



**Goldenote Tuscany Moving Coil Cartridge** \$5800.00

**Distributor**

Koetsu USA  
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Features:

MC Low output cartridge: 0,15mV.  
FREQUENCY RESPONSE: 15-50.000Hz  
IMPEDENCE: 35ohm.  
COMPLIANCE: 15CUs.  
CHANNEL SEPARATION: over 35db  
WEIGHT: 10g.  
SUGGESTED TRACKING WEIGHT: 1,4g +/- 0,3g  
CANTILEVER: 2 pieces conical special super lighted  
Magnesium alloy  
DIAMOND: Super Micro Elliptical Shape®.  
BODY: Precisely machined Natural Amorphous fiber,  
Ertalon® & Sustarin®

What is it about being under the Tuscan sun? I love all things Italian! Food, Lamborghini's and Ferraris, Colnago and Campagnolo, the Giro de Italia, Gina Lollobrigida and Chianti, without the liver and Fava beans thank you very much Hannibal!

Goldenote may not be a familiar name to most of you as they are somewhat new to most US audiophiles. The readers of Dagogo though will now be ahead of the power curve as with this introduction. The company originally went under the name of Bluenote but ran afoul of the famous Blue Note label here in the US so they have had to change the name for US distribution.

*"Our Company was formed in 1992 started producing innovative accessories to be used in conjunction with its own and other products.  
This first line of accessories became so popular that more than 10 years after introduction, many, like the Midas tube dampers still remain available today.*

*By 1994, after several third party audio manufacturing experiences and a solid commercial infrastructure for Italy and the US in place, the Company began committing resources to its own vertically integrated line of affordable audio products with true audiophile performance. By 1997, the launch of the Industrie Audio Vox (aka) I.A.V. brand name, offering included turntables, tone arms, CD players, amplifiers and speakers, all of which incorporated "the goals of price ratio to quality and an attractive Italian look". In late 2000, and after 3 years of continuous research and experience garnered from the budget line, the Company followed up with a higher-priced, more ambitious line dubbed Villa that, by 2002, had opened the doors for expanded international commerce in Europe, the US, South America, the Far East and several Pacific Rim countries.*

*Today, the Company is partnered with local vendors for its own custom parts, professional assembly and packaging and remains flexible to respond to fluctuating domestic and foreign requests. This includes facilities for very quick prototyping and special product manufacture on demand.*

*Company's main officers include a team of highly professional people, engineers and technicians that after large experiences with the electronic industry have been able to design devices such as the super acclaimed "Zero-Clock™" device, a special digital output filter and the "Electro-Power™" an innovative system to electronically control the speed fluctuations of the digital mechanics applied in all our digital sources.*

*Recently the new proprietary design Dual-Speed™ that enable the CD Player unit automatically adjusts the mechanic speed and reduces the voltage coming to the motor, set new standards in the digital audio field.*

*Today's the Company manufactures some of the finest audio and video products the market offers and proudly introduced innovations we believe they could affect our specialized field for many years in the future."*

Goldenote is now a part of Koetsu USA and recently I had the honor of auditioning the Goldenote Tuscany MC Phono cartridge. The Tuscany is the top cartridge in the Goldenote family. The body is made from a solid piece of black ebony that has been injected with a semi fluid mixture of Ertalon® & Sustarin®. By following this process Goldenote has been able to eliminate most of the unwanted external vibrations from reaching the stylus. This also gives the body a look and feel akin to a block of carbon. The picture shows an earlier model. Current models are actually black. The cartridge is very lightweight especially if you have become used to handling cartridges like the stone bodied Koetsu.

The cantilever of the Tuscany is made of two telescopic pieces that are conically shaped in order to achieve maximum lightness according to the manufacturer. It is then coupled elastically to the body with additional Sustarin in order to increase the dampening factor at its maximum level. This particular design is claimed to offer state of the art tracking ability. It is coupled to a Super Micro Elliptical Shape® diamond stylus. Internally the coils are wound with Oxygen Free Copper "air" coils and are singularly hand wired and matched. The resulting generator is extremely low in output at .15mv. Then there is the 35 db channel separation. Is that the best out there? No but most agree that this level represents a solid achievement. The frequency range of 15 Hz to 50 kHz is also fairly impressive, more for the lower 15 Hz flooring than the 50 kHz top end. I was really looking forward to hearing how this sounded compared to the two other reference cartridges I had on hand, both of which were Koetsus.

Initial setup was fairly easy and it was made all the more so with the flip down stylus guard. I know that this is "old fashioned" but it still makes sense when handling cartridges that are the cost of a nice used car. Best to do this

job when one is not the least bit impaired with traces of fine tequila in your system!

The case is nice and blocky with straight sides that make it easy to handle. It also makes it easy to sight in the offset and azimuth, at least for initial settings. The suggested tracking force is 1.4 grams plus or minus .3. I must say that the Tuscany tracked best at 1.5 in all three tonearms I tried it in. In the DaVinci I found it helpful to recheck the VTF after setting VTA. If the VTA is out everything will sound a bit compressed. The top end sparkle will retreat and the overall color will dim.

One thing is for certain. The more careful you are with the initial setup the more the cartridge is going to show you the love. Small deviations produced noticeable sound variations. In a way this was a mixed blessing as it made it fairly easy to really dial it in.

