

AUTOMOTIVE

Mercedes, SXSW team to discover what's next

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Poster for Mercedes' me Convention at the 2018 SXSW Festival March 9-15. Image credit: Mercedes

By STAFF REPORTS

German automaker Mercedes-Benz is thinking of the future as it continues its partnership with the South by Southwest Conference & Festivals in Austin, TX March 9-18.

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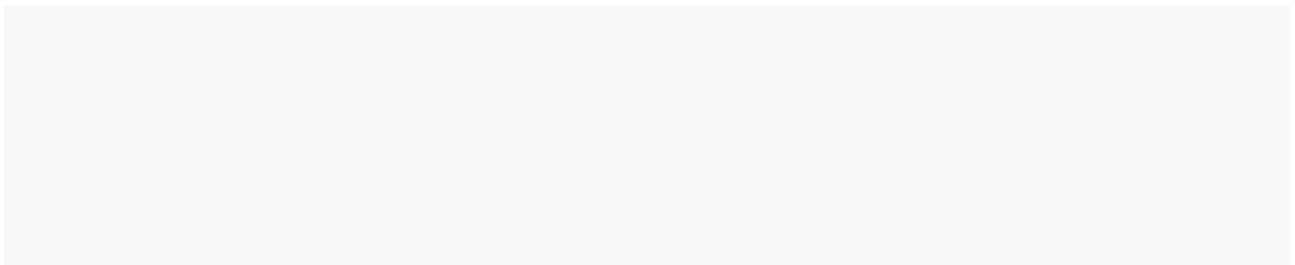
As part of its sponsorship of the 2018 edition of SXSW, Mercedes and its smart brand will host the me Convention, an event program full of inspiration, innovation and insights. Launched by Mercedes and SXSW in Frankfurt in September 2017, the me Convention is held over three days and includes 150 speakers and 2,700 participants from more than 35 countries.

