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Terry Melcher, shaper of California surf sound, dies

LOS ANGELES, California (Reuters) -- Terry Melcher, a producer, composer and songwriter who worked with the Beach Boys and helped shape the '60s era California surf music sound, has died, according to his publicist. He was 62.

Melcher, son of actress-singer Doris Day, also produced several hits for the Byrds, including "Mr. Tambourine Man."

Melcher died Friday at his Beverly Hills home after a long battle with cancer, publicist Linda Dozoretz said Sunday.

Day was in Carmel on Sunday and unavailable for comment. "She and Terry were extremely close and close in age because she was 17 when she had him," Dozoretz said.

"They were amazing together. There wasn't a day that went by when Terry wasn't involved with one of his mother's projects," she said.

In 1969, Melcher's name was associated with convicted murderer Charles Manson and the deaths of actress Sharon Tate and her friends. The murders took place in a house that Melcher had sublet to Tate. Manson had known about the house through an acquaintance with Melcher.

Melcher had auditioned Manson for a recording contract but turned him down. After the murders, rumors swirled that in choosing the Tate house for his gang to commit murder, Manson had intended to send a message to Melcher. Spokeswoman Dozoretz said police later discounted this theory.

Born Terry Jorden, Melcher was the son of Day and her first husband, Al Jorden. He was later adopted by Day's third husband, Martin Melcher, and took his name.

He began his career as "Terry Day," capitalizing on his mother's famous name. However he later became known in his own right, singing background tracks, writing lyrics, playing the piano, composing and producing.

Melcher teamed with future Beach Boy Bruce Johnston in the early 1960s. The duo eventually formed the group the Rip Chords, who recorded the 1964 hit "Hey, Little Cobra."

He also wrote songs with Bobby Darin and Randy Newman. But it wasn't until the mid-1960s, when he joined Columbia Records as a producer, that he made his mark on the California sound.

He was instrumental in helping craft the Byrds' groundbreaking fusion of rock and folk and produced several of the group's hits, including their versions of Bob Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" and Pete Seeger's "Turn, Turn, Turn."

Melcher also co-wrote the hit "Kokomo" for the Beach Boys. The song, used in the movie "Cocktail," was nominated for a Golden Globe in 1988 for best original song.

During his career Melcher also worked with Paul Revere and the Raiders, Taj Mahal, Ry Cooder, Glen Campbell, Gram Parsons and the Mamas and the Papas, among others.


Melcher later worked more frequently with his mother. From 1968 to 1972, he served as the executive producer of "The Doris Day Show" on CBS. He also co-produced "Doris Day's Best Friends," which ran in the 1980s, Dozoretz said.

Melcher is survived by his mother, his wife, Terese, and one son, Ryan.

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