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What to Expect at SXSW 2010

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By [Dan Costa](#)

SWSW Interactive opened on Friday in Austin, Tex., drawing a crowd of thousands and a collection of [speakers](#) that includes director Quentin Tarantino, Twitter founder Evan Williams, and Microsoft Researcher Danah Boyd. What started as a hip music-and-film festival has become one of the most active and innovative technology shows.

The sprawling show differs from conventional conventions in that it largely eschews the show-floor-and-booth model for participatory panels in which the audience often offers as much insight as the speakers. PCMag will have coverage throughout the show. In the meantime, here's a rundown of some themes thus far.

Pay TV vs. the Internet

As the recent ruckus between Cablevision and Disney on Oscar night illustrated, the Internet is seriously disrupting the television industry. And even on the Internet, there is no well-defined model for profitably distributing online video. Hulu will let you stream a show for free, while [iTunes](#) will charge you to download the same program. Internet video maverick and HDNet founder Mark Cuban is scheduled to discuss these trends with Avner Ronan, chief executive of Boxee, a service that lets you watch Internet video streams on your TV.

Geolocation Goes Mainstream

SXSW has always been a hot spot for location services; there will probably be more Foursquare check-ins from Austin this week than any other city in the nation. Even so, aside from real [GPS](#) services, location-based services haven't shown they can move from amusing diversions to profitable businesses. That may change this year. Foursquare has signed up major marketing partners, such as *The New York Times* and *Zagat*. And just about every location-based service plans to make news here.

The Professionalization of Twitter

Just as blogging started as an amateur invention and quickly became professionalized, with best practices, a thriving How-To industry, and for a lucky few, profits, [now](#) the same thing is happening to Twitter. What used to be a way to tell a few friends what you are having for lunch is now the way CNN breaks—and collects—news. Twitter founder Evan Williams ([@ev](#)) will keynote on Monday and discuss the future of the service.

Microsoft BizSpark Accelerator

On Monday, 32 start-up companies will present their business plans to a panel of experts as part of Microsoft's BizSpark Accelerator program. Three winners will be announced Tuesday, but anyone that can attract venture capital will be a winner.

For live SXSW coverage, you can follow me on Twitter [@dancosta](#). Otherwise be sure to check out [PCMag.com](#) for more updates.

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