

# Stellar bassist lets the good times roll



By CHARLOTTE WHEELER

Packet staff writer

**B**eaver Felton played the bass guitar in about every circuit in the Midwest and Southeast for more than eight years, because bass playing is not only his career; it is his love, he said.

Felton, 31, sat on stage last Saturday night in Gilligan's with his Savannah based rock'n'roll band, Shut Up & Drive, demonstrating his talent. The crowd applauded and whistled as he played solos that had people dancing in their seats.

When he was finished playing his white bass with his fingers and a Budweiser bottle, two band members lifted his wheelchair off the stage and Felton joined his friends at a table.

In an interview before the performance, Felton said that when he became paraplegic two years ago, his ability to dance on tabletops and play on the road was altered, but it hasn't stopped him from pursuing his goal to be one of the finest bass players in the world.

The August 1985 issue of *Guitar Player* magazine recognized his talents internationally when it picked Felton as one of three top instrumentalists in the world. His music was selected from about 600 tapes submitted in a one month period. And he is an endorsee of Peavey Electronics bass guitars, GHS Strings guitar strings and Ibanez guitars and effects.

About a month before the magazine article came out, Felton was driving a car pulling a boat for a friend. The boat fishtailed and the car landed in a ditch. The lower half of Felton's body was paralyzed. He spent 3½ months at a rehabilitation center for spinal chord injuries in Atlanta, but he said he doesn't like to dwell on the ordeal.

"I had unbelievable support from my family, girls and my buddies when I was in the center," Felton said. "And it taught me one of the most important things you have in life is real friends...they're the ones who are always there."

The accident brought other changes in Felton's life. He said it gave him the chance to develop and record his mail-order instructional cassette course, "Superchops," which covers many techniques for bass soloing. And he gives private bass lessons for \$25 an hour out of his garage apartment behind his mother's house in Savannah. Felton said more information regarding bass lessons is available by calling him at 916-233-BASS.

Ironically, he named the new, five-member band Shut Up & Drive, but he said the name doesn't have anything to do with the accident.

"I think the name is funny as hell," Felton said. "It's catchy and invariably, people love the name."

Felton arranges the bookings for the 7-month-old band, whose members include Mike Day, 31 (lead vo-

cals), Bart Zipperer, 19 (lead guitar), Chris Stubbs, 24 (lead and rhythm guitar) and Mark Vaquer, 27 (drums and vocals). Robert Youngblood and Kenny Peterson operate the sound system.

Shut Up & Drive, who play songs from groups such as The Cars, David Lee Roth, The Fixx and The Beatles, is gaining popularity in Savannah and surrounding areas. The band plays one to five nights a week and is booked at Gilligan's one week-end in the next three months.

"I feel I'm pretty lucky," Felton said. "I'm an accomplished musi-

cian, and I have good self-esteem and confidence in my playing."

Before the band took a break from playing last Saturday night, Tony Hooks, who grew up with Felton in the Savannah music scene, jumped on stage and played the "Star Spangled Banner" with Felton. Hooks, wearing a cowboy hat, grey pants and a red leather shirt, complemented Felton, wearing jeans, a red sleeveless T-shirt and matching red tennis shoes. When the guitar duet was over, the crowd howled with approval.