

## Esoteric Grandioso T1 Turntable

October 18, 2023



**Review: Esoteric Grandioso T1 turntable-** The Esoteric Grandioso T1 is a testament to audio perfection, setting new standards for vinyl turntables with its impeccable design and extraordinary performance.

### Introduction

The digital realm has dominated the world of high-end audio for decades, with innovations in digital sources taking the spotlight. However, Esoteric, a revered Japanese audio manufacturer, has defied convention with the Grandioso T1 vinyl turntable. This bold move marks the brand's first foray into vinyl after 35 years of setting industry standards in digital audio. The Grandioso T1 is not just a mere addition to the lineup; it's a groundbreaking testament to Esoteric's unwavering commitment to precision engineering and sonic perfection. This vinyl turntable reimagines the art of music playback, combining daring design choices with meticulous control, ensuring that every note emerges with unparalleled beauty.

As we delve into the heart of the Grandioso T1, we'll explore its unique features, extraordinary design, and the ingenious technology underpinning its magnetic levitation and non-contact rotation. This journey will reveal the exquisite craftsmanship behind this turntable, from the customizable tone arm board to the intriguing sound adjustment method that lets audiophiles sculpt their musical experience. The Grandioso T1 offers more than just vinyl playback; it offers a profoundly customizable, stress-free listening adventure, unrivaled in high-end audio.

Esoteric is a renowned Japanese audio manufacturer with over three decades of rich history. Founded in 1987 as a division of TEAC Corporation, the company quickly established itself as a pioneer in high-end audio equipment. With a relentless commitment to precision engineering and uncompromising audio quality, Esoteric has consistently pushed the boundaries of what's possible in audio playback. Over the years, the brand has garnered a well-deserved reputation for producing top-tier audio components, including digital-to-analog converters, CD/SACD players, amplifiers, and, most recently, vinyl turntables like the Grandioso T1. This commitment to excellence has made Esoteric a household name among audiophiles and music enthusiasts, a legacy built on innovation, dedication to craftsmanship, and a passion for delivering exceptional audio experiences.

**Unboxing the Grandioso T1** The Grandioso T1 arrives in three boxes, each housing a different component. The main body of the turntable, the central rotating tray and control motor, and the power supply are all neatly packaged. Esoteric's packaging design ensures the safety and integrity of this high-end audio equipment during transit.



### **Esoteric Grandioso T1 vinyl turntable**

- The Esoteric MagneDrive System patented technology (Japan Patent No. 6501130)
- Platter with Magne-Float system magnetic floating rotating plate system
- Built-in 10MHz clock supplies DC motor to generate high-precision speed

- Drive torque (torque) adjustment
- Sandwich structure chassis
- Isolated damping support feet
- Speed: 33 ⅓ rpm, 45 rpm
- Speed adjustment range: ±12% (0.1% step)
- Wow and flutters: less than 0.06% (WRMS)
- Clock input: BNC x 1
- Input impedance: 50Ω
- Input frequency: 10MHz (±10ppm)
- Input level: 0.5 to 1.0Vrms (sine wave)
- Turntable base size: 497 × 215 × 436mm (W×H×D)
- Turntable base weight: 17kg
- Rotating tray size: ø315.4 × 103mm (Diameter × Height)
- Rotating tray weight: 19kg
- Control motor size: 180 × 137 × 450mm (W×H×D)
- Control motor weight: 9kg
- Separate Dimensions of the power supply: 445 × 131 × 370mm (W×H×D)
- Weight of the power supply: 18kg
- Voltage of the power supply: AC 120V, 60Hz or AC 220 – 240V, 50Hz
- Power supply of the power supply Supplier power consumption: 8W (standby 0.4W)

