

PUNK GLOBE

THE ULTRA COOL

JOSIE COTTON

By: Tyler Vile

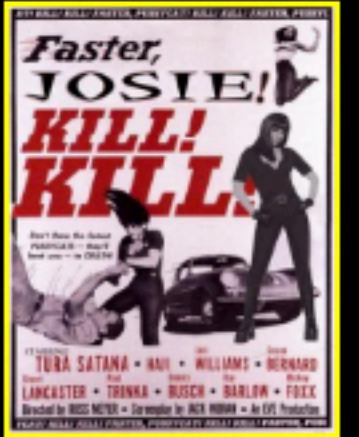


Photo By: Kiley Amesklein

I asked Tyler Vile to do the following interview with the Ultra Cool Josie Cotton.... Not only is Josie a fabulous pop singer she is also a great journalist.. You may have read her work in Punk Globe. If you have not there are a couple links in this interview.. Josie has a new CD "Pussycat Babylon" and it is slated for a May or June release... I would also like to thank Tyler for doing this great interview... Enjoy ~Ginger Coyote

Punk Globe: Hey Josie, thanks for doing this interview. Please tell us about yourself.

Josie Cotton: It's a pleasure, Tyler. Ginger tells me great things about you...that you're a very good writer, precocious and deep and obsessed with music. She also told me that you're the next Cameron Crow. No pressure but exactly when is your first movie coming out? Back to the answer I'm avoiding. I suppose I'm known primarily as a singer who recorded a very controversial song. The truth is I never wanted to be a singer. I don't even think I'm that good at it. I just happen to love doing it. What I've learned about myself is that I have always felt like a writer, even before I started writing. As long as I can remember I've had the sense I was on the outside looking in and it felt very lonely. I think being an artist was the only way I felt like I was a part of the world. As far as I can tell, my job is to be a witness to events that want to be remembered and then fucked around with. So that's what I try to do.. Writers are like photographers, slightly removed from what they are observing. But here's the rub in a nutshell. To me, and I might be idealizing this, an artist by definition never compromises but being in show business suggests almost a form of prostitution. Unless we're talking about an uncompromising hooker. Haha I think I finally found my niche, Tyler. You're good. In one question that wasn't even a question you had me completely redefine myself. Here is the link <http://www.punkglobe.com/writingwritingjosiecotton1009.html>



Punk Globe: How did you first get involved in playing music?

Josie Cotton: The chain of events went as follows. I grew up in the ballet world which inspired me to study the piano, which led me to writing songs, which resulted in me singing in school choirs, various bands after that,.

Punk Globe: You're from Dallas, right? What made you want to move from Dallas to L.A.?

Josie Cotton: I came out here to be in show business, rather an uncompromising hooker as you taught me, Tyler but I contemplated becoming an architect. When I was a little girl I didn't draw flowers or bunnies unless I was forced to by my teachers. I drew mid-century buildings, over and over again with straight edge rulers so the lines would be perfect.

Punk Globe: Are there any recordings of the bands you were in when you lived in Texas?



Josie Cotton: God I hope not.

Punk Globe: Was it an easy transition into the L.A. punk scene?

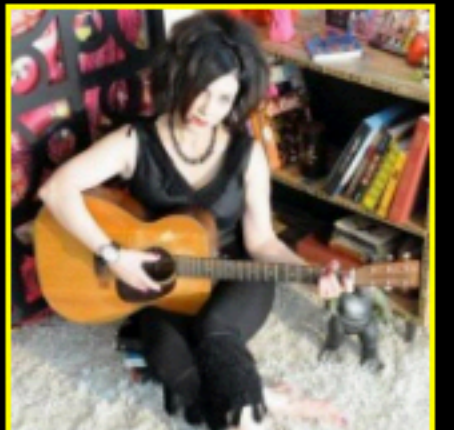
Josie Cotton: I was only on the periphery of the punk scene and that was just through the Paine Brothers who were my producers, also working with the Go Go's and Fear at the time. I never transitioned. I observed and extrapolated like a complete geek.. I have never felt part of any movement, musical or otherwise. I wish I did.

Punk Globe: I know that a lot of early Los Angeles punks were big fans of glam rock before they got into punk, were you? If you were, were you starstruck when you were working with Queen's producer on your second album ?

