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Vol 2 • No 4 1995



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Beaver Felton**

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## Beaver Felton

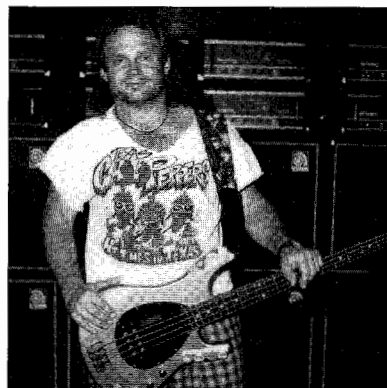
**SuperChops** founder Beaver Felton has managed to stoke an already saturated market and strike gold with his unique teaching methods.



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## Michael Anthony

**Van Halen's** influence would not be complete if Michael Anthony's hard-driving bass lines and crystal shattering harmonies were overlooked.



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## Marcus Miller

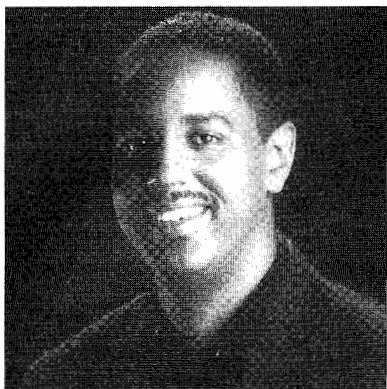
The undisputed "Superman of Soul" is rising to the top of the charts with the release of *Tales*. His retro-funk vibe captivates all who listen—so listen.



34

## Robert Hurst III

Purest **Wynton Marsalis** discovered this devoted musician. Bob's **Tonight Show** gig has allowed him to grow into the ultimate musical chameleon.





# Beaver Felton:

## The Man behind the Chops

By Dave LaRue

When you think of today's saturated market of taped instructional materials, you'll find only one company that offers you up to 22 titles. That company would be Beaver Felton's *SuperChops 4 Bass*.

dropped from their label after its first record. By age 29, Beaver was still doing the club circuit on the East Coast. Beaver says, "So, like everybody does at some point, you start thinking what if I don't become a rock star. You know, you start thinking what else can I do to generate income via music. *SuperChops* was born that night."

Having kept up with all the "latest licks," Beaver was sending his tapes to Hot Licks and Star Licks, "...who at the time were the biggest on the scene. They basically both wrote almost an identical letter: You're a great player, your teaching method is excellent, you are nobody. So the next plan of action was, I need to be spotlighted."

"I worked for a couple of months, in '85, and put together this solo that was taped on a little boom box. Just me and that. live. It was kind of a tour de force of all the techniques I knew. I mean I used every false harmonic trick. But it was tied into a well constructed five minute solo."

His goal to be spotlighted was something Beaver Felton would see. But first he would survive an ordeal that would change his life.

"In '85' I was in a car accident while I was on the road. I became Paraplegic." And just for perspective. I was playing six and seven nights a week for like nine years prior to that. And the night before the accident, I was doing the same thing I had always done, which was wearing as little as possible, and doing my bass solos wireless, on table tops. So going from that to twelve hours later—"Hey, I can't move below the waist", was a pretty devastating thing. However, the good thing that took place was about a week later *Guitar Player Magazine* came out and I was featured by Mark Varney's Spotlight. As a matter of fact, I was laying in my hospital bed the first week of my accident, and one of my students called me from Tampa, I was in Georgia, and he said have you seen this month's *Guitar Player*? I said, of course not! He said, you're in Mark Varney's Spotlight and he gave you a really good write-up."

The Spotlight payed off. It did just what



Christopher Lee Helton

*"And the night before the accident, I was doing the same thing I had always done, which was wearing as little as possible, and doing my bass solos wireless, on table tops."*

Born and raised in Savannah, Georgia, Beaver Felton grew up on Yes and Genesis. Beaver says, "I was really a bedroom player, starting at age 13. I played with a few bands here and there. But I loaned my bass to a friend until around age 15. When I got the bass back, I became a 'serious bedroom player.' I started really getting serious about chops and exercises and learning a lot of Yes, which at that point was considered really cool stuff. At age 18 I joined a top-40 band and realized Yes licks did not work in Leroy Brown—literally."

As with most players, Beaver took the obvious path to stardom—"I went on the road. I'd like to think I got better and better because I immediately started getting a really good reputation in Florida."

Although Beaver had considered going to BIT in 1979, he opted to join a band called Montreux that had just signed a record deal. Would this be his big break? No. The band was

Beaver had hoped. "Peavey immediately called me and wanted to do an endorsement thing. So then I approached Hot Licks later, or they approached me."

"That gave me the instant credibility that I needed. Then for almost the entire year of '86, I developed the original SuperChops 4 Bass course, which was like nine tapes. There were different techniques, and proficiency levels, and that went over well. I expanded to more tapes and then I went to video, and then I was offered to do CDs and books."

Now after nearly 10 years of educating bassists through his tapes and books, Beaver Felton is still exercising his entrepreneurial spirit with his part ownership in 21st Century Productions and Future Sound Recordings in Orlando, Florida. Beaver says, "I'm getting ready to expand with four more videos, two of them are going to be me and the other two will be you (Dave LaRue). On another front, Angelo, the guitarist that appears on all of my videos, and I have this recording studio, which is also a rehearsal room and of course we give private instruction. Plus: You're (LaRue) also here, thank goodness, and that's happening. But Angelo and I are presently getting ready to shop some material for a record deal."

