

# Converting 8mm Film to Digital

## Things to Consider:

### **COST:**

If cost is your most important consideration, and you have access to the necessary equipment, and you have lots of time to devote to the project, and quality isn't especially important, Then, consider doing it yourself. Unless you can somehow balance the projector speed and camera speed. the result will be judder, and flickery. You are also likely to get flashlight effect (bright center - dark sides) and color balancing will be up to you.

**Suppose I want to do the film transfer myself. How do I do it?**

**<http://www.wikihow.com/Transfer-8mm-Films-to-Video>**

**Otherwise**, look at the cost/ quality/ risk tradeoffs of the various companies that offer these services and pick the one that most appeals to you.

### **QUALITY:**

You will not get good quality from a service that projects the film on a wall or screen and captures it with a conventional camera. Top quality services have specialized projector/ camera computer combinations to capture the data frame by frame while capturing the full frame as opposed to a portion of it. They clean and lubricate the film before scanning it. (the lubricant temporarily fills in and conceals the scratches) They enhance and color correct the scanned image.

### **RISK:**

When you ship anything there is a risk of loss. If the place you ship to ships to another place for processing, the risk is doubled. For this reason, I would always ship (or take) the film directly to the processing location.

### **ARCHIVABILITY:**

You might think that once you convert the film to DVD you have preserved it forever and you would be wrong. DVD readers are already going out. They are being replaced by the cloud and undoubtedly some other medium

will come along so that they will go the way of 8 track players, but by getting the images digitized, you have gone a long way to preserving them. You may consider getting the output on a hard drive instead of or in addition to DVDs. You might even put a hard drive in a safe deposit box. I did. Getting editable files on a hard drive gives you the ability to rearrange the files and to cut out unimportant sequences to make the viewing experience more pleasurable. It also gives you the ability to add music and or narration to preserve your memories with the images. I did both.

### **How Long Can I expect a recorded DVD to be readable?**

It varies. See:

**<http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/initiatives/temp-opmedia-faq.html>**

**FORMAT:** Some websites offer HD or Blue ray formats: Don't bother. Your film is not likely to be HD quality and for sure isn't HD format. Keep it in its native format to retain all the data without out stretching or shrinking anything!

### **OK, I want to get my transfer done professionally. Who can do it?**

**LOCALLY:** You may want to try to find a place to get it done locally. IF you can find a local place to do it and you see their work or hear from a trusted friend that it meets your criteria, go for it.

One processor **Video Vault Productions** is located in Belleview, FL <http://videovaultproductions.com/videovaultproductions.com/index2.html> . Two of our members have used this company and were satisfied with the results. I did not find any on line reviews. One member warns to be be sure you know up front what the total price will be. This is good advice for every company mentioned in this presentation.

I found One place **Home Video Productions** in Tampa <http://www.homevideostudio.com/video-services/224/index.cfm> that is part of a national chain and sends all their work to a central processing location but

has local pick up and drop off sites that will help you get your order ready. They even have an old fashioned 8mm film editor they will loan you so you can manually look at your film and cut out scenes you do not wish to digitize. Depending on your film library, this could be a major cost saver. Other local places may have this service. Other Home Video Production franchises are located in Jacksonville and Winter Haven.

This company has 90 franchises around the country like the one in Tampa. It must be doing something right, but I could not find any comparative reviews other than the ones on their web site. I talked to the owner in Tampa, Arnie Reynolds and found his personal expertise and knowledge to be useful. He was cooperative and friendly.

I would not use a local service that sends film out unless they have employees dedicated to this service. I'm thinking drug stores where my wife had a bad experience .

#### **WEBSITES OF INTEREST:**

I found the following on the TECHive website: Before trusting it too far, be aware that they were looking at slide scans and not movie scans, but some of the observations would be pertinent to both.

Company	Overall	Ease of Use	Turnaround Time	Cost	Image Quality	Services	Delivery Options
<b>ScanCafe</b>	1	2	3	1	1	3	3
<b>GoPhoto</b>	2	1	2	2	2	4	2
<b>digmypics</b>	3	4	3	5	2	2	4
<b>ScanDigital.com</b>	4	3	5	3	5	1	1
<b>ScanMyPhotos INTERNATIONAL</b>	5	5	1	4	3	5	5



I looked at the relevant websites and other reviews instead of just showing this one (though it was tempting - would have saved a lot of time)

**Scan cafe** sends their work to India to be done - unless you pay a premium to have it done in the USA. Added Risk - added time. and other reviews were less complimentary than this one.

**GOPHOTO** does not process 8mm film - case closed for them.

**Digmypics** is a site I have used for both slides and 8mm. I was impressed with their quality, their ability to provide both a DVD and editable media on a hard drive (ON DVD IF YOUR AMOUNT OF DATA IS SMALL), ability to preview your output before you pay for it and to only pay for what you want. I have to qualify this. They batch your data and allow you to view the batches, You can delete and not pay for a batch but you cannot delete a partial batch. You can rename the batches so you know what they are. You can arrange the batches into the sequence you prefer them to appear on the DVD. They were very good about answering questions (in understandable English), and about sending emails as the data made its way through the process so I always knew where my order stood. Other than the Techive review posted above, I did not find any independent

reviews for Digmypics. I consider this strange. I saw numerous glowing reviews on their website, but I take reviews on any companies own website with a huge grain of salt. <http://digmypics.com>

**ScanDigital;**

Their website looks great and it says all the right things.  
<http://www.scandigital.com>

Other reviews I read were mixed: average 3.5 of 5. A lot of the negatives were from “group on” customers complaining about slow service, being charged more than expected without authorization and poor quality. Several 5 star ratings of high praise - not many middle roaders. Ratings I saw: <http://www.yelp.com/biz/scandigital-torrance?nb=1>

**SCANMYPHOTO.COM:**

Their website mentions and gives prices but little else about 8mm to digital processing. They invite phone calls. It looks like 8mm processing is an after thought with them. I did not devote more time to researching them.

I hope you picked up a few useful pointers in this presentation. Good luck on your film to digital conversions.