Used Piano Inspection Checklist

What to look at before you buy a piano with an unfamiliar name

Before you open the lid

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

   Write down exactly what is printed on the fallboard and the plate. Ask the seller what they know about its history, and treat anything unconfirmed as a starting point, not an answer.

2. **Locate the serial number**

   Check the plate near the tuning pins on an upright, or the plate and rim area on a grand. Record it exactly, including letters and spacing.

3. **Look at the cabinet with fresh eyes**

   Separate how the piano looks from how it plays. A refinished case tells you about cosmetics, not about the soundboard underneath.

Inside the case

1. **Check the plate for cracks or repair welds**

   Look closely around the tuning pins and the mounting bolts for hairline cracks or signs of prior repair.

2. **Examine the soundboard from an angle**

   Use raking light to check for an even arch and look for staining that could point to past water exposure.

3. **Try a few tuning pins by hand**

   A pin that turns loose easily, especially in more than one area, is worth asking a technician about before you commit.

4. **Look for loose ribs or growing cracks**

   Ask whether any visible cracks have changed over time, and listen for a buzz that seems tied to a specific area of the board.

Play it before you decide

1. **Play a slow scale across the full keyboard**

   Watch for keys that stick, stay down, or feel noticeably different in travel from their neighbors.

2. **Look at the hammers where you can reach them**

   Compare felt wear across the bass, middle and treble sections and ask about the last time the action was regulated.

3. **Ask what a professional appraisal would add**

   If the piano matters enough to make a decision on, ask a technician or appraiser what a full inspection would cover that a visual check cannot.

Check the build, not just the name, before you decide.

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