

Los Angeles Times

Jazz Reviews : Remler Shatters Notions at Vine St. Bar & Grill

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Emily Remler shatters every preconception about jazz. Young, petite, attractive and female, she is as far from the stereotypical image of the jazz musician as the Rev. Jesse Jackson is from the icons of the political past.

But images can be deceiving. Remler, a guitarist in the mainstream tradition, has the chops to play along with anyone. With pianist Eliane Elias, who is also in town this week, Remler is part of an emerging generation of female performers who have, once and for all, buried the line that says, "She plays pretty good--for a girl."

Making her first appearance in the area in two years, Remler opened at the Vine St. Bar & Grill on Wednesday night, backed by the local rhythm section team of Harvey Newmark on bass and Ralph Penland on drums.

With only a brief afternoon rehearsal in which to become acquainted with her accompanists, Remler chose mostly familiar standards for her late show appearance. An opening middle tempo stroll through "Yesterdays" encountered a few rhythmic thickets, but Remler burst into the clear with a brightly energetic solo on her own piece, "Mocha Spice."

Her reading of the ballad "Polka Dots and Moonbeams" revealed a rich harmonic imagination, and she played an almost effortless string of hard-grooving variations on an untitled blues.

If there were problems, they traced to an occasional not-quite-in-sync interaction with Newmark and Penland. In addition, Remler was sometimes betrayed by her own youth and exuberance into solos that were filled with fanciful ornamentation, but lacking thrust and focus.

The gift of music, however, is clearly in Remler's playing. She may look like a candidate for Madonna's back-up singers, but she plays like the gifted jazz performer she really is.

Remler continues at Vine St. through Saturday.

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