

Hugh Farr

Farr, Hugh. Fiddle player; b. Llano, Texas, December 6, 1903; d. Casper, Wyoming, March 17, 1980. He was briefly a member of the Farr Brothers, a band he had with his brother Karl Farr. Hugh Farr also was a member of the popular singing group, the Sons of the Pioneers. Farr joined the group with his brother Karl in 1934, when it was still called the Pioneer Trio. As part of the Sons of the Pioneers, the Farr brothers enjoyed a very successful recording career and appeared in such films as “Bells of San Angelo,” “Two-Fisted Rangers,” and “Riders of Black River” with Gene Autry, Bing Crosby, Roy Rogers, and other movie stars of the 1930s and 1940s.

One of the most enduring groups in country music, the Sons of the Pioneers have been active from the early 1930s to the present. The group sang not only traditional folk and country tunes, but they also wrote new material of their own, including such international hits as Bob Nolan’s “Tumbling Tumbleweeds” and “Way Out There,” and Tim Spencer’s “Room Full of Roses.”

The Sons of the Pioneers also were known for having extraordinary three and four-part harmonies, along with a very refined and polished live stage presence, which helped earn them a reputation as being more “genteel” than many other cowboy groups of the time. As Peter Stanfield notes, the Sons of the Pioneers’ arrangements often reflect a jazz influence, in terms of sophistication and spontaneity. Hugh Farr’s first-rate fiddle playing certainly helped bolster this sound, particularly on such jazz numbers as Jelly Roll Morton’s “Milenburg Joys” or W.C. Handy’s “St. Louis Blues.”

The Sons of the Pioneers also were capable of performing many other styles of music, from square dances to waltzes. The band recorded prolifically, including a string of 151 songs for the Standard Radio Transcription Company made between August 1934 and September 1935.

Although Hugh Farr left the Sons of the Pioneers in 1958, the band continued to perform. In recognition of their contributions to country music Farr and the other members of the Sons of the Pioneers were inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1976. The Smithsonian Institute also has listed the group as a ‘national treasure’. Hugh Farr died four year after the group’s induction on March 17, 1980 in Casper, Wyoming.