

# RAILROAD REPORT

Dennis Andreas

## **Bachmann Large Scale Thomas the Tank**

**Young or old, what could be better?**

**T**his month we get to look at a great large scale version of an icon of our younger train enthusiasts. Thomas the Tank has graced the television screen for decades. Entertaining and fueling the desires of many young people and I'm sure a few adults to this day.

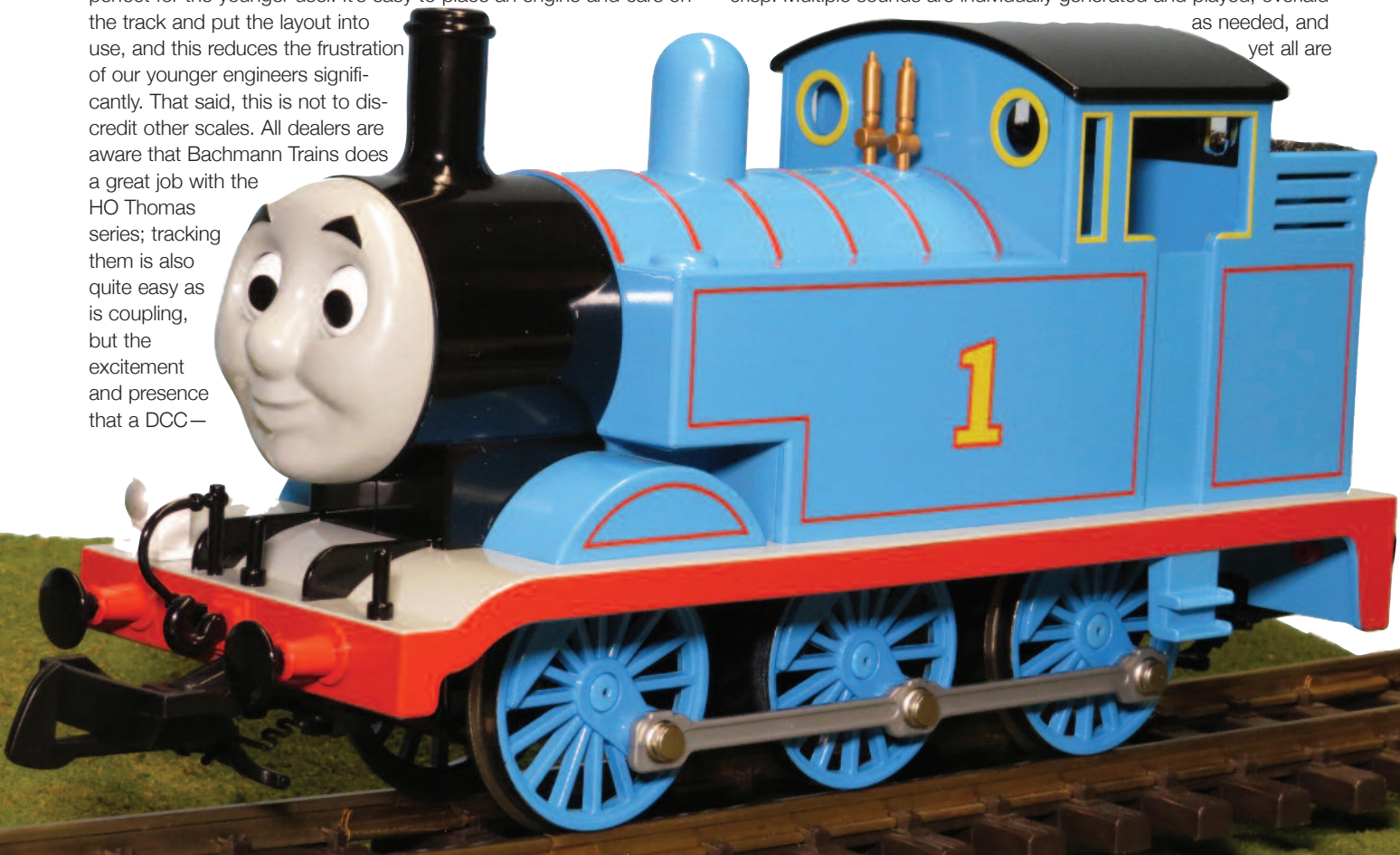
Bachmann Trains has released a large-scale Thomas the Tank Engine with Moving Eyes and DCC/Sound On Board (#91421). I ask, what could be better? Some customers may shy from large-scale thinking it takes more room, but as strange as it sounds, when talking about a basic circle or oval of track, all three common scales, Garden, O-gauge and HO take up pretty close to the same amount of room. About the only exception are the holiday introductory sets where extremely short engines and cars are used, allowing for the smallest of radius and shortest of straight track.

The reason I bring this up is because a large-scale train set is perfect for the younger user. It's easy to place an engine and cars on the track and put the layout into use, and this reduces the frustration of our younger engineers significantly. That said, this is not to discredit other scales. All dealers are aware that Bachmann Trains does a great job with the HO Thomas series; tracking them is also quite easy as is coupling, but the excitement and presence that a DCC—

Sound capable large-scale engine makes on a child is simply awesome.

