

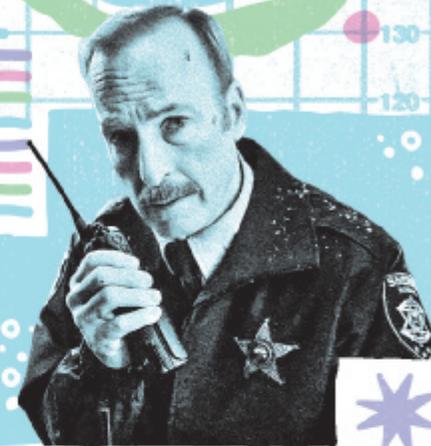
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SXSW[®]

2026

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19

ANNE WILSON

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WILLIAM CLARK GREEN

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RANDALL KING

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LA MAQUINARIA NORTEÑA

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DIAMOND RIO

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28 ProRodeo Finals

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The massive hole in the ground that was once the Austin Convention Center

PHOTO BY RICHARD WHITTAKER / DESIGN BY ZEKE BARBARO

Everything Old Is New Again

With a new schedule, a new footprint, new staff, and a turbulent world, the festival and conference redesigns itself **BY RICHARD WHITTAKER**

For decades, when visitors arrived in Austin for South by Southwest, the first thing they did was head to the Austin Convention Center to pick up their badge.

If they try that this year, they'll be confronted with a massive hole in the ground, and that's just the first shift to what people have come to expect from the festival and conference. SXSW Senior Vice President of Content Meghan Cassin said, "Even if you've been to South By in the past, this will feel like your first time going to South By."

Navigating and overseeing the changes was one of Cassin's first jobs at the festival. When she joined SXSW in 2024, she was assigned to a task force combining what she called "South By O.G.s who'd been here for at least 15 years, and people like myself who were brand-new to the organization and even

the event who had no preconceptions of what South By should be."

That said, SXSW has always been in a state of flux from the moment it first launched as a four-day music conference back in 1987. Much of what has become familiar about the festival was a later addition: There wasn't even a convention center until 1993, and the festival didn't add a film and multimedia component for another year. A majority stake in SXSW was acquired by Penske Media in 2021, and since then the company has seen the firing and departure of many of its most seasoned and knowledgeable staff. There are still some veterans, like Chief Commercial Officer Peter Lewis, who were part of completely reimagining the fest in 2020, turning it from a massive in-person cultural event into a COVID-proof streaming experience. "That was certainly a

cold dose of water in the morning," Lewis said, "[but] it definitely positioned us, from a mindset standpoint, to be focused on how we can improve the event."

This year marks another massive challenge: The convention center, which has been the festival's anchor for over three decades, has been demolished and its replacement will not open until 2029 at the earliest. The change has been a long time coming, with various groups annoyed that it took so long and others frustrated that it's happening at all. Knowing they had to change so many established operational procedures, the task force took the festival back to its basic intentions. First, Cassin said, are "the epic stories. There's always the story of 'I was at that South By,' and it always proceeds to be the craziest thing you ever heard."

Everyone has those stories. For Cassin, it was watching Elmo perfectly imitate Seth Rogen's laugh in front of a delighted Rogen. ("You've never seen a man cry-laughing like that. He was dying.") Lewis will never forget bumping into billionaire investor Mark Cuban as he was leaving the bathroom at the convention center. "My first thought was, 'Oh my God, that's Mark Cuban!' And my second thought was, 'Wait, don't people like him have special bathrooms somewhere else?'"

This desire to facilitate these moments of unexpected synergy led to the first big change from the last few years: Moving the festival from 10 days to seven by having all the sections run concurrently. Regular attendees have got used to the first weekend being for Film and Interactive, and the second for Music, with a bit of blur in the intervening week. This year, all three elements – Film and TV, Music, and what's now dubbed Innovation – will run concurrently. Lewis called the shift the result of conversations about "creating an event that is more manageable, and the reality is that nobody has 10 days to spend in Austin except Austinites." The hope is that the single calendar will lead to more synergy between

industries and allow for what Lewis dubbed “the marketer’s favorite phrase – surprise and delight moments.”

Moreover, while the overall festival shrinks, two of the components are actually expanding as Music actually adds a day, while Innovation grows from four days to a full week. However, the Film and TV Festival loses two days and won’t have a closing night film as the Paramount Theatre will be needed for the film awards that night. Moreover, the weekend yet again clashes with the Oscars ceremony, and many out-of-town industry visitors are planning to miss Saturday and Sunday night in Austin to head to Los Angeles.

The second big change was inspired by that physical loss of the convention center as a hub: designing a new footprint for the festival. While the festival will still use more remote venues like the Alamo South Lamar for film and Hotel Vegas for music, it’s become more concentrated in the 60-block rectangle between I-35 and Congress Avenue, and 10th Street and Cesar Chavez. “We were walking the new footprint over and over,” said Cassin, “and it feels big and overwhelming in all the best ways, but it also feels manageable to the average new person.”

SXSW’s closest partner in all these changes is the city of Austin. Maria Alonso, special events manager for Austin Arts, Culture, Music, & Entertainment, explained that the city is in constant conversation with SXSW on issues like road closures and public safety, and those aspects haven’t really changed. If anything, she said, the shorter timeline and condensed footprint will make the situation “a little more controlled [and] contained Downtown, which for us makes it easier to coordinate.”

Within that concentrated footprint, this year the festival will provide new hangout hubs, nicknamed clubhouses, intended to spur community building but also located near the biggest draws for each badge type. The Innovation clubhouse will be at Brazos Hall, close to most of the sessions in nearby hotels. Music takes over the Downright Austin hotel, at the top end of Red River but still within easy reach of the remaining venues on the Eastside. Film & TV will be anchored at 800 Congress, next to a three-block street closure along Congress and within easy reach of the film-centric panels at the nearby Omni Hotel and Headliner screenings at the historic Paramount Theatre. In part, Lewis explained, this approach was inspired by the spinoff event, SXSW London, which never had a central hub and instead creates spaces across the whole Shoreditch neighborhood. Cassin added, “We hope that people will have a day that actually makes sense.”

With no convention center, many of the events it hosted are being relocated. Take the familiar trade show: Now branded SXSW Expo, it’s moved one block east of the convention center to the Fairmont Hotel. Meanwhile, the Flatstock poster sale has been similarly displaced, and now will take place over on the west side of the construction site, at the Austin Marriott Downtown. To get from one to the other, you’ll walk past where the convention center once was.

On the tourism side, Tiffany Kerr, SVP/CMO for Visit Austin, said that her office was optimistic about all the changes. “Long before the convention center became its primary hub, SXSW thrived in our local music venues, theatres, and hotels,” she said. “2026 is a celebration of that original ‘City as a Venue’ spirit.”

However, SXSW veterans will see some changes beyond the duration and locations. While Platinum badges will get access to everything, the festival has got rid of what was known as secondary access, so there’ll be no getting into a film with a Music badge. Equally, there’ll be no sneaking into a music showcase with an Innovation or Film badge unless you pay for a Music wristband as an add-on. Moreover, the Film pass has completely gone, replaced by limited individual tickets for certain screenings.

That last loss has upset many locals who helped fill screenings of lower-profile films. Yet the SXSW team is aware of the regular complaint that SXSW simply descends on Downtown Austin. Since the festival will, by necessity, be more integrated into the community than ever, they’ve doubled down on outreach with local businesses, as well as published a series of guides for visitors to help point them toward Downtown stores and restaurants. Lewis noted that the festival is “very much part of the framework of the city of Austin, and so we’re thinking through what’s making the most impact for the city and the people.”

The people who will be most immediately affected are Downtown residents and businesses. Jenell Moffett, senior vice president for economic development, marketing, and strategic communications for the Downtown Austin Alliance, stated that there’s great interest among her members about what the new format will mean for them. She called the concentrated timeline “smart” from an operational standpoint and noted that it should mean shorter road closures and disruptions for residents and businesses. However, she added, “On the economic output side, I think it’s hard to tell.”

There’s still a big question about what the shorter time frame will mean for hotel bookings and general spending by guests. And this comes as businesses are already

navigating the loss of the convention center, which Moffett called “an anchor asset” for Downtown. “It wouldn’t be fair to say that we don’t notice or feel the pullback.”

And the convention center isn’t the only major construction project that’s hitting Downtown over the next decade. In June of this year, the Paramount – the biggest screen and biggest theatre of the film festival – will close for a 10-month restoration and renovation project. The good news for fest regulars is that the remodel will include new bars, upgraded sound and light, and new seating. As Austin Theatre Alliance Executive Director Jim Ritts put it, “The things we’re fixing here, patrons have been asking us to fix for a long, long time.”

The bad news is that this will mean the Paramount is closed during SXSW 2027. Then when it reopens in April of next year, it will be the turn of the neighboring State Theatre, which will close for 14 months, starting in July 2027 and running through November 2028. Luckily, the Austin Theatre Alliance is confident that it can hit those dates, as they’ve been working with architects and restoration experts for almost two decades on setting this in motion.

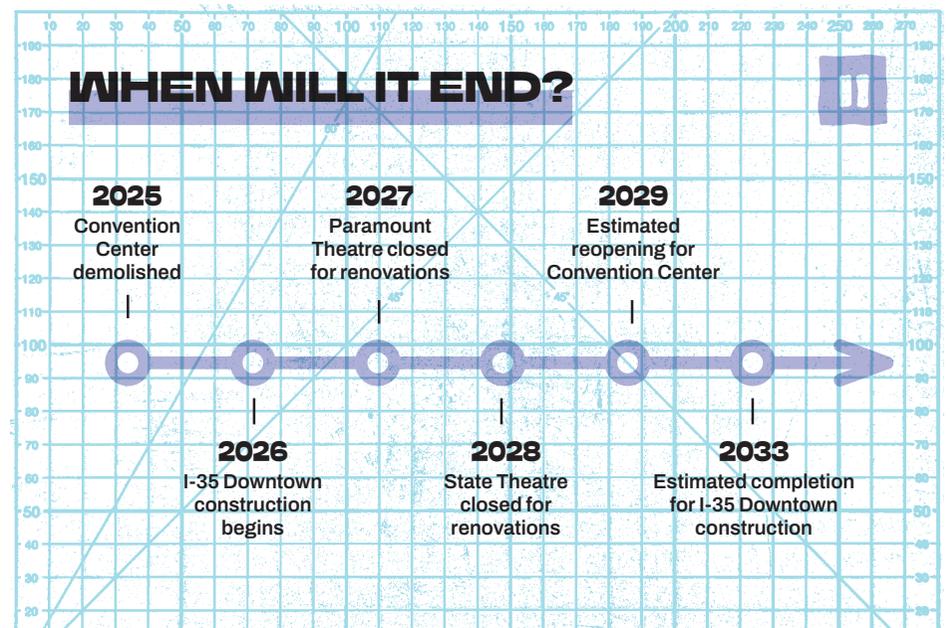
There’s a lot less certainty about another construction project that dwarfs even the convention center: the complete rebuilding of the Downtown stretches of I-35. The Texas Department of Transportation has estimated that this will mean seven years of traffic hell on the main arterial route through Austin, but that’s widely regarded as wishful thinking, considering how delayed every other major highway project in Austin has been. At the same time, that 2029 completion date for the

convention center could end up being fluid, and it’s unlikely that SXSW will be back in the building before 2030.

Add on to this the broader economic uncertainty. The golden era of tech firms throwing money at events like SXSW for activations is over, but for Lewis that’s one of the advantages of the festival’s broad cultural portfolio. “We can’t control anybody’s budget,” he said. “[but] we are uniquely positioned in that we are bringing together so many different and diverse industries that there’s a little bit of a balance.”

At the same time, the number and diversity of firms and nations represented in the expo has noticeably shrunk over the last few years. That’s one indicator of how many international travelers are avoiding the U.S. as a destination, with both business and tourism travel declining markedly nationwide. This has been caused by a combination of concerns about deportations, increased travel restrictions on many countries, and constant reports of artist visas being denied or delayed, and there is little expectation that this trajectory will shift under the Trump administration. All that the SXSW staff can do is give international visitors as much support and advice as possible. This includes giving advice on planning a visit under the increasingly challenging visa application process.

With all these changes and burdens, the expectation is that 2026 will be a transitional year for SXSW and its attendees. Lewis said, “It’s a different context this year, for sure, but we’re focused on trying to create a platform where they can showcase their talents, meet people, do business.” ■





Austin/Philly-based post-punks Big Bill

PHOTO BY POONEH GHANA

40 Musical Acts to See at SXSW 2026

The most exciting rappers, alt-rockers, jazz innovators, and more descending on Austin this week

Some one thousand artists will perform throughout Austin in the next seven days – how are you supposed to listen to all of them? The answer is you're not; that's our job. The *Chronicle* music team pored over this year's South by Southwest Music lineup and compiled the top 40 acts we're most excited about, from international artists we'd never heard of to the locals we think will most impress this week's influx of tourists and industry insiders. Pro tip: When you find these names on the SXSW schedule, watch out for sets scheduled for midnight or later – they're listed with the following day's date, even though the showcase will have started the day prior.

A Wordless Orange

SATURDAY 14, 8:20PM, ELYSIUM

Neo-psychedelic trio A Wordless Orange are translating global rhythmic trends into their own context in Wuhan, China. Their lush, bilingual tracks carry the laid-back ease of vintage soul and the suave playfulness of Afrobeat and jazz to a new genre dimension, which their Instagram bio aptly dubs "Asian-beat." Their tranquil aesthetic takes cues from the mysterious and maligned genre of background tracks known as Library music, but subverts those easy listening expectations with compellingly smooth vocals and an endless supply of sonic surprises drawn from electronic music, alt-rock styles, and traditional instruments alike.

– CAROLINE DREW

Ama Louise

DATE / LOCATION TBA

"When I looked around that stage and saw how many people were standing there, I was excited but I was [also] scared, I'm not going to lie." So admitted übercharismatic French-Ghanian R&B seductress Ama Louise on her Insta-vlog about showcasing for SXSW London 2025 last June. "[The] biggest crowd I've performed to pushed me outside my comfort zone." Not six months later, the buttery, UK-based throwback singer dropped full-length debut *Long Story Short*, as enveloping and soul-caressing as Roberta Flack by candlelight.

– RAOUL HERNANDEZ

Amri

FRIDAY 13, 9:10PM,
ZILKER BREWING

MONDAY 16, 8:30PM, MARLOW

Amri's sound is a satisfying fusion of smooth R&B and polished jazz, with Carnatic flourishes inspired by the British singer's Indian heritage. Her band's full-bodied sound – featuring horns and a sitar, and anchored by sharp, technical drumming – is so refined it's hard to believe the group has only one EP under its belt. Amri's sparkling, intoxicating stage presence and mystically danceable sound should make for a pleasantly rich concert experience.

– JOSEPH GONZALEZ



COURTESY OF SXSW

Angela Autumn

THURSDAY 12, 11PM, 13TH FLOOR
 MONDAY 16, 10PM, LAS PERLAS
 WEDNESDAY 18, 9:10PM,
 WANDERLUST WINE CO.

Sometimes leaning into where you're from is the best way to figure out where you're going. Since moving to Nashville earlier in the decade, Angela Autumn has only dug deeper into her sharp western Pennsylvania Appalachian twang. Last year's *I'm Not Around* EP quakes behind a high-twinged wail across songs like the catchy swirl of "Electric Lizard." Recently signed to Gar Hole Records, Autumn unloads an understated fury singed by both a raw emotional vulnerability and a wry sense of humor, as latest singles "Millionaire Money" and "Garbage" ache in lilting uncertainty and a desire to carve her own space.

— DOUG FREEMAN

Azamiah

SATURDAY 14, 9:10PM,
 ZILKER BREWING
 SUNDAY 15, 10:20PM, SWAN DIVE
 MONDAY 16, 10:30PM, MARLOW

Part of the ever-expanding UK jazz scene, Glasgow's Azamiah turned heads out of the gate with 2023's *In Phases*, a confident debut featuring the voice of singer India Blue and a blend of jazz, R&B, electronica, and spaced-out pop. That intoxicating broth soaks several releases from 2025, including the single "New Moon" and the *Two Lands* EP, on which the soul gets more soulful, the dreaminess even dreamier, and Blue's sultry croon more poignant. A series of festival appearances and the quartet's first headline tour in the UK put the band in position to infiltrate sophisticated consciousnesses.

— MICHAEL TOLAND

Big Bill

THURSDAY 12, 10PM,
 LEFTY'S BRICK BAR

If only all of our favorite artists in these spooky times made their politics as clear as Big Bill. In an era where Radiohead – Radiohead! – won't even disavow a genocide, it's nice to know these Austin/Philly-based post-punks are unafraid to draw a line in the sand, from ICE ("you should be shunned by your family") to fuckboys (they use their emotions "like shotguns") to the wealth gap ("so tired"). The long-running outfit stays righteous and stays fun, issuing zigzagging, dance floor-filling tunes that get you riled up without bumming you out. What better radicalizing agents could we ask for in our modern shitshow?

— CARYS ANDERSON

BigXthaPlug

SATURDAY 14, 10:55PM,
 ACL LIVE AT THE MOODY THEATER

BigXthaPlug's modern-day anthem for the Lone Star State, "Texas," packed enough charisma to match the unrivaled pride Texans have in their culture. 2024 release *TAKE CARE* offered sample-based tracks and firmly established him as a leader of Texas hip-hop's new generation, but the Jessie Murph-featuring track "Holy Ground" from the album's deluxe edition previewed an unexpected pivot. The Dallas rapper's latest full-length, *I Hope You're Happy*, sandwiches hooks from country music stars between heart-break-filled verses. He'll bring along Ro\$ama and other artists from his record label as support in anticipation of 600 Entertainment's debut compilation tape, *6WA*.

— DEREK UDENSI



PHOTO BY DANIEL PRAKOPCYK

SHOP SXSW ESSENTIALS AND SOUVENIRS AT AUSTIN'S FAVORITE GIFT STORE!

The advertisement for Atown gift store features a central image of a woman in an orange "AUSTIN" sweatshirt with her arms raised against a blue sky background. Surrounding her are various merchandise items: a white t-shirt with "Keep Austin Weird" in a colorful font, a black t-shirt with a floral design, a brown t-shirt with "HOOTIN LEADS TO Hollerin'" and an owl illustration, a black cap with "AUSTIN FUCKING TEXAS Y'ALL", a black cap with "WILLIE FOR PRESIDENT", a black cap with "ALRIGHT ALRIGHT", a red mug with "AUSTIN Live Music CAPITAL OF TEXAS", a blue mug with "KEEP IT WEIRD", a box of "SALT LICK" spices (Spicy, Dry Rub, Original), a "WHATABURGER Fancy PUZZLE" box, and two water bottles with photos of country artists. At the bottom, the text reads "Atown BOUTIQUE, HANDMADE GIFTS, LOCAL ART & MORE! 5502 BURNET RD. SHOP OUR NEW LOCATION AT 217 W 2ND ST! FREE GIFT WRAP! KEEPATOWNWEIRD.COM".



PHOTO BY MEGHAN HANCOCK

● ● ● ESSENTIAL ACTS (CONTINUED)

bloodsports

FRIDAY 13, 7:30PM, SHANGRI-LA
SUNDAY 15, 12:30AM, CHESS CLUB
MONDAY 16, 8:50PM, HOTEL VEGAS

Bloodsports channel the restless energy of New York into taut riffs and punchy, guitar-driven rhythms. With post-punk roots, the four-piece's debut project, *Anything Can Be a Hammer*, delivers garage rock grit and enough angular urgency to cut through the controlled chaos. Tracks oscillate between explosive bursts and measured grooves, creating tension between their deliberate arrangements and volatile unpredictability. The outfit has carved a reputation for raw, no-frills live performances that match the intensity of their recorded discography. One thing's guaranteed: Your eardrums won't be safe.

— MIRANDA GARZA

Boutique Feelings

FRIDAY 13, 10:30PM, SEVEN GRAND
SATURDAY 14, 12AM, HOTEL VEGAS
SATURDAY 14, 11PM, SWAN DIVE

It may be an impossible task to put Karim Lakhdar's music into a box. His latest project as Boutique Feelings is part trip hop, part synth-heavy post-rock, and even part ambient archival political statement, set to sparse Arabic guitar. Where Boutique Feelings strays from Lakhdar's previous sound with progressive rock outfit Atsuko Chiba is in his charged rapping. With a vocal style reminiscent of B-Real and André 3000, the Montrealer sounds off on the ailments of modern society, hoping to use his pointed lyrics and hypnotic production to create a shift in your consciousness.

— JOSEPH GONZALEZ

Buddy Red

FRIDAY 13, 8PM, SAXON PUB
MONDAY 16, 9PM, STUBB'S
WEDNESDAY 18, 1AM,
INN CAHOOTS AUSTIN GARDEN

"Scion" remains a double-edged identifier in music, the progeny of stars forced to prove themselves doubly in the shadow of their 'rents. Buddy Red's dad helped put hot 'Lanta on the rap map, yet T.I. isn't the 300-pound penumbra here. The twentysomething singer/slinger's soul drawl, the funk lag in his engine room, and a thick, mulchy Strat strum all scream Hendrix. While "When I Dream" straight cops "Little Wing," last summer's "Sold His Soul" makes the same hairs stand on end that once saluted "Hey Joe." SRV channeled the Voodoo Chile. Buddy Red quite possibly reincarnates him.

— RAOUL HERNANDEZ

Cashier

FRIDAY 13, 9:30PM, VALHALLA
SATURDAY 14, 11:35PM, CHESS CLUB
MONDAY 16, 11:10PM, SEVEN GRAND
TUESDAY 17, 9:15PM, HOTEL VEGAS

Cashier will take you back to 2005 with the quickness. Anchored by Kylie Gaspard's androgynous, emotional vocals and a smattering of thrashing guitars, the Lafayette four-piece updates the Fueled by Ramen formula with Dinosaur Jr. sludge – and the much-cooler co-sign of Julia's War Recordings, the label of They Are Gutting a Body of Water frontman/contemporary heavy rock innovator Doug Dulgarian. And no, they aren't the only band on this list to hang out in the middle of the SXSW Music-Julia's War Venn diagram. The alt-rock renaissance continues!

— CARYS ANDERSON

Chuck Prophet and His Cumbia Shoes

THURSDAY 12, 9:15PM, SWAN DIVE
TUESDAY 17, 9PM, LAMBERTS
THURSDAY 19, 12AM,
CONTINENTAL CLUB

While dealing with Stage 4 lymphoma, a new-found love for cumbia music gave Chuck Prophet some relief. After beating the disease, the accomplished songwriter decided to take a creative left turn with his latest project *Wake the Dead*, a collaboration with California cumbia group ¿Qiensave? The record mixes Prophet's roots rock sensibilities with Latin rhythm and melody, creating a surprisingly satisfying blend you never knew you needed. He'll bring that sound to this year's SXSW before heading to Willie Nelson's Luck Ranch to play the Luck Reunion and the Todd Snider Rules! tribute show later in the week.

— JOSEPH GONZALEZ

Commercial Breaks

TUESDAY 17, 9PM, CHESS CLUB
SATURDAY 14, 10PM, HOTEL VEGAS

Launched just last year, local quartet Commercial Breaks counter the shoegaze craze with a heartfelt ode to power-pop. Their Bandcamp-exclusive self-titled debut piles one taut and ready guitar riff after another onto unpretentious tracks covered in joyful distortion and populated by the appropriate number of *oohs* and *ahhs*. Hook is the right word for their catchy melodies, because these sweetly rugged vocal harmonies will sink right into you, ready to reel you into another rambunctiously good-hearted performance anytime their name's on the bill.

— CAROLINE DREW



PHOTO BY OLIVIA PERILLO

Don Toliver

FRIDAY 13, TBA,
MOODY AMPHITHEATER

Perennially traversing between trap and R&B like a Slinky composed of slick melodies, Don Toliver's ability to stitch the two genres together gives him a distinct sound. The Cactus Jack signee rose to mainstream prominence with 2020 full-length *Heaven or Hell* and his earworm of a chorus on Internet Money's "Lemonade" later that year. New maiden chart-topper *OCTANE* ditches the subtle rock elements found on 2024's *HARDSTONE PSYCHO* in favor of the Houstonian's trademark psychedelic backdrops and Auto-Tuned croons about women. There's a Justin Timberlake sample ("Body") on there, too.

— DEREK UDENSI

Ella Ion

THURSDAY 12, 11PM,
WANDERLUST WINE CO.
SUNDAY 15, 10PM, SEVEN GRAND
MONDAY 16, 8:40PM, DOWNRIGHT
AUSTIN GLOBAL STAGE
WEDNESDAY 18, 12AM, SAXON PUB

It only took two singles for Ella Ion to hook me. Last October's "Looking for Nothing" recalls Bella's *New Moon* depression montage: slow-churning acoustic guitar, mournful cello, gauzy vocals likening the Adelaide songwriter to a dog tied to a tree. "Blue Black Crows," released two months prior, is even better. Ion snaps her strings with one of those stop-start riffs you immediately, involuntarily, nod along to, crooning an insistent "oh yeah, oh yeah-heah-heah-heah" refrain alongside it. Add in those searing electric accents and abstract orchestral freakouts – this name's on my usually noncommittal South By schedule in pen.

— CARYS ANDERSON

Fish Hunt

FRIDAY 13, 7PM, LOW DOWN LOUNGE
SATURDAY 14, 9:50PM, CHESS CLUB

I hear twinges of Snail Mail, Lorde, and a long lineage of emo vocalists in Lucy Mondello's elongated vowels, but on *Self-Taught*, the New York songwriter stitches such disparate musical stylings into a cohesive quilt all her own. Indie rock acoustics, eerie saw, and sputtering percussion are instrumental to this LP, an unvarnished-yet-meticulous showcase of childlike DIY. As Fish Hunt declares in melancholy manifestation "Go My Way": "I'm the shit, can't you see?"

— CARYS ANDERSON



COURTESY OF CAMERON McCLOUD

Cure for Paranoia Comes Full Circle in SXSW Return

Dallas-based rapper Cameron McCloud brings therapy and theatrics to live performance

BY CAROLINE DREW

Over a decade into his musical career, with several South by Southwest stops under his belt, *Cure for Paranoia* mastermind Cameron McCloud experienced the surreal festival moment all artists dream of last year: People recognized him and showed up for his music.

"We've played for packed rooms when it's us opening for somebody, but it's never been a situation where we're playing packed rooms and they're there to see us," McCloud says. It was an overwhelming, full-circle moment for the artist — one

bolstered by his cinematically precise NPR Tiny Desk Contest video submission, which caught the internet's attention shortly before SXSW '25.

"I can't stress enough how therapeutic [music] is for me and how humbling it is to have people come up to me and tell me how therapeutic it is for them as well," he says. McCloud traces the roots of that recognition to another SXSW festival, over 10 years prior.

"My first time at South By was probably the best first time at South By anyone

Cure for Paranoia

THURSDAY 12, 11PM, SWAN DIVE
FRIDAY 13, 9:30PM, SHANGRI-LA
TUESDAY 17, TIME TBA, SWAN DIVE
TUESDAY 17, 11:30PM, RIVIERE
WEDNESDAY 18, 3PM, DOWNRIGHT
AUSTIN RADIO DAY STAGE

could ever have," he says with a laugh. In 2014, the rapper was, in his words, young and "didn't have shit to lose," sleeping in a car with his roommate to attend the fest. He networked his way into a wristband and a side-stage view of Childish Gambino's electrifying Butler Park performance. Gambino collaborator Fam Udeorji noted his initiative — telling McCloud it reminded him of his and Gambino's own youthful antics — and got the fledgling artist an audience with the *Atlanta* creator.

"I wouldn't even be the artist that I am now had I not [gone] to South by Southwest and did that," says McCloud. Gambino's specific words are lost to the starstruck moment, but his encouragement was enough to keep the Texas rapper in the game.

After last year's triumph, McCloud returns to the festival with another eye-catching video offering for NPR's worldwide competition — and his third LP, *Work of A.R.T.* The seven-track album of socially conscious, wit-loaded lyricism is an ode to the remedial power of music and performance, reflected in every element of the project's output — all the way down to the name, *Cure for Paranoia*, which McCloud says has "turned into a mantra, a way of life."

"The year that I created the band, I got placed on medication for bipolar depression and paranoid schizophrenia," says McCloud. In a hotboxed car on the way to Colorado, the musician effortlessly christened the group upon realizing "that creating music was more therapeutic for me than the medication was."

On this visit to the Austin festival, the rapper says his performance is carefully crafted to tell the story of his mental health odyssey and music's curative role, forging a full band setup for a simple trio lineup of McCloud and producers Jay Analog and Tomahawk Jonez, presented with his signature attention to theatrical details and thought-provoking visuals.

"It's really putting my self-discovery that I dealt with last year on full display." ■



March 11th: Wednesday 2-8pm

BMI Howdy Texas

2pm: Claire Hinkle
3pm: Elijah Delgado
4pm: Magna Carda
5pm: Matt Kirk and The Güeyfarers
6pm: MackMartin
7pm: The 4411

March 12th: Thursday: 2-8pm

The House of SONGSX /
Musician Treatment Foundation
Unofficial SXSW Spotlight

2:00pm: Doak Hensley
2:30pm: Simone Tang (DK)
3:00pm: Danny Malone (ATX)
3:35pm: Giulia Millanta & Vanessa Lively
4:10pm: "Bird" (UK/Italy)
5:00pm: Sarah Barlow / Nick Adamo
+SPECIAL GUESTS

March 13th: Friday: 2-9pm

Bubble Studio's
Unofficial SXSW Showcase

2:00pm: EVAN AUTIN
2:50pm: Blush Fantasy
3:40pm: Flight By Nothing
4:30pm: Dogs With Hats
5:30pm: INOHA
6:30pm: Pretoria
7:30pm: Trashy Annie
8:20pm: SIXTEEN DELUXE

March 14th: Saturday: 2-9pm

SXSCongress

2:00pm: Zip Dagger
2:45pm: Clif Confident
3:30pm: Tricia Fox
4:30pm: Dave Random
5:30pm: Maryanna Sokol
7:00pm: Sarah Golden
8:00pm: Spencer

March 15th: Sunday: 12-6pm

Comboplate Booking's SXSF -
South By Soup Fest 2026

12:00pm: Jimmy Joe Natoli
12:30pm: Raina Rose
1:15pm: Robert Parker Jr.
2:00pm: Erica Michelle
2:45pm: Anderw Duplantis Band
3:35pm: Beaver Nelson
4:25pm: BettySoo
5:15pm: Nathan Hamilton

●●● ESSENTIAL ACTS (CONTINUED)

Geto Gala

WEDNESDAY 18, 10:25PM, SWAN DIVE

Major League, Geto Gala's 2024 debut album, is a celebration, dancing with feather-light piano licks, swaying drum beats, and the honeyed rhymes of rap duo Jake Lloyd and Deezie Brown. Their sound is a true Texas recipe of sun-soaked Southern rap spun through Houston's chopped and screwed influence and baked in a soulful rock ambience that makes for a head-bobbing, finger-snapping show. Both talented multifaceted musicians in their own right, Lloyd and Brown's union in Geto Gala is one of creative admiration and community appreciation that shines through in every festive chorus and glorious groove.

- CAROLINE DREW

Gran Moreno

**THURSDAY 12, 9PM,
LEFTY'S BRICK BAR**

Since the pandemic, ATX's Latin music scene now manifests every blush, from heartbreak balladeers (Grace Sorensen) and MCs (Anastasia Hera) to funk (Superfónicos) and metal (Brown Sabbath). Gran Moreno bends a whole other golden note. Psych rock sibling bomb squad Ricardo and Christian Rodríguez unsheathed debut full-length *El Sol in January*, its cataclysmic detonation moving beyond White Stripes and Black Keys to a wholly unique amalgam of mariachi trumpets, hacienda percussion/strings, y tequila tempos. Thirty-two minutes never sounded so epic – so gran(d).

- RAOUL HERNANDEZ



COURTESY OF GRAN MORENO

Gus Englehorn

SATURDAY 14, 10PM, VALHALLA

Gus Englehorn's mind must be a fantastic and terrifying place. The pro snowboarder-turned-bizarro pop maestro has released four albums in the past five years, each more wildly ambitious, unhinged, and fascinating than the last. Whereas 2025's *The Hornbook* constructed an unraveling of rock history, this year's *The Broken Balladeer* spills like of Montreal into the Unicorns, veering between strafing bursts of playful wonder and horrifying shock. Equally appropriate is recruiting Butthole Surfer Paul Leary to produce the album, who adds the perfect complement to the cataclysm of Englehorn's wildly mutating and eccentric, psychedelic worlds.

