

# SALUDO LA SALUDA

WHEN IT COMES TO BESPOKE GUITARS YOU REALLY CAN HAVE IT ALL – AND IT'S ALL ON THIS STUNNER FROM PATRICK JAMES EGGLE. **PAUL ALCANTARA** GETS A LESSON IN TAP DANCING THROWN IN

## GBINFO

### PATRICK JAMES EGGLE SALUDA

PRICE: £3345 as reviewed (base price £1950)

BUILT IN: USA

SCALE LENGTH: 645mm (25.4 inches)

NUT WIDTH: 44.5mm (1 3/4 inches), unbleached bone

TOP: Adirondack spruce

BACK & SIDES: Brazilian rosewood (from reclaimed stump wood)

NECK: Honduran mahogany

FINGERBOARD: Ebony

FRETS: 20, Stewart Macdonald medium sized

BRIDGE: Ebony

MACHINEHEADS: Gotoh 510 Delta Series antique gold, with 'ebony' buttons

CASE: Cedar Creek blonde hardshell case included

FINISH: Natural gloss nitrocellulose

LEFT HANDERS: Yes

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... Mention the name Eggle and most guitarists will probably recall the Coventry-built, PRS-alike electrics that, for a brief period in the early 1990s, looked as if they might put the UK back on the map as a serious contender in the quality-guitar stakes.

Having changed hands several times, the company is still with us, though it now has no connection with its founder, Patrick James Eggle, who left in the mid 1990s to pursue a career as a custom builder. Currently based in the USA (but soon to return to the UK), Patrick now specialises in upmarket flat-tops, hand-carved acoustic arch-tops and mandolins. If you ask nicely he might even put together a solid-body electric for you! We looked at a couple of impressive Faith Guitars in issue 44 that Patrick had built for the brand, and now here's a rather lovely example of one of his own instruments.

### BODY & NECK

Faced with Brazilian rosewood, the Saluda's headstock is multiple bound

in black/white purfling with an outer layer of figured koa. Over 7-1/2 inches long, its asymmetrical silhouette calls to mind that of a 1970s Hagstrom Swede. It is inlaid with an ornate, Art Nouveau-style pearl logo which, though flawlessly executed, may be a little too fussy for some folk: very much a horses for courses situation.

Tuners are Gotoh 510 Delta Series with an attractive antique gold finish and imitation ebony buttons. The review guitar was completed before Patrick switched to Gotohs and as a result has the marginally thicker headstock that Schallers require – in practical terms this makes little difference. The tuners, with their 21:1 ratio, are exceptionally smooth and accurate in use.

Cut from unbleached bone, the nut is expertly shaped and polished and most importantly has string slots that are cut to exactly the right depth. The satin-finished Honduran mahogany neck, which has been left au naturel, has a comfy C-shape cross-section with the gentlest hint of a V as it approaches the nut. It's topped by a smooth black ebony fingerboard, ➔

**GBOPINION**

**PATRICK JAMES EGGLE SALUDA BRAZILIAN**

**GOLD STARS**

- ★ Fantastic build quality
- ★ Fantastic materials

**BLACK MARKS**

- Figured koa, Brazilian rosewood, herringbone trim and abalone make for visual indigestion to some

**IDEAL FOR...**

Discerning acoustic players who want something amazing and unique

inlaid with pearl slotted square position markers and bound, like the headstock, in curly koa. Unfortunately, the koa's pronounced figure renders the small black side dots all but invisible. The neck, which combines a dry (unglued) mortise joint with bolts, is easily removed should it need to be reset at a later date. Both Taylor and Collings guitars (and many others) use variants on this idea, so it's tonally and structurally proven.

