



Spector gets three weeks to find new lawyers

Judge says he wants retrial to start in four months, but music producer's attorneys -- three of whom are leaving the case -- say it will be tough to prepare that quickly. Next hearing is Oct. 23.

By Greg Krikorian, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer
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Only days after a jury deadlocked on whether to convict Phil Spector of murder, plans for his retrial got underway today with talk of a new defense team to defend the famed music producer against charges that he shot actress Lana Clarkson in his Alhambra mansion four years ago.

With three members of Spector's current defense team leaving the case, Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler set a hearing on Oct. 23 for Spector to appear with new attorneys. A half-dozen attorneys, whose identities are unknown, are said to be in discussions with Spector about taking over the case.

During the brief court hearing, Fidler made it clear he will want Spector's new counsel to be ready for trial in less than the six months his current attorneys say will be needed to adequately prepared a defense.

Last week, Fidler declared a mistrial in the nearly six-month-long case after a jury ended 12 days of deliberation in deadlock. Jurors said they were split 10-2 in favor of convicting Spector of second-degree murder, the only charge they were allowed to consider.

Three of the jurors later told reporters that prosecutors convinced most of the jury that Spector, 67, shot Clarkson when she tried to leave his home in the early morning hours of Feb. 3, 2003. The three jurors also said that the lone holdouts against conviction were persuaded by defense theories that Clarkson could have shot herself--accidentally or on purpose--particularly after the prosecution decided not to provide a detailed psychological analysis of Clarkson to rebut that possibility.

At today's court hearing, Roger J. Rosen, who had been Spector's lead lawyer for much of the trial, formally announced he would not continue with the case. Also leaving the case before the retrial will be lawyers Linda Kenney Baden and Bradley Brunon.

Only Christopher J. Plourd and Dennis Riordan are expecting to stay on the team, though Plourd told the judge the status of any holdover attorneys will depend on the wishes of Spector's new lead counsel.

Plourd also told Fidler that it could be difficult to find any attorneys who will be free of other cases and capable enough to be ready for a retrial in the four months sought by the judge.

"Good lawyers are going to be busy," Plourd said.

He asked the judge to consider a new trial date of at least six months off to allow Spector's next defense team to adequately review a mountain of competing evidence in the case.

Spector already has been through 10 lawyers--including well known criminal attorneys Leslie Abramson, Robert Shapiro and Bruce Cutler--since he was first accused of murder.

Outside court, Rosen said he agreed with Spector's decision to seek new lawyers in the retrial who can provide "new eyes and ears" in the case.

"I have fulfilled my responsibility and obligation to Phil," Rosen said. "And I have other clients and I think it is the right thing to do in terms of turning my attention to them."

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