EDUCATION

Elvis Presley Records Price Guide

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Introduction: The Enduring Value of the King's Vinyl

For over half a century, Elvis Presley has remained a cornerstone of popular culture. His music continues to captivate new generations, and his records are among the most collected in the world. Whether you have inherited a stack of LPs from a relative, stumbled upon a dusty 45 at a flea market, or are a dedicated collector refining your shelf, understanding the **Elvis Presley records price guide**is essential. This guide does not simply list numbers; it provides a framework for evaluating what makes a particular pressing valuable, rare, or desirable. From the raw Sun Studio sides to the iconic RCA Victor albums, the market for Elvis vinyl is layered with nuance. Rarity, condition, label variations, and historical significance all converge to determine a record's worth. This article will walk you through the key factors, highlight some of the most sought-after releases, and offer practical advice for both buyers and sellers navigating the vibrant world of Elvis collectibles.

Understanding What Drives Value in Elvis Records

Before diving into specific price ranges, it is important to grasp the core elements that influence how much an Elvis record is worth. No two pressings are exactly alike, and subtle differences can mean the difference between a $20 album and a $2,000 rarity.

Rarity and Scarcity

Scarcity is the single most powerful factor. Early pressings, especially those from the Sun Records era (1954–1955), are inherently rare because they were produced in relatively small quantities. Similarly, promotional copies, test pressings, and records that were withdrawn or had limited distribution command higher prices. Elvis's first single, "That's All Right" on Sun 209, is famously scarce in any condition. The fewer copies that survived in good shape, the higher the premium.

Condition and Grading

Condition is everything in the vinyl market. Collectors rely on a standardized grading system: Mint (M), Near Mint (NM), Very Good Plus (VG+), Very Good (VG), Good (G), and Poor (P). A record graded Mint or Near Mint can be worth ten times more than the same title in Good condition. For **Elvis Presley records price guide** purposes, always inspect the vinyl for scratches, warps, and groove wear, as well as the sleeve for ring wear, seam splits, and writing. A pristine copy of a common album like "Elvis' Christmas Album" can fetch $100+, while a beat-up copy might sell for $5.

Label Variations and Pressing Plants

Elvis's records were issued on several labels: Sun, RCA Victor (with multiple label designs), and later RCA's various subsidiaries. Even within RCA, early 1950s "Dog on the Nipper" labels differ from later "RCA Victor" black labels, or the "Camden" budget reissue labels. Collectors pay close attention to label color, text font, and the depth of the grooves. For example, the first pressing of "Elvis Presley" (RCA LPM-1254) features a maroon

label with silver print, which is more valuable than the later black label reissues.

Mono vs. Stereo and First Pressings

Before 1968, many Elvis albums were recorded and mixed in mono, with stereo versions being either rechanneled or later true stereo mixes. Mono pressings of albums from the 1950s and early 1960s are often considered more authentic and are typically more valuable than the early stereo copies. First pressings – those from the initial release run – always carry a premium over reissues. The catalog number, matrix number etched in the dead wax, and cover artwork details help identify a first pressing.

The Holy Grails: Most Valuable Elvis Presley Records

While thousands of different Elvis records exist, a select few are legendary among collectors. These are the high-end items that can command thousands of dollars at auction or private sale. Here are some of the most notable, with approximate price ranges based on recent sales and expert valuations.

Sun Records Singles (1954–1955)

- “That’s All Right” / “Blue Moon of Kentucky” (Sun 209) – The very first Elvis single. A copy in Near Mint condition can fetch between $5,000 and $15,000, depending on the exact pressing variant (e.g., the earlier “hillbilly” version vs. later pressings). Even a VG copy might bring $2,000.
- “Good Rockin’ Tonight” / “I Don’t Care If the Sun Don’t Shine” (Sun 210) – Rarity similar to Sun 209, with prices in the $3,000–$8,000 range for NM.
- “Milkcow Blues Boogie” / “You’re a Heartbreaker” (Sun 215) – Another highly desired single, valued at $2,000–$5,000 in NM.
- “Baby Let’s Play House” / “I’m Left, You’re Right, She’s Gone” (Sun 217) – Often peaks at $3,000–$6,000 in top condition.
- “I Forgot to Remember to Forget” / “Mystery Train” (Sun 223) – The last Sun single, still valuable at $2,000–$4,000 NM.

