

Best of the rest over £500

Meridian F80**£1690**

AT FIRST GLANCE, Meridian's £1495 F80 could be mistaken for a Ferrari-branded portable radio. But it's more than that – not just in terms of its features, but due to the ability on offer.

Of course, it needs to be special to justify that price, which initially seems steep until you hear the F80 with your favourite music.

Team it up with Meridian's £195 i80 universal iPod dock and you've got the full, and very sexy, package. It connects simply to the F80, giving immediate control of your iPod music library through the F80's remote or front-panel buttons. Track details are relayed via the F80's OLED display and the i80 also charges your iPod.

A purist's portable

Let's get one thing straight: this unit isn't a sonic replacement for decent separates kit of the same value. It is, however, a rather brilliant portable system that even the most purist audiophile can listen to for hours without distress.

With music as varied as Outkast's *The Love Below* and Dvorak's *New*

↑ FOR

Fabulous sound quality that has masses of detail, refinement and authority; clever control system; portability; build

↓ AGAINST

Price may put some people off; set-up rather complex for this type of product

→ VERDICT

It's heartening to see a specialist manufacturer try something different and succeed so impressively



World, the F80 impresses with bags of detail, strong dynamics and big bass – though if we're being picky, that low-end could be tauter. An 80-watt

“From OutKast to Dvorak, the F80 impresses with bags of bass and detail”

power output means there's enough volume to start a neighbour-annoying party, even in a pretty large room.

Radio quality is just as impressive. Whether you listen to DAB or FM, the signals are clear and refined – the results of a tuner section that's as good (if not better) than most standalone tuners

we've tested. Even AM is perfectly acceptable. DVD replay is the one area where the F80 is less than great. Outputs are limited to composite and S-Video, and the results won't worry any decent budget player. It's a shame HDMI isn't included on a system at this price.

But we're quibbling: the F80 is a very smart and beautifully designed system. The price looks high, but once played, you'll think it's worth it.

SPECIFICATION

Plays CD, DVD-A, MP3, SACD, CD-R, CD-RW, DAB, FM, MW, LW, RDS **Line level inputs** 3.5mm **Power** 80w **Inputs** Coaxial digital, optical digital, analogue **Internet radio** No **USB** No **Dimensions (HWD)** 19x42x23cm **Weight** 6.5kg

www.meridian-audio.com

01480 445 678