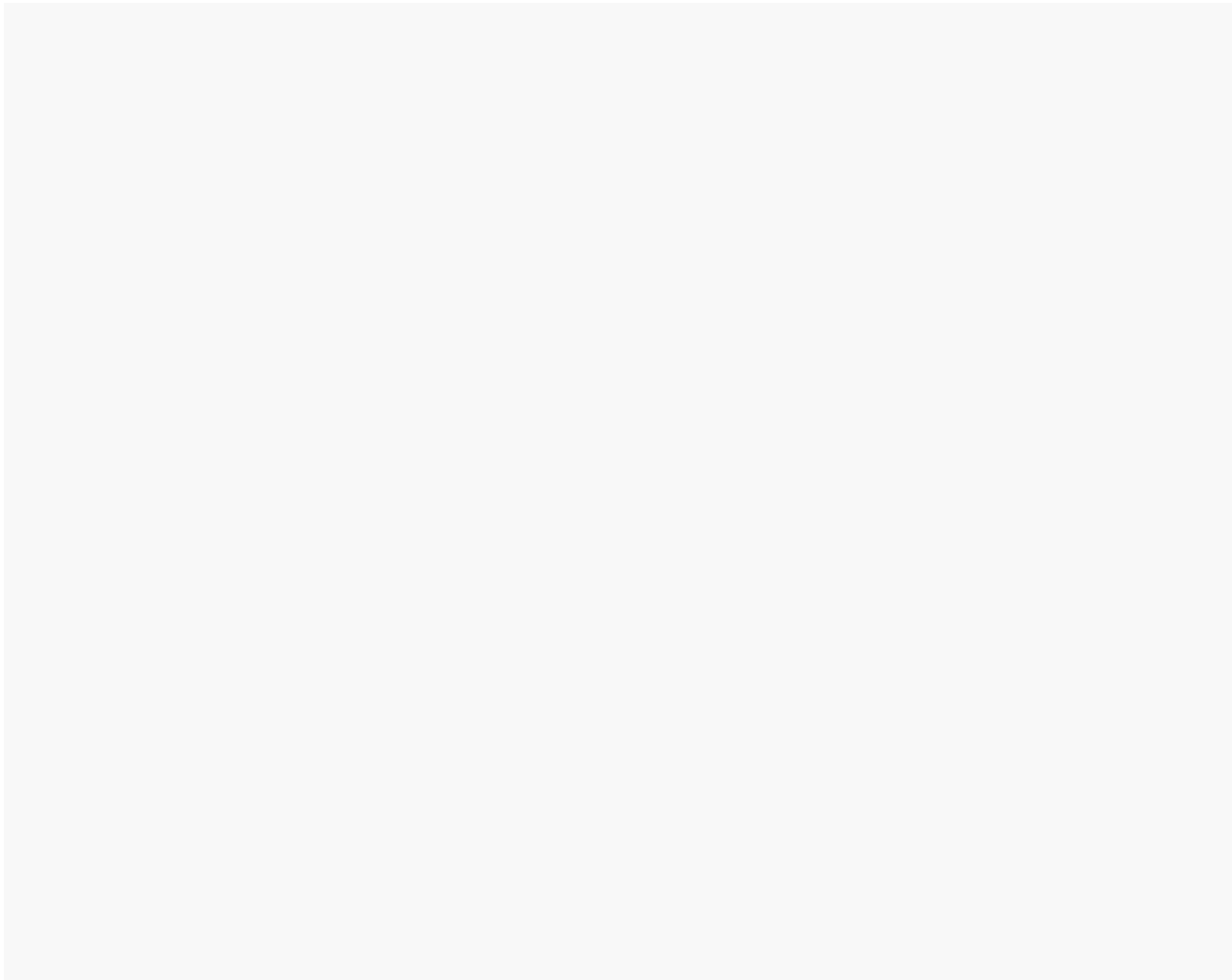
Talks of the future

Following the success of the Frankfurt me Convention, Mercedes is bringing its talk and events program to Austin with an agenda that extends its relationship with the SXSW organization.

In March, the me Convention will occur within the SXSW calendar under the "Intelligent Future Track." Participants will discuss relevant issues of the future in the Fairmont Hotel March 9-15.

At the end of each day, Mercedes will host "Mystery Talks by me Convention" at Palm Park, an event that will see surprise speakers and topics announced at short notice.





Will man & machine romances evolve from sci-fi to real-world love? Bas van de Poel, Creative Strategist at @space10_journal, thinks: "We're actually getting really close." But then what are the ethical standards we need to address? "We need to democratize tomorrow's AI today" and "take all people's wishes and concerns into account", to avoid a lack of diversity, which otherwise could make AI systems sexist or racist. #NewRealities #createthenew

A post shared by me Convention (@meconvention) on Jan 4, 2018 at 4:30am PST

Additional me Convention activities will also be held at Palm Park, next to the Austin Convention Center in downtown. Here, attendees will encounter an open culture of dialogue through progressive and interdisciplinary activations that focus on the community and inspiration.

Activities will include livestreams, meet-and-greets with speakers, a food court, yoga sessions and workshops, in addition to interactive installations.

Similar to last year, Mercedes' smart car brand will provide SXSW attendees a retreat from the bustle of the convention center. During SXSW, smart will display the "Tiny house of smart" in Palm Park.

"Following the successful launch of the me Convention format with South by Southwest, we will continue our collaboration in 2018," said Dr. Jens Thiemer, vice president of marketing at Mercedes-Benz, in a statement.

"Our intensive collaboration began just over a year ago, when our CEO, Dr. Dieter Zetsche was at the SXSW in Austin," he said. "As part of the IAA in Frankfurt, the first me Convention took place, tightly curated and inspired by SXSW, whose makers had never before entered into a partnership outside the U.S.

"Therefore, it is more important to us to return now with an advanced concept to the place where the me Convention originated."



Poster for Mercedes' me Convention at the 2018 SXSW Festival March 9-15. Image credit: Mercedes

Roland Swenson, CEO of SXSW, echoed Dr. Thiemer's statement saying, "SXSW is excited to welcome Mercedes-Benz, Smart and our unique collaboration with me Convention to our event. We both share a strong focus on the future and discovery of what's next. Together, our collective community can be a powerful force in creative problem solving."

Last year other luxury brands such as Giorgio Armani and Neiman Marcus embraced SXSW to appeal to young affluents.

As SXSW continues to grow in size and popularity, luxury brands hope to connect with the affluent customers who are willing to pay the high price to participate. A spin-off festival, an on-site fashion show and film screenings are just a few of the tools brands wielded to participate the 2017 edition of SXSW ([see story](#)).

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