

800
REFERENCE SERIES

808/808i Signature Reference Compact Disc Player



Meridian is the acknowledged leader in high-performance Compact Disc playback, and has held that pre-eminent position since the release of the world's first audiophile CD player, the MCD, in 1984. Over the last two decades, Meridian has introduced no less than two dozen CD player models, each one better than the last; each one redefining the state of the Compact Disc art.

This steady process of improving CD performance has been recognized by more than 50 awards and has made Meridian absolutely synonymous with the very best in Compact Disc.

Meridian's 508 alone received more than 20 awards, including a Class 'A' rating from Stereophile, who, when faced with the superb performance of 800, had to add the Class A+ rating!

Now, Meridian introduces the 808: a new member of the 800 Reference Series and one specifically developed to render the ultimate performance possible today from the CD medium.

There is nothing quite like sinking into your favourite chair in your listening room, pressing 'play' on the remote control, and listening, as the air becomes filled with a faithful rendering of your favourite recording.

This is true whatever the format, but the fact is that there is still one medium that is today as popular as ever: the Compact Disc.

A well-recorded, well-mastered Compact Disc is capable of extraordinarily high quality results. But to realise the full potential of this medium, one that today we perhaps take for granted, you need the highest level of reproduction: a truly extraordinary high-fidelity system, unmatched in sound quality. A Meridian system.

Meridian: CD Innovator

Of all manufacturers, Meridian has the longest history of high-performance CD players. Meridian's first CD player, MCD, was introduced exactly 20 years ago. MCD sounded radically better than anything else available, and still stands comparison with many so-called audiophile designs of today.

In the intervening 20 years, Meridian has relentlessly pursued the path of making better and better CD players, introducing more than 24 models – each one better than the one before. Every model has received critical acclaim, and we have gathered more than

Highest quality CD player ever offered by Meridian

808 Player-only version

808i Player/Preamplifier version includes built-in stereo preamp functionality: six stereo analogue inputs, three coax and two optical digital inputs

Main and auxiliary S/PDIF coaxial digital outputs for connection to Meridian DSP Loudspeakers or digital preamps/controllers

Balanced and unbalanced analogue outputs, fixed or variable for connection to preamp or power amp

Special Limited Edition with extended 5-year warranty

BOOTHROYD STUART
MERIDIAN

808/808i

The Meridian Compact Disc Heritage

1984

Meridian MCD and Pro-MCD

Meridian's first CD player, the MCD, based on a Philips chassis with completely custom analogue circuitry, was the world's first audiophile CD Player. Its successor, the Pro-MCD shown here, included a separate custom-designed power supply, DAC and oscillator, mounted underneath the transport.



50 awards for our CD players, including particularly prestigious awards for our landmark 207 in Japan.

Over the years we have researched, pioneered and ultimately mastered the art of refinement of every aspect of CD playback. We showed how jitter was a major challenge to audio quality – indeed, Meridian was the first company to isolate jitter, as far back as 1984. Our technologies include advanced servo implementations, unique power supply designs, significant innovations in the digital arena and, of course, peerless analogue sections. Meridian also pioneered the idea that special disc navigation could improve the playback quality on difficult discs (such as those with fingerprints, scratches or manufacturing defects). Our players also benefited from digital output capabilities.

Meridian was also the first company to offer a 2-box solution (utilising an outboard DAC), and has developed special phase-locked loops and FIFO buffers to produce the very best result in such systems – including of course our preferred system, a CD player directly connected to a pair of Meridian DSP loudspeakers. The quality of digitally-connected Meridian systems is further enhanced by our music-industry-approved MHR inter-connection system.

1985

Meridian invents the CD Transport

The idea of separating the transport from the rest of the player – to minimise jitter and other distortion from the mechanism – was developed to produce the world's first separate Transport/DAC product – the critically-acclaimed 200/203 shown here.



1989

Meridian 208 CD Player

The highly successful 200 Series included several CD players. Using different DACs as the technology developed, the 208 was a landmark in Meridian's CD player development, with up to 20-bit conversion capability and preamplifier functionality.



Meridian has also offered its technologies for the mastering of Compact Discs. Some of the highest quality recordings were made using our 607 A/D converter, while even more have used the 618 Mastering Processor to maximise the dynamic range on disc. Top recording studios tend to use a Meridian player for checking, and over the years a Meridian CD player has become synonymous with the best sound, and 'a reference'. This is a reputation we cherish, and one which we aim to defend by making each player better than the one before.

1991

Meridian 602 Transport & 601 DSP Preamplifier

The 600 Series was highly regarded by reviewers and owners alike, especially the 602 transport and its companion 601 DSP Preamplifier, 603 Digital Control Unit or 606 DAC.



Of course, today there are new formats available – with more on the way – promising higher resolution. However, after 20 years, the CD catalogue is overwhelmingly comprehensive and strongly-supported. Today there are believed to be tens of millions of CD titles available, with thousands added to that total every month. No matter what the success of music on DVD or other formats, many serious music lovers already own a cherished collection of Compact Discs and will continue to buy them to satisfy their particular interests. The serious listener needs to enjoy the very best sound from this huge musical resource.