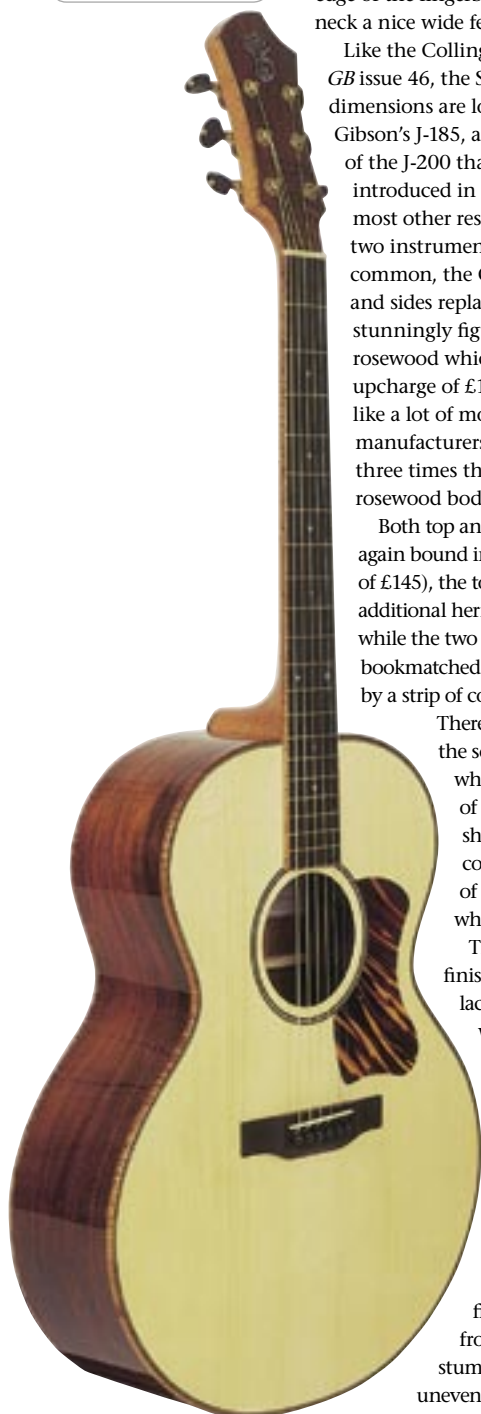
20 medium-sized frets – all of which are immaculately shaped and polished – extend out over the binding to the edge of the fingerboard, lending the neck a nice wide feel.

Like the Collings SJ reviewed in *GB* issue 46, the Saluda's body dimensions are loosely based on Gibson's J-185, a downsized version of the J-200 that the company introduced in the early 1950s. In most other respects, however, the two instruments have little in common, the Gibson's maple back and sides replaced here with stunningly figured Brazilian rosewood which represents an upcharge of £1160. That sounds like a lot of money, but other manufacturers will add at least three times that for a Brazilian rosewood body.

Both top and back are once again bound in koa (an upcharge of £145), the top featuring additional herringbone wood trim, while the two halves of the bookmatched back are separated by a strip of coloured abalone.

There's more abalone in the soundhole rosette which comprises a ring of the beautiful sea shell, framed by contrasting strips of black and white purfling.

The guitar is lightly finished in nitrocellulose lacquer, the quality of which puts the lie to any claim that this traditional finish can't match synthetics in terms of uniformity. There are a couple of blemishes on the back beneath the finish, but these result from the nature of stumptwood with its wild, uneven grain pattern.



**PATRICK JAMES EGGLE**

**TAP DANCING**

**The guitar before you was built by this chap. We caught up with Mr Eggle for a quick chin-wag about voicing its top.**

**Guitar Buyer:** Tell us something about the way that you 'tap tune' the tops of your flat-top guitars.

**Patrick Eggle:** "I came to building flat-tops via arch-top guitars. With an arch-top there is a lot of tap tuning involved. This process involves tapping the centre of the soundboard with one hand while feeling for top response with the other. Though the construction of a flat-top is obviously very different, I still strive to achieve a responsive top that is working across as much of its surface as possible."

**GB:** Does top thickness vary from one guitar to the next?

**PE:** "Yes, I try to treat all guitars as individuals. Of course, there are guidelines as to how thick I make the top, back and sides depending on the wood that I am using. Adirondack spruce typically ends up a little thinner as it has more lateral strength. I also bring tops on OM-size guitars down a little thinner as they can otherwise end up sounding tight with a weak bass due



to their smaller body size.

"Bracing is pre-shaped before being glued into place. Once the bracing is in place, I will start the process of tap tuning the top. The bracing is then shaved down until I get a good tap tone and the top feels lively.

"After the [sound]box is constructed, I get a second chance at tap tuning. If the guitar is sounding tight, I thin the top around the edges. It's a slow process that can't be hurried. However, if the top ends up too thin, the guitar will sound boomy and less responsive."

With so many acoustics now featuring an aged toner (a stain intended to replicate the look of a vintage guitar), the Saluda's buttery white Adirondack spruce top looks a little odd. This is exactly how those lovely old vintage Martins looked

pickguard appears rather out of place. Many contemporary guitar makers dispense with a pickguard altogether, and in my opinion the Saluda – which is likely to find favour with fingerpickers rather than strummers – would look better without one. It's a matter of opinion, of course, and I dare say Patrick will leave it off if that's what you specify in your order.

The interior of the guitar is reassuringly clean and tidy, the scalloped X braces – which are constructed from the same Adirondack spruce as the top – smoothly shaped and sanded.