- DOUG FREEMAN

Ink

**SATURDAY 14, 9:35PM,
ACL LIVE AT THE MOODY THEATER****SUNDAY 15, 4:10PM, MOHAWK**

After writing hit after hit for stars from Kendrick Lamar to Beyoncé, Atia Chade Boggs, best known as Ink, is now turning her focus inward. Over a decade of songwriting comes to the forefront on the Atlanta-raised musician's debut project, *BIG BUSKIN*, showcasing confessional intimacy and melodic craftsmanship. Sitting atop a neo-soul foundation, the record channels twangy pop, modern R&B, and electronic textures through tactile production and tender vocals. On "Turquoise Cowboy," Ink paints a cinematic portrait of love and longing, layering memorable hooks with shimmering flourishes.

- MIRANDA GARZA

Jazz Re:freshed Outernational

**SUNDAY 15, 7:30PM,
FLAMINGO CANTINA**

Jazz musicians in the United Kingdom see their genre as foundation more than form, pulling in global influences far beyond swinging, sophisticated blues. The 10th Jazz Re:freshed SX showcase makes that plain in the most entertaining and enlightening way possible. Featured artists include Zimbabwe-born/London-based jazz/soul singer-songwriter Zola Marcelle, cosmopolitan jazz/funk/hip-hop bassist/singer Amy Gadiaga, Newcastle jazz fusion trio Knats, veteran Nigeria/London guitarist/producer Femi Temowo, London jazz drummer/producer Mackwood, and Manchester producer/player Werkha. A decade in, Jazz Re:freshed Outernational isn't just an event – it's a visit with an old friend.

- MICHAEL TOLAND

J'cuuzi

TUESDAY 17, 12:50AM, HOTEL VEGAS**TUESDAY 17, 10:30PM, SWAN DIVE**

Elaborate, handmade costumes; raunchy group choreography; frequent trips from the stage to the pit – every succeeding J'cuuzi show is a bigger and bigger spectacle. Gorge Bones and Trey Razeldazl, the romantic partners at the heart of this art-rock, dance-punk, truly indescribable rock & roll affair, know how to keep you entertained – and how to balance just the right amount of bubbling Björk synths and sleazy glam rock guitar in the chemistry experiment that is this wondrous musical hot tub. Amid a weeklong barrage of performances, you're guaranteed to remember J'cuuzi.

- CARYS ANDERSON

Joe Harvey-Whyte

**FRIDAY 13, 12:45PM,
HILTON AUSTIN DOWNTOWN****TUESDAY 17, 7:50PM,
CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH****WEDNESDAY 18, 10PM, 13TH FLOOR**

You might guess that an artist playing experimental pedal steel guitar music at SXSW would be a local, but Joe Harvey-Whyte isn't even from America. A master of a notoriously hard-to-play instrument, the London native pulls the pedal steel out of the honky-tonk and into the astral expanse. Harvey-Whyte makes you reevaluate an instrument you've heard a thousand times, bending your mind's expectations like he does the tone of his guitar. In addition to composing heady Americana, the award-winning musician further demonstrates his reverence for sound with a side gig as a field recordist for film and radio.

- JOSEPH GONZALEZ

Jordan Walsh

MONDAY 16, 7PM, THE PERSHING

From his CV, Austin percussionist, composer, and teacher Jordan Walsh is busier than a parent of 10. Straddling the line between chamber music and sound design, Walsh performs with Goliath Was Bigfoot, Maru Haru, Line Upon Line Percussion, and Density512's new music collective. He also engages in solo performances all over the country that blend vibraphone, percussion, and electronics in a tireless championing of electroacoustic music-making. Holding a doctorate from UT-Austin, he teaches percussion and audio technology at Southwestern University, Austin Community College, and other institutions in Texas and elsewhere. How he's found the time to showcase at SXSW is a mystery.

- MICHAEL TOLAND

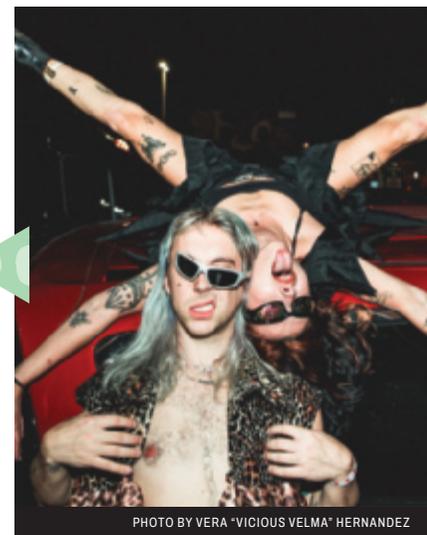


PHOTO BY VERA "VICIOUS VELMA" HERNANDEZ

Joyeria

MONDAY 16, 9PM, SWAN DIVE**TUESDAY 17, 8PM, VALHALLA**

The irreverent blond behind London-based project Joyeria is keeping lad rock alive with gruff "yeah yeah yeah" choruses and synthesizer beeps and boops to match every chunky power chord. The bobbed man, known only to us listeners as Joy, nails an exaggerated drawl on early single "Wild Joy" despite his Canadian-Polish heritage, while more recent banger "I don't know, who cares?" ("How are you doing?/ How do you feel today?/ I don't know, who cares, stop asking") nods to king slackers Pavement at their twangiest. Production from Dan Carey (Fontaines D.C., Wet Leg) on 2025 EP *Graceful Degradation* seals the deal.

- CARYS ANDERSON

**MIGHT BE MAGIC
PRESENTS**

DJ HARVEY / DANNY DAZE / DEMI RIQUÍSIMO
DJ E-COLOGY AKA ELI SOUL CLAP / MARK GRUSANE
MIKE SERVITO / MYSTIC BILL / PAURRO / SHUBOSTAR
BRETT JOHNSON / TERENCE TABEAU / WILL RENUART

AK-4YA / AL V DAM / AMANDA KOONTZ / ARTIME / CHORIZO FUNK
ANIEL ALLEN / DJ HOT DONNA / DJ Q / DREAM DAYS / GANSI / GIRLCOP
HORSE OPERA / INBAL / JAY LEMAK / JOSHUA CORDOVA / M. SHOJI
MARCUS LOTT / MAURICIO MEADE / P1NKSTAR / PHAMSTAR
ITCHMOD / RAMGON / SCHI THE GOD
WYLDFLOWER / ZARA

WHERE ARE MY KEYS

AUSTIN

- 4 DAYS -

SAT MAR 14

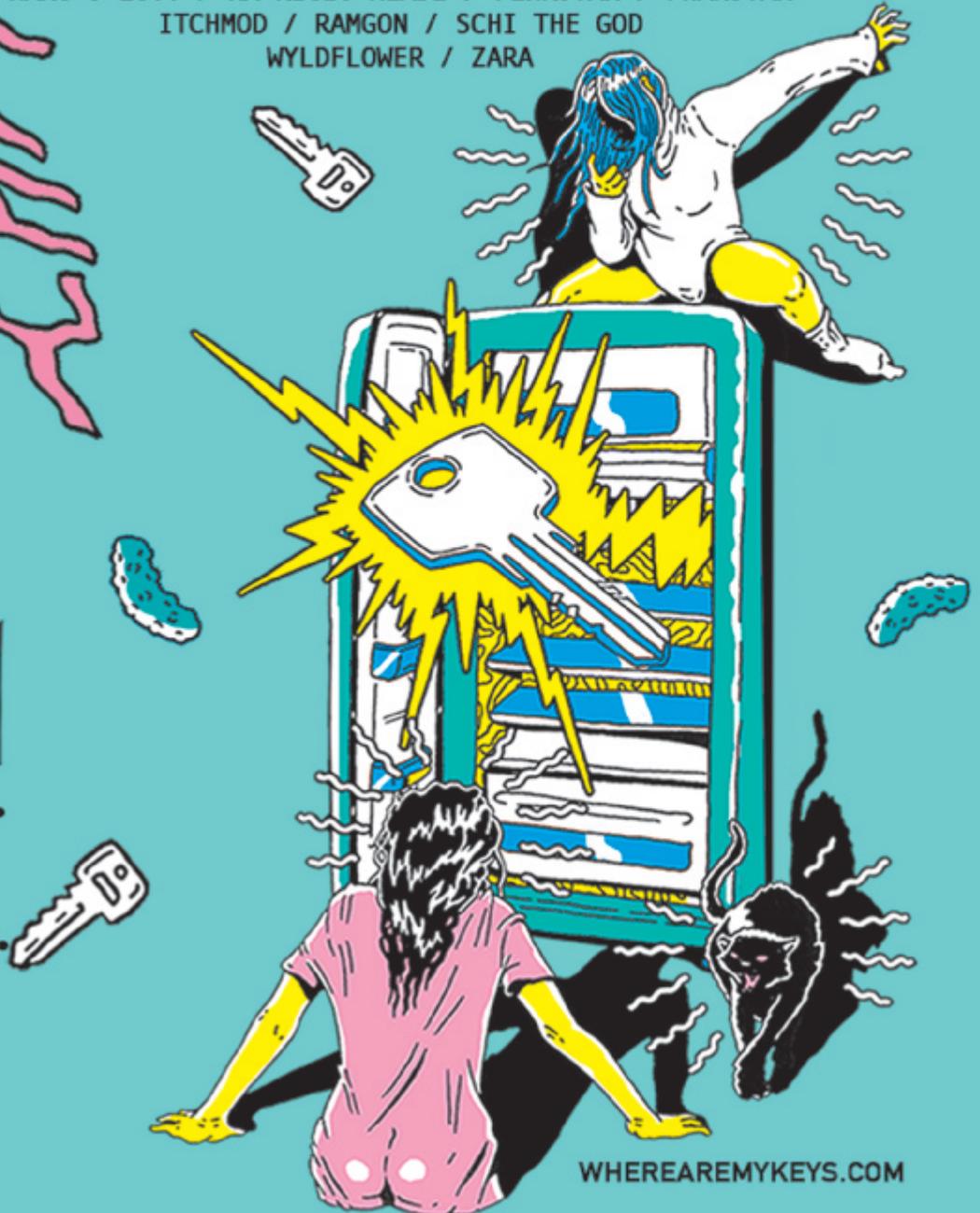
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COURTESY OF SWITCHFOOT

Switchfoot Is Still in the Moment

Drummer Chad Butler on alt-rock band's trust in music and improvisation

BY CAROLINE DREW

They may be nearly three decades into their career, but Switchfoot is still crossing dreams old and new off their rock star bucket list: namely, playing South by Southwest for the first time this year, and a 2025 single with pioneering blues guitarist Buddy Guy.

"In all the years we've been a band, that was not on my bingo card," drummer Chad Butler says of the collaboration. He and his bandmates jumped at the chance to work with such a renowned musician who *Ain't Done With the Blues*, according to the title of his 2025 album. Connected by a mutual friend, the band teamed up with the near-nonagenarian icon for a soulful, anthemic single, "Last Man Standing," that puts Guy's signature boisterous spin on the alternative rock group's West Coast sound. "That's something I'll be playing for my grandkids," says Butler.

Playing SXSW was more or less on the bingo card all along, but somehow slipped through the cracks amid

globe-trotting tours and prolific recording. Stepping out of a year in the studio working on album No. 14, Butler says they're all itching to be back onstage and to bring new music to their audience.

"The live experience is still what keeps us going," he says. "It feels good to be human and to be with humans and to be part of a magical moment – the song exists in that form only once."

Staying in the moment onstage and keeping improvisation at the forefront of their set list is what helps the San Diego-based group stay connected to songs from throughout their catalog. In 2023, they re-recorded their breakout album, *The Beautiful Letdown*, in honor of its 20th birthday. *Billboard*-topping singles like "Meant to Live" and "Dare You to Move" feel just as prescient with a grownup coat of paint, a matured rasp in singer Jon Foreman's vocals, and a glossier tone on the pop-punk-inspired guitar riffs.

"Not many bands get the opportunity to revisit a project 20 years later, and have been playing those songs all along," says Butler. "That record really took us around the world and those songs have evolved as we've evolved as people and as musicians."

The urgent pleading of their youthful releases has grown into a reassured, optimistic insistence. "I think hope deserves an anthem," says Butler. "I feel like music can really change things in ways that nothing else can."

That now-confident belief in the power of music and the hard-earned trust in their musicianship propels Switchfoot onto the SXSW stage, just like every other – with ease and an eagerness to improvise.

"As a live band, we embrace the things that go wrong during the show. You break a guitar string, you break a drumstick – those are moments to improvise and to take the song somewhere it's never been before," says Butler. "The set list is always just suggestions. It's up to the moment. The crowd has an equal say in what we end up playing." ■

Switchfoot

FRIDAY 13, 11PM, ELYSIUM

● ● ● ESSENTIAL ACTS (CONTINUED)

Kaash Paige

SATURDAY 14, 11:30PM,
BRUSHY STREET COMMONS

Dallas alt-R&B singer Kaash Paige's dreamy, Auto-Tuned vocals float with an airlie quality, yet convey plenty of emotion. She returns to SX for her own Kaash Paige & Friends showcase on March 14 after headlining iLL Manner Shows' A FAT A\$\$ RAP SHOW last year. First signed to Def Jam as a teenager, the 25-year-old leveled up as an independent artist after departing the label in 2023. She dropped two projects after signing to indie label Rostrum Records last summer: *KAASHMYCHECKS* and *2 Late to Be Toxic*. Arrive early at Brushy Street Commons to catch Lynn and Austin-bred R&B singer Grace Sorensen.

– DEREK UDENSI

Lola Young

THURSDAY 12, 9:55PM,
ACL LIVE AT THE MOODY THEATER

What defines 24-year-old Lola Young's sound isn't genre-hopping, but her raw candor and emotional immediacy. With three studio albums under her belt, the London-born songstress drifts between alt-pop, indie rock, and soulful R&B, with her powerhouse vocals building a common ground between these pulls. Young walked away from this year's Grammy Awards with two nominations, including a win for her chart-topping hit "Messy" for Best Solo Pop Performance. SXSW will mark one of the singer's first shows back following a brief hiatus, as she rejoins the live circuit and takes the stage as part of *Rolling Stone's* Future of Music showcase.

– MIRANDA GARZA



PHOTO BY ELIANA SHYMANSKY



PHOTO BY EA VISUALS

Lucid Express

MONDAY 16, 12PM, DOWNRIGHT AUSTIN
MONDAY 16, 7PM, DOWNRIGHT AUSTIN

Shoegaze will never die – nor should it when it's in the hands of a band as good as Hong Kong's Lucid Express. Not only do singer Kim Ho and her crew get the sonics just right, but they use their dreamy guitar swathes to illuminate the issues facing them and other democracy-minded citizens in what was, until 2014, one of the world's most cosmopolitan and progressive cities. Ho claims "we've been steadily losing hope for a decade now" in their artist bio, but the sublime six-string beauty found on the quintet's brand-new *Instant Comfort* wraps its defiance around us like a warm blanket.

– MICHAEL TOLAND

Luke Tyler Shelton

SUNDAY 15, 8PM, ANTONE'S
MONDAY 16, 9:10PM, LAS PERLAS

Twentysomething singer Luke Tyler Shelton is living the Laurel Canyon lifestyle of yore, and he's got the outfits, the big-name backers, and – this is important – the music to prove it. On his 2025 EP *Blue Sky*, produced by royal outlaw Shooter Jennings and frequent Father John Misty collaborator Jonathan Wilson, the L.A. native pairs campfire choruses with honky-tonk guitar solos, jaunty piano with pedal steel warmth, and tops it all with the voice of a proper Sixties folkie. Shelton's opened for Chaparrille and played last year's Luck Reunion, so this SXSW only furthers the songwriter's Austin country coronation.

– CARYS ANDERSON

Lynn

THURSDAY 12, 11:15PM, MALA FAMA
SATURDAY 14, 9:45PM, BRUSHY STREET COMMONS
TUESDAY 17, 10:30PM, VENUE 6

Adversity reveals character. Birmingham, Alabama, transplant Lynn gave meaning to that trite phrase during last year's SXSBreaks showcase as she powered through a headlining set ravaged by technical difficulties. "Life be lifin'," she said then. The 24-year-old has only increased her stock since, with fall 2025 album *Ten Thousand Hours* adding personal depth to her brash, confident raps. A clip of "Slow Dreamz," a quick-hitting track interpolating Twista's "Slow Jamz," currently counts over 430K views on TikTok. Expect some doses of R&B, too, and a redemptive showing that'll demonstrate why she's one of Austin hip-hop's brightest young talents.

– DEREK UDENSI

Mama Duke

THURSDAY 12, 11:30PM, SWAN DIVE

The Texas capital has long loved this two-time Austin Music Awards Best Hip-Hop winner, known for a playful, pop-loving streak and a welcoming warmth, but the nation became Mama Duke fans this year when the queer rapper earned Mel B's golden buzzer on *America's Got Talent* last August. Walking off the show as the first female rapper to reach the Top 10, Mama Duke returns to the SXSW stage with signature charisma and uplifting tracks that joyfully intertwine Eighties synth grooves with Aughts club hooks and an effortless lyrical prowess.

– CAROLINE DREW

Marley Hale

FRIDAY 13, 11PM, SAXON PUB
MONDAY 16, 9PM, LEFTY'S BRICK BAR
TUESDAY 17, 12AM, CONTINENTAL CLUB

"If whiskey were a woman, I'd fuck her." How's that for an opening line? Those quotable lyrics open Marley Hale's "Drunk On You," a slow-moving country waltz about lost love and alcoholism. Hale's steely gaze and sentimental vocals make her vintage outlaw sound impossibly alluring. Born in Austin and raised in Northern California, the now-sober singer and guitarist splits time between her birthplace and Brooklyn, New York. She recently completed a February residency at the legendary local Hole in the Wall.

– JOSEPH GONZALEZ

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PHOTO BY KACIE JEWEL HILL

HNRV FLWR Summons the “Infinite Void”

David Van Witt’s Brooklyn indie rock project delivers synth-filled sermons

BY JOSEPH GONZALEZ

It takes an odd set of ingredients to make a HNRV FLWR, but sometimes you need the strangest things to produce something that truly stands out in a world that’s seen just about everything.

The man behind the project, David Van Witt, spent much of his childhood in a meditation commune – or cult, depending on who you ask. Seeking a fresh start, Van Witt’s mother moved him and his brother to the spiritual community in rural Iowa, where they lived in a network of trailer homes inhabited by crystal-carrying hippie idealists. The family lived there until

his mother, shaken by a near-death experience, decided to leave the commune and take the 12-year-old Van Witt and his brother Northeast.

It wasn’t the worst childhood. The worst part about it was actually leaving.

“I think life just got harder when we left it because I was kind of leaving a bubble,” Van Witt explains.

Part of his psyche, unsurprisingly, still remains there. The spirituality gained from his childhood commune experience is the biggest philosophical influence on the eclectic rock that is HNRV FLWR.

For the better part of a decade, Van Witt and his band have been tearing up Brooklyn’s music scene, collecting a rotating lineup of about 30 of some of the borough’s finest musicians.

“It’s sort of like a running joke in Brooklyn [that] every musician there has been in my band,” Van Witt says.

The singer-guitarist recently solidified a six-member lineup he calls “The Infinite Void.” He’ll bring two of them – Luc Swift on guitar, Melanie Drew Chambers on keyboard – along to SXSW, which he’s played a handful of times in the past.

“It always feels like home,” Van Witt says of the festival. “All these other bands from New York are there, so I run into people I don’t even run into here in New York.”

HNRV FLWR’s impassioned preaching fits right in among the singular musical acts of SXSW. Their songs inspire the type of zen you’d expect from a trailer park sunset meditation. With a sound somewhere between melodic folk rock and experimental funk, and a vocal persona between Lou Reed and Ram Dass, the band’s 2023 debut album, *Visions of the Daytime Moon*, was a standout display of Van Witt’s exceptional voice.

“I thought about my mom/ Waking up from a clairvoyance/ When I wouldn’t come home/ I was chasing the crow/ A sacred omen,” he proclaims in opener “The Mystery,” a spirited track that includes both a tasteful flute solo and unconfined Auto-Tune.

Like Robert Zimmerman’s metamorphosis into Bob Dylan and David Robert Jones’ reinvention into David Bowie, Van Witt has come to embody his vowelless musical persona.

“I think it’s about taking off my mask as David Van Witt and all the baggage that comes with that,” he says. “There’s something powerful in taking ownership of your identity in that way.”

When the *Chronicle* phoned him late last month, Van Witt was at work on the next HNRV FLWR album. Playing his new music at SXSW, he hopes, will be just as far out as his origin story.

“When you can feel the [audience] sort of breathing and lifting, when the energy is all connected, I think that kind of [feeling] is just on another level,” he says. ■

HNRV FLWR

THURSDAY 12, 10PM, LAS PERLAS

● ● ● ESSENTIALACTS (CONTINUED)

Miss Bashful

SUNDAY 15, 9:30PM, SPEAKEASY

After conquering Berlin’s club scene, Miss Bashful is returning to her Texas roots before plotting her electroclash world domination. Pulling from the high-voltage likes of Peaches and Miss Kitten, the Mexico City-born provocateur has cultivated candy-coated electronica with body-forward BPMs and relentless momentum. Her self-proclaimed “slut techno” combines warehouse-ready maximalism with hedonistic hooks and a no-compromise attitude that commands the room. The club siren enlisted German DJ duo GDA on her latest rave-bred cut, “Glamour Snobby,” a sharp burst of peak-hour pressure designed to keep bodies moving.

– MIRANDA GARZA

Next of Kin

THURSDAY 12, 7:45PM, ZILKER BREWING

FRIDAY 13, 2PM, RIVIAN ELECTRIC ROADHOUSE

FRIDAY 13, 10PM, CONTINENTAL CLUB

At the Austin Music Awards earlier this month, Next of Kin took home top honors as Best New Act. It was a well-earned but unsurprising honor for the trio, who has not only honed their sharp lyrical narratives behind bursting dynamic harmonies, but also galvanized a community of joy and advocacy around their defiant queer and trans country identity. While Madison Baker, Lili Hickman, and Caelin each bring a distinct songwriting style into the band, together they surge into the kind of empowering Nineties country anthems that cut with an emotional independence and sharp wit – as they do on last year’s standout debut EP, *Homemaker*.

– DOUG FREEMAN

P.H.O.

MONDAY 16, 9PM, 13TH FLOOR

TUESDAY 17, 10:30PM, VALHALLA

Brooklyn’s P-H-zero describes itself as “silk-punk/cyber-metal,” crediting the former term to sci-fi horticulturalist Ken Liu, while elaborating on a teeth-rattling crucible of trad-Asian elements and instrumentation, plus “the fragmented chaos of analog modular synthesizers.” Howard Ouyang, Pierre Pi, and Jun Guo core the current quintet’s crossover from clean, ambient melodicism – rain falling on city rooftops – to harsh, dystopian mosh incitement in the streets on October EP *Gore*:

DLC. Somebody get P.H.O. the opening slot on a Melt-Banana tour.

– RAOUL HERNANDEZ

Pierce Washington

THURSDAY 12, 8PM, SWAN DIVE
 SUNDAY 15, 8:40PM, TACO N MAIZ
 TUESDAY 17, 8:25PM,
 THE CREEK AND THE CAVE

Dallas rapper Pierce Washington sticks a slow jam hook to his infectious 2023 track "SPLIT FARE," a duet with the namesake lead singer of Vancouver indie-pop quintet DACEY. More often, however, the MC veers into jazz. Twinkling keys and sultry horns adorn Madlib co-write "BILOXI"; upright bass soars throughout "AS WE PROCEED" – which features an uncredited Lil Wayne, by the way – and fresh single "Boughtaname" shuffles with the kind of swinging live instrumentation you'd expect to hear in a smoky old back room. Expect big(ger) things from this Dallas Entertainment Awards winner. – CARYS ANDERSON

QUENTIN

MONDAY 16, 12AM,
 CONTINENTAL CLUB

"You haven't kissed me but you already broke me." With one line, QUENTIN's latest single conjures not simply unrequited love, but the special kind of hell that is forming a romantic connection with someone who swears that they're straight. "Hello Denial," the first look at the gender-non-conforming Austin artist's upcoming album *TOMGIRL*, is a power pop anthem for the queers who have been strung around by the emotionally guarded. In the track's Ducky Mane-directed video, the diva struts down South Congress in waist-length braids and knee-high boots. Her best accessory? A Beyoncé-nodding baseball bat. – CARYS ANDERSON



PHOTO BY CANCERIAN

Total Wife

SATURDAY 14, 8:55PM, CHESS CLUB
 TUESDAY 17, 12AM, SEVEN GRAND

Name-dropping Dale Cooper and Elliott Smith is one way to get an alternative music fan's attention, but a different line in Nashville shoegaze project Total Wife's artist bio looms larger: "[Luna] Kupper sold all of her synths to make rent before she started working on the album, and so every inorganic sound is instead built from samples of the band's own work." Besides encapsulating the depressing reality of the modern working musician, this tidbit underscores the innovation showcased on the synthetic-organic merging band's *come back down* – released in September on TAGABOW founder Doug Dulgarian's Julia's War Recordings. – CARYS ANDERSON

TTSSFU

SATURDAY 14, 11:20PM,
 PALM DOOR ON SIXTH
 SUNDAY 15, 5:10PM, MOHAWK
 SUNDAY 15, 7PM, HOTEL VEGAS
 TUESDAY 17, 12:30AM, SWAN DIVE

A true blood digital native, Manchester's Tasmin Nicole Stephens grew up in a world of GarageBand possibility and misinformation manipulation. Her bedroom-based, grunge-for-the-despondent sound and her meme-aware, self-mythologizing PR streak – she's claimed to be the daughter of an AC/DC drummer and the granddaughter of Leonard Cohen – nod appropriately to the smirking slouchers and winking liars of days of yore (looking at you, Bob Dylan), while planting TTSSFU firmly in the modern moment. Rattling with ambivalent angst, her latest singles "Upstairs" and "Sick" set party malaise and religious guilt in a fog-filled world of hypnotic basslines and ethereal vocals. – CAROLINE DREW

Victoryland

SUNDAY 15, 1:25AM, CHESS CLUB
 MONDAY 16, 9:45PM, HOTEL VEGAS
 MONDAY 16, 10:50PM, LAS PERLAS

Victoryland bursts with a frenetic energy that settles somewhere in a collision between Car Seat Headrest and LCD Soundsystem. The project of former Blood guitarist Julian McCamman, Victoryland's new sophomore album and Good English label debut, *My Heart Is a Room With No Cameras in It*, drives with the classic Brooklyn indie rock angst of sorting through sadness with a danceable catharsis. The lo-fi jagged guitar elements from 2024's *Sprain* still slash through McCamman's howls, but behind producer Dan Howard, he finds a new layered heft that twists like a life-saving tourniquet to stop the bleeding. – DOUG FREEMAN

– DOUG FREEMAN

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LÉA THE LEOX (Brookton CA)
Lee Bains (Birmingham AL)
Lee Vasi (Atlanta GA)
Lena Dardelet (Cibarrate DOMINICAN REPUBLIC)
Leo Kalyan (Los Angeles CA)
Leonilo Jaimes (Austin TX)
Leo Von Sol (Austin TX)
Les Itinérantes (Dijon FRANCE)
Leslie Kirchoff (Los Angeles CA)
Lew Apollo (Austin TX)
Lexaay (Dallas TX)
Liam St. John (Spokane WA)
LIFEOFTHOM (New York City NY)
Lightbath (Hyperspace PA)
Lil Asian Thiccie (Kuala Lumpur MALAYSIA)
Lila Tristram (London ENGLAND)
LilJayFromDaO (Austin TX)
Little Guilt (Wandsworth AUSTRALIA)
Little Wilderness (Durango CO)
Liz Cooper (Brooklyn NY)
Iluvii (Austin TX)
Lodri (Valencia VENEZUELA)
Lofi Legs (San Francisco CA)
Lola Kinsey (Wylie TX)
Lola Tried (Austin TX)
Lola Young (London ENGLAND)
Loren Heat (Wickliffe ENGLAND)

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Los Discorde (Mexico City MEXICO)
Los Gatos 512 (San Marcos TX)
Los Gran Reyes (Dallas TX)
LOS GUITARRAZOS (Mexico City MEXICO)
LOS KEMET (Jackson MS)
Los Lobos (East Los Angeles CA)
Louie Lee (Detroit MI)
Louie V T (Pflugerville TX)
Lovpune (San Antonio TX)
Low Clik (Mexico City MEXICO)
Lucaa (Richmond VA)
Luca Eck (Berlin GERMANY)
Lucid Express (Hong Kong HONG KONG)
Lucky (Stagern Flat AUSTRALIA)
lucky break (New York NY)
LU GOT THE TASTE (Monterey MEXICO)
Luke Herbert (Dallas TX)
Luke Tyler Shelton (Los Angeles CA)
Luna Luna (Dallas TX)
Luna Tropical (San Antonio TX)
Lynn (Birmingham AL)
Lyrice Rachae (Atlanta GA)
Mac-K the K Baby (Dallas TX)
Mackwood (London ENGLAND)
Mae Muller (London ENGLAND)
Magic Rockers of Texas (Austin TX)
Magnolian (Ulaanbaatar MONGOLIA)
Mai Anna (Queens NY)
The Mainliners (Los Angeles CA)
Majestyofdivinity (Austin TX)
Mama Duke (Austin TX)
Manny Phesto (Minneapolis MN)
Mariae Cassandra (Perth AUSTRALIA)
Marijuana Deathsquads (Minneapolis MN)
Marilina Bertoldi (Buenos Aires ARGENTINA)
Marissa Nadler (Nashville TN)
Mark Brown (Houston TX)
Mark Cooper (Detroit MI)
Marketplace (Hartlepool ENGLAND)
Marley Hale (Austin TX)
Marni Ch. (Falm Springs GA)
Marry Cherry (Austin TX)
Martin Eyerer (Berlin GERMANY)
Marty (Los Angeles CA)
Maru Haru (Austin TX)
Mass Minor (Austin TX)
Mato Wayuhi (Dayville OR)
Mc Danny (São Paulo BRAZIL)
MC Frontalot (Berkeley CA)
MC Nito (Rio De Janeiro BRAZIL)
MEEK (London ENGLAND)
Mega Ran (Phoenix AZ)
Meg Elsier (New York NY)
Melaina Kol (Yorngville NC)
Melanie Dyer (Inverell AUSTRALIA)
Mélat (Austin TX)
Melly (Salvador BRAZIL)
Mên An Tol (London ENGLAND)
mer marcum (Brooklyn NY)
Merrick Winter (London ENGLAND)
Michael The Lion (Philadelphia PA)
The Microphone Misfitz (Chicago IL)
Mid Century Modern (Seattle WA)

Miguel Ortiz y El Nuevo Estilo (Austin TX)
Mika Häkki & Dark Yonder (Gothenburg SWEDEN)
Mike Checc (Houston TX)
MikMula (Savannah GA)
MILHD (Austin TX)
Minori (Kingston JAMAICA)
Miss Bashful (Berlin GERMANY)
Miss GIRL6 (Philadelphia PA)
Mission (Sacramento CA)
MISTA KLEEN (Atlanta GA)
MITA (Mexico City MEXICO)
Mobeethicc (Chicago IL)
Modern Cinema Master (Taipei City TAIWAN)
Modern Cult (Miami FL)
Modeselektor (Berlin GERMANY)
Moe Lotti (Pensacola TX)
Moio (Dublin IRELAND)
Money Mark (Los Angeles CA)
Monsieur Van Pratt (Mexico City MEXICO)
Montclair (Austin TX)
MORENO X4 (Sacramento CA)
MORGAN (London ENGLAND)
Morgan Janay (Atlanta GA)
Morgan Munroe (Lincolnton ENGLAND)
Moscato J (Austin TX)
Mosmo (Hermosillo MEXICO)
Mother Nature (Chicago IL)
Mr. Lewis & The Funeral 5 (Austin TX)
MrWootay (Shreveport LA)
Ms. Ca\$H (Savannah GA)
MT Jones (Liverpool ENGLAND)
MUGGER (Austin TX)
MUNJI (Houston TX)
MURTY (Kajang MALAYSIA)
MX LONELY (Brooklyn NY)
myplotis (San Antonio TX)
N@te! (Hampton VA)
NAADI (New York NY)
NASAAN (Detroit MI)
Nathaniel Stewart (San Diego CA)
Native Leaves (Salt Lake City UT)
Nattali Rize (Kingston JAMAICA)
Neapolitan (Austin TX)
Negüs Fresh (Detroit MI)
néomi (Rotterdam NETHERLANDS)
Neptune XXI (Washington DC)
Next of Kin (Austin TX)
NEZZA (San Jose CA)
Nicotine (Houston TX)
Nightbus (Manchester ENGLAND)
NIGHT DRIVE (Austin TX)
Night Ritualz (San Antonio TX)
Nilasii (Suffolk VA)
Nikki Gold (Nashville TN)
Nik Parr & The Selfless Lovers (Austin TX)
Nilipek (Berlin GERMANY)
NOA (Saltillo MEXICO)
NOAMZ (Madison WI)
Nonô (Rio De Janeiro BRAZIL)
Novelist (London ENGLAND)
Novul (Los Angeles CA)
Nudo (El Paso/Eagle Pass TX)
Nug (Portland OR)

