

R**reviews**

TOP GEAR



'Man Up

Carr Amplifiers Impala

BY TOM BEAUJOUR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MASSIMO GAMMACURTA

ATTENTIVE READERS WILL note that the Carr Impala is in fact the second amplifier by the North Carolina boutique manufacturer that we've reviewed in the past few years. We were so impressed with the first model that we checked out—the low-wattage Mercury—that we began salivating at the news that this new addition to the Carr line is based loosely on a 1968 Bassman, an amp which, despite its misleading name, is one of the most overlooked, splendiferously overdriving, and idiot-proof amplifiers of the rock guitar era.

Housed in an impeccably crafted pine cabinet covered in attractive two-tone tolex, the hand-wired, 6L6-powered Impala delivers 44 clean watts (55 peak) through a single 12-inch bespoke Elsinore speaker installed in a Sixties-style floating baffle. The top-mounted control panel features the controls for volume, treble, and bass that would have appeared on a classic blackface-era Bassman. These are augmented by mid, master volume, and reverb controls as well

as standby switches and a three-way power switch that allows the user to flip the amp's polarity to avoid shocks or excessive buzzing.

We put the impala through its paces with several guitars, including a 1952 Telecaster with a Lollar pickup, a 1960 Stratocaster, and a 1964 Gibson ES-335. The amp's highly interactive mid and treble controls allow it to counteract single-coil harshness and instead produce a euphonious, snappy clean that has clarity and punch as well as a forgiving elasticity and roundness that maintains low-end focus and definition at all times. The master volume is also extremely effective and well designed, allowing one to crank the volume and dial in anything from slightly toothy overdrive to gainy grind at highly manageable sound-pressure levels.

After plugging in my ES-335 and dialing in a glorious James Gang-era Joe Walsh overdrive, I spent several hours completely engrossed in the sound before I was able to put the guitar down. And while no amp can make you a better guitarist, the sheer fun and pleasure of communing with the Impala moved me to play better than I had in years. **GA**

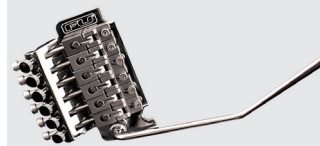
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