

Thursday, November 7, 2002

# Winona Ryder convicted of vandalism, grand theft

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. (AP) — Actress Winona Ryder was convicted Wednesday of stealing \$5,500 worth of high-fashion merchandise from Saks Fifth Avenue last year.

The jury found the star of *Girl, Interrupted* guilty of felony grand theft and vandalism but cleared her of burglary.

The panel reached the verdict after 5 1/2 hours of deliberations over two days.

The two-time Oscar nominee, who marked her

33rd birthday in the defendant's chair, was arrested Dec. 12 as she left the Beverly Hills store, her arms laden with packages.

Ryder did not testify during the trial, which lasted two weeks.

The prosecution told the jury that Ryder came to Saks with large bags on her mind, bringing shopping bags, a garment bag and scissors to snip security tags off items.

"She came, she stole, she left. End of story," Deputy District Attorney Ann Rundle said in her closing argument. "Nowhere does it say people steal because they have to. People steal out of greed, envy, spite, because it's there or for the thrill."

Jurors were shown videotape of Ryder moving through the store laden with goods, and Saks security workers testified that after she was detained she apologetically told them a director had told her to shoplift to prepare for a movie role.

Her attorney denounced the security guards as liars even before the trial began.

At the start of her shopping trip, she paid more than \$3,000 for a jacket and two blouses. The defense said Ryder believed the store would keep her account "open" while she shopped and would charge her later. There was no evidence of an account.

Geragos ridiculed the charge that Ryder vandalized merchandise by cutting holes in clothes when removing the security tags.

"This woman is known for her fashion sense," he said. "Was she going to start a new line of 'Winona wear' with holes in it?"

Settlement talks between the defense and prosecution failed, but just before trial the district attorney's office agreed to dismiss a drug charge after a doctor said he had given her two pills found in her possession when she was arrested.

Ryder has made some two-dozen films since 1986, including *Beverly Hills Cop*, *Heathers*, *Mermade*, *Little Women*, *The Age of Innocence*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *Reality Bites* and *Mr. Deeds*.

She received her Academy Award nominations for *Little Women* (best actress) and for *The Age of Innocence* (supporting actress).



RYDER

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