



## **SXSW ANNOUNCES NEW KEYNOTES AND FOURTH ROUND OF FEATURED SESSIONS & SPEAKERS**

*Actor Issa Rae, Signal's Meredith Whittaker, and Colossal Biosciences' Ben Lamm with actor Joe Manganiello Announced as Keynotes*

*Featured Speakers Announced include the cast and creators of *The Last of Us*, Hideo Kojima, Kasley Killam, Keith Lee, RJ Scaringe, Conan O'Brien, Kevin Bacon, Taylor Tomlinson, Andrew McMahon and more*

**Austin, Texas — February 11, 2025** — South by Southwest® (SXSW®) Conference and Festivals has announced the addition of new Keynotes and the fourth round of Featured Speakers for the 39th edition of its annual Conference, which celebrates the convergence of technology, film, television, and music. SXSW takes place March 7-15, 2025 in Austin, Texas. The Keynotes announced today include actor, writer, producer, and director **Issa Rae**, President of Signal **Meredith Whittaker**, and founder and CEO of Colossal Biosciences **Ben Lamm** with actor, producer, director, author, Emmy Award-winning voice actor, and reality competition host **Joe Manganiello**.

"Every year, SXSW assembles a group of speakers that are doing extraordinary and often surprising things, like breaking boundaries in storytelling and representation, advocating for secure communication, and bringing back the woolly mammoth," said Hugh Forrest, President and Chief Programming Officer. "Issa Rae, Meredith Whittaker, Ben Lamm, and Joe Manganiello make up a stellar group of changemakers who are a perfect fit for the SXSW community."

Issa Rae, Meredith Whittaker, Ben Lamm, and Joe Manganiello join the previously announced Rock and Roll Hall of Famer and Grammy Award-winning lead singer for Creedence Clearwater Revival **John Fogerty**, Bluesky CEO **Jay Graber**, and IBM Chairman and CEO **Arvind Krishna** as Keynote Speakers for SXSW 2025.

The Featured Speakers announced today include the cast and creators of HBO's Emmy Award-winning series ***The Last of Us***; game creator and founder of KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS **Hideo Kojima**; CEO of Rivian **RJ Scaringe**; food critic and creator **Keith Lee**; five-time Emmy Award-winning television host, comedian, writer, producer, and host of the podcast *Conan*

*O'Brien Needs a Friend* **Conan O'Brien**; Golden Globe Award-winning actor **Kevin Bacon**; comedian and host of *After Midnight* **Taylor Tomlinson**; and singer-songwriter and frontman of Something Corporate, Jack's Mannequin, and Andrew McMahon in the Wilderness **Andrew McMahon**.

The SXSW 2025 opening session will feature **Kasley Killam, MPH**—renowned social health expert and award-winning author of *The Art and Science of Connection*.

The SXSW Conference is organized into 23 programming tracks presented in a variety of session formats. Tracks for 2025 include 2050, Advertising & Brand Experience, Artificial Intelligence, Climate & Sustainability, Creating Film & TV, Creator Economy, Culture, Design, Energy, Fashion & Beauty, Film & TV Industry, Food, Game Industry, Government & Civic Engagement, Health & MedTech, Music & Tech, Music Industry, Psychedelics, Startups, Tech Industry, Transportation, Workplace, and XR. More information about SXSW programming tracks and formats can be found [here](#).

#### **Announced SXSW 2025 Keynotes:**

- ***Colossal: Technology Company Turning Science Fiction to Science Fact***: Fueled by the spirit of American ingenuity, Colossal Biosciences is rewriting the rules of what's possible. In this fireside chat, founder and CEO of Colossal Biosciences **Ben Lamm** and actor, producer, director, author, Emmy Award-winning voice actor, and reality competition host **Joe Manganiello** will share a special announcement about Colossal's progress while showcasing groundbreaking technologies like gene editing, cloning, and artificial wombs that are restoring extinct species. But this isn't just about de-extinction—it's about creating new technologies to also save existing species. Don't miss a front-row seat to the future, where science fiction becomes fact through extraordinary innovation.
- ***A Conversation with Issa Rae***: Actor, writer, and producer **Issa Rae** first received attention for her award-winning web series and the accompanying *New York Times* best-seller, "*The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl*," before creating and starring in the Peabody-award-winning HBO series, *INSECURE*, which garnered her multiple Emmy® and Golden Globe® nominations. Rae has also made her mark on the big screen, co-starring in Greta Gerwig's *BARBIE*, which dominated theaters as the biggest box-office hit of 2023, *SPIDER-MAN: ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE*, Sony's highest-grossing animated release in history, and the award-winning *AMERICAN FICTION*. In 2020, Rae formed HOORAE, a multi-faceted media company that develops content across mediums in an effort to continue to break boundaries in storytelling and representation. Rae produced the HBO Documentary *Seen and Heard*, which is having its world premiere in the 2025 SXSW Film & TV Festival.
- ***A Conversation About Online Security and Confidentiality with Signal President Meredith Whittaker***: Think about it: everyone has something to hide these days even--maybe, especially--if you're the good guy. Join this tactical, practical, and heretical discussion between **Meredith Whittaker**, President of Signal and leading advocate for

secure communication, and author, professor, host of the *Remarkable People* podcast, and Chief Evangelist of Canva **Guy Kawasaki**.

