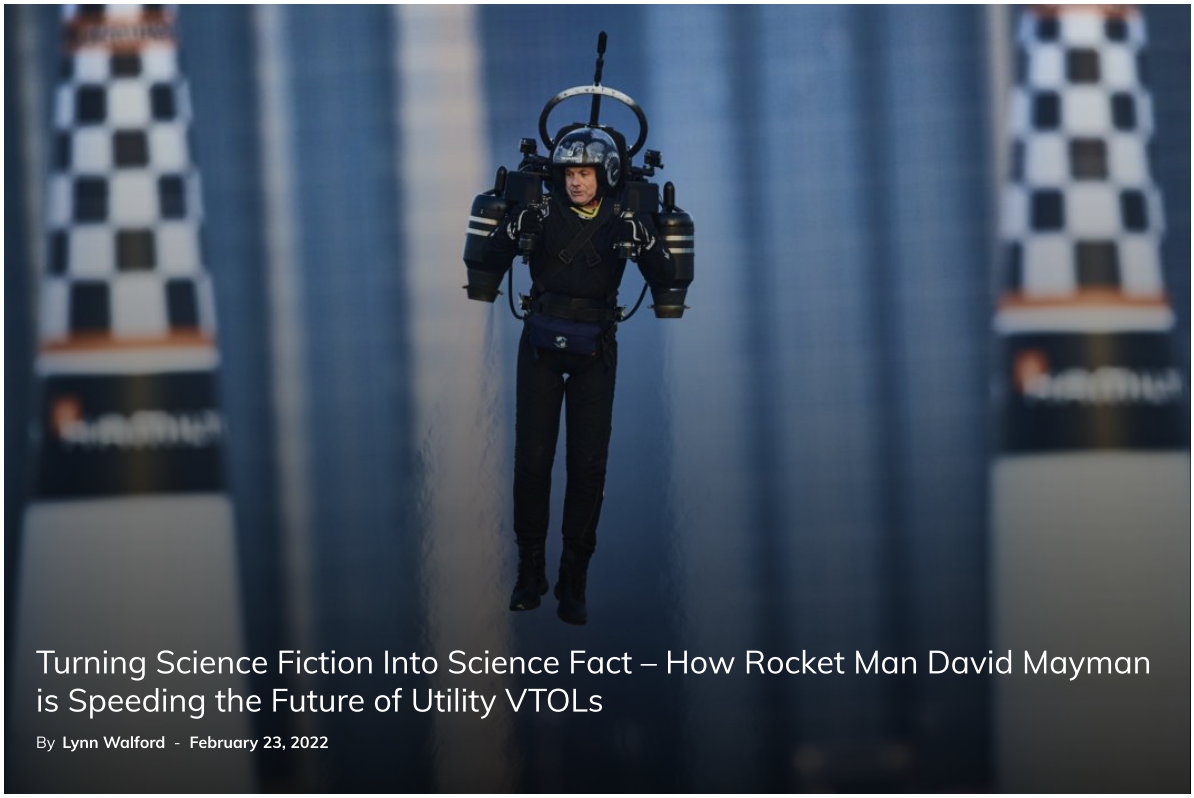

Turning Science Fiction Into Science Fact – How Rocket Man David Mayman is Speeding the Future of Utility VTOLs

By **Lynn Walford** - **February 23, 2022**

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Flying over the Statue of Liberty, with only a JetPack strapped to him, is only one of the many accomplishments of rocket man David Mayman.

