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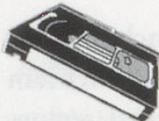
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THE REVIEWS



Winter on the Bernina

Produced by van den Burg beeldproducties, Netherlands.

DVD. German, English and Dutch commentary. Total running time 82 minutes.

Available from MITV at £18.95 + £1.25 p&p. See their adverts for details.

Winter on the Bernina contains five sections. The main part lasting 50 minutes shows in detail the extraordinary effort and equipment needed to keep the Bernina Line open in winter between Pontresina and Poschiavo, and includes modern footage as well as fascinating archive material. Extensive shots are shown of snow clearing at Ospizio Bernina and Alp Grüm and some of the weather conditions are truly formidable – much more welcoming in summer! The quality of the pictures, including magnificent winter landscapes, is excellent and the commentary clear and informative. The next three sections give information on the vintage rotary steam plough, Xrot 9213 (5 minutes), a snow plough cab ride between Ospizio and Alp Grüm (8 minutes) and more winter footage (18 minutes). Finally, there is a collection of more than 30 archive still photographs. Material from these additional sections is used in the main part. Whilst the overall quality of this programme is excellent and the content very interesting, it has to be said that it becomes somewhat repetitive. In this reviewer's opinion it might have been more interesting if the whole of the route from Pontresina to Tirano had been covered. Miralago and the Brusio curves in winter would have been a valuable addition!

Chamby

Rhätische Bahn - Rhaetian Railway Odyssey

DVD by van den Burg, Holland. 80 minutes approx. Available from MITV at £18.95 + £1.25 p&p. See their adverts for details.

The menu contains a photo album, individual RhB lines, main programme and four short cabrides and commentary is available in a choice of German, English and Dutch.

The main programme lasts for approximately 80 minutes. At the beginning is an over all history of the RhB. This is followed by each of the individual routes. At the start of each section there is a selection of old photographs and a route map. The movie covers more history of the lines with some fascinating archive film interspersing the modern views.

Commentary is clear with plenty of atmospheric railway sounds and music. Picture quality is good but colouring is more subtle than some other video productions and some of the shots could even be said to be a bit arty. The photo album comes without sound, the RhB lines are the individual lines from the main programme and the cabrides have background sound.

I thought the DVD was fascinating, especially the archive films. Even if you already have a number of RhB videos this DVD would be a worthwhile addition to your library.

Gerlad

Bern - Trams, Buses, Trolleybuses

Ronald Smith. CD-ROM in PDF format. Available at £10.95 including p&p from the author direct. Details of how to order are given in the advert elsewhere in this issue.

There is a special offer for SRS members.

The author has chosen to publish this work on CD-ROM in PDF format - either PC or MAC computers may be used - and the simple grey cover implies a direct approach. When the CD is started this is borne out by the clear language choice (English, French, German) and subsequent menu screen. What a pity then that there are no direct links to the relevant parts of the disk. Instead, follow the instruction to click "Exit" and the swift return to your desktop screen may put off some potential readers.

Open up your PDF file reader - Acrobat is the usual tool - and the layout is straightforward and set out in six chapters, the main one being "The Fleet" which shows ten classes of buses, five of trams and three of

trolleybuses each with its own page showing a list of basic facts plus a fundamental technical plan labelled in German. Of the other chapters "Bern" is an introduction in English, French and German; "Map" is just that; "Steamtram" is the renovation story; "Service" shows pictures of the service vehicles and "Oldtimers" has twelve nostalgic pictures. All pictures are well taken and show useful livery details.

Overall a useful tool for bus and tram enthusiasts and modellers alike.

Dick Griffiths

Heliview - RhB Albula Line. Chur to St Moritz.

Video Production by MITV. VHS PAL. Digitally mastered.

Hi-Fi Stereo. 118 minutes. £19.95 and available from MITV or SRS Sales with or without commentary.

This tape is a total recording of the journey from Chur to St Moritz on the famous Albula Line on the Rhaetian Railway, inclusive of all tunnels in their entirety! Whilst this may be interesting on curved, short tunnels the longer ones were a little tedious. However this fact should not deter the RhB enthusiast who wants to see one of the greatest lines ever built from enjoying this production. The title suggests only views from a helicopter above the line but this is quite incorrect. Although the first 20 minutes or so of the tape from Chur are essentially viewed from the air, the remainder is an enjoyable mix of views from the cab, air and with a small amount of lineside photography evident. The tape reviewed is without commentary or mixed sound or music and records the cab sounds throughout the journey despite being photographed by the helicopter. A version with commentary is also available. Graphics are seen for all tunnels and stations and a diagrammatic map is seen on the entrance to the Albula spirals above Bergün. In addition, historic photographs of the building of the Albula Tunnel are seen whilst "experiencing" the actual tunnel from the cab. The photography and sound were up to the normal excellent MITV standard (now the industry standard), although some of the aerial shots were a little jerky (expected). One of the biggest issues on heli-views is that of heli-shadow and that was only evident near Muot and is a credit to MITV to have chosen the correct time to video this train and in the normal brilliant MITV weather.

The journey begins in Chur where the "Glacier Express" starts its journey to St. Moritz behind Ge 4/4 III 648 *Suschi* hauling fourteen coaches including five Panoramic cars. Excellent high-level shots of the station and surrounding area as the train sets off on its fantastic journey. The first 20 minutes are not representative of the tape and as soon as the high mountains are reached the ratio of cab scenes to heli- are just about right to keep the viewer interested. After 60 minutes this definitive recording arrives in Filisur where the real journey begins and MITV really perform well providing a myriad of differing views and cutting from cab to air with increasing regularity. Indeed there was one cut that went from an aerial shot direct into God Tunnel (486m.) That was most interesting! Watching the rather scruffy driver drive his Ge4/4 up the bank out of Filisur after crossing another "red machine" really captured the spirit of this experience and the engineering accomplishments of the Swiss builders. Whilst in awe at the Preda spirals and the spectacular scenery, the building of the Albula Tunnel is still inspiring, and a few photographs whilst in the 5844m tunnel records those brave men. As the train enters the Upper Engadin and the scenery changes, a few low level helicopter views are experienced that must have been great to see as the machine came down to track level. Passengers and on-lookers alike must have been surprised around Bever as this took place. After 118 minutes St Moritz is reached and several exquisite shots are taken around the station /lake area that really summed up summer in the mountains. Personally I think St Moritz always looks better in the winter but then I am biased!

An excellent tape for the enthusiast and modeller alike that does improve as it goes on and really captures the spirit of the journey.

Recommended. What else!

G&T

The next Swiss Express will be posted in June 2003. Send your pictures and articles in soon! Topical pictures in particular are always welcome