

The technology for ALS*¹ symbiotes to rekindle physicality in digital space through the use of electromyography signals

Project Humanity at SXSW 2024

Dentsu Lab Tokyo presents ALL PLAYERS WELCOME / EYE VDJ MASA

at UK House, a stage sponsored by the UK government, on Saturday, March 9.

Also selected for an innovation award and Creative Director Naoki Tanaka will be speaking at a seminar.

Project Humanity, the latest project of Dentsu Lab Tokyo (DLT)'s ALL PLAYERS WELCOME*², which is being promoted in collaboration with Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation (NTT) and WITH ALS, will be held in Austin, Texas, USA. ALL PLAYERS WELCOME and WITH ALS will present a 15-minute performance with artist Vulva Voce at UK House, an event sponsored by the UK government's Department for Business and Trade, held during South by Southwest (SXSW) in Austin.

Project Humanity is the world's first project to develop a system that enables ALS patients to control their avatars in real-time in the digital world by utilizing electromyography signals (EMG), which is a minute electric signal generated when muscles are moved even slightly.

The project will also be discussed at the session titled *Beyond Boundaries: Tech and Humanity Converge* held at SXSW.

■ Details of Project Humanity: <https://project-humanity.live/>



1 ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) is a disease in which motor nerves are damaged and commands from the brain to muscles are no longer transmitted, gradually making it difficult to move muscles throughout the body. An estimated 400,000 people worldwide suffer from this disease.

2 The project was launched in June 2022 with the aim of creating tools and an environment in which anyone can express themselves with the help of their perspectives and creativity, together with people from various backgrounds, including those with physical disabilities.

< For media inquiries regarding this matter, please contact
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Unveiling of Project Humanity at UK House

UK House is held annually at SXSW by the UK government and brings together UK organizations, creators, and innovators from the fields of advertising, art, immersive technology, music, and innovation. Invited as the first act, EYE VDJ MASA, a founder of WITH ALS, will perform Project Humanity for the first time in the US in collaboration with the transdisciplinary string quartet Vulva Voce.

On the day of the event, MASA will be performing in Tokyo and connected online to UK House venue in Austin, where he will give a music performance using our originally developed eye-gaze input music instruments and virtually DJing using the EMG controlled avatar. The performance sends a strong message that technology removes physical limitations and allows anyone to express their creativity, and that the resulting musical performances will connect people from any circumstance. Using music as a medium to engage people, ALL PLAYERS WELCOME aims to create a world where everyone can express themselves through the power of technology and creativity, regardless of whether they are abled or disabled.

Event Outline:

Location: UK House BME (BRITISH MUSIC EMBASSY)

East 10th St & Red River St, Austin, TX, 78701

Date & Time: Saturday, March 9, 8:00 a.m.

Web site: <https://www.thebritishmusicembassy.com/>

Selected as Innovation Awards Finalist

Project Humanity has been selected as a finalist in the Innovation Awards, which will be held for the seventh time in 2024. The Innovation Award is a prestigious award given to innovative projects and products, and this is the first time that a finalist in the Interface Design category has been selected from Japan.

Five finalists will be nominated for each of the 11 categories to showcase their projects. The winners will be announced at the 26th Annual SXSW Innovation Awards Ceremony on Monday, March 11 at the Austin Convention Center.

■ Detailed press release: <https://prtimes.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000035.000088502.html>



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Session at the SXSW

Project Humanity will also be discussed in a session titled *Beyond Boundaries: Tech and Humanity Converge* presented by Dentsu Lab Tokyo.