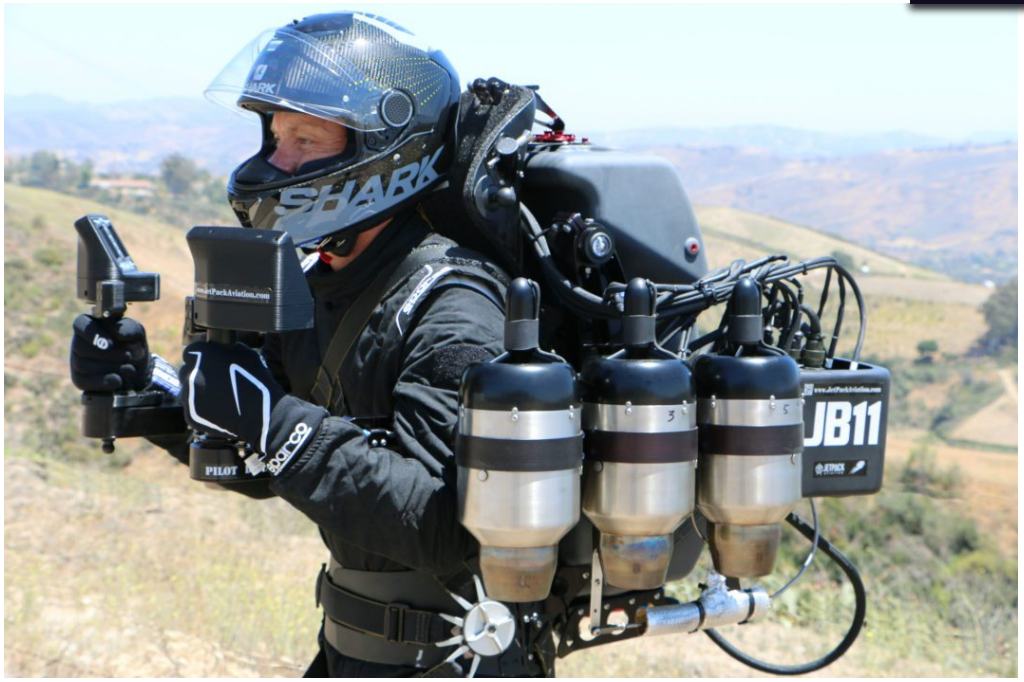
As CEO and founder of JetPack Aviation (JPA), he and his team are engineering a Utility Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL) craft – the Speeder. Mayman talks to Auto Futures about the future of the Speeder and what kinds of flights will be available “one day.”

Mayman is originally from Sydney, Australia. As a child, he dreamed of flying on his own. He made a helicopter out of fence railings and a lawnmower motor when he was twelve years old. He had a private pilot’s license by the time he was seventeen. He put his flying dream on hold, completing a degree in business and becoming a management consultant.

Then he worked in mergers and acquisitions in mining, and moved on to the dot-com boom. He created truelocal, the Australian Yelp, that he sold to News Corp.

“In 2005, my wife said you have to do something to get out of the house,” says Mayman, that is when he started working on the JetPack.

It was not an easy leap from 2005 to 2015 when Mayman flew over the Statue of Liberty. Mayman spent years on the JetPack project. He worked with Nelson Tyler who designed the Bell Rocketbelt worn by Bill Suitor during the 1984 Olympics.



Flying Over the Statue of Liberty

For the first JetPack flight, Mayman jetted into the skies around the Statue of Liberty.

“It was many years coming. It was a lot of work. It took years because it took months to work out with the FAA and all the different departments from New Jersey and New York. Because it was the first public flight in an iconic location, we were not allowed to publicize it in advance,” says Mayman, “It was amazing. It went off without a hitch.”

While he was flying, he saw the people on the Staten Island Ferry cheering him on.

Since the inaugural flight, Mayman has JetPacked over landmarks, all over the world. Jetpack Aviation was formed in 2016. The company offers flights for others who want to turn their dream of flying into a reality at the JetPack Experience Center in Moorpark, California. Participants get to keep their flight suit.

“It’s a life-changing experience. We train you and provide lunch because we found you get less motion sickness.” says Mayman.

JetPack is FAA approved and is authorised to provide flight instruction on JetPacks.

After JetPack – the VTOL Speeder

JPA has been developing Speeder since August 2018. The Speeder is an aerial utility turbine-powered heavy-lift VTOL for emergencies, rescue operations, fire-fighting and other missions. The Speeder's speed and size allows it to go into places where a helicopter would be at risk.

"We were working with the Navy with the JetPack. They wanted something simpler to drive and wanted it to be automated. It must be small like a jet ski or a motorcycle," says Mayman, "When we began there were only four VTOL companies, now there are over 300.

The Speeder can fly in places where there is fire with GPS. It can spot a fire starting. Then spray retardant before the fire gets too big. Helicopters are much slower. The Speeder can be brought in on a trailer and can be used to take off from the trailer and land in a small area about the size of half of a parking space, he says.

