



Civil trial of Keanu Reeves begins in LA

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By ANTHONY McCARTNEY, AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES —

Just like in "The Matrix," jurors in a civil trial featuring Keanu Reeves may have to wade through several versions of reality.

A jury was selected Monday to hear the case, which stems from a March 2007 incident in which a paparazzo claims he was seriously injured while shooting photos of Reeves behind the wheel of his Porsche.

A lawyer for Alison Silva contends Reeves struck the photographer with his car, causing him to fall to the ground. But Reeves' attorney, Alfred Gerisch, told the panel that the photographer repeatedly changed his story depending on whether he was talking to paramedics, a deputy or doctors.

"Mr. Silva, during the course of that night, has told at least five different versions of what happened," Gerisch said during opening statements.

Reeves, the star of action flicks such as "Speed" and the upcoming remake of "The Day the Earth Stood Still," sat quietly in the courtroom. He spoke to jurors only once Monday to wish them "good morning."

The actor could spend up to three hours on the witness stand Tuesday, when he is expected to testify about his recollection of the incident. In opening statements, Gerisch said Reeves saw Silva trip over his own feet, and that the actor stopped to help him after the fall.

Reeves had gone to a residential area about 30 miles south of downtown Los Angeles to visit a family member in March 2007, Gerisch said. Silva had followed him after spotting the actor driving his car on Sunset Boulevard and waited until he was leaving, Gerisch said.

Silva shot several photographs of Reeves walking down the street and continued to shoot the actor while he was behind the wheel of his car and trying to pull out of a parking space.

Silva's lawyer, Joseph Farzam, told jurors that Reeves struck the photographer's knee with his car and continued rolling until he fell to the ground. The tumble seriously injured Silva's wrist and required surgery that left him with reduced strength and flexibility, Farzam said.

He said evidence will show that Reeves had his head down when the accident occurred.

The trial will likely feature testimony from several doctors describing the damage to Silva's wrist. Both sides acknowledge the paparazzo injured his wrist years earlier, but Farzam contended Monday the injury was made significantly worse by the fall.

Jury selection had a distinctive Hollywood flair, with several prospective jurors working in the film industry. One woman who listed her occupation as "actress" said she knew people who worked with Reeves, who smiled slightly as she spoke.

One man who said he was once the voice of Bugs Bunny did an impromptu impression, causing laughter in the courtroom.

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Another man who said he hadn't been to a movie theater in 30 years said a friend gave him one of Reeves' movies with spectacular special effects, possibly describing "The Matrix." In the film, Reeves' character joins a war waged on multiple planes of reality.

Whatever the film, the plot threw the man, who said, "Frankly, I didn't understand it."

Those three potential jurors were dismissed, along with an entertainment attorney and others who expressed a negative view of the paparazzi.

Many were familiar with his film roles, and complimented his acting ability. Those who remain on the panel include a law office clerk who described her firm's celebrity clients as "just files," an animator for "The Simpsons" and a government worker who serves as a liaison between film shoots and public parks.

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