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The All-Scale News Monthly

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them have paid up front for these products, so they don't get their money back until they deliver them. You can't imagine how frustrating it is to wait and wait for entire containers filled with merchandise when your life savings are invested in that large box. —John

Project DCC question

I've been reading in your always excellent August issue Part 3 of the Project DCC series. This series is very comprehensive and very well written, but I am at a loss to understand your choice of the three systems to cover. Why did you choose to cover two European systems (Lenz and Zemo) that are more expensive and very difficult to locate here in the USA, while leaving out two popular American systems (MRC and NCE) that are much better values, readily available, and being used by many American modelers? Both of these systems offer wireless control and are designed with the American modeler in mind. Instead, Project DCC goes into great depth describing two foreign curiosities that I am unlikely to encounter. The Digitrax Zephyr is a great system, but what about the other great systems? Is *Model Railroad News* going to become Digitrax only (like some other magazines) or will you give equal time to the other American systems in the future?

Barry Draper
Alhambra, CA

Thanks for your question, Barry. As discussed in part 1 of Project DCC, Model Railroad News used a Request for Proposal (RFP) process in which the detailed project description and specific requirements for each feature were provided to those vendors interested in participating. In turn they responded by describing how their specific products and services fulfilled the desired functionality and requirements listed in the RFP. Each vendor's response was scored to determine which products best fit Project DCC's requirements, and then we selected those to be included in the project.

Specifically in the area of DCC Systems, nine different vendors of DCC Systems were invited to participate. Six provided RFP responses for scoring, while the remaining three were not interested or were unable to participate due to other priorities at the time. Each of the six RFP responses was scored and down-selected to the three systems currently in the series (Digitrax, Lenz, and ZIMO).

As to why neither NCE nor MRC was selected for the series, NCE was one those vendors

who declined to participate, while the MRC systems do not support a computer interface, a key requirement for the series (other DCC systems were not selected for this same reason). While wireless is explored in the series, the ultimate goal is layout automation which currently and typically requires a computer interface.

I agree with you that there are many great DCC systems available, and if you have time to review back issues of MRN (and future issues as well) you'll note that we've reviewed nearly all of them (including Digitrax, Lenz, MRC, NCE, Bachmann, ESU, etc.). For Project DCC, we took the RFP approach that we felt gave all vendors a chance to participate, provided their offering met the requirements of the series. We did our best not to "play favorites." —Phil

A TAMR Thank You

As Convention Director for the TAMR's summer convention, The Burning River Limited, I'd like to offer a "thank you" to the sponsors who helped make this event possible through their generous donations.

While it was a small crowd, it was still a success and couldn't have been without the work of the following: To the great folks right here at *MRN*, thank you for the advertising space you gave us free for the convention announcements (as well as the regular space you continue to give us every month). Without that we wouldn't have gotten all the generous donations from donors such as JWD Premium Products (some beautiful hopper/gon loads), The San Juan Car Company (several On3 car craftman kits), Atlas (literature, and rolling stock), and a Santa Claus going by the name of Gregory Hamway (HO locos from Kato, Bachmann Spectrum, and Proto 2000!)

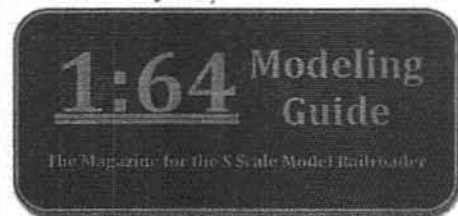
I, as well as the rest of the group, thank you again from the bottom of our hearts. I see no better way to thank these companies for helping support teens in the hobby than by patronizing their businesses, which I hope everyone who reads this will. Thanks and God Bless!

Peter Maurath
Editor of TAMR's Hotbox

Thank you, Peter. I think these fine people have discovered what we have, that TAMR is a real asset to our hobby. The future of model railroading is in your ranks right now! —John

New Publishing firm buys 1:64 Modeling Guide

WEST ORANGE, NJ – RLN Publishing, a new company specializing in model railroading and related topics, has purchased the *1:64 Modeling Guide* magazine from Deben, LLC. Bob Nalbhone, a model railroader for over 35 years, is the new editor and publisher. Nalbhone has professional experience as a technical writer, as well as an editor and publisher. In addition, he currently serves as the Vice-President and Development Director for The Model Railroad Club, Inc. in Union, New Jersey.



