

# Tech, film, music buffs flock to Texas for SXSW

March 7 2013, by Robert Macpherson

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Aspiring tech tycoons, their potential financiers, plus indie film-makers

and musicians of all generations and genres are flocking by the thousands to the Texas state capital Austin for the nine-day pop culture jamboree.

"In the world of start-ups, SXSW is pretty crucial to attend. It's like if you're not there, you're not on the map," said Lori Cheek, who is returning to SXSW to launch a smartphone app for her online flirting service Cheekd.com.

The first five days of the event are dominated by the SXSW Interactive Festival, a far-ranging showcase for [emerging technology](#) and social media with sideshows dedicated to gaming and technology start-ups.

It was at SXSW three years ago that a voice recognition app called Siri won the festival's Accelerator award for innovative [web technology](#), before it was snapped up by Apple and found its way into the [iPhone](#).

"The crossbreeding of ideas and personalities at SXSW is an extraordinary opportunity to enhance one's thinking as well as one's social network," said Steven Lowe, founder and CEO of Innovator, a software consulting firm.

So impressed was Lowe of his past SXSW experiences that he wrote a book about them, titled "SXSW Peeps: 11 Interwoven Interviews"—freshly-printed copies of which he'll be signing in Austin.

Launching in tandem with SXSW Interactive will be the nine-day SXSW film festival, with nearly 250 features, documentaries and shorts—many of them world premieres.

"The Incredible Burt Wonderstone," veteran TV director Don Scardino's comedy about a pair of Las Vegas musicians who grow to loathe each other, enjoys pride of place as the opening film.

"Much of this year's program embraces love and the need, search (and) desire for connection," said SXSW Film director Janet Pierson. "We're lucky to have a plethora of hugely entertaining and audience-pleasing films."

Panel discussions—highly popular among SXSW attendees who can pay as much as \$1,595 for an all-access platinum pass—feature the likes of actor Matthew McConaughey and "Slumdog Millionaire" director Danny Boyle.

Celebrities awaited on the red carpet include Chloe Sevigny, starring in director-writer Michael Blash's drama "The Wait," and Selena Gomez in the neo-sexploitation thriller "Spring Breakers."

Very unlikely to turn up is Lindsay Lohan after SXSW Film followed the Sundance festival in rejecting her comeback project "The Canyons," an erotic thriller, reportedly for "quality issues."

Then, from Tuesday, the music kicks in.

More than 1,300 bands have been lined up so far to play SXSW Music, from the venerable Iggy Pop and The Stooges to the Beijing punk combo Carsick Cars and Baauer, the Brooklyn DJ who scored the "Harlem Shake" viral video rage.

Rumors are flying about Justin Timberlake appearing at a private party as part of his return to the land of pop music, but Green Day, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs are all confirmed.

Speakers include Foo Fighters founder Dave Grohl, delivering the annual music keynote address, his recent collaborator and Fleetwood Mac songstress Stevie Nicks, and New York rap legend 50 Cent.

Andrew Goss, program director for the tech-oriented public relations firm Voxus, called SXSW a peerless opportunity to see "some amazing artists perform in a more intimate setting than you could normally see them."

"I also enjoy catching up and combing talent," he told AFP by email, "so I can later say in truth: 'I saw The Black Keys in 2003 with only 15 people and they killed it!'"

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