

September 2021: The future is now

“The water’s risen up a couple storeys, it’s too hot to be out in daytime (and) people work by night.” If I told you that was a quote from a renowned DP, about shooting in New Orleans, you might wonder if it was someone just dispatched to record the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. Instead, it’s Paul Cameron, ASC, talking about filming the just-released “futuristic noir” thriller *Reminiscence*, with writer/director Lisa Joy.

It’s a collaboration that’s already proven fruitful. Joy is co-creator of HBO’s *Westworld* with her husband, Jonathan Nolan, and Cameron’s working relationship with the pair has gone from shooting the pilot, to subsequent episodes, to even climbing into the director’s chair on the show.

So, when it came time for Joy’s Black List-awarded script to be made, with Hugh Jackman as the two-fistedly named Nick Bannister, a “private investigator of the mind,” Cameron was the natural choice.



DP Paul Cameron behind the scenes on Warner Bros. Pictures’ *Reminiscence*. (Photo by Ben Rothstein)

And there is plenty to be said about the work the always-busy Cameron did (when we caught up with him, he had just joined the Board of Governors at the Motion Picture Academy), such as his adaptation of Hologauze – a scrim-like material normally used in concert venues for projections to appear as 3D images on a 2D medium – for the rendering of the holographic memories that become Bannister’s particular back alleys. Cameron calls this breakthrough use of the material “a parallel to the (LED) volume work we’re seeing now,” in this era of “live” digital VFX.

There’d be all that and more to discuss, but happily, a more expansive piece on Paul’s work in the film is being done on British Cinematographer’s magazine side, and I commend your attention to it, when that issue alights in your hands.

But one particularly striking detail came when Cameron mentioned using a deserted Six Flags park as a set – abandoned after the flooding from Hurricane Katrina, sixteen years ago, and him recalling it was “a little of a challenge to be in water, at night, in stormy New Orleans.”



Rebecca Ferguson and director of photography Paul Cameron behind the scenes on *Reminiscence* (Photo by Ben Rothstein)



Hugh Jackman behind the scenes on Warner Bros. Pictures' action thriller *Reminiscence* (Photo by Ben Rothstein)

Which, given recent events, would now seem like an understatement.

But it simply speaks to a challenging aspect of “near future” stories, especially ones like *Reminiscence*, which is set in an essentially “unusable” New Orleans, circa 2050.

That near future is here now. If Nick Bannister already had a detective agency in the Crescent City it may just have been flooded out, or had its roof torn off. While we write, many in Ida's path are still without power, and other critical infrastructure components. And while the levees thankfully held – mostly – this time, the extent of physical and psychic damage is still being assessed.

As is the damage from the subsequent flooding of New York, New Jersey, and other areas, all of which happened as this column was being written.

The timing of all this, coincident to the film's release, shows that what's ahead may represent even more of a terra incognita than even some of our most imaginative minds can conjure.

Or, to paraphrase Faulkner, “the future isn't far off. It's not even ‘future.’”