



Modellbahn-TV 19

Rio Grande – VGB

DVD 53mins ref.7519 €14.80

The new edition of the 'Modellbahn-TV' magazine programme, released in October 2011, is introduced from the Sacramento Railroad Museum and begins with a tour of the site (3'35"). Vintage Lionel layouts have a place alongside the historic stock and memorabilia.

However, the first main feature takes us back to Germany to visit the Modellbahn Zauber permanent display layout at Friedrichstadt (8'20"). As well as observing many of the carefully modelled details on this large HO installation, with scenery ranging from the North Sea to the Alps, we get to look behind the scenes. Computer control allows up to fifty trains to be in action. The obligatory night-time phase is enhanced by a firework display and some effective thunder and lightning. The show may not have the scope of Miniatur Wunderland or the historical authenticity of Modellbundesbahn, but seems well worth a visit.

Subject of the next section is the presentation of the *Goldene Gleis* awards to producers of models selected by readers of the various VGB publications. This took place during a visit to Meiningen works, and as well as highlights of the ceremony we get a tour of the facilities (9'). The event concluded with a trip along the Rennsteigbahn hauled by 0-10-0T 94 1538.

One award went to the legendary railway historian Horst Obermayer, famous for his handy and authoritative pocket-size guides to German locos and stock. He is now in his 80s and could not attend – so the presenter and film crew went to him! He was interviewed about his life and work and an edited version (6'55") is included here; as a bonus, the disk also provides the full thing (45').

The professional workshop section in this issue completes the superdetailing and weathering of the Auhagen HO kit for 'Krakow' station building begun last time (9'). The advice on creating the painted sign on the brickwork looks very interesting.

The new product reviews cover recently released locos, stock, and accessories, among them the DB VT11 diesel train and ÖBB 1245 electric from Roco, the Prussian T8 by Brawa, a Bavarian dining car and modern container flats from Märklin, the Fleischmann N Taurus electric, factory accessories from Faller, and a laser-cut card kit by Busch (5'45").

We end by returning to the USA to visit the NMRA convention, in Sacramento; in addition to examining selected layouts and trade stands in the hall, we also participate in a tour visiting several home layouts (9'20").

The production is fully up to professional broadcast standards, well photographed and carefully compiled.

The programme is only offered in 16:9 format.

The initial screen offers direct access to the seven chapters as well as film start; if one chapter is chosen,

only that section plays before returning to the menu.

Graphics separate the sections with clear titles. Each section is introduced by Hagen von Ortloff in vision, but the clear and informative commentary is by another voice. The interviewees are somewhat harder to follow. The soundtrack is only available in German; the American modellers have been dubbed.

There is some use of backing music.

Rio Grande railway videos are published by VerlagsGruppe Bahn GmbH, Am Fohlenhof 9a, D-82256 Fürstentfeldbruck, Germany.

www.riogrande.de www.vgbahn.de

Steam in Poland

Volume 3:

The South 1970 – 1985

Ton Pruissen

DVD c.55mins £20.35 incl.p&p

Dutchman Ton Pruissen was a frequent visitor to eastern Europe during the communist era, spending his holidays chasing steam trains. This DVD in his 'Steam under the Red Star' series is the third to present the results of several trips to Poland, and is organised into nine chapters.

It begins with a September 1975 visit to Jaworzyna depot, where classes seen include Ok1 (BR38) 4-6-0, Ty2 2-10-0, and Pt47 2-8-2 (4'50").

Going back to 1970, we move on to Opole to see a Tr21 2-8-0, and Zakopane, where an old Okz32 2-8-2T is the centre of interest (3'10").

Next, sequences taken from the lineside in southern Poland show a Tkt48 2-8-2T in September 1975 and a Ty2 June 1976 (5'10"). Some of the footage was taken from a car running parallel, and the result is very steady.

The same visit also took in Pyskowice depot and some lineside observation near Rybnik. Types seen include the last working example of the Ty23 2-10-0, plus Ty45 2-10-0, Pt47, and more (8'40").

In Sierpc depot and yard the main attraction for enthusiasts was a Tr203 2-8-0 (USATC S160) (2'35").

Attention then turns to the Sochaczew narrow gauge, west of Warsaw, now a museum line, but seen in 1975 while still working, complete with dual gauge section. There is some pacing, and a ride on the loco, a pre-war 0-8-0 (6').

Nysa station in June 1979 provides examples of the Pt47 and Tkt48 classes, plus a school excursion in April 1985 (6'51").

The Polish-built Pt47 forms the subject of the penultimate chapter: seen in action from the lineside around Klodzko in June 1979 and at the station in April 1985 (6'55").

The coverage is completed with a look around Klodzko depot in that year. Despite the weather, with

Left

PKP 2-8-2T Tkt48-10 running between Nowy Sacz and Chabowka on 4th September 1975. This is one of the images provided among the supporting information on Ton Pruissen's *Steam in Poland* DVD.

Photo: Jan Willem van Dorp.

rain turning to sleet and snow, servicing is carried out in the open air. A car converted to run on rails makes an amusing aside. (10'45".)

