

Why Super 8 was super



My very first venture into filmmaking was a high school project I shot and edited on Super 8 film. I'm in good company. Steven Spielberg did the same thing.

Super 8 was a vast improvement over the regular 8mm film that was being used at the time. 8mm was nothing more than 16mm film cut in half... literally. Camera operators would need to feed a 25 foot, 16mm sized film cartridge into their cameras, shoot their footage which would record on one side of the strip, then remove the cartridge, flip it over and shoot again so the images would record on the other half. When the the film reached the lab for processing, it was then split down the middle and spliced together to form the 50 foot 8mm film reel that has become so iconic. It was, in a word, a pain.

Super 8 simplified the matter and, by doing so, ushered in a new age of amateur filmmaking. Spielberg and I were not the only ones who cut their auteur's teeth on Super 8 film. Directors J.J. Abrams, Tim Burton, David Fincher, Christopher Nolan and Michael Bay have all reflected fondly on their cinematic beginnings that started with a Super 8 camera.

Here, copied from a Live Science blog of 2011 are some random

facts about Super 8:

- Although Kodak no longer produces Super 8 cameras, the company still makes four different kinds of Super 8 film. (You can find used Super 8 cameras on eBay.)
- The last manufacturer to produce Super 8 cameras was the French company Beaulieu, which continued making the cameras well into the '90s.
- Super 8 continues to be used in the film community as an inexpensive alternative to high-definition video. "It tends to be more for small films, commercials and music videos rather than the big blockbuster movies found in theaters," Johnson said.
- Super 8 film was made using Kodachrome, a type of color reversal film that was manufactured by Kodak from 1935 to 2006. The color was used in motion picture cameras as well as still cameras, especially for images intended for publication in print media. Steve McCurry used Kodachrome for his well-known 1984 portrait of Sharbat Gula, the "Afghan Girl", for National Geographic magazine.
- The new "Super 8" app recreates the experience of having an old-school Super 8 camera by letting you adjust different lens and filter effects while recording a video on your iPhone, iPad or iTouch. The app also contains embedded information about Steven Spielberg's new "Super 8" movie as part of its marketing.

And in case you were wondering why I didn't go on to direct films like Jaws, E.T., or Schindler's List like Mr. Spielberg... here, for your viewing pleasure, is my Super 8 high school effort.

Michael Ondrasik and Home Video Studio specialize in the preservation of family memories, including films shot in 8mm, Super 8, and 16mm format. They can be reached at 352-735-8550. www.homevideostudio.com/mtd