

PLENARY

SXSW Trade Show * Minneapolis Convention Center * Face Painting & Body Art Convention

'Convergence's Coming of Age'

EVENT: South by Southwest (SXSW) began as a music festival in 1987, and since then has evolved into a series of film, interactive-media, and music festivals and conferences that take place every spring in Austin. Each of the three parts runs relatively independently, with different start and end dates. The brand-new SXSW Trade Show: The Exhibition for Creative Industries is also now a part of the SXSW mix.

2011 MEETING (MARCH 14-17): Taking place at the Austin Convention Center, the SXSW Trade Show bridges the SXSW Film & SXSW Interactive Conferences (March 11-15) with SXSW Music (March 16-20). By combining three creative industries into one exhibition, SXSW expects to draw 35,000 registrants and 350 exhibitors.

CHALLENGES: Over the nine days of SXSW, SWSX schedules and produces more than 5,000 events. In addition to the Trade Show, SXSW offers five other exhibitions — ScreenBurn Arcade (gaming), Style X (indie-designer fashion show), Gear Alley Expo (new music equipment), Texas Guitar Show (buy-sell-trade music equipment), and Flatstock (concert-poster collectors).

With all that's going on, it's easy to see why SXSW Sales Manager Ron Suman's biggest challenge is "logistics, logistics, logistics." Suman, who is responsible for planning the Trade Show and all of SXSW's sales and marketing assets, said: "We strive to make certain that each and every participant, from registrant to filmmaker to speaker to exhibitor to musi-

cian, has the same opportunity to experience all that SXSW offers. Our aim is to qualify the statement that 'If you don't go home inspired, enlightened, energized, connected, and entertained, then you didn't go to SXSW.'"

INITIATIVES: For the first time in SXSW's history, the registrants and exhibitors of the three industries represented by SXSW — film, interactive, music — will be united under one roof for four days. "At SXSW, we've been giving the word 'convergence' a workout since 1995," Suman said, "and I believe 2011 will allow everyone to fully realize what that word truly means."

On the heels of SXSW's 25th anniversary this year, and with the launch of the SXSW Trade Show, Suman said, "we endeavor to provide increased media attention, add and enhance ser-

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vices and activities that provide exhibitors and registrants a richer, meaningful, and productive experience. Oh, and a good time!"

To complement and reinforce "convergence's coming of age," Suman said, the SXSW Trade Show will debut the "Next Stage," a place where celebrity interviews, comedy, music, debates, discussions, and demonstrations occur. The SXSW Hiring Hub, powered by Monster.com, will "facilitate the connection between SXSW's intelligent, creative, and motivated registrants," Suman said, "with ever-evolving industries of SXSW."

Another new initiative is the Meet Up Pavilion, which will promote communication between specific groups of two different industries. And, Suman said, "it wouldn't be Austin or SXSW without the inclusion of the SXsaloon" — the Trade Show bar, serving alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. ■

— Michelle Russell

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SHOWPLACE: The SXSW Trade Show combines three creative industries into one.

