

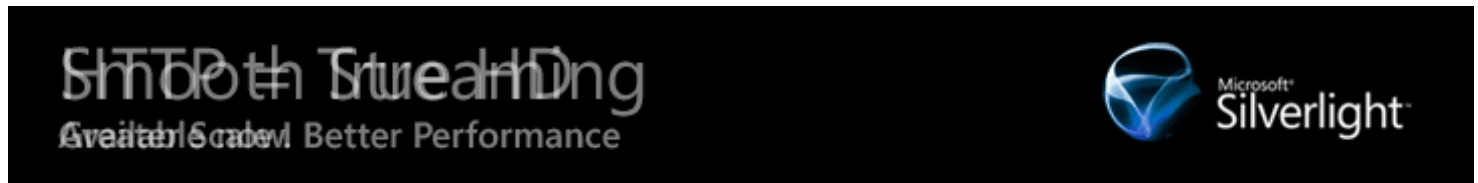
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Video Essentials

SXSW Is Streaming Live

By [Troy Dreier](#) · March 4, 2011 ·  [Print This Post](#) · [Post a comment](#)

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If you can't attend South by Southwest (SXSW) this year, don't worry. The legendary digital, music, and film festival will live stream more of its events than ever before, exposing a global audience to the scene-making ideas, artists, and films that make up the Austin, Texas-based festival.



SXSW isn't new to online video; it's offered a small amount of live streaming before. Most of its efforts, though, have been in video-on-demand, which it's offered for 10 years, explains Scott Wilcox, the festival's director of technology. This year, the festival will greatly increase its live streaming.

"We feel the immediacy of streaming offers some great advantages to people who can't attend for one reason or another," says Wilcox.

A Massive Challenge

With over 5,000 events taking place at the festival, happening in over 90 venues each night during the music portion, getting a streaming program set up has been a challenge. The festival would have offered more live streaming before, says Wilcox, but technical challenges and expense got in the way. This year, they found live streaming a lot easier and more affordable.

SXSW will do some of the streaming themselves, says Wilcox, and some with partners. [Watchitoo](#) is sponsoring the [Next Stage](#) and will live stream 24 hours of video. The Next Stage opens on March 14 with a kick-off starring the mayor of Austin and the festival's co-founder. That will be followed by live programming from noon to 6PM each day. Viewers will see a variety of content, including film interviews, a net neutrality debate, acoustic music sets, and more.

"Working with SXSW is really an opportunity for Watchitoo to show the innovation that we have in the product. For us, it's a great opportunity to be innovators in this field. It's a great match for us," says Rony Zarom, Watchitoo's CEO. Watchitoo will have three cameras at the event: one showing the main stage, one showing the interview area, and one catching crowd reactions.

[Keynote talks](#) from the Interactive part of the festival will be streamed from Saturday, March 12 until Tuesday, March 15. Four of the five major keynotes will be offered live, something the festival has never done before. As the time of this interview, Wilcox still hadn't chosen the platform his team would use for the streaming, but was looking at Livestream, Brightcove, and Limelight. He was leaning toward Livestream, though, because he liked its white label version and its features.

Bumps in the Road

Mobile is a difficulty for Wilcox, and he wasn't sure whether or not the live feed would be available to viewers using Apple iOS devices. SXSW will be streaming Flash video on its website. Besides offering video online, his team would also simulcast video to ten different event spaces in Austin.

Wilcox isn't worried that offering so much content live for free will hurt festival registrations. On the contrary, he sees live video as one more way to promote the talent on display.

"We feel like more exposure is better for the people we're working with," says Wilcox.

He's already learned that simpler is better when it comes to streaming live, and that he needs to bolster his team's knowledge of live video and the different options available. He's already looking for ways they can improve their streaming for the 2012 festival.