

By HANNAH FRY, STAFF WRITER

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The man in the dark blazer grabs the microphone and looks straight into the camera inside the dimly lit bar in downtown Los Angeles.

He seems uneasy as he freestyles to the beat, calling himself a “gangster” and rapping incoherently while surrounded by a group of other impromptu performers who gathered in the predawn hours Tuesday at the King Eddy Saloon for its weekly open mic night.

With a drink in one hand and the microphone in the other, the man moves within inches of the camera and begins to rap more forcefully.

“I killed my ... and buried that ... in the ... dirt,” he raps, using expletives. Other performers exchange concerned looks as he walks off the stage.

Authorities are reviewing the footage, obtained by KTLA-TV Channel 5 on Wednesday, which appears to show Robert Camou, 27, who is suspected of kidnapping his girlfriend on Monday, rap about killing and burying a woman and being sought by police. Camou’s girlfriend, 31-year-old Amanda Kathleen Custer, has not been found.

Sheriff’s Department officials confirmed they have seen the footage but have not been able to secure the original file.

“We want to make sure it’s unedited,” said Deputy Trina Schrader, a Sheriff’s Department spokeswoman. “If it’s edited, then in court people can poke holes in it.”

Los Angeles County sheriff’s deputies had already been looking for Camou for nearly a day in connection with Custer’s disappearance when the video was recorded.

Michael R. Moore, 64, was behind the camera around 1 a.m. Tuesday but wasn’t aware of who he had filmed until he saw Camou on television being arrested hours later. He had a strange feeling about the performance, he said.

“What he said, he said it with such force that people just stopped,” Moore said. “They were shocked. There was a lot of hate in his expression.”

As they sat at the bar, Camou sipped a beer and asked Moore where he planned to post the video. Moore told him he was putting it out everywhere — meaning all across his social media accounts.

“He said that was cool,” Moore said.

Camou became the focus of investigators’ kidnapping probe early Monday, when police responding to a domestic violence call at his home in the 600 block of Vaquero Road in Monrovia found blood, Sheriff’s Lt. Scott Hoglund said. He said investigators have not found any remains of the missing woman.

Investigators suspect Camou assaulted Custer and took her from the home against her will. A witness told authorities they saw him putting Custer, who appeared possibly unconscious, in the rear cargo hatch of a 2017 gray Toyota Prius, Hoglund said.

It was not clear if she had been injured when she was put in the car, he added.

The Prius was seen traveling north on Padua Road in Claremont toward Mount Baldy. Investigators are asking anyone who may have seen the vehicle near Mount Baldy on Monday to contact them.

Public records show Custer lives less than a block away from the home on Vaquero Road that Camou shares with his parents. It is not clear when they met, but Hoglund said they had been dating for at least two years.

Much of their relationship has been tumultuous, marred by domestic violence allegations that have become more persistent in the last several months, according to police and Los Angeles County court records.

In early February, Custer sought a restraining order against Camou, alleging that he was verbally, mentally and emotionally abusive toward her. She wrote in the filing that Camou had been harassing her with text messages and phone calls using “over 100 fake numbers” for more than a month when he scaled a side fence to her home and tried to get into her bedroom in late January.

She told him to leave and sat down on the floor of her bedroom until she couldn't hear him anymore. When she looked out the window into her yard, she saw him carrying a hatchet, she wrote.

“As he was walking away with it I opened my window and asked him if he planned on taking that too like he took my book for school,” she wrote. “He turned around came running at my window and broke my double pane window with the hatchet.”

Custer alleged he took the hatchet and smashed the side mirrors off her grandmother's car. Camou is facing a misdemeanor vandalism charge in connection with the incident. He has pleaded not guilty, court records show.

Custer wrote in the filing that Camou has a 12-gauge shotgun and a black handgun that he keeps under his bed, and expressed concern over the safety of her dog, a pit bull-boxer mix named Piper.

“I also think he would go as far as hurting her or killing her to hurt me,” she wrote.

The petition was denied after a hearing in late February. Shortly after they left the courtroom, Camou responded by filing his own restraining order, alleging that Custer hit him on multiple occasions and requesting \$2,000 from her for counseling and temporary housing, the document shows. That request was dismissed by a judge in March.

Records regarding the couple date to April 2018, when a woman identified as Custer's grandmother filed a petition for a restraining order against Camou. She alleged that her granddaughter was choked and her face bloodied in an attack and that Camou would harass them and frequently drive past their house. Her request was also denied after a hearing in May 2018.

Camou was taken into custody early Tuesday — hours after allegedly performing his rap — after Monrovia police informed the LAPD early Tuesday that he might be in the downtown area in a Prius. Officers found the vehicle shortly before 3 a.m. parked half a mile away from the King Eddy bar near the intersection of Hill and 2nd streets.

Camou, who was sleeping in the back seat, was awakened by officers trying to get him to step out of the car. He refused, at times pretending to still be asleep, police said.

About five hours later, an LAPD SWAT team shot tear gas into the car to force him out. Camou was still wearing a dark blazer when officers in tactical gear led him away from the car in handcuffs. He is being held without bail on a warrant related to domestic violence, burglary, battery and assault charges that were filed against him in May. He pleaded not guilty to those charges last month, according to court records.

“At the arraignment our office requested that bail be set at \$150,000, but over the prosecutor’s objections the court released the defendant on electronic monitoring,” said Paul Eakins, a spokesman for the Los Angeles County district attorney’s office. “The prosecutor requested a protective order, which the court issued.”

Times staff writer Richard Winton contributed to this report.