



Heroes: Emily Remler

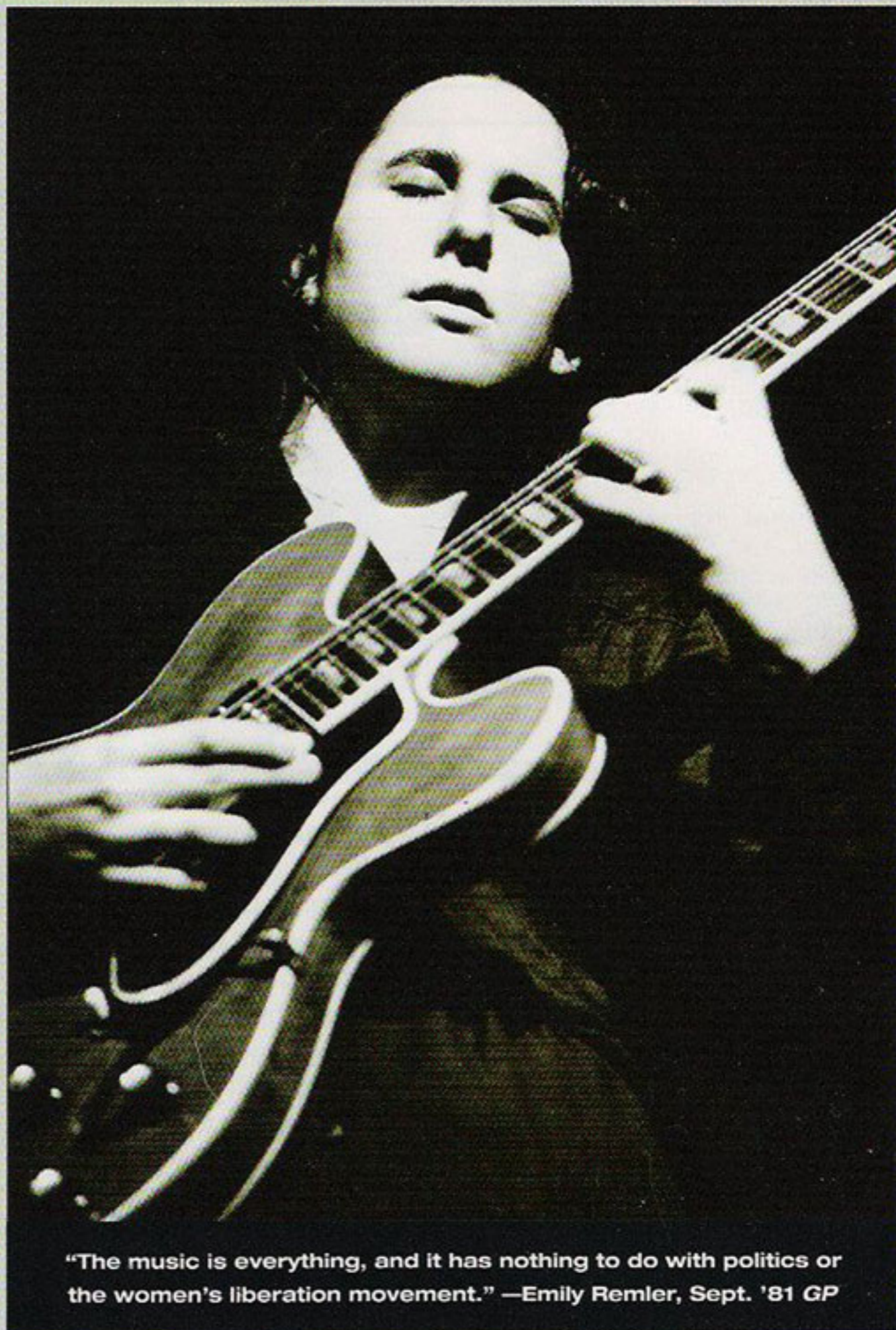
Emily Remler came and left before most of us had a chance to fully appreciate her immense talent. The jazz legend died of a heart attack in 1990 at age 32. But while among us, she cut several stellar records, and won the staunch support of jazz luminaries such as Jim Hall and Herb Ellis. It was Ellis, in fact, who introduced Remler to larger audiences. After hearing her play in New Orleans, he invited her to perform at the Concord Jazz Festival, which led to her signing with the Concord Jazz label.

With her first release—1981's *Firefly*—Remler was already showing promise as a heavyweight jazz-guitar contender. Her early efforts resonate with the echoes of Wes Montgomery, Pat Martino, and Joe Pass, but she defined her own style with each new album. Likewise, her personality as a composer developed quickly, and subsequent records included more and more of her tunes until 1984's *Catwalk* featured her compositions exclusively.

In 1985, Remler—who usually played a Gibson ES-330—recorded *Together* with Larry Coryell. “She was a natural,” Coryell remembers. “She was probably the best jazz guitarist to come along during her lifetime. Her solo on ‘Nunca Mais’ from *Transitions* is one of the greatest jazz-guitar performances I’ve ever heard. Her playing is totally integrated with the rhythm section, she has a hard-swinging feel, and her melodic ideas are great. Also, Emily stayed away from old-fashioned clichés. She avoided diminished arpeggios like the plague—that’s one of the things that made her sound so modern.”

As with Charlie Christian, Jimi Hendrix, and so many others who died young, it’s impossible to guess where Remler’s career might have gone. But despite her meteoric life, the records she left in her wake remain an invaluable contribution to the jazz guitar canon. And as Coryell says, “Her music speaks for itself.”

—ADAM LEVY



“The music is everything, and it has nothing to do with politics or the women’s liberation movement.” —Emily Remler, Sept. ’81 GP