

Der GARTENBAHN *profi*

3 / 2006

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INTERNATIONALES MAGAZIN FÜR GROSSE MODELLBAHNEN

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LGB's Amtrak Diesel in Gauge 1.5 The US Shekel Page 22

LGB designed a fine Diesel specimen in the USA and produces it in China. It turned out a typical LGB engine.

Amazing that no one came up with the idea to replicate the Genesis at an earlier date. Since she has - compared with the rather plain looking freight engines - a rather futuristic look about her. Well finally the LGB P42DC is on the market and the Amtrak passenger service can proceed.

Since there is stiff price competition in the USA LGB produces in China - a fact that is only really noticeable in the interior of the engine: the wire bundles are held in place by Scotch tape, just like with the American competition.

For an average price of E360 one gets a substantive piece of engine with the LGB-typical concessions regarding the radii. R1 turnouts and curves are easily handled. However, the huge and heavy engine looks much better on R3 and larger curves. Especially since the back of the engine has a huge overhang on account of the asymmetrically pivoted trucks. The plow at the front end stays more or less centered to the track - and returned to its normal position with a loud snap on at least two locations of our layout. Traces of wear indicate that the plow displacement is not quite adequate and that the trucks were rubbing on the frame.

Those who use larger than R3 curves will most likely immobilize the plow assembly and the rear skirting, with its

constant slight motion, and bodymount the couplers. It would be nice if that were a factory provided option. No provision for the installation of the extremely popular Kadee couplers has been provided. But certainly for a compatible coupler. The engine comes equipped with LGB knuckle couplers - which will couple with both Aristo's and Kadee's products (see GBp 2 and 3/04) - but which are rather large. The standard LGB H&L couplers are provided as extras.

Unpack and go

There are no detail parts to be added on this engine, the fun starts as soon as it is unpacked. Unfortunately one will have to forego a proper Amtrak consist unless one has a set of USA Trains Amtrak cars. The Northeast Corridor Amfleet cars will be delivered later. More typical for Amtrak would be a set of the bi-level Superliner cars. Apart from the occasional mail, express and roadrailer cars in the passenger consist, the Genesis never pulled freight. Roadrailers are available from Aristo-Craft.

The brand new analogue engine starts a bit abruptly. After some running in it performs more smoothly and almost as expected from LGB, even if the one power truck created considerable noise. The coasting of approximately an engine length is quite acceptable, the top speed slightly less than the expected 177kmh

(110mph). There is no three point equalization in the two drive units. The running characteristics and the power pickup via the eight wheels and four pickup shoes are good.

LGB added one traction tire on each truck, despite the hefty weight of the engine. The pulling power is more than sufficient for heavy trains since longer Amtrak trains are usually powered with two and sometimes up to four engines. The current draw while running light is 1A - moderate in the usual LGB fashion.

Part of the reason for the lower current consumption are the many LEDs that have been used i.e. the main headlights, the ditch lights, the red tail lights etc. etc. When moving forward the red tail lights on the front are also illuminated, an incomprehensible error. The number boards are illuminated. A micro bulb is used for the cab light. A sensation are the three computer screens in the cab which glow in a bluish green.

The operations selector switch is mounted in the back wall of the cab. Slim fingers can reach through the spring loaded cab doors. A selector switch in the floor would have been more practical for those with heftier hands.

No Diesel smoke

That's all for the electrics, LGB skipped the smoke generator which is otherwise customary on US engines. In

the manual there is no mention of a retrofitting possibility for a smoke generator, but mention of a LGB sound module and a 3A decoder complete with detailed schematic. Less elaborate are the instructions on how to remove the roof, by grabbing the exhaust stack, in order to get at the printed circuit board (on the one side push the edge of the roof to the inside and lift on the exhaust rim).

The manual mentions all three series of the Genesis as prototype and places emphasis on the AMD-103, in which case the engine number should be in the 800 series. According to the engine number the sample is a P42DC of the first series in the original Phase III colour scheme. Lehmann adds six additional decal numbers in the 1 through 120 range. As delivered from the factory there are three different engine numbers - a novelty and an incentive for the collectors.

