

MONO **MS** STEREO

REVIEWING THE WORLD'S FINEST AUDIO PRODUCTS

TUSCANY GOLD / TUSCANY RED

REVIEW BY MATEJ ISAK

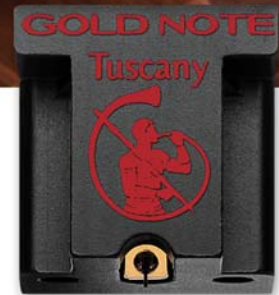


MAURIZIO ATERINI,
FOUNDER & CEO

Anyone who has met Maurizio Aterini shares the same opinion. He's first and foremost a music lover, but he's also a high-end audio entrepreneur and a highly experienced audio manufacturer with a long standing track record. The original 'Bluenote' was founded in 1985 and laid down the roots of Gold Note. Their analog journey began in 1996 with the Kymyas – a revolutionary treatment for restoring vinyl records. A year later, they brought their first

turntable to market – The Vox Deck 12 with two different proprietary ball bearings and unipivot tonearms. Fast forward to 1999, with the launch of The Boboli and Baldinotti MC cartridges, and its here where the story of Gold Note cartridges begins...

Gold Note is not just another new comer. I've had a chance to see their impressive portfolio, and the number of innovative and diverse products is more than impressive. Maurizio Aterini has implemented many out of the box approaches over the years. One of his triumphs that I've listened to extensively was the Demidoff Diamond Anniversary two box flagship integrated. This amplifier packs a grand amount of exotic takes and unique solutions that showcase very different and unique performances. Golden notes indeed.



DISCOVER
TUSCANY CARTRIDGES



The Tuscany cartridge series features an extra-thin micro ridge diamond tip developed with Adamant/Namiki, the world's most renowned diamond manufacturer. Their special multi-faceted cut guarantees the best deep

vinyl groove contact possible. These premium diamond tips are mechanically inserted and then blocked into a telescopic boron cantilever. This is held by a titanium pipe which results in an increased rigidity for the entire structure.

Each titanium pipe is finely machined from a single block of metal. Four spokes handle the cartridge's silver micro coil hilt by a Teflon spacer to achieve great rigidity. This allows a perfect alignment and builds precision for best tracking results.

The non-deformable harmonic steel cantilever suspension is blocked with a gold plated nut on the bottom side of the crossbar. The gold case is positioned behind the micro-coils. A Teflon spacer is used to avoid unwanted vibration and to further improve its solid groove tracking. Longer gold-plated pin connectors enable a wider contact with arm cinch, stopping energy dispersion and improving grounding for a surprisingly silent background that will show the best of every



single detail. The body's cube design offers gorgeous structural rigidity combined with very intuitive and precise VTA adjustment and an easy to see flat bottom line. Tuscany's 7050 alloy ultra-light body is injected with fluid polymers to provide a pronounced dampening control effect. The high-quality Italian finishes and exotic structure of the Tuscany Series were designed to satisfy the most demanding ears for a true lifetime pleasure of music listening. (*all Tuscany cartridges come with serial number indelibly printed in the engraved area at the top of the body.)

SECRETS OF THE RED AND GOLD



Tuscany Gold and Tuscany Red cartridges are the second generation of the best cartridge design Maurizio's ever made. Almost ten years ago, He started designing the very first Tuscany that at that time (the body) was made from a solid piece of true black ebony. Ebony is a special material that has always fascinated Maurizio since his first steps into the audio business. With the creation of his first flagship state of the art cartridge, this was his clear choice of material.

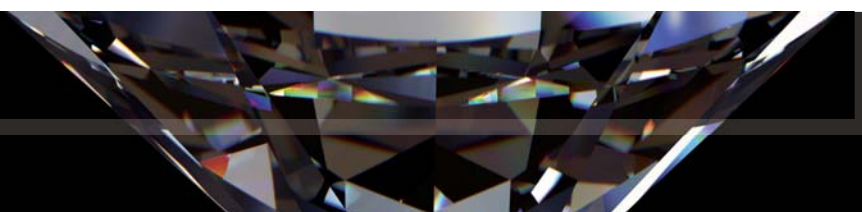
But that's not all. Maurizio designed, what could be considered one of the shortest cantilevers, made from a hardened series 7000 aluminum alloy. He chose diamond as a line contact made in Japan by Ogura, an amazing international diamond manufacture. The coils were very small yet truly sophisticated. The result was truly amazing, and even though the first generation Tuscany did not have a high gain (about 0.15mV) – it sounded very very good. It was open, crisp and detailed like the very best MC's, but with a bass extension and powerful gain few MC cartridges could ever claim to have.

