

Ringling the changes

MERIDIAN 808.2 SIGNATURE REFERENCE (£7195)

Packed with proprietary technology, Meridian's stunning 808.2 promises a new high in CD performance



Meridian's 808.2 Signature Reference represents a significant advance over its 2004 predecessor, the 808. The new machine incorporates Meridian's Resolution Enhancement DSP. This uses a new 150MIPS processor to up/oversample the signal to an exact multiple frequency of 176.4kHz with 48-bit internal precision (24-bit output). Meridian claims this 'perfect' or 'true up-sampling' significantly improves sound quality.

Meridian also claims that high-definition sound is achieved from CD by using a new digital low-pass filter, claimed to remove supersonic artefacts with minimum phase and without adding ripple or pre-echo. Unlike post-echo, which may be 'masked' by the ear, this is potentially much more audible. Meridian's anti-image filter is claimed to combine a very sharp cut-off with, it claims, no pre-ringing.

Meridian says this gives the Signature Reference 808.2 'perfect' timing and significantly improved sound quality to provide higher resolution sound from conventional CDs.

The player is built with separate high-current power supplies for each circuit section or sub-system. For improved serviceability, etc, the 808.2 is assembled on a mother-daughter circuit board system.

The DVD-ROM transport reads the disc in multiple passes, to improve error correction, and there are two FIFO buffers to help reduce jitter. Even the delta-sigma DAC has been improved. Outputs include analogue RCA

and balanced XLR audio outputs, digital coaxial and the RJ45 sockets and, for computer control, an RS232 connector, a couple of COMS sockets and three trigger sockets.

This is the very latest in a distinguished line of players. In less capable hands than Allen Boothroyd's, it could have looked very bulky, but the gently contoured cast metal front panel, large display and big keys play down the size, and soften what might otherwise have been a bit of a behemoth.

Once one gets the hang of the dual-function remote keys, the player is easy to use. The disc is read quickly and starts to play in no time.

A SPECIAL SOUND

It was clear that this CD player is very special. The words lush, smooth, detailed and powerful all cropped up repeatedly throughout my notes.

Superficially, the sound is, if anything, understated and self-effacing. It does not impose 'clarity' or 'detail', but delivers both in such a measured and precise fashion that the music comes to life.

It seems to tease out subtle musical detail, natural acoustic clues and spatial information. Most notably, treble detail was well presented, with a combination of smoothness and clarity rare from CD. This helped form a strong and vivid impression of instruments and the musicians playing them.

The Miles Davis *Kind of Blue* [Columbia] gave possibly the freshest and most immediate replay of this CD I had heard. In 'So what'

the clarinet was rich and reedy and the music really 'swung'. Cymbals rode and rang clearly and the timings of sticks on metal and skin were obvious. Rim-shots had power and precision. Miles' trumpet had warmth and richness, and was so focused that the gentle addition and variation of echo-plate was quite obvious. Miles' exquisite phrasing was all there to be heard...

Many other discs were of course played. The results were generally the same: a convincing replay of music, with warmth and a solid, palpable presence.

VERDICT

Meridian's Signature Reference 808.2 replays stereo CDs with clarity and precision. Packed with

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the latest technology, it is not cheap, but in warmth, transparency, dynamic impact and musical rewards it is hard to find better. 

AUDIO FILE

Reference upsampling CD player

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HI-FI NEWS SPECIFICATIONS

Maximum output level (balanced outputs)	4.87Vrms
A-wtd S/N Ratio	110.5dB
Distortion (1kHz, 0dBFS/-30dBFS)	0.0037% / 0.0036%
Distortion (20kHz, 0dBFS)	0.004%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.0dB to -1.1dB
Digital Jitter	122psec
Resolution @ -100dB	±0.4dB
Stereo separation (20Hz-20kHz)	>82dB