



amp that led us to conclude that Carr has taken the 12 watt combo concept as far as it can possibly go, all with stellar results.

*TQR:* In the long history of Carr amps, where does this model fit, Steve? What did you want to accomplish with the Skylark design specifically?

This is a central question. The line has expanded and evolved. It is important for us to have a line of amps that makes sense and does not confuse our customers nor our dealers. They have to be individuals which satisfy different needs. The Skylark developed under the concept of 'ultimate American flavored at home amp'.



Also the Skylark in my mind is the American cousin of our Mercury amp. There is overlap though with the Skylark having 2/3 American and 1/3 British potential while the Mercury is the opposite. They

both excel in home, studio, and small gig settings. It is more a matter of what side of the tone continent you want to lean towards! The features and vibes are different and it would not be redundant to have both but this is the most generalized take on it I can give. Looking at the line as a whole, they are the over achieving home/studio/small gig amps. The Raleigh is strictly practice/recording and then the others are more stage and gig amps. They will work at home too but the Raleigh, Mercury, Skylark are specialists!

*TQR:* In your mind what are the benefits of the floating baffle?

In my experience both solid pine cabinets and floating baffle boards impart a similar vibe. They each have a nice transient snap while sounding rich and dimensional. We use both to 'double up' on the goods. The baffle being able to move a little with the speaker, I believe, makes the sound a bit diffuse in a pleasant – thickening way. The solid pine cabinet resonates – like the guitar. The sound of an amp always seems to be more than the sum of its parts. Both seem best for clean and lower power amps. For heavy overdrive amps a more

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## Carr Skylark

In a world crowded with small, diminutive amplifiers intended for home and studio use, you might think that everything that can be done has been done, but then again, you're not Steve Carr. Continuing to work the vintage automotive theme, Carr has recently introduced the Skylark – a feature-packed 1x12

rigid and colorless cabinet is helpful to keep things controlled.

**TQR:** How do you manage to design attenuation that can take the amp down to 1/100th of a watt? How does that work?

Our top secret attenuator uses power resistors, high quality caps, a high wattage pot, and a speaker voice coil. The design is pretty straight forward but I tweaked it a lot for the Skylark and that is nice thing about a single amp dedicated attenuator. The amp is always making its full 12 watts – it is just how much of this power gets to the speaker. The other thing that is important is to retain the ‘feel’ of a speaker and I pay a great deal of attention to that aspect. When the Attenuator toggle is up the attenuator is 100% out of the signal path. Once you flick it down it switches the speaker into the attenuator and also connect the attenuator to the output transformer. The attenuator receives more of the signal as you turn it down until the attenuator is handling all of the output rather than the speaker.

**TQR:** How do the extended range mid and presence controls work? Are these just different cap values kind of like a Fender bright switch?



In a way they are massaged variations on the classic themes. The extended Mid is just that – a 50K Audio pot instead of the typical 10K for Fender or 25K

pot for Marshall. This allows you to dial in more Midrange but also in extreme settings frees up lost gain in the tone stack so you can drive the amp harder. Using an Audio pot helps as the straight up noon position is about 6K which is similar mid-range to a blackface Deluxe which does not have a Mid pot.

The Presence control is inspired by the very earliest Bassman amp – this is a more primitive presence control that not only dials in brightness but also changes the frequency of that push as you turn it up – introducing upper Mids too. This part of the circuit changed by the end of the ‘50s – but the old one really felt right to me! The old one has a characteristic ‘swoosh’ as you turn it! (due to a little dc voltage on the pot - it is safe)

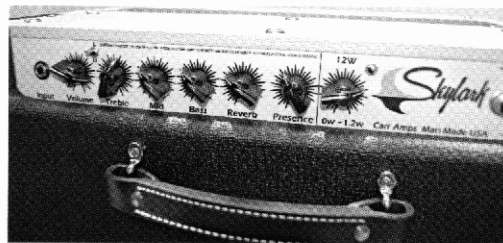
I tweaked it as usual to get the biggest – most effective and intuitive range plus added a little tone shaping. Many folks have found Presence controls useless. The Presence in the Skylark is *super* useful. With it on zero the amp is very even and polite sounding – sort of Jazzy and taught. As you advance the Presence to midway you get nice airy chime and a very blackface sound. Then you can go further for more bite which really cuts thru the mix or clears up a congested sounding neck pickup.

This control is one of my favorite aspects of the Skylark. The Presence works thru negative feedback around the output stage (phase inverter, power tubes, output transformer, and speaker). The small part of the signal is taken from the speaker output and feed back into the phase inverter out of phase. This lowers the gain/volume of the output stage while it corrects distortion in a subtractive way. Presence controls work by removing high frequencies from this gain reducing loop which effectively boosts those freed frequencies!

**TQR:** What’s ahead? Do you have another new amp on your drawing board?

I do have something in mind! I am right at the beginning though and it is too early to discuss. The amps go thru so many changes with twists and turns — they rarely emerge as I initially conceive of them. Stay tuned!

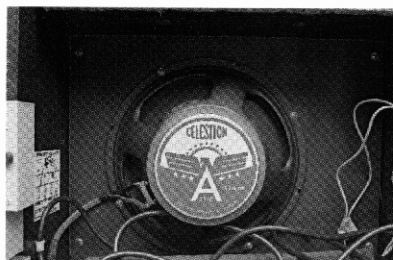
If you are craving a moderately powered but eminently toneful 1x12 combo, the Skylark might could be your next amp. Here’s why...



On style points alone, Carr’s dedicated wood working shop

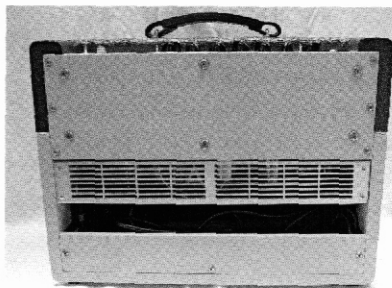
continues to produce the most unique and artful cabinet designs in existence. Made entirely of North Carolina yellow pine, the Skylark features a floating baffle and yes, you can hear the difference. The Skylark creates a lively tone with an airy bounce to the notes. Carr has packed excellent all tube reverb into the Skylark, and features that will leave you wanting nothing more, beginning with a switchable built-in attenuator that can manage volume from a bold 12 watts to a mere whisper played clean, or at all levels of overdriven distortion. Technically the Skylark can drop to 1/100th watt, but who’s counting? A high/low gain switch delivers clean and naturally overdriven tones that are dynamically responsive to pick attack, and we particularly admired the extended range mid and presence controls for precise tone-shaping and still more variety and color.

Carr chose the new Celestion American-voiced A-Type 12”



speaker, and we were impressed with its open and very balanced and airy tone. This is a departure for Celestion, but a good one indeed.

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Controls are simple and intuitive: Volume, Treble, Mid, Bass, Reverb and Presence, Low/High Gain, Extended Mid and Presence. What more could you possibly need? There are

more tone-shaping capabilities in this amp than anything we have ever reviewed, and most importantly, they are all useful, creating an extremely wide range of tones, intensity levels and volume that worked well with all of our guitars. The clean tones are fundamentally pure and satisfying, and the range of variable levels of overdriven tones and distortion pretty much cover every guitar sound you can possibly imagine, from mildly busted up to screaming, even at a whisper. Did we mention that the spring reverb is lush and real real, too?

We have admired Steve Carr's work since we first heard a Carr Rambler at Corner Music in Nashville well over ten years ago. He knows his business, and his business is great tone. The Skylark gets our vote for the small amp of the year. Quest forth...to

[www.carramps.com](http://www.carramps.com)