

# John P. Funk offers light and sound to lift the spirit

John Miller Updated Jan 23, 2016  0



Courtesy photo Audio and visual artist John P. Funk

If you've recently forgotten why you live in Taos, a conversation with John P. Funk might serve as a good reminder.

The 50-year-old El Paso-born 3-D animator turned musician has been living in Taos for more than two years, but his effusive enthusiasm for the Northern New Mexico landscape, culture and arts makes one wonder if he did not arrive just yesterday.

Many transplants who relocate from crowded urban centers experience a heady sense of freedom and inspiration upon arrival in Taos — but this feeling can go dormant after so many years. Not so with Funk, who has chosen to harness his inspirations and coalesce them into a sound that he refers to as "Enchanted Lands Soundscapes" — a new musical project that features stirring and heartfelt compositions that carry the indelible mark of an enamored newcomer.

"I moved here from Austin, Texas, and being in Taos is like being out in the middle of nowhere when compared to a big city," said Funk. "I feel like that transition really helps to sort of reboot your consciousness."

Funk explained that some of his family is based in Albuquerque, and though he had heard of Taos many times over the years, it was not until his sister and brother-in-law, Sunita Smith and Reece Tatum, encouraged him to visit their home in Pilar that Funk found his way to the area and produced his first album.

"I came up here in 2012 and had a trunk full of music equipment," said Funk. "I found myself up at this earthship out in the countryside, and while I was house-sitting for weeks by myself, this 'soundscape' kind of music just started coming out of me. I was trying to figure out what to call my project, and since I was creating music inspired by the 'Land of Enchantment,' I decided to reverse the main words and came up with 'Enchanted Lands' — the name really encapsulates the philosophy that I have been working on with this music, which is the oneness of nature."

Funk is set to sample from three volumes of completed work for his Enchanted Lands Musical Ceremony and Spirit Art Show, which takes place Saturday (Jan. 23), 6-8 p.m., in the Land of Oz Education Center, 216 Paseo del Pueblo Norte, Suite C. Admission is free, but a donation is appreciated.



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'Rio Grande Gorge Sunset' photograph by John P. Funk Courtesy image

Though he has not worked in the music world for very long — at least not in a professional sense — Funk's technical expertise from his previous career, combined with a natural musical ability, has allowed him to quickly progress from a dabbling musician to promising composer.

"I spent about 30 years in Austin and worked in the game development field," said Funk. "I'm an animator and filmmaker, really an artist of all trades, but in the last decade I've moved more towards my music."

Funk has worked on a number of short films, and some of his credits can be found on [imdb.com](http://imdb.com). His passion for soundtracks has had a particular influence on his current project.

"I love films. I'm a big 'Star Wars' fan and fantasy genre fan," said Funk. "Jerry Goldsmith is one of my favorite composers. A lot of people don't know much about him. He's not as famous as John Williams of 'Star Wars' fame, but Goldsmith created soundtracks for movies like 'Planet of the Apes,' 'Patton,' 'Alien,' 'Outland,' 'Total Recall' and 'Basic Instinct.' He's not pigeonholed into any genres, and his composing is visceral and melodic. A good soundtrack is like its own character and creates a sort of landscape for the listener, so when I came up with Soundscapes, it was like painting using music as the medium. Everything in my music is very visually inspired."

"Soundscape" certainly seems to be the appropriate categorization for Funk's music in light of his nature-based muses. The word itself refers to the component of the auditory environment that can be perceived by humans, but is probably best known as the new-age subgenre that relies heavily on MIDI-based synths that subtly evolve from quiet melodies to rollicking beats. Funk puts a unique spin on the subgenre by layering his electronic compositions with acoustic instrumentation.




"I've played guitar since I was young and brought a Native American flute when I moved from Austin, but had never really tried playing it," Funk explained. "My neighbor up in Pilar was playing a Native American flute, and when I heard him play, I started picking it up myself. It came very naturally, and so I chose to incorporate it into my recordings and live performances."

Each track comes with a description of Funk's specific inspiration — a waterfall in the Rio Grande Gorge, a rare animal sighting or visit to a sacred historic site are just some of the examples he provides. Many feature samples of ambient sounds that Funk records while exploring the Taos landscape. The result is a kind of audible topography designed to transport a listener to Funk's sources of inspiration.

In addition to sounds, Funk picks up natural debris on his treks around Northern New Mexico, taking common organic materials like cactus branches and interlacing them with LED lights — another combination of technology and nature that seems to be his signature. He calls these creations "Spirit Art," and he will have samples to display and sell at his show on Saturday.

When asked what he hopes to achieve through his performance, Funk says that he would like "people to just come in and enjoy the music, and hopefully take away a youthful feeling of imagination, creativity, inspiration and connection to their own passions."

To learn more about Funk's projects or to hear his most recent tracks, visit his website at [cozmicfunk.com](http://cozmicfunk.com) or call (575) 758-7399.

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