

XTZ A2-400

Ed Selley finds space on his kit rack for the step-up power amplifier from Sweden's XTZ, and then tries his hardest to make it sound flustered



IN RECENT YEARS, the number of channels it is possible (and desirous) to have in an AV system has begun to surge ahead of the number of powered channels found in many AV receivers and power amplifiers. Sure, there are 11-channel AVRs available (even ones offering 13) but often a setup will be based around a seven-channel model. So when the 'more speakers' bug bites, what do you do? Upgrade your entire amplification at the same time, or look for a cost-effective, simpler way to add more power?

We've already auditioned the A2-300 stereo amplifier from Swedish audio brand XTZ (see *HCC* #326). That sells for a curiously specific €408 via XTZ's direct retail website (a cost to which you'll need to add import tax) and delivers a meaty 2 x 150W (into 8ohms) of Class D grunt, via ICEpower modules.

Now it's the turn of the newer A2-400. This pricier model – €740 – ups the power ante to 220W into an 8ohm load (420W into 4ohm). This should be enough for most domestic requirements, and will appeal to anyone who might have looked at the A2-300 and somehow thought it lacking. But it's not just an increase in power that explains the increase

in price. The A2-400 is a little cleverer too. First, it's fitted with XLR connections as well as RCA, feeding into a balanced circuit and making it more of a partner for an AV processor with balanced outs. Second, the A2-400 dispenses with the dual mono arrangement of the more affordable amp and instead offers the option of running in BTL (Bridge-Tied Load) mono. This, claims XTZ, will deliver an 800W/8ohm single-channel output. A switch on the rear, adjacent to the unit's 12V trigger (another feature the A2-300 lacks), flicks the amp between stereo and mono operation.

Once again, XTZ wraps its amp module, circuitry and switch-mode power supply in an all-metal chassis with a compact 20cm width intended to allow two to be fitted within a single rack unit. This model is taller and deeper than its sibling, however, so looks a little more prosaic while still coming across as well-finished. Rear-panel speaker terminals feel sturdy, and the brushed metal front fascia is smart. A miniscule status LED lets you know when the amp is running, and blinks blue to signify clipping.

Take it easy

Something that's important to stress about using the A2-400 day to day is that its considerable power output doesn't make it particularly tricky to live with. Driving a pair of £8,500 Kudos Titan 505 loudspeakers, it left me in no doubt there was a mountain of power there if I needed it.

SPECIFICATIONS

POWER OUTPUT (CLAIMED): 2 x 420W(4ohm)/2 x 220W(8ohm); 1 x 800W(8ohm) in bridged mode
CONNECTIONS: Stereo RCA input; stereo balanced XLR input; stereo RCA loop output; 12V trigger
DIMENSIONS: 200(w) x 69(h) x 352(d)mm
WEIGHT: 3.1kg

FEATURES: ICEpower Class D amplification; all-metal ventilated chassis; variable gain adjustment; stereo/bridged mode; clipping status indicator; auto on mode

The A2-400 adds a balanced XLR output and bridged mono operation to XTZ's power amp feature set



There's an effortlessness to the way in which the A2-400 delivered the dynamic cut and thrust of the attack on the train speeder in *The Book of Boba Fett* (Disney+) that only comes from having a serious amplifier at your disposal. There's no sense of strain.

The amp also cajoles a level of low-end extension from the Titan 505's 6in woofers that ensures that impacts and explosions arrive with crunching weight. This is achieved without losing finer details. And even with levels firmly into the realms of the antisocial, the A2-400 sounds absolutely composed.

My criticism of this amp is, actually, the same levelled at the A2-300, and centred mainly around music reproduction where, even with something as enormously good fun as Royal Blood's *Typhoons*, its performance still feels a little matter of fact. There's plenty of space around the vocals and instruments, and no shortage of body, but it can sound a little over civilised.

The counter to this is that when you switch back to movies, where there's more of a need for clean, insistent, effortless power, the XTZ delivers in spades. Add one for your front L/R speakers (or maybe two, both running in mono mode) and I don't doubt you'll be highly impressed ■

HCC VERDICT



XTZ A2-400

→ €740 (excl. tax) → www.xtzsound.eu

WE SAY: If you need a huge amount of power in a small, no-nonsense chassis, XTZ's A2-400 takes a huge amount of beating.