

One Hit Wonders, cont. (Rosie Méndez Hamlin, RIP), Michael's Rock and Roll Posse

When I was growing up in New Mexico, every local high school band played a repertoire of three or four songs: "Satisfaction," "Gloria," any Buddy Holly song, and "Angel Baby" or a Brenda Lee song for the slow dance. I had not realized for many years that the author and singer of "Angel Baby" was Rosalie ("Rosie") Hamlin. Like so many other singers, she was robbed of the copyright for a period, due to her lack of sophistication, and because she was a minor at the time (15, when the song first appeared, in southern California in 1960). The original version on a 45, quite rare now, was attributed to David Ponce, a member of the Originals (her band), who was old enough to be assigned the copyright. She fought to regain it, and did so.

Until I saw the 1995 film *Mi Familia*, which depicts the group at a local sock hop dance, I had not realized she was Mexican American (her mother was Méndez), in part because the song was a one-hit wonder and in part because her father was Anglo (hence Hamlin). She eventually married another Mexican American (Noah Tafolla), did intermittent back up singing work, and then lived her life in relative obscurity in Belen, NM, where she died last week at the age of 71. In recent years, she would occasionally venture out to oldies shows, casinos, and other cultural events, but she was better known for the outstanding covers of "Angel Baby" by John Lennon (on *Menlove Avenue*) and Linda Ronstadt (on *Dedicated to the One I Love*). Led Zeppelin gave her two shoutouts: once in the lyrics to the song "How Many More Times," and another in the liner notes on the album back cover for *Houses of the Holy*.

I have always had a fondness for one hit wonders, whose success is so evanescent and transitory, and I always think: “what if”? In the Chicano sub-genre of one-hit wonders, I include “Land of 1000 Dances” by Cannibal and the Headhunters,” “96 Tears,” by ? and the Mysterians, Sunny & the Sunglows (a/k/a Sunny & the Sunliners), “Talk to Me,” and now, “Angel Baby.” Other Chicano entertainers with more than one hit, just for the record (get it? For the RECORD?) include Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs, Los Lobos, Chris Montez, Linda Ronstadt, and Freddy Fender. My Posse, with our shared geriatric sense of music history, will doubtless remind me of more. I know there are more, but these all come to mind.

Hope all my Posse members are doing well, and I will be returning to UHLC in a short time, ending my service at UH-Downtown. And I will be working with Houston Public Media/KUHF for the radio show, when we announce they are picking it up in a month or so. The sun never sets on Olivas...

Michael

<https://nyti.ms/2oDXDYI> (NYT obituary)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bu2dAQ3xb8s> (Rosie and the Originals, 1961)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQGHiaAPk_I (Jeanette Jurado as Rosie in Mi Familia)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGQEbD4sJoI> (on PBS Oldies show, 2002)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MC7zmW1SeUM> (Linda Ronstadt)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2zqmmU8R3o> (John Lennon)

https://play.google.com/music/preview/Tz72ai3kigq74l3fby2zjw3xyz4?lyrics=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=lyrics&pcampaignid=kp-lyrics

(Led Zeppelin lyrics)

The New York Times



Rose Hamlin, a One-Hit Wonder With 'Angel Baby,' Dies at 71

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The song was the only Top 40 hit for her group, Rosie and the Originals, but it was covered by John Lennon, Linda Ronstadt and others.

Or, copy and paste this URL into your browser:

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