These are regular services, not specials or charters, and Pruissen always takes time to observe details and procedures.

While locations are mostly at stations or around sheds, there are more lineside views than usual in this collection. The shots are carefully composed, and the clips of a good length.

The film is a mixture of black & white at first and later colour, and the picture quality is very good throughout.

The sound was recorded on location – we are shown the cameraman's wife doing so! – and has been meticulously dubbed to create a convincing effect, in stereo.

The DVD offers the choice of commentary in German or English, the latter the result of co-operation between Camden and Pruissen. The English commentary is informative, giving the date of each clip (in most cases), the location, and details of the train and motive power; it is clearly delivered by Ton Pruissen himself – his English is excellent, albeit with a slight accent. Some of the 'jokes' fall rather flat, but we suspect that would be true in any language!

The first screen of the DVD offers the choice of running the film, with or without commentary, in either language, or selecting specific chapters. If a chapter is chosen, just that section is played, then the menu is shown again.

There are several trailers (12") for other similar Pruissen productions.

The DVD also includes printable pdf files that provide extensive background notes (five pages, in English, German, and Polish) on locomotives and locations, plus maps (there are none on screen), an index of places mentioned, a selection of colour photos taken by Pruissen's travelling companions, and even a copy of their Polish letter of permission to take photos!

Another fascinating film from Ton Pruissen which allows to share his remarkable rail travel experiences.

The DVD can be obtained from Camden Miniature Steam Services, Barrow Farm, Rode, Frome, Somerset, BA11 6PS. The price quoted above includes UK postage and packing.

www.camdenmin.co.uk

The 2011 Sandstone Steam Gala

Sandstone Heritage Trust

DVD/CD c.50mins £10.50/R130.00

This programme features many highlights from the week-long steam gala held on the Sandstone narrow gauge railway in the Eastern Free State of South Africa in April 2011.

The 2' gauge line on this working farm has an enormous and constantly growing variety of motive power – no fewer than twenty-two steam locos were in action for the event, from tiny industrials to mighty Garratts. The operation is famous world-wide for the standard of the restoration work carried out, bringing derelict machines back to working order. This is definitely a collection of contrasts, and also includes agricultural machinery, traction engines, a steam lorry, vintage cars, and classic military vehicles – all were in action during the gala, and are represented here.

Staging such a large event poses many challenges, and local staff were augmented by visiting volunteer loco crews from the Welsh Highland Railway, which also uses NGG16 Garratts, and the Bennett Brook

Railway near Perth, Western Australia, which also has NG15 2-8-2s. The visitors relished opportunity to work on other locos, and some of them are interviewed in the programme.

The combination of hard-working locomotives and the scenery of the foothills of the Maluti Mountains makes for some memorable images. The steam effects are optimised in the autumn, and the weather was generally kind, despite some clouds, though heavy rain not long before had damaged parts of the line, which required much effort to get back into service for the event; indeed, one section had to remain out of use.

The first screen of the DVD offers access to the coverage of the gala or a postscript entitled 'The Road Ahead'. This explains some of the main problems facing the continued operation of the railway – damage due to the weather, criminal activity (theft of track materials), official indifference (no support from the tourism ministry, despite the historic worth of the restoration work and the presence at this event of representatives from the Transnet Heritage Foundation, not to mention the effects on the local economy), and the prospect of inappropriate regulation (imposing main line conditions on a low-speed museum operation). All enthusiasts will sympathise and hope that the Trust can progress.

There are no separately identified chapters, but the skip button does access logical sections.

Picture quality is excellent, camerawork always competent, locations well chosen, and observation – both of the gala action and its participants! – keen.

The commentary is clearly delivered and informative, although generally only the few locos featured in detail are specifically identified. The location sound is stirring, and backing music has been sparingly used, to cover long shots where background noise would be objectionable.

As a bonus, the package also includes a picture CD containing almost two hundred images by some of the world's most experienced railway photographers who took full advantage of the carefully composed train formations, staged runpasts, and magnificent scenic settings.

The DVD was produced by Frameline Productions for the Sandstone Heritage Trust, P.O.Box 67805, Bryanston 2021, South Africa.

www.sandstone-estates.com

It is available in the UK from 33, Searing Way, Tadley, Hampshire, RG26 4HT.

joannewest@btinternet.com

The prices quoted include postage and packing. Cheques should be made payable to 'Sandstone Steam Railroad'.

Very enjoyable, and a bargain at the price.

Gears in the Woods – Shays at Cass

Highball Productions

DVD 16x9 105mins SPV ref.S164 £21.00

The town of Cass, West Virginia, grew up as a base for the logging activities of the West Virginia Spruce Lumber Company in the early 1900s. The railway, initially just a main line fed by branches, was built to bring the lumber down from the nearby mountains for onward transportation on the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad and processing into paper. As the business developed and the value of the local hardwoods was realised, a mill and company towns were built further up the line at Spruce, and two further main lines continued to Bergoo and Cheat Junction, totalling about eighty miles. After a varied history, including two major fires, and as demands and technology changed, the business closed in 1960.

