

*This was one of the rare moments that an editor suggested a story. Bob Love, then managing editor of Rolling Stone (and a very nice guy), emailed me while we were living in Mexico and asked me to look into Gloria Trevi. I'd never heard of her. But using a dial-up modem and a rotary-dial phone, I was able to cobble together this proposal, which turned into a really great assignment. I got to spend a week in Mexico City dining with the cream of Mexico's intellectuals and artists. Great fun.*

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I've read the recent LA Times piece on Gloria Trevi, all their archived stories back to 1990, and some local reading, and you're right: she certainly would be a hell of a story. Has Rolling Stone written about her before? Could you email or fax me whatever coverage you've given her in the past? Ditto any coverage you've had of the Mexican music scene, on both sides of the border (particularly south). If it's too much to email or fax, let me know and we'll work up a quick and safe way to send paper.

Just as apartheid was the story when we worked in South Africa a decade ago, the pace of change is \*the\* story in Mexico now. Even for American baby-boomers – perhaps the generation most accustomed to rapid change in human history – the pace here is dizzying. Economically, politically, sexually, religiously, culturally: Mexico is in upheaval on all fronts. We see it both in the rural town we live in, and in Guadalajara, Mexico's second-biggest city, where we visit often. We tend to think of the fifties, sixties, and seventies as challenging hidebound traditions in the US. But the US – rooted in Reformation England and culturally in a state of constant self-definition, was never as tradition-bound as Mexico. Mexico's roots lie in Spain – seat of the Counter-Reformation, which specifically rejected not only the new ideas of the Reformation, but the very notion of new ideas. (What is worth knowing is already known, and is to be interpreted by the Church.) Five hundred years later, this mentality is still evident. Where United States culture has forever looked to the future (originally in the form of the frontier), Mexicans are culturally conditioned to look to the past. We do it this way because we have always done it this way. Even the Mexican Revolution was not – like ours – an attempt to create a new society, but to return Mexico to the ways of its past.

What does this have to do with Gloria Trevi? She is one of a growing number of critics and challengers to the old order and the

circumstances of her disappearance raise a lot of disturbing questions. Everybody here has his own candidate for "the most central institution of the Mexican character." Certainly the Church is one. Right up there, too, is machismo, and Mexico's peculiar – yea, archaic – relationship between the sexes. Even the hippest, most urban couples we know behave at times like June and Ward Cleaver – she asking his permission to leave the house at night, he expecting meals at set times, and so on. When Trevi, who also produces politically and culturally critical calendars, appeared in her 1992 edition semi-naked in front of a kitchen stove – jabbing at Mexican men's notion that a woman's place is in the kitchen -- it created the kind of furor here of which Madonna (to whom Trevi is constantly compared) could only dream. Direct challenges to the sexual order are on a par with Sinéad O'Connor tearing up a picture of the Pope. It is a big thumb in the tenderest eye of Mexican society.

So for Gloria Trevi to be implicated in sex crimes lobbed grenades in all directions. To her critics, the sordid allegations are proof that her brand of lascivious performance leads to child molestation as surely as marijuana smoking leads to heroin addiction. Her fans suspect that she's being set up; that a society as freaked out as Mexico by the pace of change, and hyper-sensitive about sexuality, would have to destroy a critic as effective and popular as Gloria Trevi. This is further complicated by the understanding that her critics aren't all churchgoing old farts and her fans all teenagers. Her popularity cuts across generations – reviews of her concerts often mention the grandparents in the crowd.

Obviously, there is a lot of ground to till here. Moreover, the sheer human drama is fascinating. The relationship between Trevi and her lover/manager, Sergio Andrade, appears to be something out of one of the myriad bodice-ripping telenovelas (soap operas) with which Mexicans are obsessed.

My situation is this: I leave a week from today (7 July) for seven weeks in the US. So I couldn't begin the on-the-ground reporting until the third week of August. Perhaps that's to the better. By then, she will have presumably shown up, and the parameters of the story will be clearer. Are you looking for a quick-and-dirty about the disappearance, or a long rumantive piece about the whole Gloria Trevi phenomenon. If the former, I probably can't help you. If the latter, I'd be in a good position to report and write the piece.

We fly out of Mexico City on the 7th. If you wanted this story, I'd go there early to visit the papers and magazines and gather up as much written material on her as I can, plus the videos, the calendars, and the CDs, to have it all digested by the time I get back here in August. Hard to say exactly how expensive reporting the story would be, but I wouldn't think it would be a budget-buster (unless she really did flee to Germany or Argentina and I had to go there). Some time in Mexico City, a trip to Chihuahua, and maybe a quick one to LA, where she was one of a growing number of Mexican artists to do their recording in Van Nuys.

Please let me know soon if you think you want to go forward. And if so, please remember to send me anything RS has published on her or Mexican rock.

Dan