

# XTZ A2-300

Many AV receivers can now decode more channels than their onboard power amps can actually handle. **Ed Selley** auditions a stereo power pusher that's ready to help out



Just 200mm wide, the A2-300 should be an easy fit

**SOMETIMES A THROWAWAY** line in an equipment review belies the complexity of actually achieving something in reality. A significant number of AV receivers we've looked at over the last few years are equipped with seven channels of amplification but have decoding for nine (or more). And somewhere in these reviews there's often the instruction to 'just add a stereo power amp' to make use of those extra decoded channels.

The catch is that stereo power amplifiers are quite niche things and, more often than not, expensive to the point where they can frequently exceed the cost of the receiver. Enter XTZ with an affordable solution.

The A2-300 is the smaller of two stereo power amplifiers that the Swedish manufacturer sells through its direct retail model (you buy from the XTZ website, specifying your desired mains power connection). It's a half-width design, allowing two to work side by side in a single rack space, or one to be easily added to your AV shelf.

Don't be fooled into assuming that the

power on offer is in any way limited though. The A2-300 owes its somewhat unromantic name to the fact it claims no less than 300W into both channels over a 4ohm load, which halves to 150W into an 8ohm one. It is, in short, volcanically powerful, although you should note these figures come with a quoted distortion of 1% THD.

The XTZ features a Class D ICEpower module, rather than the more conventional Class A/B technology of hi-fi amps, which means that energy consumption is comparatively low for the power on offer, and it runs usefully cool too (the sides of the casework provide ventilation, which seems to be sufficient).

## Back to basics

As you might expect from a power amplifier, especially a 'budget' one, the functionality of the A2-300 is basic. You get an RCA input (with a trim adjustment to help you match the gain to the other amplification in your system) and a pair of very sturdy speaker terminals. There is no loophrough and no ability to bridge the A2-300 for more power, although it can be run in dual mono, outputting the

## SPECIFICATIONS

**POWER OUTPUT (CLAIMED):** 2 x 300W(4ohm)/2 x 150W(8ohm)

**CONNECTIONS:** Stereo RCA input

**DIMENSIONS:** 200(w) x 285(d) x 58(h)mm

**WEIGHT:** 2.3kg

**FEATURES:** ICEpower Class D amplification; all-metal ventilated chassis; variable gain adjustment; dual mono output option; auto on mode; 0.27W claimed power consumption in standby

same signal from both channels. XTZ's all-metal chassis is well finished for the price and this amplifier is handsome in a fairly 'route one' sort of way.

## Play me up front

The price of the A2-300 means that I would generally connect it to my pair of Spendor A1 speakers, in order to provide an easy electrical load for an affordable amp, but the power available proved worthy of any of the speakers lying around my house. So for any sub £1,000 AV receiver that allows you to do so, the XTZ should be viewed as a device to handle the front left and right speakers in a multichannel system, rather than surrounds or heights.

The word that crops up repeatedly in my listening notes is 'clean.' The A2-300's sound is not particularly warm or cossetting, but has an ability to extract detail from movie mixes. When a dynamic moment happens onscreen, there is always enough grunt in reserve to ensure it really delivers the jump in energy required. The nature of how the bulk of film and TV sound is mastered plays perfectly to the 'big and clean' presentation that the XTZ goes in for.

This is a slightly roundabout way of saying that its performance with music isn't always quite so convincing. Here, the rather greater variability of how things are mastered can sometimes leave the A2-300 sounding hard-edged and unforgiving.

But this needs to be taken in the context of its very reasonable cost, and the likely performance of the AV receiver it will be connected to. There are stereo devices that I might subjectively prefer to this XTZ, but none deliver the same effortless wave of clean, dynamic power for so little money. If you are looking to increase the number of channels you have on the go, this has to be seen as something of a bargain ■

## AV INFO

**PRODUCT:** Compact 2 x 150W/8ohm power amplifier

**POSITION:** Smaller of two stereo power amps from XTZ

**PEERS:** Emotiva BasX A2; NAD C 268



A rear switch enables 'always on' or 'auto on' operation

## HCC VERDICT



### XTZ A2-300

→ €400 (excl. tax) → [www.xtzsound.eu](http://www.xtzsound.eu)

**WE SAY:** An affordable and compact way of adding an extra two channels of appreciable power to your AV system.