

'I SWOPPED THE COMMUTE FOR LIFE AS A MUSICIAN'

SARAH MCQUAID is recalling her previous life as a journalist. "It wasn't something that I'd sought out," says the 46-year-old musician. Still, for more than a decade, Sarah — born in Madrid and raised in Chicago — worked in Irish journalism, juggling an accidental career in magazine publishing with a weekly folk column in these very pages.

It all started when she and her first husband made the move to Ireland via the States in 1994. Sarah had married Noel, an Irishman she'd met in France, after spending a year abroad studying philosophy and playing in his band.

After their split, Sarah relocated to Dublin and set off on her plans to become a full-time musician. She got as far as finishing her debut album when she fell into a job in journalism.

PREGNANT

"I was offered what was supposed to be a three-month job filling in at a magazine publishing house," she explains, "and I thought, 'yeah, I'll do that and then I'll go out on the road and promote my new album'."

"I wound up staying in that job for 11 years."

Sarah also began contributing to *The Herald* and *Hot Press*. Along the way, she met her second husband, Feargal. In 2003, she was pregnant with her first child, and the couple quickly realised that their flat in Rathmines was "totally unsuited for having a baby". They settled on a new home in Wexford.

"At that stage, there was no bypass around Gorey, so the commute to work used to take me about an hour-and-a-half. It was ridiculous," she remembers.

One day, Sarah — who also wrote *The Irish DADGAD Guitar Book* — was offered the chance to co-host a guitar workshop in Sligo. And she loved it. She enjoyed her job as a music writer, but the move to Wexford



MAKING THE LEAP: Sarah McQuaid tours for half the year had put a stop to her role as *The Herald's* gig reviewer. What's more, the "soul destroying" magazine work was taking its toll. "The last few years of my journalism career were horrible."

She set herself a task. It was September, 2006 — if Sarah could book enough gigs to sustain a living, she'd hand in her notice. "I managed to book myself a one-week tour around Ireland," she recalls. Sarah had "finally made the leap".

REWARD

Now on solo album number three, Sarah spends six months of the year on the road, touring Europe and America.

She's happy with her career and her life in rural England. "Financially, things are disastrous," she continues, "but it's a good life. It's great to be able to play music. Hopefully, at some point, that'll start translating into financial reward — before the house falls down."

> CHRIS WASSER

Sarah plays the Seamus Ennis Cultural Centre in Naul, Fingal, Co Dublin, this Friday and will host an afternoon DADGAD Guitar Workshop at Waltons New School of Music on South Great George's Street, Dublin 2, on Saturday. For more, visit www.sarahmcquaid.com

HE'S STILL STAND DELIVER

ADAM ANT TELLS CHRIS WASSER HOW HE FOUGHT HIS PERSONAL DEMONS TO HIT THE COMEBACK TRAIL

IN JANUARY OF this year, Stuart Leslie Goddard finally got around to releasing an album he had been talking about for quite some time. *Adam Ant Is the Blueblack Hussar in Marrying the Gunner's Daughter*, he called it. And if you thought the title or, indeed, the way in which the man otherwise known as Adam Ant recorded, released, and marketed the bloody thing was hard work (DIY all the way), you haven't yet heard the final product. Still, a new Adam Ant record — almost 18 years in the making. That's a hell of a long wait.

"Oh yeah, it's a lifetime," agrees the 58-year-old musician, "but I kind of have to balance that out with the amount of work that I put in between 1977, non-stop until about 1995."

WEIRD

Fair enough, the London-born entertainer was, in his prime, a very busy man. Following the disbandment of Adam and the Ants in 1982, the group's world-famous ringleader went on to release a string of solo records in the Eighties and Nineties — though never quite matching the success of 'Antmania', when he and his decorative band of post-punk merchants were selling millions.

He later gave acting a shot, moving to Hollywood to pursue a minor career in television and movies. Then, things got a little weird.

Indeed, the difficult years started in 2002, when a hazardous incident involving an imitation firearm, a car alternator and a packed pub in Camden got Adam in trouble with the law. A year later, he was sectioned under the UK Mental Health Act following another incident, this time at a neighbour's house.

He has since talked about everything, including his battle with bipolar disorder — which he was diagnosed with at the age of 21 — and the medication that threatened to ruin his life. Today, I've been asked not to mention his mental health. And not because he won't discuss it, I'm sure, but