The evolution continued when Gold Note started manufacturing their own records with a special pressing process. At that time, Maurizio had the opportunity to start working with the preeminent diamond company in the world. This was Adamant, their Japanese name is Namiki. They are known as the pinnacle of diamond cutting for hi-end record masters.

In the last three years, The Gold Note team has developed additional projects with Adamant/Namiki including a new diamond with a unique 'ultra small micro ridge'. This design guarantees the best & deepest contact with the 'hardest' part of the vinyl groove.

With such a great diamond under their brand's umbrella, and with over ten years of experience, Maurizio also completely redesigned the cantilever, the coils and their support, the crossbar and the body. This new body sported 7000 aluminum alloy that guaranteed a perfect machined body with tolerance stricter than 1/100mm. The current cantilever is made out of boron, which is much shorter and stiffer than before. This design brings needed lightness and rigidity for the ultimate tracking ability. The diamond is not only glued, but also crimped in order to give the best tolerance and an extra long life.

New coils are now smaller with more processing ability than with previous models and are wound around a single piece of titanium





dampened with Teflon support. The coil handler is telescopically inserted into the boron cantilever, which gives it even more rigidity. The ultimate result is a cartridge that has more gain, and is easier to handle via MC phono preamp (the Gold's 0.25mV and the Red's 0.4mV). Tuscany Red and Tuscany Gold represent a sophisticated series of cartridges that guarantees a unique quality of live performance sound.

THE INNOVATIVE AND INSPIRED VOICING FROM TUSCANY

I'm sure that you've already figured out that Maurizio Aterini is very serious about his cartridges. They come as result of his love for music and his dedication to bringing out something unique and musically potent. Both Tuscany Gold and Tuscany Red cartridges represent Gold Note's core commitment towards the creation of musically oriented micro machines.

Its never easy to find a safe and proper balance between stringent and mellow orientation. Some Japanese cartridges, by default, (as well as electronics) embrace the warm side of the sound. Inversely, almost as a rule, western cartridge makers/manufacturers adopt a more open, transparent and often brittle signature. Do both words need to collide?

What really surprised me with both of the Tuscany Gold and Tuscany Red cartridges was the absence of a typical sound imprint. Truly, I did expect the stronger signature of some sort, yet Maurizio didn't follow any of the opposing trends, but clearly aimed for balance and musicality.

Each and every turntable setup is prone to many different things,



especially with an analog setup, the tinniest thing matters and its always hard to talk about a general universal approach. Still, its much easier to implement a certain cartridge into an analog setup that is not ardently specific with its sonic signature. I've been lucky to find a really great match via Audio Union Helix 1 Turntable by Mark Döhmann and The Schröder CB Tonearm. This combo has shown to be a beguiling match. Tuscany Gold's given output of 0.25mV and suggested load of >400 ohm is a bit harder to match, compared to Tuscany Red 0.4mV output and suggested load: >400 ohm. Luckily one of the settings on the Thrax Audio orpheus phono preamplifier covered the peripheral loadings. This gave the proper plane to extract what Tuscany Gold and Tuscany Red are really capable of.

TRUE MUSICALITY

Its rare that two cartridges from the same manufacturer hit review at the same time. So it was great to hear two of Gold Note's top cartridges performing alongside each other with known material.





Since my visit to Gold Note in Tuscany, I've had enough time to perform my testing and comparisons in a proper manner. My trusty arsenal of other reference cartridges offered a great opportunity to conduct listening at proper levels and balance.

In order to keep my listening findings objective, I've gone through some fine setup work. To keep everything in focus my routine was: Commence listening with the Gold Note Tuscany Red. – Short pause... Unmounting, moving to Gold Note Tuscany Gold, and then repeat the process with same vinyl record and then adding a few additional tracks.

Nut job!? You bettcha. – But, that's not all. My next step was to introduce two additional cartridges with different characteristics into the process. This ensured the objectivity with my listening remarks.

Its a routine that's definitely time intensive – that's why my next investment will be additional Schröder CB Tonearm. Why? Audio Union Döhmman Helix 1 Turntable offers a great platform to host two completely identical tonearms. The Schröder CB Tonearm is dead simple to use (when you embrace all the fine adjustments) and my Thrax Audio orpheus phono comes with three different inputs.

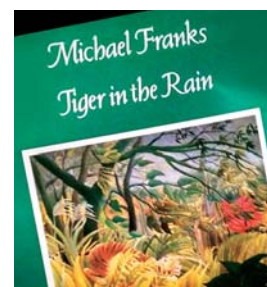
This means; same turntable, exactly the same tonearm base and tonearm cable going into the Orpheus phono preamplifier inputs where A/B/C are instantaneous. In this particular situation, A/B comparing was done simply via touch of the knob on the Thrax's front plate! This will ease up the repetition of mounting and give a proper level of controlled assumptions.

