

MUSIC



COCO'S LUNCH

Surrey Hills Music Cafe, July 30

Jessica Nicholas Reviewer

What a silken web these singers weave

One of the most mesmerising songs in Coco's Lunch's repertoire is a composition by Sue Johnson called *Sister, My Sister*. It's an exquisitely simple, hymn-like piece – a prayer for compassion, support and understanding – that is also an apt metaphor for the way these five women relate to one another on stage.

Satisfying as Coco's Lunch's recordings are, there's something about this band live that cannot be captured on CD. Watching their faces as they work together, and their bodies moving subtly to shape each story and underline each emotion, is like watching a delicate spider's web swaying in the wind: a web held together by interconnecting strands that make it surprisingly strong and flexible.

Last Friday's concert opened with a set by Natalia Mann (on harp) and Aurora Kurth (vocals), which helped create a mood of quiet intimacy. By the time Coco's Lunch arrived on stage, the capacity audience at Surrey Hills' Music Cafe had settled into an expectant silence, ready to be swept into these five women's warm embrace.

The group has been together for 10 years, and their natural camaraderie allowed the songs to breathe freely, even when pinned to intricate harmonies and overlapping rhythms. Sometimes these rhythms were implied as much as stated (there's even a song in the group's repertoire, *Invisible Rhythm*, that hints at the subtle, unconscious pulse inherent within all music and all life.) Elsewhere, the rhythms pushed themselves forwards eagerly, either via the deft use of various percussion instruments, or simply through the layering and interlocking of five perfectly controlled voices.

In fact, it's in the purely a cappella pieces and passages that the sophistication of Coco's Lunch's music reveals itself most clearly. In Friday's rendition of *Sweep My Feet*, Johnson's voice became a pert, walking bass, while Nicola Eveleigh conjured up a wah-wah trumpet, swaggering trombone and swinging hi-hat accents. On *Thanga*, Lisa Young's striking konnakol (vocal percussion) pulled against the deft pulse articulated by the other four. And, on *Sister My Sister* – the evening's final tune – all five voices sank into the gloriously rich harmonies, creating a piece that was part lullaby, part prayer, part celebration of the human voice.