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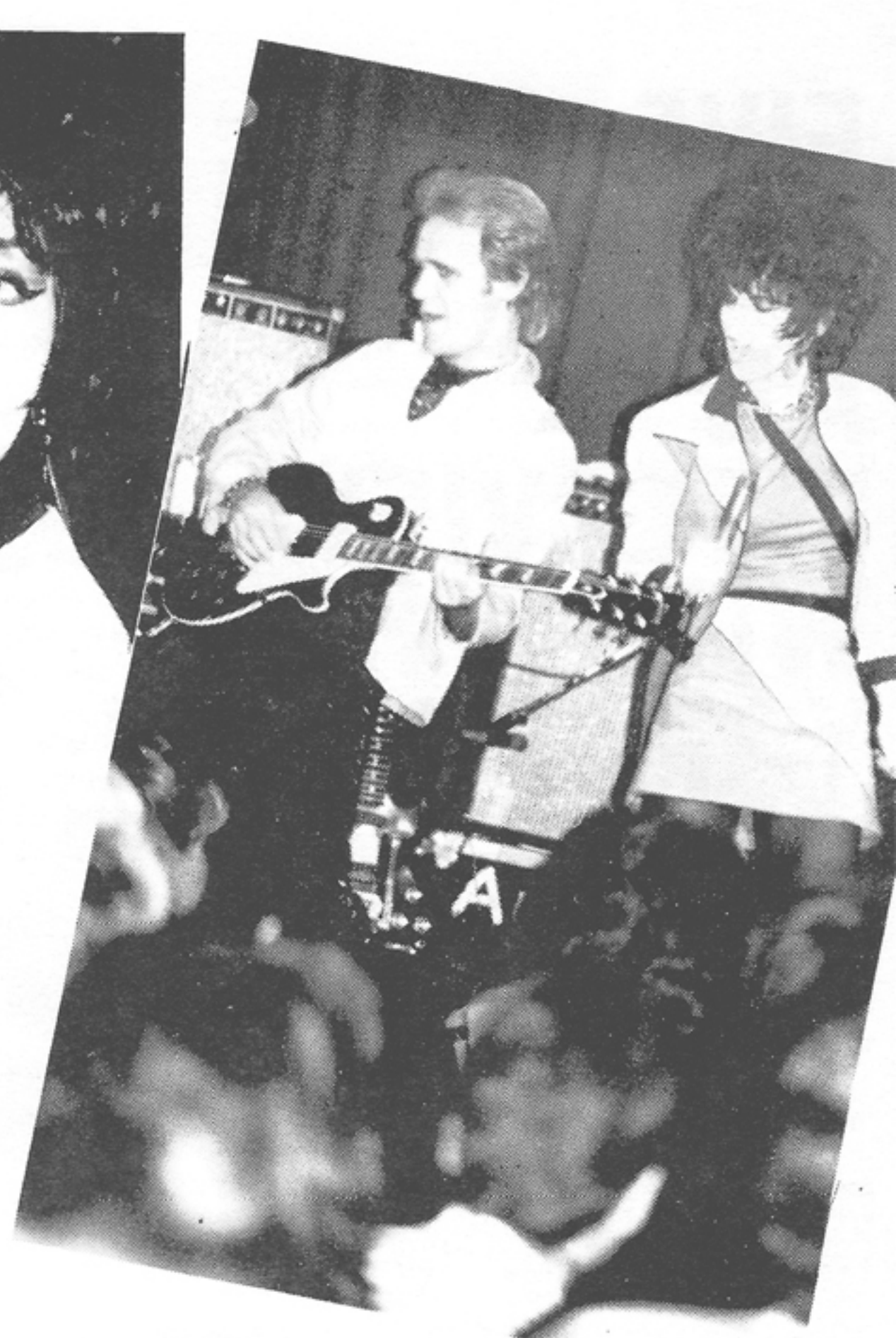
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JOSIE COTTON

