

Carmen Rental

by G.E. Simons

Carmen Flores was the star of Mexico's most successful and longest running telenovela, 'Juego de Maria', which ran between 1981 and 1992.

In it she played Maria Perez the matriarch of a brutal drugs cartel who were based in Matamoros, Tamaulipas.

The televisual game that Maria played each week was balancing family life and motherhood with commercial narcotic trading and meting out respect driven violence.

Viewing figures peaked at 22 million in 1987 and Carmen was voted Mexico's most beautiful woman in the years 1986, 1987 and 1989.

In 1988 she narrowly lost to singer Eva-Yolanda Ortiz, who was also a truly beautiful woman.

Carmen bought a pastel coloured three-story house called 'Casa Cerezo' in the La Condesa district of Mexico City in 1988. She tastefully furnished it in whites, stained glass, bleached wood and African orchids.

But in 1991 Carmen developed a heroin habit and was forced to sell her powder blue, convertible Mercedes 500SL.

In late 1992 her character Maria Perez was murdered in a Zippolite seafood restaurant and 'Juego de Maria' itself was subsequently decommissioned just nine episodes later in early 1993.

Because Carmen was able to pay cash for 'Casa Cerezo' when she bought it, she has managed to keep hold of it.

But she can't afford to live there. The African orchids have also been replaced by easier to care for ferns in various decorated earthenware pots.

Instead she rents the house out to American, Australian and European tourists.

It is a very popular rental property because 'Casa Cerezo' is in a very modish location. It also has its own terraced roof garden where visitors can drink mint tea and feel the sun on their faces.

She uses the money they pay to pay her own rent on a one bedroom apartment in the Iztapalapa borough of the City and to cover her daily living expenses as well as supporting her ongoing opiate habit.

Carmen Flores hopes that one day she will be able to beat her addictions, resume her acting career and move back into 'Casa Cerezo'.

She has not auditioned for a part since late 1995 but still retains an elegantly bohemian beauty at 62 years of age.

