



PHOTOGRAPHY AMANDA THOMAS

Rivera Quiana Studio 112 combo £1,529

Boasting a velvet tone and vintage cool from one of the world's top amp designers, is the Quiana one of the most irresistible amplifiers ever made? **by Nick Guppy**

Rivera's current range is one of the most diverse you'll see from any manufacturer, and with an artist roster that covers everyone from Slipknot's Mick Thompson to Nashville fingerstyle master Doyle Dykes, that's hardly surprising.

While most of Paul's amps have EL34 output stages, there are a couple of notable exceptions: besides the entry-level Pubster and Clubster 25s, which use a pair of 6V6s, there's just one other non-EL34 amp in the Rivera 30th-anniversary catalogue, and this

RIVERA QUIANA STUDIO	TEST RESULTS
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★

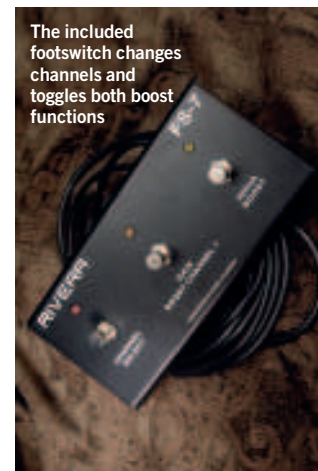
■ **WE LIKED** Truly exceptional tone; fabulous reverb; great looks

■ **WE DISLIKED** A decent slip cover would be nice; making the adjustable boost feature standard would be even nicer

is it. The Quiana (pronounced kee-AHN-ah) is Rivera's only dedicated 6L6 model and is named after Paul Rivera

Sr's daughter, so you'd expect it to be rather special. It's available in a variety of different formats to suit any need, and this issue we're looking at possibly the most versatile choice, the 50-watt Studio 112 combo.

Riveras are known for their excellent build quality and the Quiana Studio is no exception. The extra-deep birch ply cabinet is superbly put together, with tough metal corners to protect your investment, and no less than eight bolts to secure the chassis. You have a choice of custom finishes, although the



The included footswitch changes channels and toggles both boost functions

The rivals

Mesa Engineering	
Lone Star Special	
1 x 12 combo	£1,695
Supro Tremolelectric	
3 x 10 combo	£1,475
Brunetti MC2 combo	
	£1,299

Mesa's fantastic Lone Star Special is one of Randall Smith's best ever designs and it's got to be one of the Quiana Studio's closest competitors for features and tone, with arguably the best spring reverb effect ever put into a guitar amp. It's equally versatile and well-built, with a similar pedigree. If you want none-more-vintage then check out Supro's Tremolelectric, which we reviewed in issue 280. Bruce Zinky's reinterpretation of a classic theme hit the bullseye for us, and faithfully captures those early Zep tones. Just as hot in the tone department and worth more than a fleeting glance, Brunetti's MC2 packs serious flexibility into a very portable cabinet. Packed with Italian style and power, this amp deserves a wider audience.

standard trim for this amp is arguably the prettiest – the sumptuous ruby red Tolex, wheat brown speaker grille and white piping combination looks seriously cool, and has subtle vintage appeal. Two inches deeper than an R55 cabinet, the Quiana Studio's extra volume is intended to enrich bass response and, although it's a bit more of a handful to carry than some combos, it's still portable and doesn't look out of proportion.

Like most Rivera combos, the speaker grille is attached with Velcro and so it's easily removed for precise close mic'ing in the studio. The steel box chassis supports substantial mains and output transformers.

It's worth pointing out here that Rivera is one of just a few USA amp manufacturers to make UK-friendly 250V/50Hz versions. UK mains power used to be 240V, plus or minus six per cent, but some years back this was supposedly dropped to 230V to harmonise with the rest of Europe. However, in practice, many areas are still closer to 250V at off-peak times, so Rivera mains transformers should run cooler and the internals won't slowly bake to a crisp, while a regulated DC filament supply for the preamp valves means there's no mains hum.

Rivera's aerospace-standard circuit board is packed with custom components and features surgically clean soldering and wiring. All the

We typically had both of the master volumes set to around six or seven, at which point other guitarists' jaws started to drop – it really does sound that good

valve bases are chassis mounted, which saves the PCB from long-term damage caused by flexing when valves are replaced. Emergency mid-gig valve swaps are easier too.

The Quiana's control layout is based on traditional Rivera topology, with a few twists, such as two fully independent channels with very different characteristics. Channel 1 is inspired by classic Brit sounds and has a wide-ranging gain control, fully interactive three-band EQ and a footswitchable boost. Channel 2 is where the classic American stuff hangs out. Here the EQ arrangement is much more flexible, featuring push/pull switches for bright and mid shift functions that tweak things for either tweed or blackface response, and again there's a footswitchable boost. In fact, this is Rivera's infamous Ninja Boost, which adds substantial drive to both preamp and power amp for increased volume and a much thicker tone.

