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And now: the Phil Spector retrial

Thirteen months after jurors deadlocked in the music producer's murder trial, jury selection begins for the second go-round. He faces 18 years in prison if convicted of killing actress Lana Clarkson.

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A smiling Phil Spector shuffled out of a downtown Los Angeles courthouse 13 months ago after his murder trial ended in a hung jury, stepped into a chauffeured Mercedes and sped back to his Alhambra mansion. In the driveway of the hilltop estate, the legendary music producer and his wife danced ebulliently while waving to hovering news helicopters.

The specifics of the deadlock might not seem worthy of celebration -- jurors voted 10 to 2 for conviction -- but the mistrial guaranteed the 67-year-old a period of freedom and the opportunity to retool his defense.

How long Spector remains a free man will probably be decided at his retrial, which begins this week with the selection of a new jury. The man whose work with musicians such as the Beatles, the Ramones and Tina Turner revolutionized pop music faces a minimum of 18 years in prison if convicted of second-degree murder.

He will arrive at the same courtroom, sit at the same table and listen, once again, as prosecutors paint him as an unstable gun nut who shot an actress in the mouth because she rebuffed his sexual advances. And Spector's defense will counter, as it did last year, that Lana Clarkson was suicidal over her flagging Hollywood career and shot herself in the foyer of his home on Feb. 3, 2003.

If the retrial is largely a reprise, it is likely to be a shorter performance in a different key. Spector has replaced his sprawling and at times dysfunctional legal team -- half a dozen attorneys, including a bombastic New York City mob lawyer not always on speaking terms with colleagues -- with a single attorney, a sober San Franciscan with a record of converting retrials into acquittals.

"Both sides understand a little more clearly what evidence is most important," said Spector's attorney, Doron Weinberg.

"We'll have a more efficient trial and one that I think will be easier for the jury to follow and understand."

Judge Larry Paul Fidler told prospective jurors that he hopes the case will conclude in three months -- two months less than last year's trial.

Side issues extended the length of that proceeding: A Hollywood madam teetered into the courtroom in stilettos and a micro-mini with a salacious tale about Clarkson working as a call girl. Famed forensic scientist and defense expert Dr. Henry Lee was accused of hiding or destroying potentially important evidence. A surprise witness purporting to be the actress' longtime lover promised to blow the case open with testimony about cocaine and guns -- only to be assailed as an impostor.

In the end, none of those witnesses took the stand, and the issues are not expected to arise again.

At the heart of the case are unflattering portraits of the defendant and the woman he is accused of killing. Prosecutors depict Spector as a misogynist who answers romantic rejection by pulling a gun and who once said all women "deserve a bullet in their . . . heads."

The defense is expected to cast Clarkson, 40, as an over-the-hill C-lister whose professional and personal disappointments may have made death an attractive option.

A witness list filed with the court indicates little alteration in the lineup.

"The evidence does not change from trial to trial. The evidence is what we presented in court last time," said Sandi Gibbons, spokeswoman for the district attorney's office.

Still expected are a string of women who claim Spector menaced them with guns in the decades leading up to Clarkson's death. One who took the stand for prosecutors last year, Dianne Ogden, died in December.

The judge had not yet decided whether jurors will see a videotape of her testimony. Prosecutors located a sixth woman after the trial, but the judge ruled she could not testify, saying that her allegations were not similar enough to the circumstances of Clarkson's death.

Probable defense witnesses are friends and colleagues of Clarkson's who previously testified the actress was on the edge of a nervous breakdown at the time of the shooting.

Both sides will also call on forensic experts to support their claim that the shooting was homicide or self-inflicted. Weinberg declined to say if the defense plans to summon all the high-profile experts Spector hired to take the stand, but Lee is on the witness list along with noted pathologists Michael Baden and Cyril Wecht.

Ricardo Enriquez, a juror who voted to convict Spector last fall, said he found the defense theory -- which allowed for both suicide and accident -- confusing and contradictory.

"They could probably gain by picking some kind of story line and sticking to it," he said.

Public interest in the case appears to have fallen considerably.

The trial was the first criminal case broadcast live in Los Angeles since O.J. Simpson's 1995 murder trial, but the initial media attention waned. Spector's fame, which peaked in the 1970s, seemed faded, especially in comparison to young stars such as Paris Hilton, whose comparatively minor legal woes received exponentially more coverage during the music pioneer's trial.

"It was not a case that was continually capturing the imagination of Southern California," court spokesman Allan Parachini said. No television outlet applied for permission to broadcast the retrial.

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