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Video and Book Reviews

BERNINA EXPRESS: MITV Address and prices in Ad. Page 45

This video production concentrates on the 60 km Bernina Express journey from St. Moritz to Tirano which is the highest open crossing of the Alps in Europe. The cover photograph shows the familiar curved viaduct at Brusio.

The history of the line is covered with black and white stills. During the recording there is a comprehensive narrative interspersed with the usual MITV music. Pictures include in the cab footage, trackside, within the carriages and helicopter views of trains within the landscape. The Morteratsch glacier and skiing at Diavolezza are informative short diversions from the railway sequences. The various horseshoe loops towards Italy provide the modeller with a good excuse to use tight radius curves on his layout!

Watch out for; polo played in the snow, the horse racing on a frozen lake and two RhB employees called Charlie and Nina. Film sequences were taken in both summer and winter. The contrast of the cold air of the Swiss Alps in winter and the summer sun of Italy are well captured.

The route graphics are clear and add to the enjoyment of the recording. Picture and sound quality is good with a 53 minute running time. There are now 15 MITV Granite Alp tapes - this is a useful addition to the range.

THE RIGI RAILWAYS: Desti Media - Available from MITV, Address and price in Ad. Page 45

The title of this production indicates that this 57 minute production concentrates on the two rack railways which climb to the summit of Rigi by different routes. These are the lines from Vitznau and Goldau to Rigi Kulm. The historic black and white footage of the film is towards the end of the running time which is a little unusual. The filming took place in both summer and winter and provides a good year round record of the mountain and its transport systems. Lake steamers and cable cars are included together with short visits to Lucerne, Vitznau and Goldau.

The mountain trails, horse drawn carriages, mountainside cafes, tobogganing, skiing, and sunbathing on the Rigi are all covered in incidental footage. Watch out for the men

wrestling in sawdust adjacent to the track! Both steam and electric traction feature in the coverage of the railways and views of Lake Lucerne figure highly - sometimes beneath a substantial cloud barrier.

The video features English narration (some of which is rather superfluous and would, in your reviewer's mind, be preferably replaced by additional music) and pleasant background music in some sequences. Filming has taken place from within the locos cabs, on the trains, at the trackside and from helicopters. Picture quality is very, very, good. The Hi Fi stereo sound is very clear.

For anyone wishing to recall a journey taken up Rigi by rail, cablecar or foot this tape will make a first class reminder.

The Rhätische Bahn -1, by Alan Pike OBE, ISBN 1-898399 04-2, Heath Publishing Services, 7 Pauline Gardens, Billericay, Essex CM12 0LB, £8.95 (inc. postage)

This 72 page A5 format book in the Swiss Rail Lines series covers the RhB Bernina, Chur/Arosa and Misox lines. It includes RhB lines already open, those under construction and sadly part of the Misox which is no longer in use. The book contains a brief history and route description of each line.

It contains several maps and route diagrams to clarify the routes mentioned in the text. In addition to the superb two cover colour photographs the book contains over 90 black/white photos the majority of which were taken by the author. Most of the pictures are undated but are of good quality. They include stations, rolling stock, locomotives and "trains in the scenery pictures". Many have been taken in the snow.

For those interested in Swiss railways and the RhB in particular this new book with English text is a real boon. Whilst German or French text can be generally understood with a nearby dictionary how much easier it is to read in one's mother tongue! There are a few useful Appendix - a guide to the abbreviations in the text, official details of all the motive power for the lines covered in the book and three pages of lists of rolling stock.

The remainder of the RhB network (Disentis to

The remainder of the RhB network (Disentis to Chur and Landquart to Davos and Filisur) will be covered in the second RhB book in this series in the months to come. This book is to be recommended. It will be a useful compact travelling companion on any trip to the Graubunden.

The Furka-Oberalp Bahn and its Glacier Express by Leslie Heath. ISBN 1-898399 02-6 Heath Publishing Services, address as above, £8.95 (inc. postage)

This is the third 72 page A5 format book in the Swiss Rail Lines series. It contains a brief history of the Furka-Oberalp and a description of the line from Brig to Disentis. Again the English text is really useful to those of us who have not mastered the intricacies of German or French.

The book contains a clear route map and a line drawing of the proposed new FO depot at Glis. In addition to the excellent three cover colour photographs the book contains over 120 black/white photos - the majority of these were taken by the author. While most of the pictures are undated the authors own collection has been supplemented by pictures of the

Steffebachbrücke obtained via the FO. Others include stations, rolling stock, locomotives, and trains in various scenic settings. A few have been taken in the snow and there are various interior shots of the latest trains included - some of these trains look most inviting!

The Appendix contains a Glossary, official details of all the motive power of the line and a summary of facts about the FO. Some of the photographs feature loco cab interiors and depot pictures which usefully supplement the more familiar photos of locos and stations. It is a pity all the photographs are not reproduced in colour. The various pictures of the stations are especially useful to modellers. The different architectural designs of the FO give an indication that a common station design was never really determined!

Your reviewer must acknowledge that he supplied one page for the book about modelling the FO so if there are any mistakes in that section please do not take it out on Les Heath!

This book is to be recommended as a general overview of FO operations but there is only one problem - it makes one want to revisit the line



Each book is a photographic guide to the line and contains a brief history and outline of a trip along the line, with photographs of the motive power and some rolling stock, stations and points of interest.

A5, perfect bound, 8.95 inc P&P UK (Europe £9.50, USA £10)

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SWISS RAIL LINES Now Available

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