Odanga (Austin TX)
OG Ron C (Houston TX)
OKAN (Miami FL)
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Onlyheaven (New Orleans LA)
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Oscar Twins (Turin ITALY)
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Our Shame (Taipei City TAIWAN)
Oya Noire (Brooklyn NY)
Ozer (San Francisco CA)
Packaging (Seattle WA)
Paisley Fields (Brooklyn NY)
Panam (Barcelona SPAIN)
Panic Shack (Cardiff WALES)
Panoramic Voices (Austin TX)
The Paradox (Atlanta GA)
Pär Hagström and Charlatans of Love (Göteborg SWEDEN)
Parker Woodland (Austin TX)
Parris Chariz (Tulsa OK)
Passion Pit (Cambridge NY)
Pat G (Austin TX)
Patriarchy (Walibu GA)
Patrice Pike Band (Austin TX)
Pedal Steel Noah (Austin TX)
Pedro TQM (Miami FL)
Peelander-Z (Austin TX)
Pei-Yu Hung (Kashong TAIWAN)
Perdón Amor (Monterrey MEXICO)
Petrina DeLacey (Los Angeles CA)
P.H.O (Brooklyn NY)
PIAO (Toronto CANADA)
Pierce Washington (Dallas TX)
Pink Breath of Heaven (San Francisco CA)
Pink Elephant Radio (Houston TX)
The Pink Stones (Athens GA)
Pirscription (Waco TX)
Planeta No (Chilbin CHELSE)
Planet Dev (San Antonio TX)
Poison (Queens NY)
The Point. (Austin TX)
PONS (Brooklyn NY)
Popstar Benny (Atlanta TX)
Posavant (Riverside CA)
Pretty Jane (Nashville TN)
Principe Q (Corpus Christi TX)
Prissy P (Austin TX)
promqueen (Austin TX)
Propain (Houston TX)
Proress The Testament (Washington DC)
PSH (Peneř Strýčka Homeboye) (Prague CZECHIA)
Puzzled Panther (New York NY)
Pyrex (Baltimore MD)
Python P (Oxnard CA)
¿Quiensave? (Saltus CA)
Q Tha Hero (Long Beach CA)
QUANNA (Savannah GA)
QUENTIN (Austin TX)

Que the Boy (Detroit MI)
Qui (Virginia Beach VA)
Quiet Money Dot (Houston TX)
QUIMIKOZ DEL SON (Fort Worth TX)
Radium Dolls (Brisbane AUSTRALIA)
Pehuenche (Calape MEXICO)
Rafa Parra (Mexico City MEXICO)
RAKEL (Reykjavik ICELAND)
The Ramona Flowers (Bristol ENGLAND)
Rampage Sound (London ENGLAND)
Randy Perez (Phoenix AZ)
Raq Baby (Chicago IL)
Ras Mundi (Austin TX)
Ray Vaughn (Long Beach CA)
Reaper (Los Angeles CA)
The Red Eye Gamblers (Austin TX)
Redzed (Bmo CZECHIA)
Reggie Becton (Los Angeles CA)
REHMA (Chicago IL)
Reilly Downes (Chicago IL)
REJAY (Nagasaki JAPAN)
Remey Williams (Camden NJ)
Reuben Vincent (Charlotte NC)
The Reverent Few (Austin TX)
RIA (Mexico MEXICO)
Rich Delinquent (Melbourne AUSTRALIA)
RickFromTexas (Austin TX)
Riobamba (Austin TX)
Riverboat Gamblers (Austin TX)
Rockstar Keezy (Pulaski TN)
Rocky Banks (Houston TX)
Rosa Anshuetz (Berlin GERMANY)
Rosegarden Funeral Party (Dallas TX)
Ruido Selecto (Medellin COLOMBIA)
runo plum (Minneapolis MN)
Ryan Dove (El Paso TX)
Ryley Hall (San Antonio TX)
Saanbluu (St. Louis MO)
Sage Bava (Honooye Falls NY)
Salge Davis (Huntington Beach CA)
Saint Agnes (Southampton ENGLAND)
Saint Avangeline (Atlanta GA)
Saint Harison (Southampton ENGLAND)
Sally Baby's Silver Dollars (New Orleans LA)
SAMIA (Montreal CANADA)
Sam LLanes (Miami FL)
Sam Scherdel (Doncaster ENGLAND)
Samurai Drive (Budapest HUNGARY)
SAMWOY (Montreal CANADA)
Samy Sharif (Venice GA)
San Charbel (El Paso TX)
Sarah Crean (Dublin IRELAND)
Sarah Meth (London ENGLAND)
Sasha Wrist (Bakersfield CA)
Sassy 009 (Oslo NORWAY)
SATALIGHTS (Austin TX)
Scuttino (Dallas TX)
Secret Family (San Francisco CA)
selines (New York NY)
Semisoft (Tacoma WA)
Sertified (Austin TX)
Seulement (Montreal CANADA)
Sex Mask (Melbourne AUSTRALIA)
Sexpop (Austin TX)

Sgt. Remo (San Antonio TX)
Shai Gabriel (Austin TX)
Shallowater (Houston TX)
Shao Dow (London ENGLAND)
Shaunsolo (Kilbuck TX)
She23 (Austin TX)
The Sheila Divine (Boston MA)
Sherlock Sound System (Kingston JAMAICA)
Shiv (Cypress TX)
SHO (Atlanta GA)
Short Life (Monterrey MEXICO)
Shreea Kaul (Houston TX)
Shunk (Montreal CANADA)
Sibby Liv (Philadelphia PA)
Sickick (Toronto CANADA)
Silvertone (Chicago IL)
Simone Tang (Copenhagen DENMARK)
sir eddie c (St. Louis MO)
skeien (Malmö SWEDEN)
SLASH NEED (Toronto CANADA)
Slomo Drags (Austin TX)
Slow Spread Love (St. Louis MO)
Smooth Nature (Waco TX)
Social Cig (Milwaukee WI)
Social Order (Las Vegas NV)
Sofia and the Antoinettes (London ENGLAND)
Softish (Guadalajara MEXICO)
softcheese (Jacksonville FL)
Solarrio (Paris FRANCE)
Somalia (Lithonia GA)
Somebody Someone (Austin TX)
someshiit (Osaka JAPAN)
Sonido Cachimbo (El Paso TX)
Sonora Hechicera (San Antonio TX)
Sonora Tukuyuy (Miami FL)
The Sophs (Los Angeles CA)
Sorry Youth (Taipei City TAIWAN)
sosocamo (Apex NC)
Soucream (Miami FL)
Soularreal (Maracaibo TX)
SoundMass (Austin TX)
South North SouthWest (Detroit MI)
Southside Hippie (Austin TX)
SpaceGoonz (Austin TX)
Spacestation (Reykjavik ICELAND)
Spellman Twinz (Sacramento CA)
Spencer Thomas (Atlanta GA)
Spoon Benders (Portland OR)
SRI (Brooklyn NY)
St.Augustine (Boston TX)
Stalefish (Austin TX)
Stare Away (Brooklyn NY)
Steven Bamidele (London ENGLAND)
Steve Ray Ladson (Hopkins SO)
Stiff Barbie (Houston TX)
Still Blank (Hawaii HI)
Stockz (Houston TX)
STRANGE LOT (Austin TX)
Subpar Snatch (Austin TX)
Suck Brick Kid (Orlando FL)
Sugaboo (Dublin IRELAND)
Suitanes del Yonke (El Paso TX)
Sun Atlas (Los Angeles CA)

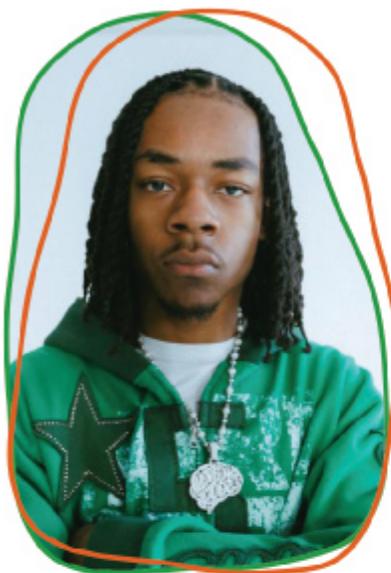
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Sûn Byrd (Dale NCRWVY)
Sunforger (Montreal CANADA)
Sunnitharapper (Houston TX)
Sun Room (San Diego CA)
Sunshine Spazz (Asbury Park NJ)
Superfan (Los Angeles CA)
Susannah Joffe (Austin TX)
SUUUVI (Los Angeles CA)
Suxxy Puxxy (Austin TX)
Swapmeet (Adeleide AUSTRALIA)
SWDEJAY (Detroit MI)
Switch Angel (Boston MA)
Switchfoot (Carlsbad CA)
SXSW DJz (Austin TX)
Synchrolyst (Houston TX)
Talise (Nielsen CANADA)
TALK (Ottawa CANADA)
Tamera King (Boston MA)
Tavo Rayo (Miami TX)
Texas String Assembly (Austin TX)
Thelma and James (Nashville TN)
Thelma and The Sleaze (Nashville TN)
The Ionious Love (Houston TX)
Theo Lawrence (Austin TX)
THUNDEROSA (Lockhart TX)
The Tiarras (Austin TX)
Tia Tutt (Augusta GA)
Tiera Kennedy (Gardendale AL)
Timmy Skelly (Sandwich IL)
Timothy Howls (Dripping Springs TX)
Tipa Tipa (Lima PERU)
t-low (Hamburg GERMANY)
Tomar and the FCs (Austin TX)
Tom A Smith (Sunderland ENGLAND)
Tone Royal (Austin TX)
Torture and the Desert Spiders (New York NY)
Total Wife (Nashville TN)
The Tremolo Beer Gut (Copenhagen DENMARK)
Trey Kams (Los Angeles CA)
TRIM (Mobile AL)
Tropa Magica (Santa Fe NM)
Trophy Wife (Brooklyn NY)
Troy Campbell (Austin TX)
True Jackson (New York NY)
TTBBY (Beaumont TX)
TTG HUNCHO (Houston TX)
TTSSFU (Manchester ENGLAND)
The Tullamarines (Adeleide AUSTRALIA)
Twitch4Eva (Accra GHANA)
Two Legged Dog (Austin TX)
Two-Man Giant Squid (Brooklyn NY)
TY DOLLA \$IGN (Los Angeles CA)
Tye Harris (Dallas TX)
Tyla Yaweh (Orlando FL)
Unsafe Space Garden (Lisboa PORTUGAL)
Unwritten Law (San Diego CA)
urboi. (Monterrey MEXICO)
Valee (Chicago IL)
Valice (Austin TX)
Valsian (Mexico City MEXICO)
Vanita Leo (San Antonio TX)
Vertarias (Austin TX)

Very Necessary (Austin TX)
very nice person (Walibu CA)
Vickeelo (New Orleans LA)
Victor Jones (Brooklyn NY)
Victoryland (Brooklyn NY)
Villain Park (Los Angeles CA)
Vinilious DJ (San Antonio TX)
Vintage Jay (Austin TX)
Vin Zeal (Houston TX)
VITAL Powers (Wolverhampton ENGLAND)
Vivir Quintana (Oahu Mexico)
VÖ.A 2000 (Austin TX)
Wacotron (Waco TX)
Water Damage (Austin TX)
Wave Chapelle & NilexNile (Niwaseko MI)
Ways Away (Los Angeles CA)
Werkha (Shepperton ENGLAND)
Wesley Wolfe (New York NY)
West Texas Exiles (Austin TX)
whisper (Austin TX)
Whitelands (London ENGLAND)
Whitney Mongó (Nashville TN)
Wiardon (Austin TX)
WifeKnife (Brooklyn NY)
Wilby (New York NY)
Willgood (Amarillo TX)
willoh (Springfield MO)
Willy J Peso (Detroit MI)
wilter (Los Angeles CA)
Wim Tapley & The Cannons (Athens GA)
Woes (Chicago IL)
Worlds Worst (Salt Lake City UT)
Worship Music DJs (Austin TX)
Wreckshop Family (Houston TX)
Wyatt Flores (Stillwater OK)
xBValentine (Georgetown TX)
Ximena Soto (Monterrey MEXICO)
XOY (Houston TX)
Xuco Baby (El Paso TX)
Yakiyan (Dallas TX)
YARD (Dublin IRELAND)
YES AND MAYBE (Glasgow SCOTLAND)
Yndent (Dallas TX)
Yng Naz (San Luis Rio Colorado MEXICO)
Yoshi (Mexico City MEXICO)
Yoshi Vintage (Flint MI)
Yoso (Louisville LA)
Young Clean (Austin TX)
Young Tmo (Houston TX)
Yung AI (Houston TX)
Yung Bryse (Austin TX)
YUNG D3MZ (Tema GHANA)
Zac Savage (Dallas TX)
Zae France (Waterbury CT)
Zak Blaine (Hopkinton KY)
ZAMAERA (Kuala Lumpur MALAYSIA)
Zastava (Detroit MI)
Zañal Nortex (Austin TX)
Zoe Tan (Kuala Lumpur MALAYSIA)
Zola Marcelle (London ENGLAND)
Z-Ro (Mo City TX)



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Mexico Amplified: How Música Mexicana is Reshaping Global Music (Caballeros, OCESA, Apodaca Music Group)

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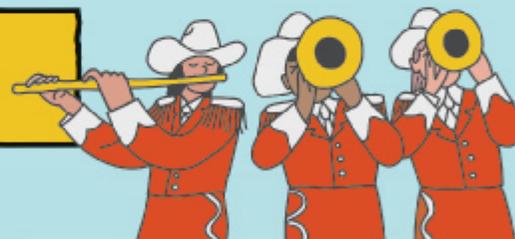
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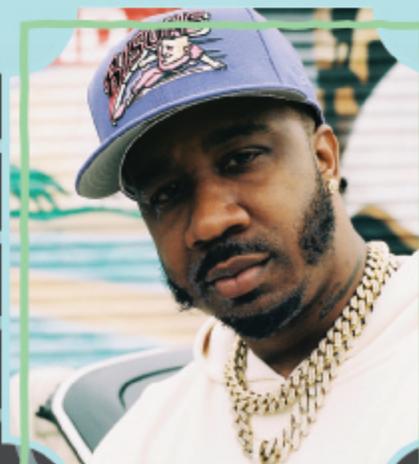
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GUADALAJARA + LATIN



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COMMUNITY CONCERTS AT AUDITORIUM SHORES

MARCH 15, 3:00PM-7:00PM

RADIO DAY STAGE

MARCH 13 - 18, 12:00PM-8:00PM

GLOBAL STAGE

MARCH 12 - 18, 7:00PM-12:00AM

All events subject to change

SXSW EXPO: INTERNATIONAL INNOVATIONS

MARCH 14, 9:00AM-4:00PM

SXSW EXPO: EMERGING TECH

MARCH 18, 9:00AM-4:00PM

FLATSTOCK

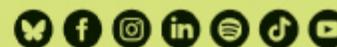
MARCH 13 - 15, 10:00AM-5:00PM

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HEADLINER

Presented by Louisville Film Office

I Love Boosters

Director/Screenwriter: Boots Riley
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 105 MIN

A crew of professional shoplifters take aim at a cut-throat fashion maven. It's like community service.

Cast: Keke Palmer, Naomi Ackie, Taylor Paige, Poppy Liu, Eiza González, LaKeith Stanfield, Will Poulter, Demi Moore

Thursday March 12, 5:00pm, Paramount Theatre
Friday March 13, 11:00am, Paramount Theatre



Mike & Nick & Nick & Alice

Mike & Nick & Nick & Alice

Director/Screenwriter: BenDavid Grabinski
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 107 MIN

A hilarious, stylized, R-rated action-comedy about two gangsters and the woman they love trying to survive the most dangerous night of their lives. As if that wasn't enough, there's one wild ingredient added to the mix: a time machine.

Cast: Vince Vaughn, James Marsden, Eiza González, Keith David, Jimmy Tatro, Stephen Root, Lewis Tan, Ben Schwartz, Emily Hampshire, Arturo Castro

Saturday March 14, 9:00pm, Paramount Theatre
Tuesday March 17, 2:00pm, Zach Theater

MIDNIGHTER

American Dollhouse

Director/Screenwriter: John Valley
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 87 MIN

Caught between a grotesque Christmas fantasy and her own childhood trauma, a woman's search for a fresh start in her home town is violently interrupted by a psychopathic neighbor.

Cast: Hailey Lauren, Kelsey Pribilski, Tinus Seaux, Danielle Evon Ploeger, Richard C. Jones

Saturday March 14, 10:30pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Monday March 16, 8:30pm, AFS Cinema
Tuesday March 17, 10:00pm, Alamo Lamar 2

Drag

Directors/Screenwriters: Raviv Ullman, Greg Yagolnitzer
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 86 MIN

A routine robbery at a rural house turns into a nightmare for two amateur burglars when one of them throws out her back. Things spiral out of control as they try to escape before the homeowner returns.

Cast: Lizzy Caplan, Lucy DeVito, John Stamos, Christine Ko
Friday March 13, 10:15pm, State Theatre; Monday March 16, 8:30pm, Alamo 6
Wednesday March 18, 9:45pm, Alamo Lamar 6

Fifteen

Directors: Jack Zagna, Yossy Zagna, Screenwriters: Andrzej Rattinger, Ricardo Alvarez Canales

World Premiere | Argentina, Mexico | 2026 | 98 MIN

Spanish; Castilian with English Subtitles

A Mexican girl's quinceañera spirals into chaos when supernatural rumors and small-town gossip collide, forcing her to face adulthood sooner than expected.

Cast: Greta Marti, Macarena Oz, Aminta Ineta, Martha Claudia Moreno, Enrique Arecedo, Mercedes Hernández, Malena Sandy, Cloe Jurena Furgan, Andre Fajardo, Silvia Villazur

Sunday March 15, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 4; Tuesday March 17, 8:15pm, Alamo 1
Wednesday March 18, 3:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3

Over Your Dead Body

Director: Jorma Taccone, Screenwriters: Nick Kocher, Brian McElhane

World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 105 MIN

A dysfunctional couple head to a remote cabin to supposedly reconnect, but each has secret plans to kill the other.

Cast: Samara Weaving, Jason Segel, Timothy Olyphant, Juliette Lewis, Paul Guilfoyle, Keith Jardine

Saturday March 14, 5:30pm, Paramount Theatre
Monday March 16, 11:30am, Zach Theater

Pretty Lethal

Director: Vicky Jewson, Screenwriter: Kate Freund
World Premiere | United Kingdom | 2026 | 83 MIN

An action-packed thriller where five ballerinas, stranded in a remote forest, take shelter at an unsettling roadside inn. They must weaponize years of brutal training, turning grace, discipline, and even pointe shoes into tools for survival.

Cast: Iris Apatow, Lana Condor, Millicent Simmonds, Avantika, Maddie Ziegler, Uma Thurman

Friday March 13, 8:00pm, Paramount Theatre
Monday March 16, 11:00am, Paramount Theatre



They Will Kill You

Ready or Not 2: Here I Come

Directors: Matt Bettinelli-Olpin, Tyler Gillett, Screenwriters: Guy Busick, R. Christopher Murphy

World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 108 MIN

After surviving the Le Domas attack, Grace faces the next level of the deadly game -- now with her estranged sister Faith. With four rival families hunting them, Grace must survive, protect her sister, and claim the High Seat that rules it all.

Cast: Samara Weaving, Kathryn Newton, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Shawn Hatosy, Néstor Carbonell, David Cronenberg, Elijah Wood

Friday March 13, 5:30pm, Paramount Theatre
Saturday March 14, 11:00am, Paramount Theatre

They Will Kill You

Director: Kirill Sokolov, Screenwriters: Kirill Sokolov, Alex Litvak

World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 94 MIN

A high-octane horror-action-comedy in which a woman must survive the night at the Virgil, a demonic cult's mysterious, twisted death-trap, before becoming their next offering in a uniquely brazen battle of epic kills and wickedly dark humor.

Cast: Zazie Beetz, Myha'La, Paterson Joseph, Tom Felton, Heather Graham, Patricia Arquette

Tuesday March 17, 9:30pm, Paramount Theatre
Wednesday March 18, 11:00am, Paramount Theatre

Grind

Directors: Brea Grant, Ed Dougherty, Chelsea Stardust, Screenwriters: Brea Grant, Ed Dougherty

World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 104 MIN

Four interconnected tales of workplace horror tackle the most terrifying aspect of modern life: making a living! With a wild tone as darkly comic as it is relevant, *Grind* is the most fun you'll have in a late stage capitalistic hellscape.

Cast: Rob Huebel, Barbara Crampton, Vinny Thomas, Jessica Van, Christopher Rodriguez-Marquette, James Urbaniak, Courtney Pauroso, James Paxton, Ify Nwadiwe, Aubrey Shea

Thursday March 12, 10:30pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Sunday March 15, 5:45pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Wednesday March 18, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 4



Grind

Hokum

Director/Screenwriter: Damian McCarthy

World Premiere | United States, Ireland | 2026 | 101 MIN

When novelist Ohm Bauman retreats to a remote inn to scatter his parents' ashes, he is consumed by tales of a witch haunting the honeymoon suite. Disturbing visions and a shocking disappearance forces him to confront dark corners of his past.

Cast: Adam Scott, Peter Coonan, David Wilmut, Florence Ordesch, Will O'Connell, Michael Patric, Sioux C, Brendan Conroy, Austin Amelio, Ezra Carlisle

Saturday March 14, 10:00pm, State Theatre
Sunday March 15, 5:45pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Tuesday March 17, 8:30pm, Alamo Lamar 8

Imposters

Director/Screenwriter: Caleb Phillips

World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 102 MIN

After a couple's baby boy is taken, the desperate mother learns of a way to bring him back. However, her husband begins to suspect that what she returned with isn't their son.

Cast: Jessica Rothe, Charlie Barnett, Yul Vazquez, Bates Wilder, Luisina Quarleri, Thomas Parobek, Ian Lyons, Taylor Karin, Lee Bennett, Declan Bennett

Sunday March 15, 9:00pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Monday March 16, 2:30pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Tuesday March 17, 9:15pm, Alamo Lamar 3

Monitor

Directors/Screenwriters: Matt Black, Ryan Polly

World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 88 MIN

A social media moderator unleashes a deadly terror when she refuses to publish a cryptic video.

Cast: Brittany O'Grady, Taz Skylar, Viveik Karla, Ines Haysater Asserson, Gunner Willis, Sara Alexander, Camila Wahlgren

Thursday March 12, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Sunday March 15, 6:35pm, Alamo 2 & 7
Tuesday March 17, 12:00pm, Alamo Lamar 6

Never After Dark

Director/Screenwriter: Dave Boyle

World Premiere | Japan | 2025 | 105 MIN

Japanese with English Subtitles
A medium travels deep into the Japanese countryside to perform a routine exorcism, where she is forced to confront the most terrifying enemy of all: the living.

Cast: Moeke Hoshi, Kento Kaku, Kurumi Inagaki, Mutsuo Yoshioka, Bokuzo Masana, Tae Kimura

Friday March 13, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Monday March 16, 9:45pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Wednesday March 18, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 9

FESTIVAL FAVORITE

The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocaloptimist

Director: Daniel Rober, Charlie Tyrell
Texas Premiere | United States | 2026 | 103 MIN

A father-to-be tries to figure out what is happening with the AI insanity, exploring the existential dangers and stunning promise of this technology that humanity has created.

Friday March 13, 3:15pm, State Theatre
Saturday March 14, 2:45pm, Satellite Venue: AFS Cinema

American Doctor

Director: Poh Si Teng
Texas Premiere | United States, Malaysia, Qatar, Denmark, State of Palestine | 2026 | 93 MIN

English, Arabic, Hebrew with English Subtitles
When three American doctors - Palestinian, Jewish and Zoroastrian - enter Gaza to save lives, they find themselves caught between medicine and politics, risking everything to expose the truth.

Featuring Thaeer Ahmad, Mark Perlmutter, Feroze Sidhwa

Thursday March 12, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Friday March 13, 11:45am, Alamo Lamar 9



Buddy

Big Girls Don't Cry

Director/Screenwriter: Paloma Schneideman
Texas Premiere | New Zealand | 2026 | 98 MIN

Rural New Zealand, 2006. Over one transformative summer, 14 year old Sid Bookman discovers desire, identity and the internet, as she imitates the people she longs to be loved by.

Cast: Ani Palmer, Rain Spencer, Noah Taylor

Friday March 13, 11:15am, Alamo Lamar 8
Saturday March 14, 6:15pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4
Monday March 16, 8:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4

VISIONS

And Her Body Was Never Found

Director: Polaris Banks, Screenwriters: Polaris Banks, Mor Cohen

World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 75 MIN

A couple treks deep into the wilderness to make a movie about their troubled relationship, but takes the opportunity to kill each other instead.

Cast: Mor Cohen, Polaris Banks, Grace Drake

Saturday March 14, 6:00pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Monday March 16, 3:15pm, Alamo Lamar 1
Wednesday March 18, 9:30pm, Alamo Lamar 1

Bagworm

Director: Oliver Bernsen, Screenwriter: Henry Bernsen
North American Premiere | United States | 2026 | 96 MIN

After a sexually frustrated hammer salesman steps on a rusty nail, he must determine whether the world's sudden and violent turn against him is real or the result of an infection consuming his body and mind.

Cast: Peter Falls, Michelle Ortiz, Robbie Arnett, Corbin Bernsen, Stephen Borrello, Jessy Morner-Ritt, Sydney Winbush, Francesca Galassi

Friday March 13, 9:45pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Saturday March 14, 9:00pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Tuesday March 17, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 6

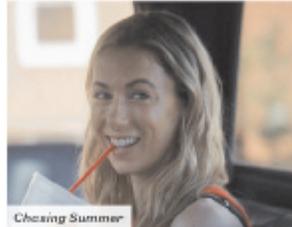
Buddy

Director: Casper Kelly, Screenwriters: Casper Kelly, Jamie King
Texas Premiere | United States | 2026 | 95 MIN

A brave girl and her friends must escape a kids television show.

Cast: Cristin Miloti, Delaney Quinn, Tophar Grace, Keegan-Michael Key, Michael Shannon, Patton Oswalt

Monday March 16, 10:00pm, State Theatre
Wednesday March 18, 12:00pm, Alamo Lamar 4



Chasing Summer

Chasing Summer

Director: Josephine Decker, Screenwriter: Iliza Shlesinger
Texas Premiere | United States | 2025 | 91 MIN

After losing both her job and boyfriend, Jamie retreats to her small Texas hometown where friends and flings from a fateful high school summer turn her life upside down.

Cast: Iliza Shlesinger, Garrett Wareing, Lola Tang, Tom Welling, Megan Mullaly, Almee Garcia, Cassidy Freeman, Jeff Perry

Tuesday March 17, 8:00pm, Paramount Theatre
Wednesday March 18, 6:30pm, Alamo Lamar 3

Cookie Queens

Director: Alysa Nahmias
Texas Premiere | United States | 2026 | 91 MIN

It's Girl Scout Cookie season, and four tenacious girls strive to be a top-selling "Cookie Queen," navigating an \$800 million business in which innocence and ambition collide.

Featuring Nikki B., Olive G., Shannon Elizabeth S., Ana E.

Friday March 13, 9:15am, Alamo Lamar 4
Sunday March 15, 11:30am, AFS Cinema

Erupcja

Director: Pete Ohs, Screenwriters: Pete Ohs, Charli xx, Lena Góra, Jeremy O. Harris, Will Madden
US Premiere | United States | 2025 | 71 MIN

English, Polish with English Subtitles
Set in Poland, *Erupcja* follows two women as they complicate their romantic lives. Nel lives in Warsaw where she works at a flower shop. When her childhood friend Bethany comes to visit with a new boyfriend, a volcano erupts.

Cast: Charli xx, Lena Góra, Jeremy O. Harris, Will Madden

Thursday March 12, 6:30pm, State Theatre
Friday March 13, 11:00am, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3

Joybubbles

Director: Rachael J Morrison
Texas Premiere | United States | 2026 | 79 MIN

A boy discovers he can control the global telephone system by whistling a magic tone. Born blind and yearning for connection, his early obsession with the telephone sparks a subculture that shapes the future of hacking and technology.

Featuring Joybubbles, Phil Lapsley, Steve Wozniak

Thursday March 12, 6:15pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4
Friday March 13, 3:15pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4
Sunday March 15, 12:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4

Leviticus

Director/Screenwriter: Adrian Chiarella
Texas Premiere | Australia | 2026 | 86 MIN

Two star-crossed teenage boys must escape a violent entity that takes the form of the person they desire most - each other.

Cast: Joe Bird, Stacy Clausen, Mia Wasikowska, Jeremy Blewitt, Ewen Leslie, Davida McKenzie, Nicholas Hope, Zahra Newman

Obsession

Director/Screenwriter: Curry Barker
United States | 2025 | 108 MIN

After breaking the mysterious "One Wish Willow" to win his crush's heart, a hopeless romantic finds himself getting exactly what he asked for but soon discovers that some desires come at a dark, sinister price.

Cast: Michael Johnston, Indie Navarrette, Cooper Tomlinson, Megan Lawless, Andy Richter

Saturday March 14, 7:00pm, State Theatre
Tuesday March 17, 6:30pm, Alamo Lamar 4

The Oldest Person in the World

Director: Sam Green
Texas Premiere | United States | 2025 | 87 MIN

English, Catalan, Valencian, French, Japanese with English Subtitles

A decade-long global journey chronicles the ever-changing record holders of the title of oldest person alive. What begins as a portrait of longevity becomes a meditation on the passage of time, fate, and the profound human experience of being alive.

Featuring Susannah Mushatt Jones, Emma Morano, Violet Brown, Kane Tanaka, Sister André (née Lucile Randou), Maria Brinnyas Morera

Friday March 13, 6:15pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Tuesday March 17, 9:00pm, AFS Cinema

Paralyzed by Hope: The Maria Bamford Story

Directors: Judd Apatow, Neil Berkeley
Texas Premiere | United States | 2026 | 115 MIN

A raw exploration of comic Maria Bamford who mines her own pain for comedy, blurring the line between performance and personal crisis.

Featuring Maria Bamford
Sunday March 15, 12:00pm, State Theatre
Tuesday March 17, 8:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4

Rock Springs

Director/Screenwriter: Vera Miao
Texas Premiere | United States | 2026 | 97 MIN

English, Cantonese, Mandarin with English Subtitles
After the death of her father, a grieving young girl moves to an isolated house in a new town with her mother and grandmother, only to discover there is something monstrous hidden in the town's history and the woods behind their new home.

Cast: Kelly Marie Tran, Benedict Wong, Jimmy O. Yang, Aria Kim, Fiona Fu

Sunday March 15, 3:45pm, State Theatre
Tuesday March 17, 10:00pm, State Theatre



Obsession

See You When I See You

Director: Jay Duplass, Screenwriters: Adam Cayton-Holland
Texas Premiere | United States | 2026 | 101 MIN

With the help of his family, a comedy writer battles PTSD after the tragic death of his sister.

Cast: Cooper Raiff, David Duchovny, Kaityn Dever, Hope Davis, Lucy Boynton, Ariela Barer

Friday March 13, 11:30am, Zach Theater
Monday March 16, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 4

The Shitheads

Director/Screenwriter: Macon Blair
Texas Premiere | United States | 2025 | 90 MIN

When two unqualified bozos are hired to transfer a rich teen to rehab, their straightforward gig quickly spirals into dangerous mayhem.

Cast: Dave Franco, O'Shea Jackson Jr., Mason Thames, Peter Dinklage, Kiernan Shipka, Nicholas Braun, Killer Mike

Sunday March 15, 6:15pm, Zach Theater
Wednesday March 18, 9:30pm, State Theatre

Time and Water

Director: Sara Dosa
Texas Premiere | United States, Iceland | 2026 | 90 MIN

English, Icelandic with English Subtitles
Facing the death of his country's glaciers and the loss of his beloved grandparents, Icelandic writer Andri Snær Magnason turns his archives into a time capsule to hold what is slipping away - family, memory, time and water.

Thursday March 12, 6:00pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Saturday March 14, 11:00am, AFS Cinema

SXSW FILM & TV VENUES

PARAMOUNT THEATRE

713 Congress Ave.
1100 seats

STATE THEATRE

719 Congress Ave.
298 seats

ZACH THEATER

202 S Lamar Blvd.
420 seats

ROLLINS THEATRE @ THE LONG CENTER

701 W Riverside Dr.
210 seats

ALAMO LAMAR

1120 S Lamar Blvd.
1: 43 seats
2: 43 seats

3: 61 seats

4: 149 seats

5: 167 seats

6: 93 seats

7: 63 seats

8: 63 seats

9: 93 seats

VIOLET CROWN CINEMA

434 W 2nd St.

1: 50 seats

2: 50 seats

3: 39 seats

4: 44 seats

5: 44 seats

6: 44 seats

7: 44 seats

8: 44 seats

9: 44 seats

10: 44 seats

Beyond The Duplex Planet

Director/Screenwriter: Beth Harrington
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 93 MIN

In 1979, artist David Greenberger's talks with senior citizens become a word-of-mouth hit 'zine, *The Duplex Planet*. Four decades on, now a senior himself, he has much to tell us about the nature of art, conversation and growing old.

