



Meridian 507 CD player £1,195

Meridian has a highly impressive and well-earned reputation in the world of optical disc. In 1984 it produced the first 'audiophile'-quality CD player, and is still at the forefront of audio developments, thanks to the Meridian Lossless Packing technology that sits at the very heart of DVD-Audio. The company has not forgotten its two-channel roots, though, and is very keen to have a strong presence in the sub-£2,000 CD player market.

Meridian rather cheekily claims this CD player is 'entry-level'. Compared to the 588 CD player (£2,100) and 800 DVD/CD player (£10,000 plus) we suppose it is, but that doesn't disguise the fact that Meridian CD players enter the market at the point where the most manufacturers position their flagship models.

Initial impressions of the 507 are very good, though, and externally this player looks no different from the more expensive 588, or the 506.24 it replaces. It's solid and weighty to the touch, and is decked out in Meridian's long-serving industrial styling. However, there is one major change: rather than the CD drawer coming out as one brick-like unit the way Meridian CD players always used to, the front panel now folds down smoothly to make way for a far more conventional-looking tray affair.

But there's still a slab element to the player, as the 507 comes supplied with the company's comprehensive Meridian System Remote Control. So it's

KEY FEATURES

- 24-bit/192kHz DACs
- Double buffering reduces jitter
- Four separate power supplies
- Audiophile standard output amplifier
- Optical and coaxial digital outputs
- CD-R, W compatible
- RS232 port for custom control/automation

something of a blessing for those without a complete Meridian system that the fascia controls are impressively firm to the touch. That said, the 507 does seem to take longer to respond to transport demands than many CD players; perhaps because Meridian uses its own propriety software.

On the well-spaced back panel, the 507 provides a single set of analogue outputs, both optical and coaxial digital sockets, two Meridian Communications connections – for linking up to other Meridian kit – plus a RS232 socket for custom integration and automation.

Inside are 24-bit/192kHz DACs, while internal trickery includes Meridian's 'double buffering' technique for reducing jitter levels – this technology has trickled down from the 508 – and the re-clocking of the signal from either of the digital outputs. The 507 makes extensive use of surface mount

technology and has four separate power supplies. It may be 'entry-level', but Meridian has obviously put a lot of time and effort into designing this player.

This attention to detail pays dividends, and the 507 is a very impressive player. It majors in authority and plays CDs with a real sense of power and passion that works well whatever roads your musical taste takes you down. Play the Flaming Lips' sublime *Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots*, and the Meridian does a wonderful job of getting the best out of this eclectic bag of tricks. It renders the acoustic guitar that provides the beating heart for many of the tracks in a natural and believable manner – it really does hold everything together. But the 507 also has enough guts to get heavy when called upon. It presents a remarkably coherent sonic picture, and even manages to translate the occasionally bizarre (non-instrumental) noises into a thoroughly musical whole.

Joni Mitchell's vocals on *Blue* are rendered crystal clear and wonderfully natural, with excellent small-scale

dynamics and an amazing openness – really letting the songs shine through. There's a real presence to the voice as it sits solidly centre stage, often with just an acoustic guitar for accompaniment. But the Meridian doesn't over-egg the stereo imaging pudding, and things remain impressively realistic and lifelike throughout.

Large-scale dynamics are also well catered for: the grandstanding finish to Beethoven's *9th Symphony* is delivered in an electrifying manner, and the Meridian plays the score with impressive degrees of headroom and atmosphere. It's also a very rhythmic piece of kit, and for a CD player at this price has impressive timing. Set it running with DJ Shadow's powerful new offering, *The Private Press*, and the mixed-up rhythms are delivered in a marvellously coherent and solid manner.

The 507 also goes one better than its predecessor by sounding just that little bit more alive and exciting. It's in no way lightweight – the solid bass attests to that – it's just got that extra degree of sizzle and fire that the 506.24 lacked. This works well with rock and classical, but it also does wonders for folk and pretty much anything else you play on it.

Meridian has done a fine job with this 'entry-level' player. It has much of the refinement and subtlety of the firm's costlier equipment, but with a slightly more forthright presentation that serves it well with a wide range of music. An exciting candidate to place at the head of your system.

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www.meridian-audio.co.uk



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