



the collecting queen

Entertainer Jackie Clarke displays her passion for collections and Kiwiana in her Auckland home.



The recent trend for minimalist interiors went completely unacknowledged by entertainer and singer Jackie Clarke. Her Grey Lynn house, shared with filmmaker partner Grant Lahood and their two young sons, is the antithesis of the look, thanks to their passion for collections and Kiwiana.

A specially built glass case houses Jackie's collection of snow domes, the walls in one of the sitting rooms are nearly covered by Grant's collection of Mt Taranaki images (he was raised in Taranaki) and above the fireplace is an array of fake stuffed animal heads. There are carved wooden Maori heads, ethnic masks, ukuleles ... the lists go on. There is even a collection of Spanish bullfighting images and relief carvings which Jackie defends as being very Kiwiana, reminiscent of all of those mock Spanish small town coffee houses with swirling stucco walls.

Jackie believes her passion for collecting began in childhood, when she used to help her Aunt Marg at her flea market stall. "I was fascinated by the discovery of all of these treasures, essentially other people's junk.

"Also, as a twin [with sister Robyn], I like multiples. Not just a few but many. I think a handful of snow domes

would look naff but a collection looks fine." Then later, when touring with bands like Marching Orders, the Netherworld Dancing Toys and When the Cat's Been Spayed, she would gravitate to the local second-hand stores and buy pieces for her collections. "Now, we have friends who are props buyers for movies and they come across all sorts of things we might like."

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Collecting has also become easier, thanks to the internet. "I have to be careful I don't become a TradeMe junkie. Brown paper parcels turn up on the doorstep and Grant wonders what on earth I've bought now."

Her favourite collection is relatively small, a trio of special edition musical Jim Beam bottles fashioned to look like three famous Maori chief figurines.

The collections are not, of course, simply about the things. Jackie has a constant reminder of the places she has been and the people associated with various pieces.



With a family of her own, home has become more important to Jackie. “When I travel these days, I spend a lot of time dying to get back home, away from those motel rooms.”

Home is a villa that Grant and Jackie have owned for a number of years and have renovated a couple of times – once to add a new kitchen and dining area, and more recently to add a main bedroom and family living area. It has certainly provided more wall space to display the collections.

And work these days is still the rich variety it has always been for Jackie. Her latest project is very dear to her heart – a CD of original songs put together with fellow musicians, guitarist and drummer Wayne Bell and songwriter/singer Callie Blood.

The trio has been making music together in different guises for many years but finally got The Darlings together five years ago, performing alternative country renditions of New Zealand songs. Now they have launched a CD, *The Cicada Sessions*, which is available in music stores. Jackie describes it as “pop with a twist; a little bit Dixie Chicks”. It has already attracted some great reviews.

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“I have spent so much time singing covers and now I finally get to sing originals,” says Jackie.

Other projects Jackie has been involved in include the musical *Sweet Charity*, and TV’s *New Zealand Idol* and *Here To Stay*, in which she traced her Scottish ancestry (Jackie is also part Samoan and part “non-specific Pakeha mix”). She also sings covers with her other band, Lady Killers, is a regular at Christmas in the Park events and made a documentary about war songs with partner Grant, which aired on Anzac Day.

Just so long as any of the work doesn’t take her away from home for too long – from Grant, the boys Stan and Ernie, and her collections! **H**

