

By Dan Baum

Mexicans don't have a word for "teenager." The concept simply doesn't exist there. They say *jovenes* for "young people," but that can mean anyone up to about thirty, and the clinical term – *adolescente* – doesn't begin to describe the mercurial "teenager" who is so worshiped, pampered, feared and despised in the United States. To sustain such an army of self-absorbed adolescent revelers, a country must first be rich enough to let its young people slack off between childhood and work. It must offer them safe havens in the form of free junior high and high schools. And it must provide them with prodigious amounts of pocket money. Even the United States couldn't do this on a grand scale until the postwar boom of the Fifties and Sixties. To the extent Mexico was ever able, it was during a brief window of prosperity in the early 1990s. Mexico began experimenting then with teenage culture, and the name of that experiment was Gloria Trevi.

She was Mexico's first public teenager – defiant, moody and powerfully sexual in the way James Dean and Elvis were in the Fifties. Trevi was primarily a pop star, singing of love and insubordination in a way no Mexican ever had. She also made movies and starred on TV, where she made brash pronouncements on everything from abortion to the

Zapatistas. She was even taken quasi-seriously as a potential presidential candidate. For a time, Gloria Trevi was Mexico's most exciting social critic.

Now, she's Mexico's most exciting villain. As her conservative critics predicted, her brazen ways seem to have led her to perdition. She'd probably have something witty and trenchant to say about sex, the media and society, if only she weren't locked away in a Brazilian jail cell.

Gloria de los Angeles Treviño Ruiz was born in the city of Monterrey on February 15th, 1970, the first daughter of a well-off architect. Many Mexican children drop out after sixth grade to work; Trevi didn't even need an afterschool job, and went to piano lessons and acting class instead. Divorce is rare in this overwhelmingly Catholic country, but Trevi's parents split up when she was ten, adding a brushstroke of American-style angst to her cosmopolitan canvas. That she lived in Monterrey is also significant. This sprawling clone of Houston, only 130 miles south of the border, is the most American of Mexican cities, both in the number of U.S. companies operating there and in its crass, strip-developed architectural vision. If you're going to learn to be a teenager anywhere in Mexico, Monterrey is a likely place.

Trevi put her afterschool lessons to good use when, at thirteen, she won a national performance contest and got her first taste of the Mexico City showbiz scene. She loved it; when her mother ordered her to home, she refused, and blew off the rest of her formal education so she could devote herself to auditioning for pop bands. Although a childhood friend says she lived there with an uncle, Trevi has always made much of those early years “on the street” in Mexico City. She says she sold chewing gum, sang in the subways, begged tacos from street vendors. What is certain is that she banged on a lot of doors, and that when she was fifteen, one of her cattle-call auditions paid off. In 1985, Trevi became one of the original members of an all-girl teen-pop band, Boquitas Pintadas – Little Painted Mouths.

Trevi is, as she liked to say, “an eyeball taco,” with a beauty that is distinctly Mexican. In this racially complicated country, the tone of Trevi’s skin hits all the right cues for pop stardom. It is a dusky shade closer to European white than to indigenous dark, placing her recognizably in Mexico’s upper-middle class – high enough on the caste ladder to be appealing without being so white that she seems inaccessible or foreign. Her smile is broad and luscious, her dark eyes and heavy brows telegenically wide-spaced. Her body – about which it’s fair to comment, since she has drawn so much attention to it with a series of seminude calendars– is exaggeratedly curvaceous. North of

the border, she'd appear softer and heavier of leg than the rosy American ideal, but on her home turf she's considered close to perfect. Trevi was just a backup singer in Little Painted Mouths, playing a pink plastic harmonium shaped like an electric guitar. But musicianship wasn't the point. What mattered was that Little Painted Mouths was created by Sergio Andrade Sánchez.

Andrade was to Mexican pop in the Eighties what Phil Spector was to American pop in the Sixties, a fabulously successful producer who also wrote some of the hit songs his protégés recorded. Born to a powerful Veracruz family in 1956, he is described by associates as "a son of 1968," meaning that, though he was a kid during the tumultuous days of student protest, his heart remains attuned to that decade's struggles. To make a living, though, he poured his talent into the kind of commercial, romantic sob songs Mexicans adore. He became a jack-of-all-trades in the Mexico City pop industry – songwriter, studio musician and engineer. In the early Eighties, he broke out of the pack, writing the prizewinning ballad "Suavemente" ("Softly") for a blind singer named Crystal. He leveraged that fame to become a producer of singing acts, and quickly displayed a genius for picking and cultivating winners. He took to driving a long black Lincoln and collected sculpture by the surrealist Sergio Bustamante. But he continued dressing in the

same disheveled fashion of the grunge rocker some say he remained in spirit.

