



MERIDIAN

G08

The Meridian is certainly flexible, being able to play discs of MP3 files plus CD-R/CD-RW discs too. So how does it sound with CDs?

DETAILS

-  Meridian G08
-  £2250
-  www.meridian-audio.com
-  01480 445678
-  Energy, authority, rhythmic, engaging
-  Forward vocals at times

Inside, the G08 uses a high-speed DVD-ROM drive to extract the data from the disc, after which it is upsampled to 176.4kHz before D/A conversion by dual differential 24-bit DACs. The G08 will play discs of MP3 files as well as CD-R and CD-RW recordings.

On the front of that elegant 440 x 90 x 350mm (hwd) case, the transport controls sit below a well-designed and readable custom display. More like a PDA than a conventional remote, the MSR+ controller

is a comprehensive AV system remote, designed to sit on a chair arm or coffee table rather than in your hand.

On the back are balanced and unbalanced analogue outputs, coaxial and optical digital outputs. There are also connections for communication with other Meridian G Series or 800 Series components or DSP loudspeakers, an RS232 connector, and IR In to receive remote command signals from a suitable IR repeater.

SOUND QUALITY

Starting with Ladysmith Black Mambazo (the CD layer this time, of course), the G08 gave the impression of very good

detail, in the subtleties of the singers' breathing noises for example, and quite a good feeling of rhythm. On Rickie Lee's 'Easy Money', the string bass was resonant and fruity while the vocal was a little forward and a tad sharp-edged, with detail well presented.

With the Gerald Wilson Orchestra, the G08 was quite bright and 'loud', but appropriately bursting with energy, the bass and drums good and the brass section work cleaner, with a bit more perspective in the sound. Again, on the Jennifer Warnes track, the bass and drums seemed to work well to drive the music along, the cymbal sounds well captured. And on 'Kind of Blue' the string bass had its proper authority, while the ride cymbal had genuine swing.

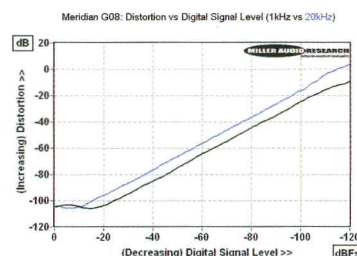
On that Uchida piano record, the G08 seemed able to describe the space around the instrument well, and on the problematic Heifetz disc the orchestral sound was well underpinned by the bass, the overall result convincing and even engaging.

LAB REPORT

FINDINGS

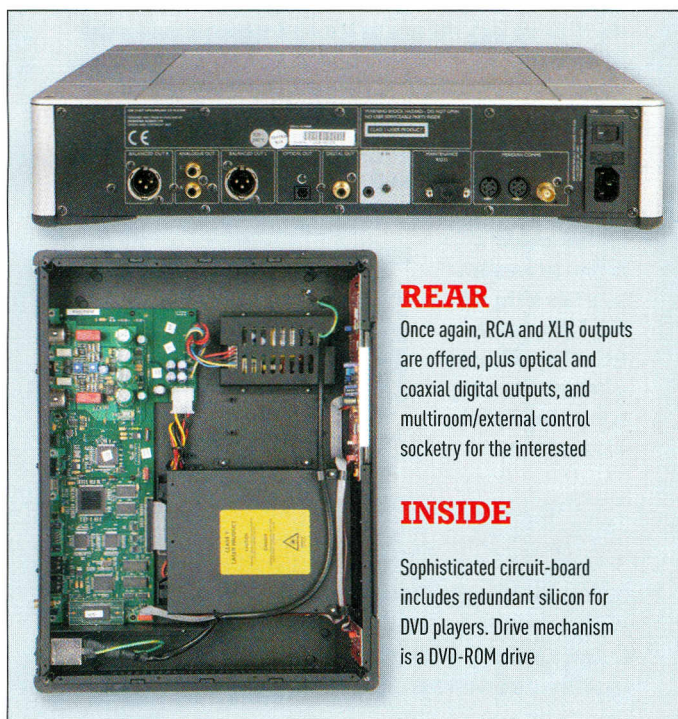
Driven by a wealth of custom DSP (including a redundant Dolby/DTS decoder!), Meridian's upsampled 176.4kHz/24-bit data is addressed to a high-performance DAC from Analog Devices, the AD1852. This ensures a very wide 112dB S/N ratio – second only to Arcam's double-differential DAC regime – and quite the lowest HF distortion I've seen in years. With just 0.00075% THD at 20kHz/0dBFS, the G08 introduces the bare minimum ultrasonic noise and distortion into the amplifier chain. Response begins rolling-off quite steeply at 19kHz rather than 20kHz, something I've seen with earlier Meridian players.

Otherwise, the player's max output is some +1.6dB over the nominal 2V standard at 2.4V, low-level resolution is good to within 0.5dB over a full 105dB dynamic range, stereo separation better than 100dB and IM distortion just 0.0003%.



