

Combs jury to weigh sordid details

The music mogul's trial is full of graphic accounts, but are they enough to convict?

BY RICHARD WINTON

One of the most sensational celebrity trials in decades is expected early this week to go to jurors, who must decide whether music mogul Sean “Diddy” Combs is responsible for a shocking series of alleged sex crimes and conspiracies dating back years.

The trial in New York has been marked by graphic testimony from inside Combs’ music empire, alleging a pattern of violence, threats and cover-ups that prosecutors have compared to a mob-like criminal enterprise.

A key question posed in the case is whether Combs — who was once worth more than \$1 billion — used his power and money to conceal alleged crimes, often with the help of his sprawling organization.

Prosecutors hammered home this alleged conspiracy in closing arguments. Assistant U.S. Atty. Christy Slavik told jurors Combs “counted on silence and shame” to enable and prolong his abuse and used a “small army” of employees to harm women and cover it up, according to the Associated Press.

Combs “doesn’t take no for an answer,” she added.

But legal experts have said the case may not be quite the slam-dunk that the tabloid headlines suggest.

Combs’ defense has freely acknowledged that the mogul behaved badly. They claim, however, that the charges against him are overblown and pointed out that some key witnesses did not report Combs’ misdeeds at the time.

“The theory of the defense seems to be that Diddy did really horrible things, but they don’t meet the elements of the crimes charged,” said legal expert Jeff Chemerinsky, a former federal prosecutor.

On Friday, Combs’ attorney labeled the prosecution’s case “exaggerated” and hammered some of his



A FRIAR at the damaged Mission Santa Barbara after the earthquake.

Lessons from a 1925 earthquake resonate

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

One hundred years ago Sunday, downtown Santa Barbara was devastated by an earthquake centered just offshore.

The main commercial district, State Street, was in ruins. Some buildings collapsed — the vulnerability in their designs laid bare by the power of Mother Nature. About a dozen people died.

Yet, despite the destruction, the great Santa Barbara earthquake remains relatively obscure, seismically speaking, even in a state notorious for its shaking.

There are a number of reasons why, including the comparatively low death toll and concerted efforts by contemporary civic boosters and business interests to downplay the extent of the damage.

But in a state where the next “Big One” is an always looming threat, lessons learned from the Santa Barbara quake should still resonate — even 100 years later, experts say.

Structural engineers, for instance, have long considered brick buildings to be one of the deadliest types of structures in an earthquake. And the Santa Barbara temblor revealed just how dan-

The 1925 Santa Barbara earthquake

On June 29, 1925, an earthquake of a magnitude between 6.5 and 6.8 struck the Santa Barbara coast, destroying much of the city’s main business district. Damage was reported as far away as Ventura.



Iranians arrested in immigration crackdown

Some of those being detained by federal agents have lived for decades in the U.S.

BY KIM CHANDLER, CLAIRE RUSH AND ELLIOT SPAGAT

Mandonna “Donna” Kashanian lived in the United States for 47 years, married a U.S. citizen and raised their daughter. She was gardening in the yard of her New Orleans home when U.S. Immi-

gration and Customs Enforcement officers handcuffed and took her away, her family said.

Kashanian arrived in 1978 on a student visa and applied for asylum, fearing retaliation for her father’s support of the U.S.-backed shah. She lost her bid, but she was allowed to remain with her husband and child if she checked in regularly with immigration officials, her husband and daughter said. She complied, once checking in from South Carolina during Hurricane Katrina. She is now being held at an immigration de-

tection center in Basile, La., while her family tries to get information.

Other Iranians are also getting arrested by immigration authorities after decades in the United States. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security won’t say how many people have been arrested, but U.S. military strikes on Iran have fueled fears that there is more to come.

“Some level of vigilance, of course, makes sense, but what it seems like ICE has done is basically give out an order to round up as many Iranians as you can, whether

or not they’re linked to any threat, and then arrest them and deport them, which is very concerning,” said Ryan Costello, policy director of the National Iranian American Council, an advocacy group.

Homeland Security did not immediately reply to an email seeking comment on Kashanian’s case but has been touting arrests of Iranians. The department announced the arrests of at least 11 Iranians on immigration violations a week ago, during the weekend of the U.S. missile strikes on Iran.

After crucial vote, Trump’s bill is teed up for big finish

Plan to cut \$1 trillion in social spending advances. Democrats endeavor to delay.

