

JAZZ



Emily Remler is a top jazz guitarist.

Emily Remler plays one smokin' guitar

By Don Adair
Correspondent

On the outside Emily Remler is a petite, unmistakably female jazz guitarist — but that's just the part you can see.

"I may *look* like a nice Jewish girl from New Jersey," she once told an interviewer, "but inside I'm a 50-year-old black man with a big thumb, like Wes Montgomery."

Anyone who saw Remler's headline performance this year at the Coeur d'Alene Jazz Festival will tell you she played like one: At the tender age of 32, Remler has established herself as one of the most exciting jazz guitar players in the world, bar none.

Anyone who didn't hear her this summer will get a chance Sunday evening, when she performs at The Met. She'll be backed by Kelly Roberty, bass, and Brad Edwards, drums.

In Coeur d'Alene, Remler showcased her fluid, riveting style and encyclopedic mastery of mainstream jazz. She was introduced to the music of John Coltrane and Wes Montgomery as a student at Berklee, fell in love with the bebop mainstream and now is one of its most accomplished practitioners.

All of which is to say that Remler just plain smokes.

Remler is an accessible yet challenging guitarist who lives up to Whitney Balliet's description of jazz as "the sound of surprise." You don't need to scrape of many layers of illusion — her age, her size, her gender, her deceptively gentle approach to her guitar, just for starters — to discover that a fire burns deeply inside her.

Most important, she is a superbly skilled player who gets the fire out of her gut and onto fretboard.

Onstage, Remler is friendly and

open but when she turns her attention to her guitar she becomes consummately focused. She plays without histrionics or drama — there's enough going on in each bar she plays that she doesn't have to layer it with show biz.

Says guitarist Herb Ellis, who played a key role in Remler's development, "I've been asked many times who I think is coming up on the guitar to carry on the tradition, and my unqualified choice is Emily."

Aside from her own five, critically-acclaimed solo LPs, Remler has enhanced the performances of a stunning list of contemporary greats from Wynton Marsalis to Sonny Rollins, Freddie Hubbard and Stanley Jordan. She and Larry Coryell teamed up in 1986 for an LP called "Together," a tour de force of contemporary mainstream jazz guitar — but Remler now operates in bigger leagues even than Coryell's.

Despite some early, gifted female musicians, women have traditionally only succeeded in jazz as vocalists. Big-band leader and composer Toshiko Akiyoshi and keyboardist Carla Bley join Remler as notable exception, and it hasn't been easy.

When asked how she handles narrow-minded male musicians, she said, "You don't get angry, you don't get bitter, you don't get feminist about thing. You don't try to make a statement for women. You just get so damn good that they'll forget about all that garbage."

It's not so hard these days, she said, "Now that they know I can play."

PREVIEW

Emily Remler will perform in concert Sunday at 7 p.m. at The Met. Tickets are \$12 and are available, with applicable service charges, at G&B Select-a-Seat outlets, 325-SEAT.