DO WHAT YOU WANT TO DO

BY JANE GREENSTEIN

When Josie Cotton burst onto the music scene in 1981 with the song, *Johnny Are You Queer?*, she became a subject of controversy, due to the song's disputatious lyrics. Yet the song became a west coast hit. She was soon signed to Elektra Records, for whom she recorded the album, *Convertible Music*. After moderate success with the 1982 singles, *He Could Be The One* and *Bye Bye Baby* (both from that album) and a nationwide tour, Cotton is taking on the world once more. Not only on record, but on the screen, as well. Cotton has just completed her second album, tentatively titled, *Do What You Want To Do*. She and her band also appear in the motion picture, *Valley Girl*. The soundtrack of the film features Cotton and band singing *School Is In*, the first single from the soundtrack.

Oddly enough, Cotton's road to fame began in a bank in 1980. While standing in line, she met Larson Paine, who (with his brother, Bobby) had worked with a handful of local Los Angeles bands, including Fear, Geza X, Levi And The Rockats and the original singers of *Johnny Are You Queer?*, the Go-Go's. Cotton speaks highly of the Paines, whom she feels are the, "Unsung heroes of the Los Angeles music scene." According to Cotton, their lack of recognition is primarily due to ungrateful musicians who were inspired to terminate their professional relationships with the Paines because of the brothers' unyielding quest for perfection. Cotton said that their high standards led to the auditions of hundreds of musicians, creating bands and breaking them up until

the perfect combination was found.

"The Paines did not want me to go out on the road until I was ready", she commented. I'm sure that if I were to have gone out there like some of the garage bands, or some of the bands who can't play or don't have their songs together, I would have been better received. Once Elektra picked us up, we had to start playing. When we debuted at the Roxy in Los Angeles, the band was perfect. I wasn't!"

Still, the Paines remain the vital force behind Cotton's career. Bobby Paine served as co-producer of both her albums and acts as leader of Cotton's present band (comprised of Josie Cotton on lead vocals, Bobby Paine on guitar, Che Zuro on vocals and keyboards, J.B. Frank on keyboards, Gary Ferguson on drums and ex-Knack bassist Prescott Niles in that same capacity), which plays on her new Elektra album, *Do What You Want To Do*.

Cotton describes the new release as a less pop-oriented album. "Our music has evolved", she explains. "We finally have a real band together. The album is more European sounding. More western. More Fellini". The album will also feature American dance music. *License To Dance*, the first song to be produced as a video from the album, is described by Cotton as a dance anthem.

School Is In will also be released as a video. Cotton and her band play themselves in *Valley Girl*. The role is reassuring to Cotton, whose identity is oftentimes the subject of misinterpretation. "I'm not trying to project anything", she retorts. "It's not calculated. I put on the clothes I have in my closet, whether to perform or to go

out on the street. I'm comfortable with my image".

However, Cotton's biggest adversity is not her own image, but rather the image given to her by some factions of the print media. She feels that she has been grossly misconceived and has not been given the chance to prove herself. "It's the music that counts", she emphasized. "Yet most of the people who attack me haven't heard my album or seen one of my concerts".

Another myth the Dallas-born Cotton has been trying to refute is that of being a member of a well-to-do family background. "That is my background and not my present situation", she contests. "Right now, I'm nickel and diming it. It's a financial struggle. I wish I was rich, but that is not the case".

After all of the backlash Cotton has received, it seems only logical that she would elect to eschew the option to explore controversial territory on future recordings. However, Cotton pointed out that one track on *Do What You Want To Do* is certain to, "Blast *Johnny Are You Queer?* right out of the water in its controversiality".

Why does Cotton continue to pursue such an approach? "I do it for art", she explains.

Following the June release of the album, Cotton and her band will embark upon a nationwide tour, which will possibly include some European dates. She is confident and feels that it is an exciting time in her life. Yet she admits that she will probably never be able to shake some people's views of her. As Cotton put it, "I can't get mad anymore. Right now, I'm in it for the ride".

Hopefully, this time the public and press will be along with her.