Session Outline:

Date: March 12, 14:30-15:30 (local time)

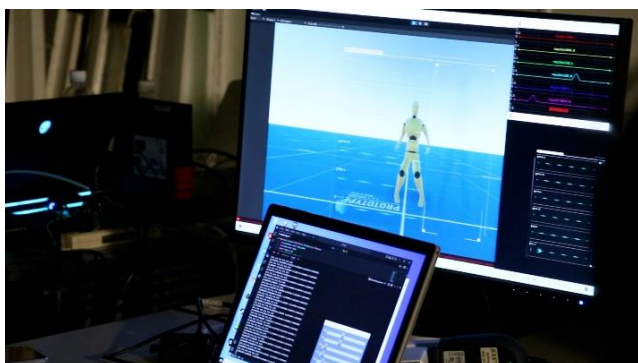
Speakers: Yasuharu Sasaki (Dentsu Lab Tokyo), Naoki Tanaka (Dentsu Lab Tokyo), Mariko Nakamura (NTT)

■ Details: <https://schedule.sxsw.com/2024/events/PP145589>

About Project Humanity

Project Humanity has jointly developed by Dentsu Lab Tokyo and NTT, together with WITH ALS, represented by Masatane Muto, an artist and ALS patient. This is an initiative to realize ALS patients controlling their avatar in the digital world using EMG signals emitted when moving muscles even slightly. EMG sensors applied on the body acquire biometric information from minute muscle activity. This information will then be converted into operational information, enabling the free control of avatars in the digital world.

■ Detail of Project Humanity: <https://project-humanity.live/>



Artist Information



Vulva Voce

Creating radical musical experiences, the string quartet combines movement, experimentation, and improvisation to produce a truly dynamic show. They combine their musical influences of folk, jazz, contemporary classical, and beyond, to push the boundaries of its music.

In 2023, the quartet toured Europe for the first time, playing to packed venues in Scandinavia and Germany. Their first single "Smeòrach Chlann Domhnaill" released last year gained traction across multiple streaming platforms, and their latest single "Weaver's Key" is due out in early March 2024.

Spotify <https://open.spotify.com/intl-ja/artist/7ttzajTTeFLYMCfoB7m6oL>

Apple Music <https://music.apple.com/gb/artist/vulva-voce/1696606147>

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Masatane Muto / EYE VDJ MASA

37 years old artist and ALS patient, performed at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Paralympics in 2021.

His mission is to create a BORDERLESS society through the power of creativity, starting from solving the issues of ALS patients using technology such as eye-gaze input and brain waves. He works across three areas: entertainment, technology and nursing care, aiming for a society where all people can take on challenges in their own way.

<https://withals.com/post/?id=511>



ALL PLAYERS WELCOME

Together with the message of "making everyone a player," this project was launched by Dentsu Lab Tokyo in 2022 with the aim of bringing out the expressive power of all people, physically challenged and non-disabled alike. The project has developed "ALL PLAYERS TOOL LAB.", a platform that provides freeware for everyone to express themselves through original operational UI. As the second project of ALL PLAYERS WELCOME, Project Humanity was launched in collaboration with NTT and WITH ALS. Until now, ALL PLAYERS WELCOME was presented in Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity, Tate Modern in the U.K., and other world-class art and technology events to spread the message around the world.

What is SXSW?

SXSW is a huge music, film, and interactive business conference and festival held every March in Austin, Texas, USA.

The event has grown to become one of the largest events of its kind in the world, attracting hundreds of thousands of people over its 10-day period. The event, which has been held for 30 years, is a collaboration of government, private sector, and citizen volunteers.

It has played an important role in the startup and cultural scene, with online services such as Twitter, Pinterest, and Spotify, as well as artists such as The White Stripes, Norah Jones, and Franz Ferdinand, who have received awards and performed at "SXSW" to break into the global marketplace.

<https://www.sxsw.com/>



About Dentsu Lab Tokyo

Dentsu Lab Tokyo is a creative R&D organization that integrates research, planning, and development. With the philosophies of "PLAYFUL SOLUTION" and "Be Irregular" in mind, they use various technologies and ideas to develop expressions that move people's hearts and minds, and to solve social issues that the world needs today.

Official website: <https://dentsulab.tokyo/>

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