

Global Innovators Showcase at South By Creative Expo Displays Innovations in Tech and Business

JC RAMIREZ DELGADILLO | web editor-in-chief

South by Southwest (SXSW) is a city wide conglomeration of a variety of events ranging from film screenings, musical performances, and other creative events such as flatstock, an art exhibition, and the Creative Industry Exposition (Expo). The Creative Industry Expo is home to many innovations such as food technology that can extract stronger flavors out of plants without the use of sugar. Global innovations are a big part of the Creative Industry Expo due to many foreign investors and innovators gathering to showcase their country and what it has to offer.

Flanders Investment and Trade is a government agency from Flanders, the northern region of Belgium. According to Alexander Bleyaert, representative of Flanders Investment and Trade, the agency helps companies from Flanders grow internationally.

"We're basically governmental agencies that represent the interests of our region, Flanders, northern part of Belgium, but also our companies," Bleyaert said. "If companies want to internationalize into some other place in the world, we help them. I help companies in the digital tech field, so everything related from Mechatronics to ICT [information and communication technology]. So one day, it could be a gaming company, the next day, a semiconductor company. So every day is a new, exciting company to work with."

Shauna Zajac is the Head of Client Engagement for Menacom Group, a company that handles the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship in Jordan. Zajac believes in the importance of advertising internationally to promote young entrepreneurs.

"We have a lot of young, really talented entrepreneurs, and a lot of young tech savvy talent," Zajac said. "I think over half the population in Jordan is under the age of 24, so it's a very vibrant, youthful population. They're highly educated, and one of our main goals is to really promote our young, innovative, and creative talent."

In order to promote the company and its partners, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship travels to many different events similar to SXSW. Jordan is a developing country, according to the World Trade Organization, and one of the goals of the organization is to promote both Jordan as a country and its companies, according to Zajac.

"We try to engage Jordanians who live abroad in helping spread the word about Jordan, because it's a small country, not many people know much about it," Zajac said. "So we do a lot of events like this. ... After we finish South by

Southwest, we're actually headed to Silicon Valley, we're going to meet with some companies and potential investors there, as well as members of the Jordanian diaspora."

There are many benefits to investing in companies outside of the United States, according to Brian Bourgerie, Enterprise Manager at Invest Puerto Rico. Bourgerie explained the benefit of investing in companies in Puerto Rico.

"Invest Puerto Rico is a public private partnership and is the official business and Investment Attraction agency for Puerto Rico," Bourgerie said. "Everything comes down to whether we bring new money to the island and create good jobs. Puerto Rico is a very unique part of the United States as a territory, that actually gives it a lot of very interesting benefits for US citizens, and just business owners and investors all around the world."

Another country that has a growing economic importance is Jordan, a country in southwestern Asia. According to Zajac, Jordan has a booming gaming and Internet Protocol (IP) sectors that have a lot of potential.

"We've had a couple of our own local gaming companies that have been acquired by Stillfront, which is a huge mobile gaming group," Zajac said. "We have a big Jordanian delegation with us for SXSW. Aside from gaming, we also have a really big IP and business process outsourcing industry. So a lot of companies use Jordan for things like call centers like that. ... Jordan is also the biggest creator of Arabic content online, so that is something that has a lot of potential."

For Flanders, the business model they are using is the business-to-business model, used by companies that produce more of their transactions with other companies. According to Bleyaert, Flanders works to understand each company's individual needs.

"In Belgium, especially in Flanders, we were very strong in B2B, this business to business

model," Bleyaert said. "So we're not doing much with consumer products. We try more to find other businesses here to partner with, we try to network as much as possible, we try to understand their regions. We have six offices in the United States. And if a company comes in the gaming sector for example, we try to know as much gaming context as possible and know all the big studios or investors and that's how we hope to bring them in contact."

The event took place March 12-15 at the Austin Convention Center. Next year investors will return from March 8-16 at SXSW 2024, according to SXSW.



review "Beef"

HELEN BIGGE | staff writer

Road rage is something I've seen on the road very often. Whether it's due to running late, heavy traffic, or a person cutting you off, there will be times where you want to curse out the other driver. No series exemplifies that feeling better than "Beef", a Korean-directed TV series where two people's involvement in a road rage incident pits them against each other, leading to both parties becoming increasingly involved in the other's life.

The dark comedy series' first two episodes aired at South by Southwest (SXSW) this March and received highly positive feedback. The series makes the two main characters relatable by showing contrasting aspects of their personalities, such as their different reactions to stress and their different economic backgrounds. Each character deals with issues that the other doesn't know about, which allows the audience to empathize with each of them and adds to the humor when they interact with hostility. Amy Lau (played by Ali Wong) is a chronically busy, hard-working business-owner and mother "in a zen maze of her own creation" as described by the actor during a Q&A after the screening. Meanwhile, contractor Danny Cho (played by Steven Yeun), is also hard-working but bitter at his inability to afford bringing his parents to

the United States because of his cousin's illegal actions. Their first encounter, in which Amy blocks Danny's path and flips him off, sends both of them into a state where they take out all of their pent-up stress and anger at their situations on each other, all road rules be damned. The audience watches as their ensuing obsession with vengeance becomes entangled in their lives, subverting even their own expectations of themselves.

