

HIGHER FIDELITY



BOOTHROYD STUART
MERIDIAN

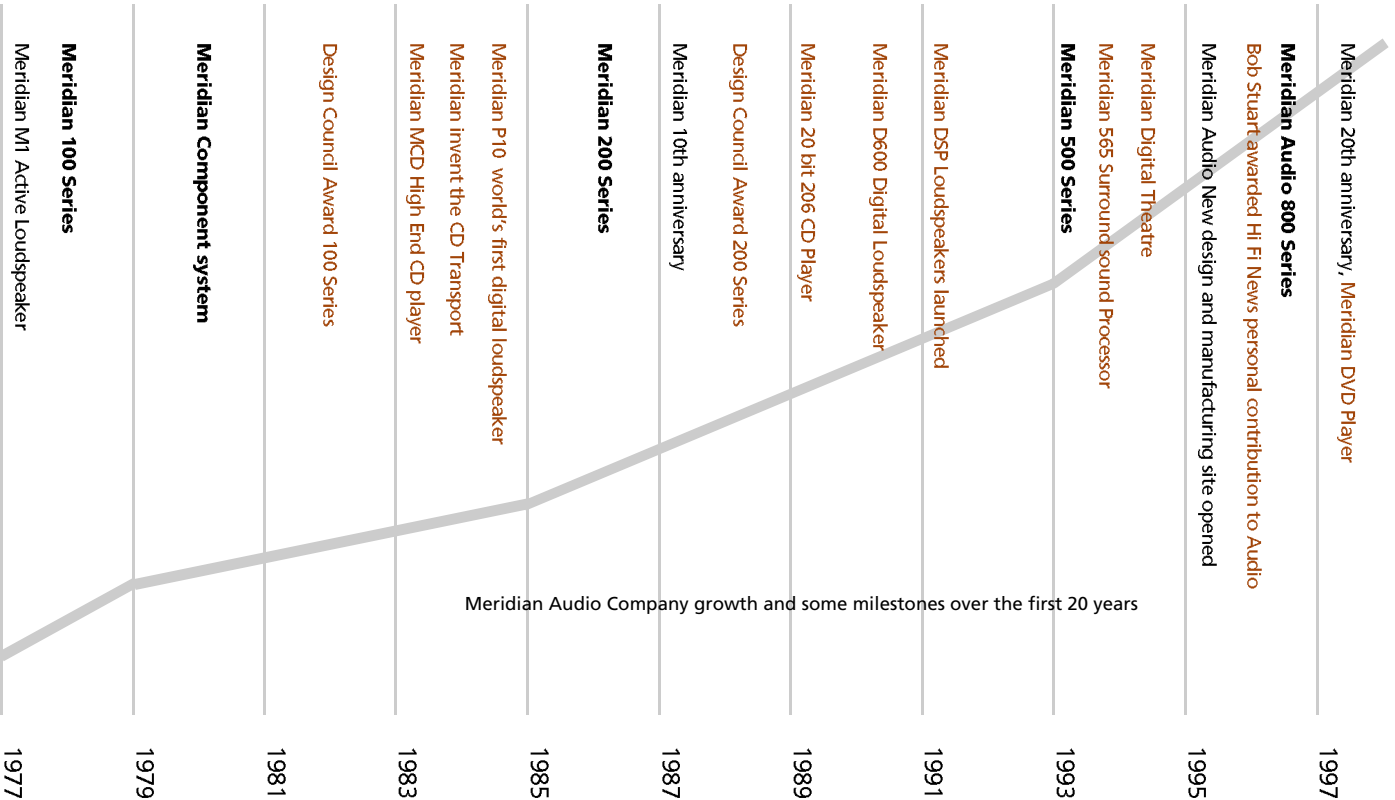


Bob Stuart studied Psychoacoustics, Electronics Engineering and Management at Imperial College, London. A passion for music soon caused him to specialise in audio design.

Allen Boothroyd trained originally as a mechanical engineer, going on to study industrial design at the Royal College of Art. In addition to his role at Meridian he also runs a Design Group in Cambridge.

Boothroyd and Stuart met in Cambridge, discovered shared interests and philosophies in audio equipment design and founded Meridian in 1977.

Since then, their designs for Meridian Audio have gained much critical and industrial acclaim winning the coveted Design Council Award for Outstanding British Product an unprecedented three times in addition to the EISA European Product of the year award twice and many other international accolades.



