

PFM

Title: Cook (Expanded Edition)

Label: Manticore

Release Date: 2011

Medium: CD

Availability: Very Good

Venue: University Of Toronto, Toronto, CN
Central Park, NYC, NY

Recording Date: August 22 and 31, 1974

Lineup: Franco Mussida - Guitar, vocals
Flavio Premoli - Keyboards, vocals
Mauro Pagani - Violin, flute

Framz Di Cicoccio - Drums, vocals
Patrick Djivas - Bass, vocals

Set List: Four Holes In The Ground
Dove ... Quando
Just Look Away
Celebration
Mr. Nine 'Till Five
Alta Loma Five Till Nine
River Of Life (NYC)
Four Holes In The Ground (NYC)

Is My Face On Straight (NYC)
Dove ... Quando (NYC)
Guitar Solo (NYC)
Just Look Away (NYC)
Mr. Nine 'Till Five (NYC)
Alta Loma Five Till Nine (NYC)
Celebration (NYC)

Premiata Forneria Marconi, better known as PFM, is an Italian progressive band that has been active since the late sixties. They were the first Italian rock band to chart records in both America and England. They also successfully toured in both countries. The band was the first Italian band to use synthesizers, combine symphonic classical and traditional Italian music in a rock format, and have dominated the Italian record charts since their formation. In total, they charted two albums in America and ten in Italy, including four top ten albums. They remain active as of 2017.

The band had its roots in a 1964 band called the Black Devils, which included guitarist Franco Mussida (born in Milan, Italy on March 21, 1947), drummer Franz Di Cioccio, guitarist singer Pino Favaloro and bassist Tony Gesualdi. They became the backing band for singer Gian Pieretti, who released a handful of singles in 1964 and 1965. In 1966, the backing group broke away and formed a pop rock band called I Quelli that specialized in performing Italian language covers of popular hit singles of the day, including The Turtles' "Happy Together" and Traffic's "Hole In My Shoe". At that point, the lineup included singer Teo Teocoli, bassist Giorgio Piazza, Mussida, and Favaloro. In 1967, keyboardist Flavio Premoli (born Varese 1949) was added. Teocoli left in 1967 and was replaced by Alberto Radius.

I Quelli (also Quelli) released 12 singles and one album between 1966 and 1970 on Ricordi Records in Italy. While they were popular in their home country, the musicians grew restless with the pop format and were looking for a change. The newest rage throughout Europe was progressive rock, which relied on the instrumental capabilities of the band. In 1969, they met violinist/flautist Mauro Pagani (born February 5, 1946 in Lombardy) in Milan. He was a member of the group Dalton and also wanted to make a change. An accomplished musician on many levels, Pagani suggested that they form a new group that would focus on progressive rock, similar to King Crimson, Yes, and Jethro Tull. Mussida, Premoli, Di Cioccio, and Piazza agreed and the five formed Forneria Marconi, named after a bakery shop in Chiari, Italy.

Since all five members were established musicians, they quickly attracted interest from within the industry. Producer Alessandro Colombini did not think their name was strong enough so he suggested that they add Premiata, which means award winning. They also signed a new recording contract with Numero Uno Records and signed with manager Franco Mamone. He immediately got them opening slots for major groups like Procol Harem, Yes, and Deep Purple.

In June, 1971, the band competed at a competition at a music festival in Viareggio. They were co winners, which resulted in a recording contract with RCA's Italian division, Numero Uno Records. Their first single, "Impressioni di Settembre", was the first Italian hit to feature a synthesizer. The group was featured on Italian television and released their first album, *Storia di un minuto* (1972) in January, 1972. The album combined progressive and symphonic rock, with elements of classical, Italian folk, and jazz. It received great reviews and peaked at number three in Italy.

They followed with *Per un amico* (1972) in November, 1972. It also received great reviews and is now considered by Rolling Stone magazine to be the 19th best progressive rock album of all time. It peaked at number 13 in Italy. As with their debut, all lyrics were sung in Italian. While ELP was touring Italy in late 1972, Greg Lake and Peter Sinfield attended a PFM concert on December 20, 1972 in Rome. ELP was in the process of forming their own label, Manticore Records, in combination with Island Records at the time. Once the label was formed, Atlantic Records took over from Island as Manticore's distribution outlet. ELP quickly signed PFM and Sinfield began to work with the band on new lyrics and production.

