

Revel-8 Super 8 Film Fest Help Guide 2017



Introduction

This short self-help guide is designed to provide some handy hints for the Revel-8 Super 8 film festival. There's no substitute for a bit of practice, whether you're a first-timer or coming back to the medium after a break. I totally recommend buying test stock and getting some practice in before getting started on your single cartridge, edited-in-camera masterpiece.

Working on Super 8 is great fun and filming silent gives the director the chance to direct (loudly) during each shot. Get started now!

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For further advice contact us at revel8filmfest@gmail.com

Competition Advice

1. **Theme:** "Magic" – this theme is wide open and can be interpreted in so many ways. Remember, though, if you're making a narrative film, there needs to be a story we can follow and understand. Think about what other filmmakers might do and try something different - make your idea stand out!
2. **Loosen up the Film Cartridge:** Super 8 films come a long way to get to Australia. Sometimes the film binds up inside the cartridge and won't start! Give the cartridge a light shake or a rap with the back of the hand before inserting. Check that the film advance indicator on the camera is turning/moving.
3. **Editing in Camera:** This means you must shoot the film sequentially, one shot after the other. If you're cross-cutting between locations, this could mean lots of travel! Planning is a good idea and so is a shot list which can be ticked off as you go. Don't worry if you mess up a shot, keep going. It's pretty likely that everyone is going to make a mistake somewhere along the line. Take note that unlike digital video, there's no start-up time for a Super 8 camera. When the trigger is pressed, you're filming immediately!
4. **Film 5 seconds of black at the beginning:** Blank off the lens with the lens cap or a piece of cardboard. Run 5 seconds of film (count 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) before beginning the production. This is to make sure that the first images of your film come out for sure – the lab needs some front-end to work with. This will leave you with 3.5 minutes of useable footage – keep an eye on the camera footage counter as their accuracy varies – it's normally touch and go after 47 feet.
5. **Use a Trusted Camera:** Make sure your camera is working properly. Do a test roll beforehand if in any doubt. An 'unknown' camera can mean a lot of work for nothing! Loan cameras are available for Perth filmmakers. Contact us for more details.
6. **Setting f-stops:** The automatic exposure meter can usually be trusted for most films. Sometimes Tri-X can be a problem. Use the guide supplied to set (or check) apertures (f-stops) manually for Tri-X black and white film. Never set the f-stop needle in the viewfinder to a point which is right off the scale (red zone at either end) – this might close the aperture completely so that you only get black!
7. **Focus:** Don't forget to set the eyepiece to your individual eyesight or the whole film could be out of focus. Filming wide angle but getting close to your subject gives the best depth of field i.e. range of focus.
8. **Lens:** Keep it clean and avoid scratching it!
9. **Filming for visual interest:** Be daring in your composition, camera movements and camera angles – give the audience a visual smorgasbord!
10. **Titles and credits:** Filming the computer screen is a bit chancy – you tend to get a lot of flicker. Be innovative, do a bit of research – there are many ways to film titles.
11. **Safety:** Maintain safe shooting practices at all times. It's easy to lose sight of what you're doing when your eye is glued to the camera eyepiece.
12. **Film in sunlight:** Less important for black and white films, but sunshine really brings the tones up on colour film. Reap the benefits of a bright day.
13. **Don't remove the film until you're sure the cartridge is finished:** You will lose part of the film. When finished, the word "exposed" appears in the cartridge gate (white letters).
14. **Fun:** Don't forget to enjoy yourselves. Revel-8 is about participation and exploration. Do some planning, take a moment to check the camera before each shot and it will all happen for you.

Getting the Camera Ready

1. Load Batteries

Super 8 cameras usually use between 4 and 6 AA size batteries – alkaline are best, avoid rechargeables. Be careful to load them the right way up (or down) - there is often a diagram inside the battery compartment or on the camera casing or grip.

2. Check Battery Condition

All Super 8 cameras are fitted with some kind of battery tester - either a warning light or a meter with a needle. Switch the camera on and check battery charge. A red zone means trouble on a meter with a swinging needle, but paradoxically on cameras with test lights, both green and red lights can mean batteries are OK! Standard batteries should last for about 5 films - but check regularly for safety.

