

# James Bird – 8mm Movie Cameras – Hobby or Obsession?

My hobby started about 10 years ago when I found at a boot fair a hand-cranked projector for £10.

Whilst most of my collection is 8mm cameras, the projector that started this hobby plays Pathascope 9.5mm film. Grandpa owned and used a 9.5mm camera pre- and post-war. Whilst I can still view his films on the projector, I've had them firstly converted to VHS, but I can't play those anymore, and then to DVD – soon won't be able to play those? Interesting that whilst modern formats come and go, it's safest to keep the original media!



Bauer 88D 8mm cine camera c1958-60.

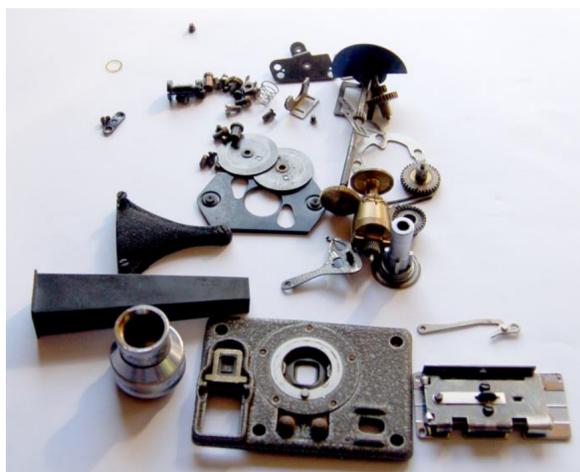
Below, a Bolsey 8, 8mm miniature cine camera c1958

Most of the cameras are 8mm. There are no Super 8 devices (far too new and modern for me!). The newest camera is the first electric motored 'domestic' camera (a Eumig). This is in the collection as an example of the 'end of the line' – the end of purely mechanical 8mm cameras.



These cameras are engineering marvels. Today making a camera that can record at 8 to 64 frames a second, with variable exposure and shutter speed is trivial – you've probably got one in your smart 'phone. But just think clockwork – to do it with springs, weights and friction pads – and for a price that the public could afford – FANTASTIC.

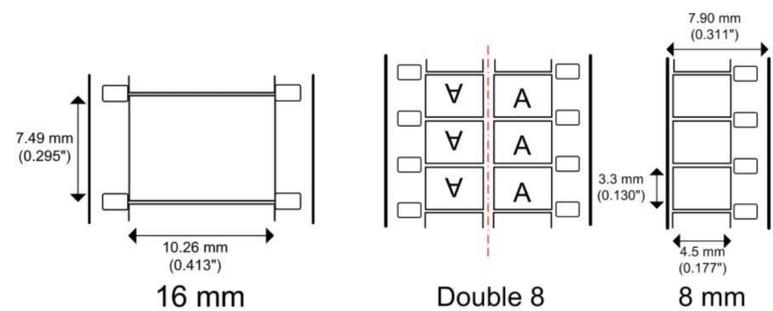
The vast majority of the cameras and accessories listed have come from eBay. Strike at the right time and you can pick these devices up for a pound or two.



The most I've paid is £100 for the little Bolsey, which I thought I deserved as the crown in my collection.

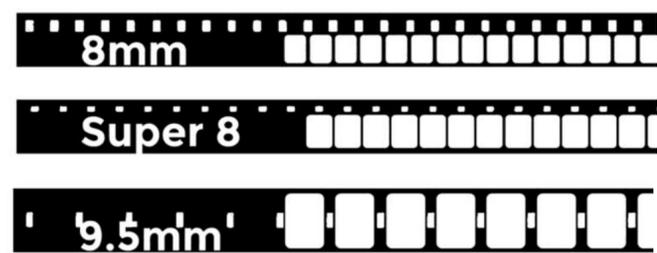
8mm, well, that's it isn't it? Of course not - marketing hype is nothing new and back in the 1930s they knew how to confuse people!

## Cine Film Formats



### Double or Standard 8

The first film marketed as 8mm was in fact 16mm film! Marketed as Double 8, later as Standard 8 it is a 25m length of 16mm film prepared with sprocket holes along both edges. The camera exposes 1/2 the width of the film, the film runs to its end, and is then run back the other way, exposing the other half. During processing the film is cut end to end, and presented back to the user as a single 50m length of 8mm film.



### Single 8

Around the time of the launch of super8 a number of manufacturers launched their own single width 8mm film formats. These were truly 8mm wide, but in the best traditions of 'how to destroy a perfectly good market' there were a number of conflicting and non complementary 'standards' which did little but allow Kodak to clean up with Super 8.

### Super8

Developed by Kodak in the mid 60s. Super 8 was indeed an 8mm wide film, supplied in a plastic cassette able to be daylight loaded. But as I say, far too modern for me.

### 9.5mm

Very much like the videotape format battle of the 1970s, 9.5mm like BetaMax was arguably the technically superior format.



It was successfully out-marketed by the underdog, and in the end completely shouldered out of the market.