PFM's Manticore debut, *Photos Of Ghosts* (#180-1973), was recorded in January, 1973 in London and released in October, 1973. Sinfield produced it and wrote new lyrics on five of the seven songs. The album contained one re-recorded song from their debut album, all of *Per un amico* with four of the five song's lyrics rewritten by Sinfield, and one new track. Led by "Celebration", which received significant airplay on American and Canadian FM radio stations, the album entered the American pop albums chart, peaking at number 180. It was the first album by an Italian rock group to ever make the American charts.

Following the release of the album, Piazza left the band and was replaced by Patrick Djivas (born May 23, 1947 in Cannes, France). They toured Great Britain and Europe in April and May, opening for Ten Years After. With the record selling in the United States, PFM started a North American tour on July 6, 1974. They played 13 shows in total, opening for Peter Frampton and J. Geils, Santana, ELP and The Allman Brothers Band. Shows in Toronto and NYC Central Park were recorded and the band was well received by American audiences.

In 1974, the group released their fourth album, which was recorded in both Italian and English. The Italian version was called *L'isola di niente* (1974) with the English version released as *The World Became The World* (1974). The album peaked at number four in Italy and incorporated more of a jazz fusion feel, with complex musical passages. Once again, it received solid reviews. They toured Italy in October, 1974, then returned to North America in November, playing 17 more shows. During this tour, they opened for Poco, Blue Oyster Cult, Dave Mason, Robin Trower, Johnny Winter, Foghat, and Fleetwood Mac.

In late 1974, the band pulled together the live tapes recorded earlier that year during their North American tour and released them as *Cook* (#154-1975), which was released as *Live in USA* throughout Europe. It peaked at number seven in Italy. It would be their most successful American album. It was also their last album solely released by Manticore Records and their last collaboration with Sinfield.

After appearing on NBC's *Midnight Special* on February 21, 1975, the band returned to Italy. Believing that they needed a stronger lead singer to take the next step, they recruited Bernardo Lanzetti from the band Acqua Fragile. During his college years, Lanzetti had lived in Austin, Texas and as a result, could speak fluent English. The new six piece signed a record contract with Numero Uno Records and recorded a new album, *Chocolate Kings* (1975). It was distributed by Manticore in England and Asylum Records in the States.

The new album featured a more hard rock sound and did not sell as well as previous records in Italy. It did not chart in America but was well received in England, although it did not chart. It did chart in Italy, peaking at number six. In support, the group appeared on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* in 1976 in support. After the supporting tour ended, Pagani left the band to start a solo career. The group members replaced him with ex It's A Beautiful Day violinist Gregory Bloch and recorded their next studio album, *Jet Lag* (1977), in Los Angeles in January, 1977. It would be their last English language release. It was released by Zoo Records and distributed by Manticore and Asylum Records. The album returned to the jazz fusion style of *The World Became The World* and peaked at number fourteen in Italy.

By the end of 1977, Bloch had left the band. Their 1978 studio album, *Passpartu* (1978) was a complete departure from their previous releases. It was recorded in Italy in January, 1978 for Zoo Records and featured elements of world music, Italian folk, and Latin music. Nearly all the guitar work was acoustic. It peaked at number 18 in Italy but was the last record to feature Lanzetti, who left soon after it's release in 1978.

In 1979, PFM replaced Bloch with Lucio Fabbri and performed a series of concerts with Italian singer Fabrizio De Andre. The performances were later released as *In Concerto* (1979) and *In Concerto – Volume 2* (1980). Their next independent album, *Suonare Suonare* (1980) was released on Numero Uno in 1980. It peaked at number sixteen in Italy but was the last album for Premoli, who left to pursue a solo career. He was not replaced. The band followed with *Come Ti Va In Riva Alla Citta* (1981) and the live album, *Performance* (1982), which was recorded on July 24, 1981 in Italy. Both charted in Italy, peaking at numbers 16 and 15 respectively.

For the remainder of the eighties, PFM focused on their Italian market. They released *PFM?PFM!* (1984), which featured second drummer Walter Calloni. *Miss Baker* (1987) followed three years later. Neither charted in their home country so after completing a supporting tour, the band took an extended hiatus. In 1997, four of the five members of their most popular lineup reunited. Premoli, Di Cioccio, Djivas, and Mussida released *Ulisse* (1997). They followed with a new live album, *www.pfmpfm.it* (1998).

