

## Josie Cotton & Kevin Preston Presents “The Ballad Of Elvis Presley”

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Even great musicians are usually forgotten. A select few become legends within their chosen styles. And once in a generation, a popular musician makes the leap from the entertainment section to the pages of history. Elvis Presley was an artist like that. His career was so seismic that we’re still feeling the reverberations he made. Elvis wrote the rules we still follow: he taught us about pop phrasing, rock attitude, and spellbinding performance. Whether we know it or not, every time we pick up a microphone and perform rock music, or country, or soul, we’re singing his praises. Josie Cotton and Kevin Preston are simply being more explicit about it than their peers.



The “Ballad Of Elvis Presley,” Cotton and Preston’s collaborative single, is a glorious tribute to the King — a testament to his enduring centrality to the story of American popular music, and a highly entertaining example of his influence. Both Cotton and Preston are show business veterans; they’ve seen styles come and go, and they’ve watched countless pretenders to the throne stumble. So for their Elvis “Ballad,” they’re keeping it strictly classic. The rhythm section – which includes Lee Rocker (Stray Cats) and Clem Burke (Blondie) – is rockabilly, the guitar solo could have come straight from a Sun Session, the mix crackles like an old 45, the melody is timeless, and the performances are totally committed. Josie Cotton, who’s best known for her incisive, serrated-edged new wave hits, shows us she can soar like Tammy Wynette when she wants to. Kevin Preston, frontman of the punk band Prima Donna, harmonizes as sweetly, and tightly, as Phil and Don Everly might have. They may have made their names recording music in other genres, but Elvis’s sound and Elvis’s aesthetic is right there for Cotton and Preston, just like a heartbeat.

Piper Ferguson’s clip for “Ballad Of Elvis Presley” is similarly attuned to the nuances (and cheeky humor) of American pop history. The director has brought Josie Cotton and Kevin Preston to a ghost town, and set them loose in an old-fashioned saloon, church and dueling ground. They’re dressed for the occasion, too: they look like they’re ready to take the stage in a Bakersfield honky-tonk in the mid-’60s. And they’re not alone. The town is full of characters, including an insouciant bartender, a tattooed gunslinger, poker players grabbing for their chips, a Calamity Jane look-alike with an eye out for desperadoes, and, of course, the members of the band, who’ve set up behind the swinging wooden doors of the bar, and are ready for a showdown with anybody who doubts, even for a second, that Elvis is still King.