Featuring David Greenberger, Penn Jillette, Louie Perez, Ed Rescha, Michael Stipe, Norabelle Greenberger, Rae Greenhart, Tyson Rogers

Thursday March 12, 7:15pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Friday March 13, 2:00pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Wednesday March 18, 11:00am, Rollins Theatre at Long Center

Daughters of the Forest

Director/Screenwriter: Otilia Portillo Padua
North American Premiere | Mexico | 2026 | 93 MIN

Spanish, Castilian with English Subtitles
Deep in Mexico's forests, this immersive sci-fi doc follows the unusual, fungi-driven paths of two indigenous mycologists as they seek to reconcile the past and present while reimagining the future for themselves and the changing world they inhabit.

Featuring Elisaveta Ramirez Carabajal, Julieta Serafina Amaya, Julia Dolores Raimundo, Zenaida Perez, Magdalena Martinez, Olivia Ayala

Friday March 13, 6:45pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3
Saturday March 14, 12:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3
Sunday March 15, 12:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3

Dead Eyes

Director/Screenwriter: Richard E. Williams
World Premiere | Australia | 2025 | 81 MIN

A first person (POV) horror experience. After the death of his sister, Sean ventures into a remote forest with his friends to find his missing father, only to discover his grief has become the bridge between the living and the dead.

Cast: Ana Thu-Nguyen, Mischa Heywood, Rijen Laine, Charles Cottier, Alex O'Shea, Stephen Phillips, Freya Callaghan

Thursday March 12, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Monday March 16, 6:45pm, Alamo Lamar 3
Wednesday March 18, 10:00pm, Alamo Lamar 2

Perfect

Director: Millicent Hailes, Screenwriters: Millicent Hailes, Kendra Miller
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 94 MIN

In a world devastated by a contaminated water supply, a wealthy pregnant woman living in a beautiful and shabby lakeside resort in the California mountains encounters a younger woman who is starting her life over.

Cast: Julia Fox, Ashley Moore, Lio Mehiel, Micaela Wittman, Ryder McLaughlin, Kate Moennig, Creed Bratton

Thursday March 12, 3:30pm, State Theatre
Saturday March 14, 8:45pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Monday March 16, 10:00pm, Alamo Lamar 1

The Peril at Pincer Point

Directors/Screenwriters: Jake Kuhn, Noah Stratton-Twinn
World Premiere | United Kingdom | 2025 | 83 MIN

On a quest to prove his competency, an inept sound recordist finds himself entangled in a nautical prophecy on the spectral island of Pincer Point.

Cast: Jack Redmayne, Alyth Ross, Os Leanse, Mike Mackenzie, Dashiell Upton, Jason Hogan, Mat Wright, Noah Stratton-Twinn, Isabel Laidler, Oliver Woolf

Saturday March 14, 5:15pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Sunday March 15, 9:45pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Wednesday March 18, 10:00pm, Alamo Lamar 7

Sinner Supper Club

Directors/Screenwriters: Nora Kaye, Daisy Rosato
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 70 MIN

An NYC friend group reunites to throw an "eviction funeral" for Genevieve; as the night progresses and a heat wave traps them together, their long-ignored problems boil over. An improvised gay mumblecore ghost story shot on an iPhone in six days.

Cast: Ashli Lee, Elise Kibler, Genevieve Simon, Jayae Riley Jr., Nora Kaye, Sophie Sagan-Guthertz, Daisy Rosato

Thursday March 12, 10:30pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Saturday March 14, 12:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4
Monday March 16, 12:00pm, Alamo Lamar 1



And Her Body Was Never Found

NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT

Anima

Director/Screenwriter: Brian Tetsuro Iyie
World Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 96 MIN
English, Japanese with English Subtitles
A young woman and an old man embark on a road trip to preserve his consciousness at an experimental facility.

Cast: Sydney Chandler, Takehiro Hira, Marin Ireland, Lili Taylor, Maria Dizzia, Tom McCarthy, Emil Wakim, Maximilian Lee Piazza

Thursday March 12, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Sunday March 15, 7:00pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Wednesday March 18, 2:5pm, Alamo Lamar 1

Basic

Director/Screenwriter: Chelsea Devantez
World Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 96 MIN

Gloria spirals through her boyfriend's dating history, until she discovers the reason for all of their problems, his very basic, very hot ex, Kaylinn, who not only just stole Gloria's boyfriend, but is about to take her entire story from her, too.

Cast: Ashley Park, Leighton Meester, Taylor John Smith, Nelson Franklin, Kandy Muse, Ashlye Nicole Black, Kenzie Elizabeth, Amber Ruffin, Jon Gabrus, Georgia Mishak

Monday March 16, 9:45pm, Zach Theater
Tuesday March 17, 12:00am, Alamo Lamar 5
Wednesday March 18, 9:15pm, Alamo Lamar 5

Beast Race (Corrida dos Bichos)

Directors: Ernesto Solis, Rodrigo Peasavento, Fernando Meirelles, **Screenwriters:** Ernesto Solis, Rodrigo Lages, Eva Klaver, Marco Abujamra
World Premiere | Brazil | 2026 | 124 MIN
Portuguese with English Subtitles
In the ruins of a dystopian Rio de Janeiro – a city fractured by class conflict and addicted to blood sport – a resistance leader is forced to enter a violent, high-stakes race to save his sister from a fate worse than death.

Cast: Matheus Abreu, Rodrigo Santoro, Isis Valverde, Bruno Gagliasso, Thainá Duarte, Seu Jorge, Sivero Passira, João Guilherme, Grazi Massafera, Anitta
Tuesday March 17, 2:00pm, Paramount Theatre

Campeón Gabacho

Director: Jonás Cuarón, **Screenwriters:** Jonás Cuarón, Aura Xilonen
World Premiere | Mexico | 2025 | 108 MIN
English, Spanish; Castilian with English Subtitles
The story of Liborio, a spirited Mexican migrant who fights, literally and figuratively, for a better life in the United States, punching through prejudice with heart, humor, and hope to become an unlikely hero.

Cast: Juan Daniel García Treviño, Leslie Grace, Rubén Blades, Eddie Marsan, Rosario Dawson, Cheech Marin, Marvin Jones III, Carlos Carrasco, Dolores Heredia
Tuesday March 17, 6:15pm, Zach Theater
Wednesday March 18, 8:00pm, State Theater

Chili Finger

Directors: Edd Benda, Stephen Helstad, **Screenwriter:** Stephen Helstad
World Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 100 MIN
When a small town lawyer finds a severed finger in her chili, she blackmails the restaurant for a cash payout in an effort to regain control over her mundane life. The situation quickly spirals out of control, and her life descends into chaos.

Cast: Judy Greer, Sean Astin, Bryan Cranston, John Goodman, Madeline Wise, Paul Stanko, Sarah Herriman, Sara Sevigny, Dann Florek, Shaya Harris

Saturday March 14, 2:45pm, Zach Theater
Sunday March 15, 8:30pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Monday March 16, 9:30pm, Alamo Lamar 7

Crash Land

Director/Screenwriter: Dempsey Bryk
World Premiere | Canada | 2026 | 90 MIN
Two amateur stuntmen try to make a "real movie" to prove their lives have meaning. They crash and burn.

Cast: Gabriel LaBelle, Finn Wolfhard, Billy Bryk, Noah Parker, Abby Quinn
Friday March 13, 10:00pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Sunday March 15, 10:00pm, State Theatre
Monday March 16, 8:45pm, Alamo Lamar 1

Dead Deer High

Director: Jo Rochelle, **Screenwriter:** Joshua Roark
World Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 101 MIN
Created by teachers, *Dead Deer High* follows a team of high school slam poets and their English teacher as they prepare for a national poetry competition one year after a tragedy changed their lives forever.

Cast: Zack Kazlow, Halden Gayetta, Kyla Brown, Christian Cruz, Ayanma Barkahina, Joseph Bertót, Madelyn Grace, Aaron Cammack, Julia Prud'homme, Audrey Kennedy Kozlow

Thursday March 12, 3:45pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Friday March 13, 9:30pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Wednesday March 18, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 3

Downbeat

Director: Danny Madden, **Screenwriters:** Danny Madden, Daniel Rashid, Addie Weyrich, Arkira Chantaratanaanon
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 91 MIN
Fleeing mistakes in Atlanta, Mauro crashes on his sister's couch in Boston. He takes to bucket drumming on the streets for a way out, but can't stop screwing things up and drawing everyone else into his own feral shortcomings.

Cast: Daniel Rashid, Addie Weyrich, Arkira Chantaratanaanon, Terence Nance, Will Madden, Francesca Blanchard, Dakota Loesch, Dustin Hahn, Skyler Bible
Friday March 13, 10:00pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Monday March 16, 11:45am, Alamo Lamar 7
Wednesday March 18, 8:45pm, Alamo Lamar 2



Family Movie

Dreamquill

Director: Alex Prager, **Screenwriters:** Alex Prager, Vanessa Prager
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 89 MIN
Set in the near future, a woman returning from a virtual retreat discovers her worst nightmare when the helper robot sent to help her family in her absence starts to infringe on her life and identity.

Cast: Elizabeth Banks, John C. Reilly, Juliette Lewis, Sofia Boutella, Kathryn Newton, Lamorne Morris, Toby Larsen, Anna Marie Dobbins
Monday March 16, 8:30pm, Zach Theater
Tuesday March 17, 11:00pm, Zach Theater

Family Movie

Director: Kevin Bacon, **Screenwriters:** Dan Beers
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 81 MIN
A filmmaking family's low-budget horror movie turns into a real-life slasher when a dead body shows up on set. Chaos ensues as the Smiths fight to keep the production on track. After all – the show must go on!

Cast: Kevin Bacon, Kyra Sedgwick, Sosie Bacon, Travis Bacon, Liza Koshy, John Carroll Lynch, Jackie Earle Haley, Andrea Savage, Austin Amelio, Scott McHenry

Friday March 13, 8:15pm, Zach Theater
Saturday March 14, 11:00am, Alamo Lamar 6
Monday March 16, 5:00pm, AFS Cinema



Forbidden Fruits

Director: Meredith Alloway, **Screenwriters:** Meredith Alloway, Lily Houghton
World Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 103 MIN
Free Eden employee Apple leads a secret witch cult with coworkers Cherry and Fig. New hire Pumpkin questions their sisterhood, forcing them to confront inner darkness or meet violent ends.

Cast: Lili Reinhart, Lola Tung, Victoria Pedretti, Alexandra Shipp, Emma Chamberlain, Gabrielle Union

Monday March 16, 5:30pm, Paramount Theatre
Tuesday March 17, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 5

The Fox

Director/Screenwriter: Dario Russo
International Premiere | Australia | 2025 | 89 MIN

In this darkly comic folktale, an affable foxhunter encounters a talking fox who offers him an opportunity to transform his fiancée into the perfect woman.

Cast: Jai Courtney, Emily Browning, Damon Herriman, Claudia Doumit, Sam Neill, Miranda Otto, Olivia Colman
Sunday March 15, 9:45pm, Zach Theater
Monday March 16, 8:45pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Wednesday March 18, 11:00am, Alamo Lamar 8

He Bled Neon

Director: Drew Kirsch, **Screenwriters:** Tim Cairo, Jake Gibson
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 85 MIN
After discovering his brother's death by overdose may have actually been a murder, Ethan returns to a world he left behind – the underbelly of Las Vegas – uncovering a web of corruption and his own appetite for violence.

Cast: Joe Cole, Rita Ora, Marshaun "Beast Mode" Lynch, Ismael Cruz Cordova, Paul Wesley, Josh Holloway
Monday March 16, 7:00pm, State Theatre
Wednesday March 18, 8:00pm, Alamo Lamar 5

Kill Me

Director/Screenwriter: Peter Warren
World Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 104 MIN
Jimmy didn't try to kill himself. Or at least, he's pretty sure he didn't... With the help of a reluctant 911 operator, he sets out on a darkly comedic amateur investigation to solve whether he is being stalked by a killer or chasing himself.

Cast: Charlie Day, Allison Williams, Giancarlo Esposito, Aya Cash, Jessica Harper, David Krumholtz, Tony Cavalero
Thursday March 12, 10:00pm, State Theatre
Saturday March 14, 9:45pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Tuesday March 17, 8:30pm, State Theater

Love Language

Director/Screenwriter: Joey Power
World Premiere | U.S. | 2024 | 104 MIN
An aspiring author with a side hustle writing wedding vows for other people reconnects with her long-time crush, only to learn he's the fiancé of one of her new clients.

Cast: Chloë Grace Moretz, Anthony Ramos, Manny Jacinto, Isabel May, Lukas Gage, Billie Lourd, Chloe Femanan, Zach Zucker, Morgan Jay, Bobbi Althoff, Marchánt Davis, Dan Perreault

Monday March 16, 8:30pm, Zach Theater
Tuesday March 17, 11:30am, State Theater

Mam

Director: Nan Felix, **Screenwriters:** Nan Felix, Marine Garnier
US Premiere | France | 2025 | 81 MIN
English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese with English Subtitles
A self-taught chef from Texas arrives in New York to open a Vietnamese restaurant. Broke but relentless, he teams up with a witty waitress, and together they cook up an unlikely journey of passion, resilience, and friendship in the city's underbelly.

Cast: Jerald Head, Nhung Dao Head, Tuan Bui, Henry Wong, Linh Phan, Ngao A Nguyen, Maxence Victor, Kim Hoang, Naoto Ono, An Nguyen Xuan

Monday March 16, 8:30pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Tuesday March 17, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Wednesday March 18, 11:45am, Alamo Lamar 2

Normal (on 35mm)

Director: Ben Wheatley, **Screenwriter:** Derek Kolstad
US Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 90 MIN
Director Ben Wheatley and John Wick creator Derek Kolstad pit a provisional sheriff against his constituents when the exposure of a small town's sordid secret sparks a rip-roaring firefight.

Cast: Bob Odenkirk, Henry Winkler, Lena Headey, Ryan Allen, Billy MacLellan, Brendan Fletcher, Reena Jolly, Peter Shinkoda, Jess McLeod, Derek Barnes

Sunday March 15, 5:45pm, Paramount Theatre
Wednesday March 18, 8:30pm, Alamo Lamar 4

The Pirate King

Directors: Josh Plasse, **Screenwriters:** Josh Plasse, Brev Moss
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 107m
A marine veteran struggling with PTSD and addiction finds unexpected redemption when he joins a group of pirate re-enactors, giving him a chance to fight for custody of his daughter and rebuild the life he thought was lost forever.

Cast: Rob Riggle, Jordana Brewster, Matt Barr, Elizabeth Tulloch, Billie Lourd, Nichole Sakura, Leander Suleiman, Adele Abinante, Chris Wisatake, Annabeth Gish, Brett Cullen

Monday March 16, 12pm, State Theatre
Tuesday March 17, 12pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3

Pizza Movie

Directors/Screenwriters: Brian McElhaney, Nick Kocher
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 92 MIN
A group of college students go downstairs to their dorm lobby to get a delivery pizza. There's only one issue: They're insanely high on a home-made drug, turning their simple journey down two sets of stairs into a mind-bendingly transformative quest.

Cast: Gaben Matarazzo, Sean Giambrone, Lulu Wilson, Jack Martin, Peyton Elizabeth Lee, Marcus Scribner, Caleb Hearon, Sarah Sherman, Miguel-Andres Garcia, Justin Cooley

Friday March 13, 6:45pm, State Theatre
Sunday March 15, 12:00pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Tuesday March 17, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 4

Poetic License

Director: Maude Apatow, **Screenwriters:** Raff Donatich
US Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 117 MIN
Maude Apatow's sharp and heartfelt debut feature, *Poetic License* follows a middle aged mother Liz, as she becomes the unexpected point of tension between Sam and Ari, two inseparable best friends and college seniors.

Cast: Leslie Mann, Cooper Hoffman, Andrew Barth Feldman
Tuesday March 17, 9:00pm, Zach Theater
Wednesday March 18, 2:45pm, Zach Theater

Power Ballad

Director: John Carney, **Screenwriters:** John Carney, Peter McDonald
North American Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 98 MIN
Power Ballad follows a talented but past-his-prime wedding singer and a young rocketeer who uses the wedding singer's songwriting prowess to revitalize his own career.

Cast: Paul Rudd, Nick Jonas, Peter McDonald, Marcella Plunkett, Havana Rose Liu, Jack Reynor

Saturday March 14, 2:00pm, Paramount Theatre
Wednesday March 18, 11:30am, Zach Theater



Forbidden Fruits

A Safe Distance

Director: Gloria Mercer, **Screenwriter:** Aidan West
World Premiere | Canada | 2026 | 85 MIN
After a woman is abandoned by her boyfriend in the forest, she befriends a pair of notorious fugitives on the run from the law, and becomes dangerously entangled in their relationship.

Cast: Bethany Brown, Tandia Mercedes, Cody Kearnsley, Chris McNally
Thursday March 12, 9:30pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Friday March 13, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Saturday March 14, 7:00pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7

Same Same But Different

Director: Lauren Noll, **Screenwriter:** Dalia Rooni
World Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 105 MIN
English, Persian with English Subtitles
An Iranian immigrant agrees to marry her boss's son to stay in the U.S., but their simple green card wedding on Cape Cod gets complicated when her two Iranian best friends arrive with their own American boyfriends and cross-cultural baggage in tow.

Cast: Medallion Rahimi, Logan Miller, Layla Mohammadi, Dalia Rooni, Richie Moriarthy, Michael Bessler, Danielle Finnock, Lauren Noll, Nicholas Coombe, Kevin Nealon, and Joey Lauren Adams

Thursday March 12, 9:30pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Saturday March 14, 11:00am, Alamo Lamar 8
Wednesday March 18, 8:15pm, Alamo Lamar 6

The Saviors

Director: Kevin Hamedani, **Screenwriters:** Kevin Hamedani, Travis Betz
World Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 90 MIN
An estranged couple rents out their Airbnb, but soon start to suspect their guests might be plotting something nefarious. As the couple investigates, they rekindle their relationship and discover something stranger than they could have imagined.

Cast: Adam Scott, Danielle Deadwyler, Theo Rossi, Kate Berlant, Nazanin Boniadi, Daveed Diggs, Ron Perlman, Colleen Camp, Greg Kinnear

Friday March 13, 3:00pm, Zach Theater
Sunday March 15, 11:15am, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Tuesday March 17, 3:00pm, State Theater

Seekers of Infinite Love

Director/Screenwriter: Victoria Strouse
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 91 MIN
Estranged and highly dysfunctional family siblings – claustrophobe, a compulsive gambler and controlling lawyer – are forced to unite to rescue their sister from a doomsday cult.

Cast: Hannah Einbinder, Justin Theroux, John Paul Reynolds, Griffin Gluck, Justine Lupe, Greg Kinnear

Thursday March 12, 6:30pm, Zach Theater
Sunday March 15, 11:00am, Alamo Lamar 5
Tuesday March 17, 6:15pm, Alamo Lamar 9

Sparks

Director/Screenwriter: Fergus Campbell
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 78 MIN
Urban legend has it that a Nevada reservoir is a time portal – the tease of which is enough to keep life exciting for the Crop, an aimless but spirited group of teenage best friends, until Cleo moves to town hell-bent on reaching 1960s Paris.

Cast: Elsie Fisher, Charlie B. Foster, Denny McLaughlin, Madison Hu, Simon Downes Toney, Thomas Deen Baker, Julia D'Angelo

Thursday March 12, 8:30pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Friday March 13, 3:15pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Saturday March 14, 10:15pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7

The Sun Never Sets

Director/Screenwriter: Joe Swanberg
World Premiere | U.S. | 2026 | 102 MIN
Wendy's life is thrown into chaos when her boyfriend, Jack, who is older and divorced with children, insists they take space to evaluate the relationship. During their break, Wendy runs into her ex, Chuck, forcing them into a volatile triangle.

Cast: Dakota Fanning, Jake Johnson, Cory Michael Smith, Dobby Ryan, Anna Konkle, Lamorne Morris, Karley Sciortino
Friday March 13, 9:30pm, Zach Theater
Sunday March 15, 7:15pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Tuesday March 17, 9:45pm, Alamo Lamar 8



Their Town

Director: Katie Aselton, **Screenwriter:** Mark Duplass
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 80 MIN
When Abby's boyfriend drops out of the high school play, she finds herself helping a school outlier step into the role opposite her. They spend a long night wandering around their town, examining their futures and unearthing surprises from their past.

Cast: Ora Duplass, Chosen Jacobs, Will Parker, Kim Shaw, Jeffery Self, Daveed Diggs, Leonardo Nam, Annie Hank, Brad LaBrie

Saturday March 14, 5:30pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Sunday March 15, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Tuesday March 17, 5:00pm, Alamo Lamar 1

Ugly Cry

Director/Screenwriter: Emily Robinson
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 94 MIN
An actor loses their dream role because of their "ugly cry," causing them to spiral down the dark and dangerous path to perfection.

Cast: Emily Robinson, Ryan Simpkins, Aaron Dominguez, Robin Tunney
Thursday March 12, 8:45pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Saturday March 14, 3:15pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Sunday March 15, 3:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4

NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION

Presented by Kickstarter

Brian

Director: Will Ropp, Screenwriter: Mike Scollins
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 94 MIN

An acerbic high school student prone to panic attacks runs for class president to get closer to the teacher he's hopelessly in love with.

Cast: Ben Wang, William H. Macy, Edi Patterson, Randall Park, Natalie Morales, Joshua Colley, Sophia Macy, Peyton Elizabeth Lee, Thomas Barbusca, Jacob Moskovitz

Saturday March 14, 9:30pm, State Theatre, Sunday March 15, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Tuesday March 17, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 9

Edie Arnold is a Loser

Directors: Megan Rico, Kade Atwood, Screenwriter: Megan Rico
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 73 MIN

Timid dork Edie accidentally makes waves when she starts a punk band with her fellow "turds," becoming an icon to the rest of the losers at her Catholic school while pissing off the hot girls, the nuns, and the horniest altar boy you've ever seen.

Cast: Adi Madden Cabrera, McKenna Tuckett, Cherish Rodriguez, Niki Rahimi, Alexa Palge, Luseane Pasa, Star Herrmann, Alana Mei Kern, Gabe Root, Lucas Van Orden

Friday March 13, 6:00pm, Alamo Lamar 5; Sunday March 15, 3:15pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Tuesday March 17, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 1

Mallory's Ghost

Director/Screenwriter: Arabella Oz
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 87 MIN

A young woman becomes convinced that she is being haunted by the ghost of her boyfriend's ex-lover and muse - an obsession that takes her on a strange, transformative journey.

Cast: Arabella Oz, Nick Canellakis, Anjelica Bosboom, Delphi Harrington, Shahjehan Khan, Evangeline Beasley

Saturday March 14, 7:56pm, Alamo Lamar 4; Sunday March 15, 9:00pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Wednesday March 18, 11:45am, Alamo Lamar 7



Plantman & Blondie

Plantman & Blondie: A Dress Up Gang Film

Director: Robb Boardman, Screenwriters: Robb Boardman, Cory Loykasek, Donny Divanian, Frankie Quinones
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 98 MIN

A lonely man escapes working from home when he meets Plantman... a mysterious man saving the neglected house plants of Los Angeles.

Cast: Cory Loykasek, Donny Divanian, Frankie Quinones, Kate Berlant, Blake Anderson, Kirk Fox, Brent Weinbach, Jamar Neighbors, Christian Duguay, Kevin Camia

Saturday March 14, 11:30am, Zach Theater
Sunday March 15, 3:30pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Wednesday March 18, 11:15am, Alamo Lamar 1

Seahorse

Director/Screenwriter: Aisha Evelyns
World Premiere | Canada | 2025 | 83 MIN

A sous chef's pursuit of stability is tested by the return of her estranged father, now living on the streets of Toronto.

Cast: Aisha Evelyns, Ruth Goodwin, Brett Donahue, Joseph Marcel, Alden Adair

Friday March 13, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Monday March 16, 8:15pm, Alamo Lamar 7
Wednesday March 18, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 2

Sender

Director/Screenwriter: Russell Goldman
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 94 MIN

After receiving a series of unwanted packages containing unnervingly targeted items, a woman tumbles down a paranoid rabbit hole to find her mysterious sender.

Cast: Britt Lower, Rhea Seehorn, Jamie Lee Curtis, Anna Baryshnikov, David Dastmalchian, Utkarsh Ambudkar, Mike Mitchell, Edward Torres, Alyssa Imperis, Inger Stratton

Saturday March 14, 8:00pm, Zach Theater
Monday March 16, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Wednesday March 18, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 9

The Snake

Director: Jenna MacMillan, Screenwriter: Susan Kent
World Premiere | Canada | 2025 | 89 MIN

When an ungovernable 40 something wild child collides with her venomous mother, her life blows up spectacularly leaving her newly evicted, partially single, and in bed with her best friend's husband.

Cast: Susan Kent, Robin Duke, Jonathan Torrens, Emma Hunter, Daniel Petronijevic, Jimbo, Kim Roberts, Kenny Robinson, Jacqueline Robbins, Joyce Robbins

Friday March 13, 10:45am, Alamo Lamar 5
Monday March 16, 3:15pm, Alamo Lamar 3
Wednesday March 18, 3:35pm, Alamo Lamar 7

Wishful Thinking

Director/Screenwriter: Graham Parkes
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 105 MIN

When a volatile couple discovers their emotional state has supernatural consequences on the world around them, they must decide whether to fight for their relationship or accept that their powerful connection might be doing more harm than good.

Cast: Lewis Pullman, Maya Hawke, Randall Park, Jake Shane, Kate Bertant, Amita Rao, Eric Rahill

Thursday March 12, 9:30pm, Zach Theater
Monday March 16, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 5
Wednesday March 18, 2:30pm, Alamo Lamar 5

DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION

The Ascent

Directors: Edward Drake, Scott Valtri, Francis Cronin

World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 102 MIN

English, Swahili with English Subtitles

The Ascent is the inspiring true story of Colorado Springs bilateral-amputee climber Mandy Horvath's record-breaking attempt to crawl to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro and the mysterious circumstances under which she lost her legs at the age of 21.

Featuring Mandy Horvath, Julius John White aka 'Whitey', Carel Verhoef, Sally Grierson

Sunday March 16, 11:00am, Zach Theater
Monday March 16, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 6
Tuesday March 17, 3:30pm, Alamo Lamar 5

The Last Critic

Director: Matty Wishnow
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 83 MIN

Robert Christgau, The Dean of American Rock Critics, whose work has inspired & infuriated readers for sixty years, is still at it in his eighties - grading records, interrogating commas & listening to absolutely everything (except Metal & Prog).

Featuring Robert Christgau, Carole Diboll, Thurston Moore, Boots Riley, Randy Newman, Colson Whitehead, Ann Powers, Joe Levy, Amanda Petrusich, Grief Marcus

Saturday March 14, 11:00am, Alamo Lamar 5
Monday March 16, 2:15pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Wednesday March 18, 11:15am, Alamo Lamar 6

The Life We Leave

Director: JJ Garber
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 87 MIN

When Washington legalizes human composting, entrepreneur Micah bets everything on a new vision of deathcare. With funeral directors Brie and Katey, he builds the first large-scale cremation facility, reshaping how we grieve and return to the Earth.

Friday March 13, 3:15pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Sunday March 15, 11:00am, Alamo Lamar 6
Tuesday March 17, 11:15am, Alamo Lamar 7

My NDA

Directors: Juliana Dressner, Miriam Sher
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 99 MIN

Three people bound by non-disclosure agreements face extreme personal risk to expose how a simple intellectual property contract is weaponized to silence, manipulate and control.

Thursday March 12, 7:30pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Monday March 16, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Wednesday March 18, 3:15pm, Alamo Lamar 3



Phoenix Jones

Phoenix Jones: The Rise and Fall of a Real Life Superhero

Director: Bayan Joannam
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 105 MIN

Phoenix Jones is a real life superhero who fights crime on the streets of Seattle, but a recent arrest calls his motives into question.

Featuring Phoenix Jones, Rajan Wilson, Jon Ronson, Midnight Jack, Freedom Fodor, Carlos Fodor, Ryan McNamee, Ghost, Lance Coulter, El Caballero

Friday March 13, 11:00am, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center
Monday March 16, 10:00pm, Alamo Lamar 3
Tuesday March 17, 9:30pm, Alamo Lamar 9

Stormbound

Director: Mike Lim
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 95 MIN

Go inside the eye of the hurricane and the life of one of America's top stormchasers. Utilizing a 30-year archive and a new storm season set to be deadlier than ever, Jeff Gammons' search for the ultimate shot could see him chase his final storm.

Featuring Jeff Gammons, Sara Gammons
Saturday March 14, 9:30pm, Zach Theater
Monday March 16, 11:15am, Alamo Lamar 4
Wednesday March 18, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 4

Summer 2000: The X-Cetra Story

Director: Ayden Mayeri, Screenwriters: Ayden Mayeri, Barry Rothbart
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 104 MIN

Four friends reunite when an album they made as pre-teens becomes a cult hit on the internet and scores a record deal 20 years later. Together, they revisit their friendship and early 2000s girlhood.

Featuring Ayden Mayeri, Jessica Hall, Janet Karuki, Mary Washburn, Robin O'brien
Saturday March 14, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 4
Monday March 16, 12:00pm, Alamo Lamar 3
Wednesday March 18, 3:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4



The Life We Leave

#WhileBlack

Directors: Sidney Fussell, Jennifer Holness, Screenwriters: Ann Shin, Jennifer Holness, Sidney Fussell

World Premiere | U.S., Canada | 2025 | 84 MIN

Darnella Frazier, who filmed George Floyd's death, steps forward in this powerful documentary on viral videos that ignited global movements revealing the cost of going viral while Black: trolls, surveillance, and platforms that profit from pain.

Featuring Darnella Frazier, Diamond Reynolds, Matthew Cagle, Matthew Mitchell, Safiya Noble

Friday March 13, 7:00pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Sunday March 15, 6:00pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Wednesday March 18, 2:30pm, Rollins Theatre at Long Center

BUZZ SCREENINGS

Buzz Screenings 1-8

Films that everyone is talking about, and audiences need another chance to see.

Monday March 16, 9:45pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Monday March 16, 9:45pm, Zach Theater
Tuesday March 17, 8:45pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Tuesday March 17, 9:45pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Tuesday March 17, 10:00pm, Alamo Lamar 7
Wednesday March 18, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Wednesday March 18, 3:00pm, State Theatre
Wednesday March 18, 10:30pm, Alamo Lamar 3



SHORTS COMPETITIONS

Presented by Vimeo

Narrative Short Program 1

Catalan; Valencian, English, Mandarin, Castilian with English Subtitles | 106 MIN
Exceptional storytelling that captivates, surprises, and excites.

Friday March 13, 2:30pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center
Monday March 16, 9:45pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center

Narrative Short Program 2

English, Malay, Mandarin, Spanish, Castilian with English Subtitles | 103 MIN
Exceptional storytelling that captivates, surprises, and excites.

Friday March 13, 6:00pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center
Monday March 16, 2:30pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center

Narrative Short Program 3

Dutch, Flemish, English, Mandarin, Spanish, Castilian with English Subtitles | 99 MIN
Exceptional storytelling that captivates, surprises, and excites.

Friday March 13, 9:30pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center
Monday March 16, 8:15pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center

Documentary Short Program 1

English, Navajo, Tagalog with English Subtitles | 112 MIN
Authentic storytelling that captivates, surprises, and excites!

Saturday March 14, 1:00pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center
Tuesday March 17, 6:00pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center

Documentary Short Program 2

Amharic, Arabic, English, Frensh with English Subtitles | 102 MIN
Authentic storytelling that captivates, surprises, and excites!

Saturday March 14, 2:30pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center
Tuesday March 17, 2:30pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center

Animated Short Program

English, French, German with English Subtitles | 93 MIN
A whirlwind tour of hand drawn, stop-motion, and digital reinvelies.

Saturday March 14, 6:00pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center
Tuesday March 17, 11:00am, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center

Midnight Short Program

English, French, Korean with English Subtitles | 88 MIN
Indulge your cravings for horror, gore, and dark comedy.

Saturday March 14, 9:15pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Monday March 16, 7:00pm, Alamo Lamar 4

Texas Short Program

Chinese, English, Spanish, Castilian with English Subtitles | 92 MIN
Vibrant work filmed in, inspired by, or connected to the Lone Star State.

