



INTERVIEW – JOSIE COTTON

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Josie Cotton is a name most associated with the quirky '80s hit "Johnny, Are You Queer?," however, how many know the performer more in-depth? Cotton, a native of Texas, is quite the interesting person who has a long history as a singer with cinematic flair. In fact, her style is so movie-like it stands to reason that "Johnny, Are You Queer?" was heavily featured in the 1986 fan-favorite *Valley Girl*. Living on forever through this film, other Cotton music was also featured in *Valley Girl*, as well as the lady herself performing during the Junior Prom scene.

All cool little tidbits of history, there is still more to Cotton; like the ton of other music she has released through the years. Now in more recent times she continues to find inspiration with her recently released new album *Day of the Gun*. A follow up to 2019's *Everything is Oh Yeah* (which was in fact recorded in 1986, but never released), Cotton recently sat down to reflect on her wild journey, her artistic vision, plus more.

Cryptic Rock – You have been involved in entertainment over four decades now. Attaining success during the '80s, you have sustained longevity with a list of releases through the decades. Tell us, how would you describe your journey in music to this point?

Josie Cotton – I would call it erratic and unplanned; which may or may not be ideal. But if it's the reason I got to where I am now creatively speaking, then I highly recommend it.

Cryptic Rock – It seems like nothing is ever really linear in life, right? Your style of music has always been rather unique to what others are doing. Going back to your debut album, 1982's *Convertible Music*, you had a very different sound. A mix of Pop, Rock, and '60s flair, how would you describe your approach to music and your inspirations?

Josie Cotton – You can't really plan for inspiration, can you? But you can make it a point to notice and to write it down or record it when it comes because it's fleeting and easily forgotten. And then you have something to work with when inspiration isn't coming.



Josie Cotton – Convertible Music / Elektra (1982)



Josie Cotton – From the Hip / Elektra (1984)

Cryptic Rock – Right, inspiration comes in various forms and is never planned. What is interesting is that 1983's *Valley Girl* brought new attention to your song "Johnny Are You Queer?" What is great is that the soundtrack also featured your song "School Is In."

Valley Girl is one of the most memorable films of the '80s. How did you become involved with being featured on that soundtrack, and are you often surprised to see the endurance the music has had?

Josie Cotton – I'm continuously amazed how much people still love that movie and remember the soundtrack. The Director Martha Coolidge had gotten a hold of my Producer Larson Paine who thought it was a crank call. He kept hanging up on her, but she was very persistent. They had wanted to put a song I had written from my first record called "Systematic Way" but I had just recorded "School Is In," and thought it would be perfect for that movie. I have lived to regret that. (Laughs)

Cryptic Rock – Wow, that is interesting to hear. It is wonderful that the film has stood the test of time and with it, your music.

Your career is full of interesting aspects. For example, you recorded *Everything Is Oh Yeah* back in 1986, but the album did not reach airwaves until 2019. Was it disappointing to you that the album was shelved for so many years and how exciting was it to finally have it released?

Josie Cotton – That was the one that got away. It made me sad to think about because I knew it was a really good record, but I had to go in a completely new direction. I found the music business to be a brutal place. It felt like a crime scene I had walked away from. It was only when the show *Stranger Things* put out a call for '80s recordings that had never been released; a pretty odd request, but I did have a whole record of them. And as I was listening, it became pretty emotional for me as I didn't think the world would ever hear these songs. So, we remixed it and put it out on our label. It felt like it had gone full circle and I could let it go finally.

Cryptic Rock – It is great that it finally saw the light of day and reached people. In 2020 you also released *Invasion of the B-Girls*, which is inspired by B-Horror films. This album is another which is taken out of your vault and offered up to fans again, correct?

Josie Cotton – Yes, we spent about a year at Kitten Robot re-releasing my whole catalogue of albums with the send-off they never got, *Invasion of the B-girls* being one of them. Basically, it was an entire record of b-movie theme songs from the '60s and '70s that I re-recorded. There were a few Science Fiction movies included, a few exploitation movies, mainly female-themed. I did a lot of research for that record and discovered that's where all the bad-ass women were and that's where I wanted to be too.



Josie Cotton – Invasion of the B-Girls / Scruffy (2007)



Josie Cotton – Everything Is Oh Yeah / Kitten Robot (2019)

Cryptic Rock – The album is also a lot of fun. What is great about these releases is that they led the way to your most recent album, *Day of the Gun*. Released back in May, this new album is a great mix of retro sounds, interesting story telling, and catchy melodies. What was the writing and recording process like for this new album?

Josie Cotton – I do put a lot into the melodies and arrangements as well as the story telling which become like little movies that I see in my mind with characters who usually aren't me. I feel like I channeled a lot of this record as I let the songs say what they wanted to say. I had no broken heart to mend like I did on *Pussycat Babylon* (2010), nothing to prove, nothing to reveal... or so I thought.

Cryptic Rock – Well, the end result is really quite good. You are clearly someone inspired by film. Your music is quite cinematic, and the track "Painting in Blood" offers listeners an Italian horror theme. What inspired this track?

Josie Cotton – That's very perceptive of you. I'm a huge fan of Horror movies and Comedy Horror, but also of epic film making like *The Good the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). That's where I became aware of the great soundtracks by Ennio Morricone. But during the pandemic I was accidentally introduced into the Italian horror movie genre from the 1970s, called Giallo. The cinematography was incredible, the plot lines not the greatest, but the soundtracks were spell binding. When I discovered that Morricone had done so many of them, I was amazed... so I wrote a song about it.



Josie Cotton – I'm pretty new to that genre. I generally gravitate more towards completely absurd Horror movies like *Basket Case* (1982) or ones with very disturbing themes like *Tusk* (2014). Some of my favorites would have to include *They Live* (1988), *Hellraiser* (1987), and *Videodrome* (1983).



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