Although Beaver's claim to fame has been his blinding fast licks and tricks, his heart and soul are firmly planted in the creation of what's right for the music. He says, "When I'm not hanging around the root, I'm trying to be very dynamic. Not licks oriented—more like brilliant choices of notes. What Chris Squire has taught me, is the power of the chosen note. I'd have to say Billy Sheehan was an influence in that he got me into tapping. But I really don't incorporate tapping as much as slapping and finger work. People, many times, in top 40 clubs will come up and say where were you schooled. I say, my room! I had three formal lessons and moved on from there. I took the ball and ran with it. Learning chord construction where ever I could. My biggest deficiency that being self-taught, I never learned to sight read music. I know the basics of reading, that's the extent of it."

*(LaRue: I think it's really interesting; we're both sitting here, we both have very similar playing styles, we hang out together, we play together, but we took such different routes. I think the whole thing boils down to how hard you work at something.)* "I agree that hard work is the output of input etc., and there are some great players that can't tell you what a mixolydian scale is. Though I maintain that the more you know, the bigger the house you can build."

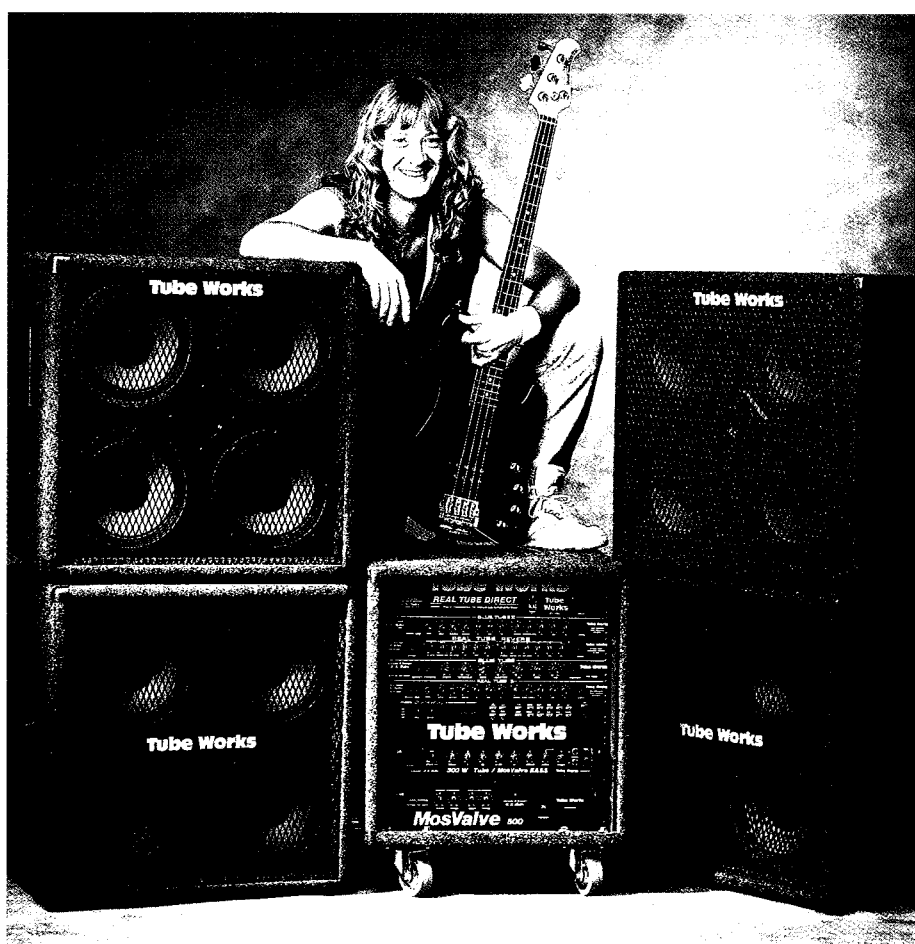
"I regret not taking the route you did so much that I preach that to my students. I've lost a few gigs because I couldn't sight-read. I don't

think it had anything to do with my playing. As a matter of fact, I was offered a gig last week, which I wouldn't take anyway, but it required reading—simple stuff, but definite sight-reading ability. For anybody reading this, I strongly recommend formal education. I really do. I would not say, take the route I did. But on the other hand, I've seen guys go away to school and come back bebop heads. They think everything besides bebop sucks."

*(LaRue: I was like that when I got out of Berklee. I finally found my way back to what I wanted to play. It's not any better or worse. I've heard really bad jazz music and really good jazz music, just like any form of music. That's one thing you can't teach a student is how to be*

*true to themselves, learn about music because they love music and apply it to any kind of music they want to do. No form of music is better than any other kind of music.)*

What Beaver Felton is doing is giving bass players of all levels new ideas and adding to their vocabulary. Beaver's tapes are known for their multitude of licks and patterns and of course, his gifted teaching methods. Beaver says, "I pride myself on being thorough, whether it's directions to the studio or making sure that somebody realizes exactly what notes fit against an A minor 7." And with that, we'll look forward to more "SuperChops" to come from the man behind the chops, Beaver Felton.



When Dave LaRue and his **Tube Works** gear hit the stage along side Steve Morse with either the *Dixie Dregs* or *The Steve Morse Band*, he has got to be ready to exchange some of the fastest and most articulate licks in today's music with one of the most demanding guitarists in the world. Highly regarded and respected Bass Player, Dave LaRue, relies on his **Tube Works** equipment to deliver every note with **Punch** and **Power, Tone** and **Tenacity**. Year after year, gig after gig, **Tube Works** has never let him down!

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