Thursday March 12, 3:15pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center
Sunday March 15, 11:00am, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center

Music Video Program

English, Hungarian, Korean, Spanish, Castilian with English Subtitles | 94 MIN
A dynamic mix of creativity and stylish visuals where music and storytelling collide.

Saturday March 14, 6:30pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Monday March 16, 3:30pm, Alamo Lamar 4

Independent TV Pilot Program

Discover new pilots from indie talent. | 102 MIN

Saturday March 14, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Tuesday March 17, 6:45pm, Alamo Lamar 5

XR EXPERIENCE

Presented by Spectacles

Sunday-Tuesday, March 15-17, 10am-6pm, Fairmont Hotel
(open to all SXSW registrants)

XR Experience Competition*

World Premieres of mind bending immersive art.

XR Experience Spotlight

Masterful immersive art from around the world.

XR Experience Special Events

Radical experimentations with emerging tech.

*Escape The Internet (Part 1)

Director/Screenwriter: Lucas Rizzotto
World Premiere | United States, Brazil | 2025 | 50 MIN

Sunday March 15, 12:15pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Tuesday March 17, 2:30pm, Alamo Lamar 7



DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT

Adam's Apple

Director: Amy Jenkins, Screenwriter: Adam Sieswerda
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 98 MIN

A transgender teen and his mother chronicle their lives, artistically weaving a rare and intimate portrait of a family in transition. Two decades of footage trace a boy's path to manhood and his parents' vulnerability as they reckon with change.

Featuring Adam Sieswerda, John Sieswerda, Elias Sieswerda

Friday March 13, 6:45pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Saturday March 15, 2:45pm, AFS Cinema, Tuesday March 17, 2:15pm, Alamo Lamar 3

Amazing Live Sea Monkeys

Directors: Mark Becker, Aaron Schock
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 100 MIN

From her crumbling estate on the Potomac, Yolanda Signorelli battles to wrest control of her late husband Harold's iconic toy Amazing Live Sea-Monkeys from the corporate men who stole them from her and from the stain of her husband's dark legacy.

Friday March 13, 8:15pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Saturday March 14, 12:00pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Sunday March 15, 10:30pm, Alamo Lamar 9



The Way We Move

Baby/Girls

Directors: Alyse Walsh, Jackie Jesko
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 94 MIN

Set in post-Dobbs Arkansas, *Baby/Girls* follows three teens living in a Christian maternity home as they navigate pregnancy and early motherhood. The film offers an intimate, unfiltered look at girlhood and motherhood colliding in the American South.

Featuring Grace Dulaney, Ariana Green, Olivia Malott, Audra Dulaney, Brian Rivera, Paula Woods

Thursday March 12, 3:15pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Friday March 13, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7, Sat. March 14, 2:30pm, Alamo Lamar 6

Black Zombie

Director/Screenwriter: Maya Annik Bedward
World Premiere | Canada | 2026 | 90 MIN

English, French, Haitian Creole with English Subtitles
From the flickering screens of Hollywood horror, to the haunted cane fields of colonial Haiti, *Black Zombie* unearths the buried origins of the zombie, reclaiming it as a symbol of survival and spiritual resistance.

Featuring Yves-Grégoire François, Anderson Mojica, Erol Jousé, Mambou Labele Déese Botanica, Slash, Tom Savini, Tananarive Due, Zandashé Brown

Friday March 13, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 6; Sat. March 14, 10:45am, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Tuesday March 17, 3:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3

Capturing Bigfoot

Director: Marq Evans
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 102 MIN

A reel of 16mm film locked away for over 50 years turns the Bigfoot debate on its head.

Featuring Clint Patterson, Bob Gimlin, Bob Heironimus, Larry Lund, Greg Long, Valie Thompson, Sandy Collier, Bill Munns, Teresa Brooks, Jeff Meldrum

Thursday March 12, 3:45pm, Alamo Lamar 4
Sunday March 15, 9:15pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Monday March 16, 11:00am, Alamo Lamar 9

Ceremony

Director: Banchi Hanuse
World Premiere | Canada | 2026 | 83 MIN

At ramshackled Nuxalk Radio in Bella Coola, an inquiry into the vanished ooligan run unravels a buried history of erasure and ignites the quiet revolution of an Indigenous Nation that refuses to disappear.

Featuring Megan F. Moody, Qwaxxy Siwallace, Snuxyaltwa Deric Snow, Nuskmatla Jacinda Mack, Q'umuilha Schooner, Suntherna Schooner, Jason E. Moody, Snaxakila Clyde Tallio, Kmalasuncw Orden Mack, Tom Swanky

Saturday March 14, 5:30pm, Alamo Lamar 6; Monday March 16, 9:15pm, Alamo 9

Cornbread Mafia

Directors: Evan Mascagni, Drew Morris, Screenwriters: Sam Wagstaff, Evan Mascagni
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 83 MIN

Cornbread Mafia is the true story of the rise and fall of Kentucky farmers who built the largest domestic marijuana syndicate in U.S. history. Part true crime, part cartoon, a whole lot of weed.

Thursday March 12, 9:30pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center
Monday March 16, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 7
Wednesday March 18, 8:00pm, Alamo Lamar 8

The Dads

Director: Luchina Fisher
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 72 MIN

As anti-trans legislation and hostility escalate in the United States, a group of dads, building a nascent movement to support their trans and gender expansive kids, are forced to make an impossible choice: stay and fight or flee the country.

Featuring Stephen Chukumba, Wayne Maines, Ed Diaz, Christoph Heinzer, Jose Trujillo, Frank Gonzales, AC Goldberg

Saturday March 14, 11:55am, Alamo Lamar 9
Sunday March 15, 6:00pm, Satellite Venue: AFS Cinema
Tuesday March 17, 6:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3

Drift

Director: Deon Taylor, Screenwriters: Kaitlin McLaughlin, Martin Biehn, Kevin Hibbard
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 104 MIN

Isaac "Drift" Wright, a self-taught photographer and Army veteran haunted by trauma, finds healing through breathtaking, illegal climbs of the world's tallest structures. But his pursuit of art sparks a high-stakes battle with law enforcement in this intimate portrait of risk, resilience, and freedom in modern America.

Featuring Isaac Wright

Saturday March 14, 2:15pm, Alamo Lamar 5
Sunday March 15, 3:45pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Tuesday March 17, 8:30am, Alamo Lamar 8



Capturing Bigfoot

First They Came for My College

Director: Patrick Bresnan, Screenwriters: Ivete Lucas, Leah Marino
Texas Premiere | United States | 2026 | 105 MIN

When the Governor of Florida transforms a beloved public honors college in a political coup, students and professors confront a new reality: their campus is ground zero in a growing nation-wide assault on academic freedom.

Featuring Gaby Batista, Joshua Jenniere, Libby Harrity, Lindsey Jennings, Dylan Niner, Amy Reid

Thursday March 12, 8:15pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Friday March 13, 5:45pm, Satellite Venue: AFS Cinema
Wednesday March 18, 8:00pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center

I Got Bombed at Harvey's

Directors: Amy Bandien Storkel, Bryan Storkel
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 93 MIN

1,000 pounds of dynamite. \$3 million in cash. One casino at the edge of disaster.

Featuring Igor Grbasic, Ethan Riley, Ian S. Peterson, Michael Solarez, Jennylyn Caterina, Marianne Wiedeman, William Swartzbaugh

Thursday March 12, 10:00pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Friday March 13, 9:15pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Sunday March 15, 8:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4

Manhood

Director: Daniel Lombroso
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 91 MIN

Manhood follows Dallas businessman Bill Moore as he sets out to make penis enlargement as commonplace as Botox. Along the way, an OnlyFans star and a father of five put their bodies – and their insecurities – on the line.

Featuring William Moore, David Smith, Ruben Ramirez

Saturday March 14, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Monday March 16, 6:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3
Wednesday March 18, 9:30pm, Alamo Lamar 8

My Brother's Killer

Director: Rachel Mason
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 95 MIN

Impassioned members of the LGBTQ community band together to try to solve one of the most gruesome and mysterious murders in Los Angeles history.

Featuring Christopher Rice, Eric Shaw Quinn, Clark Williams, ChiChi LaRue, Wendi Bernot, Krystal DeLight, Phil St. John, Sabina Grey, John Lambert, Marc Rabins

Friday March 13, 6:30pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Monday March 16, 6:30pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Wednesday March 18, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 9

One Another

Director: Amber Love
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 95 MIN

As three of the filmmaker's loved ones confront the possible end of close friendships, *One Another* follows their life changes, heartaches, and attempts to reconnect as they find a way forward.

Thursday March 12, 8:45pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3
Friday March 13, 8:45pm, Alamo Lamar 8
Monday March 16, 3:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4

Serling

Director: Jonah Tulis, Screenwriters: Jonah Tulis, Blake J. Harris
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 98 MIN

An intimate portrait of Rod Serling told through never-before-heard recordings, uncovering how trauma, censorship, and conviction gave rise to *The Twilight Zone* and the man who turned television into a battleground of conscience and imagination.

Featuring Rod Serling

Monday March 16, 3:30pm, State Theatre
Tuesday March 17, 5:30pm, Alamo Lamar 3
Wednesday March 18, 5:30pm, Satellite Venue: AFS Cinema

GLOBAL

Presented by MUBI

Apolo

Directors: Isis Broken, Tainá Müller, Screenwriters: Tainá Müller, Tatiana Lohmann, Isis Broken, Lourenço Duvalle
International Premiere | Brazil | 2025 | 77 MIN

Portuguese with English Subtitles
As we follow Apolo's pregnancy, we reflect on the drama(s) of a transgender couple: Isis Broken and Lourenço Gabriel. The father is giving birth – and society is not prepared for it.

Featuring Lourenço Duvalle, Isis Broken, Apolo Duvalle

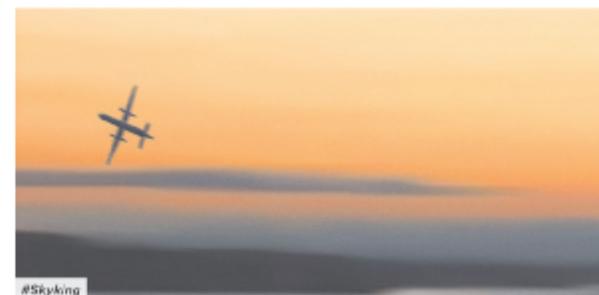
Sunday March 15, 3:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3
Monday March 16, 3:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3
Wednesday March 18, 5:45pm, Alamo Lamar 1

Do You Love Me

Director: Lana Daher, Screenwriters: Lana Daher, Qutaiba Barhamji
US Premiere | Lebanon | 2025 | 75 MIN

English, Arabic, French with English Subtitles
Welcome to Beirut. Disorientation is part of the journey.

Friday March 13, 3:45pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3
Monday March 16, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 2
Tuesday March 17, 11:55am, Alamo Lamar 2



#Skyking

#Skyking

Director: Patricia E. Gillespie
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 91 MIN

A stolen plane sparks a national shock, leaving behind a haunting American story.

Thursday March 12, 8:30pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Sunday March 15, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3
Tuesday March 17, 11:30am, Alamo Lamar 3

Summer of '94

Director: Dave LaMattina, Chad Walker
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 99 MIN

When the World Cup landed in the U.S. in 1994, it arrived in a country with no league, no culture, and no clue. A ragtag group of players and an unlikely coach faced an impossible task: don't embarrass their nation in front of the entire world.

Saturday March 14, 8:15pm, Rollins Theatre at Long Center
Sunday March 15, 2:30pm, Alamo Lamar 6
Wednesday March 18, 9:00pm, AFS Cinema

The Truth and Tragedy of Moriah Wilson

Director: Marina Zenovich
World Premiere | United States | 2026 | 95 MIN

An intimate, arresting portrait of cyclist Moriah Wilson—raised by a fierce, loving family—whose singular drive becomes her superpower, carrying her to athletic brilliance and, devastatingly, toward a life cut short by murder.

Thursday March 12, 8:15pm, Rollins Theatre at Long Center
Friday March 13, 8:15pm, Satellite Venue: AFS Cinema
Tuesday March 17, 9:15pm, Alamo Lamar 6

Mickey

Director: Dano García, Screenwriters: Dano García, Tonatiuh Israel
World Premiere | Mexico | 2026 | 75 MIN

Spanish, Castilian with English Subtitles
Filmed over ten years, *Mickey* is a documentary about the memory of a trans woman from Sinaloa who, alongside the filmmaker who grew up with her, Dano, uses play and performance to re-signify the past and inhabit the present.

Featuring Mie\$ Mickey, Jesse Sakari López, Arturo Cundapi Bustamante, Angélica María Bustamante Andrews, Loreto Pozos Trejo, Javier Lucárraga Contreras, David Allegre

Friday March 13, 8:15pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4
Monday March 16, 6:15pm, Alamo Lamar 2
Tuesday March 17, 3:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4

Scarlet Girls

Director: Paula Cury, Screenwriters: Claudia Galeano, Paula Cury
North American Premiere | Dominican Republic | 2026 | 70 MIN

Spanish, Castilian with English Subtitles
What does it mean to be a woman in a country where abortion is banned in all circumstances?

Monday March 16, 6:00pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Tuesday March 17, 6:00pm, Alamo Lamar 2
Wednesday March 18, 6:15pm, Alamo Lamar 9

The Way We Move

Directors/Screenwriters: Vanessa Dumont, Nicolas Davanel
World Premiere | France | 2026 | 95 MIN

English, American Sign Language with English Subtitles

Amber Galloway, a trailblazer in ASL interpretation, takes us on a journey into the deep bond between the Deaf world and music. We follow her as she teaches struggling recruits who she hopes will have what it takes to join her in an ACLT music festival.

Featuring Amber Galloway, Julian Ortiz, Angela "AV" Vilavong, Joshua Goerz

Sunday March 15, 2:30pm, Rollins Theatre at Long Center
Monday March 16, 9:30pm, Alamo Lamar 2
Tuesday March 17, 5:30pm, AFS Cinema

Your Attention Please

Director: Sara Robin, Screenwriter: Jaek LeMay
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 98 MIN

English, Dutch, Flemish, Italian, Spanish, Castilian with English Subtitles

A quiet revolution is underway: As AI reshapes every part of our lives, ordinary people are pushing back against addictive tech. *Your Attention Please* asks whether we are willing to reclaim autonomy and human connection before it's too late.

Featuring Kristin Bride, Trisha Prabhu, The Offline Club, Kevin McCaskill, Tristan Harris, Cal Newport, Vivek Murthy, Sherry Turkle, Frances Haugen, Laura Marquez-Garrett

Thursday March 12, 2:30pm, Alamo Lamar 9
Friday March 13, 2:30pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7
Saturday March 14, 8:00pm, AFS Cinema

Thanks for Nothing

Director/Screenwriter: Stella Marie Markert
North American Premiere | Germany | 2025 | 108 MIN

German with English Subtitles
Ok, what would you do if your best friend tries to kill herself, another one is being deported, the third is in a manic episode, the fourth has stopped speaking, and your social worker is unsuccessfully trying to cover it all up from child services?

Cast: Lea Drinda, Sonja Weißer, Saffnaz Sattar, Zoe Stein, Jan Bölow

Saturday March 14, 3:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4
Sunday March 15, 8:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3
Tuesday March 17, 2:45pm, Alamo Lamar 2



Do You Love Me



Leo Lobos Native Sons

24 BEATS PER SECOND

A Cowboy in London

Director: Jared L. Christopher
Texas Premiere | United States | 2025 | 87 MIN

A *Cowboy in London* captures country renegade Charley Crockett's first solo shows in years – three sold-out London nights where nerves, chaos, and triumph collide in an unguarded portrait of a star on the brink of global fame.

Featuring Charley Crockett, Taylor Day Grace-Crockett, Joe David Walters, Simon Slater

Wednesday March 18, 12:00pm, State Theatre

Agridulce (Bittersweet)

Directors: Frank Paviel, Benjamin de Menil
World Premiere | United States, Dominican Republic | 2025 | 98 MIN

Spanish, Castilian with English Subtitles
An intimate portrait of four children coming of age and the role of music in their journey. The children tell their stories through Bachata, a once proscribed music that has become the Dominican Republic's primary cultural export.

Featuring Edickson Garcia Dials, Frandy Dizeze, Orianny Bonilla, Yerian Castillo, Carmen Bonilla, Enrique Garcia Zapata, Jose Villa Castillo, Micheline Julien, Natvivia Dials, Martires de Leon

Thursday March 12, 3:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4

Saturday March 14, 6:45pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3

Monday March 16, 11:55am, Alamo Lamar 8

Jack Johnson: SURFILMUSIC

Director: Emmett Malloy
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 75 MIN

This intimate documentary traces Johnson's evolution from surfer to filmmaker to world-renowned musician. Rare archives and present-day reflections reveal how lived experience, friendship, & exploration shaped the sound & stories behind the music.

Featuring Jack Johnson, Kelly Slater, Rob Machado, Gerry Lopez, Ben Harper, G. Love, John Florence, Tamayo Perry, Kim Johnson

Friday March 13, 2:15pm, Paramount Theatre

Tuesday March 17, 11:45am, Alamo Lamar 9

Wednesday March 18, 8:45pm, Alamo Lamar 7

Lainey Wilson: Keepin' Country Cool

Director: Amy Scott
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 83 MIN

Follow Wilson as she redefines the modern country star, proving that staying true to yourself can lead to major success. The film explores her personal journey, struggles, and triumphs as she captivates fans on stages across the country.

Tuesday March 17, 11:00am, Paramount Theatre
Wednesday March 18, 11:00am, Alamo Lamar 5

Los Lobos Native Sons

Directors: Doug Blush, Piero F. Giunti,
Screenwriters: Doug Blush, Piero F. Giunti
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 96 MIN

Los Lobos Native Sons is the definitive chronicle of the global Latin rock 'n' roll legends Los Lobos, offering an unparalleled 50-year musical journey through exclusive access to the band's personal archives and extraordinary legacy.

Featuring Cesar Rosas, Louie Perez, David Hidalgo, Conrad Lozano, Steve Berlin, Linda Ronstadt, Tom Waits, George Lopez, Cheech Marin, Danny Elfman

Sunday March 15, 11:00am, Paramount Theatre

Monday March 16, 11:00am, Rollins Theatre at Long Center

Wednesday March 18, 8:00pm, Violet Crown 2 & 4

The Man with the Big Hat

Director/Screenwriter: Austin Sayre
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 85 MIN

Experience the unraveling of fame's illusions as 1970's Texas singer-songwriter Steven Fromholz embarks on a soul-stirring journey of self-discovery and the true meaning of success.

Featuring Lyle Lovett, Ray Benson, Terry Lickona, Butch Hancock, Bobby Bridger, Mike Williams, Dan McCrimmon, Janey Lake, Darcie Jane Fromholz, Felicity Rose Fromholz

Saturday March 14, 3:00pm, Alamo Lamar 8

Sunday March 15, 9:00pm, State Theatre at Long Center

Tuesday March 17, 2:15pm, Alamo Lamar 1

Mile End Kicks

Director/Screenwriter: Chandler Levack
US Premiere | Canada | 2025 | 111 MIN

A 24-year-old music critic gets romantically involved with members of an indie band she decides to publicize, set against Montreal's indie music scene in 2011.

Cast: Barbie Ferreira, Devon Bostick, Stanley Simons, Juliette Gariepy, Jay Baruchel

Thursday March 12, 3:00pm, Zach Theater

Sunday March 15, 11:45am, Alamo Lamar 9

Tuesday March 17, 9:00pm, Alamo Lamar 4

Noah Kahan: Out of Body

Director: Nick Sweeney
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 94 MIN

As *Stick Season* propels Noah Kahan into global stardom, he faces the pressure of what comes next. Buoyed by his uncanny wit, he returns to his Vermont roots and family and confronts the personal struggles that have left him out of sync with himself.

Monday March 16, 2:30pm, Paramount Theatre

Wednesday March 18, 2:15pm, Alamo Lamar 8

The Rise of the Red Hot Chili Peppers: Our Brother, Hillel

Director: Ben Feldman
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 93 MIN

An in-depth look at the formative years of the Red Hot Chili Peppers and the profound influence of original guitarist Hillel Slovak. The film explores the band's early evolution in LA and the deep bonds forged through their friendship.

Friday March 13, 10:45am, Alamo Lamar 6, Saturday March 14, 9:15pm, Alamo 6

Stages

Director: Ryan Booth, Screenwriters: Bradley Jackson, Dan Steele
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 97 MIN

A year after the tumultuous break-up of his band, Ben Garza sets off on his first ever solo tour. Life on the road is different now, as Ben learns alongside his ride-or-die tour manager, Rita and his spotlight-stealing opening act, Jessie.

Cast: David Ramirez, Leslie Grace, Jolene, Jake McMullen, Rafael Casal, Abner Ramirez, Amanda Sudano Ramirez, Jerry Ferrara, Marc Menchaca, David Strathairn

Thursday March 12, 9:45pm, Alamo Lamar 2 & 7

Saturday March 14, 3:30pm, Violet Crown 1 & 3

Tuesday March 17, 9:30pm, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center



Lainey Wilson: Keepin' Country Cool

We Are The Shaggs

Director/Screenwriter: Ken Kwapis
World Premiere | United States | 2025 | 98 MIN

We Are The Shaggs is a music documentary about The Shaggs, an all-girl band that created some of the most provocative and polarizing music in rock-and-roll history.

Featuring Dorothy Wigginn, Betty Wigginn

Friday March 13, 9:00pm, Alamo Lamar 9

Sunday March 15, 12:00pm, Alamo Lamar 8

Tuesday March 17, 8:00pm, Alamo Lamar 7

TV PREMIERE

The Audacity

Showrunner/Screenwriter: Jonathan Glatzer, Director: Lucy Forbes
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 120 MIN

A would-be tech titan and his therapist play dangerous games with privacy while trying to find happiness.

Cast: Billy Magnussen, Sarah Goldberg, Zach Galifianakis, Lucy Punch, Simon Helberg, Rob Corddry, Meaghan Rath, Paul Adelstein

Saturday March 14, 12:00pm, State Theatre

The Dark Wizard

Directors/Screenwriters: Peter Mortimer, Nick Rosen
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 120 MIN

An unflinching portrait of Dean Potter, the world's most influential and controversial climber, base jumper and highline walker, who achieves jaw-dropping feats while battling his inner demons.

Featuring Dean Potter, Jen Rapp, Elizabeth Potter, Brad Lynch, Jim Hurst, Timmy O'Neill, Dean Fiedelman, Dan Duane, Eric Perlman, Alex Honnold

Sunday March 15, 2:45pm, Zach Theater

Margo's Got Money Troubles

Showrunner/Screenwriter: David E. Kelley, Directors: Dearbhla Walsh, Kate Herron
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 113 MIN

A bold heartwarming and comedic family drama following recent college dropout and aspiring writer Margo as she's forced to make her way with a new baby a mounting pile of bills, and a dwindling amount of ways to pay them.

Cast: Elle Fanning, Michelle Pfeiffer, Nick Offerman, Thaddea Graham, Nicole Kidman, Greg Kinnear, Marcia Gay Harden, Michael Angarano, Rico Nasty, Lindsey Normington

Thursday March 12, 9:00pm, Paramount Theatre

Monsters of God

Showrunner: Jeremy McBride, Director: Eric Goode, Screenwriters: Jeremy McBride, Eric Goode, Tom Petersen
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 109 MIN

A group of reptile fanatics builds a global smuggling empire, while a scrappy team of animal cops risks everything to stop them.

Friday March 13, 12:00pm, State Theatre

TV SPOTLIGHT

The Comeback Season 3

Showrunner/Director: Michael Patrick King
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 80 MIN

20 years after the first season debuted in 2005, and 10 years after season two, the HBO original comedy series, from Michael Patrick King and Lisa Kudrow, will return again for a third and final season.

Cast: Lisa Kudrow, Dan Bucatinsky, Laura Silverman, Damian Young, Jack O'Brien, Ella Stiller

Sunday March 15, 2:15pm, Paramount Theatre



The Comeback Season 3

They Called Us Outlaws – The Cosmic Cowboys, Honky Tonk Heroes and Rise of Redneck Rock

Showrunners: Eric Gadsdelmann, Kelly Magalky, Director/Screenwriter: Eric Gadsdelmann
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 100 MIN

What happened in Austin and in Nashville in the late 60s and early 70s was nothing less than a tectonic shift in country music. From Tennessee to Texas, musicians were breaking rules and flouting tradition in what the industry labeled Outlaw Country.

Sunday March 15, 5:45pm, Rollins Theatre at Long Center

Woodstockers

Showrunner: Corbin Bernsen, Director: Oliver Bernsen, Screenwriters: Corbin Bernsen, Joshua Michael Stern, Henry Bernsen
World Premiere | U.S. | 2025 | 48 MIN

When his marriage collapses and his best friend dies, an aging hippie who went to Woodstock in 1969 and never left must finally reckon with a life shaped by peace, love, and too much weed.

Cast: Corbin Bernsen, Stephen Tobolowsky, Barbara Hershey, Susan Ruttan, Maggie Lawson, Willie C. Carpenter, John Glover, Lee Wilkof, Lea DeLaria, Jillian Medford

Saturday March 14, 2:00pm, Alamo Lamar 1 & 3

SXSW RESERVATIONS

Learn more about SXSW Reservations for Film & TV Festival Screenings and Conference Sessions. It's never been easier to plan your schedule in advance. sxsw.com/line-guide

EXPLORE THE CONFERENCE!

Check out the Film & TV Conference from Friday March 13 – Wednesday March 18. Find out more in the SXSW Go App and at schedule.sxsw.com.

SHUTTLE BUS SCHEDULE

MARCH 12-18, 9AM-2:30AM*

*East Austin service runs from 7:00pm - 2:30am

Track Feat shuttles in real time at shuttles.sxsw.com.

SXSW RESOURCES

Explore SXSW resources and tools to help you navigate and access events during the SXSW Conference and Fests by checking out the Film & TV Attendee Guide. sxsw.com/badges/2026-film-tv-festival-conference-attendee-guide

For a digital version of the printed schedule, scan the QR code.



NO RESERVATION? NO PROBLEM!

Check Event Status for walk-up availability. Available in the SXSW GO App or fsb.sxsw.com.

* TYPES OF INDICATORS

- OPEN
Plenty of space
- LIMITED
The venue may reach capacity soon
- FULL
Capacity is reached
- ✗ CANCELED
The event has been canceled

WAYS TO ATTEND

1. SXSW PLATINUM OR FILM & TV BADGE

Get priority access to all Film & TV screenings and conference sessions, unparalleled networking opportunities, parties, and more. Learn more at sxsw.com/attend.

2. GENERAL ADMISSION ADVANCE TICKETS

A limited number of General Admission Advance Tickets may be available for the general public at select screenings – most often at our larger venues: Paramount Theatre, Zach Theater, State Theatre, Rollins Theatre at the Long Center, and AFS Cinema. Visit sxsw.com/filmtvticketing for purchase information.

3. GENERAL ADMISSION DAY-OF TICKETS

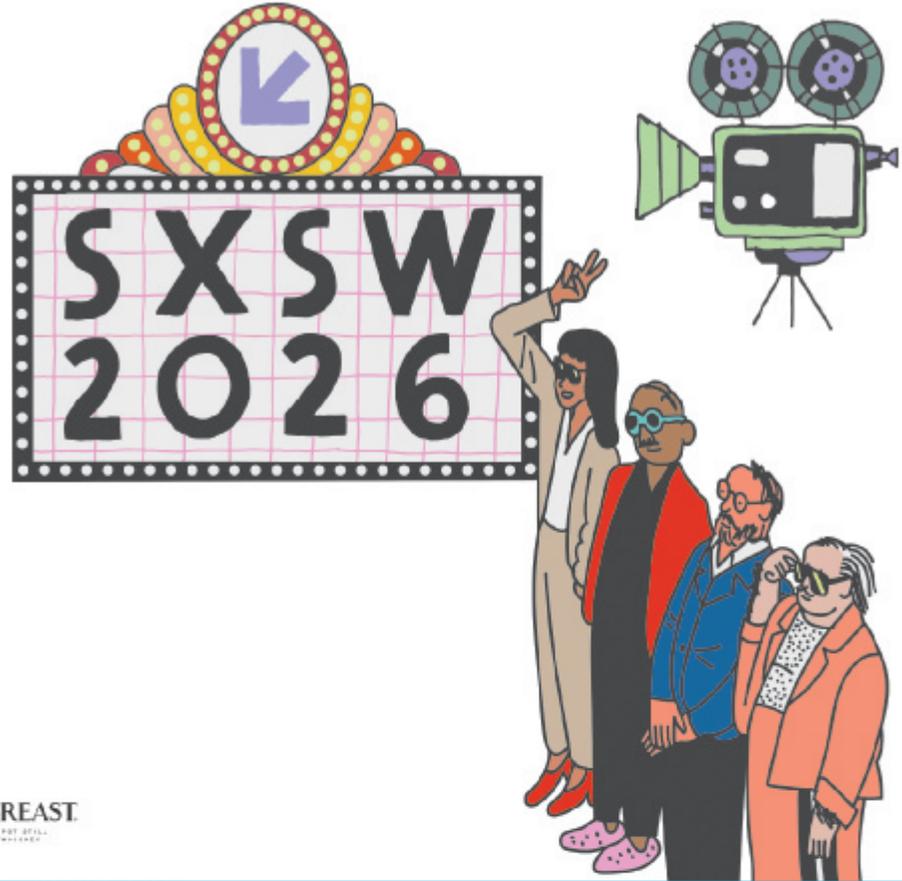
If seats remain, General Admission Day-of tickets will be sold 15 minutes before a screening starts.

Reach out to filmtvticketing@sxsw.com with any ticketing questions.