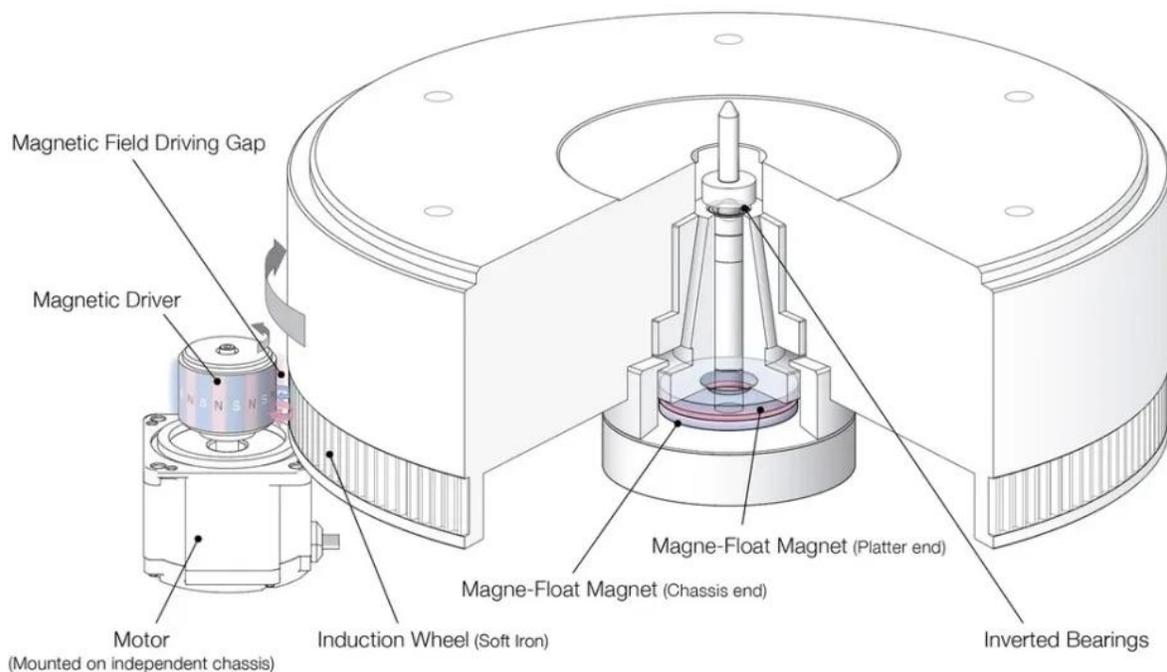


## Build Quality and Design

The Esoteric Grandioso T1 vinyl turntable is a masterpiece of precision engineering and elegant design. Its construction showcases meticulous attention to detail, combining functionality with aesthetics to appeal to audiophiles and connoisseurs of fine craftsmanship.

**Build Quality:** The Grandioso T1 boasts a robust build quality synonymous with the Esoteric brand. Its main structure features a three-layer design composed of aluminum, wood, and aluminum. The use of wood in the design serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it adds internal resistance that helps in dampening vibrations, crucial for a vinyl turntable to produce clean, distortion-free sound. Secondly, the choice of wood is not just about its material properties; it adds an element of visual sophistication to the turntable's appearance. This combination of materials enhances structural stability and contributes to the turntable's striking visual appeal.

The unit is set upon four support feet designed with coil springs and special resin damping. These elements work in harmony to isolate the turntable from external vibrations effectively. Vibrations, especially those in the extremely low-frequency range, can distort audio playback. With these features, Esoteric ensures that the Grandioso T1 offers exceptional sound quality by minimizing vibrations to an astonishing degree. The result is an audio experience that's both dynamic and immersive.



**Design:** The design of the Grandioso T1 is a testament to both form and function. Its aesthetic appeal is unmistakable and serves as a luxurious centerpiece in any high-end audio setup. The combination of the aluminum and wood layers and the minimalist, no-nonsense design exudes an air of sophistication. The clean lines and uncluttered surfaces emphasize the turntable's primary function – to play music precisely and clearly.

