

Museum of Miscellanea

Lincoln home boasts kitschy bric-a-brac

By SEAN MCCARTHY
Assignment Reporter

In Charles Johnson's Museum of the Odd, precious heirlooms are plastic, the literature is campy and horror stories and the Beta format reign supreme.

Johnson's lifelong collection of bric-a-brac, albums and comic books (graphic novels for the elitist) have given his Lincoln home the look of a museum.

Since 1956, Johnson has accumulated, sold and displayed the stuff of modern Americana. It has been happening since he first cut out "Dennis the Menace" comic strips as an 8-year-old.

"I sort of identified 'Dennis the Menace' as a role model," Johnson said.

He continued in grade school collecting stamps and moved on to horror novels in high school. Be it the graphic horror magazines of the 1950s or the campy elements in stories such as "The Creature of the Black Lagoon," horror is a predominant theme in Johnson's museum.

On the main floor, visitors can admire Johnson's collection of more than 200 Beta videocassette tapes, his extensive album collection and squeaky, rubber animals — although some have lost their squeak, Johnson said.

A wall-sized plastic jack-o-lantern monument also stands on the main floor. More than two dozen plastic pails stare down patrons. Halloween lights shine over some of the pails for added effect.

"It's always Halloween here," Johnson said.

As you ascend the stairs, severed doll heads — getting bigger with every step — look on from the left side. For some, the

climatic scene of "Apocalypse Now" may come to mind: "The horror... the horror..."

Upstairs, the tacky trinkets and ornaments on display would drop Martha Stewart like a four-vessel cerebral hemorrhage. Thousands of detective novels, a Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots boxing ring and a small army of Godzillas await curious attendees.

The crown jewel for Johnson is his 1956 Topps baseball card set.

The Mickey Mantle card alone sells for about \$1,500, he said.

Comics of "The Beverly Hillbillies" and the original "Mad" — before it became "Mad Magazine" — rest shrink-wrapped in Johnson's upstairs domain.

While the collection is mind-boggling, its meticulous organization is even more bizarre. Each crevice of Johnson's house is filled with his various collections. Monday, Johnson displayed a somber look of concern looking over the boxes of stuff still packed in his car from a recent auction.

"There aren't that many empty spaces in here," Johnson said. "I'm trying to figure out where the heck I'm going to put it."

Luckily for Johnson, he's been able to make his love for acquiring stuff a full-time occupation. This past year, Johnson quit his regular job insulating pipes to become a full-time collector and dealer. Johnson says he mostly liked his former



CHARLES JOHNSON shows that his eclectic collection of pop culture paraphernalia flows over into his bathroom. Johnson is a self-proclaimed purveyor of popular culture ephemera. "I kind of like stuff that's maybe a little tacky or in bad taste," he said.

job. "It was kind of fun in a way, but really itchy," he said.

Johnson now travels to thrift stores and auctions across the nation. Though he's been as far as New York, Johnson said he could acquire most of the materials he needs through local auctions.

The Museum of the Odd has amassed some celebrity visitors over the years. Porn star turned blues woman Candye Kane and Zoo Bar favorite Magic Slim are among Johnson's esteemed patrons.

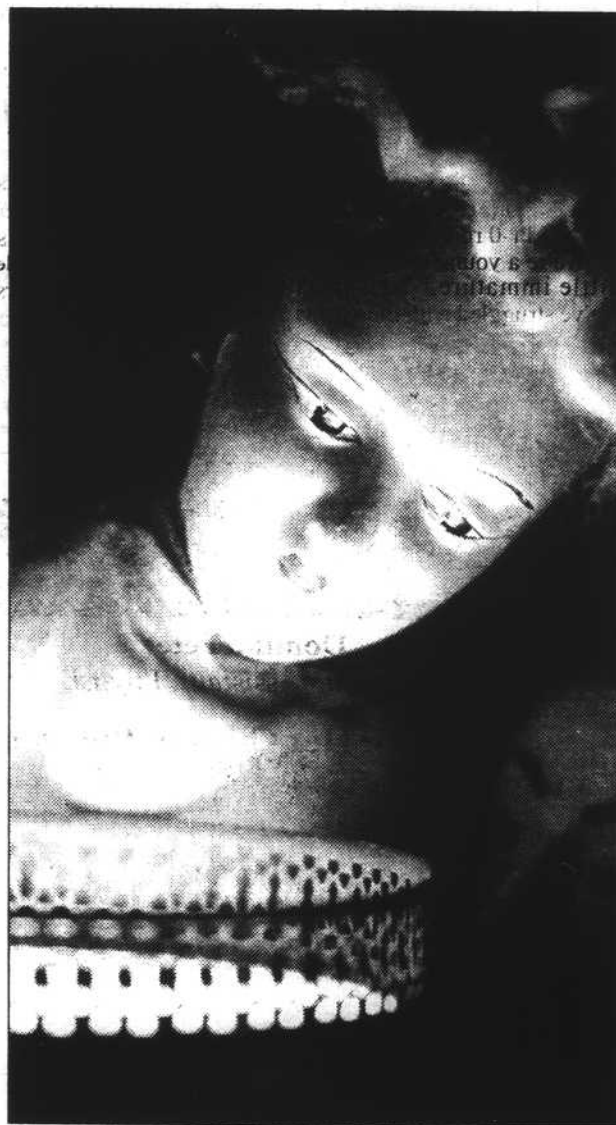
The collection attracted national attention in June when the F/X channel telecast from Johnson's house.

