

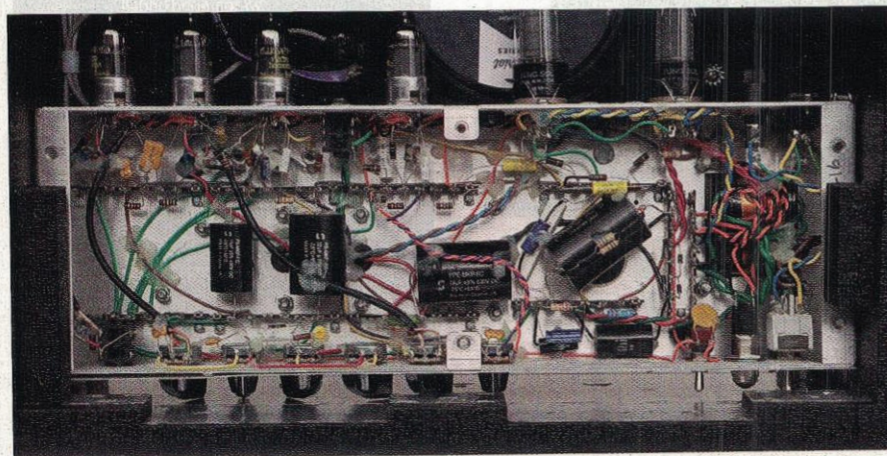


# Carr Sportsman

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

STEVE CARR CLEARLY DRAWS INSPIRATION from different eras of classic amp design, and his product line always seems to reflect a desire to keep one foot in the past while simultaneously offering players a thoroughly modern

amplifier that excels in tone, build quality, and style. All of these aspects are realized in the new Sportsman, which in Carr's words, "fuses the instant purity of '60s American 1x10 combo amps with the more aggressive dual-6V6



## >>> CARR

section of the late '50s." The Sportsman goes further toward celebrating the spirit of vintage Fender faves like the Princeton and Deluxe by being offered with either a 10" or 12" speaker bolted to a mid-'60s-style floating baffle in an open-back cabinet made from solid pine. A very classy looking amp with its cream covering and brown woven grill (other color combinations are available), the Sportsman continues the act within its aluminum chassis, where we find tidy point-to-point circuitry (more Valco than Fender in that regard) that's populated with high-grade components and beefed up in the ruggedness department via chassis-mounted pots, switches, and tube sockets. Along with a Standby switch there's a three-way Power switch that toggles between two polarity settings to eliminate hum and/or reverse a potentially dangerous grounding condition.

The standard control set of Volume, Treble, Mid, Bass, and Reverb is augmented by a knob labeled "Headroom," which I take to mean "master volume" even though it might not be wired in classic MV fashion. At any rate, depending on where Headroom and Volume are set, the Sportsman can sound beautifully Fender-like (its spacious reverb is delicious in this mode), or twangy and grinding for gnarly rhythm/lead work, or more British-y and sustaining with the Volume and Headroom cranked up to take advantage of overdrive in both the preamp and power stages. No matter how it's set, though, the Carr is in its own league in terms of harmonic richness and complexity. There's so much depth to chords and fingerpicked lines, and the amp's natural sustain qualities, even in its cleaner modes, enhance that inspiring feeling of notes blossoming under your fingers.

It only takes a little playing though the Sportsman to be convinced that it is easily one of the best sounding 20-watt combos out there. Between the flexibility of the tone stack and the wide gain range, it's easy to find tones that cover everything from jazz/funk clean to overdriven Texas blues to shimmering alt-country and rock & roll grind. Adding pedals to the front end furthers the Sportsman's versatility. Modulation and delay units sound great with this amp, and here's where a high Headroom setting with the Volume near halfway allows the amp's clear delivery and excellent dynamic qualities to shine whether you're slathering on tremolo or using a booster or distortion box for extra sustain.

The Sportsman satisfies on so many levels and is fairly priced for all it offers. If you're eyeballing the boutique market for a low-wattage combo, this one should be at the top of your list. **A**

### SPECIFICATIONS

#### SPORTSMAN

CONTACT	carramps.com
PRICE	\$1,990 street
CHANNELS	One
CONTROLS	Volume, Treble, Mid, Bass, Reverb, Headroom
TUBES	2x 12AX7, 2x 12AT7, 2x 6V6GT
POWER	19 watts
EXTRAS	Solid pine cabinet with floating baffle. Point-to-point circuitry
SPEAKER	12" Eminence Patriot Series Red White & Blues
WEIGHT	36.8 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Super toneful. Excellent build quality. Great reverb.
CONCERNS	No effects loop or reverb footswitching.