



Why your Cine film  
won't last forever.

[www.picturebox.ie](http://www.picturebox.ie)

Although Cine film is more durable than video, as a format, cine film has reached the end of its shelf life. Cine film degrades over time mainly due to its chemical properties. Film is especially susceptible to time and environmental factors. Unless these film reels are transferred to a digital format, their images will be irretrievably lost.

Cine film was most popular from the 1930's to the 1980's and was succeeded by the introduction Videotape as a home movie format in the 1980's.

### Overview

There are many family's who have old cine reels stored in attics and garages, each reel contains priceless footage of family memories that are slowly fading away with time. Many Hollywood classic movies have already been transferred to digital formats such as DVD & Blue Ray and this has unfortunately lead to perceptions that cine film can last for ever. Cine film was the predecessor of video as a home movie format, but cine film is not a durable medium.

There are three major factors that contribute cine film's degradation:

- Time
- Usage
- Environment

Even if stored correctly, in cool, airtight containers, Cine film has a lifetime of approximately 40 years, after which its starts to breakdown. The first signs of damage begins with the film itself, curling, buckling and warping can be evident. Cine becomes brittle and in some cases, even a strong vinegar smell can be detected.

### Time

The first enemy of cine film reels is time. Like most physical media, it will breakdown slowly over time. Colour dyes will lose their vibrancy and the audio track can become distorted. The acetate used in film breaks down and can release an unpleasant acetic acid smell, which has a similar smell to vinegar. Time is an unavoidable but realistic factor which has resulted in the loss of many valuable reels of footage already.

### Usage

If you're of a certain vintage, you may remember how temperamental home movie projectors were! Any number of problems occurred during the handling of the film, if it was loaded incorrectly, the sprockets could tear the film gauges, making it impossible for the film to run through the projector correctly. Sometimes this would cause the film to stop completely and as a result, a hole would burned in the film because of prolonged exposure to the projection lamp. Bad splices, where damaged film were re-taped together could

come apart and cause a jam in the projector. Wrong tension in the film reels would cause the a jam in the pull down claw resulting in the film folding up like an accordion inside the projector. Film is also susceptible to scratches because it is exposed, unlike video tape which is contained within a cassette mechanism.

## The Environment

The third major enemy to film is the environment. Elements such as heat, moisture and mildew can destroy cine film over time. Any substance coming in contact the film's emulsion can usually mean disaster as it causes reactions with the materials within the film causing warping, distortion, and brittleness. Unless film has been stored correctly, in an airtight container, in a cool, dry conditions, elements such as dampness or extreme heat can dramatically affect the quality of your film.

## Celluloid

Understanding the chemical composition of film is helpful in realising why cine is so fragile. Film typically consists of a cellulose acetate or nitrate 'strip' that is coated with a photosensitive emulsion, on which the images are contained. Each individual image is called a 'frame'. Because of its physical nature, film can suffer any number of problems such as broken or damages gauges, brittleness, and curling. All of which render it difficult or impossible to run on a projector either for viewing or for converting to a digital format.

## Solution

Because of its strong colour clarity, Cine film is one the best home movie mediums there are. These precious memories captured on cine film need to be preserved for future generations and the best method for preserving these memories is to transfer them to digital formats, such as DVDs. Once the older footage has been transferred into a digital file, it can be more easily edited, shared, and enjoyed without the concern of loss of quality over time.

## About Picturebox

Picturebox is a home video editing and DVD creation company. We transform your home movies, old-media and images into crystal-clear DVD's that you can enjoy and share, time and time again. In Picturebox's studio, our production professionals use state-of-the-art technology and techniques to edit home movie video & films, video tapes, photographs and slides into full-length productions.

Founded and led by Con Kennedy, Picturebox is based in Dublin, Ireland.

For more information, visit [www.picturebox.ie](http://www.picturebox.ie) or call 087 243 0082.

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