

Musician known as one who did it his way

ROBIN SYLER | 1951-2005

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Robin Syler's music, say friends and fans, defied categorization.

He knew blues, surf music and rock 'n' roll," said Wes Race, a longtime friend who also produced some of Mr. Syler's music.

But he could also do country-Western and just about everything else. He could do just about anything he set his mind to."

Mr. Syler, 54, was found dead in his home Sunday evening. The Tarrant County Medical Examiner's Office ruled his death a suicide.

His funeral was Thursday in Dallas. It drew some of the biggest names in North Texas' music and art scene, including musicians Jim Suhler and Smokin' Joe Kubek, and acclaimed cartoonist Mike Judge, who once played in a band with Mr. Syler. Local blues singer Johnny Mack performed

Mr. Syler was born March 12, 1951, and grew up in the Dallas area. He moved to Fort Worth several years ago and quickly became a part of the city's blues scene.

Influenced by musicians such as Jimmy Reed and Albert King, his style was completely his own. He often performed at the Keys Lounge on Westcreek Drive and J&J Texas Roadhouse and Blues Bar on Woodward

Street.

"Robin wasn't so much a great blues player as much as he played the blues great," says another friend and fellow musician Sumter Bruton. "He was a great player, a wonderful player. He played rockabilly, blues, rock 'n' roll and surf music, and played 'em all well."

In the 1970s, Mr. Syler played in the band Krackerjack with legendary blues-rock guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan. He later shared the studio and stage with players such as Doyle Bramhall, Jimmie Vaughan and Homer Henderson.

Mr. Syler's interests went beyond music, but he approached other projects with the same eclectic enthusiasm.

"He was into hip, funky, esoteric things," Race says. "He made some of his own cowboy shirts. He was beginning to build and work on bicycles before he died. He did some of his own decor at home."

But Mr. Syler will mostly be remembered for his genre-defying music.

"You couldn't put him in a certain mold," Bruton says. "He played rock 'n' roll. Let's put it like that. He really did."

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