

He made his name with electrics, but high-end acoustics are now the focus of Patrick Eggle's considerable luthiering skills – and he's back in the UK. Jerry Uwins is one happy picker...

# Patrick James Eggle

## Etowah Acoustic

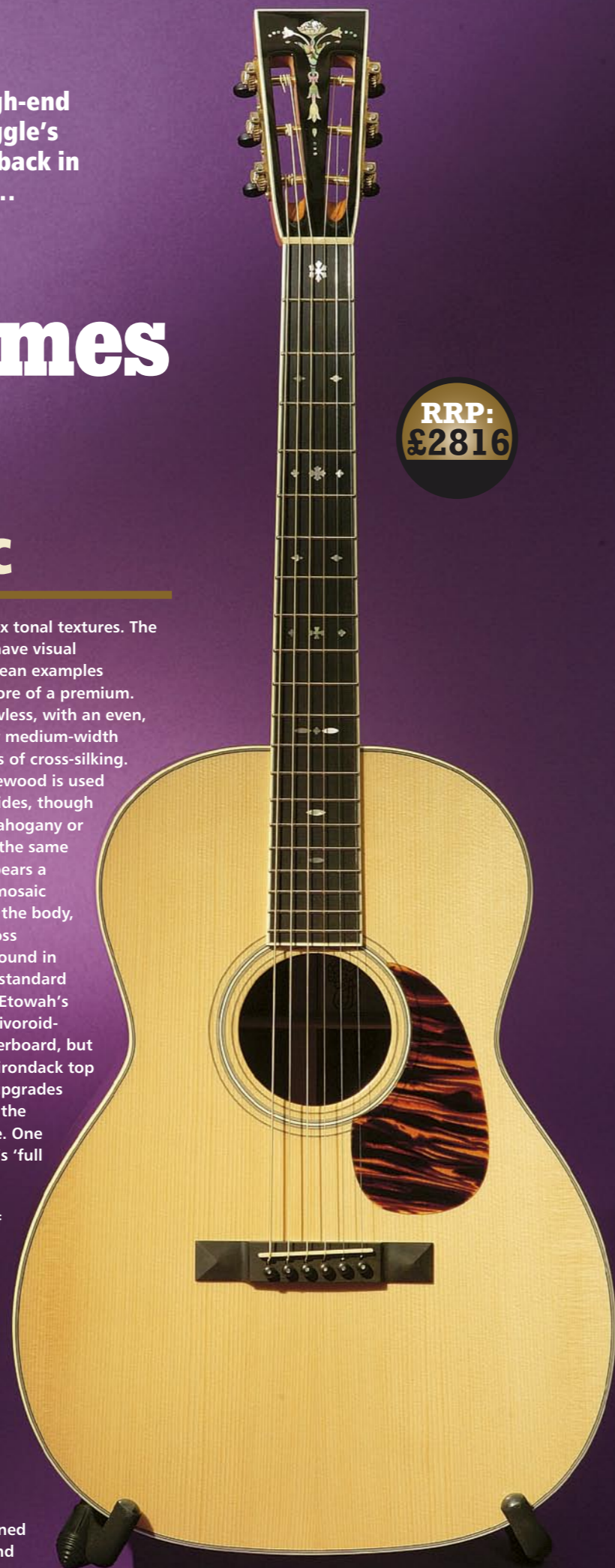
Not many of us go through life using both our first and middle names. However, in a guitar-making context it's something Patrick James Eggle has to do to differentiate himself from the UK electric maker, Patrick Eggle Guitars. That company bears his name because he was central to its founding, but he hasn't had any connection with it since the mid '90s.

Instead, Patrick has worked as an independent luthier, increasingly concentrating on high-end archtop and flat-top instruments. Since many of his sales were to American customers, he moved to North Carolina in 2003; for family reasons, however, he recently moved back to England, and now has his workshop within instrument distributor Barnes & Mullins' HQ in Oswestry. It's a mutually advantageous arrangement, because in between times he makes B&M's Faith Carolina Series models. As chance would have it, our Etowah is one of the last guitars Patrick built before catching the plane home, hence 'Made in USA' in the *Factfile*.

All Patrick's acoustics are named after North Carolina towns or villages, and the Etowah is a vintage-style 000 with 12 frets to the body and an elegant round-shouldered silhouette. Span across the body is just over 15" and the maximum rim depth is a decently capacious 110mm. In standard specification, the model would have either a solid sitka or European spruce top; ours is Adirondack, adding nearly £300 to the basic price. This might seem a lot, but Adirondack is regarded by many makers as the king of spruces for its very high stiffness-to-weight ratio and allegedly quick-responding

sound and complex tonal textures. The timber can often have visual irregularities, so clean examples command even more of a premium. This one looks flawless, with an even, light hue, typically medium-width graining and flecks of cross-silking.

