

The Goons

Interviewed by The Silver Age, July 16th, 2024

The Goons are a rock band based in South Jersey composed of Angelo, Hayden, Dom, and Nick. Their double album, *Revival/Ascension*, was released on July 26th, 2024 and is available on Spotify and Apple Music. For band updates and information about future shows, follow their Instagram @thegoonsnj.

MICHAEL AUBLE: What are your names, ages, where are you from, and what do you play?

HAYDEN: My name's Hayden, and I'm 23 years old, and I play the guitar. Then I'm going to pass it to this guy.

ANGELO: I'm Angelo. I'm 23 years old. I play bass, and I'm from Nicaragua.

DOM: My name is Dom. I play drums, and I'm from the same place, Nicaragua.

NICK: My name's Nick. I play guitar. I'm 25, and I am from here.

ALICIA LOPEZ: What type of music would you say you all play?

ANGELO: I would call it a painful yet beautiful mix of funky punk love ballads that inspire your soul.

HAYDEN: Yeah, we got a little bit of everything. We got rock, we got rock ballads, we got a little bit of indie, a little bit of acoustic. A little bit of alternative.

ANGELO: Alternative, yeah. Alternative is a really good word.

HAYDEN: Funk rock. We got one metal song. We tried rap, but that didn't turn out so well.

ANGELO: Yeah, the rap record.

HAYDEN: That's actually not a joke. We actually really did try to do rap.

M.A.: No, I remember that. It wasn't that bad.

HAYDEN: Oh, hell yeah.

A.L.: Name origin?

ANGELO: So I forgot about this, and I've told it wrong in other interviews, but I remembered it. So in high school, me, Dom and Hayden were the original Goons. We decided to play a pep rally, and we wrote an original song called "Faculty Goons," where we made fun of the teachers. And then when they asked us what our name would be, since the only song we had was called "Faculty Goons," we just called ourselves The Goons. And this is – "The Goons" is *before* "gooning" meant masturbating. We're pre-masturbation "The Goons." It's fucked up too, we're banned on TikTok.

HAYDEN: We literally – we got fucking shadowbanned on TikTok because our name is The Goons. Now nobody sees our shit except our followers. Yeah, you can't search on it. You can't find us.

ANGELO: I have trouble finding us on YouTube. I don't know if it's a coincidence.

M.A.: So I think we touched on this a little bit already, but one of our questions is how did you all meet? We can talk about how the original three came together, then how Nick came into the fold. How do you guys describe The Goon lineage?

ANGELO: That's a bit of a convoluted story as well. It was the three of us in high school in a class that we all had together about songwriting. And then we met up with a friend named Mason Eddy, and he joined our band. And then he quit our band shortly after. And then we wrote as a three piece for a while, then we found Nick about two years ago, and he joined our band. And here we are.

DOM: We went to high school with Nick, but he was a couple grades above us cause he's old.

NICK: I was a senior when you guys were freshmen, I guess.

ANGELO: I was jamming with Nick a little bit, and then Nick actually recorded a solo EP for me. So we started working closer and closer as time moved on, and then he just joined the band, you know.

M.A.: Oh, he was involved with Dr. Lo?

ANGELO: He was involved with Dr. Lo, yes.

NICK: I think you released that as Angelo Tornetta, though, didn't you?

ANGELO: No, that was Dr. Lo. *Autumn Rain Deserter* EP.

M.A.: How long have you each been playing music individually, and how long have you been playing together?

DOM: I started playing drums around eight years old, and I'm 22, so like 14 years.

HAYDEN: I'm 23. I started playing, I think, when I was 12. But I probably didn't start taking it serious until I was like 14, 15. So I'd say like seven years, eight years.

ANGELO: I've been playing officially for 10 years now. I just realized it, about 10 years. I started playing in seventh grade.

NICK: I'm 25 now – I guess I was like banging around on drums and stuff when I was like five years old, but I started playing guitar when I was seven. So I guess around 18, going on 19 years.

ANGELO: Dude, can we just go on record? Maybe throw this in there. It's about 92 degrees in here that we're doing this interview. It's astronom– this is my regular house. This is just my house, Michael. This is just how hot my house is.

