December 2018:

The CEO of Sweetwater wrote a guest editorial that was published in numerous trade publications sharing his frustration with certain manufacturers selling direct. Below was my reply that was published as a letter to the editor.

Regarding the guest editorial by Sweetwater CEO Chuck Surack.

Mr. Surack should be complimented on the exponential growth in sales his company has experienced.

With industry sales flat, Sweetwater's sales are growing by taking market share from other dealers. We see an aggressive effort to acquire a customer through use of a variety of online marketing focused mostly on SEO and price, but they are marketing to a customer who is already part of the marketplace. This does nothing to grow the industry. When his company shows up in one of my searches it is for a product I am researching, it's never "You should learn music and you should learn the Sweetwater way."

I decided not to carry a keyboard that is advertised heavily all over the internet. Everyone advertises it at MAP and then offers packages that include profitable accessories for free and free shipping and free returns. Depending upon which online platform the seller uses it is quite possible that both UPS and Jeff Bezos make more on the sale than the music dealer.

I agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Surack's opinion regarding manufacturers selling direct. It is a problem to all retailers. The irony is how he does not view his company in a similar manner. Sweetwater is the largest mail order competitor to date. I view them more as a distributor than as a music store. Manufacturers who distribute through them are using his company as the BUY IT NOW button he loathes.

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