



Rivera Doyle Dykes Signature Sedona 55 combo **£1,769**

★★★★★
Guitarist
GOLD

Welcome to Sedona Country – Rivera’s all-valve acoustic and electric dream machine makes its UK debut by Nick Guppy

Collaborations can make great music, and where Rivera is concerned, they can make great guitar amplifiers too. Paul Rivera works with artists and producers across the musical spectrum to develop his designs, and the Doyle Dykes Signature

Sedona series is a typical example, as Paul explains: “Back in ’93 Doyle came to us through a recommendation from Chet Atkins, something I’m very proud of. At the time Doyle was toting a Taylor acoustic and a G&L ASAT, and he wanted an amp he could plug both

instruments into. Getting the right loudspeakers for that was a challenge. Eventually we came across a special combination that really worked for us, a JBL main driver and a really sweet high-powered dome tweeter that gives you all the warmth without sacrificing

PHOTOGRAPHY: JESSE WILD

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RIVERA SEDONA 55	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

■ **WE LIKED** World-class tone for electric and acoustic; DI output is superlative

■ **WE DISLIKED** Expensive, but for what it does, the Sedona's impossible to fault

the clarity. That's part of what makes the Sedona special – we also made some modifications on our R55 design to get a little more headroom, added the anti-feedback feature and the DI circuit and that was basically how the Sedona came to be.”

Built to Rivera's typically high standards, the Sedona 55 is housed in a compact and portable cabinet. It's an easy one-handed lift for most people, although it's no lightweight. The Sedona's immediate identifying feature is its brown and beige colour scheme, which extends from the heavyweight custom vinyl right down to the control knobs. It may seem a little dated, perhaps, but it's handsome and won't look out of place in any environment.

Around the back you'll immediately notice the dinner plate-sized magnet of one of the Sedona's secret weapons, a front-loaded JBL M222 12-inch driver. This rare premium loudspeaker takes care of the normal electric guitar bandwidth, while the acoustic



Five ECC83/12AX7 preamp and two EL34 power amp valves fuel proceedings

instrument's higher frequencies are handled by a custom ferrofluid-cooled dome tweeter. This is connected through a passive crossover network screwed to the rear of the loudspeaker baffle, while the rest of the electronics are housed inside a strong steel box chassis. The Sedona's electronic highlights include a regulated DC heater supply for the preamp valves to keep noise to a minimum, and a Cinemag matching transformer in the balanced DI output. Cinemag are the Rolls-Royce of audio matching transformers, with a history that goes back to their pioneering designs for

Altec-Lansing in the 1940s. As with the drivers, it's extraordinary to find such components inside a guitar amplifier.

The front control panel starts off by following Rivera's standard layout: channel one is primarily dedicated to Brit-influenced rock and consists of gain, volume and a three-band EQ, with pull switches for channel select and a powerful gain boost – both accessible from the Sedona's footswitch. Channel two is voiced around classic USA tones and features the same rotary controls, with three pull switches – a 'pull bright' adds extra sparkle, while on the mid-range a 'pull

RIVERA DOYLE DYKES SIGNATURE SEDONA 55 COMBO

PRICE: £1,769

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: All valve two-channel tri-mode Class AB combo with solid-state rectification

OUTPUT: 55W RMS

VALVES: Five ECC83/12AX7 preamp, two EL34 power amp

DIMENSIONS: 460 (h) x 600 (w) x 255mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 25/55

CABINET: Birch ply
LOUDSPEAKERS: One JBL M222 12-inch, one high-powered dome tweeter

CHANNELS: Two, with acoustic mode on channel 2

CONTROLS: Channel 1: volume with pull channel select, bass mid, treble, master with pull boost. Channel 2: volume, treble with pull bright, mid with pull notch, bass, master with pull ninja. Global presence and reverb, anti-feedback level with pull EQ on, anti-feedback frequency select with pull tweeter on

FOOTSWITCH: FS7 three-button footswitch included, changes channels, toggles both boost functions

ADDITIONAL FEATURES:

Series effects loop with variable send and return levels, all-valve DI output with variable level and ground lift, extension speaker outlets

OPTIONS: Adding the 'ES' balanced input costs an extra £199 – this cannot be retro-fitted. The Sedona 55 is also available as a head for £1,449, the 100-watt combo is £2,169 and the 100-watt head is £1,499. The Sedona Lite is a trimmed-down version including a balanced input, but without the high gain channel and costs £1,199. A two-way 1 x 12 JBL extension cab costs £639, a 1 x 15 two-way JBL cab is also available at £869

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Electric, acoustic, self contained PA – the Sedona does the lot, in superb style



On the right, the Sedona's secret weapon: the front-loaded JBL M222 12-inch driver

The rivals

Mesa Engineering	
Lonestar Special 1 x 12	
combo	£1,695
AER Acousticube III	
	£1,495
Peavey Ecoustic 112EFX	
	£599

