

## **SXSW ANNOUNCES INITIAL WAVE OF CONFERENCE PROGRAMMING FOR SXSW ONLINE**

**Willie Nelson Announced as Keynote along with Over 50 Featured Speakers and Over 230  
Conference Sessions**

**Featured Speakers Announced Include Samantha Bee, Sir Richard Branson, Nicholas Britell, Dave Burd (aka Lil Dicky), The Chainsmokers, Chiquis, Laurieann Gibson, Taraji P. Henson, Barry Jenkins, Jim McKelvey, Michael Lewis, Matthew McConaughey, Alexi Pappas, Queen Latifah, LL COOL J, Brian Grazer, Cynthia Erivo, and More**

**Austin, Texas — January 13, 2020** — South by Southwest® (SXSW®) Conference and Festivals has announced legendary musician, philanthropist and entrepreneur **Willie Nelson** as Keynote, along with an initial wave of Featured Speakers and over 230 conference sessions for SXSW Online (March 16–20, 2021), a premiere digital experience featuring Conference sessions, Music Festival showcases, Film Festival screenings, world-class networking, and the unexpected discoveries that are always a part of SXSW.

“No individual has had the cultural impact on, or been more synonymous with the creative vibrancy of Austin than Willie Nelson, and we are incredibly honored to have him as a SXSW Online 2021 Keynote,” said Hugh Forrest, Chief Programming Officer. “In addition to dozens of incredible Featured Speakers, today’s announcement also includes more than 200 sessions curated from our global community via PanelPicker, and is a key part of the premium content you can expect from SXSW Online 2021.”

In addition to the Keynote and Featured Speakers announced today, SXSW has published over 230 programming sessions sourced from the community and curated by SXSW staff. A full list of sessions can be found [here](#).

The SXSW Conference explores what’s next across entertainment, culture and technology, presented in a variety of formats. SXSW Online programming sessions are organized by themes (*A New Urgency, Challenging Tech’s Path Forward, Cultural Resilience in the Arts, The Rebirth Of Business, Transforming the Entertainment Landscape, Connection in Disconnection and An Uncharted Future*), which are specifically focused on our unique moment in history and a glimpse into what the future could look like. More information about SXSW programming formats and themes can be found [here](#).

**Newly-announced SXSW 2020 Keynotes include:**

- Musician, author, actor, entrepreneur and activist **Willie Nelson**. Nelson has earned every conceivable award as a musician and continues to thrive as a relevant and progressive musical and cultural force. In recent years, he has delivered more than a dozen new albums, released a Top 10 *New York Times*' bestsellers book, again headlined Farm Aid, an event he co-founded in 1985, been honored by the Library of Congress with their Gershwin Prize for Popular Song, received his 5th degree black belt in Gong Kwon Yu Sul, headlined the annual Luck Reunion food and music festival during SXSW, and launched his cannabis companies Willie's Reserve and Willie's Remedy.

**Newly-announced Featured Speakers include:**

- Emmy Award-winning host of *TBS' Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, **Samantha Bee**
- Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Streamlytics, **Angela Benton**
- Entrepreneur and Virgin Group founder **Sir Richard Branson**
- Latin Grammy-winning recording artist (singer/songwriter), businesswoman, author and television star **Chiquis**
- *Future of Sex* founder and podcast host **Bryony Cole**
- Cannabis rights activist **Steve DeAngelo**
- Entrepreneur, author and academic **Joost van Dreunen**
- Co-founder and CEO of Relativity Space **Tim Ellis**
- Emmy-nominated creative director and choreographer **Laurieann Gibson**
- Schwab EVP and Chief Digital Officer **Neesha Hathi**
- Academy Award-nominated and Golden Globewinning actor, writer and producer **Taraji P. Henson** in conversation with *SELF* magazine Editor-in-Chief **Carolyn Kylstra**
- Leadership strategist and author **Ann Hiatt**
- Award-winning design entrepreneur and founder of the creative agency, LAYER, **Benjamin Hubert**
- Award-winning writer and publisher of the *Water & Music* newsletter **Cherie Hu**
- Author and co-founder and CEO of Affectiva **Dr. Rana el Kaliouby**
- *New York Times* bestselling author **Michael Lewis**
- Author, entrepreneur and Freeman Chief Design Officer **Bruce Mau**
- Academy Award-winning actor, author, producer, director and philanthropist **Matthew McConaughey** in conversation with Major League Soccer commissioner **Don Garber**
- Square co-founder **Jim McKelvey**
- International yoga teacher, actress, writer and entrepreneur **Adriene Mishler**
- Mathematician, data scientist and author **Cathy O'Neil**
- Executive Director of Los Angeles Department of Cannabis Regulation **Cat Packer**
- Actor, filmmaker, author, and Olympic athlete **Alexi Pappas**
- Riot Games Chief Diversity Officer **Angela Roseboro**
- Comedian, writer and *How to Citizen* podcast host **Baratunde Thurston**
- Author, behavioral scientist and modern love expert **Logan Ury**
- Director of NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab (JPL) **Dr. Michael Watkins**
- Quantitative futurist, author and founder and CEO of the Future Today Institute **Amy Webb**

