

ABEL GANZ: *Shooting Albatross*
2008 (CD, 66:05); Abel Records ARAG001CD
Style: Neo-progressive rock
Sound: ** Composition: *** Musicianship: ******
Performance: *1/2 Total rating: 14 ½**

To call this release long-anticipated suggests that anyone was waiting to hear again from Abel Ganz, a second-tier neo-progressive outfit that had its share of followers but appeared to exist in the shadows of Marillion, IQ and Pendragon. Nonetheless, the band is back with its first disc in 14 years since its last studio album (*The Deafening Silence*) and 24 years since its debut (*Gratuitous Flash*). The result is surprising to say the least: The band's sound has matured into a lovely blend of neo-progressive and classic folk music.

All four tracks are epic in nature (the shortest is 12:55) and feature all the requisite touchstones -- 12-string acoustic guitars, Fender Rhodes, Hammond organ, Moog and mellotron, along with a few exotic turns via bouzouki, sitar and banjo.

The playing is outstanding throughout, with guest appearances by Chris Fry (Magenta) and Alan Reed (Pallas). The longest track, "So Far," makes a wonderful statement that this is an impressive band overlooked far too long, and hopefully will encourage folks to revisit their catalog. -- **Mark Newman**