



808.3

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. Since then, Meridian has introduced over two dozen CD player models, 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.

The 808 was introduced in 2004 to immediate acclaim. Meridian hailed it as the best CD player they had ever made. But, since then, developments in technology and innovations conceived in Meridian's own R&D laboratories have made it possible to better even the best.

Now, Meridian introduces the third-generation 808 – the 808.3, a proud member of the 800 Reference Series. The 808.3 was specifically developed to render the very best sound from Compact Disc and network audio.

As part of the Reference 800 Series, the 808.3 is the highest performance CD Player manufactured by Meridian. It now also offers the finest network playback too, with built-in access to a Meridian Sooloos digital media system.

At the heart of Meridian's ultimate music system, 808.3 offers CD playback from an internal ROM based drive which allows for data recovery and error correction many times better than that employed in standard CD systems.

CD is still a leader, with an amazing depth of catalogue. If you are looking for a piece of music, chances are that it's on Compact Disc, and that you have a choice of recordings. You may find a download, but the quality or value will likely be lower and no matter how fine a new niche format may sound, if the music you want isn't available, then it has only passing interest. And of course, you can losslessly import your CD library into a Meridian Sooloos system.

All the more reason, then, to continue our quest to make Compact Disc sound the very best it can. 808.3 inherits Meridian's tradition of over a quarter-century of award-winning players, yet sets a whole new benchmark.

Product highlights

Audiophile CD Player with Meridian technology including ROM drive, triple FIFO buffering and DSP apodising upsampling filter to deliver the best possible "high definition" sound from the popular CD medium

Meridian SpeakerLink interconnection for superb quality: twin outputs for simple, robust "home run" installation

Multiple analogue and digital inputs including SpeakerLink and full controller/preamp functionality.

Built-in ID40 Sooloos Card enables direct connection to a Meridian Sooloos system for the highest possible sound quality digital media playback, with direct Play Queue control

New analogue input card for superior analogue to digital conversion performance

Available in Graphite, Silver, Piano-Lacquer Black and the complete range of Meridian Select colours

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.



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.



1991

Meridian 602 Transport and 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.



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 800 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. From its impeccable pedigree came the original 808 Signature Reference CD player, and now the 808.3 – the highest quality Compact Disc player Meridian has ever built.



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Meridian: CD Innovator

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

In the intervening years, Meridian has relentlessly pursued the path of making better and better CD players, introducing over two dozen models – each one better than the one before. Every model has received critical acclaim, and we have gathered more than 50 awards for our CD players.

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.

Meridian has also offered its technologies for the mastering of Compact Discs. 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.

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

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

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

"...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 around that demand this outlay, the price tag doesn't seem all that eye-watering... Takes audio to another level.... 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 808

"The 808 is worth every penny asked for it. ...this deck is head and shoulders above almost everything else I have ever heard. It's beautiful, well built and sounds wonderful... After listening to this player for the last three months at least six (sometimes 10-12) hours a day, I'm still as infatuated with it as the day it arrived. The main thing is that the Meridian 808 is an extremely musical player that gets it right on all levels."

—*Tone Audio*, Issue 8, 2007

Why the 808?

Interest in our CD players continues to increase. This tells us that there is a strong element of listeners who do not want pictures or complications attached to their music enjoyment, and wish to take advantage of the extensive selection that is available on no medium, to date, other than Compact Disc. At the same time, the 808.3 provides a bridge to a server-based future, with the inclusion of the ID40 Sooloos Card. This new card allows the 808.3 to replay music stored losslessly on a Meridian Sooloos digital media system – for example, your existing CD library – at the highest possible quality, with control of the Play Queue from the MSR+ remote. The 808.3 also offers additional inputs to make it truly the hub of the ultimate music system.

Thus the 808.3 is an exquisite CD and network player/pre-amplifier, embodying the very best of our art and technology. And the 808.3 is a 'signature' model – each one hand-signed by Meridian's founders, Robert Stuart and Allen Boothroyd.

Meridian's 808.3 is the latest in a series of optical disc players that use a new CD-ROM drive for reading. This 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, 808.3 incorporates an entirely new clocking regime and employs three buffers, two of which are used as FIFOs in a completely redesigned buffering environment.

By the time the data is passed to the DACs or the digital outputs, the jitter is incredibly low – in fact 808.3 has the lowest jitter we have ever measured on a CD player: even better than the original 808's 90 picoseconds, with the jitter spectrum held below 0.1Hz.

Above and beyond

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 a 150MIPS processor operating with 48-bit internal precision. 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 – you hear simply the pure music.

However, the 808.3 goes further still. High-resolution audio prefers sample rates and bit depths higher than the 44.1kHz 16-bit CD format, which is why we use resolution enhancement that includes upsampling.

