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Spector Verdict The End Of A Psychic Free Fall

By Neda Ulaby

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Music producer Phil Spector in September 2007, during his first murder trial after the 2003 death of actress Lana Clarkson.

SPECTOR ON YOUTUBE

'To Know Him Is to Love Him' by The Teddy Bears

'Be My Baby' by The Ronettes

'Little Boy' by The Crystals

his label.

The Symphony Conductor

Session drummer Hal Blaine recalled Spector's producing process in an interview with WHYY's *Fresh Air*.

Morning Edition, *April 14, 2009* - Six years after the death of actress Lana Clarkson, and nearly two years after a 2007 mistrial, a jury found music producer Phil Spector guilty of second-degree murder on Monday. Spector, 68, will be sentenced May 29 and faces a prison sentence of 18 years to life.

Long before the jury's final verdict, Spector had vanished from the music industry. He hadn't completed an album since the 1970s. But it almost didn't matter. Spector produced some of the greatest recordings of the 20th century — with Ike and Tina Turner, The Ronettes, The Beatles and many others — but his work was always colored by his mental state.

Shortly before the shooting that led to Spector's arrest, journalist Mick Brown taped the reclusive producer's first interview in years, as he told NPR in 2007.

"Almost as soon as I sat down with Phil Spector, he started to talk about his mental state," Brown said. In the interview with Brown, Spector referred to "devils inside that fight me," adding, "I am my own worst enemy."

Insanity and insecurity haunted Spector's entire life. His older sister had to be institutionalized, and his father committed suicide when the boy was 9. The traumatized family moved from New York to Los Angeles. Spector's first hit, at age 18, was inspired by the inscription on his father's grave: "To Know Him Is to Love Him."

Spector can be heard in the background, harmonizing with The Teddy Bears. His perfect pitch and knack for a melody soon made him an A-list producer. He was only 21 when he co-founded

"Every Phil Spector session was a party, sprinkling this fairy dust on the tape," Blaine says. "He used to be in the booth, and he'd run back and forth like he was conducting a symphony, and use certain symphonic movements, the way a conductor would do. Certain times, he would look at me and he would say, 'Now.' Which meant, 'Go for it.' "

Spector's trademark "Wall of Sound" propelled the hits of The Ronettes, whose lead singer married her producer. In 1990, Ronnie Spector told NPR that their songs were love letters.

"We always rehearsed them alone," Ronnie Spector says. "So we had this romance between my singing and him teaching me. It was like the best feeling in the world. It was like, 'Mmm!' "

Coming Apart

Those feelings began to be spiked by abuse. Phil Spector wouldn't let her wear shoes in the house for fear she would run away. He bought a glass-lidded coffin in which he threatened to display her if she left. Still, Spector produced an extraordinary string of hits, too numerous to name. He co-produced the legendary Concert for Bangladesh. But by the 1970s, Spector's career was in shambles. Brown says Spector's mounting obsession with guns signaled a psychic free-fall.

"You know, he was drinking very heavily," Brown says. "He wasn't a man in control of himself. He'd even [hold] guns on the phone with record executives, in order to give himself a bit of an edge, it seemed, over the telephone."

When Phil Spector produced a 1980 Ramones album, he reportedly pulled a gun on the group in the studio. Spector soon entered near-seclusion. He tried to record albums with other musicians, but ended up fighting with them. Music, it seems, was only a temporary balm for his pain.

"He had this one priceless gift," Brown says, "which was a musical ability. And he was able to create out of this gift these extraordinary records, these grandiloquent dreams of romance and love and escape, and fling those back into the face of the world. It was flinging them at his father, who killed himself; flinging at the kids who wouldn't talk to him at school; flinging it at the record industry, who thought he was a madman. These records were Spector's revenge."

And his legacy.

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Recent First



Patrick Cook (patco) wrote:

Phil's crazy ways finally caught up with him. Everyone in the biz knows about him and guns. I can't believe he was still so foolish as to actually have a loaded gun just to look tough. A tragedy for everyone involved.

Check out the opening scene of "Easy Rider". That's Phil in the back seat whom they sell their coke to. So long Phil.

Wednesday, April 15, 2009 11:13:01 PM

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Ignacio Alvarez (AzrielZaapiel) wrote:

I do not understand people that condone MURDER just because the MURDERER was a famous person. Unfortunately there is no way to make these people understand that MURDER is MURDER and if the MURDERED person was one of their relatives, they would be claiming for justice too. Forget about what this guy did in the music industry, he was declared guilty by a jury of his peers and now he should pay for what he did.

Wednesday, April 15, 2009 1:26:59 PM

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Mark Graham (mg in kc) wrote:

There's a fine line between genius and insanity. Spector crossed over it long ago. Too bad he was too arrogant to seek help. It could have saved him and the Clarkson family much grief. He won't survive prison unless his money can get him placed in some cushy federal institution.

Wednesday, April 15, 2009 1:24:31 PM

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Thomas Boyle (PresidentBoyle) wrote:

Phil Spector probably has REBAM Syndrome.
His anger rage is a symptom of deeply repressed wants.
There are millions of men in our society like that.
They are Repressed Bisexual Angry Alcoholic Males
according to the NO NAME STUDY.
Pray for him and his victim

Wednesday, April 15, 2009 12:14:40 PM

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D. Schankler (Debbjessie) wrote:

Thank goodness Lana and her loved ones have received justice. He was a cruel person who thought that laws did not apply to him.

Wednesday, April 15, 2009 12:04:37 PM

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