

PINES, THE BEST NEW THING FROM A *FINE FRENZY*

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HNotes Ezine

*The entire record is a story, and each song is a chapter that leads into the next* —Alison Sudol.

For quite a while I haven't heard so much grace and beauty in an album, then along came *Pines*, the third life evoking studio record from Californian singer-songwriter Alison Sudol. A conceptual album in all its significance, *Pines* is progressive music on the softer side of rock with a hint of new age. It even includes an illustrated e-book and a short animated film as companions to the music. The record is mostly filled with acoustic guitars, piano, melodic and minor percussion, Sudol's impressive vocal skills. *Pines* has various movements, possibly taken from the artist's obvious classical music expertise and influence, from pop and folk to landscape soundtrack music, with unexpected ups and downs, twists and turns, yet still, everything is astonishingly connected into a well crafted whole.

A record like *Pines* could have gone into the abyss in no time in the hands of a lesser imaginative mind, but this is not the case for Sudol's 13 meditations on biology, environment, topography and well-being: she is a master architect of atmosphere, a blessed composer. Her delicate and innovative arrangements steer *Pine's* narrative into a XXI century win-win, and all tracks flow as naturally as a river to the impetuous sea.

The album, recorded live, has the power to soothe stressed and troubled minds, to take its listeners into an incredible journey each and every time, then bring them back home full of peace and tranquility. *Pines* is like a walk through the woods. Most of the lyrics' imagery of the record are forest-inspired, embellished even more with assertive sounds of nature: from birds chirping to a river flowing here and there, and a delicate fairy-like voice beautifully creeping into the music.

Some say *Pines* is an odd, anthropomorphic fable about a tree, others say Sudol spends too much time among the giant redwoods. I say *Pines* is a highly creative thank you note from the artist, an environmental campaigner herself, to Mother Nature, and the means by which she begs us listeners to spend more time in the wild, enjoying the beauty of the world we live in, connecting with the skies and the birds, the grass and the rivers, the wind and the rain, the leaves and the ants...

Track list:

1. Pinesong
2. Winds of Wander
3. Avalanches
4. Riversong
5. The Sighting
6. Dream in the Dark
7. Sailingsong
8. Sadseason
9. They Can't If You Don't Let Them
10. Dance of the Grey Whales
11. It's Alive
12. Now Is the Start
13. Untitled (Grasses Grow)