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a 500 Series module

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## Carr Amplifiers *Viceroy 1x12 guitar amplifier*

If you read my glowing review of the Carr Mercury in *Tape Op* #39, you already know that in my humble opinion, Steve Carr builds some of the best guitar amps on the market. So I was not surprised that Carr's new 33 watt offering (which Andy recently purchased for his studio) sounded brilliant from the first strum. The Deluxe-sized *Viceroy* has the nuanced, controlled tone usually associated with smaller amplifiers, but it is very, very loud. Don't let the small size fool you; unless your name is J. Mascis or King Buzzo, the *Viceroy* will be all the amp you will ever need, and it will be easily heard in any loud rock band. The *Viceroy* has the best qualities of small and large amplifiers. It has the smooth envelope of a low-wattage amp, but none of the low-end flabbiness. At the same time, it has all of the volume and punch of a Twin, without the harsh high-end and bloated bass.

The *Viceroy* features two 6L6s in Class A operation driving a single 12" Eminence Wizard speaker; tube-driven reverb; 33 or 7 watt operation; a footswitchable, fixed boost control; a variable drive control; and a hand-wired chassis enclosed in a dovetail-jointed pine cabinet. This has become standard fare for boutique amps, but the combination of the boost and drive controls gives the *Viceroy* unique sonic flexibility. The boost bypasses part of the tone stack and provides a fuller midrange, and the variable drive control shunts some of the signal around the reverb gain stage, adding a certain overdriven twanginess to the tone. Together, these controls provide a broad palette of midrange detail, something often lacking in the smile-curve, radio-ready world of guitar sounds. I also found that the *Viceroy's* tone controls don't act as three bands of simple EQ, but they interact to change the amp's sonic character all together. Although it's fair to say the *Viceroy* sounds "American" due to its pair of 6L6s, it doesn't have "a sound" in the sense that a classic Fender amp does. It can sound like a Deluxe one minute and a Super the next, and it's one of the most tonally versatile amps I've played. The *Viceroy's* two power settings, achieved by changing the efficiency of the power section's cathode bias circuit, give the amp additional dynamic flexibility, allowing it to overdrive at lower volumes. But even at 7 watts, the *Viceroy* screams, and I missed the 1/2 and 1/10 watt attenuator settings of Carr's Mercury, an amp that can overdrive at bedroom volumes.

My only justifiable gripe is the inconvenient footswitch jack, located on the underside of the chassis and hidden behind the backboard. Also, working musicians may balk at the price tag, but the price is somewhat justified because the *Viceroy's* tonal diversity makes it a true desert-island amp, and the sonic and build qualities of this amplifier are as good as they get.

(\$2490 MSRP; [www.carramps.com](http://www.carramps.com))

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