

LOOKOUT

A GUIDE TO THE UP AND COMING



SUSAN GERS

"I may *look* like a nice Jewish girl from New Jersey, but inside I'm a 50-year-old, heavysset black man with a big thumb, like Wes Montgomery," says jazz guitarist **Emily Remler**, 24, whose big thumb—i.e., rhythmic authority—and other talents have brought her a successful debut LP, *Firefly*, as well as festival dates from Concord, Calif. to Berlin. Says jazz great Herb Ellis: "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." Respected *L.A. Times* critic Leonard Feather pegged her as jazz's 1981 Young Woman of the Year. Explains Remler of her uncommon pursuit: "No one ever told me that girls shouldn't play guitar like that."

Raised in Englewood Cliffs by "totally nonmusician" parents—a meat broker and a housewife—Remler began strumming folk guitar at age 8, and progressed to cloning Keith Richard, Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix rock solos. "Listening to music, I found I could

sing all the parts," she recalls, "bass line, horn line, harmony." At 18, Remler earned a two-year degree from Boston's Berklee College of Music. She moved to New Orleans and became house guitarist at a club that booked the likes of Joel Grey, Robert Goulet and Nancy Wilson, then headed for New York. She regularly backs Brazilian singer Astrud Gilberto or teams with bassist Eddie Gomez and drummer Bob Moses, and she recently wrapped an onstage musical stint in the L.A. company of the Duke Ellington musical *Sophisticated Ladies*.

"My parents finally took me seriously after I got my LP out," Remler says. "At least they've given up on me just getting married and having children."

When not on the road, she shares a Manhattan apartment with former Buddy Rich pianist Mike Pelleria, 25. "If I'd become a rock musician and dressed up in black leather, I'd probably be rich," Remler speculates. "But you can't be in jazz for the money." □