

SARAH McQUAID

“The precision and sophistication of the writing and playing blows me away. I am so glad to be involved,” writes guitar legend Michael Chapman in his introduction to Sarah McQuaid’s fifth solo album *If We Dig Any Deeper It Could Get Dangerous* – which he offered to produce after meeting Sarah at a festival where they were both on the bill.

Recently honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Ards International Guitar Festival in Northern Ireland, Sarah’s also drawn critical praise for her voice (which has been variously likened to malt whiskey and melted chocolate) and her engaging rapport with audiences: “I’ve attended hundreds of concerts of all kinds, and her subtle mastery onstage launches her straight into my fave shows ever,” wrote *The Huffington Post*.



With the release of her new album, the Madrid-born, Chicago-raised, Cornwall-based singer/songwriter has expanded her battery of instruments to include piano, electric guitar and drum, and it’s drawn critical raves internationally: Dutch music magazine *Heaven* hailed it as “an early contender for folk album of 2018,” the UK’s *fRoots* said it was “a collection to savour” and the USA’s *PopMatters* called it “a gateway into a true innovator’s soul.”

Born in Madrid (to a Spanish father and an American mother), raised in Chicago and now living in rural England, Sarah McQuaid was taught piano and guitar by her folksinging mother, and remembers being inspired by meeting her distant cousin, well-known singer/songwriter/storyteller Gamble Rogers, at her grandmother’s house in Indiana. From the age of twelve she was embarking on tours of the US and Canada with the Chicago Children’s Choir, and at eighteen she went to France for a year to study philosophy at the University of Strasbourg.

She moved to Ireland in 1994 and lived there for 13 years, working as a music journalist and magazine editor. In 2007, she re-released her 1997 debut solo album, *When Two Lovers Meet*, and launched her solo career with a performance on Irish national television as the musical guest on John Kelly’s popular Friday evening arts show *The View*. The same year saw her moving to England, and in 2008 she released her second album, *I Won’t Go Home ’Til Morning*. In contrast to the first album’s focus on Irish traditional songs and instrumentals, the follow-up was a celebration of old-time Appalachian folk, with Sarah’s arrangements punctuated by her own compositions and a cover of Bobbie Gentry’s classic “Ode to Billie Joe.” The two albums were re-released as a double-CD set in North America in 2010 and immediately went to No. 1 on both the album and artist Folk-DJ chart.

Crow Coyote Buffalo, an album of songs co-written by Sarah with fellow Penzance resident Zoë (author and performer of 1991 UK Top 10 hit single “Sunshine On A Rainy Day”), was released in 2009 under the band name Mama and garnered rave reviews: *Spiral Earth* described the pair as “Two pagan goddesses channelling the ghost of Jim Morrison.”

Like its predecessors, Sarah’s third album *The Plum Tree And The Rose* (Waterbug, 2012) was recorded in Trevor Hutchinson’s Dublin studio and produced by Gerry O’Beirne, but represented a departure from her previous work in that nine of its thirteen tracks were originals. Also featured were medieval and Elizabethan numbers and a cover of John Martyn’s “Solid Air”.

To record her fourth album *Walking Into White* (Waterbug, 2015), Sarah travelled from her adopted home in Cornwall, England, to the small town of Cornwall, New York, USA, in order to work with co-producers Jeremy Backofen and Sarah’s cousin Adam Pierce. Recorded and mixed in just under three weeks, *Walking Into White* was selected by *FolkWords* as Album of the Month and nominated for both Best Album from a Female Artist and Album of the Year.

In April 2017, Sarah was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Ards International Guitar Festival in Newtownards, Northern Ireland (previous recipients include legendary guitarists Davey Graham, John Renbourn, John Martyn, Martin Simpson, Pierre Bensusan and Martin Carthy) in recognition of her innovative use of the DADGAD tuning and her authorship of *The Irish DADGAD Guitar Book* (Ossian/Music Sales Inc, 1995). She regularly presents workshops on the DADGAD tuning (as well as on songwriting, tour booking and more) at festivals, music schools and venues around the globe, and is working on a follow-up book on DADGAD song accompaniment.

Sarah’s fifth album *If We Dig Any Deeper It Could Get Dangerous* (Shovel And A Spade, 2018) was produced by cult guitar great Michael Chapman, memorably described as a “granite-faced 76-year-old Yorkshireman hailed by the likes of Meg Baird, William Tyler and Ryley Walker as the godfather of new cosmic Americana” (*The Guardian*). The emphasis this time round is very much on Sarah’s superb writing (including instrumental originals as well as songs) and delivery, plus arrangements for guitar and voice of the medieval chant “Dies Irae” and Jeff Wayne’s classic “Forever Autumn”. With the release of her new album, the Madrid-born, Chicago-raised, Cornwall-based singer/songwriter has expanded her battery of instruments to include piano, electric guitar and drum, and it’s drawn critical raves internationally: Dutch music magazine *Heaven* hailed it as “an early contender for folk album of 2018,” the UK’s *fRoots* said it was “a collection to savour” and the USA’s *PopMatters* called it “a gateway into a true innovator’s soul.”