A new studio album, *Serendipity* (2000), featured new drummer Roberto Gualdi. A new live album, *Live In Japan 2002* was recorded in May and September, 2002. It included the Mussida, Di Cioccio, Djivas, Premoli lineup along with new second drummer Peiro Monterisi and violinist Lucio Fabbri, who had returned to the band. None of these albums charted. The 2005 rock opera, *Dracula*, was the last PFM album to include Premoli, who left in early 2005. That same year, PFM toured the U.S. for the first time since 1977. They appeared at the 7th NEARfest Progressive Rock Festival in Bethlehem PA on July 8, 2005. They also played shows in Canada, Brazil, Mexico, Panama, and Venezuela during the same tour.

The all instrumental *Stati di immaginazione* (2006) included Premoli's replacement, Gianiuca Tagliavini. In 2007, they returned to the States once again to play NEARfest in June. *A.D. 2010 – La buona novella* (2010) and *PFM In Classic – Da Mozart a Celebration* (2013) followed.

In 2011, Monterisi left and was replaced by Roberto Gualdi who returned on drums. Alessandro Scaglione joined the band on keyboards the following year. In March, 2015, Mussida called it quits to focus on the CPM Music Institute, which he is President. He was replaced by Marco Stogli. The group also added a second keyboardist, Alberto Bravin. The band continues to release live albums at a frequent pace. The last two are *A Ghost* (2015) and *The World* (2015). Both were recorded in 2014 and were the last two albums to include Mussida. As of September, 2017, the band is touring, with dates booked into 2018.

PFM is featured on a handful of compilations that are not combinations of previously released full albums. Snapper's 1998 set, *PFM – A Celebration*, contains 26 tracks. Esoteric Recordings' 2010 release, *River Of Life – The Manticore Years Anthology 1973-1977*, includes 20 tracks. Victor's 2010 set, *Pieces From Manticore – The Best Of Premiata Forneria Marconi*, contains 12 tracks.

The group has released a slew of live albums, many of them later day recordings. Stick with these. Esoteric's 2011 set, *Cook Expanded Edition*, contains the original six song release recorded in 1973 plus the entire Central Park show, which consists of 9 tracks. Numero Uno's 1982 release, *Performance*, includes 9 tracks recorded in 1982. . RTI's 1996 set, *10 Anni Live 1971 – 1981*, contains 50 tracks from five different tours. In 1997, the label broke up the CD into four separate sets, volumes 1 through 4. RTI's 1998 release, www.pfmpfm.it, includes 19 tracks recorded in 1998. Sony's 2002 set, *Live In Japan*, contains 27 tracks recorded in 2002. Finally, Manticore's 2014 release, *Paper Charms – The Complete BBC Recordings 1974-1976*, includes 14 tracks recorded at two 1976 shows.

My only live recording of PFM is their 1974 set, *Cook*. The original six song set was recorded in Toronto, Canada and at the Schaefer Music Festival in NYC's Central Park in August, 1974. The 2011 Expanded Deluxe edition contains the same six songs and the entire Central Park, which consisted of nine tracks. At the time, the group's lineup included Franco Mussida, Flavio Premoli, Patrick Djivas, Franz Di Cioccio, and Mauro Pagani. This is universally considered to be their strongest lineup. Recording quality is excellent.

In 1974, PFM had established a following in North America through their 1973 minor chart album, *Photos Of Ghosts*. They toured North America for the first time, opening for Little Feat, The Beach Boys, The Allman Brothers Band, Aerosmith, ZZ Top, Peter Frampton, and Santana. One of their higher profile appearances was at the Schaefer Music Festival in NYC's Central Park. By the brewing company of the same name, the festival ran from 1967 through 1976. Unlike large festivals like Woodstock, the concerts were spaced out over the entire summer, with two shows booked a night at the 7,000 seat Wollman Rink auditorium. Nearly every American and British band of note played their at least one time.

PFM performed at the auditorium on August 31, 1974. They were the only band booked that night so the audience was there to hear them play. The show included nine tracks from their career up to that point. These included one track from their debut album, three tracks from *Photos Of Ghosts*, three tracks from *The World Became The World*, on acoustic guitar solo, and one new track.

The Central Park portion of the CD begins with the prog rocker, "River Of Life", from *Photos Of Ghosts*. This is sophisticated progressive rock, sounding very much like ELP and King Crimson, with some Yes like passages thrown in for good measure.. There is plenty of flute from Pagani, some nice harmony vocals, and lots of intricate instrumental work. Premoli's mellotron sounds great, recreating the sound of a full orchestra. Mussida's guitar work is nimble, often played in tandem with the flute.

