

Misty Jazz Records - Vinyl Grading Guide

Introduction

Accurate grading is essential to maintaining customer trust and ensuring fair pricing. This guide establishes our standards for evaluating vinyl record condition.

Grading Scale

M (Mint) - 10/10

Definition: Perfect in every way. Never played, possibly still sealed.

Vinyl Disc:

- Absolutely pristine
- No marks, scratches, or scuffs
- Perfect gloss
- Never been on a turntable

Album Cover:

- No ring wear, creases, or marks
- Perfect corners
- Original shrink wrap (if sealed)
- All inserts mint and present

Rarity: Extremely rare for vintage records **Price Impact:** 100% of Discogs maximum

NM (Near Mint) - 9/10

Definition: Looks and plays like new. Might have been played once or twice with extreme care.

Vinyl Disc:

- Brilliant gloss
- No visible marks under normal light
- Possible light paper scuffs (no audio impact)
- Clean, crisp sound

Album Cover:

- Minimal shelf wear
- Sharp corners
- No seam splits
- Minor ring wear acceptable
- All inserts clean and present

Usage: Most common grade for well-cared-for records **Price Impact:** 85-95% of Discogs maximum

VG + (Very Good Plus) - 7-8/10

Definition: Shows light use but still excellent for listening.

Vinyl Disc:

- Light surface marks visible
- Possible light scratches (not felt with fingernail)
- Might have light background noise
- No skips or major distortion
- Overall clean sound

Album Cover:

- Some ring wear
- Light edge wear
- Small creases acceptable
- Minor seam wear (not split)
- Writing/stickers reduce grade
- May be missing inserts

Usage: Most common grade for vintage jazz records **Price Impact:** 60-75% of Discogs maximum

VG (Very Good) - 5-6/10

Definition: Shows obvious signs of use but still a good playing copy.

Vinyl Disc:

- Visible scratches and scuffs
- Light scratches felt with fingernail
- Surface noise present
- Possible light clicks/pops
- No skipping on proper setup
- Music still clear and enjoyable

Album Cover:

- Moderate ring wear
- Edge wear and splitting at one seam
- Several creases
- Corner wear
- Possible tape repairs
- May have writing or stickers
- Missing inserts noted

Usage: Acceptable for listeners, not collectors **Price Impact:** 30-50% of Discogs maximum

G + (Good Plus) - 4/10

Definition: Well-played copy with significant wear.

Vinyl Disc:

- Many visible scratches
- Noticeable surface noise throughout
- Clicks and pops present
- Might have light skips
- Music still discernible
- Play-through possible

Album Cover:

- Heavy ring wear
- Multiple seam splits
- Significant edge wear
- Creases and tears
- Water damage possible
- Heavy writing/stickers
- Missing inserts common

Usage: Placeholder until better copy found **Price Impact:** 15-25% of Discogs maximum

G (Good) - 3/10

Definition: Very worn but still plays.

Vinyl Disc:

- Heavy scratches and scuffs
- Constant surface noise
- Skips likely on some tracks
- Distortion possible
- Music recognizable
- Playable with patience

Album Cover:

- Severely worn
- Water damage
- Missing chunks
- Heavy tape repairs
- Split seams
- May be generic sleeve

Usage: Last resort for rare titles **Price Impact:** 10-15% of Discogs maximum

P (Poor) - 1-2/10

Definition: Barely playable or unplayable.

Vinyl Disc:

- Extremely scratched
- Heavy warping
- Skips extensively
- Severe damage
- For parts/decoration only

Album Cover:

- Destroyed condition
- May be absent

Usage: Rarely sold, parts only **Price Impact:** < 10% of Discogs maximum

Special Considerations

Plus (+) and Minus (-)

- **VG+:** Better than VG, not quite NM
- **VG-:** Worse than VG, better than G+
- Use sparingly and only when between grades

Grading Components Separately

Format: Vinyl: NM / Cover: VG+

Always grade vinyl and cover separately as they often differ in condition.

