

Matt Griffin - MA Producing Film and Television 2019-20
Santander Travel Award Report - Berlin International Film

The financial support provided by the Santander Travel Award 2019-20 enabled me to continue my academic, personal and professional development beyond the offerings of my MA Programme. I used the funding to travel to the Berlin International Film Festival, an experience which would not have otherwise been available to me, and which subsequently offered a number of future opportunities.

The Berlin International Film Festival, alongside Venice and Cannes, is considered one of the big 3 film festivals, and boasts the largest public attendance of any annual film festival. Running simultaneously is the European Film Market, which is perhaps the biggest industry trade fair outside of America. By attending I gained a unique insight into the business of film and a much greater understanding of how to operate within this environment.

It also gave me the chance to interact with successful film-making professionals and the support teams around them, growing my own network, and enabling me to put into practice skills and ideas I had learnt during my studies. It was particularly rewarding for me as I was able to reconnect with former mentors from my time working and studying in Los Angeles, and to meet Walt Disney Company colleagues based in Europe who I had previously only spoken with over the phone or online.



Speaking with my own connections, as well as previous Royal Holloway students at an Alumni Event at the festival, I was able to incorporate a wealth of new ideas into my dissertation research. Initially this began as an investigation into the role of Company Culture within the film industry but found its shape during my time at Berlinale.

My final title became *'It All Started With A Mouse': Establishing, Exploiting and Expanding Film Industry Brands*. Using my own previous experiences, speaking with industry professionals at the festival and reflecting on what I had learnt from acquiring my accreditation I noticed a three-stage development that sustained the largest brands within the film and entertainment empire.

With the encouragement of my classmates and colleagues I highlighted the Disney brand as the guiding case study from which I would assess film production, cultural perceptions and business operations as they related to each other in brand-building. It offered me the chance to continue conversations started in Berlin to critically analyse how competitors in the industry did or, as was much more common, did not, emulate the success of The Walt Disney Company.



I was able to undertake my own independent research into each of these sub-sections and create a dissertation which not only inspects the film industry but is applicable for a number of brands and industries. My time in Germany allowed me to consider Film Production from a much more holistic, inter-departmental, inter-cultural perspective, which is evidenced in my final MA dissertation, and in my previous submissions.

Academics aside, it also meant I could spend time abroad with my classmates soaking in another culture, in a country many of us hadn't previously visited. I think this had a great impact on our own relationships both professionally and socially, and there is a lot to be said for the value of this experience alone.

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity which the Santander Travel Award facilitated, and Royal Holloway for the support they offered before, during and after application. I would encourage future students who believe a similar venture would improve their experience as an academic, and their prospects post-university, to seriously consider submitting their own application.