

RROGG

RIVERA OWNERS GROUP

Doyle Dykes

Filling Church Halls & The Grand Ole Opry With His Unique Acoustic Sound



Anyone who's heard Doyle Dykes playing knows what a tremendous guitarist he is, and anyone who's seen him has probably never spent more time with their eyes wide and their mouths hanging open in amazement. Doyle's deft fingerpicking and tremendously honed musicianship set him apart from almost every other guitarist on the planet. For the past several years, Doyle has played his Taylor acoustic guitars through Rivera amps, leading to the Rivera Doyle Dykes Signature Series Sedona, an all-tube amp designed by Paul Rivera and Doyle. We caught up with Doyle while he was taking a couple of days off the road. Check out tour dates and other Doyle Dykes info at <http://www.doyledykes.com>.

"Everywhere I go, the room is different. I play everything from church halls to the Grand Ole Opry. When I play the Grand Ole Opry, I just let them plug into the back of the Sedona. They love that amp there because it's so easy. There are no rehearsals. When you take the XLR output, it's always a no-brainer because you know it's going to work. Sometimes I enjoy doing both [going direct and miking], because I enjoy getting a little 'air' off the speaker. Also, I use a vocal mike to speak into and to sing one or two songs. I always tilt my amp back a little bit, and that picks it up, too. So that adds a little to the ambience sound of the room.

"Recently I was at a church with a very live room. I just put the Sedona on a chair. My favorite amp stand is still a chair. I call it the Chet Atkins-style amp stand. He always used a folding chair. Having the open back on the amp and the chair being open helps it to project sometimes. It depends on the type of chair you have, without getting too deep into chairs. The Sedona just filled that room, without even sending a feed to the house P.A. A tube amp will fill up a room, warm it up. The Sedona is just so good at doing that. Sometimes I use my extension cabinet, and I sometimes use the subwoofer, too, depending on the room.

"When you drop down your tunings and go down to a low C on the guitar, using the subwoofer's like adding more watts because it's all coming out of a different place. Most of the time, the amp by itself is plenty. Sound dispersal is a funny thing anyway. There are times when I'll just put the amp on the side of the stage and point it towards me and not try to cover the room that much. I just put that through the house.

"I always use the Sedona in the studio. When I recorded my last album, we'd take the direct output from the XLR on the back of the Sedona and also mike the amplifier. He wanted some air off of the speaker. "When I'm playing my Taylor [Doyle Dykes Signature Model], I tend to keep the treble pulled out on Channel 2, set around 6, with the mid pushed in and around the same setting as the

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Guitar Mags Love The KnuckleHead Reverb

Erik Kirkland, Guitar World, February 2003: "The Rivera Knucklehead Reverb blazes a new trail for high-gain heads with a remarkable clean channel, loads of features, an intelligent user interface, and MIDI control. Add in the thunderous Sub 2 and you've got a massive tone delivery system with an unmatched sonic footprint."

Barry Cleveland, Guitar Player, February 2003: "A great-sounding professional amplifier that is loaded with enough sonic options to satisfy even the most inveterate tone-tweaker, the Knucklehead Reverb is also powerful enough to hold its own in nearly any performance situation. In addition, its MIDI capabilities will be welcomed by users with sophisticated rigs who want the convenience of having several pre-set sounds without sacrificing genuine tube tone."

Nick Guppy, Guitarist UK, June 2003: "Yes, it's a very expensive purchase but the Knucklehead really delivers. By comparison, some other amps in this price bracket are much harder to justify. Every feature is onboard for a specific reason and adds something. What we're really trying to say is the Knucklehead Reverb is one of the world's ultimate guitar amplifiers; once you have one, chances are you will want to hang on to it for a very long time."

