

Spreading wings

JAZZ

GAIL BRENNAN

BEBOPERA

Soup Plus, April 21

FOR TWO years, Brisbane has had a youth-oriented jazz club — Club Alto — in which original music is encouraged, and in which poetry readings and performances of chamber music also occur. If this sounds a bit arty it also sounds as if they're having a great time. The punk movement was pretty arty, too.

The quintet Bebopera showed that they are also realistic enough to put entertainment-oriented bands together and get themselves some work on the wider circuit. At least, that was how Bebopera presented itself at the Soup Plus. On Monday they appeared, minus singer Leah Cotterell, at the Strawberry Hill Hotel, where they no doubt showed their more free-ranging and hard-driving side.

It seems a shame that Cotterell did not sing a song or two in that context,

because there are indications of an inventive ability that might well flower with a less arranged approach. The most unexpected influence of Eartha Kitt was sometimes used in quite a creative way.

Bebopera were a great success at Soup Plus with their often unusual choice of songs, their well-calculated musical routines, involving Latin passages and effective drops into half time. Ex-Sydney saxophonist Tony Hobbs played short and highly musical solos on alto, tenor, baritone and flute, giving plenty of indications of the fire expected on Monday.

Pianist Steve Russell played with crisp articulation and drive. The less experienced bassist Peter Walters played nice lines but showed a propensity to bounce rather than groove.

Drummer Ken Edie was a real puzzle. The only thing I can say with certainty is that in some of his breaks he bent the time around in ways that were not appropriate to the material. Beyond that lay the deeper fascination of not being able to figure out what he was doing. At that point one can only suspend judgment.