

Even with four channels, the Tourmaster amps are a cinch to dial in.



Although the Tourmaster combo is violently heavy, Egnater does ease the burden somewhat with the addition of side handles and a rad set of heavy-duty detachable casters. But still, getting this thing up into a truck bed is a dicey one-man proposition.

Egnater Tourmaster 4212 Combo and 4100 Half-Stack

TESTED BY DARRIN FOX

AMP DESIGNER BRUCE EGNATER HAS BEEN IN the biz for three decades now, and he is perhaps best known for the tone tweaker's nirvana he created with his Egnater Modules—swappable tube preamps that plug directly into a special tube power-amp chassis. It's a design that both Egnater and Randall (with its MTS series amps) still employ. Egnater's new Tourmaster amps aren't of the modular variety, but with four completely independent channels, and a slew of thoughtful features, the Tourmaster aims to give you a ton of tonal flexibility in

a bulletproof, gig-worthy package. I tested both the 2x12 combo and 4x12 Tourmaster half-stack with a Fender Telecaster and Stratocaster, as well as a Gibson Les Paul and SG, and a PRS SC 245.

The imported Tourmaster is a handsome, well-constructed tone machine. The beige/black color scheme is sweet as hell, and the Tolex covering on the Baltic birch cabinet is flawless. The amp's color scheme also carries over to the grille cloth, which, along with the Brit-styled white piping, is a nice touch. Included

GEAR Egnater

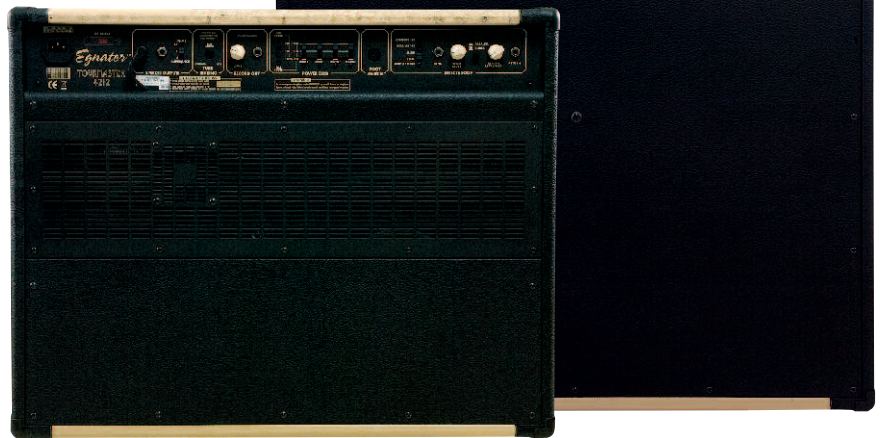
with the Tourmaster is a rugged six-button footswitch that controls channel switching as well as Reverb and Effects Loop on/off.

The hippest feature of the Tourmaster is the Power Grid wattage control. Basically, this function allows you to set the output wattage for each of the amp's four channels. First, you decide if you want the amp's max power at 100 watts or 50 watts via the Half-Power switch located next to the Power Grid. Set this switch to 100 watts, and you can choose between 100, 50, or 20 watts. Set it to 50 watts, and you can choose between 50, 25, or ten watts.

For an amp with four independent channels, the Tourmaster is inviting and simple to get around on. Each channel offers a Modern/Classic switch that revoices the preamp. Classic mode yields a barkier, more old-school midrange snarl—think vintage Marshall up to a JCM800—and the Modern setting scoops the mids and bumps the bass response up a bit for a character more akin to, say, a Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier. Each channel also sports a push-button Contour function and an accompanying control that cuts the midrange.

Plugging in a Gibson SG, and dialing in a clean tone on the Tourmaster's first channel, I was actually taken aback with how easy it was to pull crystalline tones from a humbucker-equipped guitar. Suffice to say that Strats and Teles yielded even more shimmering top-end detail, but the Tourmaster was able to deliver bold, fairly complex clean tones with every guitar I used. Even with the Gain control cranked, this channel stayed pretty darn clean unless I really dug in with

The Tourmaster amps sport tons of back-panel features.



a heavy attack. With the Voicing switch set to Classic, the tones are decidedly British, with a strong barky midrange and cantankerous top-end bite. Back off your picking attack, however, and the notes pop and ping with wonderful clarity. Lay into your guitar, and a subtle crunch enters the picture for a complex “in-between” tone.