M.A.: You're brave souls. So for each of you, are you all each self-taught or musically trained? Or how much musical training do each of you have, if any?

HAYDEN: I don't have shit. I'm musically taught courtesy of – self-taught musically courtesy of Marty Schwartz.

M.A.: Ah, yes. Marty Schwartz on the YouTubes.

HAYDEN: Marty Schwartz basically taught me everything I know. Which is like nothing. But I did play a lot of System of a Down when I first started, which is really easy stuff. So I felt like a beast. And then it's just gone downhill from there.

ANGELO: I'm also self-taught. I never took official lessons, but I've watched a lot of shit on YouTube, and I do enjoy music theory, like learning new things. There's somebody on YouTube named David Bennett Piano.

COLE GABORIAULT: Yeah, yeah. Awesome.

ANGELO: You like him? He's great. I love watching his stuff. I love watching videos of people like him. And... yes. So I do like being musically educated, but I never actually went to a place to learn anything about music.

DOM: I took lessons when I first started for probably like six years. And then I broke my arm and stopped taking lessons. Ever since then, I've just been self-taught.

NICK: My dad taught me how to play guitar, and gave me my first guitar. And I kind of just learned songs from there, just tabs and stuff, watching YouTube videos. I never got any “formal” formal training. I guess, yeah, kind of taught myself half of it. My dad taught me the essentials.

A.L.: So did you all go to college? If so, what did you major in?

HAYDEN: I don't think a single one of us went to college, right? We have a combined four semesters of community college between all three of us.

M.A.: The Goons has an Associates as a band.

HAYDEN: We just got an associate degree as an entire band. As a four man band, we have an associate's degree. In capology. Yeah, Dom Pecora went to a trade school in Brick Township. He's a plumber. I went to PENCO Tech. Unfortunately, I went for diesel mechanics. I hate my life.

A.L.: Yeah. At the show. Okay. As a band, musical influences?

ALL: The Red Hot Chilli Peppers.

HAYDEN: We're all really big Red Hot Chili Peppers fans. Big, big, huge, massive. We're all really big fans. Specifically John Frusciante too. We all love that guy. Worship him like a god.

HAYDEN: But besides the Chili Peppers, I guess we can go in a line. Do you want to start Dom?

DOM: Well, besides Chili Peppers? That's tough. I don't know. I like basically all types of metal. Recently I've been jamming to Mitch McConnell on drums for Jimi Hendrix.

M.A.: Isn't it Mitch Mitchellson?¹

HAYDEN: Mike, I know you got it. Mike, you got to throw me a bone here, bro. Tell me, you like Alvays, right?

M.A.: Oh, yes, yes. They are good.

HAYDEN: Dude, they're my shit. If the Chilis are number one, they're a close second, dude. I will die for that band. I fucking love that band.

¹ Nobody is correct. The drummer's name is Mitch Mitchell.

M.A.: That's taste, man. That's good taste.

HAYDEN: It's a hard conversation to sell, but I'm also a big boygenius fan. I think those are my top three, personally.

HAYDEN: I love The Strokes. Who are stroking cock, yes.

ANGELO: Angelo here, best music taste. Always is my least favorite band. So is Mitch McConnell. I don't like his music, or his policies, or his term limits. I don't like any of it. Some of my favorite bands are a little known band called State Radio. I really love State Radio. Check them out. I love the Misfits. I love Stone Temple Pilots. I love Queen. I like Pearl Jam. I like 90s stuff. And 80s and 70s stuff.

NICK: Yeah, I love The Mars Volta. Their first two albums. After that, it's a little too weird for me. But The Cure is huge for me. There was another one I was just thinking of. I really love Mac Miller. Not really on-genre, but he's like... But I've listened to the same five artists for the past 20 years now.

A.L.: What lineup of the Misfits?

ANGELO: I would say Famous Monsters, honestly. I like Danzig, too. But Famous Monsters era.

M.A.: Alrighty, y'all, so, how does the magic happen? What is your music writing process? What does it look like? How do The Goons goon?

ANGELO: That is a huge secret. These guys will probably say something like, "we jam and it's beautiful." Nah, I just write them all. That's not true at all.