In addition to his headliner acts, Andrade produced dozens of small-time bands to cultivate future stars and keep the cash flowing. These bands, like Little Painted Mouths, typically cut a record, performed once or twice on television, hung in long enough for the record to become a hit and then disappeared, to be replaced by the next Andrade confection. When he hired Trevi, he had stumbled upon his greatest star ever, though he didn't know it at the time. Little Painted Mouths had its moment of fame and then went away.

To understand Andrade's power – and its limitations – it's worth taking a look at the monolithic nature of Mexican pop culture. Anyone lamenting homogenized, corporate-controlled American music need only look south to see how good the U.S. has it. Mexican mass media is thoroughly dominated by one company, Televisa, which controls ninety-five percent of Mexico's TV-watching public, and also reaches almost everybody in the country daily with its myriad radio stations, newspapers and magazines. The Azcarraga family, which owns Televisa, is a pillar of the political party that has ruled Mexico for more than seventy years; for all intents and purposes, the interests of Televisa and the state are one. "Imagine if CBS, NBC and ABC were all

departments of the FBI," says Mexico City journalist Claudia Fernandez Cardenas, who is writing a book about the Azcarragas. "That's Televisa."

The Azcarragas, Fernandez says, use their network to promote a vision of Mexico where everybody is white, Catholic, virginal until marriage and respectful of social order – a "family values" agenda that makes Dan Quayle look like name tk. Televisa's only competition is the other, much smaller national media network, TV Azteca. But TV Azteca is, as Mexico City artist and critic Felipe Ehrenberg Enriquez puts it, "the fourth stomach of the cow," churning out bland formulas that Televisa has already created and digested. The uniformity of Mexican mass media is seamless.

In such a climate, Mexican popular music has never been permitted to evolve organically, from the grass roots up. Rather, it is manufactured and marketed like floor wax. When Televisa's acting school produces a starlet for a Televisa TV show, Televisa's record label, Phonovisa, cuts the starlet an album, which is then played endlessly on Televisa radio stations and hyped in Televisa magazines. Nine months later, typically, that starlet is gone as though she never existed and the next one has taken her place. Year in, year out, Mexican pop songs are identically insipid and romantic, and those who sing them interchangeably blond and immaculate. Few last more than a couple of years.

But as for genuine rock & roll, forget it. Mexico's rock scene is somehow both huge and invisible. Every Saturday morning in Mexico City thousands of fans in leather jackets and black lipstick converge on an outdoor market devoted entirely to rock music. They buy and sell homemade cassettes from an astounding number of local bands. But because it doesn't fit the family-values image exalted by the Televisa-dominated media, this entire rockero culture is almost completely absent from the radio and record stores. Well into the Eighties, rock was virtually banned by the government. "Rockeros were associated with drugs, delinquency, violence and rebellion," says Jairo Calixto Albarran, who writes about music for the Mexico City daily Excelsior. "You'd get ten kids together to hear a band and the police would show up." The country didn't see its first real rock concert until Rod Stewart came to Queretaro in 1988. Rock existed only in tiny, windowless clubs, the so-called funky dives, where sweat rolled off the walls and the amplifiers' blast could peel paint. Funky dives were unmarked and tended to rove to keep ahead of the police.

Even as late as 1984, there was no rock radio in Mexico. Rock records weren't imported except in travelers' suitcases. "I remember hearing 'Ghost in the Machine' by the Police in 1981 and it was like a signal from another planet," says Luís Salas García, who in 1984 – at age twenty-two – started Mexico's first rock station and became the first to

play the likes of REM, U2 and the Clash on the air. Like a lot of music enthusiasts, Salas was embarrassed by Mexico's failure to cultivate its own rock scene. Spain, Argentina and Puerto Rico all fielded Spanish-language rock bands that were hugely popular in Mexico and elsewhere. The most populous Spanish-speaking nation in the world was the great vacuum in Hispanic rock, and Salas tried to remedy that with a new station devoted entirely to Mexican rockeros. It failed within three years.