Common Defects & Terminology

Vinyl Disc Issues

Warping

- **Minor:** Plays fine, visible warp
- **Moderate:** Audible wow/flutter
- **Severe:** Unplayable, tonearm jumps

Surface Noise

- **Crackle:** Random pops and clicks
- **Hiss:** Constant low-level noise
- **Groove Wear:** Loss of high frequencies

Pressing Defects

- **Off-Center:** Hole not perfectly centered (causes wow)
- **Non-Fill:** Portions not fully pressed
- **Dish Warp:** Slight bowl shape (common, usually plays fine)

Damage

- **Scratches:** Light (superficial) vs. Deep (audible)
- **Scuffs:** Friction marks from sliding (may not affect sound)
- **Spindle Marks:** Circles around label (cosmetic)

Cover Issues

Ring Wear: Circular impression from vinyl edge

- Light, moderate, or heavy

Seam Splits: Opening at edges

- Measure in inches (e.g., "1-inch split at top")

Corner Wear:

- **Dinged:** Slightly bumped
- **Crushed:** Flattened corner
- **Cut:** Corner bent back

Water Damage: Warping, staining, mold

- Always disclose

Writing: Pen/marker on cover

- Note location and size

Stickers: Price tags, promotional stickers

- Note if removable or permanent

Punch Holes: Cutout/promotional copies

- Always disclose
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Grading Procedure

Step 1: Initial Inspection

1. Check for obvious damage
2. Note any immediate red flags
3. Verify pressing details match description

Step 2: Vinyl Examination

1. **Visual:** Examine under bright light
2. **Physical:** Feel surface gently for deep scratches
3. **Play Testing:** Play first 30 seconds of each side (when possible)
4. **Spindle:** Check for warping

Step 3: Cover Assessment

1. **Front:** Check artwork, corners, edges
2. **Back:** Check seams, damage
3. **Spine:** Check splits, wear
4. **Inside:** Check gatefold (if applicable)

Step 4: Inserts & Extras

1. Verify all listed components present
2. Check condition of inserts
3. Note any missing items

Step 5: Documentation

1. Assign grade for vinyl
 2. Assign grade for cover
 3. Note specific defects
 4. Add detailed notes
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Grading Examples

Example 1: Blue Note Classic

Title: John Coltrane - Blue Train (Blue Note 1577) **Pressing:** Original 1958, RVG stamp, NY label

Grade: Vinyl: VG + / Cover: VG

Description: "Original 1958 Blue Note pressing in very good plus condition. Vinyl shows light surface marks and some light scratches that don't affect playback significantly. Plays with minimal surface noise, no skips. Iconic cover has moderate ring wear, 1-inch split at top seam, and some edge wear. All original insert intact. A solid playing copy of this essential hard bop classic."

Example 2: Recent Audiophile Reissue

Title: Miles Davis - Kind of Blue (Mobile Fidelity) **Pressing:** 2020 MOFI reissue

Grade: Vinyl: NM / Cover: NM

Description: "2020 Mobile Fidelity pressing in near mint condition. Vinyl shows no signs of play, maintains full gloss. Cover is pristine with sharp corners and no wear. All inserts and MoFi inner sleeves included. Audiophile quality pressing, stunning sound."

Honest Grading Philosophy

Always Grade Conservatively

- **When in doubt:** Grade lower

- **Customer trust:** Worth more than \$5
- **Better surprise:** "Better than expected" reviews

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Overgrading:** Leads to returns and bad reviews
- **Ignoring Playback:** Visual inspection isn't enough
- **Missing Defects:** Check entire surface
- **Assuming:** Verify pressing details

Disclosure is Key

- **Always mention:** Skips, major scratches, water damage
 - **Photo evidence:** For valuable or problematic items
 - **Specific details:** "Light scratch on track 3, side A"
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Tools & Equipment

Required

- **Turntable:** For play testing
- **Bright Light:** LED or halogen for inspection
- **Clean Surface:** White or light-colored examination table
- **Cleaning Supplies:** Microfiber cloths, cleaning solution

Recommended

- **Magnifying Glass:** For close inspection
 - **Gram Scale:** Check vinyl weight
 - **Calipers:** Measure seam splits
 - **Camera:** Document defects
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Pricing by Grade

General Formula

- **NM:** 85-95% of Discogs high
- **VG +:** 60-75% of Discogs high
- **VG:** 30-50% of Discogs high
- **G +:** 15-25% of Discogs high
- **G or lower:** Case-by-case, usually < \$10

Adjustments

- **Rare titles:** Add 10-20%
 - **First pressings:** Add 15-30%
 - **Audiophile labels:** Add 10-25%
 - **Common titles:** Subtract 10-20%
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Questions & Clarification

If you're uncertain about a grade:

1. Consult with senior staff
2. Compare with similar graded items
3. Reference Discogs examples
4. When in doubt, grade lower

Remember: Our reputation depends on honest, accurate grading. Every record represents our commitment to quality.

Updated: January 2026 Based on Goldmine Grading Standards with Misty Jazz modifications