NICK: Well, I write them all, and then I give them to Dom, and then he fixes them. We're not giving you honest information. There's a variety of different ways we do it. Sometimes Angelo will just write a song and then we'll kind of make our parts around it. Like, he'll just play guitar and sing and make it like a song out of that, and we'll fill it in. Or we'll jam, and we'll make a song all together. Or me or Hayden will write something guitar-wise. I don't really sing or write lyrics. Hayden does. So, sometimes Hayden will lead to sing a song. For me, it's just a little guitar idea, usually.

ANGELO: I think admittedly our best songs are when we all put our hats in the ring. I think some great songs have come from this. Like "Quincy."

NICK: "Quincy" is out now.

M.A.: Well, here, this next question is one that I'm definitely looking forward to hearing. How do you approach writing lyrics? You have very entertaining lyrics, I can say. How do you approach writing them?

ANGELO: Sometimes it's genuinely the cavity of depression and the endless void of the existential realm of human existence. And sometimes it's just whatever tomfoolery, the weirdest thing you can come up with, it kind of depends on – sometimes, I combine it. Sometimes I like to combine the two and have something meaningful and impactful, and then combine it with something weird. And in some songs like “Lonnie,” it might sound like – “Lonnie,” a song on the album that'll be coming out – it might sound like a bunch of goofy lyrics, but they're really special to me, and they mean a lot to me.

NICK: Can I say one of my favorite lines?

ANGELO: Yes.

NICK: On “Stitches” he says, “20 pimps and hoes, 200 moving toes.”

ANGELO: I do.

NICK: And I just like it. I like the imagery there. Yeah. Just like a room just with 20 pimps and hoes with their toes wiggling around.

DOM: My favorite lyric is when in “Quincy,” when you're like, “and he's soaking in the broth with his cock out.”

ANGELO: He's taking a bath.

DOM: I mean, very poetic. It's very, like, a strange way to describe a bath.

HAYDEN: Yeah. And then sometimes we write like super sentimental ballads. Like when Angelo wrote – there's this one acoustic song called “All in What You Do,” and it's like some of the sweetest, most beautiful lyrics ever.

M.A.: You guys do have some good ballads. I remember “April”.

A.L.: Okay, so next question. Themes you like to explore when you're writing songs? Sounds like you've got all sorts of stuff. Do you have general themes?

ANGELO: I mean, sometimes like something like “Castaway,” I mean – we had a song on the album called Castaway, and lyrically I was thinking about, like, the movie *Castaway*, like a deserted island, and so the lyrics are

about somebody that gets lost at sea. So, sometimes you go at it thematically, but I wouldn't say there's a constant theme that we strive for.

HAYDEN: Yeah, and that's kind of just whatever floats the boat. No pun intended. But yeah, I don't know, at least for me personally, I feel like if I come pre-determined and tell myself what I'm going to write the song about, I never can really get it done. I feel like you just have to kind of spawn, personally. I might be stupid, but that's just me.

A.L.: Okay, so then I guess, what are you guys working on now? I know you're releasing your double album in 10 days or so.

NICK: We're getting ready for this show.

HAYDEN: Well, truthfully, if we must be real here, if we're going band for band right now, literally nothing at all. This is actually the first time – dude, this is not a joke. This is literally – this is serious. This is literally the first time we've gotten together and jammed any music whatsoever in three months. We sounded horrible today. We're hoping we can clean it up by the show.

M.A.: Our last main question, and it's a big one, are you ready?

A.L.: Oh, yes. This is where it gets philosophical.

M.A.: *This* is where it gets philosophical. Everything else was not. Alright. Why... are you a musician?

ANGELO: I knew it was going to be that. I knew it was going to be that. And here's my answer. Here's my answer.... I can't say that. I can't say that. Somebody else answer, please.

HAYDEN: I don't know. Shit, I guess I'll give the only real answer. I don't know, man. I guess because I just love making music so much. And like, for some reason, I have this really mental illness of the idea that people might enjoy our music one day. And that – I just think it'd be really cool to write a song and somebody tell me that like, they really liked it or resonated with it. And like, just the whole idea of being in the band. I like the band stuff. Because, see, I know Michael Auble and Angelo do the solo stuff. But I like the unity of the team of a band, you know? It's like the, the, yeah, because you know, I don't know. Because I'm too scared to join a gang, so I need some sort of brotherhood connection.

