



SXSW ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP TRANSITION FOR FILM & TV FESTIVAL

Austin, Texas, March 26, 2026 – South by Southwest® (SXSW®) today announced that Claudette Godfrey, VP, Film & TV, is stepping down from her role leading the SXSW Film & TV Festival after nearly 20 years with the organization. Peter Debruge, Chief Film Critic at *Variety*, has been named Director of the SXSW Film & TV Festival and will assume the role beginning April 6.

Godfrey has helped guide the SXSW Film & TV Festival & Conference through a period of sustained growth and evolution. During her tenure with the organization, she has championed boundary-pushing storytelling and supported emerging filmmakers such as Janicza Bravo, the Safdie brothers, and the Daniels, whose film *Everything Everywhere All at Once* world-premiered at SXSW and went on to win the Academy Award for Best Picture. Through her work, Godfrey helped shape SXSW into a launchpad for some of the most exciting projects in film and television today.

“Claudette has been an integral part of SXSW for many years, and her leadership has helped shape what the Film & TV Festival is today,” said Greg Rosenbaum, SVP of Programming at SXSW. “She has built a program that is both globally relevant and deeply rooted in discovery, and we’re incredibly grateful for her contributions.”

Peter Debruge will assume leadership of the festival, bringing decades of experience covering and shaping the global film industry. He joins SXSW from *Variety*, where he spent 20 years and served as the third ever Chief Film Critic in the brand's more than 100 year history, writing more than 2,000 reviews and covering major international film festivals for the last decade. Debruge was knighted by France in the Order of Arts and Letters for his work. As a leading voice in film criticism and programming, Debruge brings a deep understanding of both global cinema and the evolving media landscape.

The role also marks a return to Texas for Debruge, who grew up in Waco and studied film at the University of Texas at Austin. Early in his career, he co-edited the entertainment section of *The Daily Texan* alongside former SXSW Film head Matt Dentler and contributed to *The Austin Chronicle*, where he covered SXSW in the late 1990s. He brings a longstanding connection to the event and the Austin creative community, along with experience serving on juries at festivals

including Cannes, São Paulo, and Reykjavik, and as a co-founder of the Animation Is Film Festival.

“Peter brings a unique perspective and a deep passion for storytelling that aligns closely with SXSW’s mission,” said Jenny Connelly, Director in Charge at SXSW. “We’re excited for him to build on the strong foundation that Claudette established and lead the festival into its next chapter.”

“There’s a certain poetry to this appointment, which brings me back to the festival that is nearest and dearest to my heart, in the place I spent my formative years,” said Debruge. “I’ve been attending SXSW for nearly three decades during which time, I’ve seen SXSW grow and evolve into a world-class film festival. I’m in awe and admiration of the groundbreaking creative work done by Matt Dentler, Janet Pierson and Claudette Godfrey, and am honored to be joining the team to carry forward SXSW’s legacy of championing visionary voices. I will be eternally grateful to *Variety* for 20 incredible years, which taught me so much about the film industry and allowed me to travel the world, from Tokyo to Cannes, discovering all the great filmmakers (and festivals) the world has to offer.”

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. Learn more at sxsw.com.

SXSW continues to connect creative communities around the world through its flagship event in Austin and SXSW London, which launched in 2025—reflecting SXSW’s commitment to fostering meaningful exchange across culture, technology, and creativity.

SXSW 2026 Driven by Rivian.

###

Press Contacts:

SXSW

Brett Cannon

Alex McClure

filmpress@sxsw.com