"I am excited about this opportunity to produce a quality publication for the S-scale model railroad community," said Nalbhone. "The tinsplate/hi-rail modelers and collectors are adequately represented in the model railroad press, at least the S-gauge press, but this is not the case with us scale modelers. The *1:64 Modeling Guide* is the perfect vehicle to meet this need."

The magazine will be published on a quarterly basis in January, April, July, and October. At the time of the purchase, in August, Nalbhone expected the first edition with him as publisher to be released in October. Nalbhone has stated that special discounts are being offered to past subscribers and advertisers to encourage them to renew their support of the magazine. Article and photo submissions are also being sought. In keeping with past practices, Nalbhone has said authors will be compensated for their submissions.

The *1:64 Modeling Guide* was founded in 1993 as the *S/Sn3 Buyers' Guide*. Its name was changed to the *S/Sn3 Modeling Guide* in 1995, and the current name was adopted in 2004. The magazine's web site was temporarily unavailable as of press time, but was expected to be back online by the time you read this.

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com; www.1-64modelingguide.com

Can DCC match the DCS slick?



BY JOHN SIPPLE — I recently received a DCS Commander set, made by Mike's Train House (MTH). Designed to be used on HO layouts, the Commander is a very interesting offering, one worthy of study. Dave Otte has already done a review of it, but now it's time to evaluate it as a circle of light near that occupied by DCC. How are they the same and different? Compare and contrast, as my college professors would say.

When you deal with any model railroad control system, you are dealing with two levels. The top level is the one you see and operate. It is the buttons, knobs, screens, displays, LEDs, lights, and thumbwheels. The bottom level is the one that your layout sees, the one that tells locomotives, switches, and accessories what to do.

"Slick" is that property of the top level that makes the complexities of operation easier and more comfortable. After I once said that DCC decoders and command stations were too complex for someone to make on his own, a fellow wrote to me, madder than a wet hen, saying he could make his own and used an old 386-powered PC to drive the process. When he was done, he had made my point for me. With its breadboards and handwiring, this end of the hobby is nevergoing to be very heavily populated; I can say that for sure. This is the exact



An HO-scale Union Pacific C44-8 from Bachmann poses by the Commander and its power brick. Because it has a power cord with a wall plug, this brick is not a wall wart, thankfully. Is a system like this a better alternative to DCC? Only you can decide for yourself.

opposite of "slick."

So along comes MTH and their Digital Command System (DCS). They have two varieties of this, one of them being the full implementation generally used for their HO, O-gauge, and RailKing 1:32 trains, and they also have the DCS Commander for use with HO equipment. Freed from following the DCC party line, DCS can establish its own interface and connection rules. Their self-avowed goal is to best DCC by picking at its greatest weakness: user interface.

User Interface has been an issue for years, and early implementations of Windows on PC computers were dis-

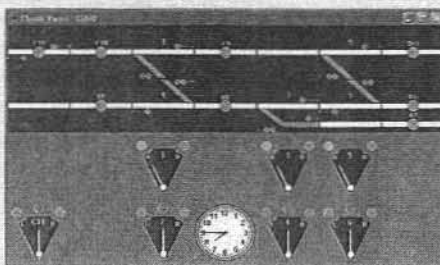
missed by DOS purists as just a "shell," that being a thin surface over the top of everything. Eerily, they were right, but it took that shell to make the PC palatable to the masses. Instead of taking DCC and building a shell on top of it, DCS started from the ground up. In the process, they both set up a slick user interface while they also built their own bottom end.

I just had to know what was up with DCS so I took a Volt/Ohm Meter (VOM) to the tracks. You have to understand that to my knowledge, MTH doesn't offer any explanations of the bottom functions of their systems. It's not something they

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