



SXSW ANNOUNCES INITIAL FEATURED SPEAKERS FOR 2025 CONFERENCE

Featured Speakers Announced include Dr. Peter Attia, Johanna Faries, Nadia Murad, Douglas Rushkoff, Dr. Laurie Santos, Amy Webb, and more

Austin, Texas — September 17, 2024 — South by Southwest® (SXSW®) Conference and Festivals has announced its initial 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.

Featured Speakers announced today include #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, host of the podcast *The Drive*, and founder of Early Medical **Dr. Peter Attia**, President of Blizzard Entertainment **Johanna Faries**, author, documentarian, Professor of Tactical Media at City University of New York, Queens College, and host of the podcast *Team Human* **Douglas Rushkoff**, Professor of Psychology at Yale University **Dr. Laurie Santos**, and founder and CEO of the Future Today Institute and professor at New York University's Stern School of Business **Amy Webb**.

"Featuring thought leaders from technology, entertainment, welfare, and advocacy, today's announcement showcases many of the verticals that make SXSW a can't miss event for professionals and creatives worldwide," said Hugh Forrest, Co-President and Chief Programming Officer. "We're looking forward to welcoming back SXSW veterans such as Douglas Rushkoff and Amy Webb, and introducing newcomers like Nadia Murad and Dr. Peter Attia to our incredible community."

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 Featured Sessions include:

- ***10 Myths Busted: The Real Impact of AI and Emerging Tech:*** Founder and Chief Operations Officer of Unstoppable Domains **Sandy Carter** will be busting myths and taking names in this rollercoaster ride through AI and emerging tech. Expect laughs, "A-ha!" moments, and eye-opening insights as she unpacks why successful AI projects are really business transformations in disguise. From casual AI to no-code tools for the tech-challenged, we'll navigate the AI landscape like pros. Learn how to tackle emerging challenges, embrace change management, and peek into the future. Sneak peek into the Top 10 myths: Is it AI-first or business-first? Can AI truly be emotional? Is there really a data shortage?
- ***Amy Webb Launches 2025 Emerging Tech Trend Report:*** Join founder and CEO of the Future Today Institute and professor at New York University's Stern School of Business **Amy Webb** for the launch of the Future Today Institute's 18th edition of its Tech Trends Report. In this mind-bending session, Webb will provide a data-driven analysis for the emerging tech trends that need to be on your radar this year and show you scenarios that will change your perspective on the future.
- ***Breadth is the New Depth: Why the Future Favors Learn-it-alls Over Know-it-alls:*** Expertise is overrated. Why? Because it has a way of blinding us to fresh perspectives. Today's era of overspecialization breeds territoriality — which means the next world-changing idea might be stuck in the brainstorm instead of making it to the boardroom. In this session, Chief Futurist at Deloitte Consulting LLP **Mike Bechtel** returns to SXSW to share why the most promising (and profitable) futures are less about domain specialization and more about polymathy, conceptual cross-pollination, and industry convergence. Join him as he brings to life what it means to build better spaces for innovation.
- ***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 session, President of Blizzard Entertainment **Johanna Faries** will share how long-lasting IPs continue to excite audiences and build communities, not only with gaming enthusiasts, but also in the entertainment/pop culture space.
- ***Design in Tech Report 2025: Autodesigners on Autopilot:*** Design on autopilot is becoming a reality through the latest features in Figma, Vercel, Adobe, and AI startups. In this session, Vice President of Engineering, Head of Computational Design for Microsoft AI Platform **John Maeda** will present the 2025 Design in Tech report and explore how AI will turn designers into "autodesigners." This shift — where designers train AIs to automate daily work — offers both challenges and opportunities. Reflecting on Muriel Cooper's and William J. Mitchell's pioneering work, we better understand our progress and future. As Steve Jobs said, "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards."

