



Egnater Rebel-20 & Rebel-112X

TESTED BY MICHAEL MOLENDAA

WHETHER YOU'RE A STONE ANALOG DISCIPLE, A tube freak, or an experimenter who embraces multiple technologies, all "tone religions" should agree that digital modeling has raised the bar for the number of amp sounds available with a single tool set—even if that tool is software. And while hybrid beasts (such as the Line 6 Spider Valve) and analog machines (Tech 21 SansAmp, Peavey TransTube, etc.) certainly offer significant tonal variations, few designers have provided players with a quick, easy, and seamless method of integrating different sonic territories in a "tubes only" amplifier. Bruce Egnater has tackled the challenge with a big, hairy NFL Films-style, slow-motion crushing hit with his Rebel-20—a single-channel, 20-watt amp with two extremely cool features: Tube Mix (which allows you to blend between 6V6 and EL84 output tubes) and Watts (which lets you set the power anywhere from 1 watt to 20 watts). Before you even get to the amp's three tone knobs—or goof around with the Gain/Master Volume mix—you've got one hell of a lot of sound shaping at your

fingertips. So much so, in fact, that I committed to using *only* the Rebel-20 (and its Rebel-112X cabinet) for every live show and studio session I played for two whole months. Here's a synopsis of the ramifications of that decision...

IN THE STUDIO

While working on Katie Garibaldi's upcoming CD release, we decided that "Say the Word"—an uplifting, gospel-tinged tune—would best be served with a minimal, Duane Eddy-style verse guitar, and a chorale of overdriven guitars on the big vocal chorus. Recording this track illustrated the basic Fender/Marshall vibe of the Rebel-20's armory. For the Eddy emulation, I plugged my Guild X-160 into the Rebel, and turned the Tube Mix knob to full 6V6. Okay—that's a given. Duh. But the surprise was how the amp so effortlessly translated the X-160's virile twang into an extremely dimensional tone with a bell-like attack (which really dug deep into the spring reverb model from a Line 6 M13) and a resonant low-midrange thud. It was like Duane had lunch with Ennio Morricone, and then met the Ventures for cocktails. At any listening volume, that clean-guitar tone commanded attention, and it did it without stealing focus from the song's main event—the lead vocal.

The guitar part for the chorus is a series of alternating two-note figures, and a more Brit-rock sound seemed the obvious approach for kicking the section into the desired climax. For this, I doubled the figure—first with a Prestige Musician, and then with a PRS SE Paul Allender Model—cranked the Tube Mix knob to 100 percent EL84, set the Watts knob to around five watts, eased up on the Gain, and opened up the Master. Wow. The resulting overdrive possessed all the snotty, midrange grit of a classic Marshall on the warpath, but the note articulation was precise enough to sound the chorus part without any note blurring due to heavy distortion.

SPECS Egnater Custom Amplification, (877) 346-6237; egnateramps.com	
MODEL	REBEL-20/REBEL-112X
PRICE	\$599 retail (Rebel-20 head); \$249 retail (Rebel-112X cab)
POWER	Variable from 1 watt to 20 watts
CHANNELS	One
TUBES	12AX7 preamp (3), and variable 6V6 (2)/EL84 (2) output
SPEAKER	Custom-voiced 12" Egnater/Celestion Elite 80
CONTROLS	Tube Mix, Watts, Master, Treble, Middle, Bass, Gain, Bright, Tight
UTILITIES	Effects loop, carrying case
FOOTSWITCH	None.
WEIGHT	16 lbs (Rebel-20 head); 31 lbs (Rebel-112X cab)
KUDOS	Innovative tube-blending feature. Versatile. Rugged. Glorious tone.
CONCERNS	None.



The continuously variable Tube Mix (that sweeps between EL84 and 6V6 tubes) and Watts controls provide a lot of sonic-sculpting capabilities—even before you touch the tone knobs.