"It wasn't the government that shut us down, it was the rockeros," Salas says. "Except for a couple of bands, the rockeros withdrew." A handful of Mexican bands have made it big in the Spanish-speaking world – Titan, El Tri, Los Jaguares and Three Souls in My Mind are the four everybody mentions. Even though the official hostility has ended, rockeros actually prefer to remain marginal and obscure. "It's like, as soon as a band makes it to the radio, it loses its legitimacy," Salas says. "They want to be off to the side, licking their wounds, enjoying their place on the outside." So, with only a handful of exceptions, they don't produce discs of sufficient quality (or free enough of obscenities) to play on the air. Instead, they perform for their rabid fans at claustrophobic clubs like Mexico City's Rockotitlan, where the music is so good it's hard to believe it isn't on the radio pollinating, maturing and influencing other types of music. The result of the rockeros'

bunker mentality, Salas concludes, is that "Mexican rock is not evolving. It's stuck."

When Little Painted Mouths disbanded within months of forming, Andrade went off to create another clone band and Gloria Treviño went off to live with her boyfriend, a gynecologist. For the next three years, while Andrade churned out more of the same old stuff, Trevi stayed home in the kitchen, where her jealous lover thought she belonged. "I was in love once," she later told interviewers, "and it was terrible." In 1989, Trevi limped back to Monterrey, where she learned that her great-grandfather had left her an inheritance. She scooped it up, made an about-face and showed up in Mexico City at the door of the man who had given her her first break.

Maybe it was the years of professional frustration after her teenybopper band went nowhere, or maybe it was feuding with her parents or her macho boyfriend, but the young woman who presented herself at Andrade's doorstep had a very un-Mexican willingness to break some rules. Especially the ones about sex. She'd tell anybody who'd listen that she believed abortion should be legal in Mexico, and that women should feel free to sleep with anybody they desire and to marry only for love – outright heresies.

What Sergio Andrade apparently recognized in the sharp tongue and sexual combativeness of the now nineteen-year-old Gloria Treviño was an opportunity to sneak some rockero sensibility past the Mexican media's ultraconservative radar and give the mainstream a naughty-but-safe taste of music's dark side. He changed her name from Treviño to Trevi, which in Spanish suggests "insolent" or "daring," for her first solo album, *¿Que Hago Aqui?* ("What Am I Doing Here?"). With the mighty Andrade behind her, *¿Que Hago Aqui?* got airtime, and Trevi signed a Televisa contract giving the network exclusive rights to broadcast her performances.

"She definitely stood out," says Monica Frías Gil, who interviewed her on the radio early in Trevi's career. "She showed up [for the interview] without makeup, which was in itself unusual. She did something else I realized I hardly ever saw Mexican women do: She laughed out loud. She talked about sexual liberation and used words like *coger*" – fuck – "in conversation. These weren't things you saw, especially in the prefabricated world of pop."

What caught people's attention were the lyrics of "Dr. Psychiatrist," the CD's first cut. "The way this house is decorated makes me violent. I'm not crazy, I'm only desperate," Trevi sang. "First they throw me out of school, then they won't let me go. These four sad walls are prison for a girl in love."

Mexicans, bored with corny ballads and romantic boleros, were hearing the seamy side of teenage angst sung on mainstream radio for the first time. "It wasn't much by the standards of the United States, but it was very refreshing to us here," says Oscar Sarquíz Figueroa, the fifty-three-year-old dean of Mexican rock writers. "It was exciting that something – anything – was happening."

"¿Que Hago Aquí?" the title track on the album, not only wasn't romantic, it was anti-romantic. "At home, I can't stop crying, my parents are at war, all they know how to do is yell. I can't stand looking at their wedding photo; it's like staring at a corpse."

"Nothing that hasn't been said before," wrote Carlos Monsivais, Mexico's hippest public intellectual, who for a while was a big Trevi fan. "But never has it been said from the television-entertainment industry, which is so conventional and timid."

Trevi wasn't much of a singer. Her songs were built around choppy phrasing that let her shout as much as sing, and she couldn't hold a long note with pliers. But there was a passion that was undeniably exciting in the way Trevi tore rough edges on the notes, much as Janis Joplin and Pat Benatar did. Unlike everybody else on Mexican pop radio, Trevi sounded angry, and that alone made her stand out.