The front-panel tour concludes with level controls for presence and

the long-pan six-spring Accutronics reverb, while Rivera's Focus control varies the damping applied to the custom-voiced Celestion Vintage 30 loudspeaker. Yet another push/pull switch on this last control adds a Quiana innovation: the Warm function that reshapes the amp's low-end and presence contours for an overall warmer response.

On the back panel, you'll find the classic buffered series effects loop that goes back at least to the Super Champ era, with level controls for send and return signals, a fixed-level line out, a pair of speaker jacks with switchable impedance, and a socket for the included FS-7 footswitch that toggles the channels and both boost functions.

There's also a small rocker switch marked Vintage and Modern, which lets you run the output stage in either triode or pentode mode. Triode mode roughly halves the output power and emphasises even harmonics, while pentode gives you the full 50 watts and odd-order harmonic emphasis for a zingier sound with more headroom.

SOUNDS: One meaning we found for the word quiana is 'silky', which also happens to be a good description of this amp's sonic character. On any Rivera, Channel 1 is famous for providing the brownest of brown lead sounds, with massive sustain, driving bass and a treble response that can

RIVERA QUIANA STUDIO 112 COMBO £1,529

GUITAR AMPS  CD TRACKS 8 & 9

RIVERA QUIANA STUDIO 112 COMBO

PRICE: £1,529

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: All-valve, two-channel Class AB combo with solid/state rectification

OUTPUT: 50W RMS

VALVES: 5 x ECC83/12AX7 preamp, 2 x 6L6 power amp

DIMENSIONS: 460 (h) x 600 (w) x 305mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lb): 25/55

CABINET: Birch ply

LOUDSPEAKERS: 1 x Celestion V30

CHANNELS: Two

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, reverb and focus with pull warm function

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

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Series effects loop with variable send and return levels, fixed-level line out, pentode/triode switching, extension speaker outlets

OPTIONS: For custom colours, add £189. There's also a factory-variable boost mod that enables you to preset the boost level to taste on both channels – it costs an extra £100

RANGE OPTIONS: The Quiana is also available as a 50W head for £1,399, a 100W head for £1,499 and a 2 x 12 50W combo for £1,669. 2 x 12 V30-loaded cabs cost £639, 4 x 12s are £799.

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Channel 2 proffers classic Tweed or Blackface tone, perfect for blues

→ slice through a mix like a welding torch through a paper napkin. It's exhilarating, but not always the most subtle of tones. However, engage the Quiana's Warm function and this channel is transformed into a softer, more velvety voice that's similar in character to some high-end Dumble clones we've tried recently. Sweeter than an R Series and less aggressive, it's distinctive and flattering to vintage PAF-style humbuckers or single-coils. For more sustain, just kick in the boost function and you're rewarded with a hot solo tone that's very fluid and remarkably dynamic. It's exquisitely shaped, with a lot of depth and a table that snarls, rather than screams.

Channel 2 is rhythm and blues central. On some early R Series amps, this one was tricky to dial in, but the EQ gremlins have now been banished and very little work is needed to get a superb sound that's classic Tweed or Blackface tone to the bone. Gorgeous, shimmering cleans at lower gain levels can easily be pushed into a beefed-up Fender-inspired overdrive that's fantastic for playing the blues, while the wonderfully mad Ninja Boost is also there for your instant vintage solo gratification.

Those bright and mid-shift functions make it easy to get the best out of single-coils or humbuckers, and the presence, focus and warm functions work to fine-tune what's already a superlative sound. The Quiana's dark and smoky reverb is one of the best we've heard on any amp, having a long, smooth decay and plenty of effect, with no hum to spoil the party.



The Quiana's effects loop has Send and Return level controls

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Verdict

For pros, semi-pros and demanding amateurs who want just one easily portable amp with a wide range of authentic vintage American tones, as well as the capability to rock really hard, the Quiana Studio sure takes some beating. Four footswitchable voices that change seamlessly with no pops or clicks, world-class sound that's just as good at bedroom levels as it is on stage, and build quality that's going to handle anything you want to

throw at it combine to make the Quiana Studio a stellar all-round performer. The 50-watt output stage is perfect for most casual gigs, allowing you to drive those two 6L6's for maximum effect. We typically had both master volumes set to around six or seven, at which point other guitarists' jaws started to drop – it really does sound that good.

As you might expect, the Quiana Studio's fabulous performance and cool looks don't come cheap, but with build, tone, features and versatility exceeding many higher-priced amps, we think it's pretty good value for money.

After years of being under-sold in the UK, Rivera is back with a vengeance, and this amp is an awesome reminder of what we've been missing out on. **A**

Rivera Quiana Studio 112 combo

Guitarist RATING

★★★★★