

sources what's happening in the world of hi-fi

Meridian says 800 is 'best optical player yet'

Version 3 upgrades for 800/861 include MHR Smart Link

Upgrades to Version 3 of the 800 Player and 861 Reference Surround Controller have been hailed by Meridian chairman Bob Stuart as heralding the system architecture and a 'benchmark for all high performance AV systems for the future'. MHR Smart Link, a digital multi-channel connection which directly couples the 800 player to the 861 Reference Surround Controller and to Meridian's family of DSP loudspeakers, is the first such system to be officially sanctioned for DVD-Audio content protection. Thus for the first time, the full resolution of multi-channel audio from DVD-Audio recordings (as well as those from CD and DVD-Video) can be losslessly transferred in the digital domain from player, to surround controller, to loudspeaker. The system is also said to allow



perfect bass management for all sources at the most appropriate point, the surround controller. MHR Smart Link provides full multi-channel capability for high resolution sources through the whole system. (Meridian is of course the developer of MLP, the lossless audio coding mandated for the DVD-

A standard.) Meridian now offers the option to decode DVD-V soundtracks within the player, leaving the DSP engine in the 861 to optimise resolution, 'typically working at 48-bit internal precision' on up to eight channels, and giving upsampling and resolution enhancement for all sources

including CD and DVD-V. Bob Stuart calls the 800 player 'the best optical player we've yet heard'. A card-based system in the 861 offers a range of interface options including outputs for 192kHz or 96kHz/24-bit analogue and high resolution multi-channel analogue inputs, the latter enabling full support for the analogue outputs from DVD-A and SACD players. (It's thought unlikely in the short term, however, that the 800 player itself will incorporate an SACD replay option.) All pre-existing capabilities of the Model 800 Series are retained, including 7.1 Dolby Digital, THX, EX, DTS, Meridian EZ, support for 2+2+2 playback via up to 10 loudspeakers, Dolby ProLogic II for stereo and matrix-encoded sources, discrete Ambisonics, MPEG, MP3 and all Meridian's proprietary modes for stereo and multichannel audio. Prices, with typical option selections, would be £10805 for the 800 player; and £9833 for the 861.

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