**Announced Featured Sessions include:**

- ***Balloonism - A Film Based On The Album By Mac Miller***: This session will feature a conversation between visual artist and director **Samuel Mason**, graphic designer and creative director **Miller McCormick**, and Managing Partner at Hornet **Hana Shimizu**, with film and creative director **Alexandra Thurmond** serving as moderator. Together, they will discuss the creative process and framework that went into creating *Balloonism*, the eponymous film based on the album by the late Mac Miller.
- ***Breaking Barriers by Turning Prisoners into Firefighters***: In January 2025, wildfire devastated L.A. and a little known fact about who is fighting these fires came to light: since the 1940s, California has relied on incarcerated people to fight fires on the frontlines. The program - known as Fire Camp - is criticized by some and lauded by others, but there's one undeniable challenge...once these firefighters are released, it is nearly impossible to get a job in the fire service—despite their passion, experience, and a severe labor shortage. This session features co-founder and CEO of the Forestry and Fire Recruitment Program **Royal Ramey**, a firefighter who got his start in Fire Camp and created a pathway allowing others to follow in his footsteps.
- ***Change Starts Now & It Starts With Us!***: In an era defined by the urgency of the climate crisis, *Change Starts Now: 100 Lessons from a full-time Changemaker* is not just a book; it's a call to action. Join activist and founder of YOUTHTOPIA **Melati Wijzen** as she shares her inspiring journey since the age of 12, mobilizing people from all generations around the world to tackle one of today's most pressing issues.
- ***Claiming the Future of Entertainment***: Gaming has been at the forefront of entertainment for nearly 50 years. Within that time, gaming has gone through various iterations of change while becoming more popular than ever. In this previously announced session, five-time Emmy Award-winning television host, comedian, writer, producer, and host of the podcast *Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend* **Conan O'Brien** will join President of Blizzard Entertainment **Johanna Faries** in sharing how long-lasting IPs continue to excite audiences and build communities, not only with gaming enthusiasts, but also in the entertainment/pop culture space.
- ***A Conversation with Taylor Tomlinson***: Join comedian and host of *After Midnight* **Taylor Tomlinson** as she brings her signature humor to the SXSW stage.
- ***DEATH STRANDING 2: ON THE BEACH***: Join legendary game creator and founder of KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS **Hideo Kojima** as he discusses and shares new details about *DEATH STRANDING 2: ON THE BEACH*, the upcoming sequel to the critically acclaimed *DEATH STRANDING* video game, coming to PlayStation®5.
- ***Eames House: Singular Gateway to Charles and Ray's Many Worlds***: The Eames House--sometimes called Case Study House #8--turned 75 this recent Christmas Eve. In this session, author, filmmaker, and Director of the Eames Office **Eames Demetrios** will talk not only about the history (and future) of the jewel-like house Charles and Ray

Eames built for themselves, but also the beautiful way that home is a lens into so much of their life and work.