The turntable's sleek, understated design extends to its control panel. It features only four buttons for basic operations, maintaining the minimalist aesthetic while prioritizing ease of use. Moreover,

the control system, housing the motor and sensors, is physically isolated from the turntable. This design choice is crucial because it ensures that vibrations from the motor do not affect the delicate playback process.

Overall, the Esoteric Grandioso T1 strikes a balance between aesthetics and functionality. Its striking design is matched by its meticulous build quality, creating a product that sounds exquisite and adds a touch of elegance to any audiophile's listening room.



## Usability & Functionality

The Esoteric Grandioso T1 vinyl turntable, while undeniably a pinnacle of audio engineering, is designed with a user-friendly approach that combines exceptional functionality with a high degree of usability. Despite its intricate internal components, using the turntable is straightforward. It offers support for up to three tonearm boards, which can be customized to accommodate various tonearm brands and lengths, providing users with flexibility and versatility. This means you can tailor the Grandioso T1 to your specific audio setup and preferences, which is a rarity even among high-end turntables.

One notable usability feature is the innovative sound adjustment system, which allows users to fine-tune the sound output. Users can influence the sound characteristics by adjusting the distance between the motor and the rotating bearing plate. The magnetic force is stronger when the motor and plate are closer, resulting in a more energetic and dynamic sound. Conversely, moving them farther apart creates a softer, smoother sound that's equally pleasing to the ears. This feature allows users to personalize their listening experience and explore different sonic nuances, adding an extra layer of engagement for audiophiles. Moreover, the intuitive control system on the Grandioso T1 includes buttons for starting, pausing, selecting the speed (33.33rpm or 45rpm), and fine-tuning the speed. Including sensors that monitor the turntable's rotation rate adds precision to

the user experience, making it easy to achieve the desired playback settings. The turntable's exceptional isolation support foot system effectively eliminates vibrations, contributing to its usability and performance by delivering clean and stable audio playback. Additionally, including an external clock, connection allows further enhancements and fine-tuning for those who demand even more from their audio system. Despite its high-end nature, Esoteric has ensured that the Grandioso T1 remains approachable for users who want a balance of sophistication and usability in their vinyl playback experience.



## Unique Functions

The Esoteric Grandioso T1 vinyl turntable boasts several unique functions that set it apart from high-end turntables. These exclusive features contribute to its exceptional audio performance and user experience:

1. **Magnetic Levitation Design:** The Grandioso T1 employs a unique magnetic levitation design for the central bearing. This “Magne-Float system” utilizes magnetic force to suspend the central rotating bearing plate, reducing its weight on the turntable's main structure. This ingenious design minimizes friction and enhances rotational stability, reducing vibration and improving sound quality.
2. **Esoteric MagneDrive System:** Unlike traditional turntables that rely on direct mechanical contact between the motor and the platter, the Grandioso T1 features the Esoteric MagneDrive System. This system employs a non-contact, magnetic pole-driven rotation mechanism. It eliminates the transfer of motor vibrations to the platter, ensuring that the stylus tracks the grooves with exceptional precision, providing distortion-free playback.