Meridian 20th anniversary, Meridian DVD Player

Meridian Audio 800 Series

Bob Stuart awarded Hi Fi News personal contribution to Audio

Meridian Audio New design and manufacturing site opened

1995

Meridian Digital Theatre

Meridian 565 Surround sound Processor

1993

Meridian 500 Series

Meridian DSP Loudspeakers launched

1991

Meridian D600 Digital Loudspeaker

1989

Meridian 20 bit 206 CD Player

Design Council Award 200 Series

1987

Meridian 10th anniversary

Meridian 200 Series

1985

Meridian P10 world's first digital loudspeaker

Meridian invent the CD Transport

1983

Meridian MCD High End CD player

Design Council Award 100 Series

1981

Meridian Component system

1979

Meridian 100 Series

Meridian M1 Active Loudspeaker

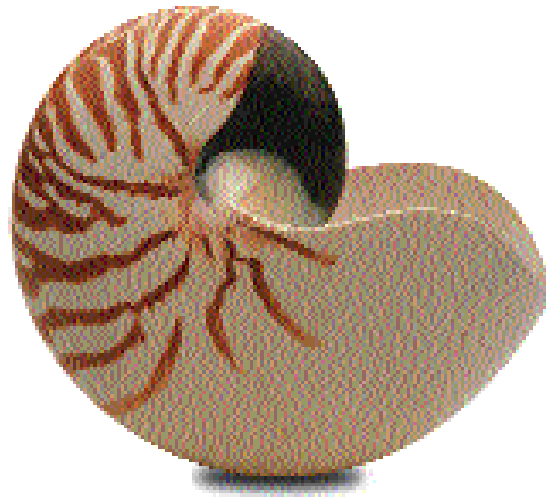
1977

DIGITAL: MUSIC TO THE EARS?

Digital technology is now widely regarded by industry experts as the best means to music in the home.

In simple terms, it's because music recorded by computer, as on CDs, can be played back with no change from the original, even over long distances, like Morse code over a telegraph line.

Why is this important? Traditional analogue systems behave much like the childhood game in which each player repeats a whispered message into the next player's ear, and so on down a chain.



Each analogue link – turntable, amplifier, cable, speaker – whispers an analogy of what it hears to the next, but something is always lost or added. What emerges at the end, while charming, may not resemble the original message.

A pure whisper.

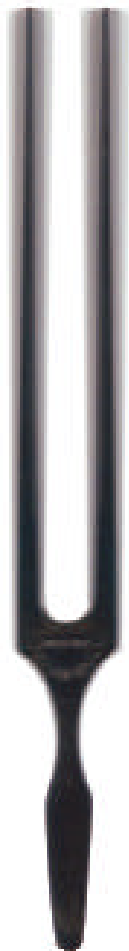
By contrast, digital audio first encodes music as digits – ones and zeros – in patterns describing specific sound waves. This is the CD language of computers, which are very unlikely to mistake a one for a zero.

No matter how long the chain, at its end digital equipment listens only for patterns of those two digits, which it reassembles into music, ignoring all other whispered information as noise. Hence the crystal clarity of good digital sound: no detail lost, no noise added.

This technology should utterly reshape the nature of our best music systems, replacing a long chain of traditional equipment. Yet fundamental change has been glacially slow at the extreme high end of audio.

Why?

A MESSAGE
TO AUDIOPHILES
(AND THOSE WHO
LOVE THEM):



From day one, digital technology has troubled the high-end audio community. Early CDs clearly were primitive, yet trumpeted by their marketers as perfect. Purists reacted by closing ranks, refining proven analogue methods, condemning digital as musical heresy and often ignoring its real and rapid progress.

In extreme backlash, certain nostalgic purists even reverted to high-priced resurrections of vinyl-and-vacuum-tube designs a half-century old.

But serious audiophiles who now accept CDs as the preferred source are forced to choose among digital equipment conceived largely by engineers mired in an analogue tradition. The tendency is to treat digital as a virus to be contained, by converting it to analogue as early in the chain as possible.

This is quaint, but amounts to refining a 1950s tubed computer to run a modern virtual-reality program: certain to deliver the worst of both worlds.

Meridian suggests the time has come to face the music and recognise digital for what it is: a fast-evolving vindication of the highest audio doctrine.

Rich man's tone controls.

