

GEAR



Carr Mercury V

TESTED BY ART THOMPSON

THIS NEW MODEL FROM NORTH CAROLINA-based Carr is based on the previous 2003 Skylark, but takes that platform further in a British direction courtesy of its High Volume and Low Volume controls, which can be configured via toggle switch to run in parallel (like “jump-ering” the inputs on an old 4-hole Marshall) or in Series, which cascades the High (brighter) and Low (darker) channels, adding an extra 12AX7 stage in the process for much higher gain potential. The Boost switch furthers the fun by selecting three different preamp gain structures: Position 1 is low gain and designed for clear, ringing tones. Position 2 replicates the gain structure of an early '70s-era metal-panel Marshall. Position 3 drives the power tubes harder for more distortion in the output stage, while also tightening the response.



As you can see, between the Low and High controls, the Parallel/Series switch, and the Boost settings, the amp can deliver a veritable rainbow of sounds, and far more distortion than any previous Carr model.

The Mercury V is well made and features a dovetail-jointed yellow pine cabinet covered in textured black vinyl with a beige front and white piping trim. The circuitry is true point-to-point, and other details include custom Carr transformers, Jupiter signal caps, and Analysis Plus and Transparent Audio cabling. At 41.8 lbs, the amp is a touch lighter than my reissue Fender Deluxe Reverb.

I used the Mercury V on a couple of recent gigs, and found it easy to set up for a sweet balance of edge and girth from a Tele. With the Low and High knobs close to halfway up, the switch in Parallel mode, and the Boost knob

SPECIFICATIONS

MERCURY V

CONTACT	carramps.com
PRICE	\$2,530 direct through dealers for 1x12 combo; head \$2,490
CHANNELS	1
CONTROLS	High Volume, Low Volume, Parallel/Series Gain switch, 3-position Boost switch, Reverb, Treble Mid, Bass, Attenuator w/bypass switch, Standby/Off/Play switch
POWER	16 watts
TUBES	4 x 12AX7, 2 x 6V6GT
EXTRAS	Switchable built-in attenuator (4 watts to zero). Tube spring reverb. Line out jack w/speaker conditioning.
SPEAKER	12" Celestion Creamback M-65
WEIGHT	41.8 lbs
BUILT	USA
KUDOS	Smart controls provide a wide variety of clean to overdriven British-style tones. Excellent build quality.
CONCERNS	Be aware that plugging into a 4Ω speaker load is not recommended.



The Mercury V's High and Low "channels" can be used separately or "jumpered" for added gain.

in the second position, I could ride the guitar's volume control to go from warm clean tones to a slicing OD sound on the bridge pickup. Conversely, using the *first* Boost setting cleaned things up and worked great when using a variety of distortion, delay, and modulation pedals.

You can get a ton of distortion from this amp while maintaining good touch-responsiveness, and one of my favorite gained-up sounds



was with both knobs around one o'clock in Series mode and the Boost on 3, which yielded massive grind and sustain with gobs of juicy harmonics. By adjusting the Low/High balance along with some small tweaks of the very effective EQ, it was also a snap to get hip tones from a Gibson Historic Les Paul and an Epiphone Joe Bonamassa "Treasure" Firebird. The attenuator dramatically reduces the volume—perfect for practice or home recording—without killing the vibe or dynamic feel, and the reverb sounds lively and reflective. Nice too that it doesn't obscure or overwhelm the amp's core sound even when turned up to the surf/space zone.

What a cool combo for anyone who can appreciate having several eras of Brit-flavored tones at their fingertips—all in a package that's easy to carry and loud enough for gigs. Having the Parallel/Series modes or Boost functions selectable by footswitch would be handy, but as it stands, the toneful and versatile Mercury V is a great amp that's well deserving of an Editors' Pick Award. 🎸