



Musician Paul Fowler is also a classically trained vocalist.

Courtesy of the artist

## Jetpack jam

*Band specializes in jazz-funk-chill-lounge*

### JETPACK JAM

by Deonne Kahler, Taos Hum, October 12, 2006.

I was raised on TV shows like “Lost in Space” and “Star Trek,” and I have one very important question as we all settle into the 21st Century: Where the heck is my Jetpack?

I think it’s about time companies quit focusing on building the ultimate SUV and put a little more effort into developing one of those backpack-like things that would allow us to zip around town, without a care about potholes

and traffic bottlenecks. Maybe it could even be powered by biodiesel.

I’ll send an e-mail to General Motors about this, but while we wait for our futuristic dream transports to arrive, groove to the “jazz-funk-chill-lounge” sounds of the cleverly named trio, Jetpack Rental. Your next chance to experience their truly unique sound is from 7-10 p.m., Friday (Oct. 13) at The Taos Inn, 125 Paseo del Pueblo Norte.

Jetpack's piano player is Taos's ubiquitous jazzman, Paul Fowler, who's joined by drummer Joel Fadness and Justin Bransford on electric bass. Jetpack Rental is Fadness's brainchild, who wanted to create a jam band without any guitars, a nontraditional approach for that genre to say the least.

The trio manages the jam band approach by Fowler playing bass licks on the piano when Bransford solos -- he uses an EQ pedal on his bass to knock out the low end, so he can essentially take a guitar solo without a guitar.

“Jetpack is our dream project. which means we’re sacrificing money for art,” Fowler joked. Even though they’re developing an enthusiastic fan base, the band's had a hard time finding a New Mexico venue that will give them a regular gig. Their sound is more lounge than straight-up jazz, with a funky backbeat groove and lots of free improvisation. It’s hard to pigeonhole, which may be part of their difficulty.

The tunes are what Fowler described as musician’s music. “Jazz music has always attracted musicians as much as it attracts people who love jazz, especially modern jazz, which is where a lot of our influences come from,” Fowler said. “There are things we do that are normally appreciated more by musicians because they actually know what we’re doing.” Even though there’s plenty of impressive technique to please the experts, the trio’s goal is to create a sound that even the non-aficionado can appreciate.

Fowler has a long history of serious musical focus, and was raised near Milwaukee by two musician parents. “I was cradled in music,” he said. He started out as a musical theater major in college, but quickly realized he wanted to focus solely on music and

leave out the drama part, so he transferred to the voice department, later adding composition.

Many people don't know that Fowler is a classically-trained vocalist, but he studied from the ages of 12 to 24. He used to have a gig at Momentitos de la Vida (now names Sabroso Restaurant and Bar, playing piano and singing, but Fowler said, "I know it sounds terrible, but I got paid the same to sit and play, or sit, play and sing, and it takes a lot more energy to sing and play so I stopped doing that." He still works as a vocalist, but said he does primarily classical composing these days. He writes chamber music, orchestral music, and choral music, and he performs his work all over the world. He also does arranging both for individual projects and larger events, like Taos's Soundscapes concert series.

Fowler has won many awards and commissions over the years, and recent accomplishments include this year's New York Youth Symphony commission for a short work that will premiere at Carnegie Hall in February. (The symphony only commissions three pieces a year.) Fowler's piece is based on his research into labyrinths. "There are appearances of similar labyrinths all over the world, completely independent of different cultures. It's one of those collective unconscious symbols, so I've been trying to play with that," he explained. A percussion ensemble out of Taiwan also just commissioned a piece.

He's lightened up on the gigging, and has been focusing on his writing plus he has a small recording studio where he does a fair amount of producing. He's also writing a solo album of originals and vocals, plus finishing up the Jetpack debut CD, and he's collaborating again with Robert Mirabal for a Tokyo-based modern dance company. Last but certainly not least, he and his wife are expecting their first child later this month.

Have I mentioned that Fowler is only 28 years old?

Even though Fowler's goal is to be composing as much as possible, Jetpack Rental is something special. Jetpack is one of those things I'm clinging to with all my might, since it's a really good time," he said. It's also definitely a good time for the audience so don't miss the show.

Call the Taos Inn at 505-758-2233. Admission is free. For more information, go to [www.paulfowler.net](http://www.paulfowler.net).