



CANADIAN MUSIC WEEK REIMAGINED

# Departure

MUSIC.ART.COMEDY.TECH.

## Departure Festival + Conference Kicks Off its First Lineup Announcement with Audience Favourites and Industry Leaders in Music, Art, Comedy and Tech

Entrepreneur powerhouse **Matty Matheson**, legendary music icon **Bryan Adams**, acclaimed performers **Mustafa**, **Tia Wood**, and **Death From Above 1979**, platinum record producer **T-Minus** in conversation with **Brian “B.Dot” Miller**, tech trailblazer **Matt McGowan**, renowned crisis PR expert **Molly McPherson**, and visionary sports and entertainment leader **Tim Leiweke** among the first crop of artists and speakers announced

Former JFL President **Bruce Hills** joins Departure team for comedy curation

Priority and Conference Passes on sale now at [departureto.com](https://departureto.com)

**Toronto, ON, January 28, 2025** - Loft Entertainment and Oak View Group (OVG) today unveiled its first announcement of artists and speakers stemming from music, art, comedy and tech who are confirmed to attend the inaugural **Departure Festival + Conference** from **May 6-11, 2025** in Toronto. These creatives include music luminaries **Bryan Adams**, **Mustafa**, **Tia Wood**, and **Death From Above 1979**; renowned restaurateur **Matty Matheson**; platinum record producer **T-Minus** in conversation with **Brian “B.Dot” Miller**; influential figure and innovator in the sports and entertainment industry **Tim Leiweke**, Chairman & CEO of Oak View Group (OVG); tech thought leader **Matt McGowan**, GM of Snap Inc. in Canada; and reputable crisis communications expert **Molly McPherson**. Together, these creatives exemplify the very best of their respective crafts, achieving massive success domestically and abroad. A groundbreaking new partnership with **Elevate**, Canada’s most influential tech and innovation event, adds to the conference’s dynamic programming.

A reimagined and expanded vision of Canadian Music Week (CMW), Departure is a dynamic and innovative launchpad bursting with diverse talent, audience favourites, and modern creative industry thinkers. While [Hotel X Toronto](#), the urban resort on the Lake Ontario Waterfront, will serve as Departure's host hotel, the global event will reach audiences across Toronto with concert venues in every corner of the city. A stream of notable speakers, artists and must-attend events will continue to be revealed over the coming months. Priority and Conference passes are on sale now at [departureto.com](#).

"Our first edition of Departure is about honouring our roots in music and growing into other creative spaces while fostering the relationship between artist and industry," said **Kevin Barton, Executive Producer at Loft Entertainment**. "This year's lineup showcases a wealth of established and emerging talent from across the country and beyond, creating opportunities for meaningful dialogue, sharing innovative ideas and building deeper connections within Canada's dynamic arts community. We look forward to sharing more programming announcements in the weeks to come."

"With its vibrant cultural scene, Toronto is the perfect home for the Departure Festival + Conference," said **Tom Pistore, President of Oak View Group Canada**. "We look forward to bringing together the most diverse and talented group of artists, innovators, and industry leaders to create a launchpad for the next wave of music, art, tech, and comedy."

The **Conference** portion is where industry professionals from Canada and abroad will come together as a community to share ideas, inspire one another and connect to build a vibrant creative future. The **Festival** portion of the weeklong event is where audiences can enjoy musical performances by their favourite artists, comedy sets from some of North America's funniest people and culinary experiences from top chefs.

### **CONFERENCE PROGRAMMING TO DATE:**

#### **Industry Experts:**

Departure's robust lineup of powerhouse speakers highlights individual streams within the creative space, welcoming Canadian chef, restaurateur and actor/executive producer of the Emmy Award-winning hit show *The Bear*, **Matty Matheson**; legendary music superstar **Bryan Adams** in collaboration with Radiodays North America; leader and veteran in the sports and entertainment industry **Tim Leiweke, Chairman & CEO of Oak View Group (OVG)**; *America's Got Talent* winner and vocal sensation **Grace Vanderwaal**; Grammy-nominated record producer **T-Minus**; one of music journalism's most revered voices and viral Rap Radar Podcast co-host, **Brian "B.Dot" Miller**; Emmy award-winning music supervisor **Matt Biffa** who has worked on *Sex Education*, *Hacks*, and *Harry Potter*; and renowned photographer and creative director **Danny Hastings**, who has worked alongside some of the biggest names in the music

industry.

Incorporating a wider spectrum of artistic expressions, the Conference will also include trailblazer and advocate for Indigenous voices **Shayla Stonechild** and internationally recognized crisis communications expert **Molly McPherson**.

“Toronto has helped me build a beautiful community I can always come back to and has deepened my love for food,” said **Matty Matheson**. “Toronto is a perfect place to discover something new and really dive in head first. Departure reminds me of those feelings for Toronto; where we thrive on creativity and culture and all the people who make this city special.”

