

RETURN OF A LEGEND

THE BEAULIEU IS BACK AGAIN – WITH A FRESH LOOK

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It is an inspiring feeling to hold a new cine camera in one's hands. Admittedly, the item in question is not quite new, but it looks that way – “remanufactured” is the correct technical term for these Beaulieu 4008s, which contain refurbished parts and new components. The Pro8mm Classic Professional Camera – with Max 8 format 16:9 widescreen modification and quartz-controlled “Crystal Sync” speed regulation – spent a week on the test bench in our editorial office.



The Pro8mm Classic professional camera in operation.

► A Beaulieu never fails to leave an impression. I believe there is no other cine camera brand that splits people so drastically into two camps: Beaulieu fans or Beaulieu haters. From the outset, I confess that I have always been a Beaulieu hater. Why? In 1980, I had three Beaulieu 6008S sent to me - only one of the three functioned properly. Then there are the endless battery problems in the 4008 series. And the frequent need for repair - in spite of the breathtakingly high purchase price. Real Beaulieu freaks were always mocked because they had to have their fancy devices serviced annually... a noble brand with movie star airs.

And now the "Pro8mm Classic" shows up in its plastic case and tries once again to irritate me right from the beginning. You have to temporarily remove the trigger to screw on the variable zoom lens with aperture and zoom motors. For Beaulieu experts, this is probably nothing new. For me it was unusual, particularly since the case insert is designed so that one must always unscrew the lens for transport. This makes quick operation impossible.



Camera without handgrip

The camera has no handgrip and therefore belongs on a tripod. The Pro8mm logo is now resplendent where the screw-in battery was once mounted. In return, they provide a battery pack that should run 50 Super 8 cartridges, according to the instructions. That would be quite something! The nickel cadmium cells deliver 2,400 Milliampères (mAh) and are hidden in a little bag that is connected to the camera by a cable. An LED shines to signal that it is ready for use, but unfortunately there is no power

Remove the trigger to screw on the zoom lens with aperture and zoom motors.

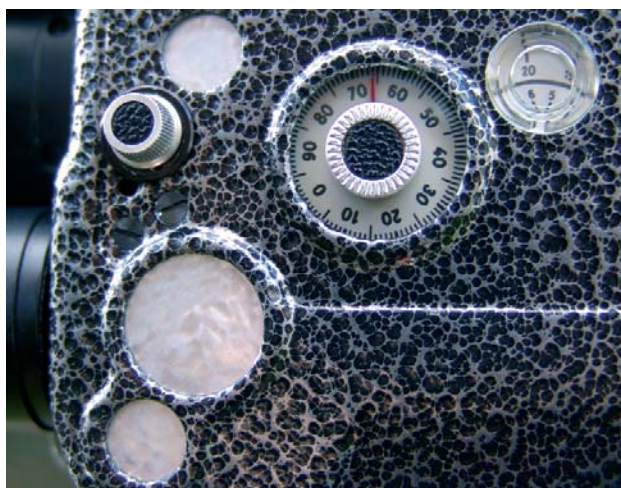
switch on the case. The batteries arrive at the customer fully charged and need five hours to recharge when empty.

The spiffed up Beaulieu saw its first action with me on my doorstep. I had to use the last autumn rays of sun for testing. I shot some scenes of the Hamburg elevated railway with the brownish-red foliage of the trees in the foreground. There are black lines in the bright reflex viewfinder to indicate the size of the image frame when transformed into 16:9. To this end, Pro8mm has slightly enlarged the film gate on the side farthest from the perforations (where the magnetic soundtrack is normally placed). However, that alone does not yet yield a 16:9 format. This is achieved by cropping the upper and lower portions of the image. Then, after scanning at Pro8mm, you receive a 16:9 video.

Unfortunately, the case provided with the camera requires you to remove the lens to fit into the provided cutouts.



Necessary attachment: The battery pack must always be connected to the camera by a cable.



As one can see, Pro8mm does not replace all mechanical elements of the camera when rebuilding the Beaulieu 4008.

Local transfer houses equipped with a Flashscan or other film scanner without a fixed frame mask can also perform such transfers. However, one loses some of the resolution of the Super 8 frame by cropping the image information at



The Pro8mm Classic Professional in its basic model without zoom and aperture motor. The aperture must be stopped by hand in this case.

Wittner Cinetec also offers a compendium for the Pro8mm camera at a cost of Euro 750.

the top and bottom. A camera modified to Max 8 can be used to create quite normal 4:3 films for projection. One simple ignores the marks in the viewfinder. Pro8mm offers the Classic camera without Max 8 for Euro 400 [US-\$500] less.

A look at the prices

Since we are already discussing prices: The Pro8mm Classic Professional Kit with carrying case can be purchased from Wittner Cinetec for Euro 2,356.20 [US-\$ 2,495.00 from Pro8mm]. In this basic configuration, a Schneider Kreuznach Beaulieu Optivaron Macro 1.8/6–66 mm is included with manual focal length and aperture adjustment. Any other C-Mount lenses can also be used, of course.



The lens I tested, with automatic aperture and zoom motor, is available

at additional cost. The variant with built-in quartz speed regulation (at 24 or 25 fps) costs another Euro 450 [US-\$ 500]. All versions are available with the Max 8 modification (another Euro 400). Indeed, Europeans can purchase the camera directly from Pro8mm at a slightly more favorable price, but this price difference shrinks quickly when you factor in the cost of customs and import duties. And, in contrast to Pro8mm who offer a mere 90-day warranty, Wittner Cinetec provides a full year guarantee.

In the meantime, the shots that I captured on Wittnerchrome 100D (Kodak Ektachrome 100D) have returned from the laboratory. This quickly silenced any sniping about this camera: The result offered legendary dreamlike image clarity with beautiful colors.

