

Lost in the '80s: Josie Cotton

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Y'know, if Josie Cotton's best-known single had become more than just a regional hit on the west coast, my high school life would have been a living hell.

But thankfully, "Johnny, Are You Queer" didn't cross over to mainstream radio in 1981, even though it was featured, along with Josie herself, two years later in the cult classic movie "Valley Girl." While my hipper friends knew about the song and would sometimes sing it to me (Answer: Yes.), the student population at large was thankfully unaware of Cotton and her catchy New Wave ways.

Her label, Elektra Records, wanted to correct this, so for her second full-length album, *From The Hip*, they pulled out all the stops. The ragged, punky edge of her debut, *Convertible Music*, was scrapped and the drum machines and synths came out to play. The lead single, "Jimmy Loves Maryann," [download](#) a remake of the only other Top 40 hit by '70s AM radio gods Looking Glass of "Brandy (You're A Fine Girl)" fame, was the best of the bunch. A shiny retro tune of young love, it was catchy enough for Top 40 and even sported a big budget video that got a bit of MTV light rotation:

If you recognize the distinctive guitar plucking on that tune, that's because it's none other than Josie's label-mate Lindsey Buckingham playing on the track. Now, why you would feature Lindsey on your song and not give him a solo is a question only Cotton can answer, but...in any case, "Jimmy Loves Maryann" scraped the bottom of the Hot 100, peaking even lower than Josie's only other chart hit, "He Could Be The One." You may be surprised to learn that "Johnny, Are You Queer" never even charted. (Phew. Bullet dodged. I and every other John breathed a sigh of relief.)

Elektra dropped Cotton after *From The Hip*, but she returned to recording in recent years, alternating from a more experimental, ethereal sound a la Kate Bush, and a campier style closer to her girl-group roots, as evidenced on her 2006 release, *Movie Disaster Music*, a dark take on theme songs from her favorite B-movies.

"Jimmy Loves Maryann" peaked at #82 on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart in 1984.