

GLASS AUDIO?

Meridian's gear has always had that simple but luxurious look that puts the Bauhaus right into your house, as you might say if you were Tom Wolfe.

Part of the elegance of the glass-topped 504 tuner is that multiple control functions are disguised via a few simple push buttons. No horribly cluttered display that looks like the Manhattan skyline at night on this tuner. No display at all, even: if you prefer the look of Manhattan in a power cut, you can switch it off.

Tuning in a station is simple on this FM only design. Scan the band for a transmission and the frequency pops up; a second later so does a numerical indication of signal strength. If it's properly tuned in, the figure is bracketed between single arrows. If it isn't, then a double one shows you whether to tune a step or two up or down. Thirty presets, all of which can be given alphanumeric names, should be enough even now the UK airwaves are filling up.

Remote control is either through wired communication between the tuner and other Meridian components, or a separate remote. But why no RDS, the supreme convenience feature of all? It can't be the 'Not Invented Here' syndrome: it was, dammit. Anyway, that apart, the Huntingdon company hasn't stepped over the wrong side of the meridian line and traded features for sound quality. It's pretty good at telling it as it is, or maybe a little worse. That old-timer 'Out of Time' by Chris Farlow was a timely reminder that however good it sounded on a Dansette, it ain't grown up enough since for a real wireless to make it better.

All the same, the 504 tackled heavy rock percussion via Virgin FM with some aplomb, kick drums alive and

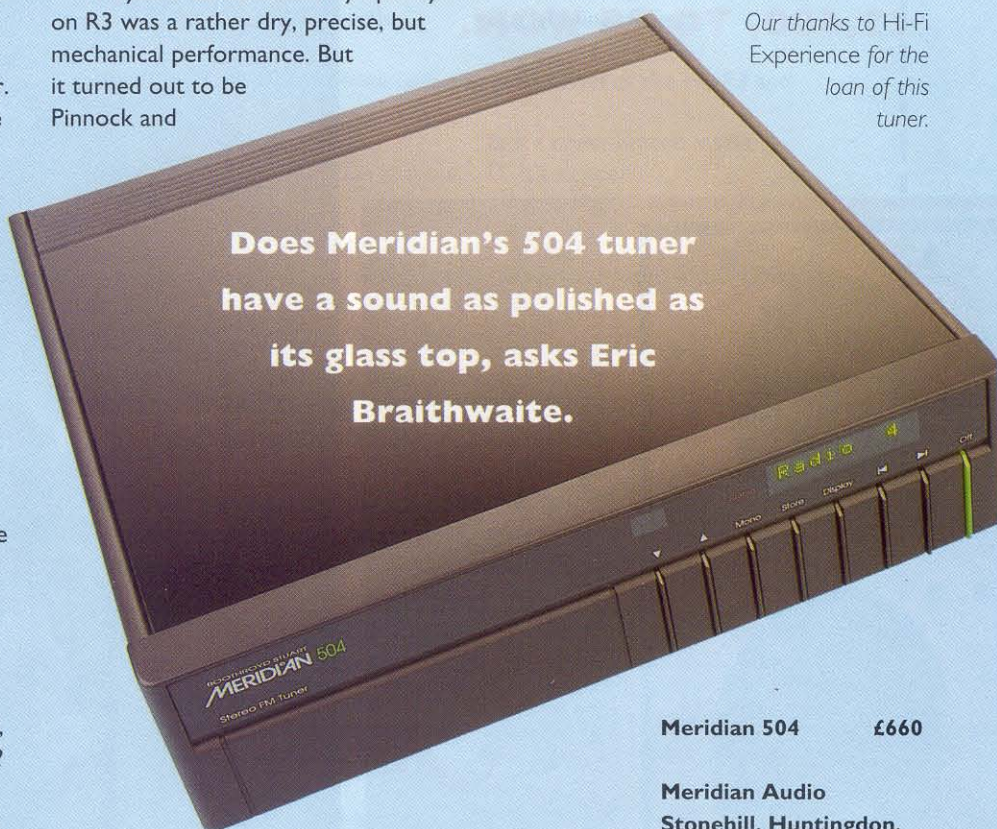
kicking very cleanly without any triangles or cymbals fizzing or splashing. A spell with Jazz FM brought similar pleasure, and some dismay, showing up what was possibly an afterthought in the mix which sounded like someone tapping a biscuit tin instead of a snare.

Haydn's 'Lamentation' Symphony on R3 was a rather dry, precise, but mechanical performance. But it turned out to be Pinnock and

orchestra) was deep and, ahem, grand, a little less refinement would have boosted the dynamic contrasts of the Philharmonia's accompaniment.

A pretty neutral midrange nonetheless held hints of a cuppiness on tenor voices, however. Depth perspective was somewhat on the shallow side, and no matter how credible the imaging was, it didn't quite have the solid holographic feel of Rotel's RT990BX or the dynamic toughness of Quad's 66FM. Or of the exceptional Fanfare FT-1, but then that is twice as much and there isn't much else in between. Not exceptional, but not half bad either ●

Our thanks to Hi-Fi Experience for the loan of this tuner.



Meridian 504 £660

Meridian Audio
Stonehill, Huntingdon,
Cambs. PE18 6ED
☎ 01480 434334

the English Concert, and on reflection at least some of the lack of excitement was down to them rather than the Meridian. The noticeable amount of hiss on R3 transmissions, however, must have been down to the tuner.

On the other hand, a live recording of Beethoven's 'Harp' quartet showed the Meridian's mettle, with a sweet violin and cool but well-tempered viola and cello sound. While the piano in Liszt's Totentanz (for piano and

WORLD VERDICT



A clear, neutral sound with good punch. Has strong rivals at the price, but acquits itself well. Hissy on R3.

Measured Performance
see p105-111

TUNER

MERIDIAN TUNER

The 504 has a flat frequency response with useful upper treble roll down above 10kHz. This will give good tonal balance and avoid harshness respectively.

Channel separation was high, but the 504 channel blends to reduce hiss as signal strength decreases, turning progressively to mono. Measurement showed hiss never rose above -55dB, but since stereo blended to mono (i.e. less than 20dB separation) below 200 μ V, this is its effective stereo sensitivity - not a good one. Sensitivity was mediocre and hiss at full quieting, reached at 1.6mV from the aerial, high at -66dB. Modern tuners usually offer -70dB or better, so the 504 is poor in this respect and I would not recommend it to critical Radio 3 listeners.

With an absence of useful facilities such as tune indicator or signal strength meter, the 504 offers little of merit. NK

Frequency response
Stereo separation
Distortion (50% mod.)
Hiss (CCIR)
Signal for minimum hiss

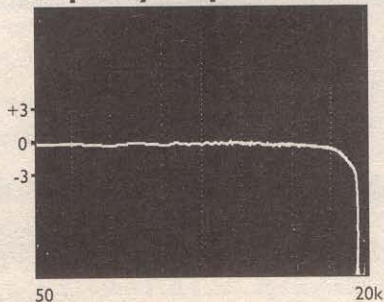
3Hz-13kHz
43dB
0.18%
-66dB
1.6mV

Selectivity (at 0.4MHz)
Sensitivity
mono
stereo
signal strength meter:

73dB

3 μ V
200 μ V
none

Frequency Response



Distortion