“Four Holes In The Ground” from *The World Became The World* incorporates some medieval folk elements into the mix, ala Jethro Tull. It quickly morphs into a progressive jazz piece, with flute, loud guitar, and outstanding drum and bass work from Di Cioccio and Djivas. This one was clearly influenced by Yes, with keyboard generated symphonic elements offset by the driving guitar dominated sections. It is very complex and played to perfection. The ending synchronized ever increasing tempo is jaw dropping good.

“Is My Face On Straight” from *The World Became The World*, begins quietly, with a pastoral feel punctuated by rock rhythms. It quickly becomes Wishbone Ash/Gentle Giant like, with harmony vocals, an outstanding flute solo that flows into a hard rock section filled with guitar and synthesizer triplets, intricate extremely fast coordinated violin, guitar, and keyboard sequences, and more harmony vocals. There’s a great wah wah enhanced guitar solo and a fast organ solo, followed by a rock based sequence with all the guitar, synthesizer, bass, and drum work you would ever want. The second half of the song is all Premoli, who constantly shifts between keyboards, putting on a performance that would make Keith Emerson smile. During this sequence, Djivas’ bass work is jazz like good, as good as anything you would hear from Stanley Clarke or Jaco Pastorius.

“Dove ... Quando” from their debut album is a complete change of direction. It is quiet and slow, with the main instrumentation on electric piano and flute. It is sung in Italian. It flows directly into a dynamic classical acoustic guitar piece that is both subtle and bombastic. That flows into “Just Look Away” from *The World Became The World*. The song is pastoral in nature, with synth, flute, and violin lines weaving in between acoustic guitar fingerpicking, with some great use of harmonics. These vocals are sung in English by Di Cioccio and are very well performed.

The band returns to a full electric mode with the dauntingly complex “Mr. Nine ‘Till Five”. This is the closest thing on the album to pure progressive jazz, with sophisticated drum, guitar, keyboard, violin, and bass work. It is incredibly well played, with every note hit with precision. It is also fast, with one particular section feature military march style drums supporting a piccolo and synth sequence. Mussida’s guitar work is incredible, with wah wah effects and a jaw dropping duel with Di Cioccio’s drums to see who can play faster at the end the song. It ends with the opening chords of the nearly twenty minute instrumental, “Alta Loma Five Till Nine”.

The song is a series of extended solos by every member of the band. It has a definite King Crimson feel with dominant mellotron backing and virtuosic playing by all involved. During the ending sequence, the band actually launches into the “William Tell Overture”. Mussida’s extended guitar work is a combination of Robert Fripp and John McLaughlin, the bass work of Djivas is fast and inventive, the violin work of Pagini is explosive and electronically enhanced, Di Cioccio is on fire on drums, and Premoli is heavily featured on a variety of keyboards.

The set ends with their FM radio hit, “Celebration”. This one is also given an extended workout, clocking in at over 15 minutes. This is old styled progressive rock, with galloping drums and bass, a distinctive opening synth riff, escalating scales, and a very definite ELP sound. There are also shades of Deep Purple. The harmony vocals evoke back to the first two tracks of the set. There are tempo shifts, fast flute and keyboard sequences, a Carl Palmer like drum solo, and a snippet of the title track from *The World Became The World*.

The first six tracks of the album, which constitutes the original release, features songs from a Toronto show nine days earlier and songs from the performance described above. It is hard to tell which tracks were

recorded where but the overall performance is exactly the same. “Four Holes In The Ground” has the same intro as the NYC version, so I am assuming that was where it was recorded. “Dove ... Quando” also seems to have been taken from the NYC show. This version of “Just Look Away” combines the guitar solo from NYC with the song itself. I’m guessing that this one was recorded in Toronto.

The original version of “Celebration” is definitely from Toronto. It is shorter but played extremely well. “Mr. Nine To Five” sounds exactly like the version played above but has a slightly different ending so I’m guessing Toronto. Finally, “Alta Loma Five Till Nine” is shorter so once again I am guess Toronto.

In the end, it doesn’t matter where these songs were recorded since the performance level of each and every song is off the map. PFM clearly could match any of their contemporaries in terms of musical ability, although I will admit that they were not as gifted vocally. Still, this is daunting complex stuff that rivals anything their better trained progressive jazz were playing at the time. While not a necessity in any live collection, definitely worth owning.