

MERIDIAN G98AH ♦ £3,625 (APPROX) ♦ 01480 445 678 ♦ www.meridian-audio.com

DVD adventures in audiophile land

Want a better player? Invent a better disc! So says Alan Sircom, as he auditions Meridian's audiophile-grade G98AH disc spinner



Meridian Audio's G series DVD players can be bewilderingly complex to the passer-by. There are three models, all with similar names and suffixes. This model – the £3,625 G98AH – is the one to go for if you plan on slotting the player into a regular home cinema system.

The others are more Meridian-specific; the G98DH comes without analogue outputs and is designed for Meridian Digital Active multi-channel systems. The G91DH is even more obscure in design; it's a DVD/tuner/pre-amplifier product designed to fit into a stereo analogue system or direct to stereo Meridian Digital Active speakers (you can upgrade to Meridian Digital Active multichannel too, but this is billed as a stereo device first and foremost). But the G98AH is the important product for anyone without an open line of credit with Meridian.

Multi-talented

The G98AH is a DVD-Audio/Video player that's tasty at spinning CDs, too. It's a cliché among DVD player manufacturers, but this unit is more like a computer for playing DVDs. It features a DVD-ROM transport and this feeds digital data into a large buffer memory. This means the disc data is read at a faster rate than regular DVD players, but is then played out of the buffer directly, thereby eliminating the data jitter problems found in pulling digital signals off a disc.

The Meridian is also packed with digital upscaling for video, with a lot of

Meridian and Faroudja-based technology inside. The G98AH has a proper video scaler, which can convert composite, S-video or interlaced component video pictures into high-density multimedia interface (HDMI) digital pictures.

HDMI is also HDTV ready, and the unit supports 480p, 576p, 720p and 1080i. It also delivers analogue progressive scan pictures for 576p PAL and 480p NTSC formats. There is no Scart socket as standard; this might be an unforgivable error in low-end equipment, but I suspect the G98AH will be used in systems where Scart is just too low-brow for connection.

Meridian is one of the leading lights of software design in audio. DVD-Audio uses an algorithm called 'Meridian Lossless Packing', a hint that the people at Meridian know their digital programming onions. But the programming skills extend past the DVD-Audio system; every part of the process and interface control of the player is designed in-house. This means a Meridian player behaves like no other, with multifunction keys performing a range of operations as you dive through the menus.

This 'go it alone' software design could be a recipe for disaster, with Kafka-esque functionality and control surfaces designed by Dali. In fact, this makes the player smoother and more instinctive than most players, especially in diving through menu systems. The slight start-up delay as the disc spools into the buffer is the nearest the Meridian gets to quirky.

RATINGS

Highs: Audio visual performance; build-quality; connectivity
Lows: No Super Audio CD

Picture	★★★★★
Sound	★★★★★
Features	★★★★½
OVERALL	★★★★★

DISC COMPATIBILITY

DVD-V	●	Video CD	●
DVD-A	●	Super Video CD	●
SACD	●	DiVX	●
CD	●	DVD+R	●
MP3	●	DVD-R	●
WMA	●	DVD+RW	●
JPEG	●	DVD-RW (Video)	●
HighMAT	●	DVD-RW (VR)	●
CD-R	●	DVD-RAM	●
CD-RW	●		

LAB REPORT

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Video jitter (3 n sec)	✓			
Signal-to-noise ratio	✓			
Composite (-79.2dB)	✓			
S-video Y (-78.7dB)	✓			
Component (-80.2dB)	✓			
Chroma				
AM (-75.9dB)	✓			
PM (-69.2dB)	✓			
Chroma crosstalk (-49.2dB)				✓
Frequency response				
S-video Y (-0.6dB)	✓			
Component Y (-0.4dB)	✓			
Composite (-0.6dB)	✓			
Audio jitter (186.3ps)	✓			

HOME CINEMA
Choice
Reference
status
★ GUARANTEE

