

# ACOUSTIC GUITAR

## PLAYLIST

May 2017



KELLER WILLIAMS RAW

### Keller Williams

*Raw*

(Self-released)

**Six years in the making, the jam-band star records winning solo acoustic effort**

Despite its disjointed recording history, the solo, all-acoustic *Raw* may just be the perfect Keller Williams album. Williams started the project in 2011, but it lay fallow until he jump-started it again after a winter 2017 tour with Leo Kottke. Those gigs must have inspired Williams, because *Raw* is one of his most consistent sets, focused on his multi-voiced guitar style in which tapping, chiming harmonics, knotty picking, and lyrical strumming collide and conjoin. It's as if Williams' guitar is speaking in tongues.

On "Cookies," plangent strumming gives way to two-handed tapping, which recalls the techniques of Michael Hedges, a key influence on Williams' playing. Rapid-fire triplets tumble into a warren of jittery picking and bell-toned grace notes on the time-signature-slipping "Return to the Moon." Tapped guitar strings stutter with antic energy on the percolating "Thanks Leo," a tip of the hat to Kottke.

Williams' winsome, surreal humor surfaces on "I Forgot," a paranoid gun culture free-association borne on flanged and chunky guitar, and "Short Show," in which Williams' foggy, friendly croon weaves a scatological tale of a gig cut short by a shower of pigeon droppings.

But it's the instrumentals that truly shine, like "Ticks When Told," where pinging harmonics, restless strumming, and rippling picking recede like distant galaxies.

*Raw* is Williams unvarnished, shorn of electric guitars, pedals, and collaborators, but it's still a Baroque and coruscating leap down the rabbit hole. Maybe he should record all his albums like this.

—PM.