NICK: Mostly it's just because I hate myself.

ANGELO: I'll also answer kind of seriously.

NICK: I did!

ANGELO: I know, that's why I'm following you. I'm being completely serious. I write music because it might be the most purest conduit to – it's my most purest outlet, and it makes me feel better and feel complete when I finish a song or something. Or I maybe air out my emotions or how I'm feeling into writing a piece of art. And then I feel like whatever's troubling me is left behind because I've completed it and encapsulated it in this piece of art. And now it's done. And now it's – now I'm done with that problem.

NICK: "I hate myself" is not what I want my official words to be.

DOM: Me, I'm just in too deep at this point.

NICK: No exactly, I think it's punishment. You just can't stop at this point.

NICK: Yeah when I say "I hate myself," really, it means it's like punishment to try to make something all the time, and it's a struggle. And it's like, you don't really hate yourself, but you – somehow you enjoy the process of creating something and kind of being punished. But I do feel like it's not always easy. It's tough to write a double album and create it and get together with all these guys and, you know, figure out your ideas and clash a little bit. Yeah, it's a little bit punishing, but it's fun. It's a struggle.

M.A.: Nice. All really good answers.

A.L.: I wanted to ask you about your music videos, because I know you all came up with some, and I watched them, and I like them a lot. Do you want to talk about the filming process for "You Know Me," or something like that?

M.A.: What was it like? And what were some inspirations for the music videos themselves?

HAYDEN: Oh dude, so we have our buddy, his name is Brandon.

ANGELO: Brandon Ferriero. Like a Ferrero Rocher.

HAYDEN: And he's friends of Purple Door, which is the guy that mixes and masters our music and stuff. And he – we got together with him to make this little – because he's real professional. Like he's really like top of the line quality, like great. He does not fuck around. So, you know, we wanted to hit him up to do this little project, because we had this idea of like almost like, kind of a reverse *Charlie's Angels* type of deal. And we got our friend, Emerson Fisher, who we went to high school with, and she was like – she did theater, and she's really an extremely talented actress and theater person. So she'd be perfect for the job. And it kind of all lined up perfectly. We got on a couple of FaceTime calls, and we'd write out scripts and whatnot. And it just kind of came naturally

in a way, you know, like, and I mean, that's so obvious. But like, you know, just the fact that we got all that done – we got it all done in one day. And I'm really happy with the way it came out. I feel like it's just the, I mean, shit. I fuck with it heavy.

ANGELO: Yeah, we had the reverse *Charlie's Angels* idea, you know, the woman is like leading us, and we're going to kill this fucking guy and he's eating popsicles. We had to throw in some comedy, obviously. So he's sucking down the SpongeBob popsicles two at a time. It was honestly impressive. And then, you know, shit goes down, shit goes crazy. You know, we plotted this over a couple weeks and whatnot over Zoom calls, and it took a lot of preparation. It was a really fun time. We filmed it in one day.

NICK: We couldn't have asked for a better execution of the actual filming and all that. It worked out so good.

HAYDEN: And then at least with the “Quincy” music video, it was very DIY. We just got our buddy Tucker Jones with a film camera, and we just kind of filmed it. In like one shot, in one day. A bunch of B-roll stuff and nonsense. It's just pretty much shenanigans, just a compilation of shenanigans basically. Yeah.

NICK: Yeah. Some shenanigans and some performance shots.

ANGELO: Very minor plotting. I mean, we just went and had fun in Atlantic City about a year and a half before the rest of the film.

HAYDEN: That's actually true.

ANGELO: So we filmed the very beginning about a year and a half before we filmed the rest and then we started goofing around. It's just, you know what? A lot of people like “You Know Me” better. In some ways I actually like “Quincy” a little better because of how, yeah, the video. Yeah. Just because of how random and sporadic it is, you know, there's some, there's some.

NICK: It's more of a peek into like how we are.

ANGELO: Yeah. It's more of a peek into us as people than “You Know Me.” But “You Know Me” is just better filmography.