FILM & TV SCREENINGS

KEY

- Narratives
- Documentaries
- TV
- Shorts
- Special Events
- Buzz Screenings



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THURSDAY, MARCH 12

	PARAMOUNT THEATRE	STATE THEATRE	ZACH THEATER	ROLLINS @ LONGCENTER	ALAMO LAMAR 1 & 3	ALAMO LAMAR 2 & 7	ALAMO LAMAR 4	ALAMO LAMAR 5	ALAMO LAMAR 6	ALAMO LAMAR 8	ALAMO LAMAR 8	ALAMO LAMAR 9	VIOLET CROWN 1 & 3	VIOLET CROWN 2 & 4
10 am														
11 am														
12 pm														
1 pm														
2 pm														
3 pm					American Doctor FESTIVAL FAVORITE 2:45pm-4:30pm									
4 pm		Perfect VISIONS 3:30pm-5:04pm	Mile End Kicks 24 BEATS PER SECOND 3pm-4:55pm	Texas Short Program TEXAS SHORT COMPETITION 3:30pm-4:47pm		Baby/Girls DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 3:15pm-4:49pm	Capturing Bigfoot DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 3:45pm-5:27pm	Anima NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 3pm-4:20pm	Dead Eyes VISIONS 3pm-4:21pm		Dead Deer High NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 3:45pm-5:26pm		Your Attention Please DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:30pm-4:05pm	Agriduce (Bittersweet) 24 BEATS PER SECOND 3pm-4:58pm
5 pm	I Love Boosters HEADLINES 5pm-6:45pm													
6 pm		Eruoja FESTIVAL FAVORITE 6:30pm-7:41pm	Seekers of Infinite Love NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 4:30pm-8:01pm	The Truth and Tragedy of Moriah Wilson DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:15pm-8pm	First They Came for My College DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:15pm-8pm	Ugly Cry NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 6:40pm-8:12pm							Time and Water FESTIVAL FAVORITE 6pm-7:30pm	Joybubbles FESTIVAL FAVORITE 6:15pm-7:34pm
7 pm													One Another DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:40pm-8:20pm	
8 pm														
9 pm	Margo's Got Money Troubles TV PREMIERE 9pm-10:30pm													
10 pm		Kill Me NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 10pm-11:44pm	Wishful Thinking NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 9:30pm-11:15pm	Cornbread Mafia DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 8:30pm-10:03pm	I Got Bombed at Harvey's DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 10pm-11:33pm	Stages 24 BEATS PER SECOND 9:40pm-11:22pm								
11 pm														
12 am														

FRIDAY, MARCH 13

	PARAMOUNT THEATRE	STATE THEATRE	ZACH THEATER	ROLLINS @ LONG CENTER	ALAMO LAMAR 1 & 3	ALAMO LAMAR 2 & 7	ALAMO LAMAR 4	ALAMO LAMAR 5	ALAMO LAMAR 6	ALAMO LAMAR 8	ALAMO LAMAR 9	VIOLET CROWN 1 & 3	VIOLET CROWN 2 & 4	SATELLITE: AFS CINEMA
10 AM														
11 AM	I Love Boosters HEADLINER 11am-12:45pm			Phoenix Jones: The Rise and Fall of a Real Life Superhero DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 11am-12:45pm	Erupeja FESTIVAL FAVORITE 11am-12:11pm	Baby/Girls DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 11:30am-1:04pm		The Snake NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 10:45am-12:14pm	The Rise of the Red Hot Chili Peppers: Our Brother, Hillel 24 BEATS PER SECOND 10:45am-12:18pm	Big Girls Don't Cry FESTIVAL FAVORITE 11:15am-12:53pm	American Doctor FESTIVAL FAVORITE 11:45am-1:18pm			
12 PM		Monsters of God TV PREMIERE 12pm-1:40pm												
1 PM														
2 PM	Jack Johnson: SURFILMUSIC 24 BEATS PER SECOND 2:15pm-3:51pm				Beyond The Duplex Planet VISIONS 2pm-3:23pm	Your Attention Please DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:30pm-4:06pm			Seahorse NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 2:45pm-4:06pm	Black Zombie DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:45pm-4:15pm				
3 PM		The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocaloptimist FESTIVAL FAVORITE 3:15pm-4:58pm	The Saviors NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 3pm-4:30pm	Narrative Short Program 1 NARRATIVE SHORT COMPETITION 2:30pm-4:16pm			The Life We Leave DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 3:15pm-4:42pm			Sparks NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 3:15pm-4:33pm	We Are The Shaggs 24 BEATS PER SECOND 3pm-4:20pm		Joybubbles FESTIVAL FAVORITE 3:15pm-4:34pm	
4 PM														
5 PM	Ready or Not 2: Here I Come HEADLINER 5:30pm-7:18pm				Adam's Apple DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 5:45pm-7:23pm	My Brother's Killer DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:30pm-8:06pm			Ernie Arnold is a Loser NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 6pm-7:13pm	Amazing Live Sea Monkeys DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:15pm-7:56pm				
6 PM		Pizza Movie NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 6:45pm-8:17pm	Family Movie NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 6:15pm-7:36pm	Narrative Short Program 2 NARRATIVE SHORT COMPETITION 6pm-7:43pm						One Another DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:45pm-8:20pm	The Oldest Person in the World FESTIVAL FAVORITE 6:15pm-7:42pm		Mickey GLOBAL 6:15pm-7:30pm	First They Came for My College DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:45pm-7:30pm
7 PM							#WhileBlack DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 7pm-8:24pm							
8 PM														
9 PM	Pretty Lethal HEADLINER 9pm-10:28pm				I Got Bombed at Harvey's DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 9:15pm-10:40pm	Bagworm VISIONS 9:45pm-11:21pm								The Truth and Tragedy of Moriah Wilson DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 9:15pm-10:50pm
10 PM		Drag HEADLINER 10:15pm-11:41pm	The Sun Never Sets NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 9:30pm-11:10pm	Narrative Short Program 3 NARRATIVE SHORT COMPETITION 9:30pm-11:00pm			Never After Dark HEADLINER 10:15pm-12pm	Crash Land NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 10pm-11:30pm	Downbeat NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 10pm-11:31pm	A Safe Distance NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 10:15pm-11:40pm				
11 PM														
12 AM														

SATURDAY, MARCH 14

	PARAMOUNT THEATRE	STATE THEATRE	ZACH THEATER	ROLLINS @ LONG CENTER	ALAMO LAMAR 1 & 3	ALAMO LAMAR 2 & 7	ALAMO LAMAR 4	ALAMO LAMAR 5	ALAMO LAMAR 6	ALAMO LAMAR 8	ALAMO LAMAR 9	VIOLET CROWN 1 & 3	VIOLET CROWN 2 & 4	SATELLITE: AFS CINEMA
10 AM														
11 AM	Ready or Not 2: Here I Come HEADLINER 11am-12:40pm			Documentary Short Program 1 DOCUMENTARY SHORT COMPETITION 11am-12:02pm	Black Zombie DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 10:45am-12:15pm		Summer 2000: The X-Oetra Story DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 11am-12:23pm	The Last Critic DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 11am-12:23pm	Family Movie NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 11am-12:22pm		The Dads DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 11:35am-12:27pm			Time and Water FESTIVAL FAVORITE 11am-12:30pm
12 PM		The Audacity TV PREMIERE 12pm-2pm	Plantman & Blondie: A Dress Up Gang Film NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 11:30am-1:08pm			Amazing Live Sea Monkeys DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 12pm-1:40pm				Same Same But Different NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 11:20am-1:34pm			Sinner Supper Club VISIONS 12pm-1:20pm	
1 PM														
2 PM	Power Ballad NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 2pm-3:30pm				Woodstockers TV SPOTLIGHT 2pm-2:40pm			Drift DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:15pm-3:50pm	Baby/Girls DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:15pm-3:40pm					
3 PM		Brian NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 3:30pm-5:04pm	Chili Finger NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 2:45pm-4:22pm	Documentary Short Program 2 DOCUMENTARY SHORT COMPETITION 2:30pm-4:11pm		Ugly Cry NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 3:15pm-4:46pm	Independent TV Pilot Program INDEPENDENT TV PILOT COMPETITION 3pm-4:42pm			The Man with the Big Hat 24 BEATS PER SECOND 3pm-4:20pm	Manhood DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:45pm-4:16pm	Stages 24 BEATS PER SECOND 3:30pm-5:07pm	Thanks for Nothing GLOBAL 3pm-4:48pm	The AI Doc: Or How I Became an Apocaloptimist FESTIVAL FAVORITE 2:45pm-4:28pm
4 PM														
5 PM														
6 PM	Over Your Dead Body HEADLINER 5:30pm-7:15pm		Sender NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 6pm-7:24pm	Animated Short Program ANIMATED SHORT COMPETITION 6pm-7:20pm	The Peril at Pincer Point VISIONS 6:15pm-6:50pm			Their Town NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 6:30pm-6:50pm	Ceremony DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:30pm-6:50pm	And Her Body Was Never Found VISIONS 6pm-7:15pm	Music Video Program MUSIC VIDEO COMPETITION 6:30pm-8:04pm		Big Girls Don't Cry FESTIVAL FAVORITE 6:15pm-7:50pm	Your Attention Please DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6pm-7:30pm
7 PM		Obsession FESTIVAL FAVORITE 7pm-8:48pm				A Safe Distance NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 7pm-8:25pm	Mallory's Ghost NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 7:15pm-8:42pm					Agriculce (Bittersweet) 24 BEATS PER SECOND 6:45pm-8:23pm		
8 PM														
9 PM	Mike & Nick & Nick & Alice HEADLINER 9pm-10:41pm		Stormbound DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 9:30pm-11:05pm	Summer of '94 DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 9:15pm-10:54pm	Perfect VISIONS 8:45pm-10:19pm			Midnight Short Program MIDNIGHT SHORT COMPETITION 9:15pm-10:43pm	The Rise of the Red Hot Chili Peppers: Our Brother, Hillel 24 BEATS PER SECOND 9:15pm-10:48pm	Bagworm VISIONS 9pm-10:20pm				
10 PM		Hokum HEADLINER 10pm-11:41pm				Sparks NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 10:15pm-11:31pm	American Dollhouse HEADLINER 10:30pm-11:57pm				Kill Me NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 9:45pm-11:20pm			
11 PM														
12 AM														

SUNDAY, MARCH 15

	PARAMOUNT THEATRE	STATE THEATRE	ZACH THEATER	ROLLINS @ LONG CENTER	ALAMO LAMAR 1 & 3	ALAMO LAMAR 2 & 7	ALAMO LAMAR 4	ALAMO LAMAR 5	ALAMO LAMAR 6	ALAMO LAMAR 8	ALAMO LAMAR 9	VIOLET CROWN 1 & 3	VIOLET CROWN 2 & 4	SATELLITE: AFS CINEMA
10 AM														
11 AM	Los Lobos Native Sons 24 SEATS PER SECOND 11am-12:30pm		The Ascent DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 11am-12:42pm	Texas Short Program TEXAS SHORT COMPETITION 11am-12:32pm	The Saviors NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 11:15am-12:05pm	Their Town NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 11:30am-12:50pm		Seekers of Infinite Love NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 11am-12:31pm	The Life We Leave DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 11am-12:27pm					Cookie Queens FESTIVAL FAVORITE 11:15am-12:45pm
12 PM		Paralyzed by Hope: The Maria Bamford Story FESTIVAL FAVORITE 12pm-1:55pm												
1 PM														
2 PM	The Comeback Season 2 TV SPOTLIGHT 2:15pm-3:15pm													
3 PM			The Dark Wizard TV PREMIERE 2:45pm-4:45pm	The Way We Move DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:30pm-4:05pm	#Skyking DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:45pm-4:15pm					Summer of '94 DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:30pm-4:30pm				Adam's Apple DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 2:45pm-4:23pm
4 PM		Rook Springs FESTIVAL FAVORITE 3:45pm-5:22pm												
5 PM														
6 PM	Normal (on 35mm) NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 6:45pm-7:15pm		The Shitheads FESTIVAL FAVORITE 6:15pm-7:05pm	They Called Us Outlaws - The Country Cowboys, Honky Tonk Heroes and Rise of Redneck Rock TV SPOTLIGHT 6:45pm-7:25pm	#WhileBlack DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6pm-7:24pm	Monitor MIDNIGHTER 6:10pm-7:03pm		Hokiam MIDNIGHTER 5:45pm-7:20pm	Grind MIDNIGHTER 5:45pm-7:29pm					I Got Bombed at Harvey's DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6pm-7:30pm
7 PM		Levittous FESTIVAL FAVORITE 7pm-8:25pm												
8 PM														
9 PM														
10 PM	Crash Land NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 10pm-11:30pm		The Fox NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 9:45pm-11:14pm		Capturing Bigfoot DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 9:15pm-10:57pm	The Peril at Pinar Point VISIONS 9:45pm-11:05pm		Imposters MIDNIGHTER 9pm-10:42pm	Mallory's Ghost NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 9pm-10:27pm					The Man with the Big Hat 24 SEATS PER SECOND 9pm-10:30pm
11 PM														
12 AM										Escape the Internet (Part 1) 45 EXPERIENCE COMPETITION 10:15pm-11:05pm	Amazing Live Sea Monkeys DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 10:30pm-12:10am			

MONDAY, MARCH 16

	PARAMOUNT THEATRE	STATE THEATRE	ZACH THEATER	ROLLINS @ LONG CENTER	ALAMO LAMAR 1	ALAMO LAMAR 2	ALAMO LAMAR 3	ALAMO LAMAR 4	ALAMO LAMAR 5	ALAMO LAMAR 6	ALAMO LAMAR 7	ALAMO LAMAR 8	ALAMO LAMAR 9	VIOLET CROWN 1 & 3	VIOLET CROWN 2 & 4	SATELLITE: AFS CINEMA
10 AM																
11 AM	Pretty Lethal HEADLINER 11am-12:28pm			Los Lobos Native Sons 24 SEATS PER SECOND 11am-12:30pm												
12 PM		The Pirate King NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 09PM-1009PM	Over Your Dead Body HEADLINER 11:30am-1:15pm	Sinner Supper Club VISIONS 12pm-1:10pm	Levittous FESTIVAL FAVORITE 11:45am-1:13pm	Summer 2000: The X-Cetra Story DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 12pm-1:44pm		Stormbound DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 11:15am-12:50pm	Wishful Thinking NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 11:30am-1:15pm	The Ascent DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 11:30am-1:12pm	Downbeat NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 11:45am-1:16pm		Agridulce (Bittersweet) 24 SEATS PER SECOND 11:15am-12:05pm	Capturing Bigfoot DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 11am-12:42pm		
1 PM																
2 PM																
3 PM	Noah Kahant: Out of Body 24 SEATS PER SECOND 2:30pm-4:04pm			Narrative Short Program 2 NARRATIVE SHORT COMPETITION 2:30pm-4:13pm	And Her Body Was Never Found VISIONS 3:15pm-4:30pm	Do You Love Me GLOBAL 2:45pm-4pm	The Snake NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 3:15pm-4:44pm		Sender NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 3pm-4:34pm	My NDA DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 3pm-4:41pm	Cornbread Mafia DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 3:45pm-4:08pm		The Last Critic DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 2:15pm-3:38pm	Imposters MIDNIGHTER 2:30pm-4:12pm		One Another DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 3pm-4:35pm
4 PM		Serling DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 3:30pm-5:00pm	Dreamquail NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 3:30pm-4:50pm													
5 PM																
6 PM	Forbidden Fruits NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 5:30pm-7:13pm															Family Movie NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 5pm-6:21pm
7 PM		He Blod Neon NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 7pm-8:25pm	Love Language NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 6:30pm-8:14pm	Narrative Short Program 3 NARRATIVE SHORT COMPETITION 6:15pm-7:54pm	Crash Land NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 6:45pm-8:15pm	Mickey GLOBAL 6:15pm-7:30pm	Dead Eyes VISIONS 6:45pm-8:08pm	Midnight Short Program MIDNIGHT SHORT COMPETITION 7pm-8:28pm		Mam NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 6:30pm-7:15pm	Drag MIDNIGHTER 6:30pm-7:50pm	Seahorse NARRATIVE FEATURE COMPETITION 6:15pm-7:38pm	My Brother's Killer DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:30pm-7:05pm	Scarlet Girls GLOBAL 6pm-7:10pm	Manhood DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 6:30pm-8:00pm	Big Girls Don't Cry FESTIVAL FAVORITE 6pm-7:20pm
8 PM																
9 PM	Basie NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 9pm-10:26pm															American Dollhouse MIDNIGHTER 8:30pm-9:57pm
10 PM		Buddy FESTIVAL FAVORITE 10pm-11:30pm	Buzz Screening 7 9:45pm-11:15pm	Narrative Short Program 1 NARRATIVE SHORT COMPETITION 9:45pm-11:31pm	Perfect VISIONS 10pm-11:34pm	The Way We Move DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 9:30pm-11:05pm	Phoenix Jones: The Rise and Fall of a Real Life Superhero DOCUMENTARY FEATURE COMPETITION 10pm-11:45pm	See You When I See You FESTIVAL FAVORITE 10:15pm-11:56pm	Buzz Screening 1 9:45pm-11:15pm	Never After Dark MIDNIGHTER 9:45pm-11:30pm	Chili Finger NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 9:30pm-11:10pm		The Fox NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT 8:45pm-10:14pm	Ceremony DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT 9:15pm-10:38pm		
11 PM																
12 AM																

Kathryn Newton and Samara Weaving in *Ready or Not 2: Here I Come*

COURTESY OF SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

Ready or Not 2: Here I Come

HEADLINER, WORLD PREMIERE

FRIDAY 13, 5:30PM, PARAMOUNT THEATRE

SATURDAY 14, 11AM, PARAMOUNT THEATRE

save her family from a fate worse than death – or just plain death. Enter *Blockers* and *Freaky* star Kathryn Newton as Grace's estranged sister, Faith, who suddenly finds herself caught up in this Satanic battle for survival.

The filmmakers knew that they couldn't just rerun the first film, instead needing to up the emotional stakes for Grace, and so they had always considered the sequel as a two-hander. Gillett said, "It was a police officer for a minute, it was a friend from childhood for a minute, [but] we needed it to be a relationship that required very little explaining, where there was almost a cheat code for what the past might be. So a sibling, it just made a lot of sense."

Finding a sister was as easy as finding the logic for the sequel, as the duo had worked with Newton on their 2024 vampire comedy, *Abigail*. Gillett said, "It was just so clear to us how similar Sam and Kathryn's energy is. ... We had actually written something after *Abigail* specifically for them, and we just went, 'Man, can we just port this over into *Ready or Not*?'"

Faith's existence actually makes a liar out of Grace, since she says in the first film that she has no family, but for Gillett that's actually a way to deepen her character. "Her past is coming back to haunt her in this movie," he said, and the sibling relationship that she had buried allows her to grow. "You think about the first movie as a love story that devolves and falls apart over the movie, and in this one it's the opposite. Two characters who couldn't be further apart at the beginning learning to love each other again."

So, basically, it's a horror riff on *Frozen*.

Bettinelli-Olpin laughed. "We had to cut the part when they burst into song. 'If there's an evil mirror version of the sisters, it's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* herself, Sarah Michelle Gellar, as the untrustworthy and mercilessly capable Ursula Danforth. Gillett said, 'It's just rare that you get to work with the collection of talents that Sarah has, and understands the stunt work, and is not afraid to go right to the edge of what it's safe for a cast member to do. With someone like that, you just stand up and let 'em cook.'"

Ready or Not, Here They Come

Directors Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett give a sense of family for bloody sequel *Ready or Not 2: Here I Come* **BY RICHARD WHITTAKER**

It's been a long time since filmmakers Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett were at South by Southwest, or even in Austin: Back in 2012, as part of filmmaking collective Radio Silence, they contributed the segment "10/31/98" to anthology horror *V/H/S*. That film played as part of the *Midnighters* lineup, but now they're rubbing shoulders with the *Headliners* for *Ready or Not 2: Here I Come*, the sequel to their 2019 feature debut, *Ready or Not*.

In that bloody action-horror-comedy, newlywed bride Grace (Samara Weaving) found herself in a deadly game of hide-and-seek with her new, stinking rich in-laws, who all turn out to be devil worshippers in the service of the enigmatic and infernal Mr. Le Bail.

The original ended with Grace, still in a blood-splattered bridal gown, on the steps of the family's now-blazing mansion. Seven years later, the sequel picks up in exactly the same place. According to Gillett, that was always the idea, to come back to the same shot. "We really loved the audacity of, holy shit, we just put this character through the most insane 12 hours anybody could experience. All she needs is a break, somebody to

talk to, to process what happened, and she doesn't get that. She's immediately thrown into this new game."

The challenge now was to find a reason for a sequel. Bettinelli-Olpin said they were always eager to revisit both the story and the fun they had working with Weaving, who also stars in Jorma Taccone's *Over Your Dead Body*, another SXSW Headliner. "She is a monster," Bettinelli-Olpin said. "She's so physical, and she's also so emotional, so you get all these different layers."

It's how Weaving can balance the bone-crushing, face-smashing violence of the hunt with the over-the-top lunacy of Le Bail's highly explosive manner of dealing with those that fail him. Gillett described those moments as "the punchline [which] allows us to make the very real, grounded violence that happens before those events feel much harder and much scarier."

The first film's success immediately sparked conversations of a sequel. However, Bettinelli-Olpin said that he and Gillett agreed that it couldn't be "a cash grab sequel, but something that comes from a place of love and passion."

Luckily, the answer was in their hands all along, on the last page of the original script for *Ready or Not*. Gillett explained that screenwriters Guy Busick and R. Christopher Murphy had included "this tag about a bigger world of Le Bail families, families that have sold their souls to Le Bail."

The first film centered on the powerful and perverse Le Domas family, but it turns out they were members of a global cabal of the untouchably rich, played by a murderer's row of genre actors including Kevin Durand (*Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*), Néstor Carbonell (*Bates Motel*), and even Elijah Wood as the lawyer/dark priest who keeps them within the terms of their demonic contracts. "The whole cast, we keep pinching ourselves," Bettinelli-Olpin said. That started with the head of the Danforth family, played by none other than horror directing legend David Cronenberg. Bettinelli-Olpin credited their casting directors for suggesting this wild swing on a Tuesday, "and on Wednesday he was in, and just as fans it was special to us."

If the monstrous elite are running to get closer to the powers of Hell, Grace is trying to

KODAK SAFETY FILM



Jerry Jeff Walker and Billy Joe Shaver

GARY P. NUNN / COURTESY OF SHADOWBROOK STUDIOS

Honky Tonk Legends

They Called Us Outlaws seeks the independent artistry behind country music's mythic Seventies **BY DOUG FREEMAN**

Eric Geadelmann trains his camera in tight on the neck of Bruce Robison's guitar, the shot moving down the frets with the songwriter's fingers as he winces out a poignant take of Waylon Jennings' "You Ask Me To." The small film crew is gathered in Ray Benson's new studio just east of Austin, capturing some final footage for *They Called Us Outlaws*, a new feature-length documentary making its world premiere at SXSW.

It's a project Geadelmann has worked on for over a decade, an exploration of the transformative 1970s Outlaw era in country music that has now expanded into a projected 10-part series. But rather than simply screen the first episode at SXSW, he and his production partner Kelly Magelky decided to develop an entirely new 90-minute feature to serve as a prologue to the series, focused specifically on the movement's unlikely roots in Austin.

So a month before SXSW, Geadelmann is scrambling to finish the film, which will serve not only as the prologue to the series, but as the cornerstone of his rebuilt Crowfly Studios.

Geadelmann has been in this position before. In 2003, having recently exited his

executive position with a healthtech company at the age of 34, he submitted his first feature-length documentary to SXSW. The critically acclaimed *The Dance* told the moving story of Billy Roth, a former 1960s champion boxer who mentored inmates in Louisiana prisons, and Geadelmann, the film's writer and producer, finished it only days before its premiere.

"I sent in what I thought was a really shitty rough cut to SXSW," he laughs. "I'll never forget [SXSW co-founder] Louis Black calling me, and he goes, 'What are you going to do to finish this? We want you to premiere this here.'"

The documentary's unexpected success opened up doors to major studios, and led to a partnership with Nicolas Cage's Saturn Films. It also allowed Geadelmann to launch 821, a Nashville media company that over the next decade developed divisions for music, film and television, digital communications, and a prescient concert streaming platform. They secured rights to and cultivated content directed at a "heartland" audience that had eluded Hollywood, and were becoming an influential studio, before it all fell apart in 2010.

On the same day that massive flooding

swept across Tennessee that May, including destroying Geadelmann's farm homestead outside of Nashville, he received word that the company's \$325M funding had fallen through. As he watched his home fold into the Harpeth River, he faced the financial folding of 821.

"Some divisions spun off, shut down, restructured, lost some rights to a lot of intellectual property," he recalls. "But part of the starting over was, we're coming back to Austin. It kind of forced me to go back to why I got into this in the beginning: to tell great stories, to move people."

Geadelmann's rebuilding echoes another one nearly 40 years earlier, when Willie Nelson moved back to Texas following his Tennessee ranch burning down and the country music industry largely stifling his career. For Nelson, that move led to the discovery of the odd 1970s counterculture that had blossomed in Austin, a mixture of cowboys and hippies that he would help catalyze to become ground zero for a new sound in country music.

For Geadelmann, the move to Austin was a return to his roots – the Arkansas native had attended Baylor University just up the road in Waco – and a rediscovery of the music that had inspired him back then. Geadelmann's experience of 1980s Austin came after the seminal Seventies scene of the Armadillo World Headquarters, but its influence still loomed large in the Texas capital's culture.

With what rights that remained from the breakup of 821, Geadelmann worked on

They Called Us Outlaws

TV SPOTLIGHT, WORLD PREMIERE

SUNDAY 15, 5:45PM,

ROLLINS THEATRE AT THE LONG CENTER

various projects over the next decade, including the documentary *Dave* and Hank Williams biopic *I Saw the Light*, but his primary passion poured into interviewing artists from the Outlaw era. *They Called Us Outlaws* serves as the foundation for his freshly launched Shadowbrook Studios, with plans to expand into a full media enterprise of live music and technology initiatives.

"I was always a fan, first and foremost, of singer-songwriters, of [Kris] Kristofferson, of Waylon and Willie, and going to school in Waco, following Billy Joe [Shaver] around. So that spoke to me, number one," offers Geadelmann of his decision to focus on the Outlaw movement. "Number two was that it had never been done before, and it was high-profile enough where I felt we'd be able to do it."

Drawing especially on rare archival footage, the prologue establishes Austin's foundational influence in fostering this new breed of cosmic cowboy and a progressive country sound before Nashville marketing finally caught up and branded it with 1976's industry-quaking compilation *Wanted! The Outlaws*, the first platinum-certified country album.

But *They Called Us Outlaws* also features over 130 interviews with artists, producers, and insiders to the thread through to contemporary country musicians who have pursued an independent path outside the mainstream industry. For Geadelmann, the connections between Kristofferson, Nelson, and Jennings and their modern inheritors like Tyler Childers, Miranda Lambert, and Jack Ingram are about more than eschewing the typical industry path; it's about a dedication to songwriting and one's own artistic vision, regardless of the outcomes.

"Kris said it wasn't about commerciality, that we didn't care if we made any money or were on the Hit Parade. It was about whether or not we're doing the good work, writing soulful songs," Geadelmann relates. "And I think it's also about the necessity of community, that back in the day, it was such a community in Austin, and feeling that you're part of something bigger than yourself. Does that exist today? I don't know."

"And finally I think it's learning the importance of just not giving a fuck," he adds. "When I say that, it's not flippantly. It's about knowing where and how to put your care." ■



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The Peril at Pincer Point

VISIONS, WORLD PREMIERE

SATURDAY 14, 5:15PM, ALAMO LAMAR

SUNDAY 15, 9:45PM, ALAMO LAMAR

WEDNESDAY 18, 10PM, ALAMO LAMAR

The Sincerity of Silliness in *The Peril at Pincer Point*

Jake Kuhn and Noah Stratton-Twine get delightfully crabby for their micro-budget seaside tale

BY RICHARD WHITTAKER

There are strange tides washing at Pincer Point. Foul winds blow in legends of pirates that steal sailors' souls. Yet gusting in from across the ocean are the goofiest B-movies of Roger Corman.

In *The Peril at Pincer Point*, which premieres this week at South by Southwest, sound engineer Jim Baitte (Jack Redmayne) has been dispatched to a strange seaside village by a demanding filmmaker, only to get caught up

in a nautical mystery. But how on Earth does anyone elevator pitch a movie that's equal parts *The Wicker Man*, *The Lighthouse*, *Lake Michigan Monster*, and *Viking Women and the Sea Serpent*?

"You don't," said Noah Stratton-Twine. "We wrote it, and three weeks later we were shooting it."

It's both kin and alien to Stratton-Twine's debut feature, sasquatch comedy *Two Big*

Feet, which he called "my step into what can be done on a very low budget and was very evocative of the more contemporary stuff like mumblecore." This time, along with fellow writer/director Jake Kuhn, in *Pincer Point* they've handcrafted what he called "an analog comedy that doubles down on its stupidity."

It's still micro-budget filmmaking, Kuhn said, "and both me and Noah were talking

a lot about this idea of how to make something that's extremely low-budget have its own mythology, and not just be four people in a bedroom with white walls talking to each other."

The origin of their salty knee-slapper is the small English seaside village of Walberswick, a sleepy place where an exciting day out involves walking to the next town for a pizza. Stratton-Twine explained, "There's only two pubs there, and they're two minutes from each other, and both of their bathrooms are decorated with crustaceous regalia."

"The town's famous for crabbing," said Kuhn. Indeed, it was home to the British Open Crabbing Championship until the event was canceled because it was becoming too popular. It's the kind of remote resort, miles from any distractions, that makes for an ideal writers' retreat, and so it's become where Kuhn and Stratton-Twine head to when they're working on a script.

With what would become *Pincer Point*, Kuhn explained that the main impetus remained as it has always been – to make each other laugh. This time, they loaded the script with in-jokes about Walberswick, like all the crabs, "and at the local pub there's this pint called Ghost Ship, so OK, a ghost ship has got to play into it." As for the Corman influence, on this particular trip, they were both reading the B-movie icon's memoir, *How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime*, Kuhn said, "and we were like, 'It would be great to watch *Attack of the Crab Monsters*,' and I think watching that and a bunch of his other movies swirled into the sincerity of just making something which is just fun and entertaining."

When it came to finally filming *The Peril at Pincer Point*, the only suitable location was Walberswick. Yet instead of the glowering locals that greet Redmayne's fish-out-of-water, Kuhn and Stratton-Twine were welcomed with open arms. Stratton-Twine said, "We were walking up to the pubs and psyching ourselves up and going, 'Is there any chance we could potentially, before you open or in off-hours, we can shoot in your pub garden?' and instead of London where they'd go, 'Oh, we'll put you through our invoicing system,' they were like, 'Oh my God, absolutely!'" ■



MAGNOLIA PICTURES

Nothing Normal About Ben Wheatley

The British filmmaker breaks down his new neo-Western with Bob Odenkirk **BY RICHARD WHITTAKER**

If there's one thing you can predict about Ben Wheatley, it's that he's unpredictable. Last year the British filmmaker took weirdo lo-fi romp *Bulk* to festivals. This year, he's coming in all guns blazing with action-comedy *Normal*, which receives its U.S. premiere at this week's South by Southwest. "They're all a bit of a change from each other," said Wheatley.

That's an understatement. Wheatley's filmography has gone from gritty, micro-budget thrillers (*Down Terrace*) to psychedelic mystical dramas (*In the Earth*) to star-studded Hollywood blockbusters (*Free Fire*) but it's not been a simple trajectory from indie filmmaking to studio work. After all, he shot *Bulk* and *Normal* back-to-back, and he could manage that shift "because they exist in different ecosystems. The people asking me to make *Meg 2* are not the same people watching *A Field in England*."

If he has his way, Wheatley will keep up that kind of ricochet. He said, "I'm very envious of the studio directors of the Forties and Fifties, when you would get on assignment and you'd do a gangster film and a cowboy movie and a courtroom drama and romance and a musical. You turn up to work and you're doing four or five movies in a year and it sounds like the most amazing time to be alive."

With *Normal*, he gets to revisit the classic era of Westerns, back when there weren't really black hats and white hats, just shades of gray. In this action-comedy from *John Wick* co-creator Derek Kolstad, disillusioned lawman Ulysses (Bob Odenkirk) is filling in as temporary sheriff of Normal, Michigan. It's a quiet place, but some things just gnaw away at Ulysses: Everyone's too polite, too well-armed, and there's just a little too much money floating around for a flyspeck in the snowy middle of nowhere.

It was Kolstad and Odenkirk's first collaboration, 2021 action smash *Nobody*, that got Wheatley interested in the project. He said, "*Nobody* came at exactly the right time after COVID. It felt like a welcome back to the cinema, and a welcome back to a grounded action and an older cinema which had been missing for a long time."

It was also the introduction of Odenkirk as an action star, but not an invulnerable one. What he pulls off in *Nobody*, its sequel, and *Normal* "is somewhat achievable," Wheatley said, "if you ever bothered to do any exercise." It's a style reminiscent of Seventies and early Eighties action, the era of "the vulnerable hero. ... There's something about Harrison Ford in his performances that always showed that he was hurting. Clint Eastwood, even in the *Dirty Harry* movies, *Unforgiven*, *A Fistful of Dollars*, they take a kicking and they have to come back, and that's part of you feeling that they're human, rather than wraiths who can take any amount of damage."

When it came to making *Normal* feel real, he said, "what was agreed on by everyone from the start was that it would be as physical and as practical as possible. If the computer was got out of the box, it was only to clean something up. ... Things, when they blow up, they blow up. When we flip a car, we flip a car. It's cause and effect, it's physics. The audience can see how one thing affects another, which on one hand is more realistic but on the other it's *Tom & Jerry*." ■

Normal

NARRATIVE SPOTLIGHT, U.S. PREMIERE

SUNDAY 15, 5:45PM, PARAMOUNT THEATRE

WEDNESDAY 18, 6:30PM, ALAMO LAMAR



I.M. Pei Campus, New College of Florida

PHOTO BY PATRICK BRESNAN

First They Came for My College

DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT, TEXAS PREMIERE

THURSDAY 12, 6:15PM, ALAMO LAMAR

FRIDAY 13, 5:45PM, AFS CINEMA

WEDNESDAY 18, 6PM, ROLLINS THEATRE AT THE LONG CENTER

The Fight for Free Thought in *First They Came for My College*

How Holly Herrick brought an unexpected filmmaker to the battle for her alma mater **BY RICHARD WHITTAKER**

As head of film & creative media for the Austin Film Society, Holly Herrick may be synonymous with Austin, but her cultural roots lay in the New College of Florida. She said, “I’ve basically credited New College with the life I have now.” Now she’s repaying the life debt as producer of *First They Came for My College*, a documentary examining the right-wing attack on the campus and its students.

New College’s reputation was for academic rigor mixed with intellectual freedom, a bastion of truly progressive thinking. Then in 2023, the state of Florida threw that history out of the window and made it hostile to both the students and the lecturers who had called it home. Herrick said, “When Ron DeSantis basically out of nowhere announced the right-wing takeover of the college, the alumni community exploded.”

As an alumna herself, Herrick wanted to get involved. Coming from a film background, she immediately realized that someone was going to make a documentary about this, “and that concerned me, because New College is a hard place to understand.” Yet she was still unsure that she was the person to tell this story until she had a long conversation with documentarian Margaret Brown (*The Yogurt Shop Murders*) and, Herrick recounted, “she said, ‘You could produce this with your eyes closed.’”

That’s when she made the seemingly surprising choice to reach out to Patrick Bresnan, who is better known for community-centric ethnographic studies like *Pahoake* and *Naked Gardens* than conventional narrative documentaries. Yet that’s exactly what she knew this film needed in a director – someone who would

truly learn about New College as a place and a community. She said, “I knew that he would not arrive there thinking he knew the story.”

