devolved into absurdist "skits" between band members or bizarre interactions with the audience, blurring the boundary between "performance" and "real life". One particularly memorable show ended with Jones berating his genuinely surprised band members with a carefully memorized 10-minute **Buddy Rich** rant - one of the 'infamous' rants captured on tape by Buddy's unlucky band members and recipients of his rage. In 1993, Cheer-Accident began doing a surreal comedy show for Chicago cable TV entitled *Cool Clown Ground*. Created and broadcast weekly to the present day, airing every Sunday night at 10pm, this televised 'art happening' has become a Chicago institution; Jones states that, "In Chicago, there are still a number of people who know us only because of that show."

The new millennium marked the rebirth of Cheer-Accident with guitarist **Jamie Fillmore** on board; the new lineup's first show was on Jan. 7, 2000 at the Lounge Ax – the famed venue's final show. The band's rebirth was marked by an unprecedented creative surge; in a short amount of time, Cheer-Accident performed more shows and wrote more material than with any previous incarnation. It self-released the 54 minute EP *Trading Balloons*, and in 2000 it released the Albini-produced *Salad Days* on the then-Chicago based **Skin Graft Records & Comics**. Shortly after, it released *Variations On A Goddamn Old Man* on Pravda. This fertile period culminated with the recording of *Introducing Lemon* in 2002; the band's best work up to that date. The full-length release explored a dizzying blend of musical styles, from Zeppelin-esque bombast to folk-tinged Americana to Stravinsky-flavored progressive rock to cinematic drama. Shortly after recording *Lemon*, bassist Posa left to move to New Orleans. The trio of Fillmore, Libersher, and Jones then went on to compose music (a 60" soundtrack) for the Skin Graft comic fantasy, *Gumballhead The Cat*, a comic book by cartoonist **Rob Syers**.

In the summer of 2004, **U.S. Maple** guitarist **Todd Rittmann** replaced Fillmore. In typical Cheer-Accident fashion, the band not only shifted among musical styles but also instrument; with Rittmann on guitar they explored uncategorizable and improvisational rock, while shifting to straightforward 'pop music' with Rittmann on drums (along with newer recruits **Sheila Bertoletti**—piano, **Andrea Faught**—trumpet, ex-**Flying Luttenbacher** member **Alex Perkolup** on bass and occasionally **Earl Scholl**—drums.) This version of the band (which also) eventually evolved into the trio of Perkolup, Libersher, and Jones, which did an extensive tour of the U.S. in 2007 with Sleepytime Gorilla Museum.

After a successful European tour in the spring of '08, Cheer-Accident returned home to record perhaps their most compositionally ambitious album to date, *Fear Draws Misfortune*. This epic work rivals *Introducing Lemon* in terms of its diversity, but it certainly trumpets it in terms of sheer musical density and complexity. There is a subtle nod to the band's very first release, *Sever Roots*, in that it has a definite narrative arc while utilizing myriad instruments, studio techniques, and orchestration. This time out, however, instead of playing all of the instruments themselves, the band takes advantage of a disparate range of musicians, who each in their own way bring great musical insight and wisdom to the table. The impressive personnel on this CD includes: Chicago free improvisation hero, **Fred Lonberg-Holm** on cello, the brilliant and ubiquitous Carla Kihlstedt (of Sleepytime Gorilla Museum and **Fred Frith's Cosa Brava**) on vocals and violin, **Aleksandra Tomaszewska** on vocals, **Dave Smith** (of **Poi Dog Pondering**) on baritone sax, and many others. *Fear Draws Misfortune* is the fruition of a long-term relationship of mutual admiration between Cuneiform and Cheer-Accident. Preceded by a performance at 2008's ProgDay festival in North Carolina, and coinciding with a lengthy cover article on the band in the Winter 2009 issue of *Signal To Noise*, this long-overdue marriage begins fearlessly with firecrackers and hopes to hurl Cheer-Accident into wider recognition.

[press release text by Joyce E. Nalewajk 2009]

for more information on Cheer-Accident, please see:  
[www.cheer-accident.com](http://www.cheer-accident.com) - [www.myspace.com/cheeraccident](http://www.myspace.com/cheeraccident)

**PROMOTIONAL PHOTOS:**



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(credit: Pete Gershon)

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