### Newly-announced Featured Sessions include:

- *AI and Great Power Competition*: A conversation about the future of Artificial Intelligence and National Security with **Lt. Colonel Alexander S. Vindman** and Pryon CEO **Igor Jablov**.
- *Aquaculture, Food Systems and Climate Change*: A conversation about aquaculture's role in creating sustainable food systems and combating climate change featuring award-winning ocean activist **Alexandra Cousteau**; four-time James Beard Award-winning TV personality and chef **Andrew Zimmern**; multi award-winning writer and producer **David E. Kelley**; and organic seaweed farmer and entrepreneur **Sarah Redmond**.
- *Breaking the Sonic Color Line*: A discussion about authenticity of voice in media, defeating racial stereotypes in voice acting, the impact of race in audio ads and how the industry can come together and make real change featuring DJ, actress and entrepreneur **MC Lyte**; Pandora Group Creative Director **Roger Sho Gehrman**; and voice-over and television actress **Joan Baker**.
- *Can VR Create Real Change?*: A discussion about creating real change, and direct action through virtual reality with AR/VR producer and director **Fifer Garbesi**; award-winning immersive artist and professor **Gabo Arora**; Director of EarthXR Tiffany Kieran; and founder of Emblematic Group **Nonny de la Peña**.
- *The Chainsmokers on launching MANTIS VC*: Grammy® Award-winning and Billboard Chart topping artist/producer duo, The Chainsmokers, are a dominating musical force with a diverse repertoire of songs that have led them to become one of world's biggest recording artists. **Alex Pall** and **Drew Taggart** have expanded The Chainsmokers' empire into film and television, tequila, philanthropy, and most recently their venture capital firm Mantis. Hear their story on how the duo have evolved their music career into so much more.
- *A Conversation with Icons Queen Latifah and LL COOL J*: From the mic to the big screen, award-winning rappers, actors and producers **Queen Latifah** and **LL COOL J** have been major forces in the entertainment industry for over three decades. Queen Latifah executive produces and stars as the first female Equalizer, Robyn McCall, in the reimagining of the series *Equalizer*, and LL COOL J stars as Special Agent Sam Hanna on *NCIS: Los Angeles*. Join them for a lively, in-depth conversation about their illustrious careers in music, television and movies (in front and behind the cameras), the cultural resonance and timeliness of their series, and much more.
- *Driving Action & Advocacy Through Online Community*: a conversation about online communities, their role in the digital ecosystem, and the value they bring to brands looking to build real connection, advocacy, and drive action, with Reddit COO **Jen Wong** and CNN media reporter **Kerry Flynn**.
- *From Moonlight to The Underground Railroad: Barry Jenkins & Composer Nicholas Britell*: A conversation with Academy Award® winning filmmaker **Barry Jenkins** and with Academy Award® nominated and Emmy® Award winning composer **Nicholas Britell** (*Succession*), where they will discuss the joy, delicate nuances, challenges and unexpected discoveries from their work together. The pair will talk about their unique creative process in building a singular audiovisual identity with a specific focus on their

upcoming Amazon Original limited series, *The Underground Railroad*, based on Colson Whitehead's Pulitzer Prize winning novel of the same name. Jenkins and Britell first collaborated on *Moonlight*, which won the Academy Award® for Best Picture. During the making of *Moonlight*, the duo formed an inimitable rapport that brought them back together again for *If Beale Street Could Talk*. *The Underground Railroad* will stream in more than 240 countries and territories worldwide on Amazon Prime Video in 2021.

