



Is a trick or technology

– HARMONIX TU-800M record tuning matte

~ BY 7500MARTIN

In the world of audio industry, we often hear how manufacturers tried hard to steal our money by over-price! What is over-price? Quality and price does not match! Or the material cost does not match with the price? I think the most common should be the material cost and the price does not match! If the quality and price does not match, the product will be vanished its life in the market.

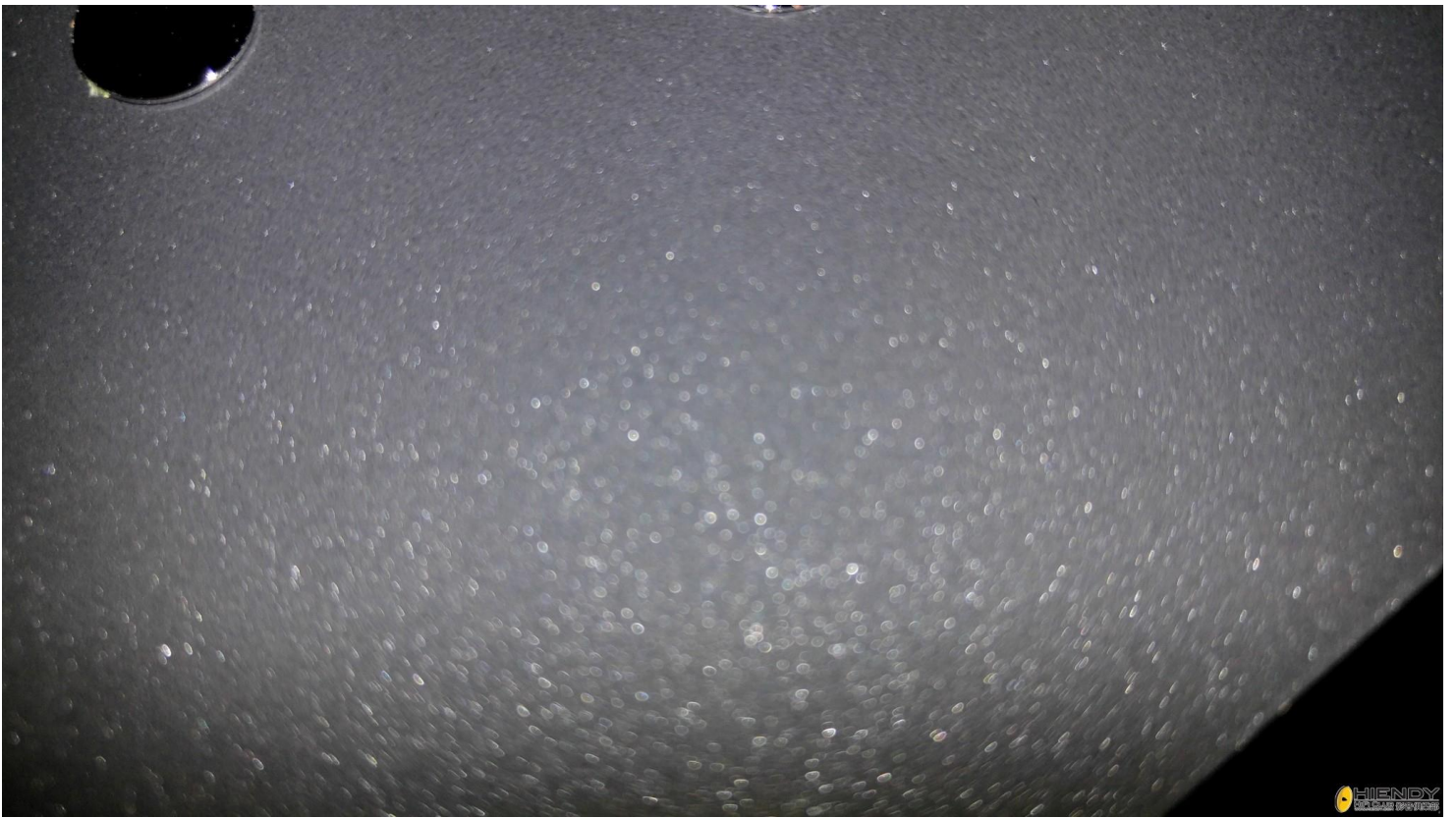
This time I would like to introduce the Harmonix TU-800M “Tribute” Million Maestro Analog Record Tuning Matte.