Wong and Yeun both do an amazing job at portraying a character that is trying to keep their cool through stressful problems that life throws at them and yet is slowly cracking under the pressure. For the most part, "Beef" does a great job of balancing the emotionally heavy elements with funny dialogue and facial expressions on the part of the actors. During the screening we watched on March 18, laughter punctuated a good portion of the characters' reactions to their own emotions and situations, including a scene where one of the characters is visibly battling urges of self harm. While their struggles with mental health are portrayed in a realistic and relatable way, the laughter can feel unsettling due to the serious nature of the topic.

Overall, "Beef"'s first two episodes were well-executed and fun to watch. We definitely recommend this show to anyone interested in dark comedies or connecting to deep internal struggles.

JC Ramirez Delgadillo contributed to this article.



Exploring Technology New Inventions in Education Show

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This year, South by Southwest (SXSW) exhibited new technology to potentially be used in the education field via its SXSW Education convention (SXSW EDU). As a part of the SXSW EDU expo, convention goers were shown new ways for teaching students using technology conceived in recent years, and demonstrators were, in turn, given more exposure to potential investors.

SXSW EDU is an event that takes place annually at the Austin Convention Center, this year taking place from March 6-9. Technological advancements presented at the expo involve virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). VR is where a user puts on a headset and sees an imaginary place, but in AR the normal world remains visible, but the user can put what they want over it on a screen.

Seb Ji is a developer for Proteus VR, a Canadian tech company specializing in creating virtual reality environments of classrooms and chemistry labs. Ji presented an AR game at SXSW EDU that, utilizing multiple different headset models, inserted the user into various educational classrooms, such as labs used in science classes.

"Currently we have a chemistry lab, an electricity lab, and are working on a biology lab," Ji said. "We also plan on working in a physics lab. We hope to work on several other mods. VR development is complicated. We are doing a lot of tests and user feedback."

Another example of a new technology showcased was Pixicade, an application that allows users to scan drawings they create and make them into virtual obstacle courses. Alysha Horstman showcased Pixicade at SXSW EDU, and she hopes the publicity will allow the product to break into the educational technological field and get students invested in game design and storytelling.

"We've met a large group of teachers that teach teachers or teacher coaches, and that has been really wonderful to have to help us get the information about our brand out there," Horstman said.

Horstman is only one of the multiple educational and technological developers



comic by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

Music to My Ears

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SXSW has a combination of badge-required and free events throughout the city which gives everyone access to a lot of different genres and musicians. The mass amount of exposure, according to Gately, gives local musicians the opportunity to share their music to a vast audience all while staying in their hometown.

“During SXSW, people from other cities are coming to Austin, and so [artists] are able to accomplish sharing their music without having to leave Austin,” Gately said. “They can make a name for themselves without having to go anywhere. There’s still so many bands and so many artists. There’s so much noise that it would be hard to cut through, but I think for the most part it is a good thing for local bands to be a part of it as much as it is for out of town bands to come to Austin.”

This year, The Tiarras were able to perform in a showcase at Stubb’s BBQ restaurant hosted by Diversity Awareness and Wellness in Action (DAWA), an organization that empowers, supports, and creates space for Black, Indigenous, people of



POWERFUL PERFORMANCES A musician performs at SXSW on Mar. 14. This year, SXSW took place between Friday, Mar. 10 to Sunday, Mar. 19, showcasing various musical artists, speakers, and inventions. photo by JC Ramirez Delgadillo

Latinapalooza, which began six years ago as an unofficial SXSW Day Show, are also fundamental to the Austin music culture.

“Austin artists are very resilient,” Tori Baltierra said. “Even when we’ve gone through periods where we don’t get a lot of shows, or when we’ve had to fight for reasonable pay, even at local shows, even at shows run by the city. We are just very persistent, and we really cling onto our purpose. Because Austin calls itself the live music capital of the world, we hold everyone accountable for that title, even ourselves. We work hard. We try to connect with other artists, and see what we can do for them.”

Gately agrees that Austin being known as the live music capital of the world holds a weight to it. According to him, the music created by local artists is what draws people around the world to the city.

“There’s a magnetism, a gravitational pull about Austin that is pulling young musicians from other parts of the country, other parts of the state,” Gately said. “Austin has a reputation that kind of perpetuates itself. People hear that Austin is where musicians are, so other musicians want to come whereas other places don’t have the same oasis appeal for musicians.”



photos by JC Ramirez Delgadillo, Kayla Le, and Hunt Andre

Speakers at SXSW EDU Showcased at South By Southwest

bolstered and given exposure by SXSW EDU. Another speaker was Sally Trainer, the chief content officer for MyShakespeare.com, a site which helps highschoolers comprehend Shakespearean plays through modern translations.

“We saw the direction of education and made a website version of Shakespeare and including translations and video resources,” Trainer said. “We don’t have a marketing team, so we rely on word of mouth, and we try to get in conferences and show teachers this new technology so they switch over to digital.”

