

Experimental explorers Panurge have embarked on an unrelenting quest for sonic perfection. Walking in the Fog – the band’s third album – charts their invigorating pursuit of such elusive quarry.

In the spring of 2000, occasional collaborators Daniel Byrne, Chris Lovell and Jon Schubert set up shop in a Vancouver home studio and recorded “Listen to Your Own.” Infusing vintage pop songwriting with contemporary electronic production, the song elicited an immediate groundswell of praise. Banding together as Panurge, the trio produced Erectangle - an engaging musical collage of psychedelic folk, late-Sixties pop, spacey atmospherics and infectious beats.

The self-released album garnered Panurge national airplay, critical plaudits, festival showcases and a record contract. With fourth member C.L. McLaughlin added to the fold, Panurge retreated to the studio and crafted Throw Down the Reins. Trading in the same genre-defying traits as its forbearer, Reins witnessed Panurge’s adroit arrangements and studied songcraft vault to new heights. Following a national tour, the record was nominated for a Western Canadian Music Award for Best Independent Album.

Even while supporting their sophomore disc, work was already underway on Walking in the Fog. Enforcing short deadlines during the demo stage, Panurge often found themselves recording and arranging songs in the same day. The truncated process spawned their most spontaneous work to date. The final months of 2005 were then dedicated to the recording of the album proper. The end result is a wondrous melding of the eccentric immediacy of Erectangle and the accomplished execution of Throw Down the Reins.

Released August 22, 2006 on Last Gang Records, Walking in the Fog is the product of a band that’s eschewed influence’s sway in order to forge a distinct identity of their own. While Panurge was originally a creative collision of individuals, the band now employs a hive mind with their craft. It has become nearly impossible to discern where one member’s contribution concludes and another’s commences.

Walking in the Fog’s twelve songs capably emulate their creators’ symbiotic relationship. Culling the tracklist from over two dozen candidates, Panurge chose complementary compositions that embodied overarching themes and milieus. As has always been the band’s penchant, the songs prescribe to the “sugar the pill” philosophy. Summery melodies temper dark lyrics and sinister undercurrents suffuse the seemingly innocuous. As such, a pop fable such as “Monkey Town” is far more indebted to Jonathan Swift than Dr. Seuss.

Once concerned with meticulously recreating their studio recordings on stage, Panurge now endeavour to reinvent their catalogue when performing live. Sequenced orchestral arrangements and programmed percussion have been abandoned in favour of analog synths and a flesh-and-blood drummer. During a spring tour with labelmates Metric, audiences witnessed a newly emboldened Panurge road test their new album. Jittery, bass-heavy “Black Box” incited the masses to move as one. The soaring grandeur of “Amazon Molly” brought them to a full stop. The vocal hooks of “Smile All the While” sunk deep and left an indelible mark. Panurge had emerged as a band whose live prowess now rivalled their studio wizardry.

All told, it could be argued that Walking in the Fog is a misnomer for the band’s latest album. A literal interpretation of the title evokes directionless wandering through indistinguishable surroundings. Conversely, Panurge are carrying out their musical vision with greater focus and clarity than ever before.

