

EXPLANATION AND CONVERTING GUITAR AMPLIFIER GRADING SYSTEMS

Rating the condition factors of guitar amplifiers can be very subjective if done properly while using the grading perimeters listed in this section. When grading vintage amplifiers, many things must be taken into consideration to get the correct grade, and the following descriptions will help you out when sorting through these grading criteria. Remember, the price will be wrong if the grade isn't right!

This 5th Edition *Blue Book of Guitar Amplifiers* lists 100%, Excellent, and Average condition factors, followed by the equivalent numerical grades/percentages, and ending with the corresponding page number(s) where that grade can be seen. While not listed in this text, Mint, Below Average, and Poor condition are also defined below.

Included in this section are examples of things that can affect the pricing and desirability of vintage guitar amplifiers, but it's almost impossible to accurately ascertain the correct condition factor (especially true on older models) without knowing what to look for - that means having the amplifier available for a physical inspection. Even then, three experienced amp dealers/collectors may come up with slightly different grades, not to mention different values, based on different reasons. Described below are the major condition factors to consider when accurately grading an amplifier. Also, please study the Photo Grading System digital color photos carefully on pages 33-48 to learn more about the factors described below.

GUITAR AMPLIFIER CONDITION FACTORS WITH EXPLANATIONS

100%/New - New with all factory materials, including warranty card, owner's manual, cover (if included), and other items that were originally included by the manufacturer. On currently manufactured amplifiers, the 100% value refers to an amp not previously sold at retail. Even if a new amp has been used only once and traded in a week later, it no longer qualifies at 100% - no dealer is going to buy the same amp at the 100%/New price since they can buy it from the dealer at wholesale price. Likewise, no independent buyer would buy a used amp when they could buy one brand new from the same dealer. The 100%/New condition factor only applies to amps that are currently manufactured or that have been discontinued no sooner/earlier than 2012 since it may take a while for inventory to sell out. It is instinctive to consider the 100%/New condition factor a "mint" category, but the reality on vintage amps is that if it is truly mint, it needs to be evaluated and appraised individually.

Excellent - the Excellent condition range is represented by both High Excellent and Low Excellent condition. High Excellent refers to an amplifier that is very clean, looks almost new (perhaps a few light nicks/scuffs only), and has hardly been used. Low Excellent refers to an amp that has been played/used, and has accumulated some minor wear in the form of light scratches, scuffs, tears, etc. The older an amplifier, the less likely it will be in High Excellent condition. Even Low Excellent is seldom encountered on amps over 50 years old, since most amps were originally purchased to be used. High Excellent condition also includes currently manufactured amps that have been previously sold at retail, even though they may have only played a few times. On recently manufactured amps, there usually is a fairly large price difference between the 100% and High Excellent condition factors due to used amplifier pricing which typically is affected by dealer replacements costs. Amps in this condition may not have the original manufacturer's warranty card, depending on the age of the amp, but should include the original cover if it was included when new.

Average - The Average amp condition factor indicates an amplifier that has been used extensively and has wear due to player use (hopefully, no abuse). High Average condition amps have normal scuffs, rips, and tears on the cabinet, and oxidation on metal parts. However, there should be no problems unless indicated separately. Low Average condition amps may reflect major covering problems, replacement parts, previous repairs (especially on older amps), alterations, and wear is typically visible. No excuses as a player, however. May or may not have a cover.

Below Average (this condition factor not covered in this book) - Covering and or grille cloth are still discernible, some parts possibly missing/replaced/repared, could be either refinished or repaired, structurally sound, though frequently encountered with non-factory alterations and other problems. Must be playable.

Poor (this condition factor not covered in this book) - Ending a life sentence of hard labor, must still be playable, most of the wattage has left, family members should be notified immediately, normally not worthy unless the ad also mentions a Narrow Panel Tweed Bassman. May have to double as kindling if in a tight spot on a cold night.