3. **Customizable Tone Arm Boards:** The Grandioso T1 offers the flexibility to install up to three tonearm boards simultaneously, allowing users to install tonearms from different brands or lengths. Esoteric even offers custom tonearm boards, ensuring compatibility with a wide range of tonearm options, a unique and highly user-centric feature.
4. **External Clock Compatibility:** The turntable features an external clock input, allowing for the connection of an external clock generator. Esoteric recommends its G1X clock, which provides a high-precision 10MHz signal for even more accurate playback. This feature allows audiophiles to enhance the turntable's performance further by reducing clock jitter and improving sound quality.
5. **Sound Adjustment Function:** The Grandioso T1 introduces a groundbreaking sound adjustment mechanism. Users can fine-tune the sound output by altering the distance between the magnetic pole motor and the rotating bearing plate. This innovative feature influences the transmission torque and, hence, the sound characteristics. Users can effortlessly switch between dynamic, energetic sound and a softer, smoother sound, enhancing the personalization of their listening experience.
6. **User-Friendly Controls:** The turntable's user interface includes straightforward controls for starting, pausing, selecting between 33.33rpm and 45rpm speeds, and fine-tuning the speed with a range of up to plus or minus 12%. Additionally, a sensor system continuously monitors the turntable's rotation rate, giving users precision and control over their playback settings.
7. **Non-Contact Rotation** The Grandioso T1's rotating bearing plate weighs 19 kilograms, but the main structure only bears around 4 kilograms of this weight. An intricately machined aluminum plate forms the bearing, surrounded by a gear-like structure that constitutes the magnetic system. The turntable's motor uses Esoteric's proprietary "MagneDrive System," ensuring non-contact rotation. This eliminates motor-induced vibrations from affecting the stylus, preserving audio fidelity.
8. **Independent Control and Motor Mechanism** The motor and control system are housed separately from the turntable, preventing the transfer of vibrations. A direct current powers the motor mechanism and utilizes a precise current waveform to maintain consistent rotation speed, avoiding the need for traditional servo mechanisms that could introduce fluctuations. The motor operates on a 10MHz clock, ensuring a stable and precise driving mechanism. It's supplied with clean DC power from an external power supply, offering the option for further upgrades with Esoteric's external clock for even higher precision.
9. **Customizable Tone Arm Board:** The Grandioso T1's tonearm board accommodates various tone arm brands and lengths. The user can customize the board to fit their chosen tonearm. It's even possible to install up to three tonearm boards simultaneously, offering flexibility and customization to suit individual preferences and collections.
10. **Sound Adjustment** This vinyl turntable offers exceptional engineering and an intriguing sound adjustment method. Users can fine-tune the sound by manipulating the distance between the magnetic pole motor and the rotating bearing plate. Even a small adjustment can create significant changes in sound characteristics, allowing audiophiles to tailor their listening experience to their liking.

These unique functions collectively make the Esoteric Grandioso T1 an audiophile's dream. They deliver both superb sound quality and an engaging user experience, catering to those who seek the highest level of customization and control over their vinyl listening. Esoteric's innovative approach to turntable design has resulted in a product that merges cutting-edge technology with classic analog audio, offering an unparalleled listening experience.



## Connections and Connectivity

The Esoteric Grandioso T1 vinyl turntable, despite its primary function of playing analog records, has connections and connectivity options that are noteworthy for audiophiles who want to integrate it into their high-end audio systems. Here's an elaboration of the connection and connectivity features:

1. **Phono Outputs:** The Grandioso T1 is equipped with traditional RCA phono outputs. These analog connections are essential for connecting the turntable to a phono preamplifier. These outputs provide the purest analog signal from the cartridge, ensuring that the signal retains its warmth and character. Audiophiles often prefer this direct analog connection to maintain the vinyl's unique sound.
2. **Phono Preamp Compatibility:** The turntable's connection to a phono preamplifier allows further customization. Users can choose their preferred phono stage, significantly impacting sound quality. The flexibility to connect to various phono preamps means that users can fine-tune the sound to their liking and make upgrades as needed.
3. **External Clock Input:** For even more precise playback and reduced clock jitter, the Grandioso T1 features an external clock input. Users can connect an external generator, such as Esoteric's recommended G1X clock. This ensures the turntable operates with an exceptionally stable clock signal, contributing to more accurate playback.
4. **Independent Power Supply:** The turntable has an independent power supply unit that delivers clean power to the control center and motors. Clean power is crucial for reducing interference and optimizing audio performance. This dedicated power supply ensures that the motor and other electronic components receive a consistent, high-quality power source.

5. **Customizable Tone Arm Boards:** The turntable's tonearm boards are customizable to accommodate a wide range of tonearms in brand and length. This level of customization is rare in high-end turntables and offers users the flexibility to use their preferred tonearms, tailoring their setup to their exact preferences.
6. **External Clock Compatibility:** The option to connect an external clock generator, such as the G1X clock, is a feature that allows audiophiles to take their listening experience to the next level. The 10MHz signal from the external clock can further reduce jitter, providing a noticeable improvement in sound quality. This high-precision clock connectivity is a feature that audiophiles value in their setups.



In summary, the Grandioso T1's connections and connectivity options are designed to provide audiophiles the flexibility they need to integrate the turntable into their existing high-end audio systems. The combination of traditional analog phono outputs, compatibility with external components like phono preamps and clocks, and the ability to customize tonearm boards make this turntable a versatile and highly adaptable component for those who demand the utmost sound quality and system flexibility. Esoteric has crafted a product that caters to the most discerning audiophile needs while maintaining a seamless connection with the analog world of vinyl records.

## Comparison to Competitors

When comparing the Esoteric Grandioso T1 to its competitors in the high-end turntable market, several key differentiating factors set it apart and make it a compelling choice for audiophiles who seek the ultimate vinyl listening experience:

**1. Magnetic Levitation Design:** The Grandioso T1 boasts a unique magnetic levitation design in its bearing structure, employing the innovative “Magne-Float system.” This technology significantly reduces the weight borne by the bearing plate, minimizing friction and vibration. In contrast, many competitors rely on traditional bearings, which can introduce more noise and distortion. Esoteric’s magnetic levitation design is an engineering feat that reduces unwanted resonance and enhances sound purity.

**2. Customizable Tonearm Boards:** One of the T1’s standout features is its customizable tonearm boards, allowing users to install tonearms from various brands and lengths. Competing turntables often come with fixed tonearms or limit users to specific compatible models. The T1’s flexibility appeals to audiophiles with diverse tonearm preferences, ensuring they can choose the best arm for their needs.



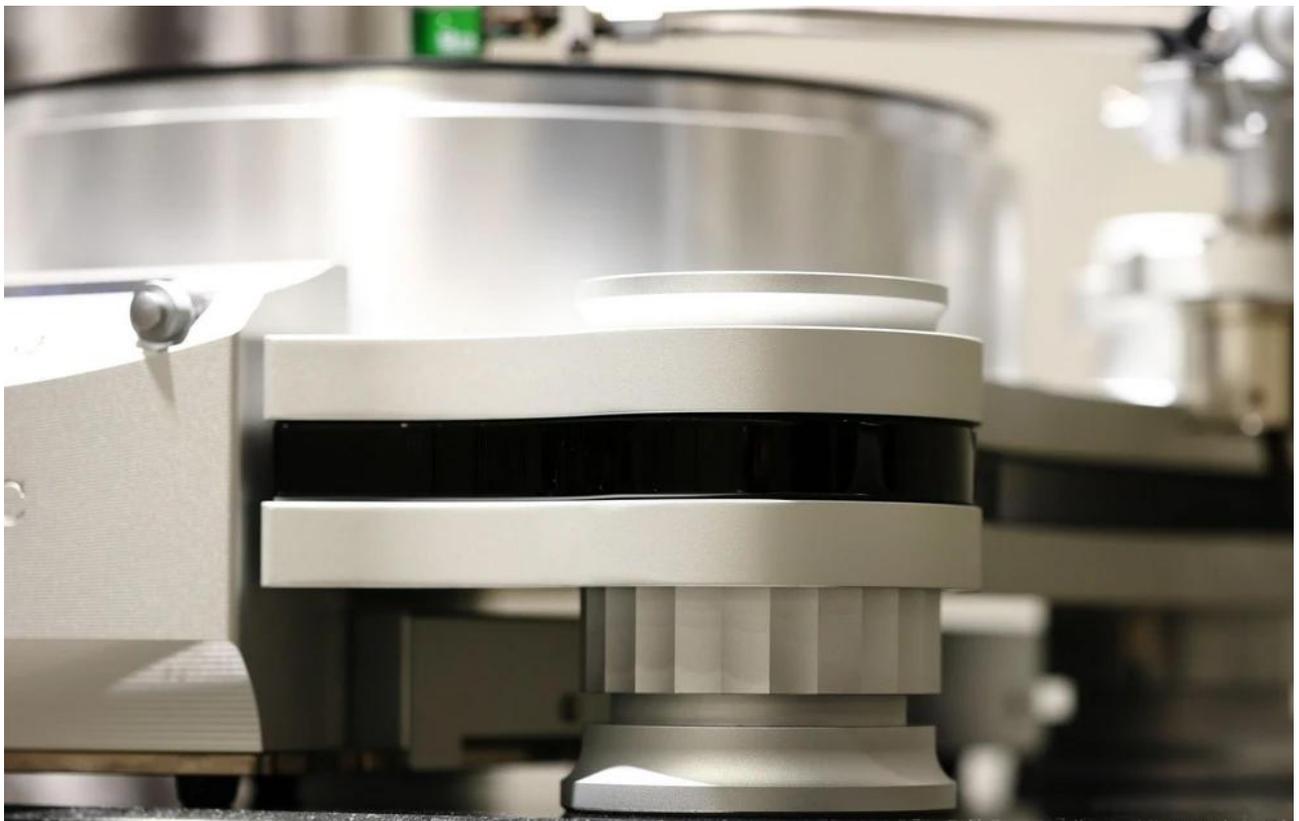
**3. External Clock Input:** Esoteric allows connecting an external clock generator to the Grandioso T1, such as the G1X clock. This feature is not common in turntables and serves to reduce clock jitter, providing a significant improvement in audio accuracy. Many competitor turntables lack this level of clock synchronization, making the T1 stand out in terms of precision and signal stability.

**4. Non-Contact Rotation:** The Grandioso T1 employs non-contact rotation in its bearing system. The motor drives the bearing plate via magnetic poles, eliminating physical contact between the motor and the plate. In contrast, many competitors use direct drive or belt drive systems to transmit motor vibrations to the platter and, ultimately, the stylus. Esoteric’s non-contact rotation minimizes interference and ensures a more accurate and pure audio signal.

**5. Independent Power Supply:** The turntable includes an independent power supply unit, providing clean and stable power to the control center and motors. Some competitor turntables may lack dedicated power supplies, leading to power fluctuations and audio inconsistencies. The Grandioso T1’s separate power supply helps maintain optimal performance.



7. **Sound Adjustment Feature:** The T1 offers a unique sound adjustment feature, allowing users to change the sound character by adjusting the distance between the motor and the rotating bearing plate. This innovative feature can be a game-changer for audiophiles who enjoy fine-tuning their sound.



In summary, the Esoteric Grandioso T1 distinguishes itself from competitors with its advanced engineering, magnetic levitation design, and a host of features catering to discerning audiophiles' needs and preferences. Its flexibility in accommodating various tonearms, the option for an external clock, and sound adjustment capabilities make it a top choice for those who demand the highest level of audio performance and customization. While the T1 may come at a premium price, its innovative technologies and customizable options position it as a standout contender in high-end turntables.

## Listening Experience

The sound test for the Esoteric Grandioso T1 turntable is a critical evaluation of its audio performance, which is a key consideration for audiophiles and enthusiasts who are seeking the best possible sound quality from their vinyl records. Here, we delve into the sonic attributes and musical experiences that this exceptional turntable offers:

**1. Exceptional Clarity and Detail:** When subjecting the Grandioso T1 to a sound test, one of the immediate impressions is its exceptional clarity and detail retrieval. This turntable is finely tuned to capture vinyl records' most nuanced musical information. Every subtlety in the recording, from the delicate pluck of a guitar string to the subtlest intonation in a singer's voice, is reproduced with astonishing precision.

**2. Realistic Soundstage:** The T1 provides a realistic and immersive soundstage. It creates a vivid three-dimensional listening experience, making it feel like you are in the same space as the performance. This attribute is especially evident when listening to well-recorded live music or orchestral compositions. Instruments and voices are accurately placed in the soundstage, providing an authentic sense of presence.

**3. Deep and Controlled Bass:** The bass response of the Grandioso T1 is characterized by depth and control. Low-frequency notes are reproduced with authority and precision, never overwhelming or boomy. Whether you're listening to a double bass in a jazz ensemble or the powerful lows in electronic music, the T1 maintains a tight grip on the bass frequencies.

**4. Expressive Midrange:** The midrange is lush and expressive. Vocals, in particular, are presented with a captivating emotional presence. Whether you're listening to a soulful ballad or a rock anthem, the midrange performance of the T1 is emotionally engaging, conveying the subtlest vocal inflections and nuances.

**5. Crisp High Frequencies:** The high frequencies are crisp and extend gracefully without harshness. Cymbals shimmer with a lifelike quality and string instruments exhibit their natural overtones. The T1 maintains an ideal balance, ensuring that high frequencies are vibrant without becoming fatiguing, even during extended listening sessions.

**6. Minimal Noise and Distortion:** The Grandioso T1 is impressively quiet, with minimal background noise and distortion. The magnetic levitation design and non-contact rotation mechanisms effectively reduce unwanted vibrations, providing a clean and pristine audio signal. This contributes to a low noise floor, allowing the most delicate musical details to emerge.

**7. Sound Customization:** The ability to fine-tune the sound by adjusting the distance between the motor and the rotating bearing plate adds a unique dimension to the sound test. Listeners can experiment with different settings to achieve their preferred sound signature, whether they desire a sharper, more energetic presentation or a softer, smoother rendition.

In essence, the sound test of the Esoteric Grandioso T1 is a testament to its ability to reproduce music with exceptional fidelity and authenticity faithfully. Its stunning clarity, realistic soundstage, balanced frequency response, and low distortion make it a top-tier choice for those who demand the highest quality of their vinyl records. Whether listening to classical, jazz, rock, or any other genre, the T1 delivers an extraordinary listening experience, allowing you to rediscover and appreciate your vinyl collection anew.



The Esoteric Grandioso T1 vinyl turntable's sound quality is exceptional, setting new standards for audio reproduction in the analog domain. This high-end turntable is designed to satisfy even the most discerning audiophiles and music enthusiasts with its remarkable sonic characteristics:

**1. Audiophile-Grade Clarity:** The Grandioso T1 reproduces audio with unmatched clarity. It extracts intricate details from vinyl records, ensuring no musical nuance goes unnoticed. Every recording element, from subtle instrument placements to intricate harmonics, is presented with pristine transparency.

**2. Dynamic and Expressive:** This turntable offers a dynamic and expressive sound signature. Music comes to life with dynamism and emotional depth that is often elusive in digital formats. From the softest piano passages to the thundering crescendos of an orchestra, the T1 handles dynamic contrasts effortlessly, delivering a captivating musical experience.

**3. Natural Soundstage:** The soundstage created by the Grandioso T1 is a particular highlight. It reproduces a wide, expansive, and natural soundstage akin to the live music experience. Instruments and voices are precisely positioned in a three-dimensional space, offering a lifelike sense of presence.

**4. Accurate Bass:** The T1 exhibits exceptional control and precision in the lower frequencies. Bass notes are delivered with accuracy and depth, adding a solid foundation to the music. The turntable's ability to convey the subtle nuances of bass instruments, such as double basses or synthesizers, is outstanding.

**5. Lush Midrange:** The midrange frequencies are rich and inviting. Vocals are a standout feature, with a lush and emotionally engaging quality. Whether you're listening to a soulful jazz vocalist or the raw power of rock and roll, the T1's midrange performance is captivating.

**6. Crisp High Frequencies:** High-frequency reproduction on the Grandioso T1 is crisp and refined. It extends gracefully without harshness or sibilance. The shimmer of cymbals, the sparkle of acoustic guitars, and the airy quality of vocals are presented in a manner that adds realism and vibrancy to the music.



**7. Low Noise and Distortion:** One of the remarkable qualities of the T1 is its low noise and distortion. The design features, such as magnetic levitation and non-contact rotation, minimize unwanted vibrations and maintain a pristine audio signal. This results in an impressively low noise floor, which allows even the most delicate musical nuances to emerge.

**8. Analog Warmth and Presence:** The Grandioso T1 retains the coveted analog warmth and presence that vinyl enthusiasts cherish. It captures vinyl recordings' warmth and tactile qualities while maintaining the utmost fidelity.

In summary, the Esoteric Grandioso T1 sets a new benchmark for analog sound quality. Its ability to convey music with audiophile-grade clarity, dynamic expression, and a natural soundstage makes it a top choice for vinyl enthusiasts. The turntable's low noise, distortion, and ability to faithfully reproduce bass, midrange, and high frequencies result in a captivating listening experience. Whether rediscovering classic vinyl records or enjoying new releases, the Grandioso T1 elevates the art of music playback, providing a profound connection with your favorite recordings.

## Conclusion

The Esoteric Grandioso T1 is a pinnacle achievement in vinyl turntable technology, showcasing the finest Japanese craftsmanship and engineering excellence. It's not just a record player; it's a gateway to a transcendent musical experience. With its meticulous design, precise engineering, and exceptional materials, this turntable embodies the fusion of tradition and innovation.

For audiophiles and music lovers seeking the utmost analog playback, the Grandioso T1 is a testament to vinyl records' enduring appeal. Its extraordinary sound quality, unparalleled build, and unique features make it a must-have for those who appreciate the art of high-fidelity music reproduction. The Grandioso T1 is not just a turntable; it's a sonic masterpiece that captures the essence of music in its purest form, offering a unique listening experience.

### Why you should buy the Esoteric Grandioso T1:

1. **Unparalleled Sound Quality:** The Grandioso T1 offers an unrivaled audio experience, with its ability to reproduce music with incredible detail, clarity, and warmth. It brings out the true essence of vinyl records, making your music collection come alive.
2. **Exceptional Build Quality:** Crafted with the highest-quality materials and meticulous attention to detail, this turntable is a work of art. Its unique construction ensures minimal vibrations, allowing for the purest sound reproduction.
3. **Innovative Design:** The Grandioso T1 boasts cutting-edge features such as the Magne-Float system and Esoteric's proprietary MagneDrive System, which enable non-contact, precision-driven rotation. These innovations contribute to its extraordinary performance.
4. **Customization Options:** The ability to choose and install different tonearms and customize the tonearm board for your preferred brand provides a tailored listening experience.
5. **Attention to Detail:** Esoteric's dedication to perfection is evident in every aspect of the Grandioso T1, from the independent motor control system to its unique sound adjustment method.

### Why you might not buy the Esoteric Grandioso T1:

1. **High Price:** The Grandioso T1 is undoubtedly an investment, and its premium price may be a significant barrier for many potential buyers.
2. **Limited Vinyl Collection:** To fully appreciate the capabilities of this turntable, you need a collection of high-quality vinyl records. If you mainly listen to digital music, the T1 may be overkill.
3. **Complex Setup:** Achieving the best sound from the Grandioso T1 requires careful setup and adjustment. This turntable may seem too involved if you prefer a more plug-and-play solution.

In conclusion, the Esoteric Grandioso T1 is a dream come true for vinyl enthusiasts who demand the highest levels of sound quality and are willing to invest in the best equipment. Its impeccable design, craftsmanship, and performance make it an audiophile's delight. However, its premium price and the need for a dedicated vinyl collection may limit its appeal to a niche market.