

★★★★★
Guitarist
CHOICE

Carr Slant 6V combo from £2,173

A powerhouse twin-channel combo boasting monster tone and audiophile-grade build quality. We take Carr's flagship for its first European test drive by Nick Guppy

Based in North Carolina, Steve Carr has been steadily building up a reputation for some of the best-sounding and best-made guitar amps on the planet. The superb Mercury single-ended combo we looked at in issue 256 is a more recent addition to

his range, but the one that started it all for Carr is the Slant 6V which is finally beginning to reap widespread acclaim as one of the best two-channel amps money can buy.

Steve told us how it all started and explained the origins of that name. "It's

CARR SLANT 6V COMBO TEST RESULTS	
Build quality	★★★★★
Features	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Value for money	★★★★★
WE LIKED	Mind-blowing tone and response from a neat, portable combo
WE DISLIKED	Impossible to fault, even at this price

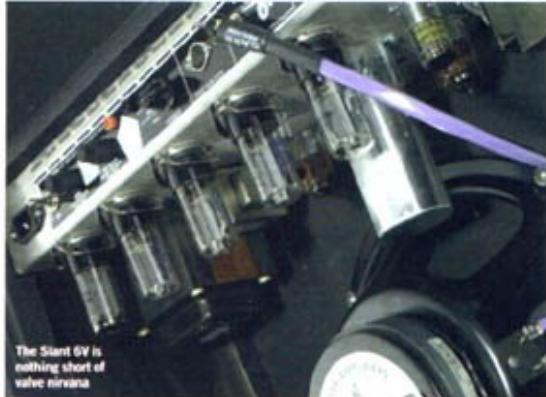
a pun: the tubes are 6V6s and there was a well-known car engine called the Slant 6, which was fabled to run forever! They were in Falcons and Dusters over here in the US back in the sixties," he explains. "Two of my favourite amps at the time I started work on the Slant 6V were a 1964 blackface Fender Deluxe Reverb and an early seventies Marshall JMP 50 non-master volume head. I'd spent a lot of time modifying them and hoped to bring the best features from both designs together in a unique package. I'm sure this is the same idea many amp builders start with, as these are archetypal amps."

From a distance the Carr is a neatly proportioned, if somewhat plain-looking, combo. Move closer, though, and the attention to detail elevates it way above the ordinary. The cabinet is solid pine with dovetailed corners, covered in thick Tolex and built like a vintage Chevy pickup truck to last. Like all Carr amps, the Slant 6V utilises pure point-to-point construction, which is to say you won't find any kind of circuit board inside the aluminium chassis. All the internal components are joined to each other, or one of several tag strips. This is very demanding for a production amplifier because everything has to be precisely placed and every amp has to be tweaked until it sounds right – which is time-consuming and therefore unavoidably expensive.

Steve Carr blends this 1940s-style construction with some ultra-modern, audiophile-grade components, including polypropylene Solen capacitors instead of electrolytics – and not just for show; every part of the amp, from the type of wire to the chassis material to the resistors, changes the sound and the feel.

"Over the years I've developed an affinity for certain components which I now use in all my designs," says Carr, "it's the combination that's meaningful. The Solens are very expensive compared to electrolytics but they impart a clear, uncongested sound while staying warm. I love them, and in our amps they're worth the expense."

The Slant 6V's two preamp channels feed a clever power stage based around four 6V6s. There are two half-power settings: one pair of valves is cathode-biased, while the other is fixed bias. You can select either from a rear panel



The Slant 6V is nothing short of valve nirvana

switch, or run both at the same time. Other refinements include a boost switch on the lead channel and a series effects loop with a bypass switch.

The front panel layout is very straightforward, with chicken-head knobs over Carr's distinctive starburst-effect dial, making it easy to dial in precise control settings. The Slant 6V comes in several options. Ours is the stock version, featuring reverb on the clean channel only. "Like the stock version with dry overdrive", says Steve, "it's a little more punchy and I tend to add just a touch of echo with a pedal on overdrive tones. Also, it's important to know the two preamps are totally discrete with no shared parts or tubes until they meet at the output section.

Switching is through a high quality relay, with no solid-state parts to run your guitar signal through. The gain boost toggle switch on the overdrive channel can also be made to footswitch. You'd then have a two-hands footswitch and a versatile two-and-a-half channel amp set-up.

SOUNDS: Most people will go straight to the high gain stuff when they plug in, and miss out on the Slant 6V's clean channel. Well, imagine the smoothest, most sparkling blackface Fender you've ever listened to – and then imagine something that makes it sound like a worn-out kazoo. That pretty much describes how good the Slant 6V can be. With a little reverb the highs

The rivals

Mesa Engineering Lonestar Special 1x12 combo	£1,695
Cordof Hellcat combo	£1,999
Alessandro Blue Tick 1x12 combo	£4,000
Mesa's Lonestar Special offers a three mode power stage that can go from a very loud 40 watts to just five watts of single-ended class A bliss – it's one of Randall's best designs ever, with incredible tonal range, and the reverb is simply out of this world. Cordof's Hellcat combo unleashes two channels of point-to-point British muscle with a distinctly American vibe. It's one of the best sounding amps you'll hear on either side of the Atlantic and very versatile. Alessandro's Blue Tick is another example of an audiophile-grade hand-built amplifier, again using 6V6s for power, but with a difference: when it comes to options, the sky's the limit. Fancy upgrading to a solid gold chassis? Just add \$50,000 (yes, that really is fifty thousand dollars) and consider it done. At that price it had better sound good!	