"She might not have been accepted earlier," says Sarquíz. "But in 1990, times were good. [President Carlos] Salinas [de Gortari] was

encouraging Mexico to open up to the world. There was a sense of change.”

Trevi was often called “the Mexican Madonna” because both singers challenged taboos. But Madonna was always very much her own boss, while Trevi leaned on Andrade in a way that some colleagues found creepy. It wasn’t just the gushy thanks she wrote him on the covers of her CDs – and the suspicion that he wrote the songs for which she took credit. Andrade always lurked nearby, guiding Trevi from the limo to the concert hall, sitting quietly behind her at press conferences and interviews, watching her. In 1991, Andrade married another singer, a fifteen-year-old named Aline Hernández, but the tabloid press had Andrade and Trevi down as lovers.

While marrying an underage nymphet devastated the early career of Jerry Lee Lewis and would itself be a scandal in the U.S., such economically advantageous teen weddings are more common in Mexico. The beautiful Aline, as she is known professionally, was Andrade’s fourth wife, and two others had also been teen brides. In fact, there had been murmurings since the mid-1980s that Andrade had an unhealthy appetite for underage girls, but such rumors were rife in the entertainment world.

After the hit with *¿Que Hago Aqui?*, Andrade engaged in an artful game of marketing La Trevi. First, he dressed her in wacky colors,

patterns over patterns, with sparkles and ribbons and sequins – Andrade cruised Los Angeles shopping malls himself to buy outfits for a wildly overdone look that appealed tremendously to pre-teen girls. Little girls love hair, and Andrade made the most of Trevi's mane by teasing it out and leaving it loose, prompting the title for one of her hit songs and her first movie, *Pelo Suelto*, or "Loose Hair." For the kid market, Andrade ordered up a Trevi doll, organized Trevi look-alike contests and had Trevi draw a series of campy autobiographical comic books in her childish style.

At the same time, Andrade turned Trevi's childlike image on its head by making her a sex goddess. He tore teasing holes in her stockings and had her writhe suggestively on the floor in her kiddie outfit during concerts. Her trademark performance gimmick was to drag a man from the audience during a concert, strip him to his shorts and whip him with his own belt. Andrade began producing annual million-selling calendars that offered Trevi's spectacular figure nearly nude in a series of ironic poses. In one, for example, she posed as a housewife at the stove, her nudity barely covered by an apron – a jab at Mexican men's image of a woman's sum-total worth. In another, she played with inflated condoms as though they were balloons. Yet another had her riffing on Pancho Villa with sombrero and rifle, bandoleers of cartridges crossing her bare breasts.

Simultaneously childlike and sexy: If that isn't the essence of teenage, what is? Teenagers are at once enviable and appalling precisely because they combine the carefree irresponsibility of children with the physiology and sexual desire of adults. Parents largely spend their time torn between wanting to kill their teenage children and wanting to be them. Which is much the way Mexico responded to Trevi – especially as she released disc after disc, each one further pushing the limits of popular broadcast music. In "Kiss Me Here" Trevi insinuated where her lover's mouth should go. In "Virgin of Virgins" she mocked a friend who had "done it ten times" and "told each guy he was the first." "Pregnant Girl" told sympathetically about the plight of one, and added, "I forgot my pills, I couldn't have cared less about condoms, all for feverishly wanting to get some!"

Sex wasn't Trevi's only weapon; she deployed an arsenal of youthful rebellion. "Los Borregos" ("Sheep") compared mainstream society to a brainless herd and, with typically teenage bravado, declared a war of resistance. In "One Day More," a worker threw coffee on her good-for-nothing boss. In "Financial Collapse," Trevi complained that "the banks only loan to millionaires." In "How Lucky That I'm Not Lady Di," she rejected the princess that Mexican song has always embraced and attacked the idea of beauty contests, still a sacred rite in Mexico.