L A T E S T B U Z Z

Martin Gore from Depeche Mode just bought a Sedona Combo. **Spine Shank** used a KnuckleHead Reverb and Sub 2 on their new album. **Jim Root** of Stone Sour is using a Knucklehead 2 on the band's new album and tour. You know Jim from his other band, Slipknot, who are using KnuckleHead 2s and Subs in the studio. The Wall Flowers' **Yogi** just bought a Quiana 410 and a Chubster 55. Fiction Plane's **Joe Sumner** has been using Rivera Quiana tops and 412 cabinets. **Dave Navarro** of Jane's Addiction used Rivera KnuckleHead Reverb, Quiana, and Fandango amps on the new *Strays* CD. LA Session guitarist/producer **Michael "Fish" Herring** is touring with Christina Aguilera on the "Stripped" tour, with his KnuckleHead Reverb.

David Rhodes

Touring & Recording With Peter Gabriel

David Rhodes has been playing guitar on album and on tour with Peter Gabriel for more than two decades. His tasty guitar work can be heard on Gabriel's 2002 release, *Up*, as well as on previous Gabriel albums dating back to the late 1970s. We caught up with David on the current *Up* tour, where he's accompanied by two Rivera KnuckleHead Reverb 100-watt heads and a 412 cabinet fitted with Vintage 30 speakers, and a 100-watt Sedona with a 15. The KnuckleHead Reverbs have been part of his touring rig for the past year, although he's been using Rivera amps for more than five years, including for all the electric guitar parts on the *Up* CD. Want more info? Visit <http://www.petergabriel.com>.

David first tried a Rivera when a friend suggested he should try one while recording in Italy a few years ago. "I had been using Matchless combos for a long time and wanted to work with something different," he recalls. "In fact, it was the first time I had used a separate amp and cabinet. I had always used combos before—Roland and Boogie before the Matchless. It was a revelation to me that I could have the head next to me, and the cab off in another room. It made my working methods very different. It made me use the amplifier a lot more, rather than just leaving a combo on my favorite all-purpose settings. The Rivera amp that I used for recording was so good that I wanted to use a Rivera setup for the shows."

"On the last leg of the tour I ended up using one 4x12 stereo cabinet for reasons of space below the stage," he explains. "We perform in the round, on as clean a stage as we can get it. I would prefer to have two cabinets and play louder. However, our sound man suggested that I was perhaps too loud, early on the tour, for his work. In the studio, but also live, the tone control is wonderful. You can be playing with a sound and there may be a suggestion that the low end or top end is a little proud; it's easy to dial the offending qualities out, without losing all the other frequencies that make up the sound. They have great definition. I also think they look great. You have to enjoy looking at the equipment you're working with!"

Throughout a typical show, David uses a number of guitars. His main instrument is one that was built for him by an Italian maker called Frudua. "It is a very simple guitar," he explains, "with one pickup and no volume or tone controls; as direct a signal as can be managed, with no loss or damping down of sound. He is currently building me a second sparkly instrument, this time with two pickups, but again no controls. I'm also playing a Jerry Jones baritone, which sounds fabulous, a Les Paul Gold Top, a Trussart Les Paul, an old Fender Jazzmaster, and a Steinberger 12-string."



PHOTO BY ARMANDO GALLO

Chris Vachon

of

Roomful of Blues



Roomful Of Blues specializes in blues that makes your heart skip a beat, and for the past 13 years, Chris Vachon has put the sting, the sing, and the swing in the guitar parts that propel this esteemed 35-year-old, 8-piece ensemble. Since 1983, Roomful Of Blues has been nominated four times for a Grammy in the Traditional Blues and Contemporary blues categories. The band has won numerous awards over the years, including twice being voted (in '96 and '98) Blues Band of the Year in the Down Beat International Critics Poll. Watch for Chris Vachon, his KnuckleHead, and Roomful Of Blues—coming to a stage near you! For more info on Chris and Roomful, check in at <http://www.roomful.com>.

Chris relies on one amp, both on the road and in the studio: his trusty Rivera KnuckleHead 100. More specifically, he has one main recipe for his tone: "I use the second channel with the NinjaBoost out so that it's activated, and I leave the volume between 7 and 8, treble around the same, and bass around 3, and my mid is pulled out and set around 3 or 4, and then I have the Focus and Presence pretty close to the top."

