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Double guitars pass sellout crowd's test

By **Bob Karlovits**

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At times, the time-keeping of her left foot was a bit incessant. Sometimes, the introductions to her solos were a little muddled and lacking in direction. But Emily Remler is a guitarist with a ton of heart.

Fellow guitarist Joe Pass doesn't have those problems. His melodic statements are clear and his conceptions are precise. But most times the soul that Ms. Remler shows is just not around.

So, last night's double-guitar treat at the Manchester Craftsmen's Guild presented quite a choice. If the listener wasn't satisfied with Ms.

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Remler's work, the exacting nature of Pass' made up for it.

And that seemed to be the case as Pass drew a warm round of applause after his set. There was even a smattering of people in the sold-out crowd of about 350 who offered standing ovations.

But Ms. Remler's set was the more intense. She offered tunes as well-known as Claude Thornhill's "Snowfall" and "My Romance," but she also did originals, too.

Her playing is strong and directed in the Wes Montgomery school of guitar work. There were times that she even sounded like she was imitating Montgomery. In her version of "Wave," she filled a late-chorus solo with octave runs that were right out of the Wes playbook.

One of her best pieces, "Snowfall," also showed some of her flaws. As she moved into her solo, she lost sight of where she was going and the first few bars were totally muddled. She quickly recovered, however, and made that song work well, even though it is old and potentially cliché-tempting.

She did half of her section solo, but then was joined for the second half by Jay Ashby, a trombonist who also dabbles at percussion. (Ashby, incidentally, is the brother of Marty Ashby, director of performing arts for the Guild.)

A trombone-guitar duo doesn't



Joe Pass

Simply overwhelming

sound too smooth, but Ms. Remler and Ashby made it work. He added a good sound and a melodic solidity to tunes like Ms. Remler's originals, "A Hug for Pittsburgh," and "Blues for Herb." He has good articulation on the instrument and plays with such a smoothness that he doesn't overwhelm her guitar.

Pass, however, is capable of overwhelming anyone with whom he shares the bill. His virtuosic ability on the guitar is so overwhelming that it is stunning to grasp the number of notes and chords he's playing.

But he doesn't have the soul in his playing that Ms. Remler does. His approach to "All the Things You Are," for example, showed at least three rhythmic approaches to that song. It became a textbook in playing. But, while it may have showed that great execution, it didn't show much philosophy in what the song was about.

At the end of the concert, Ms. Remler and Pass played a couple duets that showed that their styles, while different, can blend. They did a solid version of "Falling in Love With Love" that was highlighted by Pass' backup work that was so complex that it sounded like Bach had written it for a keyboard.