1993

508 – Compact Disc Classic

The 500 Series, launched in 1993, developed into a full range of audio/video products, including Meridian's first DVD player, the 596, in 1997. Meanwhile, from 1994 onwards, the 508 set the standard for CD until the advent of the G08 in 2003.



2004

Meridian 808 Reference Series

Originally a superb DVD player, the Meridian 800 has developed to become one of the most highly-specified optical disc players in the world, with full DVD-Audio/Video capability. Now, from its impeccable pedigree comes the 808 – the highest quality Compact Disc Player Meridian has ever built.



808/808i

Signature Reference Compact Disc Player

The press on Meridian's CD players...

Meridian CD Player

"...a breakthrough for CD players. ...[Soundstage] is where the Meridian renders the competition irrelevant and worthless."

—The Absolute Sound, Winter 1985

"One of the most significant developments in CD player technology."

—Audio Magazine (USA)

Meridian Pro-MCD

"I suspect that [the Meridian Pro-MCD] will be the first CD player to be regarded as a 'classic'!"

—Hi-Fi News & Record Review, Feb 1986

"[The] MCD-Pro... has found itself used as a quality reference by several CD manufacturers as well as equipment and record reviewers."

—Which Compact Disc, Jan 1988

Meridian 207

"The original Pro-MCD set the benchmark in its day, but the 207-Pro was the radical step, placing Meridian for all time in the CD player hall of fame."

—Hi-Fi Choice, June 1990

"There is nothing else on the market remotely like the Meridian 207... It is...one of the finest-sounding CD players on the market."

—Sydney Morning Herald, Aug 1988

Meridian 602/606

"In Meridian we might be looking at a company that has a real contribution to make towards raising CD performance."

—Audiophile, June 1991

"...the 602 [via the 606] was damn near impossible to fault... Its resolution of the subtlest treble details was intricate to the point of being exquisite... the 602/606 turned out to be a very 'special' combination."

—Hi-Fi Choice, July 1991

Meridian 508

"...the Meridian 508.24...the world's best single-box player and used as a reference machine by renowned US publication Stereophile... brings out aspects of music that most players can merely hint at..."

—Audio & Video Lifestyle, 1999

"...the 508.24's measured performance reveals that Bob Stuart and his talented digital design team have done a fabulous job."

—Stereophile, May 1998

Meridian 800

"...a true reference-quality product..."

—The Absolute Sound, January 2004

"...the 800 is perhaps the finest overall CD player I've ever laid ears on. When you consider that there are some CD-only players round that demand this outlay, the price tag doesn't seem all that eye-watering... Takes audio to another level, if you can afford it. Without doubt the finest optical disc playing system we've encountered."

—HiFi World, December 2002

"...I found that the Meridian... was clearly superior... not just to my reference components, but to any other CD front ends that I've auditioned or reviewed... The performance of Meridian's 800/861 with CDs is superior to the performance you get with the great majority of SACDs and DVD-As through any player."

—Absolute Sound, December 2003

Meridian decided to introduce the 808 Signature Reference Compact Disc Player for several reasons. We have been both surprised and pleased by increasing levels of interest in our CD player models 588 and G08: this tells us that there is a strong element of enthusiasts that does not want pictures or complications attached to their music enjoyment. Some believe that modern DVD or 'Universal' players cannot get the best from CD because of the additional circuitry and compromises involved and, to some extent, this is true.

Meridian also wanted to mark the 20th anniversary of the category 'Audiophile CD Player' – a category we can legitimately claim to have invented. Thus the 808 is offered as an exquisite music-only player, embodying the very best of our art and technology. For the first time we are creating a 'signature' model – each one hand-signed by Meridian's founders, Robert Stuart and Allen Boothroyd.

Player or Player/Preamplifier

808 is available in two forms.

Both versions offer analogue balanced and unbalanced outputs which can be fixed in level (to suit a preamplifier), or variable (for direct connection to a power amplifier).

Both versions also have two digital outputs: Aux (which runs at 44.1kHz) and Main (which can run at either 44.1kHz or, via upsampling, at 88.2kHz, and can use MHR to enhance performance when connected

to a Meridian DSP loudspeaker or Surround Processor).

808i adds analogue and digital inputs. This means that 808i can also be the system preamplifier. When connected to a power amplifier or DSP loudspeakers, all the user's sources can be routed through the player.

808 Technology

Meridian's 808 is the latest in a series of optical disc players that use a specially-selected ROM drive for reading. The ROM drive allows multiple passes to be made, ensuring that the correct data are recovered from the disc and improving Compact Disc's error-correction a hundredfold. It also allows complete buffering of the recovered data.

To ensure the lowest possible jitter, 808 incorporates three buffers, two of which are used as FIFOs. By the time the data is passed to the DACs or the digital output, the jitter is incredibly low – in fact 808 has the lowest jitter we have ever measured on a CD player: around 90 picoseconds, with the jitter spectrum held below 0.1Hz.

