

R**reviews**

TOP GEAR



Out of This World

Carr Amplifiers Mercury

PHOTOGRAPH BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

FEATURING AN INNOVATIVE circuit design, point-to-point wiring, premium componentry, and cabinets hand-assembled in his Pittsboro, North Carolina, shop, Steve Carr's unimpeachably built amplifiers have been top performers in the boutique amp world since 1998.

The Mercury is no exception. Powered by a single EL-34 tube, the amp comes stock with an Eminence Patriot Red White & Blues speaker and features controls for volume, reverb, tone, and boost, as well as a treble-cut switch that supplants the tone controls when one of the amp's two boost modes is engaged. Using Carr's proprietary power-attenuation circuitry, the Mercury's power stage can be switched to deliver either eight, two, one-half or one-tenth watts of power, allowing the tubes to receive a workout even at low volumes.

Front-ended with a Tele-style Rust guitar loaded with Lollar pickups, the Mercury bloomed with exciting and satisfying overtones. Because of its relatively low power rating, this is not an amplifier with headroom to spare, but it delivers the perfect amount of snap, sparkle and sag that flatters almost any lick or riff. At more overdriven settings with the boost engaged, the amp imparted a toothy—but not harsh—overdrive to the Rust's single-coil output, creating tones that would be perfectly suited to classic rock and modern country applications. The Mercury performed equally well when paired with a P-90-equipped 1968 Les Paul, delivering presence, clarity, and riff-tastic overdrive on demand.

And while many tube amplifiers promise to deliver satisfying tones at optimal studio and bedroom levels, few succeed as admirably as the Mercury. The built-in power attenuation is remarkably transparent, especially when the amp is set to overdrive, and even the 1/10th-watt setting delivers a pleasingly wide harmonic spectrum that will allow players to rock and record while their neighbors and family members rest easy. **CA**

List Price: \$2,290 (\$2,440 as shown, in Gators & Cream)

Carr Amplifiers, carramps.com



SOLID CABLES DYNAMIC ARC ULTRA INSTRUMENT CABLE

The Dynamic Arc Ultra instrument cable features all-metal connectors, better-than-military-spec armor along its length, and an ultra-pure copper conductor wire isolated in avionics-grade adhesive. Tested with a variety of guitars and amplifiers, the Dynamic Arc Ultra delivered added harmonic detail and clarity.

List Price: 12-foot cable, \$138

Solid Cables, solidcables.com



AKAI PROFESSIONAL ANALOG CUSTOM SHOP PHASE SHIFTER

Akai's new Custom Shop Phase Shifter pedal features a bulletproof stainless-steel casing, true-bypass switching, and fully analog circuitry. The A and B toggle switches can be set to produce 90, 180, 270, and 360 degrees of phase shift, allowing the pedal to recreate the sound and swirl of legendary units like the Electro-Harmonix Small Stone and MXR Phase 90 with impressive authenticity.

List Price: \$99

Akai, akaipro.com