



News Release
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South by Southwest Leaders Honored as 2011 Austinites of the Year

AUSTIN – Dec 10, 2011 – The Austin Chamber of Commerce will honor four leaders of South by Southwest (SXSW) as the 2011 Austinites of the Year during the Chamber’s 134th Annual Meeting on Feb. 1, 2012 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Hilton Austin, 500 E. Fourth Street.

The Austinites are Hugh Forrest, Director of SXSW Interactive and founders of the original SXSW conference; Nick Barbaro, publisher and co-founder of the Austin Chronicle; Louis Black, editor of the Austin Chronicle; and Roland Swenson, current managing director of SXSW.

“South by Southwest encapsulates the uniqueness of Austin,” said 2011 Board Chair Bobby Jenkins, President, ABC Home & Commercial Services. “So much of the heart and soul of the festival has taken root in the community – welcoming musicians, filmmakers, tech gurus and a new hub in education software. Honoring the founders of SXSW brings much deserved attention not only to those roots, but also to the celebration of the entrepreneurial spirit that is the hallmark of Austin.”

About the Austinites of the Year & How SXSW was Born

Barbaro, Black and Swenson worked together at the Austin Chronicle in the 1980s. Swenson sold ads, proofread articles, wrote stories and delivered the paper. There he talked extensively with then publisher Barbaro and then editor Black about the possibility of a new seminar-style gathering in Austin. Local booking agent Louis Meyers, who left the Chronicle in 1994, joined the discussion. Together, the four founded the South by Southwest Music and Media Conference in 1987, sponsored by the Austin Chronicle. They expected 150 to attend – 700 showed up.

Their initial goal was the same then as it is now: to host an event that acts as a tool for creative people and the companies they work with to develop their careers, to bring together people from a wide spectrum to meet and share ideas. With this accomplished, there is also an increasingly significant impact on the local economy. The 2011 economic impact of SXSW is estimated at \$168 million (and an additional \$38 million in media coverage).

Forrest serves as Director of the South by Southwest Interactive Festival, the five-day gathering of digital creatives that occurs in Austin every March. Over the last few years, SXSW Interactive has emerged as one of the world's most influential events for the new media industry. He also held several jobs in the newspaper industry before surrendering to the digital revolution.

The SXSW music event has grown from 700 registrants in 1987 to 16,353 from 53 foreign countries in 2011. In 1994, SXSW added a film and interactive component to accommodate these growth industries for Central Texas. In 2005 SXSW had a total of 8,604 registrants. In 2011, SXSW Film welcomed 13,409 registrants from 37 foreign countries while SXSW Interactive drew 19,346 registrants from 63 foreign countries.

Artists that have performed at SXSW over the years have included Robert Plant, Ray Davies, Willie Nelson, Johnny Cash, and Tony Bennett to name just a handful.

Former Austinites of the Year include 2009 honoree Charles Barnett, President of Seton Family of Hospitals, and 2010 honoree Lance Armstrong, seven-time winner of Tour de France.

In addition to honoring the SXSW leadership, the Chamber will recognize its most outstanding volunteers for 2011, review successes and outline priorities for 2012. For more information and to register, visit austinchamber.com/annual.

About the Austin Chamber of Commerce

The mission of the Austin Chamber of Commerce is to provide leadership that facilitates the creation of a prosperous regional economy and effective advocacy for its members. Visit austinchamber.com

About SXSW Conferences & Festivals

The South by Southwest® (SXSW®) Conferences & Festivals (March 9-18, 2012) offer the unique convergence of original music, independent films, and emerging technologies. Fostering creative and professional growth alike, SXSW® is the premier destination for discovery.

Year after year, the event is a launching pad for new creative content. New media presentations, music showcases and film screenings provide buzz-generating exposure for creators and compelling entertainment for audiences. Conference panel discussions present a forum for learning, business activity thrives at the Trade Shows and global networking opportunities abound. Austin serves as the perfect backdrop for SXSW®, where career development flourishes amid the relaxed atmosphere. Intellectual and creative intermingling among industry leaders continues to spark new ideas and carve the path for the future of each ever-evolving field, long after the events' conclusion. Highlights from the 2011 Interactive festival included the following presentations from Blake Mycoskie (TOMS Shoes), Felicia Day ("The Guild"), Craig J. Venter (Founder of J. Craig Venter Institute), Al Franken (US Senator, Minnesota) and Marissa Mayer (Google). The Film Festival and Conference presented the world premiere films including, Duncan Jones' "Source Code," Jodie Foster's "The Beaver" and Joe Cornish's "Attack the Block" as well as speakers, Paul Reubens aka Pee Wee Herman and director Todd Phillips. Highlights from the Music Festival and Conference included showcases from Raphael Saadiq, TV on the Radio and Fitz and the Tantrums, and speakers Yoko Ono, Duran Duran and Bob Geldof.

SXSW® 2012 is sponsored by Miller Lite, Chevrolet, IFC, Brisk, Mountain Dew, Monster Energy, Freecreditscore.com, The Austin Chronicle, Sonicbids, Samsung, Microsoft and Isis. For more information, visit www.sxsw.com.

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