

Meridian's 501/555 pre/power amps are versatile, elegant and easy to use, but do they sound as good as they look?



PRE/POWER AMPLIFIER

## Meridian 501/555

£1190.00

- ▲ **Elegant; very versatile; excellent remote.**
- ▼ **Not quite the sound quality one would wish for.**

SOUND ★★☆☆

VALUE ★★☆☆

Versatility was obviously a key design aim when Meridian set about producing its 5 series. Its new 501 preamplifier, or control unit, as Meridian prefers to call it, features a communications port enabling any combination of these components to be linked together and controlled from a Meridian System Remote.

The 501 accepts up to six audio inputs, each of which can be configured to your own individual needs. Input One on the review sample was for use with moving coil cartridges but, regardless of the variance of your source components, the Meridian will be able to cope.

Each input can be assigned a different name and identified via a four character alpha numeric display on the preamplifier front panel and each is fully adjustable for sensitivity.

The 555 power amplifier is solidly constructed around a

dual mono design and delivers 65 watts into eight ohms. Meridian has usefully provided two pairs of speaker outputs at the rear, making bi-wiring a set of speakers as simple as buying an extra set of cables.

The 501/555 is not a competitor for the best in its class. There are several rivals which could show it the way around a piece of music. It has adequate power and its overall control is not bad either, but there is a definite lack of expansiveness and projection to the musical performance.

At low levels it is quite sweet and relaxed, but give it a bit of work to do and it remains resolutely in its cage. The midband is restrained and though the low end is neat and tidy, its flow is stuttering. This can give it an over-processed feel, especially on the line inputs, which are disappointing next to the well balanced moving coil stage.

At around £1,200, this Meridian combination offers style, lots of versatility and real smoothness of operation. But it just fails to get the toes tapping when it comes to making music and this should be the prime requirement of all amplifiers.

**Chris Thomas**

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