The 720mm long body of the P42DC has a nicely detailed roof. Among them communications antenna, a five chime horn and an etched, curved cover over the heat exchanger. Several signs with cautionary messages are neatly printed. On the sides one notices washboard like sheet metal insert which are supposed to simulate the air intakes. Due to the black nickel plating they appear almost as dirty as the prototype's. The reason behind these solid covers without perforations isn't clear. One could have easily molded them as part of the body, complete with the see-through effect that shows the diagonal reinforcing bars behind the louvers as they appear on the prototype.

The cab doors can be opened, but the three doors at the back of the engine can't. The plastic handrails are inset and flush with the outside of the body, but not always straight. Above them there are small gaps in the moulding. The cab windows can be opened, an imitation mirror is mounted on the outside of them. The back of the engine is nicely and correctly detailed.

Plenty of errors on the front

The overly high front of the engine leaves plenty to wish for: The proportions of the front windows are incorrect, they should be wider and the dividing strut between them narrower. The two headlights are too far apart, the safety glass over them is 10% too large,

as is the number board. The much oversized Amtrak logo has slipped too far down. The access hatches below the windshield wipers are square on the prototype and rectangular on the LGB item. The opening for the coupler/draftgear is approx. 20% too narrow. The side shrouding between the pilot/plow and the trucks has completely incorrect contours.

The many, easily avoided errors dampen the overall impression of the otherwise very nice engine and move it into the toy category, "where details are not that important". Which is too bad and the consumer can not rectify those error, apart from the distance of the headlights. To do it right wouldn't have cost more.

At least the position of the windshield wipers is gratifying. Most of the Amtrak engines circulate like that, others with the wiper blades in bottom position at the center strut. There are also three different versions of plows.

A pleasant surprise is the detailed cab with three seats and the elaborately replicated control console complete with illuminated displays. The engineer looks more realistic than some of the competitors' engine crew.

The truck side frames are very well detailed and apart from the mounting holes for the ladders, nicely done. One skimped on a few extra injection moulds. The sanders are missing. The springs have no function, the wheel sets have only minimal play in the long, extended black power bricks; but that isn't noticeable during operations. The ladders swivel together with the trucks, unavoidable even with large radii.

There are only two compressed air tanks mounted to the floor of the engine, a few of the lines are missing, which isn't a drawback in this price class. The paint finish isn't quite perfect, the printing didn't cover in two locations of the striping. There are sharp parting lines visible on closer inspection.

The Genesis is according to our new review standards (see Feuilleton in GBp2/06) a model in the Gauge 1.5 class. LGB's model doesn't adhere to any conventional, established scale. How pleased we would have been to report that LGB follows the de facto Northamerican scale of 1:29!

However the engine is 5mm too short for that, more than 20mm too high (1:25.5) and 5.3mm too wide (1:27.6). The

wheels with 37.1 to 37.3 diameter fit the 1:27 scheme. The axle distance in the trucks corresponds to 1:28.5.

Fazit: If the new LGB engine would have had a uniform, consistent scale, a smoke generator and a design which would require reasonable radii, it would have been a pleasure to at least award a Silver medal.

The strong LGB engine is, despite many avoidable mistakes, impressive and a sturdy passenger diesel with a remarkable degree of detailing, however what is missing on the overly high model is the typical frontal appearance of the Genesis. The mechanical solutions to satisfy the R1 requirement are not convincing. Therefore it is only a Bronze.

Those who don't care for or about scale, will quickly grow fond of the model. And the elegant diesel is hard to overlook. The Genesis offers a lot of engine at an attractive price. The choice is up to you.

Friedhelm Weidelich /HJM

G 1.5

Models in the G 1.5 group are of standard gauge (4ft 8.5inch track) items which have been "adapted" to fit the Meter gauge 45mm track. The scales are in those cases - mostly different for length, width and height, but also including distortions of various separate components - somewhere between 1:25 and 1:32.

So far the following G 1.5 LGB items have been reviewed:

DB 101 (GBp2/05)

DB Bimz 264 (GBp2/06)

Mikado (GBp4/03)

Those engines and cars will complement each other visually.

