

# Chris Ferrell found guilty in musician Wayne Mills' death

Stacey Barchenger , sbarchenger@tennessean.com 4:45 p.m. CST March 6, 2015

(Photo: Larry McCormack / File / The Tennessean)

The man who shot and killed country musician Jerald "Wayne" Mills in 2013 was found guilty of second-degree murder Friday.

A jury reached the verdict in the fifth day of trial, finding Chris Ferrell, 46, guilty in Mills' death. Ferrell's attorneys immediately promised an appeal.

About 30 people, Mills' friends and family, sat in Judge Steve Dozier's courtroom. Warned by court officers not to react to the verdict, they cried, breathed sighs of relief and a few exhaled "yes" after the verdict was read. Three extra security guards were in the courtroom.

Mills' widow, Carol, visibly shook and cried.

"I am grateful to the state of Tennessee for bringing the defendant to trial and justice, on behalf of myself, our son, Jack, Wayne's family and friends," she later said.

Before the verdict, Ferrell held hands with his attorneys, the father-and-son team of David and Ben Raybin. Ferrell looked to his own supporters as he was taken into another room to be booked into jail. He faces 15 to 25 years in prison and is scheduled to be sentenced April 10.

Ferrell said during testimony that he shot Mills, his friend, out of fear after Mills, 44, had threatened him. They had been at an after-hours party at Ferrell's downtown bar, Pit and Barrel, on Nov. 23, 2013.

David Raybin said after the verdict that Ferrell fired in self-defense. He promised an appeal, focusing on evidence that was missing from the case.

"I blame the verdict on the failure of the government and the police to fully investigate this case at the time," the attorney said. During trial, witnesses testified that a bullet — one of three fired by Ferrell — was overlooked by police and later found by a defense investigator and that police damaged evidence in Mills' cellphone by placing a magnetic powder on the device.

Raybin said those mistakes meant an incomplete case was presented to the jury.

"I've been an attorney for 40 years and I have appealed many homicide cases," Raybin said. "We feel very comfortable that this man will get a new trial and a new day in court."

Prosecutors rebuffed claims of self-defense and said Ferrell intentionally killed Mills when Ferrell opened fire in the bar, shooting Mills in the back of the head.

"We believe very strongly this was a conscious act," Assistant District Attorney Tammy Meade said after the verdict.

Reach Stacey Barchenger at 615-726-8968 and on Twitter [@sbarchenger](https://twitter.com/sbarchenger).