Chris' comping tone has a fat chunkiness, which the bluesman attributes to the KnuckleHead's tremendous gain. While many guitarists leave their guitar's volume set at its maximum, in order to drive the preamp stage of their amp with a hotter signal, Chris has a more subtle approach: "I usually leave the volume on my Flying Finn guitar down at around 5 or 6 for comping, and then I'll turn it up to 7 or 8 for soloing. I don't usually go beyond that. I've been doing it that way for a long time. It makes sense to me, because you don't load the front end of the amp too much."

Chris built his own speaker cabinet, partly because he needed something to fit under the bus and partly because he already had a tour case to fit a Fender Super Reverb, so he built a speaker cabinet to fit into that space and used a 300-watt Carvin bass speaker. Also built into the cabinet is an Alesis Quadraverb for reverb and rotary speaker settings, and he patches it into the effects loop of his KnuckleHead, a setup he has relied on since he got his KnuckleHead, about eight or nine years ago. Chris lets us in on an important sonic secret: "I went with digital reverb partly because you don't hear springs in the reverb tank. We were on a lot of stages that are shaky, and you'd always hear rattling noises. And traveling on a bus, I lost about three reverb tanks, and I just got tired of it." In the eight or nine years of constant touring and recording with his KnuckleHead, Chris has found it to be incredibly reliable. "If you open it up, you can see it's built like a tank," he says. "Everything in that amp is top-grade. I have had no problems with my amp. That thing has lived under the bus for that long, too, and about once a year all I do is take it to the house and clean it up."

Mike Keneally

The Orchestra. The Mike Keneally Band.
The Hundred Duo Twelve.



Some guitarists are flashy and fast without much steak under the sizzle, but Mike Keneally is one of the amazing few who can sprint through tough pieces like Frank Zappa's, Steve Vai's, and his own compositions with a finesse that few other pickers can muster. Mike is now spending time with his Mike Keneally Band and in a new role as a composer/performer for orchestral pieces. If you want to know more about Mike and what he's up to or to order CDs, we urge you to visit his website, <http://www.keneally.com>, as soon as humanly possible.

In June, Mike went to Amsterdam, Netherlands, and on June 8th premiered his first orchestral composition, a 45-minute piece called "The Universe Will Provide," for which Mike was the soloist with the Metropole orchestra. On the same bill was Vernon Reid, who performed his own piece with the orchestra. "One of the main themes of the festival was Electric Guitar Today," Mike explains, "so they commissioned us to come up with new music to play with the orchestra. I spent about six months writing a fairly elaborate piece, and it went down really well." (Chris Opperman, a Keneally bandmate, worked with Mike on the orchestration between December 2002 and May 2003.) Mike will be returning to Holland in September to record the piece with the same orchestra.

Mike's amp? Still his trusty Rivera Hundred Duo Twelve, which he used at the orchestra gig. The following night he played a duo performance at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam with Finnish bassist Jaan Wessman, part of a bill featuring several other guitarists. A night later, Mike was gigging with guitar legend Jan Akkerman, who Mike calls "a huge influence on me. He was really important to me when I was young." Keneally sums up the experience: "Having an opportunity to play with Jan for an hour and a half was just like heaven. And I used the Rivera for that, too."

"Curmudgeon that I am when it comes to gear, I find something that I like and I tend to stick with it forever," Mike chuckles. "I've been playing the Hundred Duo Twelve for a long time." Mike's main guitar is still his trusty green Fender Eric Clapton Stratocaster, which he estimates has been under his fingers for about 15 years.

In addition to his orchestral gigging, Mike's been very busy with his quartet, and they're halfway through recording their new CD, which should be available by the end of this year or the first part of 2004. Mike also is the cohost of NoneRadio, an Internet radio show (<http://www.noneradio.com>), where they get special guests such as Steve Lukather and Reeves Gabrels into the studio. The live block of programming is done on Monday evenings, and repeats constantly throughout the week.

Kenny Brescia And Rivera Seven Years On Broadway with

Guitarists are always looking for a great gig, but how many find one that's not only great, but lasts more than seven years? Kenny Brescia has been the guitarist for one of the best-known and longest-running Broadway shows ever, *Rent*. Right next to him, his faithful Rivera KnuckleHead 55 amp has been hard at work for nearly 3,000 shows—eight shows a week (it's on for at least three hours a night, and on weekends there are two shows on Saturday and Sunday).

