

Man given eight years for burglary

Music store break-in netted Lynchburg man guitars worth \$9,000

By Jeffrey Sykes

The News & Advance

A Circuit Court judge sentenced a Lynchburg man to an eight-year active prison sentence Friday for breaking into a local music store.

Mark Matthew Ferguson, 29, who lived at 600 Reusens Road Apt. F-67 when he was arrested, broke into the Lynchburg Music Center March 19, 2001 and stole \$9,000 worth of guitars.

A jury convicted him of burglary and grand larceny and recommended a 13-year sentence.

Circuit Court Judge Mosby G. Perrow followed that recommendation Friday, suspending five years of the sentence.

Prosecutors said that Ferguson broke into the Lynchburg Music Center, then located at 4895 Fort Ave., by smashing the store's front glass. The store has since moved to 6115 Fort Ave.

After the crime, Ferguson rode around Lynchburg trying to sell the guitars out of the trunk of a car, according to Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Charles Felmlee.

At one point, Felmlee said, Ferguson drove by the crime scene so he could show a friend the numerous police officers on the scene investigating the crime.

Ferguson eventually sold two of the guitars that morning and bought a bag of heroin with the proceeds.

Felmlee noted Ferguson's extensive criminal background in asking Perrow to follow the jury's recommended sentence.

Ferguson has 13 previous felony convictions, Felmlee said, and served a seven-year prison stint between 1992 and 1999.

Defense attorney Killis T. Howard asked Perrow to consider a suspended sentence and order Ferguson to undergo in-patient drug rehabilitation.

Ferguson's father and girlfriend said he came to them shortly before the incident and said he had a drug problem and needed help. Family members tried to get him into a local drug-rehab program, but were turned away due to lack of space.

Howard asked Perrow to consider Ferguson's addiction in pronouncing a sentence.

"He was overpowered physically, emotionally and fundamentally during this time," Howard said.

Ferguson also faces charges in