

GEAR Bench Test



Egnater Rebel-30

TESTED BY MICHAEL ROSS

BRUCE EGNATER'S STORY FOLLOWS THE NOW classic amp-designer path: improve your own amps, do mods and repairs for friends, and eventually produce a product line for the public. Egnater's modular amplifiers quickly became highly respected among those who enjoyed the tonal flexibility afforded by their swappable preamp sections. More recently,

Egnater designed a series of non-modular heads and combos that offer smart features at an affordable price. Manufactured offshore, these amps reflect Egnater's particular take on tone, as well as what he has gleaned from years of listening to what pro players want from their amplifiers. The Rebel-30 head on review here (a 1x12 combo version also available) presents a look worthy of an amp costing three times as much. The two-toned Tolex and white piping are cleanly applied and neatly trimmed, and the black piping dividing the Tolex colors is a classy detail.

The Clean channel offers Volume, Bass, and Treble controls, while the Overdrive channel adds Gain and Midrange knobs. The front-panel channel-switching button is overridden when using the included footswitch. Each channel also sports Bright and Tight switches. Bright adds an obvious sparkle with no harsh artifacts, and, as with most bright switches, the effect is more noticeable at lower volumes. The Tight switch reins in any floppiness on the low end, and is a function I found especially useful at higher output levels. Each channel has its own Wattage knob that ranges from 1 to 30 watts. A common mistake (one that I have made) is to think that this is the same as a power attenuator, enabling you to crank up the

SPECS	Egnater Amplification, (877) EGNATER; egnataramps.com
MODEL	Rebel-30 Head
PRICE	\$799 street
CHANNELS	Two
CONTROLS	(Clean Channel) Volume, Treble, Bass Volume (Overdrive Channel) Treble, Middle, Bass
POWER	30 watts
TUBES	Five 12AX7s, two 6V6 power tubes, two EL84 power tubes.
EXTRAS	Variable wattage control (1 watt to 30 watts), Tight and Bright voicing switches for each channel, Tube Mix (blends power tubes), XLR cabinet voiced line/recording output, speaker-mute mode for silent recording, individual reverb level for each channel, buffered effects loop
WEIGHT	23 lbs
KUDOS	Wide variety of quality British-based tones. Extensive feature set. Reasonable price.
CONCERNS	None.

power amp while maintaining bedroom volumes. This is not the case, however. At the 1-watt setting the Rebel-30 is still plenty loud, and the difference in output between the 1-watt and 30-watt setting is minimal at lower master volume settings. However, as the volume is increased, this control alters the dynamic feel from saturated and spongy at the 1-watt setting, to wide open with lots of glorious headroom when turned toward the 30-watt position. More of a *headroom* attenuator than a power attenuator, this function can be a terrific tone-shaping tool.

The Rebel-30 uses two sets of power tubes—a pair of EL84s and a pair of 6V6s—and the Tube Mix control lets you use either pair alone, or any combination of both. Some may assume that the idea here is to provide “American” and “British” sounds depending on whether the 6V6s or EL84s are fully engaged. However, Rebel-30’s preamp and tone control sections tilt the amp in a British direction regardless of where the Tube Mix knob is set. That said, I found that the EL84s provided a little more gain and aggression than the smoother-sounding 6V6s. I also noted that when the control is at 12 o’clock—employing both sets of tubes equally—the output of the amp was significantly louder. Suffice to say this control adds another range of colors to the amp’s already abundant palette.

The Egnater’s rear panel reveals a further bevy of workhorse features. A switchable (100/117/230 volt) power supply makes world touring safe and easy, while impedance switching among 4 Ω , 8 Ω , and 16 Ω loads allows any number of cabinet choices and configurations. Separate reverb controls for each channel are always welcome. The Rebel-30’s digital reverb sounds great and won’t make thunderous noises on shaky stages. The series buffered effects loop worked well with Guyatone Micro Delay and Hermida Reverb pedals, providing clear sounding effects and maintaining the amp’s core tone when the pedals were bypassed.

The Rebel-30’s XLR output can be used as a line out for running a signal to the front of house mixer to augment your stage sound, or

for direct recording. The front panel power switch also allows you the option of Silent Record mode. When engaged, an internal simulated-speaker load is connected so that no speaker needs to be plugged in.

I tested the Rebel-30 head through a custom 1x12” cabinet loaded with an Eminence Texas Heat speaker, as well as through the speaker of a Reverend Hellhound combo, and through both speakers at once. The guitars I used were Fernandes S and T models sporting DiMarzio Virtual Vintage pickups, a Stromberg Monterey fitted with DiMarzio Eric Johnson humbuckers, and a Danelectro Dead On ’67.

The Rebel-30’s Clean channel offered more undistorted headroom than some other 30-watt amps I’ve heard, eventually breaking up in a different, but no less musical, manner than the Overdrive channel. The EL84 setting delivered a Brit-style grittiness that was somewhere between Vox and Marshall, and the Tight switch enabled me to elicit blues “give” or funk “spank,” expanding the amp’s dynamic palette in a very useful way. Goosing the Gain knob on the Overdrive channel with the 6V6s engaged and the Tight switch off, recalled the rounded roar of cranked “tweed” tones without exactly emulating anything that Fender made in the ’50s. With my Fernandes single-coil guitars, the Overdrive channel stayed essentially clean until the Gain was set past noon. Chords began to crunch, but single-note distortion didn’t really arrive until the Gain was up around 2 o’clock. By 3 o’clock, the bridge pickup on my T-style was singing with an articulate distortion voice that just became thicker and more harmonically rich from there on.

The Rebel-30’s distinctive sound approaches that of boutique products costing significantly more. It presents a full-bodied clean tone with abundant headroom, and while not a gain monster, it provides all the dirt you need for anything short of metal. Compact, well thought out, and equipped with lots of great features, the Rebel-30 could be exactly the mid-powered gig/session amp you’ve been looking for. **B**