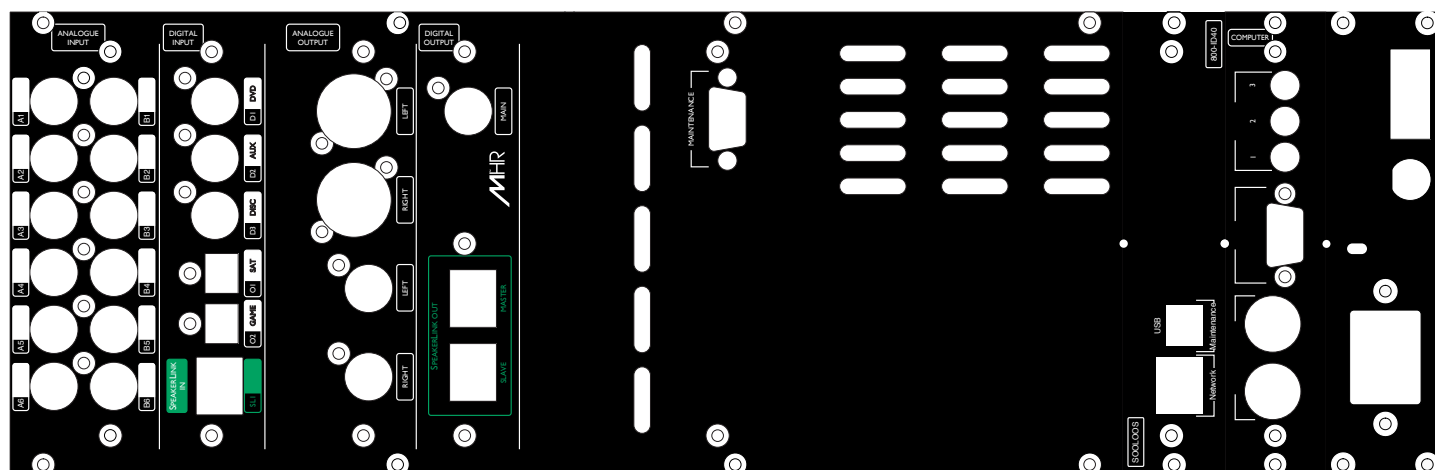
Yet upsampling alone cannot improve on one aspect of CD: the original sampling rate of the recording. A digital system can only capture sounds up to half the sample rate: anything above that must be filtered out. In the case of CD, half the sample rate is only just above the limit of human hearing, so the filters must be very steep. In the past, these filters have audibly degraded the sound. The earliest analogue filters caused enormous phase shifts at high frequencies, and with digital linear-phase filters a big issue was the introduction of pre-echoes.

Meridian's goal was to invent a technology that stripped away this fundamental limitation in the making of the CD, taking the listener right back to the original higher-resolution sound – no mean ambition, nor a trivial task. But Meridian's founder, Bob Stuart, was sure that high-definition sound could be achieved without excessive sample rates – if the filters were right.

Bob authored an Audio Engineering Society paper on high definition audio in which he recommended the development of 'apodising' filters – filters that were minimum phase, with no ripple, causing no pre-echo: and thus offering perfect timing. He predicted they would even be able



Each 808.3 is individually hand-signed by the founders of Meridian, Bob Stuart and Allen Boothroyd.



808.3 rear panel layout (preliminary: subject to change), showing Sooloos Card

to fix problems in the origination process itself. Meridian's research team designed an exquisite, proprietary new upsampling filter based on this research – a filter with 'apodising-style' qualities. It needs significant DSP to deliver, using much of the power of the 808.3's 150MIPS main processor. This filter system is so effective that it can even correct errors made in the recording or mastering stage – CDs played back on the 808.3 can sound even better than they did in the studio!

Finally, at the end of the audio chain, the 808.3 employs the latest multi-bit oversampled delta-sigma D/A converters, combined with a matching proprietary analogue output stage of the highest quality.

Innovation is the keynote

The new model includes many other new features, including twin RJ45-based SpeakerLink interfacing, allowing a direct "home run" single-cable link from the 808.3 to each of a pair of Meridian DSP speakers via convenient, easily-installed CAT-5 cabling.

On the input side, the 808.3 includes a comprehensive set of analogue and digital inputs – including SpeakerLink for convenient interfacing with other Meridian components. A new analogue input stage features enhanced high-performance analogue to digital conversion.

The result is, quite simply, the most impeccable-sounding CD and network player available today. It's available in Graphite, Silver, Black Piano Lacquer and the full range of Meridian Select colours.



Additional panel buttons are accessed via a flap above the main controls.

Outline Specifications

THD & Noise

- Better than -96dBFS

Mechanism

- Triple-beam laser, multi-speed CD-ROM transport

Conversion

- 192kHz-capable, 24-bit, Delta Sigma converters operating at 4 x CD sample rate (176.4kHz).
- Apodising-style upsampling filter system.

Stereo Outputs

- Analogue: 1 unbalanced on phono, 1 balanced on XLR-3M: 2.3V rms fixed/variable, Class A, 47Ω impedance
- Digital: coax unbalanced (S/PDIF); twin RJ45 balanced (AES/EBU) SpeakerLink digital interface for single-cable connection of other Meridian equipment. Operating at up to 2 x CD sample rate (88.2kHz), 24-bit with MHR option.

Stereo Inputs & Sources

- Analogue: 6 unbalanced on phono.
- Digital: S/PDIF (3 coax & 2 Toslink optical); SpeakerLink RJ45
- Meridian Sooloos digital media system connectivity via RJ45 Ethernet connection

Formats

- CD Audio (CD-DA), CD-R, CD-R/W

Comms

- Two 5-pin 240° DIN sockets for Meridian Comms, and RS232 full remote/configuration interface. Three programmable 12V trigger outputs. RJ45 SpeakerLink.

Construction

- Black lacquer, graphite or silver finish in metal & glass. Meridian Select colours also available.

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.

Display

- 20-character dot matrix display with adjustable brightness and contrast. Indicators for Phase, Repeat and EQ (emphasis).

Dimensions

- 480mm (18.9in) x 175mm (6.9in) x 411mm (16.2in) (whd)

Power

- Universal power supply for 100–240VAC, 50/60Hz, 25W