Fades in and out were performed by means of a lever – and were always successful. Soft zoom, correct automatic exposure (switchable) and distortion-free black-and-white graphic test charts, that I also filmed.

The ex-Beaulieu, now a Pro8mm Classic, captures virtually professional images that are almost up to the standards of the Leicina Special. The case is also a unique creation – both cameras are beautiful examples of design.

Riddles in the instructions

However, the operating instructions offer some riddles. Again you see that

I feel the need to grumble a bit more. There are several warnings in the text that this camera cannot do everything. For example, one must use an electric remote control if working at more than 24 fps. The normal trigger should not be used, “or the camera motor will burn out!” Oops, we wouldn’t want that.

Another warning concerns the crystal-regulated version. If we enable the “Crystal Sync” mode (24 or 25 fps, depending on the version), but accidentally set the film speed knob to a different frame rate, the film will run not at the synchronous speed, but rather at the one set on the dial. This can end nastily and asynchronously as well.

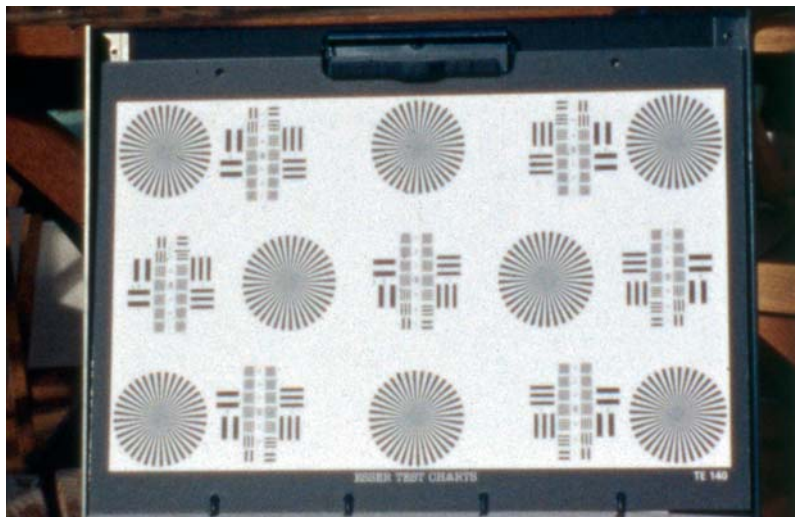
Pro8mm also advises caution with the trigger circuit. Using the wrong trigger can roast the camera motor. Yes, the French Beaulieus shared similar peculiarities that could not be completely removed in spite of costly remanufacturing in the USA.

Finally, something old yet new

The silver and black speckled Pro8mm Classic Professional is a camera that



Note the left of the image frame: The enlarged Max 8 film gate for the 16:9 format.



Wittnerchrome 100D frames shot with the Pro8mm Classic Professional: Good sharpness, deep colors.



The lines indicate where the image will be scanned to create 16:9 images. The vignetting on the top and bottom left are a typical problem with Schneider optics at certain focal lengths and distance settings – this is something that Pro8mm was unable to change.

awakens high expectations on account of its price. Those who see the images that this film equipment delivers will not be disappointed. It squeezes everything technically feasible out of the Super 8 format. The disguised Beaulieu could be a little more comfortable to handle, but professional equipment is usually a bit awkward in this sense. Whether the 16:9 modifications really makes sense – particularly since part of the image frame (and therefore resolution) must be sacrificed – is somewhat doubtful. Super 8 is essentially a 4:3

format. Pro8mm should be given significant credit for bringing newly rebuilt cameras to the marketplace. It was an absolutely necessary development, since only used equipment has been available for about 25 years. Old models grow ever more tired. Pro8mm also offers a reworked Canon 814 as an alternative for those with smaller wallets. This 8x zoom camera with some technical modifications sells for US-\$795, about Euro 540. We'll take a look at this model in our next test. ■

Technical Information

Pro8mm Classic Professional Sync Kit with quartz regulated 24 or 25 fps crystal sync control

Camera specifications:

- camera body, refurbished/remanufactured, without sound circuit
- Interchangeable c-mount camera body, many adaptors available for SLR photo lenses
- filming speeds from 2 to 70 fps (optional: additional internal quartz regulator for 24 fps or 25 fps); tested with 25 fps quartz control
- built-in exposure meter
- TTL exposure metering by CdS cell
- adjustable film speed between 50-400 ISO (ASA), automatic frame rate compensation.
- reflex viewfinder with mirrored guillotine shutter
- infinitely variable shutter speed
- ground glass focusing for precise sharpness evaluation, switchable between aerial viewfinder and full ground glass. 20x viewfinder enlargement.
- viewfinder with adjustable diopter to correct to individual filmmakers' eyesight.
- film meter and mechanical frame counter
- optional electronic remote control
- External DIN power socket
- 1/4-inch tripod thread
- dimensions: approx. 153 x 115 x 70 mm
- weight: approx. 800 g
- standard shutter speeds:
 - 2 fps = 1/7 sec.
 - 4 fps = 1/15 sec.
 - 8 fps = 1/30 sec.
 - 18 fps = 1/65 sec.
 - 25 fps = 1/87 sec.
 - 36 fps = 1/130 sec.
 - 50 fps = 1/175 sec.
 - 70 fps = 1/260 sec.
- shortened shutter speeds (shutter half closed):
 - 2 fps = 1/14 sec.
 - 4 fps = 1/30 sec.
 - 8 fps = 1/60 sec.
 - 18 fps = 1/130 sec.
 - 25 fps = 1/175 sec.
 - 36 fps = 1/260 sec.
 - 50 fps = 1/350 sec.
 - 70 fps = 1/520 sec.