

JOURNALISM TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP AWARD RYAN LESTON

Ryan Leston's Journalism Travel Scholarship Award allowed him to cover the Venice Film Festival – a plan he had been putting off for the last ten years. Ryan used the bursary for accreditation fees as well as to cover the cost of flights and a two-week stay in an apartment on the Zattere promenade. This was just a short boat ride away from Lido – the site of the festival itself – and allowed Ryan to spend as much time as possible at the festival, while also being able to dash back to his apartment to file articles and reviews.

The Venice Film Festival is one of the oldest in the world – now in its 78th year. It attracts a huge variety of filmmakers, actors and A-listers as studios enter their best indie films in the competition and launch their best mainstream titles alongside it. This year was particularly great, hosting world premieres for the likes of Dennis Villeneuve's *Dune* and Ridley Scott's *The Last Duel*.



The cast of Dune appear on the red carpet at Venezia 78 – the Venice Film Festival 2021.

As well as reporting from the event and working to improve his profile as a film critic, Ryan wanted to gain insight into how the pandemic years have affected diversity in Hollywood. His dissertation on this topic has led him to interview several important voices at this year's Oscars, but Ryan wanted to speak to several key figures who would appear at Venice – such as directors Jane Campion and Maggie Gyllenhaal.

Attending the film festival enabled Ryan to attend the press conferences and exclusive events where he was able to get the answers he needed.

"I would never have gone to Venice if it hadn't been for the Journalism Travel Scholarship Award," he said. "It's on my list of film festivals that I always want to attend but can never afford – but actually going there opened up so many opportunities."



Awaiting the first press screening of Sundown starring Tim Roth.

Aside from interviews and press conferences, Ryan was also able to watch a catalogue of upcoming movies – over twenty in total. These included Dune, The Last Duel, Spencer, Last Night in Soho and Halloween Kills among others. This in itself opened up opportunities for Ryan to write critically, offering his services as a freelance film critic to new publications.

“Just being there really helped,” he said. “Being there when editors need someone is a huge boon to a budding reporter or film critic. By being in the right place at the right time, I was able to secure work with The Telegraph, NME and IGN – publications I have long wanted to work with. The best part? They now know I’m reliable, and I’ve secured several commissions since the festival.”

The Journalism Travel Scholarship Award helped Ryan to further his career by offering his services at one of the biggest film festivals on the industry calendar. He not only furthered his own research but also improved his career by gaining work with several major outlets, and putting together a fantastic portfolio from the event alone.