However, the West Virginia State Legislature was persuaded to set up what was to become the Cass Scenic Railroad State Park and develop what remained of the facilities as an historic attraction. The railroad

Right

Shay No.5 of the Cass Scenic Railroad (a C-80 type built by Lima for the Greenbrier and Elk River RR in 1905) is being prepared for another run at Cass on 19th September 2008.

Photo:

Kenneth G.Williamson.



currently operates over eleven miles of track from Cass to Bald Knob using Shay locomotives built by Lima between 1905 and 1945; there is also a Heisler and a Climax undergoing restoration. Volunteers from the Mountain State Railroad & Logging Historical Association have performed much of the work.

This programme follows the activities during a special Carl Franz Photo Freight charter and a Railfan Weekend in May 2011. Engines 4, 5, 6, and 11 provided the power, hauling a log train and an accompanying passenger train for the fans and photographers. On each day there were side-by-side run-bys with three of the locomotives at Cass, followed by trips up the line, stopping at numerous locations in the woods for more run-bys to give the best photographic opportunities.

Soon after leaving Cass, there are two switchbacks to enable the line to gain height; both are sufficiently long to allow the trains to pass each other. Between each, the grade reaches 6.7%. Trains are seen to stop at Whittaker Station where there is a reconstructed logging camp but sadly this was not visited. Beyond Old Spruce to Bald Knob the line now used was not originally part of the main line and reaches a maximum grade of over 11%. At Oats Creek trains stop for water siphoned from an old engine boiler into which the creek is diverted. Even here there is a considerable grade to be overcome when starting. A wye allows trains to reverse before reaching Bald Knob, the end of the line.

The weather turned out to be good and helped to result in some clear images. The vertical cylinders and mechanism of side drive shafts and gears on the Shays could have been designed for video footage!

Some history of the engines and of the line is explained in the narration.

This programme is produced in the UK under licence by Steam Powered Video, of Upper Harbledown, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 9AX. The price quoted includes UK postage & packing.

A trio of trainz

Tom Williamson Productions

2 x DVD c.132mins £27.90 incl.p&p

This set of two DVDs presents three films from New Zealand, showing three very different railway operations. Two are genuine industrials of 2' (or thereabouts) gauge, while the third feature follows a main line (3'6" gauge) steam excursion.

The first disk contains a 72 minute film about the narrow gauge railway installed to remove spoil from an interesting tunnelling job, in connection with the extension of a tourist walking trail to the old Woodstock Mine in the Karangahake Gorge near Auckland. It features fascinating underground footage of drilling and firing explosive charges prior to tramming out the spoil. The home-made internal combus-

tion 'locomotive' used is in the best traditions of New Zealand 'bush engineering', making something useful out of whatever was available. The history of the mining operations in the area is very well explained, but the railway operation is hardly interesting and varied enough to warrant so much time.

The second disk hosts two films, the first an affectionate look at Norton's brick and tile works at Pukerau in Southland (16"). Another improvised motor loco hauls clay from the pit under a road to one of the oldest surviving industrial enterprises in New Zealand, which now mostly produces drainage pipes. We follow the complete process, from digging out the clay through loading the tubs, running the train, manoeuvring the tubs in the confines of the works, tipping the clay into the mixer, forming the pipes, and stacking them for firing, all done efficiently on old machinery by a very small crew. This section is a model of observation, compilation, and presentation, and would make a marvellous prototype for a model.

The second film (44") follows a steam excursion, the *Pea, Pie, and (S)Pud Special*, from Napier to Ormondville, where the travellers enjoyed a traditional railway meal – meat pie, mash, and mushy peas. (Portions seem generous!) Motive power was J class 4-8-2 No.1271: both loco and stock, provided by Steam Incorporated, are in pristine condition, and we first follow the empty stock working from the S.I. base near Wellington. There is some impressive pacing from the parallel road, and well observed views of the train snaking through the following hilly area.

On the actual excursion, after depositing the travellers for lunch (rather late in the day, judging by the light), the train had to go on to Woodville, some 45km distant, to reverse; it was delayed during this process, and meanwhile the happy revellers repaired to the local pub; it was well into the night before the train headed home, and footage of the departure is atmospheric. Coverage has actually been compiled from more than one run. However, railway enthusiasts may have appreciated more of the train and less of the revels.

This second disk offers access to separately listed chapters (the brick and tile works, and three parts of the steam excursion).

Picture quality is of broadcast standard, and the camerawork is steady.

Commentary is sparse but quite adequate.

The three features are odd companions – the industrial and main line subjects are very different in nature, and separate disks might have been advisable to appeal to each market, though this would not suit the running times, even if the material was edited with more discipline and detachment.

The DVD set is available from Camden Miniature Steam Services, Barrow Farm, Rode, Frome, Somerset, BA11 6PS. The price quoted above includes UK postage and packing.

www.camdenmin.co.uk