Josie Cotton: I'm an omnivore in regards to music but glam rock and punk rock do seem like strange bed fellows to me. Especially transitioning from one to the other but you're so right, Tyler. Even Darby Crash did exactly that. You're talking about Roy Thomas Baker. I have very warm feelings for Roy. I was never star struck per se but I did love the records he made. We did some recording together in England and I remember the sessions being especially tense because of some diddling and dallying going on behind the scenes...nothing to do with me by the way. Previous to that I had no idea there were so many double entendres to be had in a recording studio. No one does biting sarcasm better than an Englishman.

Punk Globe: How did your hit song "Johnny Are You Queer?" come about?

Josie Cotton: It started off as a demo for my producer's publishing company and then that tape turned into a record. Then it all kind of blew up. It's a long story. I wrote an article about it for Magnet Magazine in 2007 but it's also on the Punk Globe website. It was the first thing I ever wrote. Here is a link to read the article. <http://www.punkglobe.com/josiecotton1109.html>



Punk Globe: You were in an '80s teen movie that starred Nicolas Cage and several of your songs were featured in it including Johnny Are You Queer, right? What was that like?"

Josie Cotton: If Nicolas Cage was punk rock then I'm the King of Sweden. The filming was pretty fun I guess, just 2 days of shooting and I was out of there. No one really knew it would become a cult classic. I call it the movie that won't die. I performed "Johnny Are You Queer ? " in the prom scene but truthfully I've only watched Valley Girl once.

Punk Globe: You've recorded theme songs for quite a few camp cult movies, did working on Valley Girl inspire you to do that?

Josie Cotton: No not at all. I look at Valley Girl as more quirky than campy, and the movies you're referring to as more demented than campy. But yea my last record, 'Invasion Of The B-Girls' , was all theme songs from b movies or "great" songs from "bad" movies. That was the most fun I ever had recording... hands down. But last year I wrote a 5 part series for Matthew Fritch, senior editor at Magnet Magazine. I was just supposed to write these little throw away blurbs about the exploitation movies I exploited (I mean exalted) on that record.. and to also write about my dealings with John Waters etc. But it turned into this kind of crackpot odyssey I went on. I became completely swept away in the process of researching, analyzing, really studying the movies and directors for the first time, back-winding, re-forwarding, taking notes, getting quotes and that was before one word was put to paper. At times it felt like I was a character walking around in those movies and it would carry over into my dreams, especially the piece I did on 'Beyond The Valley Of The Dolls' and Russ Meyers. I was in so deep, so far over my head and had no idea what I was doing. But the more I researched the more intrigued I became and the more I wrote the more I cracked myself up, usually in the dead of night. I'm sure the people I was staying with thought I had finally lost my mind. I guess they never got the memo that ship had left the barn a long time ago.

Punk Globe: How do you feel you've evolved as an artist between your debut album and your upcoming one?

Josie Cotton: I'm a lot more comfortable in my own skin now. I didn't know who I was back then at all. I take a lot more risks in what I reveal about myself. My songs are more like stories now and I use comedy as a very sneaky way of saying things without saying them.

Punk Globe: Tell us about your new CD. What are you calling it and when will it be released?

Josie Cotton: The CD is called "Pussycat Babylon" and is slated for a May or June release.

Punk Globe: Will your ex Geza X, who worked with The Dead Kennedys and was friends with The Germs be producing this album?

Josie Cotton: To be fair, Geza was not only friends with the Germs, he also produced their first EP, Lexicon Devils. On my new record one of the tracks was produced by Shok and he did an amazing job. Paul Roessler and I ended up producing the rest of the record but it feels like we went through a war together... thankfully on the same side. There was nothing I put before Paul that he didn't hit out of the park. He is someone who loves music so deeply with an ear so finely attuned...every beat, every note every nuance matters to him, with not a shred of ego or the megalomania that is the curse of most producers. Although I had a very clear idea of what I wanted this record to sound like from the beginning I thought of myself primarily as singer/songwriter and was very prone to dismissing my own production and arrangements ideas for the sake of expedience. But Paul refused to let me do that. Honestly the only conflict Paul and I had in 9 months of working together day after day was when I told him something he recorded sounded too pretty. He hated that hahah!! Never tell a punk rocker something they do is pretty!



