

# Gold Note Valore 425 Plus turntable

by Alan Sircom



**T**here have been several Gold Note turntables through the pages of *Hi-Fi+* recently. This is the least expensive we've yet tested. A big part of the reason we've been banging on about Gold Note turntables is they get a lot right, especially when it comes to those all-important rubrics of value-for-money and ease-of-use.

Valore is Italian for 'value' and 'worth' (as in both a financial and a moral sense) and the 425 Plus is the uppermost of the two models in the Valore range, the Valore 425 Lite stripping back the design still further and shaving a few hundred off the 425 Plus' already none-too-spendy sub-£1,200 price tag. The price of the Valore 425 Plus depends on finish, with black MDF and Italian walnut plinths, as well as the transparent acrylic one we received for test. All three are 30mm thick.

The choice of plinth colour also dictates the colour of the three feet and the 23mm thick platter itself: transparent lands you a clear acrylic platter and brushed aluminium feet, while the other finishes come with a matt black acrylic platter and all have a felt slipmat. While we didn't have all three models in test at the same time, we are assured the sonic differences between the three designs are negligible.

Those feet give some indication of the elegance and simplicity of the design. They are three simple corners made of aluminium (and not unlike the corner reinforcements you might find on an old fibreboard suitcase). They offer no adjustment and the rear foot is identical to the front two, but turned through 45° so it faces front. More complex feet would make the turntable easier to level, but would raise the price and leave more things to go wrong.

If corners are cut (pun intended) in non-essential elements of construction, that's because money is spent on the important parts. In particular, the bearing, motor, and tonearm. These are direct 'lifts' from Gold Note's more up-scale models. The bearing for example is the same 60mm long bearing and spindle ▶



▶ seen in Gold Note's top decks. A large longitudinal groove is located on its axis to allow the lubricating oil to run constantly. The longer spindle limits any pendulum effect and distributes its inertial energy along its entire axis, thereby significantly lowering lateral friction. This is somewhat harder to notice at first glance because the platter deliberately runs low to the plinth, standing just 3mm from the top of the chassis.

The motor is particularly interesting, in that it uses Pulse Width Modulation to control speed. This is basically using digital to power analogue, and is a function of some very esoteric turntable speed boxes. The external speed box controls the power voltage in three steps: 230V AC input, 230V DC sampling of that 230V AC input, then 230V DC-12V AC conversion. This external box also includes a convenient speed 33/45rpm adjustment and fine pitch control. The box itself is a little basic and isn't quite as elegant as the deck itself, but it gets the job done well. The clever little hourglass pulley atop the motor itself is good for keeping the belt in place around the rim of the platter, without the need to make an expensive and frequently inelegant groove in the acrylic platter itself. There are also several radial cuts on the underside of the platter near the motor and the bearing, looking like the international symbol for 'wi-fi'.

The arm itself is a slightly stripped-down B-5 version of the Gold Note's B-5.1 arm found on its more upmarket decks, and this is an optional upgrade. The difference between the two is tighter tolerance ball bearings and a more advanced form of counterweight. The arm outputs to a SME-style five-pin DIN, and notionally this too is a good way to treat the deck if you want to buy it a birthday present.

Gold Note has learned from the masters in this game – Rega and Pro-Ject. It supplies a comprehensive manual describing the set-up in detail, but most of the set-up involves taking it out of its cardboard box (no mean feat... it's tightly packed and those spiky feet come as a bit of a shock if you try and grab one). All the tools to install and set-up are supplied, aside from a good knife needed for opening the box and the bags and cling film that holds everything in place. The difficulty of installation is about 1-1.5 Poangs: if you tried to build the ubiquitous Ikea springy armchair by following the instructions and ended up making a medieval torture device designed by Salvador Dali on acid, then the Valore 425 Plus might be above your build smarts. Everyone else will find assembling the deck simplicity itself. If you opted for a pre-installed Gold Note cartridge, just open the box, tap it a couple of times with a stick and say "Instaliamus!" and it should automatically fly out of the box and set itself up. It's that simple.

