

With Help From 'Star Wars,' Kodak CEO Says Its Film Business Will Return to Profitability

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Thanks to filmmakers such as J.J. Abrams, Quentin Tarantino and Christopher Nolan, Hollywood "doesn't have to worry about film going away anymore," says Jeff Clarke.



^[1]
Courtesy of Lucasfilm
'Star Wars: The Force Awakens'

The force is with Kodak, the last remaining motion picture film manufacturer.

J.J. Abrams' *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, which premiered Monday evening in Hollywood, was shot on film by cinematographer Dan Mindel. Also shot on film are a string of additional Oscar contenders including *The Hateful Eight* from Quentin Tarantino — which will also be offered as a 70mm film Roadshow — as well as Sam Mendes' *Spectre*, Tom Haynes' *Carol*, David O. Russell's *Joy* and Steven Spielberg's *Bridge of Spies*.

Looking ahead, Kodak CEO Jeff Clarke said, "It is our understanding that director Rian Johnson and cinematographer Steve Yedlin are planning to shoot *Star Wars: Episode VIII* on Kodak film. They are in preproduction and we are working with them to bring their vision to the screen the way they intend it."

Clarke estimated that, in total, 90 studio and indie movies (in addition to television work) were shot on film this past year. And while that's a far cry from catching up to digital cinematography, Kodak is bullish on keeping film alive as another option for filmmakers. According to the chief executive, thanks

to its film push and restructuring efforts, Kodak went from losing \$100 million annually on its film business to "breaking even the last three quarters," and he expects it to be profitable in 2016.

Speaking with *The Hollywood Reporter* as *The Force Awakens* premiered, he called Abrams "an extraordinary supporter of film. His advocacy was a key part of Kodak's decision to keep making film when we were down 96 percent."

The film manufacturer was considering pulling the plug until roughly a year ago, when filmmakers including Abrams, Tarantino and Christopher Nolan worked with all of the major studios to see that they inked supplier deals with Kodak [2], ensuring film's existence for the foreseeable future.

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"We are not longer limited by these deals," Clarke claimed, noting that its overall film business across industries is up. "We are building and investing in it to grow, including supporting and building labs around the world. There's so much artistic interest, and renewed support from studios. When artists spoke, it saved an art form."

Kodak efforts include expanding availability of lab capabilities in production hubs such as New York, whose last motion picture lab closed this past year. Clarke noted this past year, Kodak partnered with Alpha Grips to expand its mobile lab program, and is currently working with cinematographer Ed Lachman (*Carol*) and other partners to bring a lab presence to major cities such as New York.

Observing a "trend back toward wanting to shoot on film," Lachman, who photographed *Carol* with Super 16mm film, said in a recent THR interview [3]: "If Kodak is going to make film, we also need labs to process the film. Right now, the New York Film Lab [a partnership between Deluxe and Technicolor that was created to respond to film's shrinking footprint] is closed. They were going to throw out all the equipment. I inquired about it, and the general manager let me have the lab equipment. I have it in storage. We can develop film at Fotokem in Los Angeles, which is a very good lab. ... But there's a market and [we need] a lab on the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S."

Lachman said of his decision to use Super 16 for *Carol*: "I like to think of it as another skin over [leads Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara]. The grain created a certain emotional quality. ... I think part of the reason people respond to *Carol* is they feel the granularity, the texture and the emotion of what film presents."

Titles scheduled for release in 2016 all or parts of which were shot on film include Zack Snyder's *Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice*, The Coen brothers' *Hail, Caesar!*, David Ayer's *Suicide Squad*, Damien Chazelle's *La La Land*, Paul Greengrass' *Bourne* sequel, and Antoine Fuqua's *The Magnificent Seven*.

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Links:

[1] [http://pinterest.com/pin/create/button/?url=www.hollywoodreporter.com/behind-screen/help-star-wars-kodak-ceo-848593&media=http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/thumbnail_570x321/2015/12/screen_shot_2015-12-14_at_1.17.19_pm.png&description=With Help From 'Star Wars,' Kodak CEO Says Its Film Business Will Return to Profitability](http://pinterest.com/pin/create/button/?url=www.hollywoodreporter.com/behind-screen/help-star-wars-kodak-ceo-848593&media=http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/thumbnail_570x321/2015/12/screen_shot_2015-12-14_at_1.17.19_pm.png&description=With%20Help%20From%20Star%20Wars,%20Kodak%20CEO%20Says%20Its%20Film%20Business%20Will%20Return%20to%20Profitability)

[2] <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/behind-screen/kodak-inks-deals-studios-extend-770300>

[3] <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/behind-screen/carol-cinematographer-ed-lachman-talks-844632>

[4] <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/star-wars-force-awakens>