BY LISA MASCARO, KEVIN FREKING AND JOE CAPPELLETTI

WASHINGTON — Hours before a tumultuous nearing-midnight vote on President Trump’s package of tax breaks, spending cuts and increased deportation money, a Republican senator stood on the chamber floor and implored the plan’s critics, “Read the bill.”

After the dramatic 51-49 roll call on a key procedural vote that advanced the bill late Saturday, Senate Democrats did exactly that. Seemingly unable to stop the march toward passage of the 940-page bill by Trump’s Fourth of July deadline, the minority party in Congress is using the tools at its disposal to delay and drag out the process.

The Saturday night vote came after a tumultuous session, dragging on for hours as holdout senators huddled for negotiations. In the end, two Republicans

opposed the motion to proceed to debate, joining all Democrats and independents.

“If Senate Republicans won’t tell the American people what’s in this bill, then Democrats are going to force this chamber to read it from start to finish,” Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York declared Sunday.

By Sunday midafternoon some 16 hours later, the clerk’s reading of the nearly foot-high bill was done.

And within moments the Senate launched into debate, expected to stretch late into Sunday night with at least 10 hours of speeches. The slow-walking tactic points to difficult days ahead.

“It’s taken awhile to get here,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), the Senate Budget Committee chairman, “but we’ll have a debate worthy of this great country.”

Republicans, who control the House and Senate, are closer to passing Trump’s signature domestic policy package, yet there is political unease. Democrats immediately launched fresh challenges against it, decrying the way they say Republicans

Blue Shield’s out-of-state new parent stirs alarm

BY LAURENCE DARMIENTO

Last year, regulators approved a request by Blue Shield of California, the state’s third-largest health insurer, to restructure and establish a new parent corporation in Delaware.

The San Francisco non-profit got the go-ahead from the Department of Managed Health Care, or DMHC, to create an entity called Ascendium Inc., which is now the out-of-state corporate parent of Blue Shield. The insurer said that the restructuring would allow it to better serve its members

“with less bureaucracy and faster results, while making health care more affordable.”

But the transaction has raised alarm among a former high-level Blue Shield executive and consumer advocates, who complain that it was carried out with no public oversight and could allow the insurer to transfer money to a Delaware parent company with few strings attached. The activists claim that some of that money could be used to boost its spending on charitable endeavors.

The company has accrued a surplus of more than



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

JAMES OPTS IN

Lakers star exercises his \$52.6-million option as expected and is poised to become the first NBA player to compete during 23 seasons. **SPORTS, D1**

Decorated vet self-deports

Under threat of removal, Purple Heart recipient returns to South Korea after decades in the U.S. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather
Partly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 83/61. **B6**

Business **A11**
Opinion Voices **A13**

LACMA takes absurd new form

A preview of the museum’s sleek new Brutalist building is eye-opening. **ENTERTAINMENT, E1**

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The legend of an alleged Mexican Mafia boss

BY MATTHEW ORMSETH

There is a running joke among law enforcement authorities who investigate the Mexican Mafia. In any unsolved crime remotely connected to the prison syndicate, an informant will always come forward with a familiar line:

“Snuffy did it.”

Snuffy is the nickname of Manuel Quintero, alleged by Los Angeles County prosecutors to be a member of the

Mexican Mafia, a group of about 140 men who rule over Southern California’s Latino street gangs.

Quintero’s face sits atop organizational charts drawn up by task forces of federal agents, sheriff’s deputies and local police who have long suspected — but could never prove — that he was engaged in extortion, gambling and other crimes, according to law enforcement documents reviewed by The Times.

Quintero, 49, is described

in the records and interviews with gang members and police as a ghostlike presence, seemingly everywhere but impossible to catch in a provable act of wrongdoing.

He has been spotted in the harbor area, meeting with members of his incarcerated half brother’s old gang. He’s been photographed crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, wearing sunglasses, behind the wheel of a Toyota Corolla. He’s been seen in the San Fernando Valley, conferring with Ar-

menian crime figures who run illegal gaming parlors.

According to one police source who wasn’t authorized to speak publicly, an informant even claimed Quintero had faked his own death, staging a car crash with a similar-looking cadaver before disappearing into Mexico.

The story, of course, was false. After years of investigations that sputtered out without charges, one of the many task forces eyeing