

Devotion to stars caught on film

By LYNNE ILLINGWORTH

Photographer Angela Colbert became fascinated with ordinary people obsessed by their idols when an 80s pop star she worked for was stalked by a crazed fan.

She doesn't want to name the British pop star she kept house for as his stalker is still at large.

But her intrigue grew and after returning home to Auckland she sought out devotees of celebrities. During a two-year period, she has caught on film their dedication to strangers.

And during her travels she met people who not only idolise their heroes, but copy their appearance and are now living memorials to their favourite stars.

Angela, 33, has put together 12 photographs of the fans for her first solo exhibition, which opens at te tuhi — the mark in Pakuranga on August 18.

The Cult of Fame display features a Cliff Richard devotee Angela spotted in the street wearing a T-shirt featuring his face.

A Jimi Hendrix fan was snapped in the cemetery at Grafton and a woman called Riki is pictured in her Mt Roskill bedroom with her posters of Ricky Martin.

The Marilyn Monroe look-alike, who Angela met through a friend of a friend, relished dressing up as her idol, and the Princess Diana copycat



LIFE THROUGH A LENS: Photographer Angela Colbert makes a rare appearance on the other side of the camera lens with the Marilyn and Robbie lookalike photographs from her first solo exhibition.

Photo: DEAN PURCELL

was found in Glenfield.

The Robbie Williams fan, introduced by another friend, donned Kiss-style facepaint and was taken to an ice rink for the photo shoot.

The professional Michael Jackson impersonator was photographed on a carousel at Rainbow's End.

Pamela Anderson's copycat was found at a beachwear competition wearing the trade-mark red swimsuit.

One of the first people Angela photographed was an Elvis lookalike from New Lynn, who she met at a competition of impersonators of The King in Rotorua.

"The people have been amazing. They have all been really, really willing and have been fantastic about having their photographs taken," she says.

"I tried to avoid the professional impersonators, it was more about the ordinary per-

son in the street."

She believes the most important aspect of the photographs is they are of ordinary people who have integrated aspects of a famous person into their daily lives.

Angela, who lives in Sandringham and works in a nearby shopping centre, started taking pictures seriously in 1989 after doing a course. She moved to London in 1990 where she was first introduced to the darker side of fame.

"I was working for someone who was internationally famous who had this stalker and I became really interested," she says. "I was just intrigued. I remember saying that I thought it was really cool but I was only young then.

"The stalker became quite dangerous, intercepting his mail, leaving flowers on the doorstep. She befriended his mother and even moved into the same street."

Back in Auckland in the mid-90s, Angela started looking for people obsessed by fame and went along to impersonation competitions.

The most bizarre fans featured in her exhibition are the father and son Elvis lookalikes she photographed in Memphis in 1997.

Elvis Aaron Presley MacLeod's father, Paul, was a King impersonator, his mother was a Priscilla imitator and his dog was called Lisa Marie. Elvis MacLeod is now the curator of the world's only 24-hour Elvis museum.

"He ran the museum with his dad and they videotaped the TV 24 hours a day just in case there was anything on that mentioned Elvis," she says.

"In the photograph you can see the files where they would write things like 'Elvis mentioned on the *Tonight* show at 10.45pm' and they would write down what was said about him. Their house was called Graceland Too and it had the fake pillars out the front just like the real home."

Asked who her favourite celebrity is she doesn't hesitate.

"Hugh Hefner. I would really like to take his photograph. It would be one way of getting into the mansion," she laughs.

She was looking for someone to show her work but couldn't afford the fees and decided to submit her work to te tuhi — the mark. Her show is one of four opening there on August 18. The other three are Robert Jahnke's Alpha Omega, Remembrance by Frances Hansen and John Reynolds' Eureka School Detail.