



SXSW ANNOUNCES MORE THAN 250 PANELPICKER SESSIONS FOR THE 2026 INNOVATION, MUSIC, AND FILM & TV CONFERENCES

Leaders from Adobe, Anthropic, Disney, Mars Wrigley, Microsoft, MIT, Nuuly, Paramount+, PGA Tour, Pinterest, Ubisoft, Wikipedia and many more will discuss the future of technology, marketing, health, design, entertainment and more across three conferences over seven days

Austin, Texas – November 4, 2025 – South by Southwest® (SXSW®) has announced more than 250 sessions for the 2026 Innovation, Music and Film & TV Conferences (March 12–18), the 40th edition of SXSW, from PanelPicker submissions. PanelPicker, SXSW's session proposal platform, allows the community to have a voice in what sessions are programmed at the SXSW Conferences.

From thousands of submissions, and after weeks of community voting, the Conferences will cover topics as diverse as humanity in the age of artificial intelligence (AI), the creator economy as the new Hollywood, the psychology of marketing, the future of scent branding, DNA and the dark genome, how world peace is critical for global health, and designing for societal shifts.

While AI dominated as the most popular submission topic overall, this year's PanelPicker proposals saw a notable surge in sessions specifically addressing AI's impact on humanity—how we evolve alongside this technology to protect creativity and human expression. Following AI, branding and marketing topics accounted for nearly a third of all submissions. These proposals focused on themes including the evolution of consumer behavior, how brands can do more with less, and how creators and community lead the new brand playbook. Health rounded out the top three, with submissions on healthcare innovation, scientific advancements in medicine, the growing field of longevity and healthy aging, and mental health. In fact, 10% of all sessions submitted focused on mental health topics, covering areas like general wellness, managing stress and anxiety, and advancements in therapy.

"In its 40 years, SXSW has grown from a regional music showcase to a global showcase of innovation and what's next across technology, business, entertainment, and more. SXSW is the place creators and innovators come together to discuss the biggest questions on emerging trends," said Greg Rosenbaum, SVP of Programming at SXSW. "This year, one theme stuck out above the rest: humans. Across all of our tracks—Tech & AI, Cities & Climate, Creator Economy, Culture, Design, and more—session submissions asked the fundamental question, 'how does this impact humans and humanity?' From these submissions our programming team curated a broad collection of sessions to answer that question and many more. Whether it's your first or your 40th time at SXSW, you don't want to miss out."

The SXSW Innovation Conference is organized into programming tracks presented in a variety of session formats. Tracks for 2026 include: Brand & Marketing, Cities & Climate, Creator Economy, Culture, Design, Health, Startups, Sports & Gaming, Tech & AI, and Workplace, plus, the Music and Film & TV Conferences.

From the most popular topics in this year's PanelPicker submissions, highlights from several of the Innovation conference tracks from the SXSW programming team include:

Tech & AI: How We Could Lose Control: Avoiding the Paths to Runaway AI—This fireside chat, featuring physicist **Anthony Aguirre** and tech ethicist **Tristan Harris**, moves past surface-level alarms to map the actual mechanisms by which humanity could lose control over advanced AI. They will unpack how opaque incentives, design flaws, systemic misalignment, and power concentration could sideline humanity by its own creation, exploring concrete ways to prevent this outcome.

Brand & Marketing: The Anime Advantage: Brand Strategy Meets Cultural Power—Anime has shed its niche status to become one of today's most powerful tools for extending franchises and reaching global audiences. **Darren Traub** and **Elizabeth Cohen** from Crunchyroll, **Robin Tilotta** from Twitch, and **Uzma Rawn Dowler** from Major League Baseball (MLB) will explore how talent, brands, and creators are using anime as a narrative and business engine to build immersive worlds and drive long-term brand equity in pop culture.

Creator Economy: An Influential Conversation with Jordan "The Stallion"—Join us for a fireside chat with Influential CCO **Chris Detert** and one of today's most recognizable digital personalities, **Jordan "The Stallion" Howlett**. Known for his viral storytelling and unfiltered honesty, Jordan will discuss how he built his devoted community by staying true to himself while navigating the business of brand deals, audience engagement, and online growth.

Sports & Gaming: Launching a New WNBA Team: The Story of the Toronto Tempo—As the WNBA prepares to tip off its expansion into Canada, this panel takes audiences behind the curtain of launching the Toronto Tempo, the WNBA's first team outside the U.S., just months before their 2026 inaugural game. The Tempo's CMO, **Whitney Bell**, and CRO, **Lisa Ferkul**, and **Matt Klar** from The Greater will share key insights into defining a brand, securing sponsorships, and shaping community partnerships at this pivotal moment for women's sports.

Health: The AI-Powered Bionic Revolution Has Already Begun—As AI, robotics, and economies of scale converge, bionic limb pioneer **Aadeel Akhtar** reveals how shared breakthroughs are transforming assistive technology into accessible, intelligent extensions of the body. This session offers a glimpse into a future where advancements like mass-producible bionic hands and real-time adaptive control rewrite what the human body can achieve.

To see the full list of conference sessions announced, visit the SXSW schedule [here](#).

Additional Keynote Speakers, Featured Sessions, PanelPicker sessions and more, including Music Conference and Film & TV Conference session highlights, will be announced in the coming weeks.

New Look Festival & Conference

SXSW 2026 will transform downtown Austin into a pop-up creative village, with programming mapped to new and iconic venues and three Clubhouses serving as central hubs for Innovation, Film & TV, and Music. Each Clubhouse serves as a central gathering point, surrounded by related programming and events, making it easier than ever to navigate and connect. SXSW 2026 will also see a refreshed badge system that introduces reservations for the first time, giving attendees more control and flexibility. All badges now come with daily reservations that can be used to secure seats in advance. More information on the event and changes for 2026 can be found on the website [here](#).

Participation

There's still time to be part of SXSW. Learn more about opportunities to get involved:

[Music Festival](#): Seven nights to showcase your sound in Austin's most popular venues with an audience from around the globe. Don't miss your chance to turn your career up a notch.

[Pitch](#): This showcases innovative new technology to a panel of industry experts, high-profile media professionals, venture capital investors, and angel investors.

About SXSW

SXSW dedicates itself to helping creative people achieve their goals. Founded in 1987 in Austin, Texas, SXSW is known worldwide for conferences and festivals that celebrate the convergence of technology, film and television, music, education, comedy and culture. The annual event serves global professionals through sessions, showcases, screenings, exhibitions, and networking that consistently generates unexpected discoveries when diverse communities come together. SXSW 2026 runs March 12-18 in downtown Austin, preceded by SXSW EDU March 9-12. Learn more at sxsw.com.

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 2026 Driven by Rivian.

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Editor's Note: Media accreditation is now open for SXSW 2026 through February 13, 2026. Please visit our [press center](#) to submit your application.

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