

# AUDIO

THE MUSIC LOVERS' GUIDE TO THE BEST OF HI-FI

## Meridian ups the power with 559 amplifier

After years of innovation, during which it has made endless products at the cutting edge of audio technology, it's almost a relief to see Meridian announce something as mundane as its 559: a two channel power amplifier.

But a Meridian wouldn't be Meridian if it didn't cram a few novelties into a product. In this case the hefty, £2600 design employs a radical new amplifier topology which was created specifically to meet the demands of next generation digital audio formats, namely, DVD-Audio

and Super Audio CD. In fact, the core design was first featured in Meridian's DSP8000 flagship loudspeaker and is said to give superb linearity, stability and dynamic range.

The 559, which uses internal wires by van den Hul, offers 300W into 8ohms, though such a figure is probably somewhat on the modest side. The amp can continuously drive loads down to 1ohm and has the capability of output current bursts exceeding 150 Amps. This comes from a power supply featuring two low-

noise high-mass 1.2kVA transformers. Meanwhile, each channel uses 20 16Amp output devices in a super class A output stage and there's also a proprietary soft-start system.

Other bespoke systems include the company's 'super bal' input topology (the unit offers balanced XLRs as well as phono inputs) and a proprietary dynamic bias system.

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**Lots of power for your money: £2600 Meridian gives 300W/ch**

## CD piracy is rampant

That compact disc is now its own worst enemy. Recent figures from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI), representing the recording industry worldwide, show the global music market shrank 5% in value in 2001, and global sales of CDs fell to the same degree. Much of this is attributed to the increased availability of free music via digital copying, and one of the worst culprits is the CD burner.

18% of German buyers say burning CDs results in them buying less music, while in the US nearly 70% of people who downloaded music burned the songs onto a CD-R disc. Ironically, the UK bucked the downward trend, reporting a 5% sales increase.

Jay Berman, Chairman and CEO of IFPI, said, 'The recording industry was caught in a perfect storm, buffeted by the combined effects of mass copying and piracy. However, the record industry is acting decisively, using anti-copy measures'.

This means that we will see more copy-proof compact discs. For example, Universal Music Group, the world's largest record label, recently announced it would release more copy-proof CDs in the future. It hopes this will force consumers to give up copying songs onto computer hard drives, portable MP3 players and recordable CDs.

## Denon's stylish component system



**Mirror finish gives new Denon a touch of style**

Denon has had a firm grip on the mini-separates market for nearly a decade and hopes to maintain that success with its new System 201. It has an elegant mirrored fascia allied to compact dimensions, and ease-of-use functions such as Auto Power On and Auto Function Change. And the company says the ace up its sleeve is quality

electronics allied to loudspeakers which, as ever, have been designed with the help of Mission.

The core set up of CD player, amplifier and tuner costs £650, and uses the 50W per channel 201SA amp, with circuitry derived from Denon's reference-class amplifiers. The frequency band has also been extended to 100 kHz

to get the most from DVD-Audio and SACD. There's even a moving magnet phono stage for the more traditional audiophile. Elsewhere, the silver disc spinner employs 24-bit digital to analogue conversion and provides two sets of optical digital outputs.

Optional electronics include a £200 tape deck with Dolby B/C noise reduction, and a £300 MiniDisc recorder with an MDLP option to allow as much as 320 minutes of music (about 4 CDs) on an 80 minute MiniDisc. The speakers will set you back £150.

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## NAD's MP3-ready DVD player



**High-quality components and MP3: NAD's T562**

MP3 is clearly playing a big part in NAD's thinking about audio these days: in this issue the company's C660 CD recorder, which has MP3 playback, is tested, and now comes news of a new DVD-Video machine, also MP3-ready. The NAD T562 combines 'sonic

performance which arguably sets new benchmarks for sound quality from DVD and CD' with an advanced progressive scan with 3:2 pull-down. It also supports the playback of both CD-R and CD-RW discs, including those encoded with MP3 music, thus

allowing it to give up to 10 hours of music from a single disc. I even has a built-in HDCD decoder for use with suitable CDs. Oh, and it plays films, too!

The £500 machine uses 10-bit DACs running at 54MHz for the best video quality, and video outputs on composite, component and S-video, along with audio connections on analogue phono sockets and coaxial/optical digital.

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