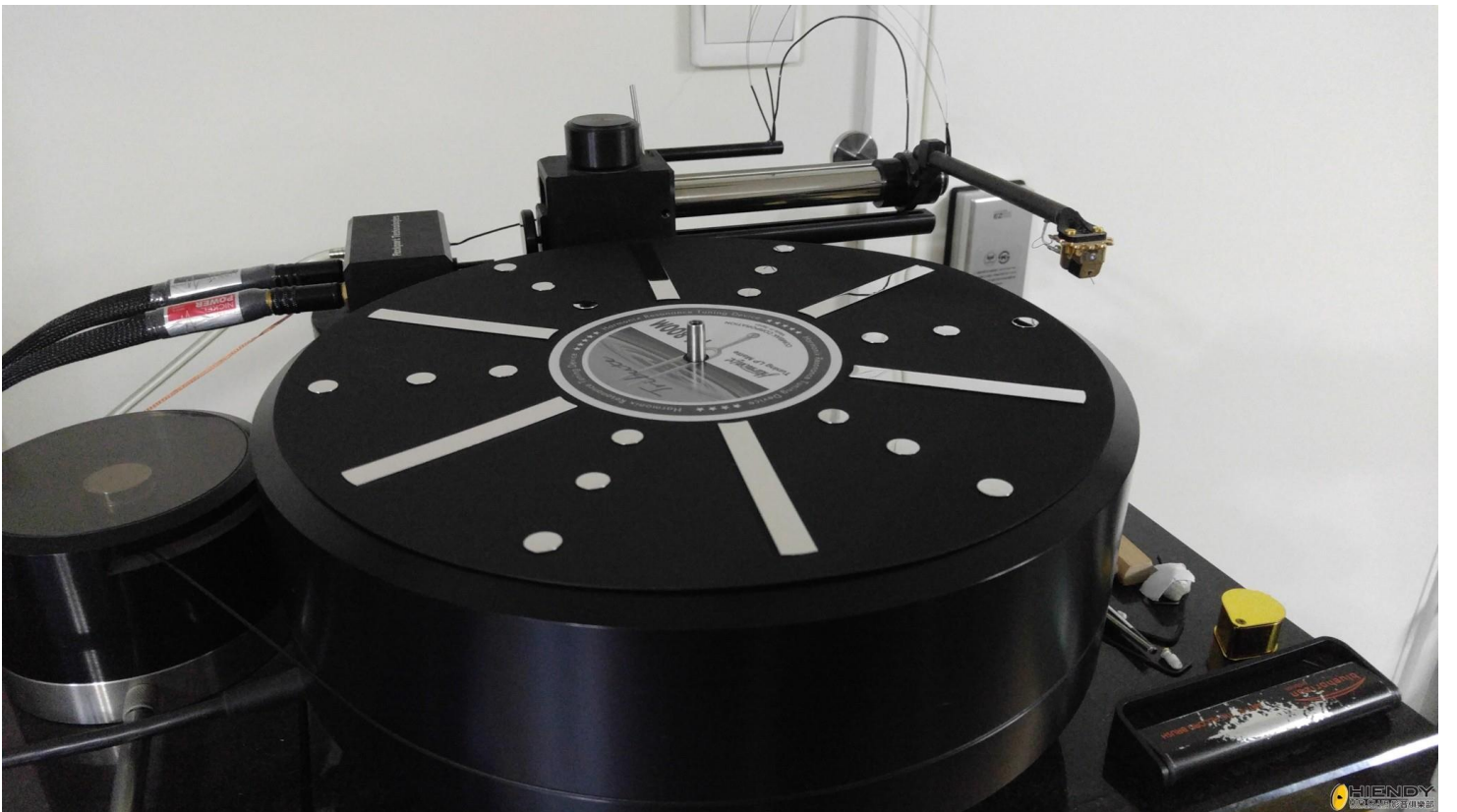
As the Million series is the top of the line of Harmonix products, you should not need to worry about its quality as Mr. Kiuchi indeed do not disappoint audiophile people. When I opened the package, TU-800M is packed in a beautiful handcrafted Japanese traditional lacquer wooden with beautifully graved a word of "Tribute" on top! Customers can also use this box as a beautiful décor on wall. I opened this wooden box and I found TU-800M in a nice cotton bag. I am a very excited and can hardly wait to open the cotton bag to see inside, and there is actually a round piece of paper-like which is similar to the "super-fine sandpaper"! Where is the record Matte? Why can't I find it!? That's right! This piece of round paper-like special material which is similar to the "super-fine sandpaper" is the top of the line Harmonix Million Maestro Series analog record tuning matte TU-800M!



I felt a bit of guilty to describe it as "Super-fine sandpaper"! as ,however, the material looks similar to some kind of paper fiber. Although the manufacturer stated that the material is a high- tech thin film developed after a long study (Light Film Form), but when a close look, this "paper" is recognized as a very special! Its surface with the super-fine grits similar to the super-fine sandpaper, but the grits are a lot more delicate, so I could not say it is smooth, but there is absolutely not rough at all!! On top of Matte, in the shape of rectangular and round dots of metal pieces are placed in uniform. Thus LP record direct contact with these metal pieces; tuning devices. Therefore there is no contact between the LP records and the matte. I have no doubt that my respectfully Mr. Kiuchi once again trying to satisfy his audiophiles fans. At the end, he does this Million Maestro series of new product demonstrate using his highest technology. Please be patient and let me tell you my experiment!