"I was a little nervous, but I came through well," he said. "It was a lot of fun."

Johnson said some of his influences included director David Lynch, cartoonist Robert Crumb and the king of camp, John Waters. Johnson said he admired Waters' kitschy, bad taste.

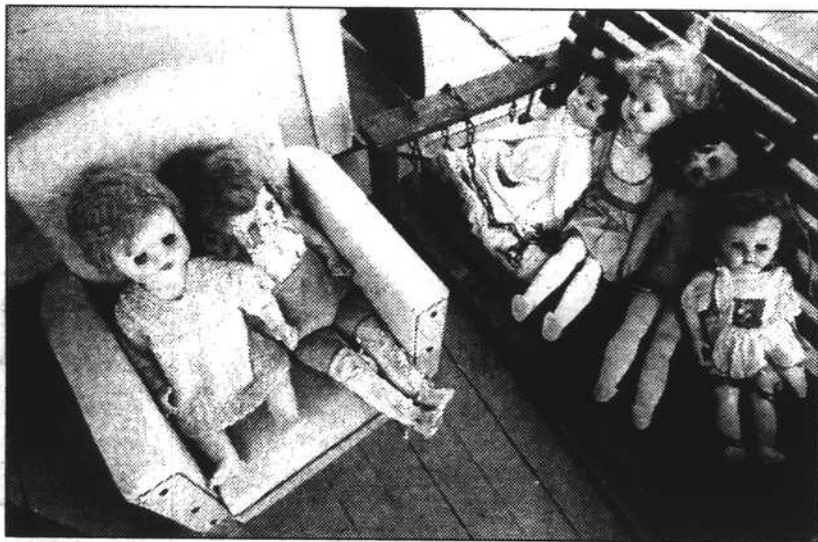
"If I'd met him, we'd have had a lot to talk about," Johnson said.

Those interested in touring Johnson's Museum of the Odd should call (402) 476-6735 for appointments and directions. The cost for visiting is free, but bringing a present for Johnson would be nice, he said.



A RAG DOLL hangs draped over the top of an old reading lamp.

SANDY SUMMERS/DN
Old broken dolls lie in a row on the porch of the Museum of the Odd.



Athens' Funkomatic fuses funk, rock, blues

By SEAN MCCARTHY
Assignment Reporter

It's hydromatic. It's systematic. It's Funkomatic.

Formed in 1994, Funkomatic blends elements of funk, soul, R&B and rock, for starters, in its energetic live shows.

The band puts it in overdrive for Duffy's Tavern patrons tonight at 10.

Bassist Ted Pecchio said the band formed in Athens, Ga., to perform old

funk tunes. Sly and the Family Stone, James Brown and George Clinton were among the initial covers.

"In two months, we felt like we really had something going on," Pecchio said.

Other members of the band include alto saxophonist and lead vocalist Terry Weaver, guitarist Jason Salzman and keyboardist/organist Chris Queen.

Funkomatic played more than 200 high-energy shows last year alone,

Pecchio said. One thing that has been consistent for all of them: The Hammond Organ goes to all the clubs and bars.

In a Philadelphia club, band members hoisted the 500-pound organ above their heads, up a flight of stairs and up and down fire escapes, Pecchio said.

The band is touring to support its latest album, "Living on One," on Arch Records. Pecchio said he planned on recording a funk opera within the next couple of months.

Bernie Worrell, a keyboardist in George Clinton's band, is set to produce the record, Pecchio said. The opera involves stealing and returning the soul of Earth.

Some of Pecchio's influences include Sly and the Family Stone, Jimi Hendrix and James Brown, he said.

"Any time I hear James Brown, it puts my heart in a tizzy," Pecchio said.

Two of his favorite albums are The Beatles' "Sergeant

Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" and "Stand" from Sly and the Family Stone.

Funkomatic has played Duffy's Tavern twice this year. Pecchio said he was anxious to play the venue again, if only to see Brad, a bartender there.

"Brad's this gruff, disgruntled, wiry-bearded bartender," Pecchio said. "He hated everybody, but he somehow took a liking to us."

For those wishing to give up the funk tonight, the cost is \$4.