- *Hi, I'm Dave: FXX's DAVE* is based on the life of Dave Burd (aka Lil Dicky), and centered on a neurotic man who's convinced himself that he's destined to be one of the best rappers of all time. The critically-acclaimed first season explored ambition, mental illness and masculinity in the world of hip-hop. Join co-creator/executive producer/writer/star **Dave Burd** (aka Lil Dicky), co-creator/executive producer **Jeff Schaffer**, executive producer **Saladin Patterson** and series star **GaTa** for *Dave's* first panel at SXSW. Season 1 is available on *FX on Hulu*; season two will premiere on *FXX* in 2021.
- *How GenZ Duets the News on TikTok*: Hear about tactics publishers are using to build relationships with young audiences on TikTok, and the content that moves audiences to action with *The Washington Post* video producer **Dave Jorgenson**, *NowThis* politics producer **Ian McKenna**, and content creator **Jackie James**.
- *How to Scale a Mission-Driven Brand*: Hear from Supergoop! CEO and Founder **Holly Thaggard** in conversation with early-stage investor, world-class tennis champion and entrepreneur **Maria Sharapova** about how to scale a company, innovate a category, and prioritizing doing good.
- *Inside GENIUS: ARETHA, the Story of the Queen of Soul*: A conversation about National Geographic's *GENIUS*, an Emmy-winning anthology series that dramatizes the fascinating stories of the world's most brilliant innovators, exploring their extraordinary achievements along with their volatile, passionate, and complex personal relationships. Season three will explore Aretha Franklin's musical genius, incomparable career and the immeasurable impact and lasting influence she has had on music and culture around the world. Join executive producer and director **Anthony Hemingway**; multi award-winning producer and author **Brian Grazer**, multi award-winning actress and singer **Cynthia Erivo**; Broadway and television costume designer **Jennifer Bryan**; and Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright **Suzan-Lori Parks** to explore the craft and care that goes into honoring her legacy and bringing her story to life.
- *Leading Safely + Motivating Empathetically*: Learn how the hospitality industry have changed their tactics to adapt to the ever-changing health and wellness regulations and lead, motivate and engage their employees, colleagues and communities; featuring Blackberry Farm Vice President of Food & Beverage **Andy Chabot**; *Food & Wine* editor-in-chief **Hunter Lewis**; executive chef and Cúrate Bar de Tapas and La Bodega by Cúrate co-owner **Katie Button**; and award winning chef and activist **Marcus Samuelson**.
- *Making Emotional Connections With Volumetric Video*: Hear from three seasoned creatives on the most effective way to make emotional connections through volumetric video with writer, director, and new media artist **Iliya Szilak**; Microsoft's Mixed Reality Capture Studios creative director **Jason Waskey**; and producer and Atlas V co-founder **Antoine Cayrol**.

- *The New Marketplace of Music Royalties*: A discussion around maximizing and navigating royalty opportunities for musicians and how the music modernization act will transform the landscape for music royalties with founder and CEO of Sound Royalties **Alex Heiche**; CMO of The Mechanical Licensing Collective **Ellen Truley**; entertainment lawyer **Robert A. Celetsin**; and Grammy award-winning musician and actor **Wyclef Jean**.
- *Postcards for Democracy: A Collective Art Demo*: Artistic visionaries DEVO cofounder **Mark Mothersbaugh** and self-proclaimed “musical weirdo” **Beatie Wolfe** share a love of tangible artforms, in and amongst their futuristic explorations. In light of the threat to our 225 year old postal service, at a time that could jeopardize the democracy of the country, Mothersbaugh and Wolfe joined forces for this collective postcard art demonstration. The aim of this campaign is to encourage as many people as possible to support USPS (if we don't use it we'll lose it!), our right to vote, and democracy as a whole via the power of art.
- *RIP Live Shows? Concerts in the Time of COVID*: A conversation about the ways the live/touring industry are trying to stay afloat, what's working, what isn't, and what still needs to be done to save the music we love, featuring Drift general manager **Adam Shore**; Panache Booking and Panache Management founder **Michelle Cable**; and Paradigm Talent Agency Executive, Wilder Records founder and Home School co-founder **Tom Windish**.
- *What is Taste?:* A discussion about taste, what it is and how science, technology and culture informs it with Cofounder of So Vegan **Ben Pook**, three-Michelin-starred chef **Dominique Crenn**, CEO of Motif FoodWorks **Jonathan McIntyre, Ph.D**, and author and scientist of senses and emotion **Rachel Herz, Ph.D**.

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 the interactive, film, and music industries. In 2021, the event moves to a digital format. SXSW Online offers conference sessions, music showcases, film screenings, exhibitions, and a variety of networking and professional development opportunities. An essential destination for global professionals, SXSW Online 2021 will take place March 16 - March 20. For more information, please visit [sxsw.com](https://sxsw.com). To register for the event, please visit [sxsw.com/attend](https://sxsw.com/attend).

SXSW Online 2021 Platinum Partners are White Claw, High Grade Hemp Seed, and The Austin Chronicle. The SXSW Online 2021 Conference is powered by Kia and Audible.

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**Press Credentials:** We are now accepting applications for SXSW Online Press Credentials at [sxsw.com/press](https://sxsw.com/press). The **deadline to apply is Wednesday, February 17, 2021**.

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