

Meridian

500 Series

Meridian Audio made what must be its largest ever new product launch at a Press briefing held at Grahams Hi-Fi (see also page 177) in mid-August. The 500 Series fills the space in the market between the long-established and steadily evolving 200 range and the top-end 600 models. No fewer than 10 models have been produced to start with, with three more scheduled for release from the early autumn onwards.

Building on technological developments which evolved in the 600 series—advanced D/A converters, partitioned four-layer printed circuit boards, remote control, user-configurable set-up using non-volatile memory, etc.—the 500 models are contained in a very stylish new double-width casing (i.e. twice the width of a 200 or 600 Series 'single' case) and have a new inter-product communication system which is easier to set-up and use (though any 500 Series unit can be 'taught' to communicate with the 200 or 600 models). This new comms system involves just one remote control unit for the entire system, no matter how complex, and the logic offers better performance, specifically in terms of CD track access time. There will even be an 'intelligent' version of the new MSR handset which can learn the control codes used by other manufacturers.

The launch range comprises the 500 CD transport (£975); 501 remote control analogue preamplifier (£595), with a 501V optional version (£745) which includes a video board; 504 FM tuner (£595); 506 CD player (£795); 508 'Super' CD player (£1,350); 555 stereo power amplifier (£595); 562 "Digital Music System Controller" (£625); 562V Multi-media controller (£825); 563 dual-differential D/A converter (£695); and the MSR remote control handset (£50). Later additions will be the 551 60 Watts per channel integrated amplifier (£695); 502 Multi-room preamplifier (£795); and 565 Surround-Sound decoder (price to be announced). All units except the 506 CD player have the dot-matrix full-character display fitted to the 600 Series.

A few specific details: The CD units use advanced Delta-Sigma D/A converters (18-bit resolution in the 506, 19-bit in the 508 and 563). The 501 preamplifier has six analogue inputs, each with user-adjustable gain; twin outputs for bi-amplification purposes; a 99-step electronic volume control; an optional MM/MC phono input modules. The 504 is developed from the 604 FM tuner and has 30 presets with user-programmable display labels, scan and seek tuning with centre-tune and signal strength displays, and automatic



Three of the new Meridian units: top to bottom, 501, 504 and 506

stereo blend. The 508 'Super' CD player uses a new Meridian dual-differential implementation of the Delta-Sigma D/A converter, and has a precision re-clocked digital output in addition to its primary balanced analogue outputs which are via XLR connectors. The 562 Digital System Control Unit has up to 8 analogue inputs, optional MM/MC boards, two analogue tape outputs, two digital outputs, 12 overall sources, precision A/D and D/A converters, an RS232 interface and a choice of 64 display 'labels'. The 562V has two optical digital inputs and one optical output, six CVBS and two

S(Y/C) video inputs, separate CVBS and 2S VCR monitor outputs. The MSR handset has provision for 12 source components which can be user-mapped and labelled on the 500 Series components' displays. Partnering all this is a new DSP5000 digital loudspeaker, described as a 2½-way reflex system with on-board digital signal processing, crossovers and power amplifiers. Further details on all these new products are available from Meridian Audio Limited, Huntingdon PE18 7EJ. Tel: 0480 52144.

Obituary

Edward Fowler

Edward "Chick" Fowler's death at the age of 91 breaks one of the last links in the chain which bound Edison, Berliner and Gaisberg through to Blumlein and those engineers responsible for the development of today's digital techniques.

He was employed in 1924 by The Gramophone Co. at Hayes as a toolmaker, transferring to the recording department for the manufacture and development of acoustic recording equipment, subsequently becoming involved in the earliest days of electrical process recording. During the 1920s and 1930s he travelled extensively through Europe, both with Fred Gaisberg and with local managers, but usually working on his own with artists such as Schnabel, Cortot and Kreisler, to whom he became both friend and collaborator.

In 1943 he was appointed General Manager of the affiliated Turkish Gramophone Co. where his organizing skills and achievements in setting-up and developing new processes were much admired. He returned to England in 1946 as part of the management team at the Abbey Road Studios and became a key player in the post-war development of electrical recording. During the 1950s he was responsible for the technical aspects of some of EMI's most prestigious recordings in Paris, Vienna, Milan and London, and in 1955 was appointed Manager of the Abbey Road Studios where he remained until his retirement in 1967.

This was an extraordinary period of development in the recording industry, with high-volume sales both in classical and popular repertoire which, together with unprecedented publicity, placed new demands on all recording engineers. Nonetheless, Fowler was never distracted from the pursuit of engineering excellence, which he always combined

with sensitivity to the artists and an understanding of the need for the highest musical standards.

It was this sensitivity which endeared him to many of the world's great artists, including Arthur Schnabel, whose performances of the Beethoven Piano Sonatas, recorded in London by Fowler during 1932 and 1933, are still held today as an example of quality piano recording. These recordings, in company with a number of others, are a constituent part of today's CD catalogue and will long stand as a living testament to one of Britain's most distinguished recording pioneers.

Edward Fowler. Born 5th January, 1902; died 7th July, 1993.



Edward Fowler, standing, with the conductor Lawrence Collingwood, left, and Arthur Schnabel
Photo HMV