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## MAGICO MAGIC

### IN REVIEW

DIGITAL AUDIO  
FROM AR, EAR,  
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ANALOG AUDIO  
FROM AUDIO ORIGAMI,  
GOLD NOTE, REGA

AUDIO AMPLIFICATION  
FROM BOULDER,  
DAN D'AGOSTINO

SPECIAL FEATURE  
THE SHAPE OF HEADPHONES  
TO COME

GOLD NOTE TUSCANY  
GOLD LOW-OUTPUT  
MOVING-COIL  
CARTRIDGE  
P.24



TEN

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## GOLD NOTE TUSCANY GOLD LOW-OUTPUT MOVING-COIL CARTRIDGE

Before reviewing Gold Note's Tuscany Gold—a highly sophisticated, low-output moving-coil cartridge (\$8030)—I had its designer, Maurizio Aterini, clarify for me that it is, in fact, made in Florence, Italy, and is *not* a

Japanese-made motor in a cartridge body machined in Italy. However, like many cartridge makers, Aterini does get his stylus/cantilever assemblies from Japan—in this case, an Adamant-Namiki MicroRidge stylus measuring

2.5 by 75µm in a boron cantilever.

Aterini won't like this part of the review. My skepticism about his cartridge was based on prejudice: His flagship turntable, the Bellagio Conquest, looks way too much like Clearaudio's

Statement for my comfort, and, for reasons that make little sense to me, has "the longest platter spindle ever." (I've heard a good argument for a *short* spindle: less wobble.) And this part won't please Clearaudio's Peter and Robert Suchy: If you're going to copy many of the design elements of a very expensive turntable, why *that* one?

Gold Note, in business since the early 1990s, has sophisticated manufacturing capabilities and makes a complete line of turntables, tonearms, and other audiophile-quality products. The Tuscany Gold is a bespoke, high-tech cartridge that measured extremely well and provided me with great listening experiences.

The Tuscany Gold weighs 11gm, outputs 0.25mV, has a claimed frequency response of 5Hz–55kHz, an internal impedance of 4 ohms, a compliance of  $10 \times 10^{-6}$ cm/dyne, and channel separation of greater than 35dB. In other words, while its construction includes a number of unique and carefully considered elements, the Tuscany Gold is an in-the-pocket, low-output MC.

The titanium pipe that holds the cantilever is machined to have four spokes, around which are hand-wound microcoils of silver wire, held in place by a Teflon spacer for perfect alignment and high rigidity. The steel suspension wire is held in place by a gold-plated nut in an arrangement that the inelegant translation in Gold Note's literature makes somewhat difficult to understand. The Tuscany Gold's tall, blocky, aluminum-alloy body is, per Gold Note, damped with "strategically" injected fluid polymers. The cantilever is tucked well back of the body's front edge, which makes setting up the Tuscany Gold and cleaning its stylus somewhat difficult.

With the tonearm parallel to the record surface, the Tuscany Gold's stylus rake angle (SRA) measured 91°—a good start. Raising the arm post about 5mm achieved the desired 92°. Maximum channel separation and equal crosstalk between the channels were achieved with the headshell slightly angled from parallel to the record surface—another indicator of high build quality, though I measured a channel separation of 32dB, not the claimed 35dB or more. The former is more typical of the measured results I've seen, compared to the overoptimistic ones often specified by cartridge makers; it's no cause for concern.

With everything else set, and based on my listening to the Tuscany Gold, I ended up using a vertical tracking force (VTF) of 1.9gm. (Gold Note recommends a range of 1.8–2.1gm.) I ran the cartridge into both the Audio Research

### The Tuscany Gold had a fine, beautifully balanced sound.



Reference Phono 3 and the Dan D'Agostino Momentum Phonostage phono preamp.

If you associate Italy with romance, you'll be surprised when you hear the Tuscany Gold. It didn't sound at all on the warm, romantic side—nor, for that matter, on the lean, analytical side. Instead, it was firmly in the zone of tonal neutrality—just where I like cartridges to be—yet had a subtle, speedy richness that gave body and grippy stiction to the well-focused aural images it produced. Its bottom end was fully and firmly extended, and superbly controlled. Its midrange was on the correct side of generous, and notably transparent.

Imaging and soundstaging are what you hope for from an \$8030 cartridge. Combine the Tuscany Gold's wide, deep stages and solid, three-dimensional images with its dynamics, which were equal to those of other great cartridges at or near this price, and you have a Class A cartridge easily able to favorably compete with the others in this class. The Gold Note was a good tracker, too, gliding silently through the grooves.

The Tuscany Gold split the difference in bottom-end solidity and weight between Ortofon's Anna (\$8924) and A95 (\$6499)—a good place to be. It did the same in terms of detail retrieval and tonal color. It

had almost the exuberance of the Transfiguration Proteus (\$5599), with somewhat greater refinement on top, and the transparency of the Lyra Atlas, though without that cartridge's slam, or the silky refinement of Lyra's Etna SL (\$9995).

Overall, Gold Note's Tuscany Gold

had a fine, beautifully balanced sound free of gross colorations, and it's well designed and built. Though priced near the top of the heap, it's easily good enough to compete with all of the costly, high-performance cartridges just named. I thoroughly enjoyed the several months I spent listening to it. ■

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