

Educational Entertainment

Video Review by Allan Miller

I Love Toy Trains: Rail Blazers

TM Books and Video

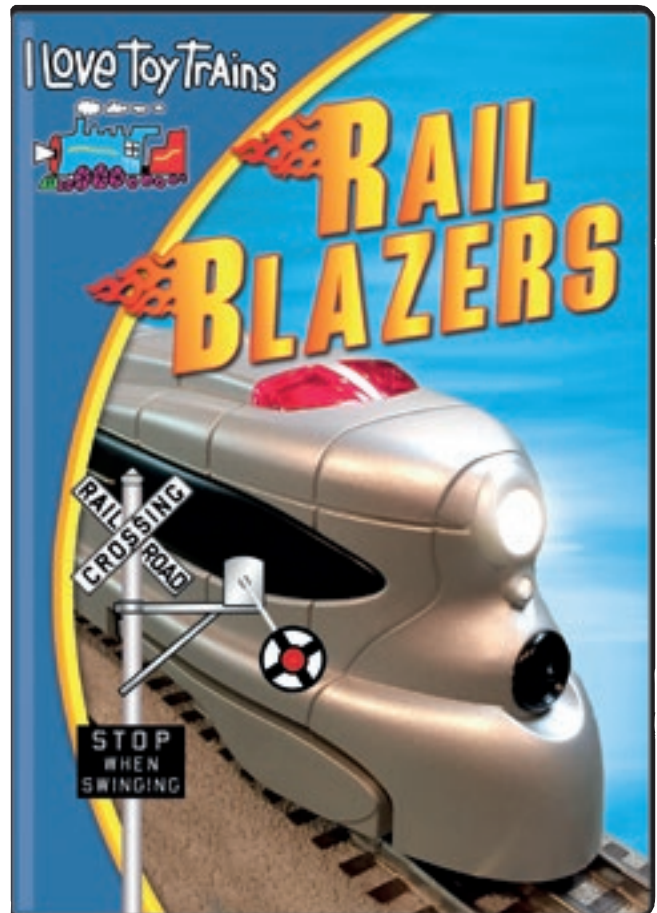
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Running time: 34 minutes

MSRP: \$9.99

Available at dealers and direct from www.tmbv.com

TM Books and Video (TMBV) continues to expand its menu of entertaining, informative, and educational video fare for train lovers of all ages. The latest release from Tom McComas and the crew is *I Love Toy Trains: Rail Blazers*, a 34-minute DVD continuing the long-standing, highly regarded, and award-winning “I Love Toy Trains” series of videos launched in 1993. Jeff McComas, Tom’s son, was two-years-old when he made his premier appearance in that first program. Since then he has narrated the entire “I Love Toy Trains” series and he appears in this current video at the ripe old age of 26.



There is something for just about every interest and age group in this fast-moving, action-packed video. Youngsters, for example, almost always seem to have a fascination with dinosaurs (as well as trains), and this video combines both as viewers ride along on the Dino Express through some rather Jurassic-like scenery populated by various prehistoric reptiles. It’s an educational journey as well as entertaining because youngsters learn how to distinguish a Diplodocus from an Iguanodon and an Ankylosaurus from a Brachiosaurus, among others.

There are other educational/entertainment combo segments for the young as well including a tip for easily recalling the colors of the rainbow in proper sequence via the name ROY G BIV. You oldsters out there do already know that one, don’t you?

Here’s yet another question for the seniors among us who represent the baby-boom and pre-baby-boom generations: When was the last time you saw Lionel’s Culvert Loader and Culvert Unloader work flawlessly through their respective cycles? Granted the TMBV videographer may have had the opportunity to do take after take to get these popular accessories to perform properly, viewers can at least appreciate the resulting smooth-operational sequences.

Modern-era hobbyists will enjoy seeing an assortment of bicentennial and American celebration locomotives from Lionel depicted in full operational mode. See the "Spirit of '76" U36b from the Seaboard Coast Line, Bangor & Aroostook's "Jeremiah O'Brien," the Union Pacific's Preamble Express, the American Freedom Train that toured the nation, and Conrail's gorgeous GG1 in all its patriotic splendor. All of these special commemorative trains--prototype and toy--are true eye candy for everyone, train fan or not.


The video also includes the customary assortment of the TMBV visual "tricks" that fans have come to expect. A very short RMT BEEP locomotive enters "Mighty Mac's Loco Works" and emerges as a full-size scale GEEP adorned in the same livery. The same thing happens with an F3 locomotive. "In Scrawny" and "Out Brawny" is Mighty Mac's shop's slogan.

A segment I found to be particularly enjoyable because I have become increasingly operations oriented involves multiple switching moves conducted with the

No. 57 "Lionel Steel" motorized unit from 1996. Command equipped, this little unit is great for switching duties and in this video it is seen going through a typical workday picking up, sorting, and delivering loads to various industries. It's always nice to see some prototypical operations in a 3-rail environment.

And, of course, no video in the "I Love Toy Trains" series would be complete

without the original and appropriate musical contributions of James Coffey.

It may be a bit early to consider your Christmas gift list for this year, but if you want to get started with a nice and very affordable stocking stuffer that will bring a smile to anyone from four to ninety-four, consider getting one or more of these easy-viewing *I Love Toy Trains: Rail Blazers* DVDs. 



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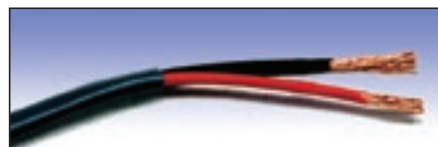
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