

# Josie Cotton Delights Listeners With Her Abstract "Day of the Gun"

Izzy Astuto · January 25, 2024

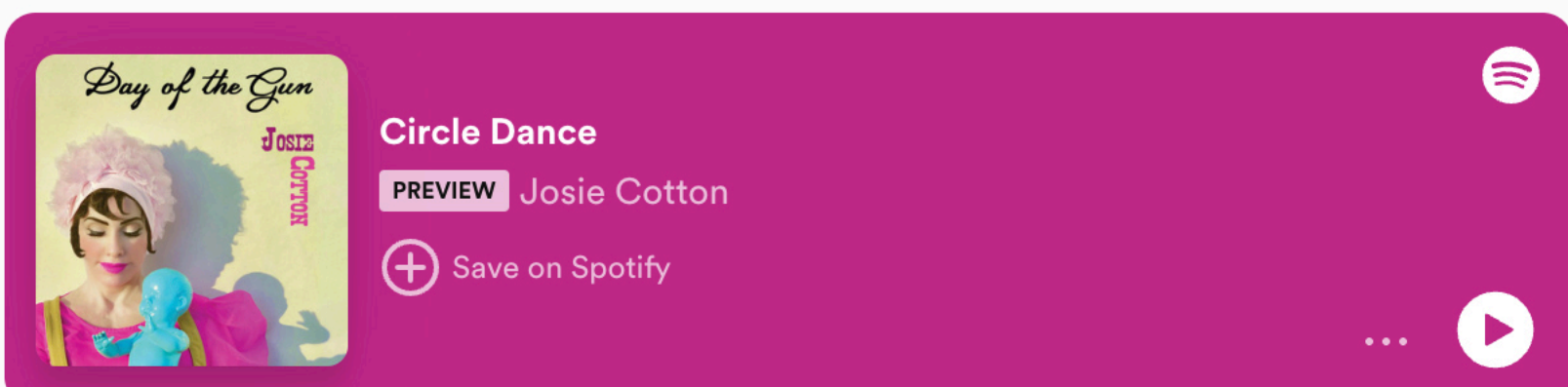


Image courtesy of Piper Ferguson

"My identity as an artist has changed with every record I've made, but a couple of things are always there: my love of humor and irony and my need to challenge norms," says '80s icon, Josie Cotton. The New Wave legend has been performing her whole life, but rose to prominence for her hit song, "Johnny Are You Queer?" featured in the soundtrack for the movie *Valley Girl*, starring Nicholas Cage. Cotton recently burst back into the scene with her newest album, *Day of the Gun*, released May 2, 2023 via Kitten Robot Records.

Kitten Robot Records is Cotton's very own label, where she has re-released most of her own music over the years. Her longtime collaborator, Paul Roessler, co-produced the album.

Cotton has always had a very distinct persona — absurd and sexy. With such a vast catalog of songs out, she wanted the opportunity to experiment with some fresh topics in her newest album. "I was able to explore a lot of philosophical questions on *Day of the Gun*," Cotton says. "There were also a lot of historical references which I loved researching — and a commitment to being completely open to whatever I found in asking those questions."



From the first song, "Circle Dance," you can really feel these different influences. The song evokes a typical square dance feel, spinning you between thrilling characters, like "the man with the lazy eye" and "hacker slacker gambler queens." The lyrics are playful, poking fun at religion, but in the same breath acknowledge something deeper, even if the singer herself thinks "it's a mystery, even over here."

"Day of the Gun," the titular song and third track, is one of the album's singles, accompanied by its own wacky music video. The video features some of Cotton's favorite imagery — gore and girl groups. With her two gal-pals, Cotton rules the trailer park, toting

her dead lover's head around to mock any bounty hunters who try to come after her. The mythology of her own character, in this video alone, is both sleek and stunning, taunting the audience and leaving them needing more.



The rest of the album certainly provides more of this lush history, such as in the next track, "Overturning." The lyrics evoke typical New wave-mysticism. They reference stories of ancient ruins that most are familiar with, specifically, Pompeii. Through this imagery, listeners may feel a sense of longing for these times, full of beauty and madness.

"The Ballad of Elvis Presley" collaborates with many of Cotton's musical friends. She says, "I knew I wanted Lee Rocker on 'The Ballad of Elvis Presley' and I knew I wanted to sing a duet with Kevin Preston [of] Green Day. Clem Burke was at our studio to play on 'Day of the Gun.' Total accident that he played on the Elvis song."

**"I KNEW I WANTED LEE ROCKER ON 'THE BALLAD OF ELVIS PRESLEY' AND I KNEW I WANTED TO SING A DUET WITH KEVIN PRESTON [OF] GREEN DAY. CLEM BURKE WAS AT OUR STUDIO TO PLAY ON 'DAY OF THE GUN.' TOTAL ACCIDENT THAT HE PLAYED ON THE ELVIS SONG."**

For Cotton, a lot of songs off the album ended up popping up out of thin air, such as "Disco Ball." "Sometimes, it doesn't feel like [the songs] are coming from me at all," says Cotton. "What is very much me is the process of editing and whittling and honing it down ... my pure delight in word play and melodic structure." The song is a fun dance beat, but the lyrics hide the not-so-fun consequences of partying a bit too hard. "On the bathroom floor / everything is clearer / like a disco ball spinning in the mirror."

One of Cotton's more niche pop culture references shows up in "Painting in Blood," the album's first-released single. The song is an ode to Ennio Morricone, an Italian composer who scored many '70s giallo and Spaghetti Western films. The lyrics describe the plots of many dime a dozen movies, carelessly throwing out each dark description as if honoring, maybe even summoning the man.

The album release was announced at the same time as her tour: Day of the Gun. While an amazing experience, it didn't come without its own hardships. Cotton confesses, "I'm torn between playing what's important to me and with what the audience seems to want from me. They want to dance and have fun, which is a part of my persona, but there's a much more serious, darker, more cerebral side of me that gets left behind sometimes." The tour continued being wonderful despite this divide, ending on December 13, 2023 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Cotton's favorite song to perform during the time was "Recipe for Disaster" from her record, *Pussycat Babylon*.

**"I'M TORN BETWEEN PLAYING WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME AND WITH WHAT THE AUDIENCE SEEMS TO WANT FROM ME. THEY WANT TO DANCE AND HAVE FUN, WHICH IS A PART OF MY PERSONA, BUT THERE'S A MUCH MORE SERIOUS, DARKER, MORE CEREBRAL SIDE OF ME THAT GETS LEFT BEHIND SOMETIMES."**

Cotton's brand has been perfectly refined over the years, so as to now be able to have this opportunity to run new material by her audience. This isn't the end for her, though — far from it. After all this time, Cotton declares, "I'm better at what I do and I'm more comfortable in my own skin, which absolutely affects what you can give as an artist."



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO FOLLOW ALONG WITH COTTON'S JOURNEY, YOU CAN DO SO VIA HER [SPOTIFY](#) AND [INSTAGRAM](#).