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“Her subtle mastery onstage launches her straight into my fave shows ever.” — *Huffington Post, USA*

“Sarah was just fantastic – she had a sold out audience captivated from start to finish.” — *Ards Arts Centre, Northern Ireland*

“I never thought UK guitarist and songwriter Sarah McQuaid could ever top her brilliant, ethereal 2015 release *Walking Into White*, but thankfully, I was mistaken ... *If We Dig Any Deeper It Could Get Dangerous* is a beautiful, engaging work that showcases two of the world’s premier guitarists and songwriters.” — *Ink 19, USA*

“With its classy songwriting, exemplary musicianship and high production values, this is a collection to savour.” — *fRoots, UK*

“Stunning sonic depictions of songs of depth and meaning. ... This is about as good as it gets and is an absolute must have.” — *Floorshime Zipper Boots, USA*

“A consummate artistic triumph that marks a new phase in McQuaid’s career.” — *Folk Radio UK*

“Captivating, unorthodox songwriting ... layered satin vocals ... enthralling, harrowing arrangements ... The record is as consummate and eclectic as fans of McQuaid would have come to expect. It’s a gateway into a true innovator’s soul.” — *PopMatters, USA*

“Intricate playing, thoughtful songwriting and consistently outstanding vocal performances ... McQuaid is an artist who really needs to be sitting at the top table of roots musicians in this country.” — *Artree Folk & Roots, UK*

“A work built upon the courage of a singular vision. ... *If We Dig Any Deeper it Could Get Dangerous* has a satisfying completeness about it, an expansiveness made concrete. It is, in short, the work of a consummate artist.” — *Stereo Embers, USA*

“Successive tracks reinforce the previous, with a flow that is wholly contiguous, each in turn combining to build into a work of formidable passion.” — *FolkWords, UK*

“I’ve died and gone to heaven, I’ve fallen in love, and any of a million other things I could say to let you know how good this record is.” — *Jersey Beat, USA*

“Een vroege kandidaat voor folkalbum van 2018.” (*An early contender for folk album of 2018.*) — *Heaven Magazine, The Netherlands*

“De lo más destacado en lo que llevamos de año en folk.” (*A highlight of the year so far in folk.*) — *Off The Hook, Spain*

“Ausgesprochen wohldurchdachte Songs und Melodien. Das ist subtile, feinsinnige und ausgetüftelte Arbeit.” (*Exquisitely thoughtful songs and melodies, expressing subtlety, sensitivity and meticulous craftsmanship.*) — *Folker, Germany*

“Avec ce cinquième album, Sarah McQuaid signe une nouvelle perle.” (*With this fifth album, Sarah McQuaid has created a new gem.*) — *Concert Monkey, Belgium*

“A darkly melodic, richly layered folk tapestry ... haunting and sparse, yet beautifully rendered ... a voice as thick and soft as fur.” — *Elmore Magazine, USA*

“Light and dark swirl through *If We Dig Any Deeper It Could Get Dangerous* ... There is a depth to the vocals of Sarah McQuaid, the velvet resonance a match for her talents on guitar.” — *The Alternate Root, USA*

“A powerful album that simply shimmers with nuance, observational depth, and despair ... sure to please fans of The Unthanks, Nick Drake, Joni Mitchell, and Tom Waits equally.” — *Cover Lay Down, USA*

“*If We Dig Any Deeper...* is the culmination of both sides of her musical personality, and is undoubtedly her finest yet.” — *Shire Folk, UK*

“Sarah McQuaid’s fifth full length album opens in the smoke and shadow of hanging blues tones, a blistering burn embedded in the rough electric slashes, a steady red-hot glow in the embers of rumbling picking. ... A sense of unresolved mood, of shifts and shadows and intangible atmospheres pervades her work.” — *Dusted Magazine, USA*

“A major statement in contemporary folk.” — *The Vinyl District, USA*

“Spine-chilling ... The songs are exceptional: some of the lyrics here would look equally at home in a volume of poetry, though it would be a pity to deprive them of Sarah’s voice and melodic flair.” — *Folking.com, UK*

“An entrancing album ... dark, sophisticated lyrical imagery and a spare but atmospheric production.” — *CultureSonar, USA*

“Seeing a shared world in a new way, from a different angle, is the role of the songwriter. Sarah gets a gold star on that front. This is a fabulous album.” — *The Afterword, UK*

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