

Spielberg and I shot Super 8



The WordchipperSM

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Fantastic! That's what I said as I looked at the "Super 8" formatted movies I shot in the 1970s and now available to myself and my grown kids and their kids on easy-to-view DVDs. My daughter has been after me for about 10 years to transfer these films to DVD, not only so she and her brother and their families could see them now but the DVD will hold these "treasures" decades into the future. This assumes, of course, that there will always be some way to transfer what's on today's DVDs to whatever visual format is popular in, say, 2050. I have much confidence that a transfer capability will exist, because once something "analog," like film or a sound recording, is turned into computer code, i.e., "numbers," then those numbers can usually be made workable in whatever format the techies come up with tomorrow.

This isn't so true with various movie films in their original form. Reason: projectors are scarce and, even if you find the correct projector, the bulb eventually burns out. These bulbs can be a bit exotic and difficult, if not impossible, to find. While I still own an old Kodak projector, it doesn't work.

However, I'm now looking at four DVD's worth of my old movies because I found a fellow in Moorhead who does Super 8-to-DVD transfer work—and, I might add, he does it very well. His name is Gary Hellerstedt (cell: 701-371-2648) and I asked him to take a look at my boxful of film; some were on 400-foot half-hour reels and there was other footage on those small 50-foot reels that came back from the processor. When I bought my Vivitar Super 8 camera in 1970, a "sound" version was not available so my movies were all silent. I went the extra step to add audio by running a reel-to-reel tape of music and narration off a player running in synch with the projector. They did this with the early iterations of Cinerama, but, of course, Hollywood had far more sophisticated equipment than my cobbled-together rig. Some of you will remember the Century Theatre in Minneapolis and its three projectors running *This is Cinerama!* in tandem. In doing my film transfer to DVD, we didn't try matching the sound from the free-standing tape to the audio; now that I have the film in a "digital file" (computers love *digital* files) I can use *Adobe Premiere Elements 9* or any similar video editing program to add music and/or narration to the various clips I may choose to pull from the DVDs (which I am now doing).

Incidentally, my friend also transfers VHS tapes, slides, photos and regular 8mm film to DVD. He does top quality work, in my opinion, and his rates are reasonable. And he did *not* pay me to say that. I just know there are a lot of people out there who want to salvage their old home movies—my kids are really enjoying looking at these DVDs of themselves as youngsters in the '70s. Bear in mind that videotape will deteriorate over time just sitting on the shelf. DVDs normally will not, and it's far easier to make DVD copies with your computer.

Incidentally, besides being the name of a Kodak film format, *Super 8* is also the title of a currently popular movie produced by Steven Spielberg, J. J. Abrams and Bryan Burk, released through Paramount Pictures for both conventional and IMAX theaters. When I was making movies of my kids over 40 years ago, Spielberg was also shooting Super 8 film. However, his career as a film professional took off. Mine didn't. In fact, his new picture harkens back to his teen days with a home movie camera, hence the title. *Super 8*, the feature film, stars Joel Courtney, Elle Fanning, and Kyle Chandler. Elle is Dakota Fanning's younger sister—no doubt you've seen Dakota in a number of relatively recent movies. Her break-through performance was in *I Am Sam* in 2001; she has won a number of awards already and is the youngest nominee for a Screen Actors Guild Award. I'm looking forward to seeing *Super 8*—but I'm the kind of movie fan that can wait for the DVD.

Meanwhile, thanks to my friend, Gary, I have four excellent DVDs to watch, after he transferred all of my "creative masterpieces" (my opinion) to video from film. I didn't turn out to be as successful a movie-maker as Spielberg, but my kids have given me an academy-award for what's on those home-movie discs: themselves, and their much younger parents!