ONSTAGE

My silly little power-pop-punk band, the Trouble With Monkeys, is so *not* subtle that raging, oversaturated stack sounds typically get the job done. However, as we often layer guitar tones in the studio, I opted to play with the Tube Mix, rather than simply go with the obvious and pin the knob on the EL84 side. *That* was a good move,


as I was able to dial in different levels of attack, warmth, gronk, and kerrang without even touching the EQ knobs (which, for the most part, remained at their flat settings throughout the 60-day trial). For example, if I was playing on a carpeted stage in front of curtains, setting the Tube Mix at noon provided enough American twang amidst the British roar to lift the guitar

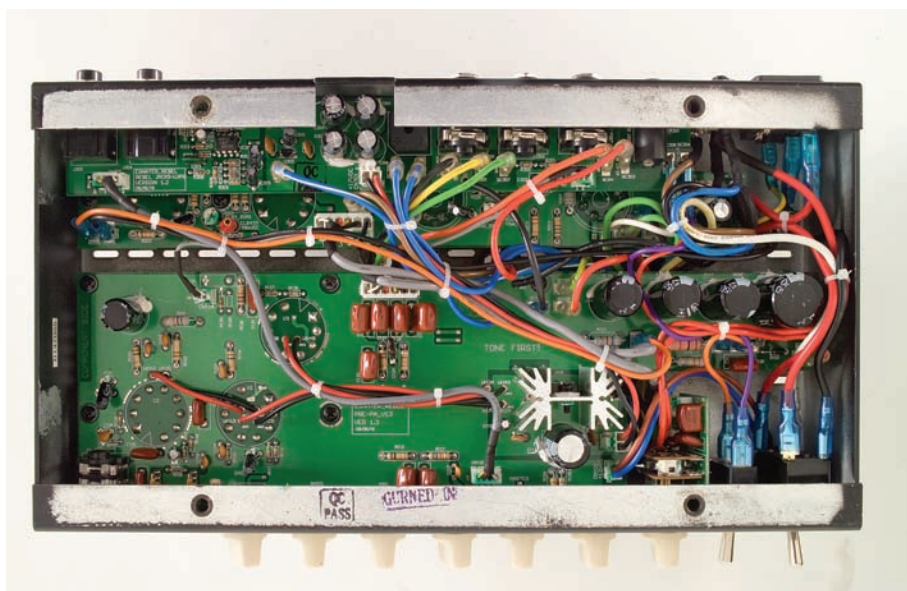
out of the band mix. If, however, I was on a wood stage surrounded by uncovered wood walls, twisting the Tube Mix more to three o'clock delivered a good balance of attack and saturation that did not sound shrill or overly bright amidst the hard surfaces. An added benefit was getting the illusion of layering different amps in the studio by tweaking the tube blend to deliver various tonal mixtures. And even though the Rebel-20 is rated at 20 watts, it filled small- and mid-sized clubs easily. I never had to tank headroom by maxing the Gain and Master knobs, and I never even placed the 1x12 cabinet on a chair—the amp/cab combo delivered plenty of volume, tone, and signal dispersion from the floor. At an outdoor gig with the Celtic punk-folk band Ol' Cheeky Bastards, I ran pretty clean by leaning harder on the 6V6 tubes, and, once again, I had no problem getting a stout, ballsy tone that cut through the band. Admittedly, I did stand a bit closer to the amp (fresh air, a slight wind, and the wide open skies can do strange things to sound waves), but I had plenty of headroom available, and the patio bar crowd had no trouble hearing the guitar—even during solos (which were boosted using a Lovepedal Eternity Overdrive). The rockin' Rebel is one hell of a screamer!

OH, THE BRUTALITY...

As we all know, gigging is hard on gear, and I didn't baby the Rebel crew. I rudely tossed the head and cabinet in the trunk of my car (always late for the gig, you know), several people helped hump the amp on and off stages with varying degrees of care, and cables were roughly plugged in and un-plugged hundreds of times. While the solid-birch cabinet took a few cosmetic hits, it still looks almost new, and the amp never failed once. Would I take the Rebel duo on tour to hell and back? You bet! They're Special Forces tough.

RIGHTEOUS REBEL

The Rebel-20 is, in a word, *awesome*. If you can hang with a single-channel amp, then you get a fabulously diverse tone machine with enough oomph to handle studio and small-club dates, and enough grit to survive the rigors of real-world gigging life. I've had the Rebels for two months, and I'm *still* discovering subtle variations of tone, and every sound I find kicks ass in one application or another. This is precisely the type of product that our Editors' Pick Award was meant to honor. 



The Rebel-20 sports a rugged PCB layout with all of the free wiring properly secured for reliability over the long haul.