



May 19, 2009

Nation

Spector Found Guilty Of Second-Degree Murder

by The Associated Press

[NPR.org](#), April 13, 2009 · Rock music producer Phil Spector was convicted Monday of second-degree murder in the shooting death of actress Lana Clarkson at his mansion six years ago.

A Superior Court jury returned the verdict after about 30 hours of deliberations. The jury had the option of choosing involuntary manslaughter, but did not do so. The panel also found Spector personally used a firearm in committing a crime.

Spector had no obvious reaction. His attorney argued that he should remain free on bail pending the May 29 sentencing, but Judge Larry Paul Fidler accepted the prosecution's argument that he be remanded to jail immediately.

Spector was led out of the courtroom by sheriff's deputies. Second-degree murder carries a penalty of 15 years to life in prison. The use-of-a-gun crime carries up to three years in prison.

Spector's wife, Rachele, sobbed as the decision was announced.

The 40-year-old Clarkson, star of the 1985 cult film *Barbarian Queen*, died of a gunshot fired in her mouth as she sat in the foyer of Spector's mansion in 2003. She met Spector only hours earlier at her job as a nightclub hostess.

Prosecutors argued that Spector had a history of threatening women with guns when they tried to leave his presence.

The defense argued that she killed herself.

It was Spector's second trial. His first jury deadlocked 10-2, favoring conviction, in 2007.

The murder case was a flash from Hollywood's distant past, a reminder of the 1960s when Spector reigned as the hit-maker supreme with such songs as the Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin' " and The Ronettes classic "Be My Baby."

Spector, who had long lived in seclusion at his suburban Alhambra "castle," was out on the town in Hollywood when he met Clarkson on Feb. 3, 2003, at the House of Blues. The tall, blond actress, recently turned 40 and

unable to find acting work, had taken a job as a hostess. When the club closed in the wee hours, she accepted a chauffeured ride to Spector's home for a drink. Three hours later, she was dead in the foyer of his mansion.

Spector's chauffeur, the key witness, said he heard a gunshot, then saw Spector emerge holding a gun and heard him say: "I think I killed somebody."

Defense attorney Doron Weinberg disputed whether the chauffeur remembered the words accurately. In closing arguments, Weinberg listed 14 points of forensic evidence, including blood spatter, gunshot residue and DNA, which he said were proof of a self-inflicted wound.

"It's very difficult to put a gun in somebody's mouth," he said.

"Every single fact says this is a self-inflicted gunshot wound," Weinberg argued. "How do you ignore it? How do you say this could have been a homicide?"

But prosecutors portrayed Spector as a dangerous man who became a "demonic maniac" when he drank and had a history of threatening women with guns. They also contended that blood spatter evidence proved Clarkson could not have shot herself.

As in the first trial, they presented testimony from five women who told of being threatened by a drunken Spector, even held hostage in his home, with a gun pointed at them and threats of death if they tried to leave. The parallels with the night Clarkson died were chilling, even if the stories were very old — 31 years in one instance.

Clarkson's mother and sister sat through both trials and Spector's wife sat across the courtroom from them.

Prosecutors, haunted by the acquittals of stars such as O.J. Simpson, Robert Blake and Michael Jackson, at first seemed invested in making Spector the first showbiz star to be convicted in a major criminal case. But after the first trial ended in a deadlock, public interest faded. The second six-month trial was played out in a sparsely populated courtroom with few members of the media present.

During jury selection, only a few panelists remembered Spector's heyday as the inventor of the "Wall of Sound" recording technique and producer of teen anthems including, "To Know Him is to Love Him," The Crystals' "Da Doo Ron Ron" and "He's a Rebel," and Ike and Tina Turner's "River Deep-Mountain High." He also worked on a Beatles album.

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[Lisa Teague \(lteague\)](#) wrote:

There is more evidence to point to his guilt. The gun was his. It was in a drawer in a holster. Before going to the house she told the driver "I'm only having one drink here, you understand?" She wanted to make sure she had a ride back to her car at HOB where she left it. When they found her, her purse strap was on her shoulder. So let's get this straight she makes sure she has a ride back, has her one drink, decides to go, puts her bag on her shoulder & then what...decides to find Phil's gun in a house she's never been to before & kill herself????? That is ridiculous!!!! The reason for the prior bad acts on Phil's part coming in is that this was exactly his MO. Whenever anyone wanted to leave before Phil allowed, he pulled out a gun & threatened them. He pulled a gun on the Ramones (when they wanted to leave). He shot the ceiling of a recording studio where he was working with John Lennon, with John right next to him & very angry that the shot could have ruined his hearing. May Pang was there when it happened & wrote of it in her book in 1983. It goes on & on. In the 70's he plead guilty to brandishing a weapon as he was again threatening someone. There is much more evidence in this case.

Tuesday, April 14, 2009 3:19:16 PM

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[Lisa Teague \(Iteague\)](#) wrote:

I watched the entire first trial on court tv. It was hard to believe the first jury went away without convicting him though that jury was 10-2 split in favor of conviction. The fact that he tried to wipe the gun down & even wiped her face before he washed his own hands says NOT SUICIDE. They found all this evidence & it was presented. He had a cloth (actually a cloth diaper that he used to clean his guns) in the bathroom with her blood on it. He also never called 911 to say oh dear someone killed just himself. He had 10 phones in the "Castle" as he called it. When the cops finally got there (called by the chauffeur) Phil was beligerent & cursing the dead woman in his parlor. He had to be tased to bring him under control. Then there's the fact of her broken fingernails. She tried to push that gun out of her mouth. She had both of her hands on it pushing it away. I'm sure in that struggle is when the weapon discharged. Had he copped to it he might have gotten involuntary manslaughter. He got what he deserved. Yes this trial was almost non existent to the press. I don't know why. But the circus that surrounded the first trial in which John Gotti's atty Bruce Cutler repped him, may have been that jury's undoing.

Tuesday, April 14, 2009 1:45:17 PM

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[Elizabeth Hodge \(Bobblehead\)](#) wrote:

Indeed, Lana Clarkson is the victim; but, as she is not the famous person, she will not be remembered -- only her death as it is conjoined to the life of a famous person.

Tuesday, April 14, 2009 11:57:50 AM

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[diane radell \(frenchloprabbit\)](#) wrote:

I think N.P.R failed to highlight there is a victim. Phil Spector isn't a victim, Lana Clarkson is.

Tuesday, April 14, 2009 11:45:57 AM

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[Elizabeth Hodge \(Bobblehead\)](#) wrote:

Spector has a long history of what seems very likely mental illness more than "eccentric" behavior. The heresy against him from those who were not present may largely rest on the assumptions about his legacy of erratic behavior and other attributes of his illness. While it may be the case that many of the people who testified were not present on the day in question, they presented validation for what the jury witnessed, a man who is by all outward appearances not sane, given his behavior in the court room. Whether or not he is truly guilty of the crime (and many of the information presented indicates that guilt), what he is "guilty" of is not being in his "right" mind. It may be the case that the verdict largely rested on that "fact"

Tuesday, April 14, 2009 11:36:08 AM

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