Bresnan recalled that when he first visited the campus, “it was like showing up to the Nineties. I felt like I was at a grunge concert, and you didn’t know what gender a person was and it didn’t matter. It was such an incredible place.” The initial thought was to make a short about the attempts to expel student body president Libby Harry, “but I thought that the story was much bigger.”

What then ensued was a yearlong process to understand the campus, creating what Bresnan called “an underground film school,” equipping some students with their own iPhones so they could capture footage in places he wouldn’t go. At the same time, he then filmed in what he called “safe spaces”

like the student food forest and garden, and the student newspaper offices. It was only after that initial year that he reached out to the college administration and explained what he was doing, and worked with them to explore their side of the story.

For Herrick, this wasn’t simply an abstract skirmish in the culture wars, but an attack on the academic processes that had made New College such a unique and affordable environment for students like herself. “This is tearing apart people’s lives,” she said. “This is removing the possibility of an amazing outcome.”

But Bresnan sees that the spirit of the old New College is not dead. On new student day, he filmed one of the incoming class, homeschooled and from a conservative family. “Last time I was there, he was walking around barefoot in eye shadow.” ■

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Underdogs & Unlikey Heroes



Surviving members of sister act the Shaggs

COURTESY OF LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

We Are the Shaggs

24 BEATS PER SECOND,
WORLD PREMIERE

FRIDAY 13, 3PM, ALAMO LAMAR
SUNDAY 15, NOON, ALAMO LAMAR
TUESDAY 17, 6PM, ALAMO LAMAR

Amazing Live Sea Monkeys

DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT,
WORLD PREMIERE

FRIDAY 13, 6:15PM, ALAMO LAMAR
SATURDAY 14, NOON, ALAMO LAMAR
SUNDAY 15, 10:30PM, ALAMO LAMAR

Summer of '94

DOCUMENTARY SPOTLIGHT,
WORLD PREMIERE

SATURDAY 14, 9:15PM, ROLLINS THEATRE AT THE LONG CENTER
SUNDAY 15, 2:30PM, ALAMO LAMAR
WEDNESDAY 18, 9PM, AFS CINEMA

Philosophy of the Shaggs

A new documentary complicates the cult band's still-remarkable story **BY JOE GROSS**

Sometime in 1980, a University of Southern California film student named Ken Kwapis walked into a Los Angeles record store. As he was flipping through the bins, an album caught his eye.

Three long-haired young women on the cover, two in matching jumpers holding guitars, one at the drum kit, none of them looking particularly slick or made-up. The photo looked dated, the players like siblings. The name of the band was the Shaggs and the album was called *Philosophy of the World*. He found the cover intriguing, so he purchased the album and took it home.

"Frankly, I was puzzled by it," Kwapis says. He was no stranger to complicated, challenging music; his favorite song on the Beatles' White Album was "Revolution 9." But this was something else. "I'd never heard anything like it."

This is the reaction most people have to *Philosophy of the World*. Even in 2026, even as the music on this singular album has been absorbed into whatever collective

unconscious is tapped into by musicians, the Shaggs' debut still has the ability to shock, to baffle, and occasionally enrage.

This wasn't abstract, freeform music; there are songs. But the guitars sound untuned. The drummer isn't particularly steady. The vocals do not sound professional, the song titles scan as almost naive: "Who Are Parents?" "My Pal Foot Foot." "That Little Sports Car."

Is this a put-on? Is this supposed to be ironic? Did these three women – Dot, Betty, and Helen Wiggins, sisters from Fremont, New Hampshire – know what they were doing?

Kwapis was blown away. "I remember being struck by this combination of sincere emotional content combined with radical musical choices."

Kwapis went on to have the sort of Hollywood career that guarantees you have seen something he directed, even if you didn't know he directed it. His movies include the totally excellent *Sesame Street Presents: Follow That Bird*, *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, and *He's Just Not That Into*

You. His television work is a murderer's row of smart sitcoms, everything from *Malcolm in the Middle* to *The Office* (including the pilot and finale) to the less-beloved *Space Force*.

But Kwapis never forgot the Shaggs. And the more he found out about them, the more interested he became. After an abortive attempt to create a feature film about the Shaggs with the living sisters' blessing (Helen died in 2006), Kwapis is at SXSW with *We Are the Shaggs*, a full-length documentary about a little band that could (sort of).

The Shaggs story is one with which the serious music nerd is familiar: The three sisters, all homeschooled in the 1960s, were let's-say-encouraged by their strange and probably abusive father to form a band, based on a prophecy he received. (No, really.)

They practiced for hours, for years. They cut an album in 1969, a recording that baffled the engineers who worked on it, and released it on a tiny private press label. According to the sisters, fewer than 100 copies made it

to the public; most who heard it thought it was the worst thing they had ever encountered. The Wiggins' feelings were hurt and the band disintegrated. But folks here and there loved them: Frank Zappa was a famous one. Rounder reissued their album in 1980 and it has been an underground signifier ever since.

Kwapis engages all of that in *We Are the Shaggs*, reaching out to composers and musicologists and extremely big fans to explain what it is about the Shaggs that keeps people fascinated nearly six decades later. The more he examines the band, the more questions of authenticity, technical ability, and even categories of "good" and "bad" come into question.

"The observations of [the experts] really surprised me," he says, citing former Prince engineer-turned-academic Susan Rogers as being particularly key to the process. (Indeed, she is terrific.) "And I think telling the story from their POV humanizes them. They weren't just these puppets fulfilling the desires of this patriarch. I wanted to give them back ownership of this experience."

In fact, Kwapis credits Rogers with asking a key, uncomfortable question, perhaps the key to the Shaggs' whole deal: "What if they were boys? Would we just assume they knew what they were doing?"

Tempest in a Fishbowl

Amazing Live Sea Monkeys documents the crazy legal battle over the childhood novelty **BY RICHARD WHITTAKER**

The world of kids' playthings has never been simply fun and games. It's big money, and with big money comes intrigue and industrial espionage. When it's an iconic brand, the stakes can become life or death, even if it's something as seemingly wacky and weird as sea monkeys.

Yes, the little cartoon critters that would turn up as powder in an envelope and, when you added them to water, they suddenly emerged as brine shrimp. If your only memory of them is the ads in the back of comics, with a cheerful, alien-looking nuclear family swimming under the sea, you may be surprised that they're still a multimillion-dollar business, and the center of a wild legal fight between the toy company that sold them and the one person that knows the secret of their creation.

That legal battle over this relic of mid-century Americana is at the center of *Amazing Live Sea Monkeys*, the new documentary from Mark Becker and Aaron Schock debuting at South by Southwest. Schock called it "a deep dive into the American aquarium, that you could scratch below the surface of a novelty and find corporate greed, misogyny, B-movies, extremist politics."

The lawsuit is what first got them interested in the story, but what really drew them in was the story of Yolanda Signorelli, the woman Becker dubbed "the mother of sea monkeys" who put pride and principle over a quick cash payout from her business partners-turned-courtroom foes at Big Time Toys. When he and Schock read an article about her lawsuit, Becker explained, "we just sent a message out into the ether on one of those web browser-based 'talk to this lawyer' interfaces, and we got a call."

They weren't the only documentarians interested in the story. Yet after many phone conversations with Signorelli's lawyer, his wife who was vetting the rival filmmakers, and finally Signorelli herself, they were the ones that Signorelli would talk to. Becker said, "I think she liked the way we conveyed how we would approach the subject."

They quickly realized that the story wasn't really about the sea monkeys, but about Signorelli's own life as a B-movie exploitation actress, wildlife activist, and entrepreneur, and the surprising legacy of her late husband, Harold von Braunhut. A self-taught scientist, it was von Braunhut who came up with the secret preservation process that makes sea monkeys possible, as well as invented a host of wild and wacky toys like X-ray specs, Crazy Crabs, and the Invisible Goldfish.

"We were really honest with Yolanda that we wanted to tell the story about her fighting to get the sea monkeys back, but we also needed to go into this other realm," Schock said about some of the unexpectedly darker and more shocking elements of the story. "I think we built some trust there that we weren't going, 'Oh, we don't want to touch that stuff.' We really need to be honest with the story that we find, and I think that there was some respect from Yolanda that we were open and honest."

Finally, after months of phone conversations, they arrived at Signorelli's mansion in Maryland to begin the filmmaking process. Becker recalled that moment: "We sat there before these gates that have 'do not enter' on them and these iron images of sea monkeys, and we called Yolanda, and that's where our journey really began." ■



The Official Unofficial Poster of the 1994 U.S. National Team

From Teammates to Family

Doc looks back at the moment soccer became America's sport **BY RICHARD WHITTAKER**

They always say, never meet your idols. That's kind of impossible when you're making a movie about a seminal event in your own life.

For documentarians Dave LaMattina and Chad Walker, that's the situation they faced with *Summer of '94*, their documentary about the year that soccer broke in America. It was 1994, when the USA hosted the World Cup for the first time. But their story begins two years before that, with the assembling, training, and unexpected success of the U.S. Men's National Team.

They were both soccer kids then. Walker switched from baseball to soccer in grade school and played center-back right into college, while LaMattina – a self-described "chunky kid" – played goalie. LaMattina still has the program from the first-ever match he attended: May 29, 1994, at the Yale Bowl, where the U.S. held visiting Greece to a 1-1 draw in front of 21,317 fans. He even got it signed on the day by defender Alexi Lalas and midfielder Cobi Jones – and 30 years later he interviewed both for *Summer of '94*, which premieres this week at South by Southwest.

Those interviews blew up the "never meet your heroes" myth, as LaMattina realized when he spent a day with goalie-turned-sports commentator Tony Meola.

"I'm going, 'This is insane.' I had pictures of this guy on my bedroom wall, in my locker at school. I made him sign my high school goalie jersey," he said. "We've been really lucky in our careers that, whenever we've had the chance to meet our heroes, they make us feel

that much stronger about the person."

There had been soccer in America before that World Cup, LaMattina said, "flashes with the [New York] Cosmos and Pelé, but that didn't take root. So, our question, and the heart of this film, was what was it about these guys that made them pioneers?"

One big key to unlocking the mystery of the team came in the form of an astonishing archive of previously unseen footage filmed by the players themselves. LaMattina and Walker had been in a similar situation when making their last major documentary, 2014's *I Am Big Bird*, in which they explored the life of Muppeteer Caroll Spinney, the man beneath the yellow feathers. In their very first meeting, Spinney's wife, Debra, told them she had a huge library of home movies. Walker said, "The first box Deb dropped off was never-before-seen home videos of *Muppet Family Christmas*, and of course we went, 'Yeah, we're going to want to use that stuff.'" But as they dug into the archive, they discovered the heart of the film was the love story between Caroll and Deb. "And that's why *Big Bird* radiated love," Walker said.

"With this film," he continued, "it was that they were a close-knit family, and what came through in the archive was that it was a complicated dynamic. It was a deep bond that these guys will forever share, but they'll tell you that when you're in there, and you're competing against people for a spot on this team, the idea of friendship is very complicated." ■

O'Shea Jackson Jr., Dave Franco, and Mason Thames in *The Shitheads*

COURTESY OF INDEPENDENT FILM COMPANY

File Under: Movies for Sickos

Austin writer/director Macon Blair takes O'Shea Jackson and Dave Franco on the road trip from hell

BY RICHARD WHITTAKER

If someone tells you there's a film about two burnouts hired to take a kid to rehab, you might expect a feel-good story where life lessons are learned, and everything is solved with a hug.

The Shitheads is definitely not that movie. Instead, writer/director Macon Blair said, "It's a propulsive, berserk buddy comedy," heavily influenced by both *Midnight Run* and *The Last Detail*. In it, broke no-hopers Mark (Dave Franco, *Together*) and Davis (O'Shea Jackson Jr., *Ingrid Goes West*) are hired by a firm that specializes in transporting people to rehab. Unfortunately, their first passenger is Sheridan (Mason Thames, *The Black Phone*), a rich kid influencer with the morals of a polecat and zero conscience.

After debuting at Sundance, the film was acquired last month by Independent Film Company for a summer theatrical release. But first, Austin-based Blair gets to bring *The Shitheads* home for its Texas premiere at this week's South by Southwest. Having first established a career as a writer and actor, he

turned to directing with his tender 2017 drama, *I Don't Feel at Home in This World Anymore*, but followed that up with a raucous, vomitous reboot of *The Toxic Avenger*. On the surface, *The Shitheads* has more of his first film's character study, but Blair still delivers his own brand of gross-out comedy and carnage. Like the meme goes, it's one for the "Ha, ha, yes!" sickos.

"That's my whole thing," he laughed. "What I got excited about early on was the idea that it could be, on one hand, this very broad, slapstick-y kind of comedy, and then it would have something that was very nasty and dark going on concurrently, and it would periodically jump between those two lanes."

The original idea for the film came from producer Alex Orr, who Blair first worked with while playing the lead in Jeremy Saulnier's breakout bleak drama, *Blue Ruin*. Blair recalled, "He knew some guys who worked at a service like this. Now, to be clear, there are very organized, trained, reputable services that do this kind of job but the guys that Alex knew were not that.

They were untrained and unsupervised, and this seems like a precarious position, so we thought that would be a funny premise for a road-trip-type comedy."

Under the bruises, blood, and projectile diarrhea, there's a political subtext to *The Shitheads*. As Davis points out, the only difference between Sheridan and Mark is that Sheridan has money, and that money has become a shield against any kind of accountability or responsibility. Indeed, he positively flaunts his immunity, having become a social media celebrity for his bad-boy antics. That idea of infamy just becoming fame was a theme when Blair and Orr first discussed the story back in 2013, but the nature of Sheridan's celebrity status changed in the intervening years. In earlier drafts, Blair said, "it was a little bit more like *TMZ*. It was him in court and him acting badly in public. It wasn't him posting to his own followers. That was something just to make it a little more realistic about how people would interact these days."

But while the nature of Sheridan's fame

may have shifted from Nielsen numbers to follower counts, for Blair the underlying story remains the same. "People who have extraordinary amounts of wealth and resources, either in their family or themselves, can buy themselves out of trouble. That's evergreen." If anything, with the seemingly endless torrent of revelations from the Epstein files, *The Shitheads* has only grown more relevant, "and I don't love that," said Blair. "I wish that it was a little more far-fetched." ■

The Shitheads

FESTIVAL FAVORITE, TEXAS PREMIERE

SUNDAY 15, 6:15PM, ZACH THEATER

WEDNESDAY 18, 9:30PM, STATE THEATRE

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PHOTO BY POLARIS BANKS

Trauma Bonding

How Mor Cohen and Polaris Banks put their real-life relationship problems onscreen **BY RICHARD WHITTAKER**

People make movies for many reasons – fame, fortune, artistry. Mor Cohen and her husband, Polaris Banks, ended up saving their marriage when they went to the middle of nowhere to film twisty meta-horror *And Her Body Was Never Found*.

Premiering at South by Southwest this week, it's a literal two-hander from the Austin filmmaking couple, who wrote, directed, filmed, and are the sole cast members in this story of indie filmmakers playing a warring couple, only for the story to worm its way beyond the narrative.

According to Cohen, the film came from “me bugging Polaris for maybe three or four years that we need to do a movie together.” Finally, she suggested doing “something very cheap, with just us, whatever resources we have, and he took it from there.”

Banks' first idea was a horror movie set on a camping expedition. But rather than a faceless slasher, he realized that “the scariest thing is if the person you're with is trying to kill you, and then I went, ‘what if we went off to make the movie, and real me was trying to kill you, and behind-the-scenes me was trying to kill you?’”

That fear was in part inspired by Cohen's own experiences as an actor. “I sometimes shoot on location,” she



Cosmic Horror Meets Matrimonial Mayhem in *Imposters*

Writer/director Caleb Phillips explores keeping the mystery mysterious in this SXSW Midnigher

BY RICHARD WHITTAKER

Not every protagonist needs to be likable. Take the married couple at the heart of cosmically tinged relationship horror *Imposters*. “I wanted to tell a story that was only possible with characters this selfish,” said writer/director Caleb Phillips.

It all comes back to the idea that everyone loves a good mystery, but may not love the reveal. “When *Severance* or *Lost* comes on, I'm really dialed in to what the answer might be, but it's really hard to land that plane sometimes. What I love about cosmic horror is that you get punished for getting closer to the answers.”

In his wild identity horror, he reverses the cosmic horror equation: When married couple Marie (Jessica Rothe, *Happy Death Day*) and Paul (Charlie Barnett, Disney+'s *The Acolyte*) undergo the trauma of having their baby abducted, high weirdness brings him back. However, Phillips noted that “[they're] not so interested in the central core of the mystery, but what they can do with it.” As a result, the audience's sympathy for them is supposed to be muted. “They both have very shitty moments,” Phillips said. “I was riding a line with how unlikely these characters could be and I feel

said, “and I’m going, I’m literally driving into this tiny town, not knowing anybody.”

This wasn’t just about the fear of strangers, but the fact that Banks’ and Cohen’s relationship was in a very unhealthy place.

“We were in a very difficult time in our marriage,” Cohen said. “Our couples therapist told us, ‘You shouldn’t go make this movie, it will break you up.’”

There are whole stretches of dialogue that are almost word-for-word taken from real arguments they’d had, as Banks’ script drew on their real problems. Cohen said, “He would sit me down and go, ‘I need to ask you personal questions about your relationship with me,’ and I was like, ‘Are we gonna break up?’”

In spite of their tensions and fears, Banks and Cohen headed to Washington state to start filming. Just two people, a lot of kit, and the wilderness. Banks said, “Mor, every time, would go, ‘Do we have to shoot there?’ and I’d go, ‘Yes! I know it’s a pain, I know this is too cold.’ She was trying to find a river in Texas, and I would say, ‘They’re not the same. We need to shoot in the ice river, we need a mountaintop at the end, we have a cliff.’”

This means shooting pivotal scenes in rivers, in forests, on cliffs, all the while literally reenacting old arguments. Cohen said, “We’re talking about waking up, hiking up the mountain for three hours, filming for three hours,

and hiking back for three hours before you get stranded there in the dark.”

Since he’d got used to roughing it during location scouting, Banks was fine with all the hardships. In hindsight, he observed, “I should have catered it more to Mor’s needs.” As a filmmaker, he admits to a certain masochistic streak, “and Mor’s been a great counter to that. If I’m shooting a scene from now on, I’ll be like, ‘If Mor would be comfortable doing this, everyone will be fine.’”

Rather than fulfilling their therapist’s prophecy, all these horrible conditions and onscreen fights based on real arguments made their relationship stronger. Cohen said, “if anything I think it saved our marriage. It taught us to be a real couple.” ■

And Her Body Was Never Found

VISIONS, WORLD PREMIERE

SATURDAY 14, 6PM, ALAMO LAMAR

MONDAY 16, 3:15PM, ALAMO LAMAR

WEDNESDAY 18, 9:30PM, ALAMO LAMAR

like a missing baby in a horror movie helped massage connecting the audience to these characters.”

After all, under that cosmic weirdness, Phillips said, “It’s about two parents who didn’t love each other, stuck with a baby.” It’s a contradiction that he said was inspired by his own parents’ divorce later in life, “and the excuse always being that it’s for the children.” As Marie and Paul navigate the unnatural forces that bring their baby back, *Imposters* is increasingly about what grueling and gruesome steps people take to stay in a relationship. “They’ll change their bodies, they’ll change themselves,” said Phillips. “I really liked the parallel between maiming your body and contorting your personality to fit a relationship. Plus, I’ve always loved body horror.”

There’s a paradox underlying *Imposters*. On the one hand, it’s a tale of two people who stumble on a secret that could rewrite the universe but are utterly disinterested in how it works. On the other hand, the only way Phillips could get it made was by knowing the nuts-and-bolts mechanics of how to direct a film. “I once read that there’s only

two entry positions on set – PA and director,” he joked. However, he took a slightly more circuitous route behind the camera, being that rare director who started off as a grip. “You move to L.A. and you do the thing to make money, and my thing was that I knew how to set up lights.”

In becoming a director, he took one important lesson from his days in crafts on low-budget features: Never take any department for granted. He said, “I’ve seen productions fall apart because a certain department wasn’t listened to. ... It’s really important to know what goes into making a movie, so when you ask for something you know how long it’s going to take and what it’s gonna cost.” ■

Imposters

MIDNIGHTER, WORLD PREMIERE

SUNDAY 15, 9PM, ALAMO LAMAR

MONDAY 16, 2:30PM, ALAMO LAMAR

TUESDAY 17, 9:15PM, ALAMO LAMAR

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Demonstrators gather in Washington, D.C., to protest restrictive abortion laws

PHOTO BY GAYATRI MALHOTRA

The Real Fight Is Local: Repro Freedom State by State

CULTURE TRACK

FRIDAY 13, 2:30PM, HILTON AUSTIN DOWNTOWN, SALON E

The Abortion Highway: Abortion Funds & Texas Abortion Toll

CULTURE TRACK

FRIDAY 13, 4PM, HILTON AUSTIN DOWNTOWN, SALON E

Why Isn't Gen Z Having Sex? How Politics Invaded the Bedroom

CULTURE TRACK

SUNDAY 15, 11:30AM, HILTON AUSTIN DOWNTOWN, SALON D

Say Vagina: Platform Censorship, Algorithms, and the Cost to Women's Health

CULTURE TRACK

WEDNESDAY 18, 11:30AM,
HILTON AUSTIN DOWNTOWN, SALON E

How Heightened Political Tensions Are Influencing a New Reproductive Reality

Exploring the current state of sexual and reproductive health among young people in a post-Roe America

BY EMILY DEMOTTE

For young people, sex is changing. At least, the attitudes, expectations, and habits surrounding it are. But why? In a country where the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* and an increasingly conservative sociopolitical climate has altered the cultural landscape surrounding sexual and reproductive health, young people are situated at the forefront of a new era.

In a trend that *The Atlantic* in 2018 called the “sex recession,” young people are having less sex than ever. Between 2013 and 2023, the percentage of high school students who say they’ve had sex fell from 47% to 32%. In

2025, 48% of adult Gen Z survey respondents said they were virgins. This trend isn’t particularly new, and it isn’t isolated. Factors like social media, pornography, and the COVID pandemic have all been cited in the effort to explain this phenomena.

But in 2022, the *Dobbs v. Jackson* decision, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*’s 50-year precedent on the constitutional right to an abortion, marked the start of an evolving reproductive reality that has infiltrated the bedroom, said Carter Sherman, a reproductive health and justice reporter at *The Guardian*.

More than one in 10 single people under 50 say they are having less sex as a result of the *Dobbs* decision.

“I think sex feels really fraught for young people right now,” Sherman said. “So many people express a very high sense of anxiety around sex and what it means. ... And I think that this is fueled in large part by our politics.”

Sherman will be speaking on the Why Isn’t Gen Z Having Sex? How Politics Invaded the Bedroom panel at South by Southwest on March 15. The panel was inspired by the findings of her June 2025 book, *The Second*

Coming: Sex and the Next Generation’s Fight Over Its Future, which explores the sex lives of young adults in a post-Roe America.

“The question is: What does it mean to have all these political and technological changes going on at once?” Sherman asked. “Theoretically, young people are more sex saturated than ever, but at the same time, their government is moving to repress their ability to actually have sex that is queer, is unmarried, is recreational.”

Today’s teens and young adults are coming of age at a time where a high degree of political



GETTY IMAGES

polarization runs rampant, Sherman said. Young women are the most progressive group in American history, while young men continue trending toward the right. Simultaneously, the U.S. is experiencing a rise in what Sherman calls “sexual conservatism” – a movement that increases political suppression around sex by making it difficult, “if not dangerous,” to have unmarried, non-heterosexual sex due to subpar access to reproductive care.

As an epicenter for highly restrictive, conservative policy surrounding sexual and reproductive rights, Texas cultivates an atmosphere where these sentiments thrive. In fact, Texas teens are some of the most restricted in the country when it comes to reproductive decision making, said Lucie Arvallo, executive director of Jane’s Due Process, an Austin-based abortion fund that serves minors. In addition to a total abortion ban without exception for rape or incest, Texas criminalizes abortion pills and requires parental consent for birth control, among other restrictions.

“We have this web of restrictions that work together to create an environment of fear and stigma for young people seeking information,” said Arvallo, who will speak at The Abortion Highway: Abortion Funds & Texas Abortion Toll panel on March 13.

Since the *Dobbs* decision, this volatile environment has sown confusion about what sexual and reproductive health care options are or are not available to young adults, Arvallo said. And in a digital era, where social media allows for a constant stream of information and the habit to increasingly turn to the internet for health education, this confusion is often exacerbated.

As the co-founder and chief marketing officer of Evvy, a precision health care company that offers individuals vaginal microbiome tests, Laine Bruzek has experienced firsthand the difficulty in breaking through the noise. Evvy, like many women’s health companies, frequently deals with ad rejections

and algorithmic censorship on platforms like Meta and Google that flag for inappropriate content. But post-*Roe*, Bruzek said she has noticed an increase in ads rejected for content about social issues, despite simply discussing women’s health topics, like OB-GYNs.

“Our education, where we are actually talking about vaginal health, and we’re using the correct anatomical terms, or we are talking about infections ... that will get blocked,” she said. “So there’s an interesting challenge of making sure that the sort of science-backed information actually can get through in a time when a lot of misinformation has no problem getting through.”

Bruzek will speak on the Say Vagina: Platform Censorship, Algorithms, and the Cost to Women’s Health panel on March 18.

As young people navigate this changing climate surrounding sexual and reproductive health, they play a crucial role in shaping its future, said Christina Chang, executive director of the Reproductive Freedom Alliance, who will be speaking at The Real Fight Is Local: Repro Freedom State by State panel on March 13.

“We need their energy. We need their organization, and we need their votes to be able to point out the vision for the world that they want to live in,” Chang said. “They have the power to do that.”

While this “sex recession” is influenced by a variety of accompanying cultural and technological factors, politics play no small part in cultivating it, Sherman said.

“I do think it’s really important for people to understand that what happens in state legislatures, what happens in courtrooms, what happens in Congress, what happens in the White House – that can have [an impact] on what happens in your bedroom,” Sherman said. “Sex is not something that just occurs between two people in private. It is something that is shaped by societal forces around that bedroom.”



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The Future of DEI

With DEI under constant threat, advocates and experts are working to level the playing field **BY BRANT BINGAMON**

For a brief moment after the murder of George Floyd in 2020, it seemed our society had collectively decided to do better. Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs proliferated in public and private institutions. Companies hired experts specializing in anti-racism training and equitable hiring practices. Colleges and universities expanded their outreach to students of color and members of the LGBTQIA community. Upon assuming the presidency in 2021, Joe Biden signed Executive Order 13985, mandating that all federal agencies advance racial equity and help support underserved citizens.

And then came the backlash. In 2023, the Supreme Court rejected the use of affirmative action in college admissions. Major employers like Google, Disney, Walmart, and Amazon rolled back DEI initiatives in response to conservative criticism. Here in Texas, Republicans stripped DEI from public universities. Gov. Greg Abbott ordered state agencies to stop considering it in hiring decisions. Donald Trump rescinded Executive Order 13985 within hours of becoming president in January of 2025.

So, where does that leave the members of the diverse groups, particularly Black women, who are seeking fairness in today's workplace? Dr. Jamila Taylor, president of the Institute for Women's Policy Research, said

one outcome is that fewer of them have jobs. IWPR released a report in February showing that thousands fewer Black women were employed in the country in December of 2025, compared to the previous January.

"Some 250,000 Black women lost their jobs between January and August of 2025," Taylor told the *Chronicle*. "This is almost 55% of job losses for all women during this period, when Black women only make up 14% of the female workforce. These occupations include health care workers, educators, and social workers. Those have been, in our research, the most vulnerable populations."

Taylor will discuss the effects of the DEI backlash at South by Southwest's *The Cost of Inclusion: Who Pays When Equity Isn't Trending?* panel. She will appear alongside Lee Christian Parker, an executive director at J.P. Morgan Private Bank; Anna Gifty Opoku-Agyeman of the Sadie Collective; and Angelina Spicer, an L.A.-based comedian and founder of Spicey Moms, a cultural storytelling initiative advocating for equitable maternal mental health and family well-being.

Spicer told us that people don't realize how deep the connections are between DEI and public health. "The principles are inseparable," she said. "When we talk about equity in health care, we're talking about who gets

listened to in a hospital room, who has access to culturally competent care, and who is disproportionately at risk of poor outcomes. DEI isn't abstract in maternal health."

Taylor agreed, saying that advocates must push for policies that are aligned with DEI values, things like paid maternal and paternal leave, equal pay for equal work, and access to affordable child care.

DEI is also important to public education and has become part of the debate over the booming field of education technology. EdTech, as it's called, includes hardware and software created to improve teaching and learning. It is increasingly connected with AI-driven computer programs that streamline teaching and make it interactive and individualized.

Symone Campbell, a research fellow at the Siegel Family Endowment and an expert on the implications of EdTech for K-12 students, told us Black families are at risk of being left behind as AI-fueled EdTech surges and DEI is scaled back. Campbell will appear on South by Southwest's *Code Switch: Defending Black EdTech Amid AI Crackdowns* panel to look at the innovators developing EdTech supporting Black students and the products they are bringing to market. Campbell said it's vitally important that Black children receive the same opportunities and investment as their peers.

Code Switch: Defending Black EdTech Amid AI Crackdowns

TECH & AI TRACK

THURSDAY 12, 11:30AM,

THE WESTIN AUSTIN DOWNTOWN, PARAMOUNT I - II

The Cost of Inclusion: Who Pays When Equity Isn't Trending?

WORKPLACE TRACK

WEDNESDAY 18, 11:30AM,

HILTON AUSTIN DOWNTOWN, SALON B

"One of the main benefits of EdTech is personalized learning," Campbell said. "But we're seeing products that aren't representative of all students. These tools are usually built using personalized data from only certain groups of students, so they're often not culturally tailored for everyone, reflecting deeper systemic biases in design and implementation. As a result, teachers often understand EdTech's benefits through the perspectives the tools are trained on. That means students who don't align with those perspectives can experience the technology as challenging or exclusionary."

Marina Gorbis, the executive director of the Institute for the Future, said that with AI-centered EdTech barreling forward, now is the time for our society to think about how it wants its educational system to look, and that includes whether it wants to center diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in the lives of students. Gorbis hosted a SXSW EDU panel titled *What If? A Social Simulation – AI & the Next Era of Learning* that took attendees through a daylong experience at four hypothetical universities covering the scope of AI use. On one end of the spectrum was a "human first" university, Gorbis told us, which rejects the use of AI in all its forms. The other end was an AI-directed university, where AI was so pervasive that it selected students' courses and even their roommates.

Gorbis said the exercise is not merely a referendum on AI; it is also meant to get people thinking about the value of ethics in future educational institutions, including the use of DEI. "We're definitely at a transition point, in terms of not just education but many areas of our lives, and it's time for people to start thinking about things like ethics and norms," Gorbis said. "This is a tool for helping people to start thinking about that. What is the value that we want to pursue in our institutions? What is important to us?"

20★26

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The Cost of War We Aren't Talking About: Superbugs

How war zones create untreatable infections worldwide

BY MAGGIE QUINLAN

Humans have not benefited from antibiotics for long in the grand scheme of things. Antibiotics were deployed for the first time in 1910. In the century since, antibiotics have extended the average human lifespan by more than 20 years. It is not hard to understand why: Anyone who has survived pneumonia, undergone a surgery, or taken pills to beat strep throat may owe their life to antibiotics.

Now, we face the possibility of a post-antibiotic era. Superbugs like those breeding in Gaza don't respond to drugs, and they certainly don't respect national borders.

"War does more than just destroy buildings and kill people. It creates superbugs that will haunt us for the rest of our lives all across the world," said Antoine Abou Fayad, a microbiologist and speaker on South by Southwest's Conflict Contagion: The New AMR Threat.

So Abou Fayad has a warning for humanity, and data to back it up. Antibiotic-resistant

bacteria are multiplying at staggering rates in conflict zones. Some are completely untreatable by existing antibiotics. He fears the result will be an existential turn in human health, back to an era where simple paper cuts are deadly, or require amputation.

"Are we willing to sacrifice that many souls, that many people, or not?" Abou Fayad asked the *Chronicle*. "And the thing with antimicrobial resistance is, regardless of where you live, nobody is safe."

Since 2017, Abou Fayad has worked in a lab at the American University of Beirut, studying bacteria samples from Lebanon. He receives vials from regional hospitals, and bacteria growing on bullet casings. Of the bacteria he examines, some are easy to kill, others are resistant to a few drugs, and some are impossible to kill with any known antibiotics. When he started, these super-strong, totally resistant bugs used to pop up in samples about once per month. Now, he said he gets these samples once per day, and sometimes more often.

