

Meet Meridian's brilliant 'brain'

Meridian G68ADV

£4995

Multichannel processor

↑ FOR

Superb performance in multichannel and stereo; very comprehensive specification; attractive styling

↓ AGAINST

The one-off set-up process is pretty laborious; it's expensive

◆ VERDICT

Fantastic – it's something of a niche product, but what a niche!



THE MOST EXPENSIVE component in Meridian's new G Series range, the G68ADV is the latest in a long line of much-acclaimed multichannel processors from the British company.

Let's kick off with a quick overview of what the G68ADV is about. The Meridian is, in essence, a powerful

TECH SPECS

DIGITAL INPUTS 2 x six-channel MHR Smart Link, 6 x coaxial, 5 x optical
DIGITAL OUTPUTS 10 x digital for Meridian DSP speakers, 2 x coaxial
ANALOGUE INPUTS 1 x six-channel, 5 x stereo, plus internal AM/FM tuner
ANALOGUE OUTPUTS 2
VIDEO INPUTS 4 x composite, 4 x S-Video, 3 x component
VIDEO OUTPUTS 2 x composite, 2 x S-Video, 1 x component
DIMENSIONS (HWD) 13 x 44 x 35cm

multichannel 'brain'. It's designed to take in analogue or digital audio signals from a range of sources, and then process that information into a form suitable for amplification. You can use it to send audio to as many as seven speakers, with multiple subwoofers, and multiroom/multizone capability is also included. Of course, you will need speakers and amplification, and the G68ADV can be teamed with either a suitable multichannel power amplifier, or a system built from the company's range of active (self-powered) loudspeakers, as you choose.

There's more to it than our brief explanation will allow, but we'll run out of space, so let's sum it up this way. Why go to all that trouble? Simple: because it sounds better. Processor/power amplifier combinations are designed to give you better sound, both when you listen to music or movies in multichannel mode or in stereo. You pay for the privilege, but in theory, you get the superior performance your significant outlay demands.

Happily for Meridian, that's certainly the case here. The G68ADV is a brilliant performer, and, as unlikely as it might sound, it's worth that premium price. It's certainly up to scratch with music, for starters, and that's undoubtedly how Meridian wishes it to be viewed: you're meant to listen to CDs and DVD-Audio discs through this processor, and you're meant to enjoy the experience every bit as much as you would listening through a high-end hi-fi preamp. True, the balance is a shade on the polite side, but there's genuine wit and skill to the G68ADV's musical touch: it's so much more capable than most rivals.



DEEP THOUGHT COMES TO HOME CINEMA

The G68ADV is based around five powerful Motorola processing devices that together produce 750MIPS (million instructions per second) of computational power, which allows for all processing to be carried out at 48-bit precision. Part of this immense processing power is aimed at standard decoding/processing modes, but some of it also powers Meridian's room-correction DSP.

Room correction compensates for the low-frequency resonances of your living room, caused either by poor speaker positioning, or by more fundamental acoustic characteristics (construction, shape and size). The system measures your room's shape and acoustic properties using a microphone, and builds electronic filters that compensate. The result is a smoother sound, with more consistent, tuneful and realistic bass.

Spend this much money, and you're also going to want pretty decent home cinema as and when the mood takes you – and the Meridian handles that job in sensational style, too. As with its forebears, the G68ADV is both a sophisticated audio component and a powerful computer, capable of some very fast number-crunching. Since it's primarily intended for dealing with digital data – the sounds on your discs, and increasingly, your broadcasts – and since it also operates entirely in the digital domain when it comes to, say, generating a surround processing mode, this speed is both relevant, and crucial. This processor builds a bigger, more three-dimensional and more 'real' surround soundfield than almost any rival. It captures details with

Superior number-crunching endows this G Series processor with fantastic sound

amazing accuracy, yet punches out bass with unerring weight. The company's potent room-correction software (see the panel above) plays a big part in that, guiding the G68ADV to an optimum balance whatever your room's acoustic characteristics.

There's a lot more to talk about, such as the fantastic backlit, learning remote, the PC-based set-up procedure, and more, but we're out of space. So a summary? It's brilliant, but expensive. If you can afford one, we envy you.

ALSO CONSIDER

Lexicon MC-8
 £5750 ★★★★★ December 2003
 An excellent stripped-down version of our reference MC-12B

Panasonic Halo C1
 £5000 ★★★★★ August 2003
 Heavyweight high-end home cinema from across the pond

