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Beth Orton review – spontaneous and spine-tingling

ABC, Glasgow

Revisiting her Central Reservation could have been a dry curatorial exercise, but Orton's infectious irreverence and musical detours made for an engaging album gig



Graeme Virtue

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Going off-piste ... Beth Orton at the ABC in Glasgow. Photograph: Peter Kaminski/Barcroft Media

It's been 15 years since the release of *Central Reservation*, the polished mix of folk, jazz and dance-inflected astral tweaks that bagged Beth Orton a Brit award and solidified her enduring image as the queen of palliative post-club playlists. An anniversary-marking double-album edition came out this week, with Orton embarking on a mini tour to support it. In front of a hushed, seated audience, she seems a little bemused by the

whole thing. "I'm not sure what you're supposed to do when you rerelease a record," she confides. "I feel like I should tell a story." In the end, Orton destarches the reverent atmosphere by goofing around between songs, pulling faces and teasing her four-piece band.

At these sort of gigs, artists generally play the album in sequence, before throwing in some hits for the encore, and Orton initially sticks to the blueprint. *Stolen Car* remains a deceptively purposeful opener: despite the refrain about "the feeling that I just do not belong", it's Orton's vocal line that consistently preempts and leads the song. After the soft swing of *Sweetest Decline* and shimmering *Couldn't Cause Me Harm*, she goes off-piste, reordering tracks seemingly on the fly and interpolating newer songs, such as the cheerfully ramshackle [Shopping Trolley](#) and the soothing, chugging [Call Me the Breeze](#). These detours, and Orton's infectious irreverence, enliven what could have been a dry curatorial exercise. Almost all of *Central Reservation* gets revisited, including the title track, in a loop-enhanced version that acknowledges the impact of its various remixes. But Orton holds back some key songs for the encore, including the album's seven-minute centrepiece, [Pass in Time](#). The original features backing vocals from the late Terry Callier, but Orton's solo version, just her and her guitar, is also a spine-tingling marvel.



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