The absence of an end pin suggests that this particular guitar was conceived with sit-down fingerpickers in mind rather than strum-along rock 'n' rollers. The lovely Cedar Creek hardshell case, the appearance of which captures the classy style of pre-war cruise liner luggage, deserves a special mention too: superb quality and a looker to boot.



Patrick's passion for all-things guitar is evident in every detail of the Saluda Brazilian

when they were brand new – so be patient and enjoy the guitar as it acquires the patina of age naturally.

The ebony belly bridge, which is similar to that used by Martin, has a compensated saddle that sits in a short recessed slot. In terms of intonation and action height, everything is exactly as it should be.

On an instrument that features natural materials throughout, the inclusion of a 'tortoiseshell' plastic

**SOUNDS**

According to Patrick, the standard Saluda, which can be had with Indian rosewood, mahogany or maple back and sides, has a typically 'American' sound, so it comes as something of a surprise to discover that, despite its steel strings, the review guitar

**DETAILS**

A FINE INSTRUMENT, BUILT TO THE VERY HIGHEST STANDARDS AND FROM SOME SIMPLY STUNNING MATERIALS



Patrick's added his personal touch inside the soundhole



The neck/body union is a dry mortise joint, secured with bolts



The headstock is multiple bound in black/white purfling with an outer layer of koa



**GBCONCLUSION**

AMAZING QUALITY, SUPER TONES AND AS-YOU-WANT-THM AESTHETICS. WHAT A BEAUTY

**A fingerpicker's delight, the Brazilian Saluda offers accomplished solo performers a rainbow of subtle colours with which he or she can shade their arrangements.**

Speaking personally, I find the combination of herringbone, abalone and figured koa along with all that outrageously figured Brazilian rosewood too much of a good thing. But that's the beauty of ordering from a custom builder – you specify exactly how you want your guitar to look and sound when you order it. All told, this is a fine instrument indeed, built to the highest standards from stunning materials. Patrick's enthusiasm for all things guitar is evident when you talk to him, so if you are in the market for a bespoke instrument, go ahead and give him a call – we guarantee you won't be sorry. **GB**

**"IF YOU'RE IN THE MARKET FOR A BESPOKE GUITAR, GO AND GIVE PATRICK A CALL"**

**BRAZILIAN ROSEWOOD**

WE DON'T SEE MUCH OF THIS ANY MORE...

**Brazilian rosewood** (*Dalbergia Nigra* – also known as **Rio Rosewood, Jacaranda** and **'Palosanto Brasileño'**) has become the stuff of legend.

Once used routinely for the back and sides of premium-quality flat-top guitars, the species is now listed in CITES Appendix I (having been classified as a species facing extinction at the Species Protection Conference in Montreal in 1992) and today only timber harvested prior to listing on 11 June 1992 can be traded.

Guitars built using old stocks of Brazilian rosewood are still offered by companies like Martin and Santa Cruz, though on a very limited basis and with an up-charge of several thousand dollars (Rio rosewood harvested before 1992 can be legally

purchased provided that it displays a CITES Certificate).

An alternative is stumpwood – timber that is literally cut from the stumps of previously harvested trees. This often boasts a stunning figure complete with exotic flames and swirls, as can be seen on the back and sides of the Saluda.



possesses many of the qualities of a good nylon-strung instrument. Treble and bass are nicely balanced so that counterpoint lines remain clearly delineated while the notes that comprise a complex chord ring out with clarity and definition. This is the first Saluda that Patrick has built with Brazilian rosewood back and sides and an Adirondack spruce top, so perhaps it's this combination of tone woods that lends the review guitar its unique voice.

The treble strings sound strong and sweet while the bass strings, though full, round and warm, remain tightly focused with none of the boomy bottom end that characterises many large-bodied rosewood guitars.

There's sustain to spare and plenty of dynamic headroom – though when played along with other acoustic instruments, the Saluda's almost polite voice lacks some of the cutting power of the best dreadnoughts. The upside of that is that it's far more refined, particularly in a recording environment when the Saluda's balance and poise sound simply dreamy. It's always interesting to really hear the difference between adequate and exceptional when it comes to quality acoustics, and this guitar is in the exceptional camp, with the likes of Collings, Santa Cruz, and high-end Martins and Taylors.

**GBRATINGS**

**PATRICK JAMES EGGLE SALUDA BRAZILIAN**

BODY & NECK	★★★★
HARDWARE & PARTS	★★★★
PLAYABILITY	★★★★
SOUNDS	★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★
<b>GBVERDICT</b>	★★★★