According to the distributor, the TU-800M analog record tuning mat suggested be used together with the TU-812MX Million Maestro record clamp, so as to maximize both tuning effect and musical performance. Few months ago when I tested TU-812MX, I could hardly resist the temptation of the powerful effective and performance of the TU-812MX, I have quietly and obediently to buy it with my personal savings. Perhaps, this time I would have to use up all my retirement fund!



In fact, I have been very satisfied to use the TU-812MX with the Sunshine STS2 metal record mat. However, after replacing it with the TU-800M, it has lower the VTA.

To use the LP “Why (點解)” of Prudence Liew (劉美君) for the test, the whole sound stage rises up; and the background music level becomes very detailed and clear. The imaging of the vocalist is as if being changed to be slimmer and more 3D image from the previous narrow image. I think the most stunning effect was on the low-frequency and rhythm. It has been changed to be tighter and solid from the previous rather too much volume. Such change is as if I have replaced a very high end audiophile interconnect cable in the system. Perhaps, some of you may think I was “lying” (exaggerated). I have been writing online in Hiendy for several years, and it is my principle in doing it for my own education and entertainment. So it should be your obligation whether to buy it or not, it does not matter to me at all. Anyway, through doing this online, the money in my wallet is always out but not in!

Now back to the TU-800M record mat, the more you listen with it, the more strong desire you want to have it. I listened to another LP “The Song My Mother Taught Me”, when I used the Sunshine STS2 record mat, the mid-low was not completely open and just felt like a blur but to tell you the truth, I never really felt that there was any problem before. However, after replacing it with the Harmonix TU-800M, all of a sudden, it’s just like a feeling of relaxation and the whole soundstage from high to low widely open up and down entirety without pulling it thin at all.

The violin is soaring, and the piano is more sonorous and solid!

Then, how is the performance of the TU-800M without the TU-812MX record clamp? The overall soundstage was just like lacking of a little artificial modification of the beauty & neat! The vocal imaging becomes a bit loose! The low frequency is changed to be more forward than the previous original laid back. The volume of the low frequency seems to be a little bit more but lacking of the fine lines. However, the high-frequency diffusion and details of the weak sound overall is still preserved!

That being the case, is it worth to invest in it if there is no TU-812MX record clamp?! It seems to spend eight thousand dollars to buy a piece of “paper”! I have no choice but to find a good competitor for the comparison, and the opponent is still the Sunshine STS2.

Without using the TU-812MX, the performance of the Harmonix TU-800M and the Sunshine STS2 are instantly getting closer to each other! But I can say the two are different tastes in listening! Harmonix TU-800M is more focus to the detail, fluency and coordination oriented - its approach is more laid back. The Sunshine STS2 is to stimulate the aggressive route; the soundstage is more forward, the bass is punching to the flesh. Listen to some audiophiles recording LPs, it is absolutely good enough, but on the layering/detail and the high-frequency ambience and detail, the STS2 is definitely not as good as the Harmonix TU-800M. In addition, the vocal imaging, the STS2 always gives you a feeling of having the hands and feet tied up, it cannot be freely to be independent in the background music. However, taking into the account that the Sunshine STS2 was just more than two thousand dollars while the Harmonix TU-800M is asking for the price of eight thousand dollars, the Sunshine STS2 is not ashamed to be regarded as defeated.

It is the time to make a conclusion, for those who do not have the TU-812MX record clamp, is it worth to invest in the TU-800M? My answer is as follows!

The pursuit of listening to natural and balance music, TU-800M is definitely a good choice. However, if your turntable system including tonearm & cartridge is under one hundred thousand dollars, then you should carefully consider. Buying the TU-800M analog record tuning mat is a small spending, but to buy the TU-812MX record clamp is a big spending because you'll want to get a TU-812MX record clamp sooner or later to try, then both the TU-800M record tuning mat and the TU-812MX record clamp will cost you more than thirty thousand dollars!

That being the case, to use it with TU-812MX record clamp can improve really so much, as mentioned above in detail. If you ask me is there more than ten percent improvement overall and my answer is definitely yes.

It is time to say goodbye now. The non-audiophiles may think that it is just a trick. They may even think that it is the play between the commercial reviewer and the distributor. Anyway, I only look at the result but I would never ask about the process! I also do not know the process! Even if you ask me, I really do not know what type of technology in this piece of mat looking like the super-fine sandpaper adding with some of the metal pieces on top. If you wish, you may try to DIY to figure out what the special secret technology is all about. Perhaps, DIY may only cost you more than ten dollars.

Two weeks have passed, the TU-800M is still sitting on my turntable Platter. Being the user of the TU-812MX record clamp at home, am I still struggling