In addition, Kenny's recorded or toured with Dr. John, The Mamas And The Papas, Wilson Pickett, Ben E. King, Rupert Holmes, and the Apollo Theater House Band. He's recorded movie soundtracks, CDs, TV shows, and jingles. You might call him versatile. Check out samples of Kenny's playing, and more information about him at his website, <http://www.kennybrescia.com>. (For collectors of *Guitar Player*, he was profiled in their July '97 issue.) You can also hear him on the *Rent Original Soundtrack* CD.



Kenny first used Rivera amps while on the road with the Mamas & The Papas in the early 1990s. He was so impressed that when he got the job with *Rent* and they told him to buy whatever amp he wanted, he chose the KnuckleHead. "Other amps needed to be really loud to get their sound, and some only did one thing well," he says. "I thought, this is not only a great sound for what I play, but it's a great size, too. It blew me away."

Brescia doesn't stick with just one sound, since the guitar is such a focal point of the show's music: "I probably use every possible setting. I'm a guy who doesn't like to use a lot of pedals. My pedalboard consists of a tuner, a delay pedal, a tremolo pedal, and that's it. The EQ is very sensitive on the Rivera, and I use the effects loop, too, for my three pedals. For about 65% of *Rent*, I don't use any effects. It's just the guitar into the amp. It's all pop and rock music, so for most of the show I'm in an overdrive setting, and for about a good third of the show I'm in the Boost channel. My volume is on about 8 and the master's on 3."

Even on nights when Kenny hires a substitute guitarist to take his place, he makes sure that his sub uses his KnuckleHead with his settings. "Even though I don't have to be there for every show," he says, "the amp has got to perform. And my amp of choice is that KnuckleHead 55. It's so easy to get a great sound. Switch to either channel, and basically use the treble, bass, and mid controls. That's pretty much it. I have a 112 open-backed Rivera speaker cabinet. It's a Jay Graydon model [Jake Studio Extension, no longer available]. It's got a Celestion Vintage 30, and it's perfect for me. I like 212 and 412 cabinets, but for this show, the single 12 is perfect. It's been there for this entire time. They put a Shure SM-57 mike in front of it, a little off-axis from the speaker."

Kenny likes the KnuckleHead's reliability, and does only one thing to maintain his killer tone: "I change the power tubes and have the bias checked, maybe every three or four months. I traveled for years, and one time I noticed my amp sounded great and asked the guitar tech why. He told me that he had changed the power amp tubes. So I asked him, 'When should I change my power amp tubes?' And he said, 'When your amp doesn't sound like this.' Rather than getting into all the technical stuff, he told me something that anyone can understand."

EX-FBI AGENT JOHN HALL LAYS DOWN THE ACOUSTIC LAW WITH HIS RIVERA SEDONA

When the word “arresting” and “FBI” are used in the same sentence, it usually means that the good guys caught the bad guys. But, in the case of the Free Agents, it’s their playing that’s arresting, and the good guys (and gals) are in the audience, treated to some fine fingerpicking. On lead



for the Free Agents, a group of mostly retired FBI guys, John Hall relies on his Rivera Sedona to spread his sound. And recently retired after 32 years with the FBI, he now has more time to pursue his love of playing full-time. During his tenure at the Bureau, John and some friends played together, performing charity functions and just plain enjoying the camaraderie and music.

Formed in the 1970s, the Free Agents are Don Bassett (vocals, guitar, keyboard, and bass), John, Buddy McKinney (guitar), Danny Schofield (guitar), and Wayne Smith (violin). They have performed for many

law enforcement and charity functions, and are friends with Doyle Dykes, who inspired them to record and to keep playing together (and Doyle played on two songs on their CD, *Most Wanted*). The proud owner of five Taylor acoustic guitars (including two Doyle Dykes Signature Models), John wanted a great amp, and at Doyle’s recommendation, he purchased a Rivera R55 with an added tweeter, the same setup Doyle used. When the Sedona became available, John decided to get one as the perfect complement to his Doyle Dykes Signature Model Taylor.

