

R

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TOP GEAR

Hotter Than The Sun

Carr Amplifiers Mercury V

BY PAUL RIARIO

I HAVE ALWAYS been a fan of British-flavored amps, so when I reviewed Carr's Lincoln amplifier for *Guitar Aficionado* last year, I was knocked out by its impressive Vox-like voice in an 18-watt combo. Now, amp builder Steve Carr—forever tinkering and honing in his designs—has concocted the Mercury V, a new 1x12 combo based on his popular Skylark model but with a brawny vintage-style Marshall character.

The Mercury V is a single-channel amp with cleverly modded functionality. The Mercury V begins with a series/parallel toggle switch and controls for high and low volume. Set to parallel, the amp ably reproduces the bridging of a classic four-input dual-channel amplifier where both volumes can operate independently or be blended as an extra layer of EQ shaping. In series, the high volume cascades into the low volume for additional red-hot gain. There is also a three-position boost switch that ramps up the amp's voicing from sparkling clean to tight crunch and molten overdrive response.

The amp also features controls for reverb (tube/spring), treble, mid, bass, a line out for recording or direct-to-PA and an attenuator switch that toggles between a full-throttle 16-watts of power or an adjustable range of zero to four watts with its last control knob. Carr's top-notch construction boasts point-to-point wiring and premium components such as Analysis Plus and Transparent cabling, custom Carr transformers and Jupiter Mustard signal caps. To project its muscular voice, the amp employs a single 12-inch Celestion Creamback M-65 speaker.



At first glance, what may seem like a complex layout on its control panel is actually a straightforward means for building a wealth of stellar tones, especially if you dig loads of searing crunch with focused note definition and touch sensitivity. Using a humbucker-equipped Tele with a coil-tap, I set the amp in parallel mode with the boost selector dead center and set the attenuator at a comfortable four watts. Being familiar with jumping inputs on vintage amps, I felt right at home blending the high and low volume sections to achieve a balanced semi-clean or slightly more overdriven response as my base tone. At its full 16 watts, the amp is plenty loud enough to handle any live performance while adding incredible body and resonance to that initial attenuated setting.

What's even more remarkable is the amp's ability to summon clean chime when using single coils and then quickly double down to cutting grit with humbuckers. The Mercury V excels at many different colors of crunchiness and sustain, and there's so much gain available you'll never think of using an overdrive pedal because its built-in boost switch (or flat-out switching the toggle to series mode) offers a wide range of hot-rodded overdrive that teeters on harmonically sweet distortion or Marshall-like bark.

The Mercury V is a knockout amp that offers a number of gainful tweaks that deservedly bestow it as Carr's most tonally versatile amp with a built-in attenuator. **GA**

STREET PRICE: \$2,530

Carr Amplifiers, carramps.com