Switching to Channel Two, the tonal character is a lot like Channel One, except it has a tad more delectable grind that ebbs and flows with your picking attack or your guitar's volume setting. Again, these tones are more British than the typical Fender clean

thing, as they exhibit a brutish yet musical toughness that still sports a healthy dynamic range—from *Sticky Fingers*-era Keef to a mildly overdriven chime akin to the Edge's. While I preferred leaving the Voicing switch in Classic mode and using the Contour control to adjust the mids, I found myself actually getting everything I needed without the Contour control engaged.

The Tourmaster's third channel has a ton of gain at the ready, making it perfect for lead or rhythm. And as with all of the channels, the Modern/Classic voicing switch will ultimately determine the character of the

SPECS Egnater, (323) 277-4119; egnateramps.com	
Price	Combo \$1,599 street/retail price N/A; Head \$1,399 street/retail price N/A; 4x12 cabinet \$599 street/retail price N/A
Channels	Four
Controls	Independent Gain, Bass, Mid, Treble, Volume and Contour; Contour Select button; Classic/Modern switch for each channel. Master Presence, Volume, Reverb, and Density.
Power	100 watts
Tubes	Four Groove Tube 5881 output tubes, eight Groove Tube 12AX7 preamp tubes.
Extras	Power Grid wattage control, Half-Power switch, assignable effects loop (with Series/Parallel switch), speaker simulated Record Out with Level control, outboard Tube Bias Adjust.
Speaker Cabinet	Combo: Two Celestion Elite 80 12" speakers; 4x12: Four Celestion Vintage 30 12" speakers
Weight	60 lbs (head), 95 lbs (combo)
Kudos	Good tones. Very flexible. Logical layout. Nice construction and feature set.
Concerns	Extremely heavy. High-gain tones take more time to dial in with single-coils.

tones. Switched to Classic, I conjured searing, mid-engorged high-gain tones that scorched the earth with my humbucker-equipped guitars. I found plenty of overdrive with the Gain halfway up. Higher settings were do-able with my humbucker-loaded guitars, but with Strats and Teles the super high-gain sounds tended to get a bit smeary and less usable. Kicking the Voicing switch to Modern, the tones became even more sinister and punishing as the mids get scooped, the lows get a bit deeper, and the gain gets upped rather substantially.

Finally, the Tourmaster's fourth Channel is about as subtle as a flying mallet. Offering distortion for days, this channel is a tad over-the-top—especially with with Teles and Strats, as their tones tended to get splatty. This was easily fixed by backing off the Gain, and patiently working with the Treble and Midrange controls. This channel really excelled with humbuckers, however, yielding wicked ultra-modded Marshall rock tones to savage scooped-metal mayhem—especially when kicking the Voicing switch to the Modern position. As with all of the



The Power Grid function allows you to select the wattage for each of the Tourmaster's four channels.

Tourmaster's tones, the low end is tight and focused—even in extreme volume settings. Even though I tended to get midrange option anxiety with the Egnater's dirty tones, these tonal tools help make the Tourmaster an amazingly versatile machine, affording you heavy, modern rock tones, as well as gnarlier classic timbres.

The crux of the Tourmaster's tonal biscuit, however, is the Power Grid feature. But even though you can bring this bad boy down to ten watts, don't think you're going to get funky, cranked-amp-meltdown bedroom tones at reasonable volumes. The Tourmas-

ter is *still* very loud. On a gig, however, I was able to set my clean tone (Channel One) to 50 watts for maximum clean headroom, and Channel Two's dirty rhythm tones were set to ten watts for more power tube grind. Then, I turned Channel Three up for a crazy, uber-sustained lead tone by cranking the Gain, and dumped the power to ten watts for some serious power tube mashing. Lastly, I set up a loud n' proud honkin' lead tone on Channel Four with the wattage set to 50, so no matter how saturated it got, I would surely be heard. Look out!

Once you factor in all of the tonal combinations for each channel—from preamp voicings to midrange tweaking to power section options—the Tourmaster is indeed a veritable Swiss Army Knife of tube tone. And compared to other four channel, high-powered combos, it is priced very competitively. If you're a gigging guitarist who needs to cover a lot of tonal ground, or the kind of player who is itching to bounce between low and high-wattage power sections, Egnater's new Tourmaster amps are tough to beat.

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