

Shannon Says...

Audio Musings from up North

by Shanon Swetlishnoff

GOLD NOTE
PSU-10

A Golden Experience with Gold Note PH10 and PSU10
\$3,000
goldnote.it

The Gold Note PH10/PSU10's swept back cooling fins inside the gorgeous brushed silver finish instantly catches my eye, but the superb sound is what makes this analog enthusiast swipe the credit card. As the PH10 has already been covered here at TONE, my mission is to tell you about the difference the PSU10 makes to this outstanding solid-state phono preamplifier. And it is a significant difference.

The Italian manufacturer Gold Note is well known for producing a full range of audio components, some of which we have reviewed in these pages to great result. The PH10 phono is packed with options and features, offering 6 equalization curves including the RIAA, Deca-London, and American-Columbia curves. Gold Note takes this a step further, by allowing you to customize the curves to your listening pleasure, allowing that last bit of fine-tuning, and the best possible vinyl experience. Got some great reggae discs you picked up on that vacation to Jamaica that never sounded quite right? Now you're covered.

The PH10 offers two phono inputs, each able to be set for MM or MC cartridges, with four different gain levels available: 3dB, 0dB, +3dB, and +6dB. This translates to a gain range of 62dB to 71dB, so it will work efficiently with lower output MC cartridges in the .25-.3mv range. The PH10 also has 9 different loading options from 10Ω to 47 KΩ, making it the most ver-

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satile and adjustable phonostage in its class.

Adding the PSU10 power supply doubles the price of the original PH10, now tipping the scale at \$3,000, yet it is still a significant value proposition, perhaps even more. The increase in transparency, resolution, and separation put it into a different league entirely. Now judging it as a \$3,000 phonostage, it is still a killer deal. Instead of relying on massive capacitor banks to filter the AC, Gold Note takes a dual choke approach.

Quick setup

Thanks to the small footprint of the PSU10, which is identical to the PH10, the pair will take up no more space than a standard, rack mount component. Setup is straight forward, utilizing an umbilical cord between them. If you are adding the PSU 10 to your existing PH10, be sure that both units are powered down and unplugged before connecting the two together. Then, power up the PSU 10 first, from the rear panel, then the PH10 and use the PH10s front panel switch as a master. Most importantly, you will need to update the firmware on your PH10 first, so that it will recognize the external power supply. Stop

here to get the update: www.goldnote.it/ download Internal component layout in both the PH10 and PSU10 dictates placing the power supply to the left of the phonostage, instead of on top or to the right. I suggest, maximizing the space between them if your rack allows, to achieve minimum background/electrical noise.

Listening

The PSUs effect is heard instantly, this is not an upgrade that you have to strain to hear. Using the Acoustic Solid Vintage Exclusive turntable, fitted with the Ortofon Quintet Red MC cartridge, (with PH10 set to 6db/470 ohms and enhanced RIAA curve) a bevy of test tracks from Tragically Hip, AC/DC and Doris Day (how's that for non-audiophile selections?) all aspects of the PH10's are substantially improved. Tracking through Doris Day's rendition of "When I Fall in Love" her voice is more prominent, smoother and more lifelike with the power supply installed. Paul Langlois' signature guitar in "Wheat Kings" is a long term reference for textural ability, and the PSU10 magnifies this texture, becoming even more lifelike, due to the additional dynamic swing that comes with higher power



reserve. Ditto for the drumming in AC/DC's "Let There Be Rock." Lead singer Bon Scott's signature growl is even more in your face. Awesome.

Finally, resolution of the most delicate musical details puts this purchase over the edge and is most evident with acoustic and vocal pieces. It's almost easier to hear when removing the PSU10 - the natural rendition of the human voice fades into the background more, and it won't take you long to become addicted. I noticed the increased performance even easier to notice with headphones on. The increased musicality offered by the PSU10 went that much further to make my headphones disappear on my head.

Though I purchased both at the same time, I see where the love comes from for the original PH10, but I couldn't live without the power supply. If your budget affords you the luxury, get both if you can! Bravo to Gold Note

for making this a two box solution though, because it does give you a chance to grow as your system improves. The bigger your record collection, the more this purchase justifies itself. Adding the PSU10 to your PH10 will invite some extended listening sessions.

Highly recommended.

