



## The Jeweler of Pens

An Interview with Giuseppe Aquila,  
Chief Executive Officer, Elmo & Montegrappa S.p.A.

**EDITORS' NOTE** A native of Naples, Italy, Giuseppe Aquila entered one of his family's businesses, the Lalex Pen Company, in 1988. While completing his college studies at the University of Naples, he oversaw export activities for the other family business, Montegrappa. In 1992, he became CEO of Montegrappa. In 2000, Aquila sold Montegrappa to Richemont and became International Marketing and Commercial Manager for the new division. In 2002, he and his father, Gianfranco, established the Aquila Group and, in 2004, acquired Tibaldi, which is Italy's second oldest pen brand.



Giuseppe Aquila

**COMPANY BRIEF** Montegrappa ([montegrappa.com](http://montegrappa.com)), the first Italian pen manufacturer, has been producing quality writing instruments with an Italian flair since 1912. Among the many who used Montegrappa pens (then known as Elmo) to write letters home during World War I were renowned American writers Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos. Montegrappa was acquired in 2000 by Richemont and was reacquired by the Aquila family in June 2009. Along with Tibaldi, the business now operates as Elmo & Montegrappa S.p.A.

### Would you highlight the history and heritage of Montegrappa and how the brand has evolved?

Montegrappa is Italy's oldest and premier writing instruments manufacturer. It originated back in 1912, from the association of an Italian entrepreneur, Alessandro Marzotto, and an Austrian lady, Edwige Hoffman. It is one of the few Italian industrial companies that continued its business throughout the two world conflicts, as pens were important commodities for the soldiers to write to their families back home. The connection with my family goes back to 1938, when my grandfather initiated a collaboration with the brand. Montegrappa has always been a pioneer in the pen industry with multiple patents and technological innovations as well as a number of world records, e.g. manufacturer of the world's largest fountain pen in the '50s and manufacturer of the world's most expensive pen in 2010 (\$8,500,000), just to mention a few. Montegrappa is also known as the jeweler of pens, and is the most sought after brand by collectors worldwide. The brand has constantly evolved over the years. The secret of the longevity of our brand lies in the ability to adapt

to the changes in our society, changes that have become faster and faster in the last decade. A brand, to remain relevant nowadays, strives to reinvent itself all the time, but keep its roots firmly planted on its history and tradition.

### What are the key collections for Montegrappa and would you discuss some of the new products that you are introducing to the market?

Montegrappa's core business is pens and particularly limited editions and bespoke. In the past 10 years, we have initiated a brand extension program, which saw the launch of watches, cufflinks, fragrance and other men's accessories. Besides the Alexander Hamilton pens, one of my favorite pens this year is the Samurai. This is the first of a new series called Warriors. Samurai is the craziest and certainly one of our most sophisticated pens ever. It's an *objet d'art*/action figure/fountain pen made with a cutting edge jewelry technique which Montegrappa has perfected over the years. Words can't really explain this pen and give you a sense of its beauty and intricate design.

### Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for Montegrappa as you look to the future?

Montegrappa is a global brand, but some important markets are still at the early stages of development. Our growth will be driven by the organic expansion of such markets. Needless to say, we won't be waiting with arms crossed – we shall pursue our continued commitment towards the creation of unique writing instruments for our most discerning clientele.

### Will you highlight the international footprint for the brand?

Our products are distributed in over 75 countries. Italy is our biggest market, although it accounts for only 10 percent of our business, followed by the Middle East, North America, Hong Kong/China and Russia. I anticipate that China will go up one or two steps within the next two years. ●



Montegrappa's Samurai *objet d'art*/action figure/fountain pen, the first in its Warriors series