

Brisbane band's style upstages the locals

JAZZ

GAIL BRENNAN

BEBOPERA
Basement Cafe, January 13

THIS Brisbane band, markedly improved since their last visit almost a year ago, should now find work in Sydney every other month. On Saturday they played to a capacity house at Soup Plus; on Sunday to a very small gathering at the Basement Cafe.

First, a few words about the new venue. This is at the same location as the Blue Note, in King Street, which closed last year.

Under new management and

slightly redecorated, the room remains, potentially, the best in town. A less trebly and metallic setting on the sound system would improve things further.

Bebopera opened with an instrumental set which showed the band to be full of talent. Steve Russell's lucid and, at times, hard-driving piano was a highlight. Tony Hobbs soloed on alto, tenor and baritone saxophones with fluency, swing and invention, but his impact was diminished by a sound mix that, in the main body of the room, picked up only the high overtones of his instruments, giving a high ring and no body.

The sound was actually better at the back of the room. The sound mixer

would be well advised to come out of his box and listen down at the front for a while.

Drummer Ken Eadie displayed a crispness, rhythmic certainty and sheer originality that place him among the handful of consistently interesting Australian drummers.

Singer Leah Cotterel joined the band for the rest of the night. At that point the performance took on a cabaret or "night club" aspect, and it must be said that they do this better than almost all the local acts on this particular circuit. Cotterel has a full, deep, husky and strong voice and a very definite period style.

In all, highly enjoyable.



Leah Cotterel ... a voice that's husky and strong.