Trevi's five CDs, released from 1990 to 1995, all shot to the top of the charts as soon as they appeared. Kids nationwide started dressing like Trevi and packed her concerts, usually with their parents or grandparents in tow. They flocked to her amateurish movies – one a loose autobiography, the other a comedy-drama – and turned them into the biggest-grossing films in the long and distinguished career of Mexican cinema. All her albums were recorded in Los Angeles, and by the third, "Zapatos Viejos," she was attracting backup from the likes of Vinnie Calaiuta (Sting's drummer), Jimmy Johnson (Allan Hollsworth's bassist) and Jeamie Gleaser (guitarist for Jean Luc Ponte and Chick Corea). Latin audiences from Madrid to Los Angeles to Buenos Aires were flocking to see what she was about. More than a hundred thousand people joined Trevi fan clubs. Half of Mexico's population is believed to be fifteen years old or younger, and Andrade scored a bull's-eye with that vast market.

What perhaps nobody expected was that Mexico's intellectuals went gaga, too, starting with Carlos Monsivais, who was tickled to find a "serpent in the Garden of Eden, dressed in a thong." The painter Jose Luis Cuevas conducted a scholarly seminar on the meaning of Trevi. She became the pop world's first emissary to Mexico City's tweedy intellectual circles. Even if Andrade was managing her every move, she clearly wasn't an empty vessel; her wit was spontaneous. "I was at a

small dinner with her, Monsivais and a couple of others," remembers the artist Felipe Ehrenberg. "Andrade wasn't there. We were talking about modern art, and she said, 'I don't know much about modern art, but I guess I am modern art.' I thought that was a very smart thing to say. She knew exactly what she was doing and in what context." Even Zapatista Subcommandante Marcos is said to have promised, "If she comes here, the flowers of the jungle will embrace her."

She became a political issue unto herself. "Gloria Trevi is a bad example for youth," the anti-abortion organization Pro-Vida declared when her first calendar came out. "She should apologize and the authorities should prohibit her actions." Priests denounced her from the pulpit and the church got the sale of the 1994 calendar forbidden in Guadalajara – the Mexican equivalent of being banned in Boston.

The mainstream response to Trevi had all the features of the American Establishment pulling its beard over "Youth Culture" thirty years ago: Hardly anybody interviewed on television about the Trevi phenomenon was younger than about fifty, and all discussed her in very . . . grave . . . tones.

It was Trevi's performance offstage, as much as her concerts, CDs and calendars, that made her a figure of such fascination. For she was brilliant in a TV interview – warm, sexy, open, daring and smart. Talking on television, her eyes flashing and her lips asparkle, she

reached millions of Mexicans who didn't see her concerts or listen to her music.

In one interview, Trevi declared that she was thinking of trying to become "la primera presidenta de Mexico." Just hearing the word for "president" used in the female form was a thrill, and people took her seriously. "Who is more in touch with the problems of this country?" Trevi demanded of an interviewer. "One of those guys who goes off to Oxford or to that University of Yale – whatever they call those things – or someone who has lived in buses, in the Metro, in the street? You know what I'm saying?"

She likewise castigated the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration for kidnapping a Mexican suspect on his home soil, and expressed tolerance for homosexuals, who are particularly reviled in macho Mexican society. In a typical tirade on one talk show, she defended prostitution, saying it isn't for men to judge the severity of a woman's circumstances – and besides, it's a woman's right to do with her body what she chooses, despite "all these male-invented values."

Trevi was Mexico's precocious teenage daughter, saying shocking things at the national dinner table – and doing so with such savvy and charm that the country couldn't bring itself to punish her. For one thing, there was always some truth in her outbursts. For another, Trevi never went too far. She busted up the holy trinity – sex, drugs

and rock & roll – by declaring she neither drank nor took drugs and by encouraging kids to abstain. Her support of the Zapatista rebellion always included kind words as well for the soldiers of the federal army. Even in her raciest interviews, Trevi was careful to genuflect while declaring her faith in the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's holiest icon. And while she'd excoriate Mexico's corrupt past presidents, she never said a word about the current president, Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León.

"There are three things you don't make fun of in Mexico: the Virgin of Guadalupe, the president and the army," says poet and novelist Homer Aridijis. "You watch her interviews and you see she has her eye on that line and knows not to cross." It was as though Andrade was whispering in her ear: Thus far shall you go, and no farther.

It's become something of a parlor game in Mexico to speculate on the extent to which Andrade controlled Trevi from the start. One school holds that Trevi was always an empty vessel into which Andrade poured the audacious words and style for which she became famous. "He was her Dr. Frankenstein -- she the body and the face, he the mind," says Jose Luis Villarreal, who was director of marketing for Trevi's record label, BMG Ariola Mexico until 1996. "She's a robot. Without him, she's nothing."

