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### **Bryston 9B SST2 5 Channel Amplifier Review**



The world of Home Theater is exciting. Every year we see new and innovative features. Speaker technology has improved. Surround sound receivers are no longer just about audio, as they now do video processing as well. The built in amplifiers of the receivers have also seen some improvements. But if you want to bring out the best sound from your speaker, a dedicated amp is the best way to do it.

Up for review today is the Bryston 9B SST<sup>2</sup>(squared) dedicated 5 channel dedicated surround sound amplifier. It is a monster of an amp, weighing in at 76 lbs. It's features include:

New cosmetics

New Push on/off power switch

140 watts per channel 8 ohms,

200 watts 4 ohms

Available in 3,4 and 5 Channel

New SST 2 output devices

Increased power supply capacitance

- 30,000 MFD per channel

Selectable Balanced or Unbalanced inputs

Lower noise and distortion

Two New Independent ultra-low-noise power transformers

New computer modeled heat-sink design

Quick connect remote 12 volt trigger

Selectable gain - 1 Volt or 2 Volt

Available in Silver or black finish with 19 or 17 inch faceplate

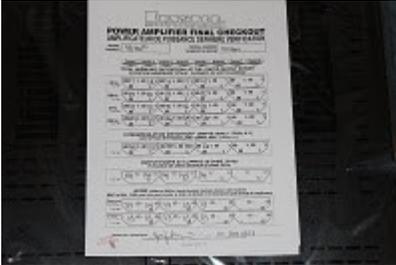
20 Year Warranty



Build quality is excellent, and resembles it's great 20 year warranty. Starting with the packaging, the amp was well secured. The owner's manual was well written and easy to follow. The connections on the rear are well labeled. And a nice added touch is the certificate that comes with each amp. Not only does it provide actual output for each

channel, it also shows the THD (total harmonic distortion) for each channel. It actually gave a breakdown of THD at 20Hz, 200Hz, 2kHz, and 20kHz, all of which was below the manufacturer's specs of 0.005% THD per channel. The actual output power per channel also beat the manufacturer's specs, with the amp putting out 154 watts per channel in 8 ohms at clipping.

I love the look of the faceplate as well. While it came in natural aluminum, black is also an option. It is a thick brushed aluminum with aluminum handles. It provides the customer with a hint of the quality that Bryston put into the amp. The front panel is also very simple to not take away from its elegant appearance. It contains a single power button, and 5 LED's. The LED's are a solid red in color until you turn it on. Then the color changes to a solid green.



I also really like the modular design. The modular construction design means that any of the individual amplifier channels can be swapped out in the rare event of a failure. Each channel is self contained with an independent power supply, audio circuitry, and connectors. The 9B is also unique among the SST² amps – it is also modular in configuration.

It has its own removable assembly. This means that if you are needing to use it with fewer than 5 channels, 1 or more can be easily removed, based on the number of channels you are in need of. It can be ordered in version of 3, 4 and up to 5 channels max. Additional modular channels can be ordered separately for the 3 and 4 channel variations.



Bryston also has an aggressive philosophy with the SST² (squared) series of amps. It is called "First To Last Watt Philosophy." A huge part of the design is to keep an ideal power curve, from the 1st watt to the last watt. Most amplifiers show a power curve where the best performance is from around 1/3 power and up. The new Bryston SST² (squared) series maintains that curve from the 1st to the last watt. It is

kind of like a torque curve in a car, and Bryston has expanded the sweet spot or torque curve. They achieve this largely by focusing on three main points: remove crossover artifacts, reduce low-level noise, and reduce distortion at all levels. The crossovers are cleaned up by using fast drivers, and Bryston's proprietary Quad Complementary Output design virtually eliminates storage delay. Low-level noise is reduced by Bryston's design to enhance low listening levels by bringing the noise floor way below signal level which improves the silence you hear between the notes and enhance music clarity at levels of low power. Reducing distortion put a lot of effort in reducing HF distortion artifacts which

yields flat THD-with-frequency curves which means there is almost zero distortion increase as frequency rises.



The sound was nothing short of...wow! The design and components all come together in a synergy of musical bliss. The Bryston 9B SST² was connected to my Onkyo TX-NR1007 and took over the amplification duties. Additional reference gear included Oppo Digital BDP-83 Universal disk transport, NHT Classic 3 fronts and surrounds,

NHT Classic 3 Center, SVS PC+ 16-46 Subwoofer, Sony Bravia HW-15 front projector and Elite screens 16:9 100" wide fixed mount screen. The amplifier section of the Onkyo TX-NR1007 is THX Ultra2 Plus certified, and has great performance. Using dedicated amplification, I was expecting an increase in performance with the Bryston 9B SST². But I was not expecting the level of performance that I heard. In the realm of home audio components, the Bryston 9B SST² is considered legendary for

a reason.



The NHT Classic 3's as a sealed design is not very efficient, and they make great use of the power Bryston provided. My Onkyo receiver is rated at 135 watts per channel. The Bryston 9B SST<sup>2</sup> is rated at 140 watts at 8 ohms and 200 watts at 4 ohms, and there was no discernible difference in volume. In contrast the Bryston did seem to have more in reserves. I like to use the analogy of a car engine with lots of horsepower but limited torque. The Bryston not only had a lot of horse power, but also plenty of torque. The sound was not thin in any way, and had the perception of more reserves on tap even though the Bryston is rated at just 5 watts more per channel than my Onkyo.

Whether it was music or movies, the sound was just better. Explosions were more dynamic. Vocals were more natural sounding. Percussion was crisper and cleaner sounding. Bass performance was also improved. All instruments had an increase in resolution. I had an increase in performance in all aspects, including no audible distortion. It performed exactly the way Bryston designed it to. The sound was more dynamic, had increased resolution, and more reserves. Not only did the Bryston give a great imaging, but the soundstage was one not previously experienced. Five channel source material, especially music, gave a sound that was not only 3D sounding, but was a bit holographic in nature. I felt like I was right there in the concert or recording studio, with the various instruments all around me! It was truly a pleasant surprise that had me grinning ear to ear.

The Bryston 9 SST<sup>2</sup> was a true pleasure to review. I have heard others claim that it is a legendary product. After listening, I am a believer. Based on design, quality, and performance the Bryston has earned our Editor's Choice award. The \$7,295 MSRP isn't cheap, but the 20 year warranty speaks volumes that this quality amp will last a VERY long time. For more info and complete specs, check out their website at [www.bryston.com](http://www.bryston.com).



Posted by Jeff Roy