- **Fans Over Fees: Touring in the Age of Secondary Market Greed:** Whether it's expensive ticketing fees or ticket scalping, fans and concertgoers weigh the pros and cons of purchasing tickets more than ever in today's evolving live music landscape. In this intimate fireside chat, singer-songwriter and frontman of Something Corporate, Jack's Mannequin, and Andrew McMahon in the Wilderness **Andrew McMahon** will discuss Something Corporate's innovative anti-scalping measures for their recent reunion tour. These measures put fans first by combating ticket bots and inflated resale prices. McMahon will share insights on leveraging technology, fostering fair access, and prioritizing authentic fan experiences. This will be a must-attend session for artists, industry professionals, and music lovers seeking to protect the integrity of live performances.
- **Fireside with Arm CEO Rene Haas:** Join Arm CEO **Rene Haas** as he discusses this transformative era of artificial intelligence, where AI continues to unleash unprecedented opportunities for society, well beyond our imagination.
- **Funny AF Comedy Showrunners:** Universal Television has been home to the most iconic comedy series and creative voices of the last few decades. From *The Office* to *30 Rock*, the studio's showrunners know how to land a joke. Hear from the current generation of Universal Television creators, **Eric Ledgin** (*St. Denis Medical*), and **Nahnatchka Khan** (*Laid*) about how to make a seriously funny show.
- **How America's 33M Small Businesses Can Grow and Prosper:** There are 33M small businesses in the U.S. They account for almost 48% of private-sector jobs and generate \$5.3 trillion in annual revenue. Yet, 50% of them will fail in their first 5 years. Small businesses are the fuel that runs the global economy and the world's most vital source of innovation and creativity. Ensuring their success is one of the greatest challenges of our time. At SXSW, star of ABC's Emmy Award-winning *Shark Tank* (produced by MGM Television and Sony Pictures Television) and co-founder of Cost Plus Drug Company **Mark Cuban** and *Shark Tank* entrepreneur and co-founder/CEO at BeatBox Beverages **Justin Fenchel** will join with Emmy Award-winning host, actor, three-time New York Times bestselling author, and Chief Empowerment Officer at Clover **Tabitha Brown** and Chief Brand, Marketing, and Communications Officer for Fiserv **Shannon Watkins** to unveil a new success paradigm for small businesses at the intersection of culture, commerce, and community, redefining support for next generation entrepreneurs.
- **How Technology Is Transforming Urban Spaces and Building Cities of the Future:** Reporter at TechCrunch **Rebecca Bellan**, Mayor of the City of San Jose **Matthew Mahan**, and Chief Marketing Officer at AutoDesk **Dara Treseder** will sit down for a discussion about the collective effort to bring government into the 21st century. Together, they will unpack how the latest technologies — including AI — are transforming urban infrastructure and creating lasting positive impacts on communities like San Jose and beyond. This panel will also explore how Autodesk and the City of San Jose are helping transform the future of housing, transportation, responsible AI procurement, and more to ultimately reimagine what it means to be a sustainable, thriving city.

- **ILM Immersive: Inviting Fans to Step Inside Our Stories:** Renowned for their home VR experiences such as: the Emmy-nominated "*Vader Immortal: A Star Wars VR Series*;" the Oscar-winning *CARNE y ARENA*; and the Marvel Studios and Disney+ mixed reality experience "*What If...? – An Immersive Story*," join VP of Immersive Content at ILM Immersive **Vicki Dobbs Beck**, Executive Producer at ILM Immersive **Alyssa Finley**, Supervisor of Look Development and Technical Art at ILM Immersive **Jonathan Harman**, VP of Development at ILM Immersive **Mark S. Miller**, and Director of Marketing and Publishing at ILM Immersive **Elizabeth Walker** for a discussion about the evolution of immersive storytelling. This session will explore how the mixed reality space has evolved since the studio was founded nearly 10 years ago as ILMxLAB, and how those learnings continue to shape how they invite fans to "step inside our stories."
- **Kevin Bacon: A Career Retrospective From Footloose to The Bondsman:** This session will feature an exclusive career retrospective with the iconic Golden Globe Award-winning actor **Kevin Bacon**, whose diverse roles have spanned over four decades. From *Footloose* to *The Following*, Bacon has captivated audiences with his versatile performances. In this intimate conversation, he'll reflect on his career, the evolution of his craft, and give a sneak peek into his upcoming series *The Bondsman* for Prime Video. Don't miss the chance to hear firsthand from one of cinema's most enduring talents.
- **The Last of Us: Cast and Creators on Season 2:** In this session, the cast and creators behind HBO's Emmy®-winning series *THE LAST OF US* will provide a glimpse into the show's highly anticipated second season debuting this April. Panelists will include co-creators, executive producers, writers, and directors **Craig Mazin** and **Neil Druckmann**, and cast members **Pedro Pascal**, **Bella Ramsey**, **Gabriel Luna**, **Kaitlyn Dever**, **Isabela Merced**, and **Young Mazino**.
- **Mastering the Art of Influencer Entrepreneurship:** The media we consume is no longer just produced by a few powerful entities but instead by thousands of voices through the Creator Economy. Food critic and creator **Keith Lee** exemplifies this transformation, using his platform to build an influential business empire. Along with founder and CEO of Digital Voices **Jennifer Quigley-Jones**, the two will discuss how content creators can strategically use customer insights, innovative marketing techniques, and AI to fuel growth.
- **Measuring Film & TV Streaming Viewership:** In this session, **Rob Jonas**, CEO of Luminate, the entertainment data and insights company that fuels *Variety's* Streaming Originals Charts, will be joined by Chief Content Officer at Tubi **Adam Lewinson** to discuss the value of data in the ever-evolving streaming landscape. Anchored by Luminate's industry-leading film & TV data, this conversation will cover how the lifecycle of IP is extended by finding new audiences on streaming platforms, why streamers are changing their approach to producing original films and series, how audience engagement shapes acquisition strategy, and what information creators need to understand when it comes to streaming content. Attendees will hear first hand about how Tubi fuels fandoms of all kinds with the world's largest collection of movies and TV episodes, including over 300 exclusive originals, engaging viewers with a fun and easy entertainment experience.