The signal path includes proprietary error correction and concealment, and Meridian's acclaimed 'Resolution Enhancement' DSP, in which the original 44.1kHz, 16-bit audio is upsampled to 176.4kHz, 24-bit in one of three 150MIPs processors operating with 48-bit internal precision. This is 'true' DSP upsampling, unlike anything else available in the marketplace.

Building a System

The 808 is a single component, but it is designed to interface seamlessly with other Meridian products, and with a wide range of third-party audio equipment, to build a system that is uniquely your own.

You can begin by considering which model of the 808 is most appropriate for your needs: the 808 player or the 808i player/preamplifier.

808 Player

- Digital and fixed or variable analogue outputs, ideal for connection to an existing preamplifier or surround controller (eg 861).
- Drives a pair of Meridian DSP Loudspeakers directly (eg DSP8000 shown here) or a conventional amplifier and speakers
- Can be used to create a simple, stereo CD replay system with the highest quality CD playback available.

808i Player/Preamplifier

- Additional analogue and digital inputs to connect radio, tape, turntable/phono preamp etc
- Digital and fixed/variable analogue outs: drives a pair of Meridian DSP Loudspeakers directly, or conventional stereo amp/speakers.
- Powerful and versatile stereo replay system with the highest-quality CD playback available anywhere, at any price.

Either way, the 808 delivers the same, superb performance.



A pair of Meridian's DSP8000s makes an ideal companion for the 808.

808/808i Signature Reference Compact Disc Player



808i (Player/Preamplifier model) Rear Panel. The 808 Player model does not include the analogue and digital input panel areas.

This upsampling allows conversion-related filtering to take place far above the limits of human hearing, so there are no artefacts added to the sound – simply the pure music.

The 808 employs exquisite multibit over-sampled delta-sigma D/A converters, combined with a matching proprietary analogue output stage of the highest quality.

To ensure the finest sound, the 808's construction employs a motherboard and multiple cards. Each card has its own power supplies and buffering so that each section – computer, decoder, FIFO buffers, DSP upsampling, D/A conversion, digital output, analogue input and digital input – is on a separate and isolated card. As is traditional with Meridian products, the construction uses audiophile-grade capacitors throughout and each component – even each resistor – has been selected for its sonic contribution. The PCBs are all multilayer, many of them using 6-layer technology for the lowest noise and jitter and for optimum grounding.



Additional controls are fitted under a front panel cover. Full remote control is also provided by the included MSR+ infra-red learning/programmable remote and via RS232.

The 808 features a solidly-constructed case built of metal and glass, finished in black lacquer or satin silver. The casework itself is non-magnetic to maintain the sweetest sound.

Our objective

Meridian CD players have been optimised for the same, accurate sound to which we aspire in all our products. The chief designer, Robert Stuart, has a definite view that the sound should be totally natural in the midrange,

and that the high and low ranges should never intrude – but should remain precise. We believe that the tonality of our players is best judged with the finest recordings of human voice, piano and violin. We audition our new designs using recordings like these, and if they sound 'wrong' in any way, the design is not accepted.

Another important target for us is that the player must reveal the 'space' in the original recording. Meridian CD players, and 808 in particular, are unique in their ability to allow the listener to hear depth in the recording and to interpret the side and back walls of the recording location.

Most of all, the words we would use to describe the sound of 808 are 'exquisitely musical'. Those who are lucky enough to own this Signature Reference CD Player will find immense enjoyment, and new depth and subtlety in well-loved recordings, gaining a lifetime of musical insight that is simply not possible with lesser designs.

Outline Specifications

THD & Noise:	Better than –96dBFS	Comms:	Two 5-pin 240° DIN sockets for Meridian Comms, and RS232 full remote/configuration interface. Three programmable 12v trigger outputs
Mechanism:	Triple-beam laser, multi-speed CD/DVD-ROM transport	Construction:	Black lacquer or satin silver finish in metal & glass
Converters:	192kHz-capable, 24-bit, Delta Sigma converters operating at 4 x CD sample rate (176.4kHz)	Dimensions:	480mm (18.9in) x 175mm (6.9in) x 411mm (16.2in) (whd)
Stereo Outputs:	Analogue: 1 unbalanced on phono, 1 balanced on XLR-3M: 2.3V rms fixed/variable, Class A, 47Ω impedance Digital S/PDIF (IEC60958): main coax with MHR plus auxiliary coax, operating at up to 2 x CD sample rate (88.2kHz), 24-bit	Controls:	Front-panel keys for Open/Close, Play, Stop, Pause, Previous, Next, On/Off. Additional controls behind hinged front access cover include Repeat, Fast Forward/Reverse, Display, Mute, Volume Up/Down, Store/Clear; Source. Full remote control via MSR+, RS232
Stereo Inputs:	(808i only) Analogue: 6 unbalanced on phono. Digital S/PDIF: 3 coax and 2 Toslink optical	Display:	20-character dot matrix display with adjustable brightness and contrast. Indicators for Phase, Repeat and EQ (emphasis).
Formats:	CD Audio (CD-DA), CD-R, CD-R/W, MP3	Power:	Universal power supply for 100–240Vac, 50/60Hz, 25W

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