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Esoteric Grandioso K1X SE (\$44,000)



My second *Positive Feedback* Writers' Choice Award for 2025 goes to Esoteric's flagship one-box SACD player, the Grandioso K1X SE. With the previous K1X model, Esoteric introduced two of its most revolutionary updates, the VRDS-ATLAS SACD transport and Master Sound Discrete DAC; taken in tandem, these two upgrades revolutionized the performance of the K1X, adding warmth and organic continuousness to the prior K1's already-world-class levels of resolution and transparency. The SE version of the K1X incorporates two more refinements: improved analog circuitry based on design breakthroughs introduced with Esoteric's Grandioso C1X preamplifier, and new discrete clock technology. All this, of course, built upon an uncompromising brand foundation of premium parts and quality of construction.

The incremental updates afforded the SE version of the Grandioso K1X may not read like much, but the sonic results are staggering. In my long tenure as an audiophile and reviewer, I've never encountered a source component of such superlative performance. The perfectly-matched attributes of warmth and resolution present in the K1X are now complemented by a greater sense of ease and engagement. All vestiges of digital artifice have been minimized to such a degree as to be rendered unnoticeable, and this realized with standard Redbook CDs. The SE version of the K1X exceeds the performance of its predecessor in two key areas. First, there is a liquidity to the presentation, coupled with greater resolution in the midband, that imbues the presentation with greater flow and lifelike texture. Second, and most significantly, soundstage layering and image precision are improved to an astonishing degree. Immediacy is enhanced, as is dimensionality, affording me the ability to peer more deeply into a performance and extract consummate levels of insight.



<https://positive-feedback.com/audio-discourse/2025-positive-feedback-writers-choice-awards/>

Esoteric's K1X SE SACD player is a technological tour-de-force and an aural revelation. And Esoteric isn't resting on its laurels at this pinnacle of achievement; they offer additional upgrades to the K1X SE, allowing the owner the option to add an external clock and/or power supply.

Not formally reviewed.