

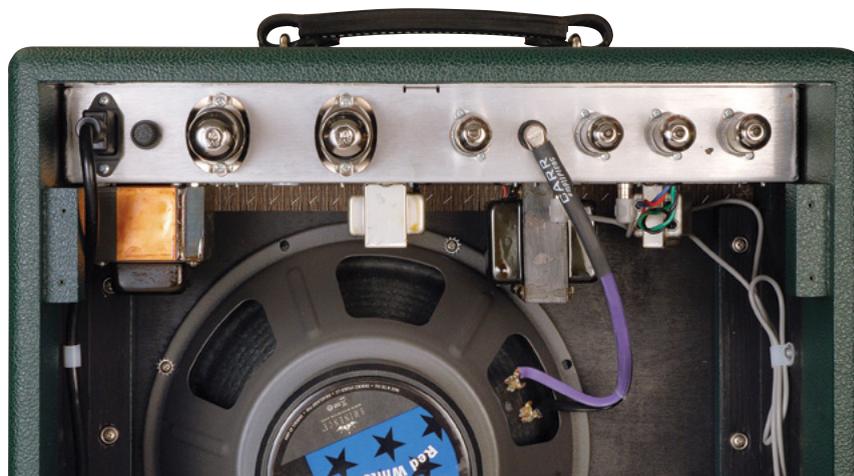
## On the Hunt

### The Carr Sportsman

**E**ven after more than a decade in the amp-building business, Steve Carr is always on the hunt for a design with new features, a new look, or a cool new vibe. His latest offering is the Sportsman combo.

The Sportsman is housed in a 12-gauge aluminum chassis in a pine cabinet with dovetail joints, Analysis Plus speaker wire, hospital-grade power cord, and a hand-made leather handle. Aesthetically, the amp lives up to its name, with tan grillecloth, white control panel with chickenhead knobs, a waterfowl-inspired logo, and minimal hardware. It all adds up to a clean look.

Electronically, the hand-wired Sportsman uses custom-wound paper-bobbin transformers, a pair of Electro-Harmonix 12AX7s in the preamp, an E-H 12AT7 reverb tube, an E-H 12AT7 phase inverter, and a matched pair of Tung Sol 6V6GT power tubes that help it produce 19 watts in a mix of cathode-bias and fixed-bias configurations. The control layout is straightforward, with Volume, Bass, Midrange, Treble, Reverb, Headroom, and Loudness controls, as well as switches for power and standby. The Sportsman is available in 1x10" or 1x12" combo configurations, and our tester



The Sportsman's chassis is designed for easy access to its tube complement.

1x12" had an Eminence Patriot Red White & Blues driver.

The Sportsman's three-way tone stack is well-voiced; its Bass and Treble controls are subtle but useful, rounding out low-end response and taming high-end as the player transitions from single-coil

guitars to humbuckers. In contrast, the Midrange control cuts a fairly wide swath, helping dial in anything from a scooped Strat sound from 8 o'clock to 11 o'clock, to an aggressive midrange British tone from 1 o'clock to 5 o'clock. And regardless of its setting, the amp sounded relatively natural, with a smooth, musical taper that allowed for a range of tonal possibilities. Dialing up the Midrange control added musical effervescence to the mids, rather than simply boosting it. And the Sportsman's Headroom control functions like a traditional master Volume, though it's markedly more transparent and allows the player to reel in the amp's output without killing its tone.

Even with the Volume control dimed, the Sportsman doesn't do high-gain. But what it *does* produce is a ton of tight, focused overtone-saturated midrange that makes single notes and chords pop. The Midrange control *does* add a bit of overdrive as well as bark and attitude when cranked, but it does not get harsh or tiring to the ears.

The Sportsman's tube reverb circuit is outstanding – clean, quiet, spanky, and lush with a medium-long decay and nicely voiced with a natural crisp tone that doesn't washout or get in the way.

At 19 watts, the Sportsman has enough power and clean headroom for most gigging situations. Its lack of footswitchable boost or channel switching, and its inherent tendency to stay on the clean side, means an overdrive pedal would be a welcome addition to the front end of the amp's signal chain. If one's style never calls for full-blown distortion, you can skip it, as the amp responds well to changes at the guitar's Volume and Tone controls, going from clean to dirty and even boosting solos.

With the Carr Sportsman, you don't have to hunt to find a great tone. Whether jammed with single-coils or humbuckers, its versatile tone stack, high-end components and built quality make it an easy task. – **Phil Feser VG**



#### CARR SPORTSMAN

Price: \$2,090 (1x10"), \$2,190 (1x12")  
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