JPA is developing different configurations and modes of operation for Speeder. It can work with a pilot, autonomously or through remote control with VR goggles.

For recovery missions, a Speeder can fly up to 400 mph. For example, it could go from Los Angeles to San Diego in 15 or 20 minutes. No other urban air mobility option with electricity would be feasible. The problem with electric aircraft is the payload and the limited amount of density of the batteries.

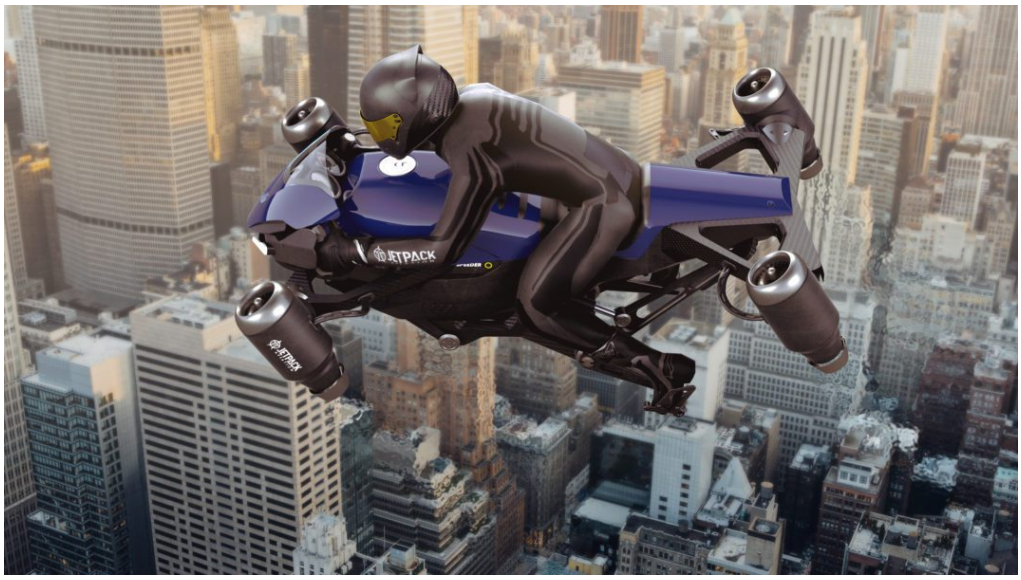
Electric power is not plausible to fly for more than 10 minutes. The Speeder uses aviation turbine fuel which through a partnership with Prometheus Fuels is net-zero fuel, says Mayman.

The Speeder is shaped more like a motorcycle and balanced like a Segway so the pilot won't fall off at high speeds. The pilot wears a helmet with communication to talk to other pilots and the ground station.

"The misconception people have about the Speeder is that it is designed for daredevils. But it's not just for racing. Speeder is designed with safety in mind. It is like an aeroplane, if you lose an engine, you can continue to fly. If you lose computer control, you can continue to fly," he explains.

A Speeder can deliver 600 pounds of medical supplies. It can also extract people out of an area, while a helicopter requires four or five people.

The US military is changing to more electric vehicles. The Speeder can carry in new batteries for these vehicles. There are Speeder configurations for a cargo tray or a litter to transport the injured out of difficult to reach areas, says Mayman.



“There is no wrong answer. We try out everything to make it work.”

In 2021, the Speeder P1 was tested in tethered flights. Speeder version P2 is almost ready to be tested untethered.

Mayman’s past work experience helped him to develop skills that he continues to use today to fly to new heights.

“I learned from my experiences – tenacity and how to talk to people. Nothing comes easy. It also helped me to learn how to negotiate and lead people. For me now, I am managing engineers. Engineers love to come to work here because they see what we do. They see that we are turning science fiction into science fact. There is no wrong answer. We try out everything to make it work,” says Mayman.

“We still have paperwork to go for the FAA to test the Speeder P2 untethered in the desert near Los Angeles by the spring or summer,” he adds.

He has not stopped dreaming about the future of aviation, turning science fiction into reality and micro-aero-mobility going faster than ever before.

He says, “In the future, one day, one or two people will be able to fly at supersonic speeds.”

Lynn Walford