Punk Globe: Did you know the late Darby Crash?

Josie Cotton: I didn't but so many of my friends were close to him that I feel like I did know him. Helin Killer, Paul, Geza and of course Don Bolles. Believe me he lives on through them. I would tell you a funny story about Darby, Paul and Pat Smear going into the Scientology Center in Hollywood but I'm already in 2 lawsuits.

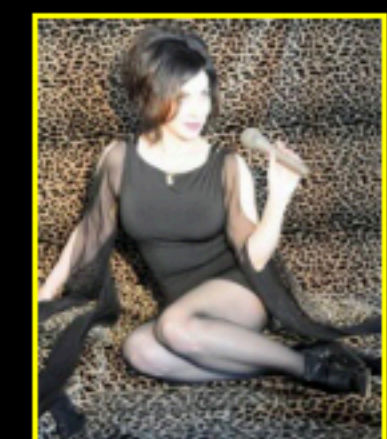
Punk Globe: Do you think that the biopics about Darby Crash and Joan Jett trivialize the scene you were in?

Josie Cotton: I think anytime you try and re-create something that was inexplicable, you're asking for trouble. But I trust Paul and he says everyone should see it, that it was a labor of love and we shouldn't judge too harshly, even though it kind of sucked.

Punk Globe: Might we see a film about you in the future?

Josie Cotton: Haha I seriously doubt it but I can absolutely see myself writing one some day.

Punk Globe: Speaking of film, Baltimore's favorite offbeat filmmaker John Waters wrote the liner notes to an album of yours, what's your relationship like with him?



Josie Cotton: Ours was an online relationship born of necessity that almost turned into a lawsuit but had a beautiful ending. We have never met but I adore him from afar. At one point in our correspondence I told him I was an actress of questionable talent and would date a gorilla to be in one of his movies. Oddly enough John is a very serious fellow with a tremendous amount of integrity. My sincere hope is that he'll abandon his integrity and finally allow me to include my version of Female Trouble on Volume 2 of My Trashy B Movie Theme Song Trilogy.

Punk Globe: One of the singles from that same album had a video featuring Punk Globe's own Ginger Coyote, what was it like filming that?

Josie Cotton: I could still kick myself for talking her into appearing in my video because she completely steals the show. No one welds an electric turkey carver like Ginger. My pal Tequila Mockingbird was in the gang as well and I plan on the 2 of them being in every video I ever do. Even in romantic love scenes I want them peering creepily through the bedroom window, preferably with bone saws.

Punk Globe: Do you have any plans to tour anytime soon?

Josie Cotton: Yes this is the year I will be touring. I have a great band now and a booking agent.

Punk Globe: You worked with Janet Jackson, didn't you? What was that like?

Josie Cotton: Well...I did a television special with her. Smokey Robinson and Rick James were on that same show and it was kind of insane. I could not for the life of me figure out what I was doing there. I would love to get a copy of it some day though as I never got to see it. A lot of the television appearances I did back in the day have never been re-released or even released in some cases and if they happen to show up on youtube for 5 minutes Viacom's legal department swoops down out of nowhere and shuts it all down. I'm starting to think Viacom is the same entity as the Vatican cause they both have all this shit in vaults they won't let anyone near. What if I promise I won't bring up the Inquisition anymore?

Punk Globe: Do you consider yourself a pop star?

Josie Cotton: No I consider myself a pop singer. My theory is the second you think of yourself as special, you're not.

Punk Globe: Do you have a My Space profile address for the readers to check out?

Josie: I do <http://www.myspace.com/josiecotton>, <http://www.josiecotton.com>

Punk Globe: Thanks for doing this interview Josie. Do you have any words of wisdom for our readers?

Josie Cotton: You're very welcome, Tyler. I do hope our paths cross sometime in the future. My words of wisdom are really more like advice and that's to question everything...especially your own mental constructs. And to please donate as much as you can right now to the SPCA as our animal shelters are literally running out of food and medicine because of budget cuts <http://www.spcala.com/donate/donorinfo.shtml>



Punk Globe: Thanks so much Josie and good luck with your new CD.