Solid Indian rosewood is used for the back and sides, though you can specify mahogany or figured maple for the same money. The back bears a chevroned wood-mosaic centre strip, while the body, lacquered with gloss nitrocellulose, is bound in ivory. These are standard details, as are the Etowah's ebony bridge and ivory-bound ebony fingerboard, but along with the Adirondack top there are further upgrades that contribute to the £2816 asking price. One is the fingerboard's 'full snowflake' set of pearl position markers instead of simpler slotted squares; the others concern decoration on the Spanish-style headstock. First up is the handsome pearl/abalone 'torch' inlay that replaces the PJE logo, and second is the fingerboard co-ordinating coachlined ivory binding, and



RRP: £2816



Tip-top materials Red spruce top, Indian rosewood back and sides, ebony pyramid bridge



Slotted headstock Bound, with custom 'torch' inlay and ebony-buttoned Waverly tuners

lastly comes a set of three-on-a-plate Waverly tuners with ebony buttons to match the headstock overlay. These tuners look and feel real class, their bronze baseplates having a nicely aged patina from new (standard machineheads would be separate nickel Waverlys – not too shabby either).

The Etowah's presentation is excellent. The inlay work (supplied by the highly regarded American specialist Tom Ellis, whose clients number many big-name makers including Taylor and Collings) is applied with pinpoint precision, and attention to detail elsewhere is equally reassuring. For instance, Patrick polishes the bone nut and saddle to a smooth glossy sheen, where many makers would leave them plain-cut, and the ebony theme running through the fingerboard, bridge and headplate is augmented by a strap button and bridge pins of the same wood: the latter sport abalone dots.

The neck, with a gloss-lacquered headplate but otherwise satin finished, is attached to the body with a 'bolts plus mortise-and-tenon' arrangement (similar to the Collings method), the bolts being concealed by a label on the face of the neckblock. The neck has a medium 25.25" scale length and is formed from one piece of Honduran mahogany, fashioned with a pointed heel and a small diamond volute under the base of the peghead.

### The Etowah's hallmarks are balance, clarity and a fluid responsiveness

Luthier-made 000 guitars are invariably designed as pickers' instruments, and the Etowah's neck is duly of the wider variety, measuring 45mm across the nut, with an airy string spacing progressing to a broad 58mm-plus come the bridge – very fingerstyle friendly. Thanks to its shallow, virtually constant depth the fairly flat-backed 'C' neck profile makes for a comfortable playing experience, and feels snuggler than the width would suggest. The sense of easy playability is enhanced not only by a beautifully slick action but by the creamy smoothness of the ebony board and the highly polished thin fretting. Oh, and the coated Elixir Nanoweb strings that are Patrick's (and as it happens, my) favoured strings help, too. Equally beneficial to the guitar's handling is the excellent physical balance of the 12-frets-to-the-body design. It tucks in to the body just great.

### SOUNDS

Whether or not the Adirondack top justifies the increased cost, there's no doubt that this Etowah is a quality player. Balance and clarity are the immediately

## FACTFILE

### PATRICK JAMES EGGLE ETOWAH

**Description:** 000-style, 12-fret acoustic. Made in USA

**Price:** £2816 inc. case

**Build:** Solid Adirondack spruce top, solid rosewood back and sides. Mahogany neck with 20-fret bound ebony fingerboard. Ebony bridge, bone nut and saddle, bronze Waverly Spanish-style tuners with ebony buttons, ebony strap button

**Options:** Basic Etowah with sitka or European spruce top, mahogany, rosewood or maple back and sides, slotted-square markers, nickel Waverlys and unbound logoed headstock is £2175; Etowah in Style-42 trim is £3625. Other body styles are the Skyland dreadnought, Linville OM, Saluda small jumbo (all from £1957) and the Saluda cutaway (from £2102). Full menu of custom options – details on request. All prices include Cedar Creek case

**Left-hander:** Yes, no extra cost

**Finish:** Gloss natural body, satin neck

**Contact:** PJE Guitars ☎ 01691 661777

**Web:** www.eggleamerica.com

### DIMENSIONS

Scale length.....	622 (25.27")
Width of neck at nut.....	45
at 12th fret.....	57
Depth of neck at 1st fret.....	21
at 9th fret.....	21.5
String spacing at nut.....	38.5
at bridge.....	58.5
Action as supplied at 12th fret treb.....	1.9
at 12th fret bass.....	2.2
F'board radius (approx).....	12"
Max rim depth.....	110
Max body width.....	386
Weight (kg/lbs).....	2.04/4.5

In mm unless otherwise stated

perceived hallmarks, backed by a fluid responsiveness to different picking styles, plus some very likeable snappy warmth in the bottom end when digging in. There's a particular mellowness in the follow-through that perhaps slightly lessens the guitar's impact volume-wise. Despite this, the dynamics are generous and the sound has laudable poise.

## VERDICT

I was impressed with the Eggle-made Faith Carolinas we reviewed in the August 2005 issue, and the Etowah equally comes up trumps. It's a painstakingly crafted instrument and a delightful picker. It also exudes the kind of retro elegance that goes so well with

the 000 design. Patrick is intending to take on staff to increase his output – as he did when based in the States – so we can expect to see more Patrick James Eggles as time goes on. That's got to be good news: welcome home, mate.