The other school holds that Trevi is her own woman, whom Andrade could advise and guide but not dominate. "I've known Gloria since she was twelve and I was sixteen," says Hugo Gonzalez, who organized the national network of Trevi fan clubs. "She has always been just the way you see her – outspoken, witty and interested in everything."

What does seem certain is that by the mid-Nineties, as Trevi's songs rocketed to the top of the hit lists, a pall had fallen over her relationship with Andrade. Maritza López, who shot the famous calendars, says that in the beginning she could discuss important matters with either Andrade or Trevi.

"But later," she says, "strange things started happening." Andrade became a tyrant, suddenly refusing to let the photographer speak to Trevi alone. Villarreal says Trevi would sparkle in front of the cameras, "but the minute the lights would go off she'd be a different person. She talked to nobody – nobody – but Andrade, and it was all, 'Yes sir, no sir,' with her eyes down."

And the swarm of young girls who had always hovered around Andrade began to seem less like aspiring singers, more like a ragged cult. The girls were as dirty and tattered as street urchins, and "had an impressive terror" of Andrade, López recently told the Mexico City newspaper *La Jornada*. They weren't allowed to talk or eat, and Trevi

had to sneak out for chips and Twinkies, which they would wolf hungrily.

In 1995, the magic combination of Trevi and Andrade seemed to stumble. She signed a \$6 million contract with Televisa, but all that could be found for her to do was a moronic game show. It bombed in one season.

And then: gone. In January 1997, Andrade and Trevi simply disappeared. Someone floated a rumor that Andrade was in Italy for cancer treatment. A year passed without a hint of where they had gone or why. But in March of 1998, another possible explanation for their vanishing act emerged. Andrade's now ex-wife, Aline Hernández, published a lurid account of her marriage, describing Andrade as a vicious pedophile obsessed with raping and abusing the young girls who flocked around him. The book – whose title, *La Gloria por el Infierno*, means either "To Heaven Through Hell" or "Going Through Hell for Gloria" – accused Trevi of helping Andrade lure the girls and of sometimes joining Andrade and the nymphets in bed. Aline described being flogged, locked up, deprived of food and forced to cower under Andrade's desk writing, a thousand times, "I will not lie to Sergio Andrade." Through promises of fame constantly delayed, through "tests" of their love, through threats and punishments, Andrade allegedly kept a platoon of underage sex slaves at his mercy.

Aline's book – with a garish cover featuring Trevi's face in a ring of fire – was publicized feverishly by TV Azteca, Televisa's competitor. Also, skeptics pointed out, Aline had a singing contract with TV Azteca, and a TV Azteca personality had written the forward to her book. The whole thing looked to many like a TV Azteca hatchet job.

Until other girls came forward with tales that were as horrifying as they were similar. "I was locked in a room and not allowed to go to the bathroom or use the phone," says Delia Gonzalez, now twenty-five. "Andrade stole my virginity. He beat me up. And Gloria helped him. She's a victim, because for her he is God. But she's guilty, too."

Gonzalez says she spent a year as Andrade's prisoner in the early Nineties. "I said nothing until now out of fear and embarrassment. Besides, who would have believed me? But lots more girls could tell you the same."

Lots more have. Seven young women or their families, by latest count, have come forward with nearly identical accounts. They've told of being locked up, beaten with belts and forced to have sex with each other while Andrade watched. They've told of being kept away from clocks so they wouldn't know what time or day it was, of being denied food and then forced to eat till they vomited. For some, the ordeal allegedly began when they were as young as twelve.

For conservatives, the scandal was proof that lascivious lyrics lead to perversion. Trevi's fans leapt to defend her as Andrade's victim, which didn't do much for her reputation as a rebel feminist. With breathtaking speed, Trevi fell from being a symbol of independent womanhood to that of a marionette performing the sexual whims of a pervert

"We all really thought something interesting was happening," laments Arturo García Hernández, the journalist for La Jornada who has covered Trevi more thoroughly than anyone. "The feminism, the open sexuality, the playful criticism: We thought Trevi was the start of something. Then it turned out she was a puppet of Andrade in the worst way. We're disappointed."