Because of the audience at SXSW EDU, both Trainer and Hortsman have been able to reach larger audiences. According to the SXSW EDU website, this is the goal of the event, to empower the teaching community.

“We’ve met some incredible people, whether it’s principals, or leaders in edutech that are trying to help companies like us to reach more people,” Horstman said.



MOODY COLORS SXSW EDU speakers prepare to take a selfie of them and the panel attendees. SXSW EDU took place from March 10-19 this year. photo by Griffin Beam

Color (BIPOC) creators. The event, hosted at Stubb’s, spotlighted many important charities and musicians of color such as The Tiarras.

“It was just nice to be a part of a showcase that showcased artists of color, and people in Austin, because these are big artists, but not everybody knows about them,” Sofia Baltierra said. “And with SXSW, a lot of the time you think of artists from Australia, or artists with big names, and people want to see them, but these artists are in our backyards. Their voices deserve to be heard. Their art deserves to be seen, so it was nice to be a part of that too.”

Tori Baltierra said being an Austin artist goes beyond music – it’s about community. According to her, locally run festivals like



editorial Accessibility in Education

WINTYR RICE | staff writer

For large portions of my life, I’ve felt at least partially defined by other people’s expectations about me, especially relating to my autism and hearing impairment. After attending several panels at South by Southwest EDU (SXSW EDU), I was reminded of just how common this feeling is.

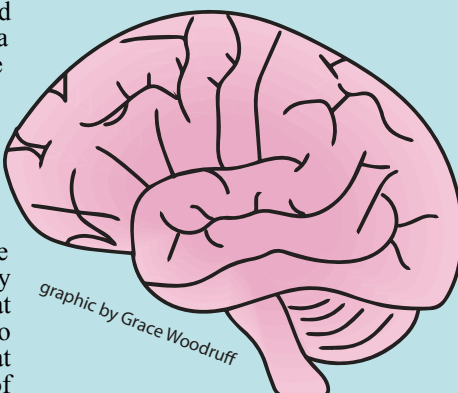
It often feels like people will have this idea in their mind of a singular marginalized person -- of a singular disabled person, a singular trans person, a singular anything, and instead of actually taking the time to get to know a person, people will just superimpose that marginalized idea on top of disabled people, regardless of whether or not it’s even based on any factual information or even applies to that person. One presentation I attended that dealt with this idea was by Aya Waller-Bey, a doctorate candidate at the University of Michigan who interviews Black students about the pressure to write college essays about trauma.

“In most predominantly white schools in this country, [students] often felt like their identities were linked to struggle,” Waller-Bey said. “There was an assumption that to be Mexican in this country or to be Black in this country meant that you’ve had to endure some type of struggle or trauma.”

According to Waller-Bey, this assumption is part of the reason that students of color are often pressured to write essays about whatever traumatic experiences they might have experienced. As a white student, this is something that I have never had to face, however, I have dealt with similar expectations relating to my hearing impairment where people will assume that because I wear a hearing aid, my life must automatically be filled with suffering and hardship.

There are also numerous assumptions that come with being neurodivergent, a term that refers to having any difference in brain function from what is considered

‘normal’. In my case, that’s Autism and ADHD. Because there are so many different diagnoses that fall under the umbrella of neurodivergence, there is no one neurodivergent experience. I’ve lost count of the amount of times I’ve had people assume that I don’t have autism because I can talk and make eye contact. The CEO of Texthelp, Martin McKay, is seeking to help solve this problem with his company, which provides accommodations for people with dyslexia.



“If you speak to a lot of people, they correlate dyslexia with low intelligence, and they think that because people have difficulty reading they’re not smart, and that’s not the case,” McKay said.

The majority of neurodivergent people are still just as capable of doing work as their neurotypical (non-neurodivergent) peers. Including diverse perspectives on teams is also becoming more of a priority for job seekers. According to a 2020 study by Glassdoor, 76% of job seekers use diversity as an important factor when considering job offers. Despite this, unemployment and college enrollment rates are consistently

worse among marginalized groups.

“Universities use stories and narratives of the most vulnerable and marginalized,” Waller-Bey said. “Meanwhile, the very students on campus who might have disabilities or different ranges of ability, or the racially minoritized students, they still are very underrepresented on campus, and the university is not creating the support systems, the resources to support them.”

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 plans are documents that can provide disabled students with accommodations that they need, but they require a diagnosis to access-- something that is becoming increasingly expensive and difficult to obtain. The gatekeeping of these resources doesn’t just affect undiagnosed individuals but also people who need the resources for reasons other than disabilities.

“There are lots of people who aren’t dyslexic, but they’re working in their second language,” McKay said. “...There are going to be a ton of people who have Spanish as their first language, and they’re learning in a second language, and [they use] the same tools that are useful for dyslexic people.”

Making assistive technology generally available is something that helps everyone. People should be able to access whatever tools they need to thrive, but doing so requires us not only to take active steps to include diverse perspectives, but also to challenge our ideas of what those perspectives could look like. When we stop filtering people through our own preconceived notions, it leaves everyone more room to live and thrive.