#### **Radiodays North America:**

Taking place May 6 - 8 at Hotel X, Radiodays North America is the premier conference for radio, podcasting, and digital audio professionals, Radiodays will feature inspiring speakers about the latest trends and strategies shaping the future of audio. More programming details to be announced in the coming weeks.

#### **Tech:**

Diving into the future of technology, Departure will feature leaders in the tech space including General Manager of Snap Inc. in Canada, **Matt McGowan** and the Co-Founder and CEO of Elevate, **Lisa Zarzeczny**.

Bridging the gap between tech and entertainment, Departure will also be joining forces with **Elevate**, Canada's most influential tech and innovation event. Elevate is a non-profit that unites world-class innovators to catalyze transformation in the Canadian tech ecosystem. Elevate has hosted global icons such as First Lady & Author Michelle Obama, Businesswoman & TV personality Martha Stewart, and Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt.

#### **Film:**

Continuing to celebrate the power of music, Departure will host special film presentations including Alex Ross Perry's (*Golden Exits*, *Her Smell*) latest film **Pavements** about the iconic '90s indie band Pavement starring Jason Schwartzman and Joe Keery. More film programming will be announced in the coming weeks.

#### **FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING TO DATE:**

Departure will present Music and Comedy Showcases available to all pass holders, along with Premium events that require the purchase of separate tickets. The Comedy Showcase lineup will be announced in February and the Music Showcase following in March.

## **Music:**

With lively performances across the city from Meridian Hall to History, The Drake Hotel and more, Departure will feature some of the most sought-after artists making waves today. The Premium events include multi-award winning powerhouse **Mustafa**; groundbreaking soulful performer **Tia Wood**; punk rock duo **Death From Above 1979** performing for two nights at Lee's Palace; R&B visionary **Avenoir**; French pop duo **Papooz** ; indie rockers **Rural Alberta Advantage**; genre-defying duo **Freak Heat Waves**; celebrated singer-songwriter **Bria Salmena**; and burgeoning Brooklyn-based punk band **YHWH Nailgun**; with more to be announced.

Ensuring audiences experience the full breadth of Toronto's bustling cultural scene, Departure will extend across the city with special events at Stackt Market, The Well and a 40th anniversary celebration of Lee's Palace. More information on those events to be shared in the coming weeks.

### Highlighted Premium events include:

Mustafa - May 6 @ Meridian Hall

Avenoir - May 6 @ Axis Club

Rural Alberta Advantage - May 7 @ Lee's Palace

Freak Heat Waves - May 7 @ Dance Cave

Death From Above 1979 - May 8 & 9 @ Lee's Palace

Bria Salmena - May 9 @ Dance Cave

Tia Wood - May 9 @ The Drake Hotel

YHWH Nailgun - May 9 @ Bovine Sex Club

Papooz - May 11 @ Lee's Palace

## **Comedy:**

With more than 40 years of shaping the comedy landscape, **Bruce Hills**, the former president of Just For Laughs, has joined as the Executive Producer of Departure Comedy. Renowned for uncovering and fostering the talent behind some of the biggest names in comedy today, Hills' focus will be on curating an impressive comedy slate, conference and spearheading the Canadian industry showcases for the festival.

From intimate spaces to large theatres, the festival's comedy programming will be in iconic venues around the city including Meridian Hall, Comedy Bar, The Second City Toronto, and Queen Elizabeth Theatre – all of which will come alive with laughter as they host acclaimed stand-up comedians.

In the coming weeks, Departure will unveil its 2025 comedy and conference lineup and a number of Canadian industry showcases which will include **Don't Tell Comedy**, the # 1 global

discovery platform for stand-up comedy, who will bring their premier stand-up showcase to Toronto at a secret and unique location, while spotlighting incredible Canadian talent. Don't Tell Comedy's Tapings are a global phenomenon, the clips garner over an astonishing 1.2 billion views annually.

More details on the Departure comedy programming to be announced. Additional guests and events will be announced in the coming weeks. For more programming and ticketing info, visit [departureto.com](http://departureto.com).

Media Accreditation will open on Thursday, January 30.

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### **About Loft Entertainment**

Loft Entertainment invests in culture-defining talent and creative partners to tell their stories. Founded by industry veteran Randy Lennox in Summer 2023, Loft offers the world's leading artists creative, strategic and business services across all artistic and commercial touchpoints in the music, film and media. Visit [loftent.com](http://loftent.com).

### **About Oak View Group**

Oak View Group (OVG) is the global leader in live experience venue development, management, premium hospitality services, and 360-degree solutions for a collection of world-class-owned venues and a client roster of arenas, stadiums, convention centers, music festivals, performing arts centers, and cultural institutions. Founded by Tim Leiweke and Irving Azoff in 2015, OVG is the leading developer of major new venues either open or under development across four continents. Visit [OakViewGroup.com](http://OakViewGroup.com), and follow OVG on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X.

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