- ***The Moment We're In: Transitioning How We Move, Think and Change The Planet:*** The future of our planet's climate will be determined for many generations to come by the decisions and actions we take over the next few decades as we transition our global economy away from fossil fuels. The companies and countries that lead this technological reset will establish the foundation for sustained technology leadership for the next hundred years. Beyond this massive shift from fossil fuels, we are also defining and birthing the integration of artificial intelligence into every aspect of our society - from large language model applications to robotics in the physical world. In this session, founder and CEO of Rivian **RJ Scaringe** will reflect on the scale of these changes and discuss how considering our kids' kids' kids can help us as society navigates this exciting and critical moment in history.
- ***Paramount CTO on AI in the Media Industry:*** Cut through the hype on AI with Chief Technology Officer, Executive Vice President, and Head of Multiplatform Operations at Paramount Global **Phil Wiser** as he shares three examples of how the media company is using the tech today to improve not just operations, but your viewing experience as well. Wiser will also talk about where he is finding the most relevant use cases in media and speak candidly about what he believes are the biggest challenges and opportunities facing the media industry over the next five years.
- ***Quantum Computing—What's now and what's next?:*** Google's Quantum AI team made headlines around the world with their breakthrough chip Willow. Where is Google and the overall quantum computing field now? What exciting things might be coming next? Hear more during this fireside chat with Chief Operating Officer at Google Quantum AI **Charina Chou**.
- ***A Sabbatical Deep Dive with The Happiness Lab Podcast Live:*** In this previously announced session, senior lecturer at Harvard Business School and founder of The Sabbatical Project **DJ DiDonna** will guest star in a live taping of psychology professor **Dr. Laurie Santos'** *The Happiness Lab* podcast. In this episode, Santos and DiDonna will explore why sabbaticals—an intentional extended leave from your job—can transform your career, reduce burnout, and improve your life. DiDonna will explain 3 types of sabbaticals and why they're crucial for your creativity, relationships, and performance. Santos and DiDonna will then discuss how to convince your boss, your colleagues, and even yourself that a sabbatical isn't just a long vacation, but a smart investment in your future.
- ***The Story of Solana—Why It's the Ecosystem Fueling the Future of Web3:*** Solana has processed 200B+ transactions since launch, which is more than all other blockchains combined. That's enabled by its design, which has a high degree of composability. But looking toward the future of Web3, what does this composability enable: What will people build? What will they build that they haven't even thought of yet? In this fireside chat, hear from co-founder of Solana and President of Solana Labs **Raj Gokal** and General Partner at Foundation Capital and Solana seed investor **Rodolfo Gonzalez** as they discuss the company's origin, lessons learned, and how design decisions enabled it to become blockchain's fastest-growing platform.
- ***SXSW 2025 Opening Session: Kasley Killam:*** Kick off SXSW 2025 with an inspiring and perspective-shifting opening session featuring **Kasley Killam, MPH**—renowned

social health expert and award-winning author of *The Art and Science of Connection*. Drawing from her research at Harvard and over a decade of experience advising global organizations, Killam will reveal why meaningful connection is essential for longevity, well-being, and success—and give a glimpse into the future where social health takes center stage, transforming industries and society.

### **About SXSW**

SXSW dedicates itself to helping creative people achieve their goals. Founded in 1987 in Austin, Texas, SXSW is best known for its conference and festivals that celebrate the convergence of tech, film and television, music, education, and culture. An essential destination for global professionals, the annual March event features sessions, music, and comedy showcases, film and television screenings, exhibitions, professional development, and a variety of opportunities to meet and connect with people. SXSW proves that the most unexpected discoveries happen when diverse topics and individuals come together. SXSW 2025 will take place March 7–15 in Austin. Learn more at [sxsw.com](https://sxsw.com). To register for the event, please visit [sxsw.com/attend](https://sxsw.com/attend).

SXSW's expansion into the Asia Pacific region, with SXSW Sydney starting in 2023 and Europe with SXSW London in 2025, provides new possibilities at this iconic experience. These events, each with their own distinct flavor, make South By an indispensable three-stop tour for the global creative community.

SXSW 2025, Driven by Rivian. The SXSW 2025 Conference is sponsored by Itaú.

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