



EVERYTHING IS OH YEAH FOR JOSIE COTTON

 BRETT CALLWOOD × OCTOBER 1, 2019



Pop-rock/new-wave singer and songwriter Josie Cotton, probably best known for her early '80s single "Johnny Are You Queer," is back with a brand new single "Ukrainian Cowboy," a "lost" album called *Everything is Oh Yeah*, and a show on October 5 at the House of Machines. We chatted with Cotton about all that and more...

L.A. WEEKLY: *So you have a new album out?*

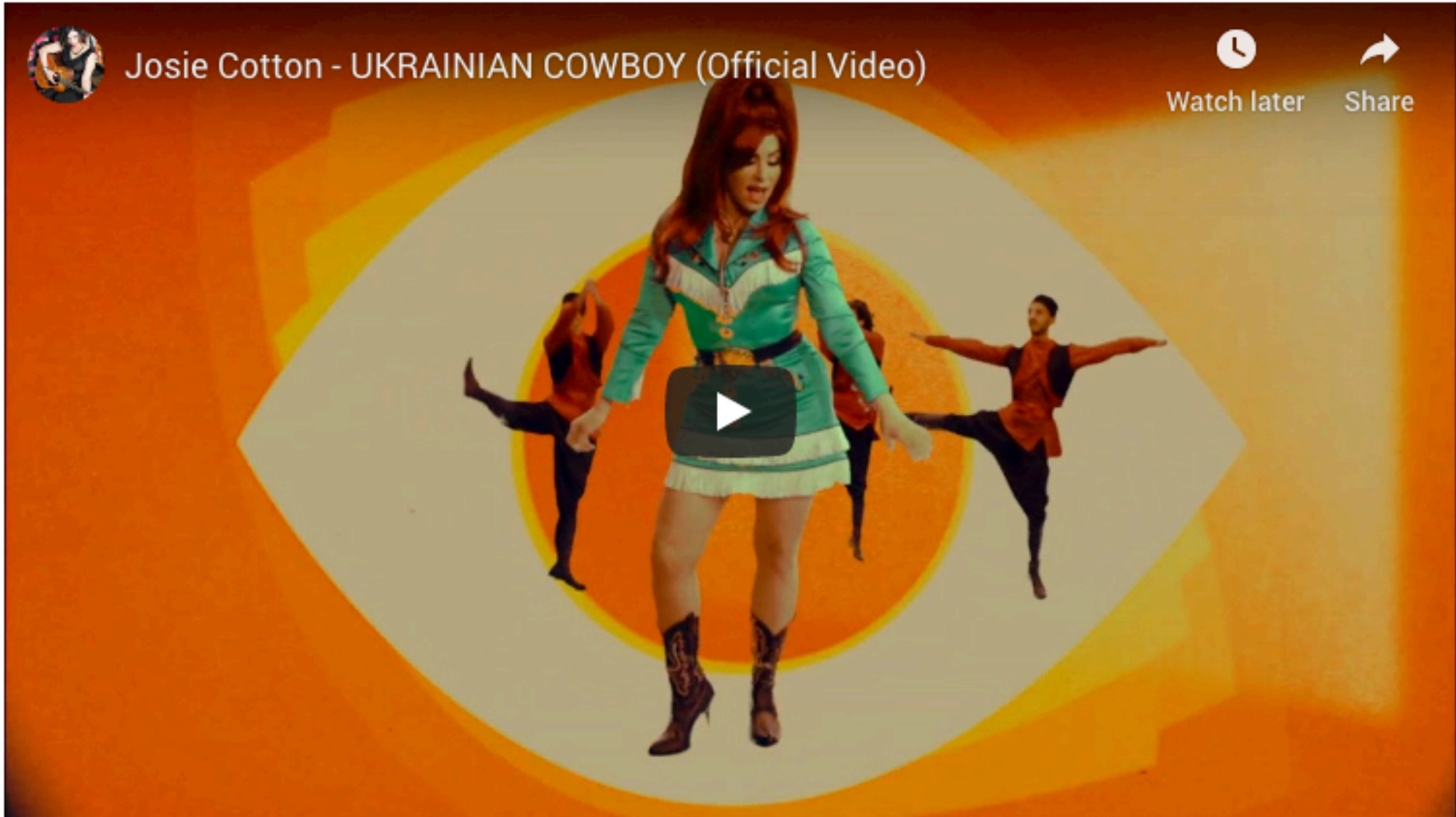
JOSIE COTTON: I have a new album and single. The single is actually new, while the album is something from a long time ago that I thought was lost.

