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From the Los Angeles Times

Prosecutor, in closing arguments, calls Phil Spector a 'demonic maniac'

In a retrial of the music producer, who is charged with second-degree murder in the death of actress Lana Clarkson, prosecutor paints portrait of sadistic celebrity who threatened women with impunity.

By Harriet Ryan

March 24, 2009

In a courtroom with dimmed lights that recalled the dark Alhambra estate where an actress was shot to death six years ago, a prosecutor Monday called Phil Spector a "demonic maniac" with "a history of playing Russian roulette with the lives of women."

"By the grace of God, five other women got the empty chamber and lived to tell," Deputy Dist. Atty. Truc Do said, referring to a string of former love interests who testified at Spector's murder retrial about harrowing encounters with him.

Actress Lana Clarkson, shot to death in a chair in Spector's foyer in 2003, "just happened to be the sixth woman who got the bullet," Do said.

In a two-hour closing argument supplemented by an elaborate audiovisual presentation, Do portrayed the legendary music producer as a spoiled and sadistic celebrity who tormented women with impunity because he resided in an elite "world where money and fame buys you the VIP treatment."

"Behind the VIP was a very dangerous man, a man who believed that all women . . . deserve a bullet in their head," she said.

Spector, 69, stared expressionless at the defense table as he has for much of the last five months of testimony. His attorney repeatedly objected to what he said were impermissible attacks on the producer's character. At the conclusion of the prosecutor's summation, lawyer Doron Weinberg asked for a mistrial. Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler denied the request.

The defense is to present its closing argument Tuesday. Jurors are expected to start deliberating the charges against Spector by week's end.

Jurors must decide whether Spector acted criminally in the shooting of Clarkson, 40. His defense contends that she was depressed over career setbacks and financial problems and shot herself. Prosecutors argue that Spector pulled a gun on her, as he allegedly had done to other female guests, when he was drunk and she expressed a desire to curtail a romantic evening.

As the prosecutor spoke, jurors stared intently at a large projection screen displaying video clips, transcripts of testimony and police photos. One picture snapped by investigators showed a desk in Spector's home adorned with a poster of a gun.

"Never mind the dog, beware of the owner," it read.

Among the evidence Do focused on in her summation were accounts of the other women and the testimony of a chauffeur who said Spector confessed to him immediately after the shooting. She also cited mist-like bloodstains that prosecution witnesses noted on Clarkson's wrists and Spector's jacket. The spots on his jacket indicated that when the gun went off, his left hand was pointed at the actress' face and his body was within arm's reach of her mouth, Do said. She also pointed to bruises on Clarkson's wrists, which she called evidence of a struggle.

Do used a photo of sand dunes on a Vietnamese beach -- her laptop screen-saver throughout the retrial -- as a metaphor for what she said were flaws in the defense case.

"Their version of the truth shifts with whatever direction the winds blow," she said.

The prosecutor dismissed defense experts who testified that the shooting was consistent with suicide as "pay-to-say" witnesses who received more than \$400,000 for their work. Referring to a defense psychologist who said Clarkson seemed despondent, Do said he had never treated the actress or interviewed her family.

"He did nothing other than judge her and then cash a paycheck," she said.

Spector faces a minimum of 18 years in prison if convicted of second-degree murder. The jury also has the option of convicting him on a lesser charge, involuntary manslaughter, which carries a sentence of two to four years in prison.

A 2007 trial ended in a hung jury with the panel split 10 to 2 in favor of conviction.

Among the more than 60 observers who packed the spectator's gallery for the summation were Spector's wife, an adopted son, Louis, and a juror who voted to convict Spector at his first trial.

"I just wanted to be here to support [Clarkson's] family," Ricardo Enriquez said, adding, "I feel like I know her."

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