Elk City - Everybody's Insecure (2018)



1 Sparrow 2 He's Having a Baby 3 Ride the Slide 4 What If I Said You Were Dead 5 Everybody's Insecure 6 My Manual 7 25 Lines 8 No Depth 9 Root Beer Shoes 10 Souls in Space Carl Baggeley - Organ, Piano, Synthesizer Claudia Chopek - Viola, Violin Sean Eden - Guitar (Acoustic), Guitar (Electric) Ray Ketchem - Drums, Mixing, Percussion, Producer, Synthesizer Renee LoBue - Vocals, Vocals (Background) Martin Olson - Guitar (Bass)

Elk City leaders Ray Ketchem (drums and production) and Renée LoBue (vocals) had plenty to keep them busy during the eight years that separated 2010's House of Tongues and 2018's Everybody's Insecure. Ketchem opened a successful recording studio in Montclair, New Jersey, and LoBue occasionally helped him out with various projects. But you have to give them credit; they've managed to stay firmly on message after a long layoff from the band. Everybody's Insecure doesn't entirely pick up where House of Tongues left off; Ketchem's production skills have gotten a bit sharper with time, and the album sounds a bit fuller than much of their previous work. The set also finds Ketchem and LoBue working with some new collaborators; guitarist Sean Eden is the only other holdover from the last incarnation of Elk City, with keyboardist Carl Baggeley and bassist Martin Olson debuting on this LP. But the well-mannered and finely crafted arty pop that's been the band's stock in trade since 2000 is ultimately little changed here, and LoBue's coolly theatrical vocal style and thoughtful if oblique lyrical stance are as strong and distinctive as they've ever been. Elk City are quite good at generating melodies that fit their template; tunes like "25 Lines" and "No Depth" display an admirable amount of hooks and energy, while more introspective tracks such as "Souls in Space" and "He's Having a Baby" show off the band's ensemble skills. At their best, Elk City sound like what 10,000 Maniacs could have been if they'd grown past their folkie inclinations, and Everybody's Insecure shows the group has matured gracefully, sounding smart and adult without tossing aside the energy of their younger days. ---Mark Deming, AllMusic Review

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