Check out the Free Agents’ web site at <http://www.thefreeagents.org> for a terrific profile of the band and its history and to purchase their CD.



ANI DIFRANCO & SEDONA

Reg Dickinson has spent the past seven years as Ani DiFranco’s guitar tech, the guy who makes sure that everything between Ani’s hands and the audience’s ears is tuned, tweaked, and totally musical. That is to say, it’s his responsibility to keep the things sounding and playing right. We spoke to Reg just as Ani was about to embark on her summer tour (get more info on Ani and her tour at <http://www.righteous-babe.com/>). “I’ve been working with her for seven years,” Reg says, “and the sounds change per the material.

“Ani’s been using a 100-watt single-15 Sedona for five years. It’s fantastic. Her main guitars are a Hamer Custom Artist sunburst, which is sort of a Les Paul-meets-335 semi-hollow, and a Danelectro baritone. We take the wireless rig and split the signal to the monitor console and do a send to the Sedona and one to an Ampeg Super Jet J12T. We’re now using eight or nine guitars, and six of them are wireless. You can take the wireless guitars and change the gain structures via the sends through the monitor consoles. It obviously changes the response of the amp, because it’s not as nice and direct, and there’s a little signal loss. But it’s a perfect example of convenience vs. getting exactly what you want.”

Ani’s amps are literally the back line, right behind her. Reg says, “She’s now solo, so in a way they’re like guitar amps, but they’re also like colored guitar monitors. They’re right behind her, pointing at her ears. If I have to mention one thing, I’d have to say that Rivera is one of the most responsive companies when I need anything. I try to work with as few companies as possible, and I don’t care how good your product is if you’re not good at customer service. That makes a big difference.”

RIVERA REDESIGNS ITS SUBS

Rivera redesigned the KS312 to make it virtually identical in size and shape to a 412, so it now looks identical to a Rivera 4x12, fits the same flight case, and offers a fatter-sounding midrange. “We’ve increased the cubic volume of the space occupied by the midrange and high transducers,” explains Paul Rivera, Sr. “It’s available with Celestion G-12T75s as well as Vintage 30s for the top end. The G-12T75 has a very balanced sound and more high end than the Vintage 30s and a little less compression. The Vintage 30s are creamier for distortion, but not quite as balanced between clean and dirty. We offer both, because we realize that every guitarist has different taste.”

Both the KS312 and the Sub 2 have a built-in crossover and power amp for the lows. The Sub 2 has 500 watts of power and two 12” JBL M222 speakers, while the KS312 pushes 300 watts into its single M222 subwoofer. Check with your dealer or the Rivera web site for further details.

R&G RIVERA OWNERS
GROUP NEWSLETTER

Published by Rivera Research & Development
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DOYLE DYKES

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treble. I’ll go anywhere from 5 to 7 on the mids because sometimes I like more high mids to get the harmonics out, for more of an electric-acoustic sound. And then I set the bass around 8. The master volume really helps. Any tube amp has to be cranked up to get a great sound, so I keep the master volume on 10 and the volume at 2 or below, usually.

“The Sedona is *the* most versatile amp that I know of anywhere in the world—especially with a tube amp. We considered plugging in a microphone and all sorts of things, but we homed in more on the guitar. In my opinion, it’s nice if you have a little combo type of thing where you want to play in a coffeehouse or on a small stage, it would be cool, or you could just play through a P.A. system. But if you want a really good guitar sound, I don’t think you need to be putting vocal microphones inside of it anyway.

“If you’re playing solo guitar and you want the best sound, you need your own source, and the Sedona is the best source I’ve ever seen for guitar. That goes for playing electric or acoustic, because I love playing my electric guitars through there, and when I play my nylon-string, it sounds like the amp was made for that guitar. There are very few amps that I’ve used that can really match up with that and get the most out of it and make it sound really good. Nothing sounds like this Sedona. It just kills everyone else.”