The Gold Note Valore 425 Plus is perfectly placed, in that it works exceptionally well with all moving magnet cartridges and most moving coils you would expect to put with a deck at this price. Gold Note has its own moving magnet design called the Vasari Red which is a perfect partner, but we ploughed our own furrow thanks to Ortofon and Audio Technica. ▶

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► I found that I dispensed with the slipmat, lowered the VTA a notch and placed records directly onto the acrylic platter with no ill effects. I preferred it that way, although that might be down to spending a lot of years listening to Pink Triangle, Voyd, and pre-Audio Note Systemdek II turntables with acrylic platters. You might prefer the slipmat. Regardless, it’s notionally a good idea to adjust the speed control after you make such a decision, but it was spot on out of the box and stayed that way throughout.

Just as the deck is perfectly pitched in terms of cartridge matching for the money, it’s also extremely well-pitched in terms of the sort of system this level of turntable is likely to sit within. This is not one of those turntables that goes after stentorian bass and the sort of dynamic range you could use to disrupt SONAR. Instead, it’s a tidy, ordered, detailed, and – above all – quicksilver performer that acts from the midrange on out. I spun up ‘The Word Girl’ from Scritti Politti’s *Cupid & Psyche* 85 [Virgin] and all those heavily processed drum sounds and synth stings that sit in the midrange came across with unctuous charm as befits the recording. The bass line is fast and precise, and doesn’t fall into that stodgy and overblown sound that comes when a lower cost turntable tries too hard to be a ‘giant killer’. That said, it’s a very big sound with a huge soundstage, although this rich 34 year old slice of recording studio lushness is always on the ‘big’ side. What the Valore 425 Plus did so well here was give this recording a sense of snap and focus that it can so easily lack. This was a single we danced to back in the day (badly, shifting weight from foot to foot just enough to make our too-long jackets sway in the breeze), and the Valore 425 Plus remembers that; some decks at the price go for ‘more bass’ and end up with ‘more plodding’ instead.

A fine test of any good turntable is female vocal, and ‘A Case of You’ from Joni Mitchell’s *Blue* [Reprise] is never that far from a platter. This shows the essential character of the deck, or rather absence of character, as the Valore 425 Plus seems to get out of the way of the music extremely well. Mitchell’s voice, that delightful dulcimer, and James Taylor’s guitar in the background are presented extremely well. You get a feeling of two impassioned people playing music passionately in a studio rather than that ‘OK, let’s go for take #427’ blandness you can sometimes experience with more affordable turntables.

Digging deeper, the limits begin to show. This isn’t the turntable for organ music or dub enthusiasts, and if all your music and your system have been tuned to deliver an onslaught of bass, Gold Note is not your vinyl partner. It won’t even thrum along with the bass line like many cheaper turntables do. The Valore 425 Plus goes more for accuracy and speed than it does for depth and force, but that’s a trade-off I would take in the same circumstances. I’d still say a little more Sturm und Drang might be better, but in a bandwidth-restricted system such as one with good two-way stand-mount loudspeakers, the Valore 425 Plus’s speed and honesty wins the day, every day.

## TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Wow & Flutter: 0.2%

Rumble: -75dB

Speed: 33-1/3 and 45 rpm +/-0.1%

Speed changing: electronic with fine pitch control

Transmission: 70 shores rectified belt in poly-vinyl

Motor: 12 Volt High Torque synchronous externally powered

Platter: 23mm PTE

Platter spindle: special Split-Spindle™

Platter bearing: 5mm ball bearing in chromed stainless steel with adjustable brass seat

Acrylic Dust Cover included

Finishes: clear acrylic, lacquered black or white, walnut, choice of silver or black metal parts and black or white platter

Dimensions (HxWxD): 42.5 x 17 x 36cm

Weight: 9kg

Price: from £1,177

Manufactured by: Gold Note

URL: [goldnote.it](http://goldnote.it)

Distributed by: Audio Pinnacle

URL: [audiopinnacle.co.uk](http://audiopinnacle.co.uk)

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This is also perhaps not the turntable for the outright rocker, for similar reasons. The Valore 425 Plus – like many of Gold Note’s turntables – is all about the beauty and accuracy of sound first and foremost, with its drive and energy second.

Most of us have more catholic tastes today. A record player isn’t likely to spend its working life playing only King Tubby or the complete works of Hawkwind, and if your tastes run from World Music to Wagner, the Gold Note Valore 425 Plus is an excellent and inherently honest performer that doesn’t impose itself on the sound of LP. +