Early RCA Victor Albums (1956–1960)

- “Elvis Presley” (RCA LPM-1254) – First Pressing – The debut album. A mono first pressing in NM condition with the original maroon label and no cover seam splits can sell for $1,500–$3,000. Later pressings and stereo versions are worth far less.
- “Elvis” (RCA LPM-1382) – The second album – First pressing mono copies in NM condition are valued at $800–$1,500. The cover art variations (e.g., “frowning” vs. “smiling” Elvis) add another layer.
- “Loving You” (RCA LPM-1515) – Soundtrack album – First mono pressing can reach $500–$1,000 in NM.
- “King Creole” (RCA LPM-1884) – Another soundtrack – Valuable in original mono: $400–$800.

Rare Promotional and Specialty Items

- “The Elvis Presley Story” (RCA Victor PC-1397) – A 1960s promo EP box set – Very rare, especially with all inserts. Prices can hit $1,000–$2,000.
- Test pressings and acetate discs – Unique items often made for radio. They can range from $500 to $5,000+ depending on content and condition.
- “Pot Luck” (RCA LPM-2523) – Early 1960s – Not extremely rare, but first pressings in NM with the “RCA Victor” black label can still be worth $200–$400.

Mid-Range and Common Records with Collectible Potential

Not every Elvis record is a goldmine, but many are still highly collectible and maintain steady value. Understanding which albums and singles fall into the mid-range can help you build a valuable collection without breaking the bank.

1960s and 1970s RCA Albums

"Blue Hawaii", *"Elvis Is Back!"*, and *"From Elvis in Memphis"* are popular. First pressings in mono or early stereo can range from **$50 to $300** in NM condition. Later reissues are common and often under $20. The key is to look for original labels and covers without damage.

1968 Comeback Special LP and Later Releases

The *"'68 Comeback Special"* soundtrack (RCA LSP-4158) is a sought-after title, especially the original quadraphonic version. Values can reach **$100–$300** in NM. Albums from the 1970s such as *"Moody Blue"* (the last studio album) are valued more for their rarity in sealed or pristine condition – a sealed copy can be **$100–$200**.

45 RPM Singles and Extended Plays (EPs)

Elvis's 45s are abundant, but certain ones are valuable, especially those with picture sleeves in excellent condition. Early RCA 45s from the 1950s (e.g., "Heartbreak Hotel," "Hound Dog," "Don't Be Cruel") with original picture sleeves can be worth **$50–$200** each. Promotional copies with "Recorded for Radio" or "Not for Sale" markings often double or triple the value. Early EPs like *"Elvis Presley"* (EPA-992) and *"Elvis Vol. 1"* (EPA-940) can fetch **$100–$400** in NM.

How to Grade and Authenticate Elvis Records

Accurate grading is crucial to buying or selling at fair prices. Use the following guidelines when examining a record:

Grading the Vinyl

- Mint (M): Perfect condition, no visible defects, plays without noise. Essentially a sealed record.
- Near Mint (NM): Minimal wear, maybe a slight scuff, but plays perfectly. Cover is close to new.
- Very Good Plus (VG+): Light surface scratches that may produce minor crackles but not affect music enjoyment. Sleeve has some ring wear.
- Very Good (VG): Noticeable scratches, some background noise, but still playable. Sleeve may have seam splits or writing.
- Good (G): Heavy wear, significant noise, skips possible. Sleeve is worn and creased.
- Poor (P): Unplayable or heavily damaged.

Authenticating Label and Pressing Details

Check the label for the correct font, color, and catalog number. Use online resources like Discogs or the "Elvis Records Price Guide" books to confirm the exact pressing. Look for the stamped or etched numbers in the runout groove. Many original pressings have specific identifiers such as "I" or "A" stamps indicating the pressing plant. Counterfeit Elvis records exist, especially for Sun singles, so compare with images from trusted collector forums.

Where to Buy and Sell Elvis Records

The market for Elvis vinyl is active both online and in person. Here are the main venues with their pros and cons:

- eBay: The largest marketplace. Prices are buyer-driven but can be inflated. Always check the seller's feedback and ask for detailed photos of the actual record.
- Discogs: A database-driven marketplace with standardized grading. This is where serious collectors buy and sell. Prices tend to be more consistent and fair.
- Record fairs and antique shows: You can physically inspect the record and negotiate. Many dealers specialize in Elvis.
- Specialty auction houses: For extremely rare items, companies like Heritage Auctions or Tracks of Time

hold regular Elvis memorabilia sales. Expect higher fees but also higher visibility.

- Facebook groups and collector forums: Niche groups like “Elvis Vinyl Collectors” can be great for trades and fair deals, but beware of scams.

Tips for Building a Valuable Elvis Collection

Whether you are a new collector or an experienced one, these strategies will help you acquire records that appreciate over time

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