



Beach Goons band leader Pablo Cervantez details growing up in Logan Heights and the history of the band

By Roberto “Rob” Camacho

Over the years San Diego has produced its share of prolific groups and bands. From Blink-182, P.O.D. and Stone Temple Pilots, a variety of artists and musical acts all spawned from the region’s diverse and rich arts scene. Logan Heights is no exception, boasting musicians such as the B-Side Players and the late Ramón “Chunky” Sánchez.

The neighborhood is also home to local Punk/ Garage band Beach Goons who are among some of the youngest, and most promising talent in the city’s eclectic and ever-diversifying music scene. The band’s lineup, which includes front-man Pablo Cervantez, 20 (vocalist, guitarist, and sole constant member), David Orozco, 20 (bassist), and Chris Moran, 23 (drummer) have produced their own distinct brand of music that is not just unique to San Diego, but Logan Heights as well.

Like many musicians, Cervantez’s earliest influences came from his family. Born and raised in Logan Heights the guitarist recalled some of his earliest musical memories saying, “My dad had a nylon string guitar in the house just laying around. He didn’t play too much, but he tried. I remember I would always pick it up and pretend like I knew how to play. I remember the first time I picked it up I would always try to mimic Rancheras or Corridos, and just basically pretend to play what I was hearing.”

The son of immigrant parents, Cervantez grew up in a household rich with an eclectic palette that created a unique mixture of musical tastes that influenced him from an early age growing up.

“Both of my parents come from Mexico. My Dad is from Guerrero and my Mom is from Jalisco, both from very small pueblitos. Thanks to them I got to listen to Cornelio Reyna, Chalino Sánchez, Ramon Ayala, just a broad selection of music.”

Cervantez’s influence was by no means restricted solely to those of his parent’s music collection either. He recalled the influence of his older siblings, whose foothold in a variety of genres further inspired him.

“It was a whole mixture of things growing up in the house,” Cervantez said. “My older sister was born in the ‘80s, grew up in the ‘90s but loved all of the 80’s new wave music...she would listen to The Cure, Duran Duran, Talking Heads, etc and I got into that too. And then my other sister listened to Ska, Reggae, Punk, Rap, R&B and all that. So, it was just this big pool of music that has been influencing me for a while.”

With influences spanning across eras, genres and nations, at an early age Cervantez set his hopes on becoming a musician. “From the moment

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I picked up a guitar I told myself this is what I want to do, and this is the only thing I want to do”.

By the time he was in middle school Cervantez was already playing in a band that he formed with neighborhood friends. Eventually, after a name and a stylistic change, Beach Goons was officially formed in 2014.

Along with childhood friends, Ruben Ochoa and Alexis Rincon on the drums and bass transferring over from Cervantez’s original band, the first incarnation of Beach Goons was born. Cervantez recalled the band’s early days saying, “the original members were all from Barrio Logan. We all grew up in the same neighborhood. We all went to the same elementary school, middle school and high school together. I remember the first show I ever played was at Memorial Middle School. They let us play at lunch.”

Cervantez remembered one break in particular that came from an unexpected place, the Logan Heights Public Library.

“Most of the times it was the Logan Heights local library helping us out. Whether it was them letting us borrow their instruments or letting us use their space to practice,” Cervantez said. “They had a music program that really nurtured and helped us develop and I appreciate them so much for that space. That’s why I really, really, rep Logan Heights and Barrio Logan in general, to rep the neighborhood and pay my respects to it.”

The group began expanding their performances beyond school and before long they began releasing their own music in 2014, with a string of projects: Summer Bummer and BoiSad along with Beach Freeks, a collaborative EP between the Barrio based rockers and Freeks, a Surf-Punk band from Kelowna, British Columbia.

Following 2015, Cervantez spent the next several years meticulously working on dozens of new songs. Originally planning another EP, the group recorded so much material that they opted for

another full-length album, hoodratscumbags. Which was released in August of 2018.

Over this two-year stretch, Beach Goons membership would once again shift, with Ochoa and Rincon leaving the group. The band’s lineup eventually solidified with current members David Orozco (bassist) and Chris Moran (drummer) joining the band for the latest LP. Since then the band has made the jump from a local band with regional buzz to a nationally touring group, even performing at Riot Fest in Chicago last Fall.