The next critical consideration at this output level is phono stage gain and loading. At an output of only .15mv you will need a phono stage with variable or high gain to say the least. Of course if you are going to spend this kind of coin for a cartridge a proper phono stage should not be an afterthought. Oddly enough (he says totally facetiously) Goldenote's own Pamphili phono stage with a gain of 70db is the perfect mate. The Manley Steelhead is also another good choice as it is infinitely variable on the fly, has up to 65db of gain and makes it pretty easy to adjust to the best setting for the Tuscany. The true message here is careful matching with the right phono preamp will get you huge returns on the back side. One other notable phono stage that seems to work with just about everything I throw at it is the Blue Circle Fon Lo Thingee. It is butt ugly, embarrassingly cheap and wickedly effective with 70 db gain and variable loading for around \$1000.00. Pay close attention to your choice of phono stage and you are going to have a wonderful ride through the Italian countryside.

### Sound.....

Well you have all the setup out of the way. You have matched it to a reasonably good phono stage and you want to have an idea of what to expect?

Describing sound is probably one of the hardest things in the world to do. The more I do it the more difficult it becomes. Ironic no?

Anyway this particular cartridge was a real surprise to me. I had heard it at CES briefly and was impressed with it. Hearing it in my own system, without all the background noise and distraction was a whole different thing. I was actually taken off guard by how much better it sounded than I had remembered. I would not call this cartridge lush but it is warm. Warm in the way sunshine feels on your face when you're laying in the grass on your back staring at the sky on a cool spring day. At the same time it is fast and accurate without being in your face. If I had to draw a comparison to other noted brands of cartridges with the Lyra or Air Tight PC1 being at one end of the scale and the Koetsu Urushi at the other end the Goldenote Tuscany falls

somewhere right in the middle. Yep that is it. Middle of the road! And that is not a bad thing at all as it gives you the analytical speed and accuracy of the PC-1 or Titan and the warmth and lushness of the Koetsu. Could it be that someone has figured out the ultimate in cartridge detente? Of course there is some dependency on the phono stage. With the Pamphili the Tuscany leans a bit towards the more strident and analytical side with a bit of coolness. With the Artemis labs PH-1 it comes more to the Koetsu end of things with a bit more warmth but losing some of the finite detail. Oddly enough with the Blue Circle I found things to get a bit more robust and holographic. Go figure huh?

Regardless of the tonal nature influenced by various phono stages the overall sonic experience was never unpleasant, just different.

When listening to music I never seemed to feel the sound was middle of the road or compromised in any way. It is quite the opposite actually. What this interesting chameleonic effect did bring was realism to the source music. As an example of what I mean I have never been a fan of brushes used in percussion. I have found that for the most part they tend to emulate pink or white noise. Either color is fine I am not picky, just scratching noise! This makes brushes and my unwillingness to listen to them as the ultimate litmus test and what I will first go to when reviewing items. With this cartridge I was able to hear the actual hairs of the brushes as they dragged across the skin of the drum head. When hitting a cymbal I could hear them as they slid off the leading edge. It was and still is a freaky sort of effect but one that speaks to the ability of the Tuscany to be very analytical without being shrill, cold or lacking in emotion! Whew! If I could only get every cartridge to just add that to their repertoire.

Another rather enjoyable aspect of the Tuscany is the way it adds size and scale in appropriate amounts. I have a good deal of music with piano, in varying formats from blues to jazz to concert recital solo piano. Most cartridges do a very respectable job of creating a sense of placement of the artist at the keyboard, with the slight delay and space between the keyboard and the bout where the music actually emerges. The Tuscany on the other hand added a third dimension of space around the piano that actually allowed me to see and feel the GRAND piano and not merely a piano in a two dimensional space. This along with that middle of the road analytical bend made the Tuscany one of the finest cartridges I have ever heard with acoustic music, lighter jazz and piano music. This is where it shined! At the other end of the spectrum it does not really seem to like Megadeath or other head banging metal music. Then again it is not my favorite form either. Aside from that level of music everything else I threw at the Tuscany it handled without any fuss. Female voices definitely are treated well by the Tuscany. Eva Cassidy's "Over the Rainbow" was as emotionally satisfying and gut wrenching as I have ever heard it delivered. The Tuscany really adds a layer of air around the notes so they just hang there in space, free floating out from the source in a natural way rather than being punched forcibly out of a box. I would say it was an organic exit out of the instrument or vocal chords with the right sense of weight and speed as opposed to being the product of so many electrical components working in harmony.

The Tuscany does bass also and it does it rather well. There is a punch and weight to it that is appropriate without being overbearing. At first I thought it a bit lean but the more it broke in the better it became. It will not deliver the kind of bass that a Shelter will give you but in keeping with the overall nature of the cartridge it never seems unnatural. It simply delivers what is on the source. Being a musician allows you to be able to make direct comparisons to live instrument sounds. The Tuscany does an uncanny job a delivering truly natural level of sound including the harmonics and shimmer that come with certain instruments. Speaking of harmonics there is a technique on the guitar that you can achieve by using the meat of your thumb along with the sharp edge of a pick to create a harmonic overtone to a note, almost a chiming sound. Billy Gibbons of ZZ Top is the master of the technique. I have spent years getting that sound and technique down. I am intimately familiar with how it sounds straight off a guitar. The Tuscany reproduced it exactly when I was listening to ZZ Tops "Give Me All Your Lovin". That is the kind of thing that makes you smile in a big way. Bellissimo!

All of this made the Tuscany one of the more enjoyable cartridges, aside from my beloved Koetsus, that I have listened to in some time. I have played around with many different cartridges over the years before settling in on the Koetsu as my reference. This Tuscany has brought me to the point of thinking perhaps there is some more room in my system for another cartridge. Now if I can just convince Paula that I really need another cartridge for objective comparison.....Ciò è appena realmente una cartuccia eccezionale. La amo!