

## Musicology

### Beth Orton

Comfort of Strangers

By Shawnté Salabert



Moving away from the poppier tone of critical darling *Daybreaker* and its subsequent remix effort, Beth Orton returns to her mellow, folksy home on *Comfort of Strangers*. The Brit's voice is, as ever, a sulking and sparse combination of Fiona Apple, Edie Brickell, and Cat Power, and being so, it rarely leaves a small vocal radius — causing a sort of monotone drone to permeate some of the more repetitive, quiet songs ('Shadow of a Doubt' especially). Luckily, it sounds like someone tossed the girl a few sugar packets on some of the jazzier numbers, which saves *Comfort* from being relegated to the stuff-you-play-in-the-background-at-work pile. The album's opener, 'Worms', is particularly biting, with Orton calling herself an "apple-eating heathen," and the piano in 'Heartland Truckstop' proves that a drum kit isn't the only thing that can provide a beat. Orton's a little mopey, sure, but you won't mistake her for depressed.

-- *The L Magazine*, 2006