Like many young first-generation Chicanos, Cervantez also struggled with identity growing up, caught in-between a hazy middle ground where the lines between Mexican and American culture clash, converge and overlap.

“Growing up I remember I hated being from where I came from; I was very embarrassed to be Mexican...because growing up I was with a

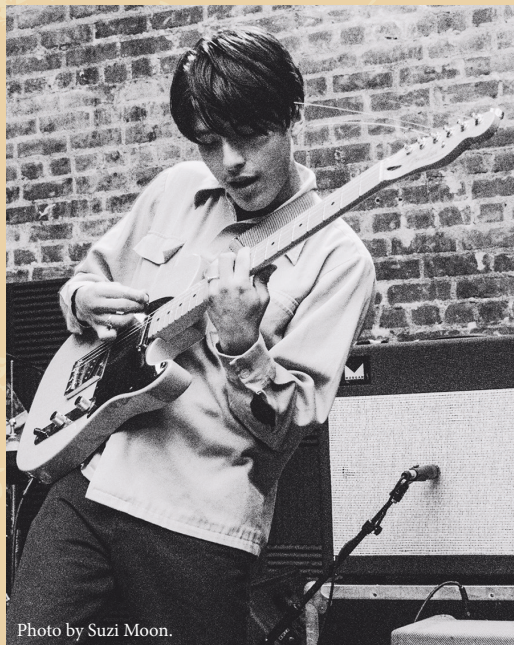


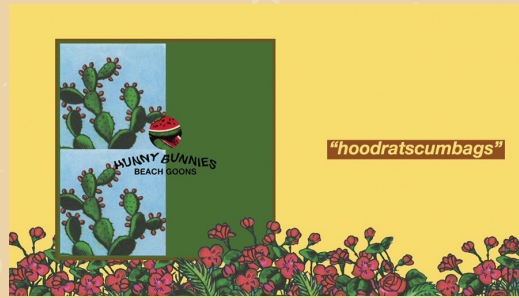
Photo by Suzi Moon.

bunch of kids that were whitewashed, Americanized. And it made me feel like because my parents listened to Corridos or because I liked those songs, I was too *paisa*, or being from Logan Heights was something to be ashamed about because it's a predominantly Mexican community," he recalled. "Growing up I was really embarrassed of who I was, but as I got older it I just got to a point where I understood that I have to be proud of where I come from, be proud of who I am and that there's nothing to be ashamed of."

Through music Cervantez not only challenged these perceptions forced onto the neighborhood, but it also helped him forge a sense of self, attuning him to the power of representation in a music scene that traditionally has had little Chicano influence.

The group's significance to young Chicano listeners has not been lost on Cervantez either. "The thing that really stuck out and resonated with me was the fact that there were a lot of Mexican/brown kids coming up to us saying it's insane to see someone who looks like us representing and playing in a scene that is predominately white and it's cool we're taking up spaces we're not usually taking up."

While the group has sometimes felt like the odd men out in the scene, it has only made them more driven. "We felt like the scene that we were



involved with was very white-dominated and we felt like we were the only band that was flexin' our heritage and roots while playing within the same scene. But it never discouraged us, if anything it made us want to stay in there more."

As he became more comfortable, Cervantez began writing and performing songs such as 'Chunti' in Spanish, which have allowed the group to flex their Mexican roots and proudly display their Chicano pride.

Cervantez hopes that the group's experience can help young listeners that are also figuring out their own identity. "Jumping in-between being too American or being too Mexican and trying to find a middle when you really can't is always going to be difficult, but I definitely think that the music helps with it," Cervantez said.

Ultimately, his greatest goal is to rep and give back to the neighborhood that molded him like hometown musicians such as Ramón "Chunky" Sánchez.

"Every time I go out to Chicano Park or I'm riding around the neighborhood and I see a mural or a picture of Chunky it's a reminder that the community respects and loves him, they appreciate what he did for the community," Cervantes said. "If I can be remembered in this neighborhood the same way that people remember Chunky I'd die happy. I don't care about any type of worldwide fame. If I can get my community to understand that I wanted to show nothing but love, appreciation and respect that would be the ultimate goal."

To listen to tracks by Beach Goons visit <https://los-beachgoons.bandcamp.com>.



Photo courtesy of Beach Goons.