We're speaking of course of the so-called pure signal path. Paramount among audiophile truths is that music's electronic journey to our ears should be as short and unadorned as possible; this preserves the fragile nuances of live performance. This is why, for example, audiophiles have long rejected analogue tone controls, correctly

seeing them as electrical mazes where musical subtleties are lost or rearranged.

Yet the typical purist hi-fi is hardly pure. Rather, it's a confusion of components with varying reactive properties, tangled together through a rat's nest of electrically whimsical cables. Each piece lengthens the path and damages delicate harmonic, phase and other relationships that contour music. The amusing irony is, these boxes and cables are generally assembled for tone control: an elaborate whispered child's game, each piece chosen for how its voice changes the message.

Why not simply replace the whole corrupt chain with one transparent digital link, particularly if the music source is digital already? The answer is, audiophiles have grown fond of certain analogue distortions and the rituals to invoke them. But there is a better way.

The Meridian way.

HOT ROD OR HI-FI?

Did you buy your car engine from one manufacturer, your suspension and transmission from others?

Yet this is how high-priced hi-fi's are typically assembled. Rarely is the system's total performance envelope known, or even knowable. Components are chosen piecemeal, often on the weight of irrelevant or anecdotal information, outside the context of how they will sound in the home system.

This is why audiophiles and high-end dealers can spend more time and money playing 'musical cables' than playing music. They struggle to force a chain of electrically independent designs to communicate and sing together in a seamless, systemic voice: this elusive Grail is known as 'musicality'.

At best, these hi-fi's are hot-rods: they do one thing well. This is why expensive

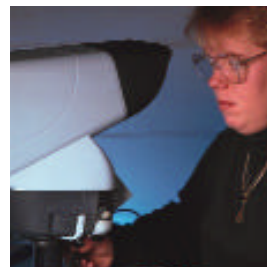
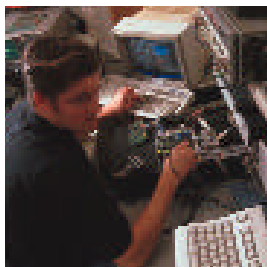
systems often sound good playing only one kind of music.

Meridian believes a system should be judged on how well the entire package performs in the real world; this is why all our components clearly speak the same electric and acoustic language. They behave perfectly well with other manufacturers' gear, yet positively sing when in chorus with equipment of their own pedigree.

And lest you believe no manufacturer can excel in more than one field of componentry, consult *Stereophile* magazine's list of recommended components: Meridian is consistently represented in more major categories than any other single manufacturer. Clearly, our years of focusing on the total system have schooled us well in all major aspects of design.

In 1996 the new Meridian design and manufacturing facility was opened in Huntingdon by the Prime Minister The Rt.Hon.John Major MP.

All Meridian products are designed and made at this advanced factory where many dealers and distributors attend regular training courses.



A Meridian Starter System:

506 CD PLAYER, 504 TUNER, 551 AMPLIFIER AND A500 LOUDSPEAKERS





BUILDING A SIMPLE MERIDIAN SYSTEM.

Meridian's hallmark pursuit of systemic audio far predates the digital revolution. Hence our simplest hi-fi's today reflect our deep analogue tradition, refined over decades of experience.

The result: musically seamless systems, informed by ingenious circuitry and understated sophistication – testament to the integrity of a Meridian playback chain. These are classic engineering values we hold dear despite flashy marketing trends elsewhere.

By combining the exceptional 551 integrated amplifier with A500 speakers, for instance, we provide an outstanding conventional 'starter' music system representing excellent cost performance. The A500, our full-range traditional speaker, sounds superb and allows a logical staircase upgrade path, avoiding the costly 'component-of-the-month' trade-in syndrome later on.

For example, to a 551 you can add a 556 power amplifier; this allows bi-amping as the 551 powers the tweeters and controls the system while the new amp drives the bass. Or start with the separate 501 control unit and a 556, dedicating a second 556 later to bass. These steps can be taken without sacrificing previous purchases.

Graduate to a full surround system over time: add digital speakers (discussed herein) up front and keep your analogue equipment for the rear channels.

Other Voices, Other Rooms.

Or take advantage of the two-room software that comes nested in the 551 (and in most 500 Series equipment), using the A500s as a main or satellite system for your study or family room. With Meridian, you can enjoy your music source twice but pay for it only once.

This building-block design philosophy is very powerful, with upgrade ladders throughout our product line; see your Meridian dealer for full possibilities.