

PRESS RELEASE

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The Meridian Audio Group

A short history

Meridian was founded in July 1977, by Bob Stuart and Allen Boothroyd, to manufacture the high-quality audio products they had designed. These included an active loudspeaker, a preamplifier and a power amplifier.

Allen and Bob had worked together as consultants since the early 1970s; their early projects included the famous Lecson Audio product line, which is on permanent display in the New York Museum of Modern Art and for which they won their first British Design Council Award in 1974.

Over the next few years the Meridian product line grew steadily into the 100 Series, for which the Company received a second British Design Council Award in 1982.

Bob Stuart was involved in the very earliest stages of the development of Compact Disc through his technical connections with Philips in Holland. In 1983, Meridian launched the first CD player to be made in Britain. This product – the MCD – was acclaimed for its performance, winning awards for the best-sounding CD player in seven major countries including Japan and the USA.

In 1986 the first products of a new line called the 200 Series were launched. This series was to last until 1993 and, through continuing development, grew to include the whole range of domestic hi-fi from CD players, radio tuners, pre-amplifiers, power amplifiers, digital-to-analogue converters and a range of multi-room components. In addition, a series of active loudspeakers (speakers with on-board amplifiers) was developed and brought to market.

In 1988 Bob and Allen were presented with their third Design Council Award by the Duke of Edinburgh, becoming the first design team to win this award on three occasions.

During the 1980s the company continued to develop its skills in audio-related digital signal processing, and in 1989 introduced the world's first digitally-driven loudspeaker: the D600.

Meridian has continued to develop active and digital loudspeakers. In 1990, the world's first speaker using Digital Signal Processing – the DSP6000 – was launched. Meridian remains the leader in this high-tech field and the DSP6000, now much developed, remained in the catalogue until very recently.

In 1993 the 500 Series was launched. This represented a major step forward, and for the first time considerable capital expenditure on tooling was possible. The 500 Series was the major product line for the ten years through 2003.

In 1994 the company entered the emerging home theatre market with another first, the Meridian Digital Theatre. This concept was based on the company's range of digital loudspeakers and the 565 Surround Sound Decoder. The Digital Theatre and the 565 won more than ten awards in the first twelve months of production.

The company's flagship 800 Series was introduced in 1997. This was a major development, introducing a new concept for hi-fi products. The 800 Series was designed to address the problem of rapid format development and the constant need for product replacement. The 800 Series is card-based and modular, and was designed to enable upgrades to be made by changing cards, thus reducing the chance of the product becoming obsolete. The 800 Series represents Meridian's top of the line products, and although expensive, they are beautifully built and are star performers, having notched up many awards.

In 2003 the G Series was launched. This was the seventh series of products in the history of the company, and of course G is the seventh letter in the alphabet. The objective with this line was to increase the number of combination products, this being made possible by the larger enclosure size.

In June 2005, Meridian signed a licensing agreement with Genesis Microchip Inc to exclusively manufacture and distribute the Faroudja® brand of video projectors and processors internationally, and develop new products in this field jointly with Genesis.

During 2006 the company released two new full-specification High Definition (1080p) video projectors and an accompanying multifunction video processor, and launched a new line of in/on-wall loudspeakers (the 300 Series) and components (the C Series), aimed at the lucrative custom installation market, all of which have already received favourable reports in the press.

2007 marked the 30th anniversary of Meridian Audio: the company was founded on 7/7/77. The company started the year with the release of a stunning new product, the F80 – a complete, self-contained transportable entertainment system developed in co-operation with Ferrari S.p.A. The F80 has already been widely acclaimed in the British and international press.

Last year Meridian also announced that the Muse SA group, a Luxembourg-based consortium of investors headed by noted film producer Arnon Milchan, had purchased a minority holding in the company. Since 1992 Meridian has been an independent, family-owned business; funding has been provided by the Taylor family, originally co-founders of the Boston Globe. Muse SA has taken a shareholding in Meridian and holds four seats on the Meridian Board of Directors; the Taylor family continues to retain a significant shareholding and three seats on the board. The investment allows Meridian Audio to expand its already-successful product operations into new areas, strengthen its development as a world-class marketing organization and further leverage the brand as one of the consumer electronics industry's most highly-regarded high-end luxury manufacturers.

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