

From: Jeremy Ritter [mailto:je [Redacted]]
Sent: Friday, November 20, 2015 9:28 PM
To: ATR-LT3-ASCAP-BMI-Decree-Review; Tara Good
Cc: Jeremy Ritter
Subject: Comments regarding the Consent Decree under review

To the Department of Justice,

Allow me to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to comment on the Consent Decree under review.

My wife and I purchased a small winery here in North Idaho 5 years ago. This was our first retail business experience and we had no idea who or what ASCAP or BMI was, but that didn't take long! Knowing nothing about the rights to music or what could be done and what couldn't, we received a call from a sales person at ASCAP and said WE HAD to have licensing to play any type of music. Being naïve we paid and did as they said. Not knowing we thought that you just paid one or the other and like buying a pair of shoes, one could shop around. Not so fast, you were going to pay all three!

During this time of paying into ASCAP we also had live music. After our first year and battling them, we opted to cancel them and that is where the battles began. We had a few small local bands that played all their own original music and posted to Facebook. ASCAP used that posting to begin bullying us and threatening law suits. They sent us bills, threatened us over the phone and that is when we said no more. We made the decision to no longer hold music events in our winery, and as you can imagine, hurt our business.

We then made the business decision to use Mood Media for just our back ground music and let them deal with the rude and hungry driven people from ASCAP and BMI.

While we respect the rights of songwriters, we hold no respect for the organizations business practices who work to intimidate and bully small business owners. Every independent artist we have encountered relayed horror stories about ASCAP and BMI and how they impact the music industry as a whole, with a twisted sense of what is best for their "members". It is clearly a money making venture, and one that does not benefit the artists at all.

Please do not bend to their requests and loosen their guidelines. Make them accountable to the same fair business practices that our country is founded on - equal rights and opportunities for all.

If you should desire additional information, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Jeremy and Heidi Ritter

Camas Prairie Winery

North Idaho's oldest winery, est. 1983

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