

Meridian G08

Meridian G08 CD player. \$7000

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In 1985 Meridian raised the digital bar by releasing the first compact disc player with audiophile potential, the MCD Pro. In the nearly 20 years that's followed they haven't stopped development. Meet the latest product of all that work, the G08 (that's gee-zero-eight).

What you need to know?

First impressions out of the box were of a very well built, great looking, hefty machine with the most obvious change from previous Meridians being the full width case. Other changes include an

excellent new vacuum fluorescent display and software-controlled keys on the player, which allows each button to have up to four individual functions. Another big improvement is the backlit Meridian System Remote Plus, which is now

fully programmable, easily allowing me to combine five remotes into one.

For the technically minded the G08 uses Delta Sigma converters to upsample the digital signal to 24 bit/176.4khz. The use of the CD/DVD-ROM drive and multiple buffers is said (by Meridian) to allow large improvements in error-correction and jitter while playing red book CDs, CDRs, CDRWs and MP3s. It has single ended or balanced outputs, along with S/PDIF coax and TosLink optical digital outs.

Meridian's programmable System Remote Plus is standard with the G08



Folks say she's gonna reach the top

Hooked up to my system (Musical Fidelity A3CR pre/power, Epos M15 speakers, Slinkylink cabling) the G08 sounds in turns powerful and delicate, rocking with passion or seducing you with beauty. Perhaps it's the upsampling, the new G-series specific circuitry or the trickle down from the 800 series, but there's a wonderful sense of ease and musical flow from the G08. I find the sound totally grainless and relaxing, allowing hours of emotionally involving, musically insightful, fatigue free listening.

That's not to say that it's soft or rolled off. Put on Tomasz Stankos From *The Green Hill* CD and you'll hear his trumpet in all it's glory, cutting edges intact. You'll also experience a very wide, deep and high soundstage with beautifully formed images. Switch to Ben Vaughn's *Mood Swings*, a collection of rough, rocking tracks and revel in the bite of his electric guitar and harmonica plus the power, weight and speed of the bass.

Then treat yourself to something gorgeous, Ella or Sarah or Cassandra, and be swept away by the wonderful way vocals are treated by this player. Since the arrival of the G08 I've been moved to tears by tracks that I thought had lost their power over me. I've also heard much more detail off familiar discs, most of it musical but some of it studio noise, musicians breathing and the like. My feeling is that if you're hearing these incidental noises you're certainly getting all the musical information.

I can pay a component no higher compliment than to say that it helps me to further enjoy music. Until now I've always struggled with Charles Mingus. Finally *The Black Saint And The Sinner Lady* sounded like emotion packed music where previously the threads of

the pieces never quite weaved together coherently for me.

Niggles? When fast scanning through a track the player doesn't mute the output, rather you get a jumbled cacophony of sound that I find very irritating. Something that annoys others is the longer than average time Meridian players take to initially read a disc. At six seconds the G08 is no different in comfortably allowing me to be back in my seat before sound issues forth but once read, the track access time is amazingly short.

Also if you demo the G08 make sure that it's had a couple of hundred hours playing. Up until then it's velvety but lacks the transparency, bite and top end air that develops over time.

I want you, you, you

My reference player for some years has been the Meridian 508.24, a player that I've never heard absolutely smoked by anything. Well the G08 didn't just leave the 508.24 bleeding in an alley, it picked it up and dropped it off at the morgue. The new player draws me further into the music, is faster, more detailed, has increased bass definition and power, greater image solidity, and greater ease of presentation.

The sound of the G08 is decidedly Meridian, musically balanced with no one thing grabbing your attention, no particular emphasis or special trick other than gloriously playing music. Bad discs are listenable but well recorded CD's well leave you speechless. The combination of musical insight and flow, tonal accuracy, transparency, and detail puts the Meridian G08 in the very top group of digital sources I've ever heard.

Recommended.—Craig Fenemor