Then, as suddenly as she vanished, Trevi reappeared. On August 15th, 1998, Televisa aired a long interview in which she discussed the charges. She sat gorgeously cross-legged on the arm of a couch, breaking into spontaneous song, punching her chest as she described her faith in the Virgin of Guadalupe, wiping away tears as she begged her innocence and professed her respect for Andrade's genius. In classic Trevi style, she herself became the accuser. Eyes aflame, she spat, "I never bought a stick of gum with a single peso from Raul Salinas de Gortari" (the ex-president's brother, now serving a fifty-year sentence for ordering the murder of a political opponent). "I don't

have a hundred-and-how-many-thousand appliance stores in all of the Republic," she said, referring to the ex-president's retail chain, allegedly bought with ill-gotten gains. "I have my talent and creativity to make songs," Trevi said, "that's all."

Trevi finished the interview by saying, "I have my conscience clear. I've been here these last days in Mexico and here I'm going to stay. I'm not hiding."

At which point she returned to hiding. In March, the parents of one missing seventeen-year-old girl filed a criminal complaint against Trevi and Andrade, alleging kidnapping and corruption of a minor. When the girl was twelve, the parents charged, Trevi had urged them to place her in the care of Andrade, who would make her a star. Instead, the girl gave birth to a baby when she was fifteen, abandoning the child in a Spanish hospital. The prosecutor in the family's home state of Chihuahua issued a summons, demanding that Trevi and Andrade turn themselves in for questioning.

In August, if a BMG Records spokesman is to be believed, a "plain white envelope appeared at reception" at the firm's Mexico City headquarters. Inside was a digital audio tape of Gloria Trevi singing "No Soy Monedita de Oro" (I'm Not a Little Gold Coin), a traditional ranchera tune. Was this a peace offering, a reminder that she was still a daughter of Mexico? Was it a cynical ploy by BMG to squeeze

another peso out of its discredited star without appearing to have a contract with her? Was it a signal that they were bringing her back? Whichever – it didn't work. The new tune was greeted with a collective yawn.

On November 4, 1999, the face that once pouted from CD covers was splashed across a wanted for arrest poster. The Chihuahua prosecutor issued a warrant for Trevi, Andrade and two of the other young women in their entourage, charging them with corrupting the missing seventeen-year-old girl. Six weeks later, the case took another bizarre twist when the alleged victim suddenly surfaced after more than a year's disappearance of her own, blithely asserting – with almost eerie poise – that she was neither kidnapped nor abused, and that the child she abandoned was not Andrade's. She has been packed off to a shrink for intensive therapy, and police say they are now asking other young women who say they were abused by Andrade and Trevi to file formal charges.

While this drama was unfolding in Mexico, rumors and reports had Trevi and her manager sighted in Honduras, Guatemala, Argentina, even Las Vegas. Turns out they were probably in Brazil the whole time, moving from apartment to apartment in the middle-class Copacabana district of Rio de Janeiro. When their tourist visas expired they used their real passports to renew them, which was a mistake:

On January 12th, Brazilian police – acting on a request from the Mexican police and Interpol – arrested Trevi, Andrade and a female member of their entourage. The news broke so big in Mexico that all television programming was interrupted for scenes of Trevi in handcuffs being led into jail. All three are behind bars in a crumbling cellblock, waiting to be extradited to their homeland for trial.

Even before the arrest, though, Gloria Trevi had been brought back down to earth. The radio stations that once broadcast her songs wall-to-wall were playing them backward and insisting one could hear “You must obey Satan” in the mumblings. Many shops refused to stock her CDs. “Sex with children – we don’t like it,” a young employee of a Mexico City record store sniffed. Masses were held throughout the country to pray for her soul.

The ferocity with which Mexico turned on Gloria Trevi indicates more than revulsion at the nature of the charges against her. A small group of aging men still holds the reins of pop culture in Mexico, and the Trevi-Andrade scandal may have been just what they needed to turn back the clock. What looked and sounded like genuine youthful rebellion and feminine defiance now looks like nothing more than one man’s scheme for exploiting youth for sex and profit. Now as ever, nobody approaches stardom but through the proper channels. And no flamboyant firecracker has been invited onto the airwaves to take the

rebel's place. If Gloria Trevi ever blazed a trail for teenagers, that trail is now cold.