

Truth, Lies and CD Prices: Taking a Closer Look at Kingsway's Price Comparisons

Today I'd like to take a closer look at Kingsway's CD price comparisons, with specific reference to the Government's [Pricing Practices Guide: guidance for traders on good practice in giving information about prices](#) (pdf, 422kb | [Google Docs 'Quick View'](#)). If you're brave (or foolhardy) enough to follow [my personal blog](#) you'll recognise the first few paragraphs, adapted from my weekend post, [Kingsway: dishonest discounts or fair practice?](#)

It seems to me that any company advertising their own products on the basis of "Our price £X, RRP £Y" when they themselves have set the RRP is operating in a grey area at best, if they're not actually being downright dishonest. When a supposedly Christian company engages in this sort of practice, it's a double whammy. But what does the Government guidance itself say? Whilst the guidance is not comprehensive, several sections have some bearing on this situation:



BERR Pricing Practices Guide (pdf, 422kb)

1.2 Comparisons with the trader's own previous price

1.2.3 (a) A price used as a basis for comparison should have been your most recent price available for 28 consecutive days or more;

Kingsway, of course, are not claiming that their RRPs are a 'previous price' so it could be argued that the specific guidance of 1.2.3 (a) does not apply. But if the RRP has never been charged, is it not a purely fictional device? Let's move on, then, to consider the guidance on RRPs:

1.6 Comparisons with "Recommended Retail Price" or similar

1.6.1 You should not use a recommended retail price, or similar, as a basis of comparison which is not genuine, or if it differs significantly from the price at which the product is generally sold.

1.6.2 You should not use an RRP or similar for goods that only you supply.

Given that Kingsway's RRPs are not generally charged by Kingsway themselves but

are only used in their dealings with other traders, any claim that those RRP's are genuine seems a tad shaky at best; and since Kingsway are the sole supplier of Kingsway products — even when made available through other traders — then, with the best will in the world, I'm finding it difficult to see how Kingsway's practice can be interpreted as anything but a deception, the 'discount' nothing more than bait to draw people in, the RRP a hook to hang it from. The deception may not be intentional, of course: most speeding motorists don't intend to break the speed limit either — my concern here is not with intentions but consequences.

Let's examine a specific example: backtrack for a moment to section 1.3:

1.3 Introductory offers, after-sale or after-promotion prices

1.3.3 *You should not indicate an after-sale or after-promotion price if you do not intend to continue to offer identical products at that price for a reasonable time. What is reasonable will depend on the circumstances. In general terms a period of at least 28 consecutive days in the 3 months after the end of the offer period or after the offer stocks run out may in many circumstances be reasonable...*

Now consider the following before and after screenshots of the new 'Very Best of Graham Kendrick' album:

Home > CDs > Worship Leaders > Graham Kendrick > The Very Best of Graham Kendrick (SIGNED) (PRE-ORDER)



The Very Best of Graham Kendrick (SIGNED) (PRE-ORDER)
Graham Kendrick
(CD) Product code: KMCD3076
Kingsway
Genre: Worship
Year of Release: 2010

Our price: £10.99
RRP: £14.99 (You save 27%)

Avg. Customer Rating: Not rated. [Write the first review or comment](#)

Qty: [add to cart](#)

[Add to wishlist](#)

Full Product Description
PRE-ORDER The Very Best of Graham Kendrick (SIGNED COPIES). AVAILABLE FROM 17/05/10.

Before: The Very Best of Graham Kendrick - Pre-order price £10.99 v/s RRP £14.99

Customers were invited to 'pre-order' at £10.99 on the basis of a 27% saving against the RRP of £14.99. But afterwards, now that the album is available, we find this:

Home > CDs > Worship Leaders > Graham Kendrick > The Very Best of Graham Kendrick



The Very Best of Graham Kendrick

Graham Kendrick
(CD) Product code: KMCD3076
Kingsway
Genre: Worship
Year of Release: 2010

In stock
Our price: £11.99
RRP: £14.99 (You save 20%)

Avg. Customer Rating: Not rated. [Write the first review or comment](#)

Qty: [add to cart](#)
[Add to wishlist](#)

After: The Very Best of Graham Kendrick: Kingsway price £11.99 v/s Kingsway RRP £14.99

The ‘pre-order’ offer period is over but the actual price now being charged by Kingsway is only £11.99: customers who thought they’d be saving £4.00 by placing a ‘pre-order’ have in fact only saved £1.00.

Perhaps Kingsway intended to charge the so-called RRP but forgot? Only Kingsway themselves can answer that question, of course, but the guidance notes are not about intentions: they are about practice, designed to protect consumers from unfair trading activities as set out at the beginning of the guidance notes:


1.1 Price comparisons generally

1.1.1 The CPRs [Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008] prohibit traders from giving false or misleading information, or omitting material information, about price or the manner of calculation of the price for a product, where this causes or is likely to cause the average consumer to take a transactional decision he would not otherwise have taken. If you choose to make price comparisons, you should therefore be able to justify them, and to show that any claims you make are accurate and valid – in particular, that any price advantage claimed is real.

Would “the average consumer” have taken the “transactional decision” to ‘pre-order’ this album had they known that the price was only going to rise by £1.00 rather than by £4.00? Only those who made that decision can answer that question for certain, but it seems fair to say that the price advantage claimed was not real.

So now we watch this space: *You Have Shown Us: Songs of Justice, Mercy and Humility*: Pre-order price, £9.99; RRP, £12.99:

Home > CDs > Praise & Worship > You Have Shown Us (PRE-ORDER)



You Have Shown Us (PRE-ORDER)
Micah Challenge
 (CD) Product code: KMCD3130
 Kingsway
 Genre: Worship

Our price: £9.99
RRP: £12.99 (You save 23%)

Avg. Customer Rating: Not rated. [Write the first review or comment](#)

Qty: [add to cart](#) 

[Add to wishlist](#)

Full Product Description
PRE-ORDER 'Songs of Mercy, Justice & Humility'. AVAILABLE FROM 21/06/10.

You Have Shown Us - Songs of Justice, Mercy and Humility - Pre-order price, £9.99; RRP, £12.99

Will customers placing 'pre-orders' for this item really save £3.00, 23% off the advertised RRP? Or will the price simply go up by £1.00 as per the Kendrick album? Will Kingsway rise to the Micah Challenge's call for trade justice in their own business practices? Or will **John Paculabo** attempt to sidestep Micah's challenge **as he did when I cited Amos?**

My updated message to Kingsway is this:

Please stop misleading your personal customers and undermining your retail partners with your dishonest discounts and fictionalised RRP's. You make a beautiful noise — but that noise is no more than a resounding gong, a clanging cymbal if you build it upon dishonourable or deceptive business practices.

The beauty of your worship recordings is marred by your behaviour — as Amos said so long ago, "Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!"

Don't just record songs about justice: practice it!