The Sedona is pretty much unique; we can't think of another all-valve unit that can handle electric and acoustic instruments. If you ignore the fact that it doesn't have a dedicated acoustic channel, Mesa's fantastic Lonestar Special is one of Randall Smith's best ever designs; for electric sounds it's got to be one of the Sedona's closest competitors for features and tone, with arguably the best spring reverb effect ever put into a guitar amp. AER's Acousticube III is one of the benchmarks for acoustic guitar amplification – a very compact and powerful combo with just about every facility you'd need in any pro situation, including digital effects and phantom power, but it's dedicated to acoustic users and doesn't have an electric guitar channel. At the lower end of the acoustic market, Peavey's Ecoustic offers stonking value for money, with digital effects and a punchy 100-watt power stage for almost any gig.

→ notch' shifts the mid-range frequency centre to approximate either Tweed or Blackface tonality. The third switch activates Rivera's infamous ninja boost, which functions differently to that on channel one, thickening up the tone, adding more gain and driving the power stage harder for a fully cranked sound at lower volume. Again, the ninja boost is footswitchable, so you can quickly access four very different sounds with a minimum of fuss.

Over to the right of the front panel there are global controls for presence and reverb, followed by the Sedona's acoustic anti-feedback functions, a pair of rotary controls that act as a semi-parametric EQ, letting you sweep and 'notch out' any frequency that starts to howl. The level control incorporates an on/off switch for this function, while the frequency control has an on/off switch for the Sedona's tweeter. This can only be activated on channel two, so with the tweeter working you can swap between electric and acoustic sounds with just one prod on the footswitch. On the back panel there's a series effects loop with variable send and receive levels, an all-valve balanced DI output with a wide-ranging level control and a ground lift, and extension speaker sockets for both tweeter and mid-range drivers with a switchable impedance selector. It adds up to a lot of functionality, yet the design makes it very simple to dial in what you want.

SOUNDS: The Sedona's electric sounds are everything you'd expect from a Rivera, with less gain on tap than an R series, but significantly increased definition and punch courtesy of that incredible JBL driver.

Channel one goes from nearly clean vintage British blues to a ripping scooped crunch and on to the brownest of gained-out solo tones, sustaining almost indefinitely with boost engaged.

Channel two is where you'll find all the classic American stuff – whether you use single-coils or humbuckers, it's perfect for country, jazz or blues and depending how you set up the gain and volume controls with the ninja boost, you can add either the subtlest of

breakup effects, or a snarling Tweed-influenced squawk that sounds awesome with a good Tele plugged in.

But the Sedona's biggest surprise happens when you dial out channel two's overdrive, swap to an acoustic instrument and engage that

dome tweeter. The clarity and sparkle of the high frequencies is nothing less than stunning. Where a piezo tweeter can sometimes sound harsh and peaky even with a carefully chosen crossover, there's a warmth and balance to the Sedona's acoustic tones that's on a par with the best hi-fi we've ever listened to. We used a Takamine EAN20C for our acoustic test and although this guitar's preamp is relatively basic, we were blown away by the Sedona's

As well as inspirational tone, the Sedona packs enormous versatility; for those who regularly swap between electric and acoustic, it's arguably the best amplifier in the world

reproduction, which emphasised the warmth and punch of the Tak's cedar and mahogany construction as well as its high-end sparkle.

"A lot of that comes from the combination of EL34 output valves and the loudspeakers," Rivera observes. "The EL34s add the detail, while much of the Sedona's warmth is from that combination of drivers".

The DI output is equally impressive and noise-free with a lot of level available, so you can easily bypass the front-end of a mixing desk and maximise the clarity of your signal. The all-valve reverb is warm and dark, adding a natural ambience that's often difficult to achieve from many high-end digital effects units. All in, it's inspiring to listen to, and it's easy to see why Doyle won't plug into anything else.

Verdict

As well as inspirational tone, the Sedona packs enormous versatility; for those who regularly swap between electric and acoustic and want killer sounds from both instruments, it's arguably the best amplifier in the world. There's also a balanced input version (using yet another Cinemag transformer) specially designed for use with instruments like Taylor's T5 electro-acoustic. Plug into that combination and you can do it all, from world-class acoustic to screaming full-on electric with just one amp. Alternatively, hook up any small mixing desk into the effects loop, plug in a mic, and you've got a powerful self-contained PA that will fill most medium-sized halls with ease, while the superlative DI output takes care of bigger events.

The Sedona is exceptional even by Rivera standards. Aimed at professionals and well-heeled amateurs, it's not cheap but you're getting a seriously powerful tool that delivers stunning tone, with a unique combination of features and some of the best components available. It's all of that in one package which wins the Sedona Guitarist's rare Gold Award. **A**

Rivera Doyle Dykes Signature Sedona 55

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★