



XTZ

Edge A2-300

Edge A2-400

If you're looking for a great deal of power from boxes that won't take up too much room, these might just have the edge

Sometimes, a logical area of development in one product category is slightly undermined by other areas not necessarily producing the kit to make use of them. The recent DAC Group Test (HFC 482) is a case in point. Five of the six models can be used as preamps to streamline your system if you have no need for analogue inputs. The catch is that affordable power amplifiers remain a fairly rare beast. Into this gap steps XTZ. The Swedish company is best known for its speakers, but also produces a small selection of standalone amps. One of these is designed to power a subwoofer, but the other two are stereo power amplifiers ideal for the task of being run with a DAC preamp to form a compact but very capable system. When you think about a small amp, you'd be forgiven for assuming

the power on offer will be limited. This would be a mistake.

In both cases, the Edge A2-300 and larger Edge A2-400 are named for their core specification. The smaller of the two amps can produce 300W into 4ohm into two channels and this rises to 400W in the A2-400 (this halves into an 8ohm load). In both cases, the figure quoted is at one percent THD, but should mean that even without going anywhere near the maximum of either you have enough power to drive any price-comparative speaker to a room-filling level.

As you might expect, they do this by using Class D. Both are built around ICEPower modules and a switch mode-type PSU that allows them to run on any voltage between 100 and 240W with connection via IEC socket. Like many Class D designs, the quoted signal-to-noise measurements are

DETAILS

PRODUCT
XTZ Edge A2-400

PRICE
€952

ORIGIN
Sweden/Thailand

TYPE
Power amplifier

WEIGHT
3.1kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
200 x 69 x 352mm

FEATURES
• 400W per channel into 4ohm
• 200W per channel into 8ohm
• 800W into one channel (8ohm bridged)
• Inputs: RCA (with trim pot); XLR; 12V trigger

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extremely good as are the distortion figures when not running flat out.

Where the two differ is in some of their functionality. The A2-300 is equipped with RCA inputs only (usefully, these have the facility to adjust the input gain – ensuring they'll work with a wide selection of would-be preamps) and it has the ability to run in dual mono mode. This switches both channels to output the same signal, which simplifies bi-amping, but it can't be bridged; both channels remain active but separate.

The Edge A2-400 is able to drive just about any speaker with great ability

The A2-400 adds XLR connections to your input choices (both featuring input trim) and you have the option of bridging them too. When set in bridged mono mode, power climbs to a decidedly hefty 800W into 8ohm. This is thanks to a higher specification module than the one in the smaller amp, together with a revised PSU.

The amps are visually very similar, differing mainly in size. Both are 200mm wide, which allows a pair to be mounted side by side on a standard rack. The A2-400 is taller and deeper and more visually imposing than its smaller sibling. Both use all-metal casework with vented sides rather than the top plate and the information is on the front panel LED, which shows status and in the case of the A2-400, if it is clipping. Build quality is very good and a nice touch is the very high-quality



speaker terminals, which is up to the job of handling an absolute hosepipe should the requirement arise. The A2-400 also benefits from a five-year warranty over the smaller amp's two.

Sound quality

Testing both models side by side reveals some intriguing differences to what are notionally very similar designs, and it's fair to say that the A2-400 is not simply 'the same but bigger'. With the Matrix Audio Mini-i Pro 3 (HFC 482) acting as source and preamp for both devices and Focal's Kanta No1 standmount (HFC 454) connected up, the A2-300 goes first and, out of the blocks does some impressive things. This lower powered amp still has huge and effortless headroom that lends even large-scale music the space it needs to sound convincing.

Within this impressively worked three-dimensionality, however, the A2-300 does reveal some limitations. Even with the full-bodied and refined Matrix Audio providing the signal, there's still something of a 'Class D fingerprint' to the way it sounds. Enjoying Poppy Ackroyd's *Resolve* through the A2-300 has her piano sounding fractionally hard and brittle. Substituting the more forgiving Spendor A1 (HFC 460) is a little more refined, but there are rival amplifiers – considerably less powerful, but rivals nonetheless – that are more natural and full-bodied in their presentation. It isn't all bad news, though. The bass response is both deep and extremely well controlled, lending a useful sense of urgency to proceedings.

It's most likely you can partner the A2-300 to obviate the more significant

DETAILS

PRODUCT
XTZ Edge A2-300

PRICE
€416

ORIGIN
Sweden/Thailand

TYPE
Power amplifier

WEIGHT
2.3kg

DIMENSIONS
(WxHxD)
200 x 58 x 285mm

FEATURES
• 300W per channel into 4ohm
• 150W per channel into 8ohm
• RCA input with trim pot

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issues, but if the cost difference of doing so is more than it would be to spring for the A2-400, it might make more sense to go for that instead. The larger amp makes no retrograde steps over the smaller one but, even with absolutely everything else kept unchanged around it, the midrange and tonal realism of the A2-400 is a considerable step forward. Ackroyd's piano becomes something altogether more tangible and lifelike. There is a greater feeling of warmth and presence to struck notes and this is apparent on vocals too. What is particularly impressive about this is that there's no detrimental effect when you lean on the A2-400 and ask it for something more ballistic.

A spirited blast through Public Service Broadcasting's *Der Rhythmus Der Maschinen* shows that the A2-400 has an effortlessness that very little at the price can get near. When you look at amps with outsize power outputs, it can be easy to lose sight of the point of such a thing. The idea isn't to put a tweeter into a low Earth orbit, but to ensure that – used within their vast operating envelope – there isn't a moment of strain or congestion. I would hesitate to describe this as a 'sweet'-sounding amplifier, but it is markedly more full-bodied than the A2-300.

If you have a projected requirement for 800W per channel, there's no arguing that the bridged mode works extremely well too. Even when bolted to Kudos' Titan 505 standmount (HFC 451) – the most demanding speaker I have to hand, but still something that generally works fine on a tenth of that output – there is an imperiousness to what the XTZ does that has little direct comparison anywhere near the same

price point. You don't need (such a strong word when talking about all forms of hi-fi if we're honest) a power output this large for most domestic purposes, but it doesn't hurt either. No less importantly, the behaviour of the amps in bridged mode is exemplary, with no unwanted pops or thuds during startup or powering down, as such a thing can have significant consequences at this power output.

Conclusion

What this adds up to is a pair of power amplifiers that occupy a niche position in the market very effectively. The Edge A2-300 is capable, but does perhaps need a little more thought put into the supporting equipment around it to get the best from it. The Edge A2-400, on the other hand, is a much more enticing proposition, able to drive just about anything it encounters with great ability. If you're looking to streamline a digital preamp-fronted system, this is a very good place to start. **ES**

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Big, rich, involving sound with plenty of drive and energy

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Still not the sweetest-sounding amplifier going

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: A solution to drive any speaker to any level it can withstand at a very competitive price

FEATURES



OVERALL