CARR SLANT 6V COMBO FROM £2,173

GUITAR AMPS

CARR SLANT 6V

PRICE: £2,173 (based on current exchange rate)

ORIGIN: USA

TYPE: All valve, two-channel, combo with valve protection

OUTPUT: Switchable, max approx 40W RMS

VALVES: Four x ECC83/12AX7, two x ECC81/12AT7 preamp, four x 5Y3GT power amp, one x 6Z34 rectifier

DIMENSIONS: 490 (h) x 610 (w) x 240mm (d)

WEIGHT (kg/lbs): 20/44

CABINET: Solid pine with dovetailed corners

LOUDSPEAKER: One 12-inch Carr Kingpin 60

CHANNELS: Two, switchable from front panel or footswitch

CONTROLS: Channel one: volume, bass, mid, treble, reverb level.

Channel two: gain, master volume, bass, mid, treble

FOOTSWITCH: Included, changes channels.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES: Spring reverb on clean channel, switchable boost on lead channel, external bias control with test points, switchable power stage (half power cathode/bias/bias, or full power running both simultaneously), effects loop with bypass switch, switchable speaker impedance, extension speaker jack

OPTIONS: For reverb on both channels add £113, while footswitchable gain boost on the overdrive channel is an extra £186.

Note that these cannot be retrofitted. Various custom Tolex colours are available from £150 extra, contact dealer for details.

RANGE OPTIONS:

2 x 10, 2 x 12 and 1 x 15

combos cost £2,335 – the Slant 6V Double Power (using 6.6k) costs from £2,800 in head

format only, with various speaker cabs available to order.

Charlie Chandler's Guitar Experience

020 8973 1441

www.carramps.com

NB: All Carr amps are

available to order if not

in stock, subject to a

30 per cent deposit and

a lead time of

approximately three

months.



shimmer as though there's a phantom chorus pedal plugged in. The lows are tight and quick to respond, while the mid-range control is deceptively powerful, taking the Carr from blackface to tweed at higher settings, with a chinking distortion that'll make any roots or blues player think they've been summoned by the Almighty.

The lead channel is a similar surprise, because despite the Slant 6V's vintage guise there's a huge amount of front-end gain to play with. At lower settings you'll find a great crunch and that 'Plexi'-style 'brown' tone, but kick in the boost and you can shred to your heart's content with a Brit-inspired sound that stays sweet and pure even when run flat out.

But it's not just the quality of the tone. The way this amp responds and clings to each note is phenomenal. Especially flattering to powerful single-coil P-90s, the combination of Carr's Kingpin 60 loudspeaker and wide baffle cabinet packs a real punch in full-power mode, giving the impression that you're playing through a much bigger rig than a 1 x 12 combo.

The unusual power stage makes it easy to tailor power output for small or large gigs and dramatically alters the Carr's character. That output stage came out of excitement over the tight and punchy sounds of

fixed bias, and cathode bias – warm with rich sustain mids, but more diffuse," Steve explains. "It gives about the volume of a Deluxe Reverb in half power, or close to a Marshall 50 at full."

Verdict

Just as different horses suit different courses, so different amps suit different players. Some crave the organic approach of a single-channel valve design with no effects, while others want a digital cornucopia with a control panel like the Sunstar Enterprise. However, the most common need is for a tough, portable valve amp combining a killer lead channel with a sweet clean channel, and we think the Slant 6V is close to being the ultimate choice.

Despite its high price, this is very much an amp that's made to be played. Carr doesn't offer fancy hardwood versions despite the obvious skill of its cabinet shop. Set against similar competition, the Slant 6V's tone, response and range is nothing short of awe-inspiring, and represents very good value

in our book as, like its namesake, it'll carry on sounding this great for decades. "The Slant 6V has evolved significantly over the years," says Steve. "With each new design, like the Rambler or Mercury, I learn new tricks,



and once I have an idea for meaningful changes we update the amp. Typically this has been every two years or so. We're building the best Slant 6Vs ever right now, though the character of the amp is the same – we've just refined and idealised the tones."

With users including Joe Perry, Nils Lofgren and Michael Landau, Carr is becoming one of the world's most sought-after amp names. And with tone and build quality this good, it's not surprising. Try a Slant 6V soon and you'll be hooked too – we guarantee. ■

Carr Slant 6V combo

Guitarist Rating:

