Piano Sound Evaluation Checklist

A listening routine for any piano viewing, familiar name or not

Before you play a note

1. **Note the name and any visible markings**

   Write down exactly what is printed on the fallboard and the plate. Treat an unfamiliar name as a starting point, not a verdict.

2. **Ask about maintenance history**

   Find out roughly how often the piano has been tuned and whether the action has ever been regulated.

3. **Separate the cabinet from the sound**

   Judge the finish and cabinet condition on their own, apart from how the piano actually plays.

What to listen for

1. **Play a slow scale, top to bottom**

   Listen for how connected the tone stays moving from bass to treble, and note any point where the character seems to break.

2. **Hold single notes soft and loud**

   Compare how long each one sustains and whether there is a real gap between soft and loud playing.

3. **Play the same passage at different volumes**

   Notice whether the keys feel even in weight and return promptly across the keyboard.

Questions worth asking

1. **Has a technician inspected this piano recently**

   A recent inspection can tell you more about current condition than the name on the case ever will.

2. **What would a full evaluation add**

   Ask what a professional appraisal covers that a showroom listen cannot catch on its own.

3. **Is there a comparison piano available**

   Hearing two pianos back to back makes real differences in tone far easier to notice.

Trust your ears and a technician's hands over any name on the fallboard.

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