VERDICT

The sound produced by this player manages to combine neutrality with authority and grip, with a bass that is powerful and weighty yet always staying in proportion. At its best, the Meridian G08 could give the impression of effortless inner detail, in a presentation that was always smooth and confident.



REAR

Once again, RCA and XLR outputs are offered, plus optical and coaxial digital outputs, and multiroom/external control socketry for the interested

INSIDE

Sophisticated circuit-board includes redundant silicon for DVD players. Drive mechanism is a DVD-ROM drive

WE LISTENED TO

Rickie Lee Jones
Rickie Lee Jones
[Warner 256 628]

Ladysmith Black Mambazo
Long Walk To Freedom
[Heads Up HUSA 9109]

Gerald Wilson
Orchestra In My Time
[Mack Avenue 1025]

Debussy
12 Etudes
Mitsuko Uchida
[Philips 464 698-2]

Jennifer Warnes
Famous Blue Raincoat
[Classic RTHCD 5052]

Miles Davis
Kind Of Blue
[Columbia 480410 2]

REVIEW SYSTEM

Source: Arcam FMJ CD36 CD player
Speakers: Dali Ikon 6 loudspeakers
Cables: Chord Siren interconnects;
Chord Odyssey speaker cables

OVERALL VERDICT:

Differences between CD players are often subtle, and subjective findings can be contentious. But it's clear that while some players here sound neutral and even anodyne, others seem to add a definite character or colour of their own.

The Jadis Symphonia Evolution, then, is definitely a player of character, with a lively and forthright sound that can certainly be very attractive. In the wrong system, it could sound a little too brash, but it's probably an ideal match for the Jadis valve amplifiers.

By contrast, the well-crafted Arcam FMJ A32 is a very neutral-sounding player, and if there's a criticism it would be that the player has too little character – it's never actually lifeless or dull, but there is just a slight feeling of something suppressed. Nonetheless, a very fine player for the money.

The seductive Marantz SA-11S1 can sound very good indeed on CD, still arguably neutral yet with more spark and sparkle, and it will play SACD – but if you are investing in SACD at all, you will surely want multichannel replay, which this player can't offer.

Audio Analogue's Maestro was something of a surprise in this group as it displayed an attractively unfettered, lively

quality, yet generally easy on the ear. Despite its relatively basic facilities, this appealing player is certainly very good value for money.

Naim's CDX2 does, I think, exactly what Naim would claim for it, with the brand's usual virtues of pace, rhythm and musical cohesion well to the fore, so it has to be recommended. But it is the most expensive of the group and many buyers (or family members) will not want to cope with the manual loading and easily-to-lose puck.

Which leaves us with the Meridian G08. This is a thoroughly well-sorted product, always sounding neutral and seemingly accurate. If it doesn't quite have the drive of the Naim, it does bring just enough verve to the music to complement a very detailed, authoritative presentation. And so, although the less expensive Arcam FMJ A32 is an exceptional product, and

the Audio Analogue Maestro is a fine and musical player too, the already much-acclaimed Meridian G08 can rest on its laurels once more.



ARCAM



AUDIO ANALOGUE



JADIS



MARANTZ



NAIM



MERIDIAN

BEST
BUYBEST
SOUNDHI-FI NEWS LAB:
MEASURED SPECS

	ARCAM FMJ CD36	AUDIO ANALOGUE MAESTRO	JADIS SYMPHONIA EVOLUTION	MARANTZ SA-11S1 (F3)	MERIDIAN G08	NAIM CDX2
Maximum output level	2.25V	2.00V	2.30V	2.5V	2.4V	2.1V
A-wtd S/N ratio	116.5dB	110.6dB	97.4dB	107.0dB	112.4dB	104.7dB
Distortion, 1kHz @ 0dBfs/-30dBfs	0.001% / 0.0045%	0.0003% / 0.0042%	0.018% / 0.061%	0.0006% / 0.0037%	0.0009% / 0.0036%	0.0015% / 0.0100%
Distortion, 20kHz @ 0dBfs	0.0013%	0.0040%	0.022%	0.005%	0.00075%	0.032%
Frequency response 20Hz-20kHz	+0.04 to -0.25dB	+0.00 to -0.73dB	+0.00 to -0.74dB	+0.00 to -0.30dB	+0.00 to -1.0dB	+0.05 to -0.95dB
Digital jitter	118psec	110psec	200psec	120psec	163psec	124psec
Resolution @ -90dBfs	+0.0/-0.2dB	+0.0dB/-0.4dB	+3.0dB/-3.4dB	+0.0dB/-0.3dB	+0.00dB/-0.4dB	+0.0dB/-0.1dB
Stereo separation, 20Hz-20kHz	>108dB	>100dB	>61dB	>93dB	>98dB	>83dB

For full, free and exclusive QC Suite reports on these CD players, please log onto www.milleraudioresearch.com/avtech