3. Set Eyepiece

This is a critical adjustment for Super 8 cameras - otherwise your film will be out of focus! Set the eyepiece by zooming in on a distant object using electric or manual zoom - *note that some cameras are electric zoom only and trying to move the zoom ring manually will cause damage!* Set focus to infinity on the lens barrel scale (maximum distance – the ‘lazy 8’). Now adjust sharpness of viewfinder image by screwing the eyepiece in or out.

3. Set Shooting Speed at 18fps

Shooting speed is expressed in frames per second (fps). Set this to 18fps unless you are attempting special effects such as slow or fast motion. Films will be projected at 18fps.

4. Test Motor

We have already tested the electric zoom. Now press the trigger and listen to the motor run. It should be running at even speed – some cameras are a bit noisy, that’s OK.

5. Load Film

Film cartridges are loaded in one of two ways - either angled in through a side door or slid in from the rear. Make sure the film door is firmly closed after loading.

6. Set Internal Filter if required

Super 8 films come ‘pre-balanced’ for either daylight or tungsten (electric) light. All Super 8 cameras are fitted with internal orange filters which compensate colour balance when using a ‘tungsten’ film in daylight. A lot of cameras are ‘intelligent’ and can sense the film type. They decide whether to engage or withdraw the filter for daylight shooting. However, some are ‘dumb’, and are equipped with a switch which has two positions: a sun icon and lightbulb icon. It’s a good idea to read the camera manual and do a little internet research on your film type before shooting, especially if you are shooting under artificial lights – you don’t want your images to turn out with an unwanted blue or orange tint. Contact us if you need further advice.

Shooting on Location

1. Check Lighting Conditions Using Auto-Exposure

Before doing a take, check light levels with the camera set to auto exposure. On most models, this means pressing the trigger lightly (not all the way!) and a needle inside the viewfinder will tell you what aperture (known as the "f"-stop) the camera wants to use. Generally, best results in image sharpness and colour saturation occur when the camera registers between f4 and f16. Note that the exposure meter cannot always be relied on in the case of black and white Tri-X film - see later in the guide.

2. Set F-Stop Using Manual Setting

Shooting on auto-exposure on a Super 8 camera is usually OK but be aware that meters are very sensitive to any change in light conditions. During pans, or when subjects pass close to the camera there could be a panic-change on the part of the camera which will cause the shot to fluctuate from light to dark. Alternatively, once you've seen what the camera wants as an f-stop on auto exposure, you can lock this manually by changing the exposure control to manual and adjusting until the needle rests on the right stop (or between the right stops). Don't forget to check for each new shot!

3. Use Lens Hood in Bright Sunlight

Especially important when you are forced to shoot against the sun. Avoids "light flares".

4. Keep Eye on Eyepiece

It is possible for light to leak back through the eyepiece onto the film when the camera is running. Keep your eye up to it at all times or blank it off if you are planning to make the shot without looking through the camera. Some cameras have a switch to perform this function. **NEVER LOOK AT THE SUN THROUGH THE EYEPICE!**

5. Beware Of Mixed Lighting Or Low Light Conditions.

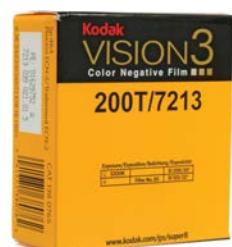
Unlike digital camcorders, film cameras do not perform well in extreme low-light conditions (although high-speed films like Tri-X assist this). They also cannot white balance for a variety of light conditions. Colour films work best in bright daylight or under full-strength artificial/studio lights. Reducing studio light intensity will cause colours to lose their correct hue and go "off". Having said this, with careful exposure it is possible to get great outdoor dawn and dusk shots - when the light has a special quality of warmth rather than being "flat".

6. Filters

It's a good idea to fit a clear filter to the front of your camera for lens protection. Filmmakers generally prefer UV (ultra violet) or Skylight filters. Colour and special effects filters are available - but experiment with them before committing important scenes to film.

7. Available Films

See www.nanolab.com.au for available filmstocks.



Camera Advice

Using Kodak's 7266 TRI-X black and white Super 8 film

This 'fast' film was originally designed for night sports in low light conditions. The grainy look of this film, together with its high contrast and sharp image, has made Tri-X a popular choice for Super 8 filmmakers in a variety of lighting conditions. Neutral density (ND) filters are usually fitted during bright daylight shooting. The reason for this is to cut down the amount of light entering the lens to allow the camera to use the normal f-stop range.

