THE SHOWBUZZ

Opening Statements Begin In Spector Case

LOS ANGELES, April 25, 2007

(CBS/AP) More than four years after a beautiful actress was shot to death at Phil Spector's hilltop castle, a prosecutor told jurors Wednesday that at times the music producer becomes "sinister and deadly."

Spector appeared tense as he watched from the counsel table in a televised proceeding as the prosecution laid out the murder case against him in an opening statement to the jury.

Spector is someone "who, when he's confronted with the right circumstances, when he's confronted with the right situations, turns sinister and deadly," said Deputy District Attorney Alan Jackson.

"The evidence is going to paint a picture of a man, who on Feb. 3, 2003, put a loaded pistol in Lana Clarkson's mouth — inside her mouth — and shot her to death."

Spector, who came to court in a light-colored suit and open-collar dark purple shirt, has pleaded not guilty. His attorneys were to present their opening remarks later.

Photos: Courting Phil Spector

Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler earlier instructed the jury on the trial process including the presumption of innocence and the burden on the prosecution to prove the allegations.

On Tuesday, the gender makeup of the jury sparked a last-minute legal dispute when prosecutors claimed the defense was systematically removing women through challenges. A judge disagreed and an alternate panel of four men and two women was chosen.

The regular jury, sworn in last week, has nine men and three women. The panel includes a TV news producer, a vice president of a movie and music company, and a television technician.

And that's potentially good news for both sides in the case, asserts jury consultant Kathy Kellerman.

"It's a dream jury, demographically, for the prosecution," Kellerman says, "... (but) these people who are more advanced in their professions are also very creative, a great sign for the defense."

The Early Show national correspondent Hattie Kauffman observes that Spector's fate is in the hands of a jury that reflects the entertainment industry he once thrived in.

CBS News legal analyst **Trent Copeland** says: "A number of key witnesses will also testify that Spector, when pushed to the point where he can explode, takes out a gun, and has done so numerous times in the past."

According to his driver's notes, the night in question was a busy one for Spector, Kauffman reports. The notes show a timeline that includes Spector taking one date to dinner, taking her home, returning to the restaurant to pick up a second date, taking her home, picking up Clarkson at two in the morning, heading to Spector's mansion at three and, at five a.m., allegedly telling the driver, "I think I killed somebody."

Hollywood likes a good trial, Kauffman says, and this one's not likely to disappoint — the hairdos alone should keep it interesting. Spector's known for unusual ones.

Spector, 67, a legendary music producer whose "Wall of Sound" transformed the sounds of rock and roll in the 1960s, lives in a rambling castle-like mansion in suburban Alhambra. It was there that he took Clarkson on Feb. 3, 2003. She wound up dead in the foyer with a gunshot through her mouth.

Clarkson, 40, best known for her role in the Roger Corman 1980s cult classic "Barbarian Queen," had gone home with Spector from her job as a nightclub hostess. He met her only hours before she died.

A chauffeur who drove the pair to Spector's mansion has told of hearing a gunshot and seeing Spector emerge from the house holding a gun and declaring, "I think I killed somebody." Spector later said he believed the shooting was an "accidental suicide" by Clarkson.

It took about eight months of investigation before authorities charged Spector with murder. They are proceeding on a theory of "implied malice," alleging he did not intend to kill Clarkson but caused her death by reckless behavior and taking an extreme risk.

If convicted of second-degree murder, he could face 15 years to life in prison.