It's still mind boggling how some cartridges are being tested; – with different tonearms and even different phono cables. Drawing conclusions with non repeating circumstances can be only labeled under far fetched philosophizing.

MICHAEL FRANKS, SUPER DISC LP 'TIGER IN THE RAIN'



One of my desert island records and always at hand when time comes for serious testing/listening. This legendary Michael Franks album is both a musical and sound gem, especially the Super Disc half speed mastering version. With the set of guests including Ron Carter, Ben Riley, Bucky Pizzarelli, Kenny Barron, etc. this album is a treat for any music fan. The impact of Michael Franks unique escapism was never repeated, even throughout his rich repertoire. An eclectic mixture of different styles is enriched by the couplet verses and inviolable lyrics linger on and on. Interestingly, 'Tiger In The Rain' embraces many more complex compositions than quick listening might suggest – There's a lot to 'decipher' with songs being so multi layered...





TUSCANY RED

Michael Franks opening track 'Sanpaku' embarks on a Casteneda-like trip, where one meets his own merits. The light, pace, flow and tempo of the song demands a medium pick up machine that can convey all the subitio subtleness and plummeted core of the rhythm structure. Tuscany Red managed to peer ahead of curve, while beautifully painting the tones and maintaining the structure.



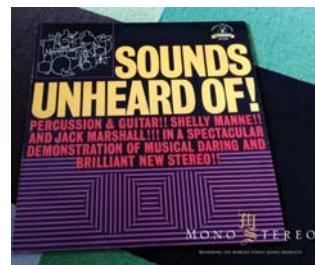
TUSCANY GOLD

With the memorable title track, Mike Mainieri's (a member of iconic jazz fusion group 'Steps Ahead') unforgettable vibraphone solo 'Tiger In The Rain' expands, Tuscany Gold really reveals its evenness across the complete spectrum. The fact that it provides a generous sonic portrayal, spreading outwards from a tight musical core, came as a surprise to me. I've heard this particular part hundreds of times, but Tuscany Gold's refreshing balance recalled the intrinsic propensities of cartridges costing almost double. My listening notes repeatedly highlighted this ultimate balancing act, which is always hard to achieve even with the top tiers.



SHELLY MANNE & JACK MARSHALL 'SOUNDS UNHEARD OF!'

'Sounds Unheard Of!' has to be one of the albums where the struggle between audiophile labels and a music worthy release is in continuing debate. Surprisingly, it's inspiring to listen to so many familiar tracks that sound so musically pleasing.



TUSCANY RED

Again Tuscany Red resolved with an intricate and open nature that never lurked above the threshold of brittleness. With 'Sounds Unheard Of!' things can go too quickly in the domain of wildly harsh. Instead of pushing harshness, Tuscany Red managed to deal with the gain through the proper amplitude rise. This is what sets high-end audio products above mediocre ones, quite an achievement at this price point.

TUSCANY GOLD

Adding to Tuscany Red's attributes, Tuscany Gold pushed the bar even further. With decays and delays, Tuscany Gold professed a true atmospheric language of virtual sounding reverberations. A touch further, dynamic transients emerged with subtle anchor points. These are fundamental to the truest rendition of acoustical space. Tuscany Gold resolved these with far more complexity than one would attach to such an affordable price sticker.



'THE ELECTRIC RECORDING COMPANY' – LEONID KOGAN

When music is put on a pedestal and placed in the realm of bespoke & finer things, everything is paced slow for a reason, you can call me both entrapped and enchanted.

'The Electric Recording Company, Leonid Kogan Plays the Brahms Violin Concerto 22' took the unique path of reviving rare and precious gems from the past in the form of a pure analog medium. The whole process included meticulously restored vintage tube machinery from the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's, along with a time consuming brass letterpress process by specialized printmakers surely ensures something very different and unique. So what are we dealing with? – It's the spirit, the tempo and the grace. This is where and why analog feels like an actual time machine. Recordings like ERC's 'Leonid Kogan Plays the Brahms' will play okay on a substantial system, but on a state of the art system the real thing happens.



TUSCANY RED

Timbre, tone and color. Mantra? Sure! Its more then just fetching garland when things are under the proper conditions. Tuscany Red let the traveling happen without moving, so to speak. This should translate to the delivery of the music's message without explicit forcefulness and taming. Tuscany Red kept its motive intimately close to the core, establishing a great rapport with the music.