A problem with using Tri-X is that the inbuilt meters in some Super 8 cameras are unable to recognise this film. A guide to manual daylight exposures follows - you can use this for shooting or as a rough check of your camera meter's accuracy:

Guide to Setting Aperture in Daylight at 18fps

(Effective film speed 200ASA)

		<i>With ND4 Filter</i>	<i>Slow Motion</i>	
				<i>(No filter)</i>
Bright Sun	(Against sand or snow)	f45	f22	f32
Bright/Hazy Sun	(Distinct Shadows)	f22-32	f11-16	f16-22
Cloudy Bright	(No Shadows)	f22	f11	f16
Cloudy Dull	(or Subject in Shade)	f16	f8	f11
Heavy Overcast	(Low light)	f8 -11	f4 – 5.6	f5.6-8

At Night/Indoors under Artificial Lighting at 18fps

(Effective film speed 160ASA – no filter)

		<i>Slow Motion</i>	
Bright 3 point lighting	(Pro lighting kit)	f8	f5.6
Lighted signs	(Neon signs etc.)	f5.6	f4
Skylines	(10min after sunset)	f5.6	f4
Stage shows	(Under spotlights)	f4	f2.8
City streets/shop windows	(brightly lit)	f2.8-4	f2.8

Where to get what you need

Finding Cameras

Try garage sales, op-shops, swap meets, trash & treasure stalls. *Gumtree* is another source. Ask relatives if they've got stuff hidden away. Be wary of eBay, it's a journey into the unknown – the best policy is to carry some batteries and try the camera out on the spot before buying.

What should I pay?

This is a hard one. Prices are all about demand - how much do you really want that piece of equipment and will it come up again at a better price? \$20 - \$150 should cover it except for name brands like Beaulieu.

What Brand should I buy?

This is an impossible question. There are untold numbers of brands and models of Super 8 equipment - most manufacturers have managed to get something right along the line. But here are some of my favourite cameras: *Canon 518SV, Canon 814 & 1014 Auto Zoom Electronic, Sankyo XL-40S, Minolta Autopak 8D6*.

What Films are available?

The best place to go is the nanolab site http://www.nanolab.com.au/stock_sales.htm

Stocks available are in a transitional period at the moment and Richard Tuohy at nanolab is able to access a range of stocks from different manufacturers.

Kodak Cinema and Television is very supportive of student filmmaking, but is trending towards negative filmstocks and requires purchase of films in bulk lots.

Single cartridges are available by mail order from <http://nanolab.com.au/>

Laboratory Processing

Australia - Nanolab <http://nanolab.com.au/> (neg and reversal)

USA – Dwayne’s Photo www.dwaynesphoto.com (colour reversal only)

Other labs – http://motion.kodak.com/motion/Support/Laboratories_Directory/index.htm

Useful Resources

The Books:

- Cheshire, D. (1980). *The Book of Movie Photography*. Melbourne: Nelson.
- Home Movies Made Easy*. (1970). New York: Kodak Publications.
- Lipton, L. (1975). *The Super 8 Book*. San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books.
- Lipton, L. (1976). *Independent Filmmaking*. London: Studio Vista.
- Malkiewicz, K. (1989). *Cinematography* (2nd Ed.). London: Columbus.
- Pincus, E. & Ascher, S. (1999). *The Filmmaker's Handbook*. New York: Plume.
- Samuelson, D. (1979). *Motion Picture Camera Data*. London: Focal Press.

The Sites:

- Filmshooting.com: <http://www.filmshooting.com/>
- Super 8 Forum: <http://www.cinematography.com>
- Super 8 Wiki: <http://www.super8wiki.com>
- Super 8 camera manuals: http://super8exchange.com/camera_instructions.php
- Professional Super 8 stocks & lab work: <http://pro8mm.com/>
- Kodak Super 8 Analogue Renaissance:
<http://www.kodak.com/consumer/products/super8/default.htm>

Some Fests:

- <http://www.supergr8fest.com/>
- <http://www.cambridge-super8.org/>
- <http://chicago8fest.org/>
- www.curta8.com.br
- <http://www.mundoemfoco.org/superoff/>
- <http://onetakesuper8event.blogspot.ca>
- <http://the8fest.com/>