Let's get to the engine and its capabilities. Visually Thomas the Tank is great. The colors, smooth lines and curves remind me of the television show. The shell is skillfully molded and perfectly painted. As expected Thomas' eyes do swing back and forth while in motion. Thomas is also equipped with the standard Hook and Loop couplers for ease of use with young or old hands. Thomas the Tank has six powered wheels. The four outer wheels are flanged and the center two are not. The track fit is intentionally loose for easy railing and curve negotiation. Running the Thomas the Tank is equally pleasing; very smooth and quiet. The engine has some get up and go, so hauling a fleet of Thomas' train pals will be a breeze.

The sound is provided by a SoundTraxx 16 bit polymorphic system. In other words, it sounds great and each sound is clear and crisp. Multiple sounds are individually generated and played, overlaid as needed, and yet all are

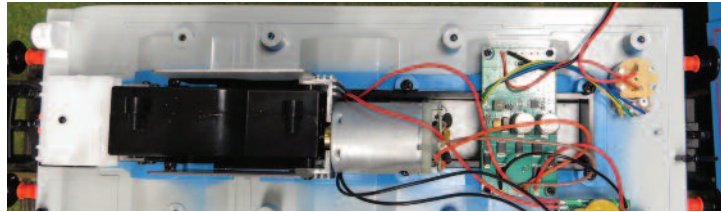


clearly audible. Mechanical engine sounds do not drown or otherwise interfere with the clarity of the SoundTraxx system at all.

Although Thomas is DCC equipped, it will run in either DCC or Analog mode. If you still have customer holdouts running analog only, the engine will run in this mode with no modification. The only caveat is that they will not get chuffing, steam hiss, and whistle sounds until the track voltage begins to exceed approximately nine volts. The sounds in DCC or Analog mode are preset and based on motion. When operating in analog mode once the voltage is sufficient to power the decoder Thomas will start to move. This is when the user will get synchronized exhaust chuff and then whistle sounds every 20 seconds when at a constant speed. When the throttle is reduced, the steam release is sounded.

Operating in DCC mode the sounds are available on demand via F1, F2, F3 and F4 function buttons on the Bachmann DCC controller. They are also synchronized exactly to when the engine begins to move. Note: the F1 button is for a bell, which when talking Thomas & Friends is actually for Toby only, not that this matter in the least to a young engineer. In addition, something parents will like, especially on early weekend mornings, is a manual volume and on/off sound switch. The switch is located on the underside of the locomotive's chassis and is easy to access.

At the time of this writing, currently offered in the large-scale Thomas & Friends with DCC and Sound line is Thomas the Tank



*Installed on the review loco, and the heart of DCC operation and the sound is a 16bit polymorphic decoder and sound board. The board is available from Bachmann separately and installation would be a welcome dealer service.*

and Percy. However all of the other favorite characters with their unique sounds are actually available within the sound decoder. This includes Thomas, Percy, Edward, James, Henry, Gordon, Toby, Spencer and Emily. If you have the capability with your DCC controller you can change the "personality" of the engine to any of these by programming CV 115 with the cor-

rect character number. The codes are included with the engine instructions and once understood are easy to use.

The DCC Decoder and Sound boards are also available from Bachmann separately. As a customer service, your shop can retrofit non-DCC Thomas large-scale locomotives. The board (#44958) has solder pads for easy installation. To complete the installation you will need an additional speaker and either you as a dealer, or the end user will need to program the sounds for the engine being fitted. The DCC board also supports a controllable headlamp. Although not included with the package, Thomas has the same capability and a headlight can be added later if so desired.

Imagine the eyes and smile of our young engineers when Bachmann's Thomas the Tank is powered up for the first time. Should the purchaser have other large-scale Bachmann rolling stock that use the hook and loop coupler they can be used without any problem whatsoever. Bachmann Trains currently offers 19 additional Large Scale Thomas & Friends add-on cars and three different sets. There are plenty of items to start and expand ones Thomas & Friends collection and they are all available now. **HM**



Complete Train Control

# Introducing the **EVOLUTION**<sup>TM</sup>

## The next Evolution in Complete Train Control<sup>®</sup>

- Premium Advanced 5/8 Amp Starter Sets.
- Starter sets are available as standard tethered or duplex radio.
- The system features a DCS210 Advanced Command Station, DT500 series throttle, and includes a power supply to make getting started easier than ever.
- The DT500 series throttles can be purchased separately from the new Starter Set.

Find out more @ [www.digitrax.com](http://www.digitrax.com)



### Evolution (shown) | \$450 MSRP

Standard Set Includes: DCS210 Advanced Command Station, DT500 Advanced Super Throttle, UP5 Universal Panel, PS615 power supply, and a LT1 LocoNet Tester.

### Evolution Duplex | \$660 MSRP

Duplex Set Includes: DCS210 Advanced Command Station, DT500D Advanced Duplex Throttle, UR92 Universal Panel, PS615 power supply, and a LT1 LocoNet Tester.