- ***From Survivor to Advocate: Nadia Murad's Fight for Human Rights and Justice:*** In this session, join human rights activist, *New York Times* bestselling author, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, and founder of Nadia's Initiative **Nadia Murad** as she shares her incredible story of survival, resilience, and advocacy. From her journey through the horrors of ISIS captivity, to becoming a global voice for victims of human trafficking, genocide, and CRSV, discover how Murad is leveraging her platform to promote justice, peace, and human rights worldwide.
- ***"The Happiness Lab with Dr. Laurie Santos" Live:*** In this session, join Professor of Psychology at Yale University **Dr. Laurie Santos** for a live taping of her podcast, *The Happiness Lab*, which explores what the latest scientific research shows about how we can feel happier at work and in life.
- ***How Not to Screw Up an AI Transformation While Shaping the Future of your Company:*** 87% of AI transformations fail, because most organizations approach this new technological paradigm the same way we did the last one. Looking at the future through the lenses of the past is a one-way ticket to frustration and failed efforts. In this session, CEO and Chief Futurist of Signal and Cipher **Ian Beacraft** will share hard-won wisdom about why and how this time is different, how teams and organizations can increase their odds of success at achieving the promised value of generative AI, and what the future paradigms of work looks like when we construct teams and organizations with AI in mind. Attendees will come away with a concrete vision of the new possibilities AI-powered teams can achieve, and a practical map to get there.
- ***Human-centered Storytelling: Driving Connection & Culture:*** The most successful brands and leaders tell stories that move people deeply, foster connection, and drive culture. In this session, filmmaker and founder of Creative Breed **Cheryl Miller Houser** will share a storytelling framework anyone can use to achieve this. Her human-centered approach draws on the craft and science of storytelling and something much deeper — how to tap into our own heart and the heartbeat of the times. Interweaving moving examples and anecdotes, she will take attendees on an emotional journey that leaves them inspired to tell stories that drive results in marketing, sales, leadership, social impact, and personal development.
- ***Level Up. The 2025 State of Play on Games, Tech, and Media:*** In this session, join New York University professor and co-founder and CEO of ALDORA **Joost van Dreunen** for a data-driven exploration of gaming's \$250 billion future. Discover how non-gaming companies are entering the space, the buzz around next-gen hardware, and the fall of walled gardens. Learn how emerging tech is reshaping content across games, tech, and media. Whether you're a developer, innovator, or enthusiast, you'll gain valuable insights into this converging landscape. In addition, attendees will receive Van Dreunen's special SXSW edition of the State of Play Report — your guide to navigating the exciting future of interactive entertainment and digital media.
- ***Love Your Tricky Brain and Unlock Your Greatest Leadership Gifts:*** After decades of research and thousands of hours of interviews, author and host of the podcast *The Anxious Achiever* **Morra Arons-Mele** discovered something unexpected: many driven and successful people struggle secretly with their mental health. Maybe anxiety is your most loyal companion and your worst enemy. Maybe you're neurodivergent, managing

ADHD or a brain that just works differently and you're feeling stuck. Maybe you feel like you need to hide who you really are at work. This session will help you learn to love your tricky brain and discover how to turn your perceived leadership weak spots into your greatest source of empathy, authenticity, and impact. The anxieties, the challenges, the emotional sensitivities that you've spent years trying to suppress are actually your competitive advantages.

- **Peter Attia: *The Science and Art of Longevity*:** In this session, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author, host of the podcast *The Drive*, and founder of Early Medical **Dr. Peter Attia** will discuss how to simultaneously lengthen lifespan and increase healthspan.
- ***Weirding the Digital: An Invocation*:** The internet began as a haven for the counterculture and a catalyst for strange new possibilities, yet it quickly surrendered to the needs of the market for predictability and profits. Digital technologies promote utilitarian ends instead of creative ones, and artificial intelligence favors the probable over the possible. It's time to talk ourselves down off this bad trip and fold the weirdest fringes back to the center of our digital society. In this session, author, documentarian, Professor of Tactical Media at City University of New York, Queens College, and host of the podcast *Team Human* **Douglas Rushkoff** will initiate the next interactive age while celebrating the new 15th anniversary edition of his classic text, *Program or Be Programmed*.

Announced Featured Speakers include:

- Vice-Chancellor of Australian National University **Genevieve Bell**
- Chief Marketing Officer of Rare Beauty **Katie Welch**

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. To register for the event, please visit 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.

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Editor's Note: Media Registration for SXSW is open until Friday, February 7, 2025. Please go to <https://www.sxsw.com/press-center/press-accreditation> to apply.

Press Contacts:
Benjamin Perez
Jody Arlington
press@sxsw.com