

relix

DECEMBER 2018

REVIEWS

Keller Williams

Sans FREEKY DISC



It seems almost impossible that it took **Keller Williams** 23 studio albums to finally create one that's all

instrumental. This is, after all, a man whose mastery of the guitar—meaning the instrument and all the insane pedals that could possibly come with it—truly does make his music sing. But now, nearly 25 years after Williams' cult-classic debut *Freek*, here we are with *Sans*, a quick, nine-track release of cheerfully grooving exercises that blend immaculate guitar-picking with gentle and playful electronics. That fusion is nothing new for Williams, but without any bouncing vocal melodies on the album, the interwoven organic and electronic sounds are the main attraction, making for a release that feels a bit more like a preview for something more ambitious. Taken as it is, though, *Sans* is nothing if not fun. On tracks like "Rosahamboagogo," Williams is a sonic mad scientist, tinkering with jittery melodies, a whole cast of percussion elements (hello, cowbell) and plenty of synthesizers, slide whistles and the always-otherworldly theremin. Williams never quite digs into the grooves on *Sans*, preferring to let them float along and dissipate like a cool breeze. These compositions are more collages than songs, but they'll provide fun fodder for Williams to further experiment with live. *Sans* ends with the retro swing of "The Cabella Vibe," featuring two guest stars: Williams' daughter **Ella** on drums, vibraphone and vocals, and son **Cabell**, who provides the distorted "sing trip" vocal effect on marimba—a wink from an artist who's always wanted his music to be a fun experience for everyone. *Justin Jacobs*