TUSCANY GOLD

Enchantment continued to develop, moving to a higher plane and clearly imposing a higher contextual language. While evidently following Tuscany Red's attributes, Tuscany Gold emancipated itself even further by offering a grander flexibility of tone and tempo. Nailing the pitch with analog may always be the foder of heated discussion. This depends on so many things. Still, when transferred in the best manner, the music becomes more than a solitude endeavor of decrypted messages. Tuscany Gold moved away from the glacier energy transfer and resolved itself with the complete suite, encompassing it's musical DNA rather than acting ostentatious. The ability to confine overarching timbral and tone within one cartridge is quiet an achievement.

Tuscany Gold and Tuscany Red managed to materialize real space rather than a notion too often associated even with some of the upper echelon cartridges, and has layed down complex colors without taking the notion of vituperations. Most importantly, Tuscany Red and Tuscany Gold were designed with evenness and an innate sense of musical remuneration in mind right from the start.

REVIEW CONCLUSIONS

Both Gold Note's Tuscany Gold and Tuscany Red cartridges took me by surprise. Distinctive in their performance, yet still sharing the same, similar DNA. I'm a cartridge junkie. As high-end mechanical watches enthrall me, each and every new micro machine comes with a fascination of it's own. Yes, there are different principles, but even the most affordable cartridge (as in mechanical watches) can bring





quite an satisfying analog experience. More complex and refined, upper echelon cartridges bring something unique and insightful. One can surely grasp a musical potion via entry level cartridges. No doubt there. Yet, for analog connoisseurs, aficionados and enthusiasts that can afford to step above certain price points, somehow the universe differs and becomes a friendly destination.

An analog maven can discern and fathom such a gem very quickly and hold it dear. I'm sure many will start looking towards the Tuscany Red and Tuscany Gold for the obvious reasons. Tuscany Red and Tuscany Gold are matured, refined products that share enticing qualities of MC's. They both provide a great balance across the spectrum, in absence of an artificial bass bump and with an airy natural transparency. They're representing Gold Note's focus on the music. Gold Note Tuscany cartridges encourage record listening with grander emotional impact. While sharing a familiar sound DNA, they are different players and these nuances come with a price... I'm more than happy that I've taken a chance to explore these proud creations of Maurizio Aterini & the Gold Note team. From the ground up, they've been designed to offer a perpetual listening experience.

AFTER REVIEW ADDENDUM

After having The Gold Note Tuscany cartridges in prolonged evaluation and with the ability to compare it with additional upper echelon cartridges, I'm wholeheartedly giving it the 'MONO & STEREO 2018 EDITOR CHOICE AWARD' for it's sheer musicality, balanced presentation, and unprecedented realism.

PRICING

TUSCANY GOLD	\$ 8699. MSRP
TUSCANY RED	\$ 5599. MSRP



GOLD NOTE
il suono italiano



CONTACT

GOLD NOTE USA	888.279.6765
info@goldnoteusa.com	www.goldnoteusa.com





TECHNICAL – TUSCANY GOLD

TECHNICAL – TUSCANY RED



TYPOLOGY	MC Low Output Phono Cartridge
OUTPUT LEVEL	0.25mV
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	5-55000Hz
IMPEDANCE	4 ohm
SUGGESTED LOAD	>100 ohm
COMPLIANCE	10×10-6cm/dyne
CHANNEL SEPARATION	> 35dB
SUGGESTED TRACKING WEIGHT	1.8 to 2.1g
CANTILEVER	Boron
DIAMOND	Super Micro Ridge
DIAMOND SIZE	2.5×75 μm
COIL WIRE	Silver
MAGNET	Samarium-Cobalt
MOUNTING HOLE DIAMOND DISTANCE	6.5 mm
FINISHES	
BODY	Solid block machined hardened 7050 Duraluminium alloy
COLOR	Black body with gold logo and name

CONTACT

GOLD NOTE USA 888.279.6765
 info@goldnoteusa.com www.goldnoteusa.com

TYPOLOGY	MC Low Output Phono Cartridge
OUTPUT LEVEL	0.4mV
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	10-50000Hz
IMPEDANCE	20 ohm
SUGGESTED LOAD	> 200 ohm
COMPLIANCE	10×10-6cm/dyne
CHANNEL SEPARATION	> 30dB
SUGGESTED TRACKING WEIGHT	1.8 to 2.1g
CANTILEVER	Boron
DIAMOND	Micro Ridge
DIAMOND SIZE	2.5×75 μm
COIL WIRE	copper
MAGNET	Samarium-Cobalt
MOUNTING HOLE DIAMOND DISTANCE	6.5 mm
FINISHES	
BODY	Solid block machined hardened 7050 Duraluminium alloy
COLOR	Black body with red logo and name
OF NOTE	Tuscany Red has a 20ohm high internal impedance and the 0.4mV output level can easily be matched with any MC active phono preamp without step-up transformers

