

Meridian 508.20 CD player

With a new 20-bit Crystal chipset tucked inside the updated 508, Meridian has made a spectacular return to form.

£1,685

Let's get straight to the point. The £1,685 Meridian 508.20, an update of the original 508 launched two years ago, is one of the best CD players ever made in the UK. A new 20-bit DAC has simply transformed the sound of this player.

Some time ago, I listened to the cheaper Meridian 506 player. At the time, I perceived a lack of clear blue water between it and the 508. The new 508.20, however, has powered off into the sunset, leaving the 506 outclassed.

The 508.20

Meridian 508.20
– kneel in the direction of Huntingdon to give thanks for this wonderful player.



sports a Crystal Semiconductor 20-bit chipset, which has been designed from the ground up with extensive input from Meridian itself. The player has balanced and unbalanced analogue outputs, and there's good news for existing 508 owners. Only £450 will buy you an upgraded 508.20.

From the first note, the 508.20 sings like an angel. You can't pin a character on it, but the sound is just consummately musical. Gone is the typical 'etched' quality associated with Meridian CD players; in its place, warmth, clarity, detail and dynamics. But this would be merely interesting if it were not for the sheer naturalness of this player.

The 508.20 can improve the sound of equipment it's used with, and this is what separates the great from the merely good. The Meridian is distinctly better than the sum of its parts, and considering those parts are pretty damn good, I'd say the company has a winner on its hands.

I had a brief audience with the 508.20 in combination with Meridian's new 502 and 557 pre/power combo, at Grahams Hi-Fi in North London. This £2,590 amp combo has the same virtues as the CD player, and similarly few vices. Add the excellent system remote and you have gold-medal hi-fi at a price even British athletes could afford.

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