Everything is Oh Yeah was supposed to come out in '86 — what happened?

Basically, I had already gotten dropped from Elektra when I started recording this record, but I just wanted to continue doing what I really liked doing — writing and recording, singing, and so we made the record. We never finished mixing it, and I just had some trepidation about going back into the record industry. I felt uncomfortable in that world. So there was a lot of pushback and attacking from enough people in the press and corporate backlash. Just the weird politics of the record business was not something I felt at ease in. So I was actually getting a lot of response from people who found out somehow. I felt like a trapped animal, so I walked away from the record. It was the best thing that I ever did, going off on my own and reinventing myself through every record I did. I kept killing and stamping on any kind of brand of Josie Cotton. I was not wanting to go back as that persona. That's the reality of it.

Thirty-three years later and you have revisited it. How does it sound to you?

I have come back and fell back in love with the songs. I warmed up to the idea of '80s music. I wasn't appalled or trying to get out of the studio. When we found it, the publishing company was working, finding places for your songs to go and they were in contact with *Stranger Things*. They were looking for unreleased records from the '80s, which was an odd request. Particularly mid '80s. I knew that I had done this record, but I wasn't sure if it still existed because it had gone through fires and landslides, earthquakes, moving in garages and all kinds of natural disasters and just, y'know, time. But we did find it. They were unmarked and we had to go through them all. Even at that point, I was like, "Ewww, I don't know." Then I heard the song I did with Brian Setzer, and thought it was fantastic. It sounded good enough for me to be proud of this record.



I heard that Brian Setzer and Malcolm McLaren clashed during the recording...?

That stopped me in my tracks. It was another sign from Valhalla. It was a situation where my producer was very good friends with both of these characters, and they are characters especially Malcolm. They would come by periodically. One day, they came at the same time which was a little clash of worlds. They were absolute polar opposites in terms of how they viewed music. It didn't go so well between those two. It was funny — like one of those awkward moments — like Dennis Hopper standing off in the corner. Malcolm was of the opinion that all music was going to be based on beats and rhythm and really hip-hop. He told me that I needed to not put this record out, I should just erase it and do a dance record. I knew how smart this fellow was and I could see, even with my view, I should listen to him. I thought he was probably on to something, and he was. It turns out he was absolutely spot on. Brian of course loves rock & roll. He's an embodiment of rock & roll I think from another time. He loved the record and he was defending my honor I guess, and rock & roll music altogether. It was confusing at that moment. But she's back. I'm just throwing it out into the universe and I don't have any idea of how it'll be received. It's a bit of a timewarp.

What can we expect from the October 5 set?

I'm gonna do my new single. I went very Russian. I couldn't take it anymore. There's so much every day, and I couldn't keep it in any longer. I have political views that I don't really express because I know how it's a futile exercise. This was my way to make a comment with historical references. So we're doing that. Of course, I'm required by law to do the few songs that people remember me by. I'll be doing some songs from the new record. One song I've never played live before is the B-side to the 12" for "Johnny Are You Queer" — "(Let's Do) The Blackout." It's an embarrassment of riches when I try to create sets now. It's a lovely place to be.

When that's done, what's next?

I have a couple of shows with Missing Persons coming up. There's been an interest in me continuing next year, doing more of these '80s festivals, but then I'm not allowed to play my current music for six months in the area. I'm rereleasing all my records — 2020 is coming up and I get my masters back for my first two records with Elektra. That's exciting. You have to know to ask for it and I accidentally found out about it. Then I will own all my own masters. After the first two, I'll rerelease the other five I've done over the years.

Josie Cotton plays with Prima Donna and Vicky & the Vengents at 8 p.m. on Saturday, October 5 at the [House of Machines](#).