The spike is astonishing, and it's not a temporary issue. Unlike viruses, which rely on animal cells to survive, bacteria can live and multiply on their own for a long time while hiding in the soil. Unless new antibiotics that can knock out these powerful new strains are rapidly developed, "this is going to be the norm," Abou Fayad said.

Conflict zones create perfect breeding grounds for superbugs, he explained. Cities under bombardment are full of open wounds, disrupted and dirty plumbing systems, and nearly expired antibiotics that are donated as aid. Infections from wounds abound. Then, when antibiotics are used in a frenzy before they are set to expire, they can do more harm than good, killing off only the weakest germs and leaving the strongest ones behind to become harder-to-beat strains.

But there's another big problem in war zones that the microbiologist says is too often overlooked: heavy metals. These metals, like copper and lead, naturally kill bacteria. When



PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES

an area is full of metals – like those from bombshells – it leaches into the soil where bacteria lay. There, the metals kill off the weakest bacteria, leaving behind the stronger microbes.

Microbiologists have linked metal resistance and drug resistance for decades, but Abou Fayad's latest research shows exactly how this works, he said. His data describes the way that bacteria exposed to inordinate numbers of shell casings become impervious to drugs. Looking at samples from hospitals in South Lebanon before conflict, during, and after, Abou Fayad's team has found data that shows "the first actual genetic link" that creates superbugs in war zones, he explained.

"We're actually going to be showing how the bombing, the shelling – all of that stuff – affects how bacteria become resistant to antibiotics, but it also affects how bacteria become more virulent and more dominant and more of a colonizer at the genetic level," he said. "It's no longer a theory."

South by Southwest may seem an unlikely stage on which to unveil such grim scientific findings. The festival is better known for its celebration of new music, film, and tech. Yet, Abou Fayad will fly 14 hours from Lebanon to Texas to share his findings. Why not one of the world's myriad microbiology conferences? Why not one of the antibiotic resistance conferences in Switzerland or Washington, D.C.?

Abou Fayad said his findings are grave, and they require an urgent response from people across industries and expertises.

"South by Southwest is not only for scientists," he said. "There are not that many platforms that allow you to share such data with

everyone. South by Southwest is a window to actually share your data with people with various backgrounds, see what they think about it, see how we can work collectively towards a better place."

Abou Fayad's long journey from the Middle East to Central Texas serves as a sort of proof, he said. His audience in Austin, and indeed the global audience, should be reminded that bacteria travel to every corner of the globe. War may be concentrated in the Middle East, but the superbugs it breeds could lead to deaths and amputations far from Lebanon or Palestine.

With so many wounds and so much heavy metal in places like Gaza, Abou Fayad wants to urge governments and companies worldwide to do at least three things: First, maintain the effectiveness of antibiotics by limiting how often they're prescribed, so bacteria don't evolve resistance to them; second, create new antibiotics by increasing funding to discover and develop new drugs; and third, stop war.

"The human race always came back from difficulties and problems with a better way," Abou Fayad said. ■

Conflict Contagion: The New AMR Threat

HEALTH TRACK

MONDAY 16, 11:30AM, JW MARRIOTT, SALON C



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Tripping as Medicine

Examining psychedelic advancements as new medical frontier **BY SAMMIE SEAMON**

“The government sends folks to war, and then they’re back, and we’re not providing sufficient care,” said Logan Davidson, legislative director for Veterans Exploring Treatment Solutions and speaker on South by Southwest’s Expediting Psychedelic Research to Qualify for Right to Try panel.

When selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and common prescriptions proved inadequate, desperate for other solutions, American veterans with traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, or drug addictions have flown to clinics in Mexico to be administered ibogaine, a lesser-known psychedelic drug from the root bark of a West African shrub, Davidson said.

“If you’re a suicidal veteran, a six to eight week wait time for [a prescription] drug to start working might be fatal, right? Psychedelics are fast-acting, so you know pretty quickly if it worked or not,” Davidson continued.

Ibogaine’s psychedelic experience is reported to be more intense than psilocybin or LSD, can last more than 24 hours, and carries risk of heart damage. It’s been criminalized in the U.S. since the Sixties. But suddenly, Texas has an appetite for it: During the last legislative session, Gov. Greg Abbott passed Senate Bill 2308, investing \$50 million into FDA-approved clinical trials on ibogaine treatment

for opioid addiction and mental illness.

“It can resolve the symptoms of opioid withdrawal syndrome in a matter of days rather than weeks or months, which is what traditional abstinence will get you,” Davidson explained, citing a preliminary 2024 study out of Stanford Medicine. “It’s also a very effective treatment for post-traumatic stress and neurodegenerative conditions.”

No psychedelic is currently FDA approved to treat mental health conditions or able to be widely prescribed by a physician and covered by insurance. But with conservative enthusiasm for psychedelics on the table, one legislative avenue for the medicalization of psychedelics will be explored during Davidson’s panel: a federal Right to Try law that allows physicians to prescribe drugs unapproved by the FDA for life-threatening or terminal conditions, when all approved drugs have failed.

“We’re not just talking about terminal cancer; depression can be life threatening,” Davidson said. Currently, Right to Try doesn’t extend to Schedule I drugs such as ibogaine, though a bipartisan bill filed in December, called the Freedom to Heal Act, could change that next session.

Beyond Right to Try, other SXSW panels will be exploring what the aftermath of psychedelic medicalization could look like. And apart

from ketamine, which is more often defined as dissociative than psychedelic, that could come soonest for psilocybin. On Feb. 17, Compass Pathways, a pharmaceutical company, announced that they’ve completed two Phase 3 clinical trials for the synthetic psilocybin drug COMP360, which could be the first-ever FDA-approved classic psychedelic for treatment-resistant depression.

“The FDA will take their time and make their decision ... but we are planning to be ready [for approval] by the end of this year,” said Dr. Steve Levine, chief patient officer at Compass Pathways and panelist at South by Southwest’s Psychedelics: The Paradigm-Changing Future of Mental Health. Compass Pathways is also currently conducting trials with the same drug for the treatment of PTSD, Levine said.

Once psychedelics become FDA-approved for clinical practice, Dr. Jessica Jackson, vice president of alliance development at Mental Health America, who will join Levine on the SXSW panel, has the following questions: Even if the FDA approves a drug, will the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration remove the drug from Schedule I classification? Who will be able to administer the drugs? How can such treatments, especially if not widely covered by insurance, be made affordable for people?

Psychedelics: The Paradigm-Changing Future of Mental Health

HEALTH TRACK

MONDAY 16, 4PM, THE LINE, TOPAZ BALLROOM 1-3

Expediting Psychedelic Research to Qualify for Right to Try

HEALTH TRACK

WEDNESDAY 18, 11:30AM, JW MARRIOTT, SALON C

“We’ll be talking about the importance of folks having access. It is important that folks get choice,” Jackson said. “They may have tried eight different medications that aren’t working. They should be able to access something that could work for them if they’re experiencing treatment-resistant depression or PTSD.”

Education for patients and physicians to dispel stigma around psychedelics will be a major part of that discussion, Jackson said. Another is making sure that the treatment is offered at an affordable price point. Ketamine, for instance, is widely administered now in Texas for depression – but even with insurance, the treatment regimen can cost thousands of dollars. “Even the price point it’s at now, it took years for them to get to that,” Jackson said.

Another question that will be discussed in both panels is what care delivery should look like: How will physicians qualify or be trained to administer psychedelic drugs? Should they be administered at only specialized, standalone clinics, or as part of standard practice? If a physician needs to monitor a patient for six to 24 hours, should it be one-on-one or in a group?

“If it’s one provider, one patient for a six- to eight-hour treatment, you’re very limited. If you expand it to a group, you start to see ... 10 times, potentially, the number of people who can receive care,” Davidson suggested.

Both Levine and Jackson emphasized how important psychotherapy and the ability to share the psychedelic experience has been for patients during clinical trials.

“I’ve also heard from folks, sometimes when you’ve not been feeling well for so long, you can’t even remember what it’s like to feel good,” Jackson said about conversations with patients post-treatment. “And so, for many folks, it has been surprising to feel like, oh, I don’t feel sad and down for no reason. I don’t feel like isolating. I don’t feel hypervigilant.” ■

21+

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Building Community Connection Through Drastic Development

Digging into how structures bond communities

BY JOE ELLETT

It's no question that architecture is advancing at an extremely accelerated pace. Within Austin itself, the Republic, ATX Tower, and the Modern Austin Residences are all demonstrations of skyscraper projects that were once unimaginable, now reality that shapes the city's skyline. And there's plenty of other projects underway with the new convention center set to open in 2029 and the Waterline Tower, which now holds the status of the tallest structure in the state at 1,025 feet, scheduled for completion later this year, just to name a couple. But some of the best modern architecture creations take it a step further than building for height or glitz and glamour; they design to enrich human connection.

With locations in Los Angeles and Dallas, Cosm executes this idea through the implementation of immersive entertainment. Through "shared reality" spaces that screen sporting events, arts and entertainment, and films, the venue creates a surreal sensory experience for attendees, specifically through its "Dome" – an 87-foot diameter, 180-degree, 12K LED screen with seating for several hundred. Think Vegas' Sphere, but with about 17,000 less seats, creating a much cozier viewing experience.

Tyler Washburn, senior vice president of venues and experience at Cosm and a speaker on the South by Southwest "Architects of Emotion: Designing for Human Connection" panel, said that the company was very intentional about creating an immersive yet intimate space.

"The design of our venues and dome has allowed us to identify that sweet spot between size and technology," Washburn told the *Chronicle*.

That sweet spot, Washburn said, allows for Cosm to facilitate hospitable, innovative access to entertainment, which, in turn, curates a fascinating bond among attendees

through an experience built around garnering emotional fandom.

"It's about designing spaces and experiences where people want to be and share with one another," he said. "Humans are social creatures. We are always looking for ways to connect with other people."

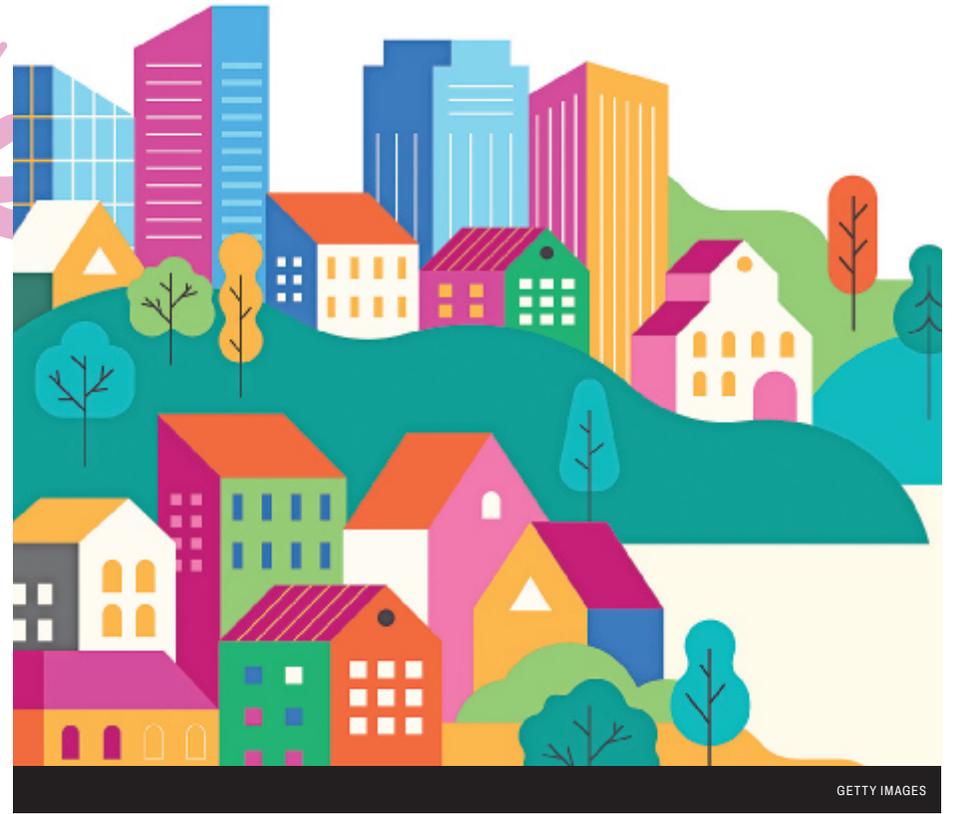
Some architectural developments extend this human connection through tearing down systems that were built to push us further apart. Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit Building Bridges Across the River works on bridging the economic gap that those east of the Anacostia River have faced since the city's inception. The organization is involved in five main projects that help execute this goal – the most prominent being the development of the 11th Street Bridge Park, a nearly \$100 million project that is expected to break ground this summer and open in 2028.

Utilizing old piers from the abandoned freeway, the organization's goal is to construct D.C.'s first elevated park, creating easier access between the Southeast area to the rest of the city, ultimately working to mend the systemic damage created by redlining in the nation's capital. Scott Kratz, president and CEO at BBAR and founding director of the multimillion-dollar project, has been working toward bridging this gap for 13 years.

"That community continues to exist with this scar, continues to have this pain, this sort of psychic, economic, and physical pain," Kratz told the *Chronicle*.

Austin's attempt to curb redlining, Cap and Stitch, continues to evolve as city leaders work toward a solution.

In Manhattan, N.Y., the West Side Elevated Line that once served as tracks for freight train delivery was abandoned in 1980. With the remaining line deemed an eyesore by residents, work began in 1999 to repurpose the deserted structure. After many phases



GETTY IMAGES

of development, the space now serves as a 1.5-mile greenspace accessible to the public, known as the High Line, featuring food vendors, local artists and musicians, and other amenities that enable connectivity.

Kira Strong, senior director at the project's nonprofit group, the High Line Network, which works on similar projects throughout North America, has partnered with Kratz and BBAR on the 11th Street Bridge development, with the two set to lead the South by Southwest Designing Great Public Spaces to Power Economic Opportunity panel. She said that these initiatives are innovative ways to facilitate uncommon relationship-building.

"They've become really compelling draws and real spaces to connect people in a way that brings both local residents and also visitors from other places," Strong told the *Chronicle*.

And both Kratz and Strong understand that the work doesn't stop when the last screw is in place; engaging individuals in the spaces after construction is complete is where the true change begins, and the two execute this through different programs and opportunities that empower these underserved communities.

"Then the fun really starts. ... It's not like we're just building it and then leaving it alone, and that programming is a really essential element," Kratz said.

"If you don't have the right programming and the right people who staff and program these spaces, then they're just spaces," Strong said.

As the Cap and Stitch conversation continues, city leaders could find value in sitting in on this panel in order to execute a deeper analysis of not only how the infrastructure itself will uplift the Eastside, but proper programming and opportunities that follow to ultimately create economic change for a historically underserved portion of the city. ■

Architects of Emotion: Designing for Human Connection

DESIGN TRACK

TUESDAY 17, 11:30AM,
AUSTIN MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN, WALLER BALLROOM A

Designing Great Public Spaces to Power Economic Opportunity

DESIGN TRACK

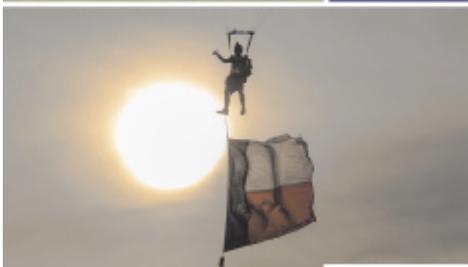
TUESDAY 17, 2:30PM,
HILTON AUSTIN DOWNTOWN, SALON A



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The Climate Paradox of AI Education

CITIES & CLIMATE TRACK

THURSDAY 12, 11:30AM,

AUSTIN MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN, WALLER BALLROOM C

Dirty Data: The Hidden Climate Cost of Our Digital Lives

CITIES & CLIMATE TRACK

TUESDAY 17, 2:30PM, JW MARRIOTT, ROOM 201-202

Exploring Sustainable AI Practices to Combat Environmental Downfalls



Experts believe AI itself could be the cure to its negative ecological impacts **BY RACHEL N. MADISON**

Texas is booming as a host for data centers used to power AI's growing infrastructure. With over 400 active centers, Texas already accounts for about 15% of the nation's total energy use, and the state's industry demands are on the rise. And it will soon be home to the largest data center campus in the country, which will be permitted to emit up to 12,000 tons of air pollutants and 33 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions a year from its natural gas plants.

Many Texans are concerned about the impacts the growing industry will have on air quality, water consumption, land usage, and grid stress. Dr. Vijay Gadepally, an MIT scientist and speaker on South by Southwest's The Climate Paradox of AI Education panel, said they should be.

A single ChatGPT prompt requires 10 times the power of a classic Google search, and just one AI server uses 15 kW of power, enough energy to power a few homes, Gadepally said. Power isn't the only issue. "A single ChatGPT conversation uses one bottle of water just from cooling," he added. Estimates conclude that Texas data centers consumed around 25 billion gallons of water in 2025, which could increase to upward of 160 billion gallons by 2030.

"It's no secret that AI requires a lot of energy and a lot of water," said Anurag Bajpayee, a water entrepreneur and speaker on South by Southwest's Dirty Data: The Hidden Climate Cost of Our Digital Lives panel. But

regardless of the strain that the developments have on natural resources, Bajpayee says "it's here to stay."

His water solutions company, Gradiant, is working to implement recycling and treatment strategies to mitigate industrial impacts and waste through new technology. A combination approach of chemical solutions, recycling technology, and monitoring systems allows Gradiant to recycle up to 99% of a facility's water, Bajpayee said. Just last year, the company signed commercial operations contracts with two data center companies, and have a third on the way – and he's confident of the impact that can have on the industry.

"We can touch so many data centers just with these three companies," he said. Recycling water can scale down impacts by magnitudes of hundreds. "If we can do that in every single place, the water problem with AI will be mitigated."

Some recent legislation gives experts hope for the role regulation may play. Senate Bill 6 requires data centers to increase energy transparency and backup power generation, as well as emergency energy shutoffs for centers during grid emergencies, like 2021's Winter Storm Uri, which left more than 4.5 million Texans without power. "This is a good example of where policymakers can help design laws that enable and incentivize flexibility," Gadepally said.

"The faster we can balance this equation in a sustainable way, the better it is," he said. While Gadepally knows AI is the root of the problem, he also thinks it may be what helps us solve it. "AI is creating a problem on one end, but it may also be the thing that helps us get past it – That's the paradox," he said.

In his companies and labs, Gadepally implements the concept of "environmentally aware computing" by incorporating external feedback through AI software systems to optimize system efficiency, identify systemic weaknesses in buildings, and make facilities more energy resilient through automated power adjustments. Meanwhile, Gradiant's AI monitoring system is allowing them to track usage efficiency across companies to reduce water footprints. At the global scale, AI is already playing a large role in tackling climate solutions, as scientists can now track and analyze environmental data faster than ever before.

The Data-Driven EnviroLab out of UNC-Chapel Hill is using AI to analyze large data to influence and track climate policy, said founder Dr. Angel Hsu, who will join Gadepally on the Climate Paradox of AI Education panel. Currently, the lab is working on their ChatNetZero approach, an AI assistant program designed to make climate pledges and status more comprehensible.

AI is especially useful in large-scale data analysis thanks to its ability to manage and assess

large datasets very quickly, Hsu said. Their work aims to "evaluate, demonstrate, and translate innovations [including AI] into evidence and tools that policymakers and practitioners can use responsibly," she said. They are also investigating "how large tech companies account for the growing energy and water footprint of AI itself, as well as how user behavior impacts the overall energy consumption of AI," outlined in the organization's recent working paper.

Hsu said she is "cautiously optimistic" about AI's impact, noting the beneficial role of analysis but also warning of the challenges that it poses, such as amplifying "existing biases and blind spots in the underlying data," making "inequities worse while giving the illusion of objectivity." Still, she believes sustainable AI systems that have more environmentally friendly underlying infrastructure, clear guidelines for use protocol, and active monitoring that can help mitigate impacts.

Experts believe that system flexibility, reducing energy peaks, and rethinking designs are key ways to mitigate current environmental loads. Bajpayee said it comes down to how much we care about human society, and the work needed now to safeguard the future.

"The planet will be here long after we are gone," he said. But if the AI industry continues to treat water, energy, and land as a mere resource to be used and then thrown away, "we're screwed." ■

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AI's Influence on How Gen Z Embraces Education and the Workplace

Zooming in on a generation learning to navigate life alongside new technology **BY VALERIA CRUZ BUTRÓN**

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly embedded in classrooms and workplaces, Gen Z is entering adulthood with tools former generations never had. Some experts see AI as a disruption, while others see an opportunity, but one thing is clear: AI is not going anywhere.

For Nicole Fichera, an innovation strategist and speaker on South by Southwest's It's a Whole Thing: Gen Z Work Relationships in the Age of AI panel, it's impossible to talk about Gen Z without discussing the effects that the COVID pandemic had on the generation. Young workers entered the workforce amid virtual and hybrid environments, often without the traditional in-person mentorship that previous generations relied on.

"AI isn't breaking workplace trust," Fichera said. "I think AI is exposing how fragile workplace trust [was] in the first place. ... It's giving people an alternative to the ways that

workplace relationships have been structured for the last couple of decades. That's showing some cracks right in how our system's design is set up around workplace trust."

Gen Z and Gen Alpha are used to having instant access to detailed information via AI tools like ChatGPT. Fichera said this could have a behavioral impact, potentially making young workers frustrated when colleagues or managers move more slowly, which can lead them to seek mentorship less often.

She hopes her SXSW audience will understand that, if Gen Z can pair AI guidance with "seeking [human] mentorship for the stuff that doesn't live in AI, then they're going to be very, very powerful."

However, even before entering into the workforce, younger students are facing unprecedented access to information and AI tools. Rebecca Winthrop, director at the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution

and speaker on South by Southwest's How to Support Resilient Youth in an AI World panel, said that while AI can accelerate learning, it also poses significant risks for students' development. She said generative AI chatbots that create original content are helping students complete tasks like math problems and essays without engaging in critical thinking.

"It's really tempting for students to use these incredibly powerful products, but it really undercuts their brain development, and I worry that it will harm them over time and their ability to think independently and learn," Winthrop said.

Winthrop said her review of more than 400 studies, which included interviews with students, teachers, parents, and technologists, found that students who rely heavily on AI "are becoming less motivated and feel less ownership over their work and less pride, because they aren't doing as much of the thinking and heavy lifting."

While Winthrop sees the effectiveness of AI to a certain extent, she warns against overextending one's thought process to the technology.

"Don't replace your human relationships and your human experiences with AI," she said. "You can use AI to support you on the margins, but you shouldn't hand over your thinking to AI."

Some experts, like Emily Williams, who will be speaking on the Beyond Voting: Defending Truth in Education: AI, Equity, & Power panel at South by Southwest, said the need for equitable AI development and regulation is key to prevent authoritarianism and biased technology, particularly in marginalized communities.

"If AI is pulling from all of the information on the internet, yet doing so in a biased way ... it's diminishing our ability to think broadly and embrace diverse ideas," Williams said, noting how AI can perpetuate stereotypes.

With this in mind, Williams said a proactive approach to educating students about AI in an equitable and empowering way is vital.

"It's a call to start creating our own knowledge ... making our own platforms and learning from one another," she said. "We don't have to only rely on these big tech companies for education, for curriculum, for knowledge, and information."

Some educators, such as Mark Light of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, are figuring out how to integrate AI into education while preserving critical thinking through partnerships with youth development organization 4-H. Although the program has been around for over 100 years, it has recently integrated AI into hands-on STEM learning to help students apply the technology into real-world problems impacting their communities, now having reached "nearly 1.5 [million] youth with the skills to succeed in an AI-powered world," according to the panel description.

Instead of outright banning AI from education, Light said educators should be encouraging responsible and creative uses of AI to integrate into curriculum.

"AI is a tool, and whether that tool was a calculator in education, whether it's a smartphone or a computer ... there's always ways that people can misuse a tool."

The educator encourages youth to think about how they can "use AI as a tool and take something that [they're] really interested in and use AI to expand upon that, or grow it, or develop it into something even bigger."

Winston Fan, a high school senior from Iowa and a "4-H'er," wanted to utilize AI as a way to uplift his community. Fan is a part of the Iowa City West swimming team, and after seeing multiple suicides in the swimming community, he created an AI-powered web application that records conversations with psychologists and patients, ultimately analyzing them for signs of disorders.

"AI isn't there to replace the psychologist's job, but it's there as an aid, and it's there as a tool," Fan said.

Alongside Light, the high schooler hopes to show attendees of the Growing Intelligence: Youth, AI, and the Future of Ag South by Southwest panel that AI can be used as a tool to enhance creativity and resources for the communities, rather than the sole existence of claiming workforce opportunities and tampering with human intelligence.

"Don't be scared of AI. The youth is still here, and we're stronger than ever," Fan said. "We're working on many ways already to improve AI, make it ethically practical for us humans. We're here and we're ready to be the next generation." ■

Growing Intelligence: Youth, AI, and the Future of Ag

CITIES & CLIMATE TRACK

THURSDAY 12, 11:30AM,
HILTON AUSTIN DOWNTOWN, SALON E

How to Support Resilient Youth in an AI World

FUTURE OF TECH TRACK

THURSDAY 12, 2:30PM,
HILTON GRAND BALLROOM, SALON HJK

Beyond Voting: Defending Truth in Education: AI, Equity, & Power

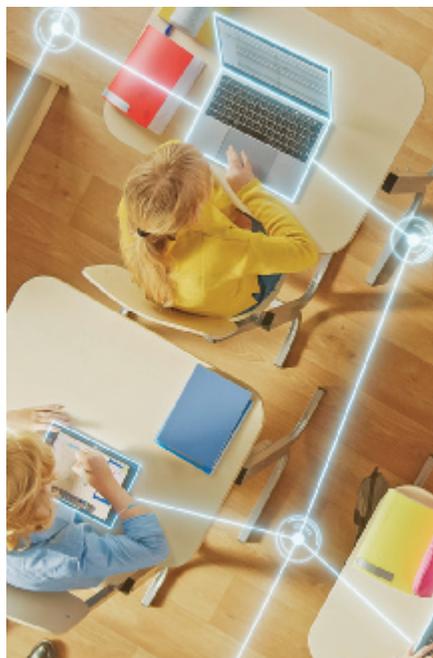
CULTURE TRACK

THURSDAY 12, 4PM, AUSTIN MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN,
WATERLOO BALLROOM 3

It's a Whole Thing: Gen Z Work Relationships in the Age of AI

WORKPLACE TRACK

FRIDAY 13, 10AM, HILTON AUSTIN DOWNTOWN, SALON B



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Vic Mensa Is Here to Expand

Chicago rapper/actor/activist talks reinvention ahead of SXSW return **BY DEREK UDENSI**

Vic Mensa made waves in 2013 on the strength of his dynamic debut mixtape, *INNANETAPE*, before signing to Roc Nation's record label just two years later. Yet he closed the decade with an album from his pop-punk band 93PUNX, much to the chagrin of longtime fans clamoring for the days of "Orange Soda." Sharp lyricism, political activism, and an individualistic mindset have been through lines for the Chicago native, currently enjoying a second wind as an independent artist. He's reinvented himself several times over: as a musician, a viral social media creator, and an actor.

Ahead of SXSW, the 32-year-old spoke to the *Chronicle* about music's transcendent power, why he'd prefer to "experiment and miss" than not try at all, and why he's speaking and curating a music showcase at the festival.

Austin Chronicle: *In your opinion, why is music able to shape other forms of entertainment and beyond?*

Vic Mensa: Music is the most immediate form of storytelling we have. Music bypasses logic and goes straight to emotion. Even if the lyrics are in another language, you feel the frequency. That emotional access is what allows it to transcend. In film, music adds narrative weight. Shows use music to define tone. A song can spark a music video or a screenplay. An album can feel cinematic. Movements have anthems. Revolutions have soundtracks. Music doesn't just accompany culture, it informs it. It's vibration, memory, and soul. That's why music crosses into everything.

AC: *What compelled you to speak at this year's SXSW?*

VM: From early on, SXSW has been part of my journey. I've performed, networked, and built real relationships there. Coming back to curate a showcase of emerging musicians and speak feels like a full-circle moment. When I think about my creative evolution, it only felt right to have a musical moment and a conversational one. From my music videos to new short film *Halffrican* and social content, [overlaps] are really central to my work. And I think these intersections are really relevant to so many creatives right now who also don't stay in one lane.

AC: *You're an artist who has undergone multiple shifts sonically – some of which you were greatly criticized for – while balancing creative*

output in different mediums. Can you expound on the importance of taking risks as a creative, especially when some detractors may label those pivots as an identity crisis of sorts?

VM: If you're not evolving, you're dying creatively. I've never been interested in staying in one box just to make other people comfortable. Growth requires risk. Reinvention takes courage and sometimes the people who discovered you in one chapter struggle to evolve with you into the next. I'm not here to take the safe road – I'm here to expand. I've seen firsthand how if you put a musician in the studio with a film writer and a comedian, [they] only add depth. I refuse to close doors for myself because someone else might not understand it. The only real failure would be shrinking myself out of fear. I'd rather experiment and miss than be stagnant. Every pivot I've made has been rooted in curiosity and truth. I'm not a monolith and never have been.

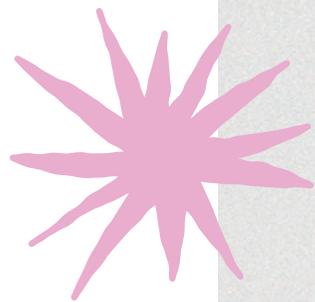
AC: *What do you hope people will take away from your speaker session at SXSW?*

VM: Permission to expand. The future belongs to people who can build across barriers while standing in their purpose.

AC: *Your Orange Tree series has really taken off on social media and you're now penning a newsletter, too. What inspired you to further share your perspective in that manner rather than just continuing to primarily speak on social issues via your music?*

VM: Music is one language I speak, writing is another. Fashion, fine art, and food are all forms of expression. I always knew migrating the conversations I was already having in my daily life onto digital platforms would resonate. Part of telling your story is being sure it reaches people. Sometimes that means telling it over a beat, [but] some thoughts need more space than a verse. Some will watch a Reel before they read a book while others will do the opposite. When my Reels started taking off, I got a lot of criticism for allegedly trying to be an influencer. Some were more focused on a job title – I was focused on the message. If connection is the goal, the medium becomes less important.

AC: *In addition to social issues, you've also been open about mental health. Two lyrics come to mind: "25, running out of time again, 27 club, how can I get in?" from "Dark Things"*



Vic Mensa

COURTESY OF SXSW

and your powerful verse on "Ble\$\$ings." How do you think your perspective on life has evolved over the years and how has that evolution put you in a position to become more of a guide for both your contemporaries and the next generation?

VM: My relationship with time has changed. Fatherhood changed me, faith grounded me, and gratitude replaced chasing. "Ble\$\$ings" reflects that evolution – recognizing that survival itself is grace. When I wrote "Dark Things," I was wrestling with internal and external pressure. Success came fast when I was younger, as did expectations. There was a period where intensity gave me this high that I now get from purpose, peace, and gratitude. Growth forced me to confront my own shadows. I always say vulnerability is my superpower. Showing people my wins, losses, and trial and error shows my evolution over time. Sometimes that's talking about therapy, sobriety, or meditation. Depends on what I'm living with at the time. What I hope that means is people [will] give themselves permission to evolve on their own terms, too. It's less about a destination and more about being true to yourself.

AC: *Why did you decide to host your own music showcase at the festival and what are some things we can expect at the showcase?*

VM: I have an excitement when it comes to emerging artists. Every day people tell me how much they love *INNANETAPE*. [When] I think back to that body of work, who I was at that time, and how my community has held me down, I want other artists to have those same experiences. Over the past year I started doing streams with artists where I'd give them a free feature or feedback on their music. An in-person showcase felt like a natural progression to move offline and give people a

real-life platform. Like all of my work, the vibes will cross genres. The way we find music has changed dramatically, so expect discovery, range, community, and some surprises.

AC: *You mentioned in a social post that SXSW is where you met your first attorney and manager. In your opinion, why does SXSW still hold value for upstart artists?*

VM: Access and proximity still matter. I was young and hungry when I first came to SXSW. The relationships I built there changed the trajectory of my career. Viral moments weren't a thing then – it was about real human connection. Social media has democratized a lot, but real life relationships are still what moves the needle.

AC: *Do you have a favorite SXSW memory?*

VM: Back in the day the whole [SAVEMONEY] crew would come down with me and we'd freestyle, share laughs, and just hang out. Had interviews with Sway [Calloway] from *Sway in the Morning* here. A lot of fond memories. ■

Beyond the Track: Storytelling Across Music, Film, & New Visual Frontiers With Vic Mensa

FIRESIDE CHAT, MUSIC TRACK
FRIDAY 13, 11:30AM, DOWNRIGHT AUSTIN

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