

iHobby Expo in Review

The 25th Anniversary show was a huge success

Dennis McFarlane

• Hobby Expo is always a good show, but this year it exceeded all expectations. Known throughout the industry simply as the “Chicago Show,” the 25th Anniversary Exposition made a big splash at the Donald E. Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois, from October 21 through 25 by setting new attendance records.

There are a lot of factors involved in bringing together a show such as iHobby Expo. This year the show staff seemed to get almost everything right. There were plenty of seminars available for the dealers to attend. Booths were manned by friendly and knowledgeable staff, which is always a benefit to any exhibitor and attendee. Plenty of local television advertisements and lots of activities on consumer days all came together to make this one of the best shows ever.

The statistics speak for themselves. The show had the largest consumer crowd ever. More than 1,200 children were introduced to slot car racing by the Great Lakes Slot Car Association on Saturday alone. Close to 1,000 AMA Delta Darts were constructed during the aircraft sessions of “Make & Take”—more Delta Darts than many people knew even existed in this country. These are just a few of the many successes that resulted from the iHobby Expo 2009 staff pulling out all the stops to put together a show for the record books.

HM



Kathleen Wozniak of Hobbytyme Distributors Inc. was more than happy to explain the company's business philosophy and demonstrate new product offerings.



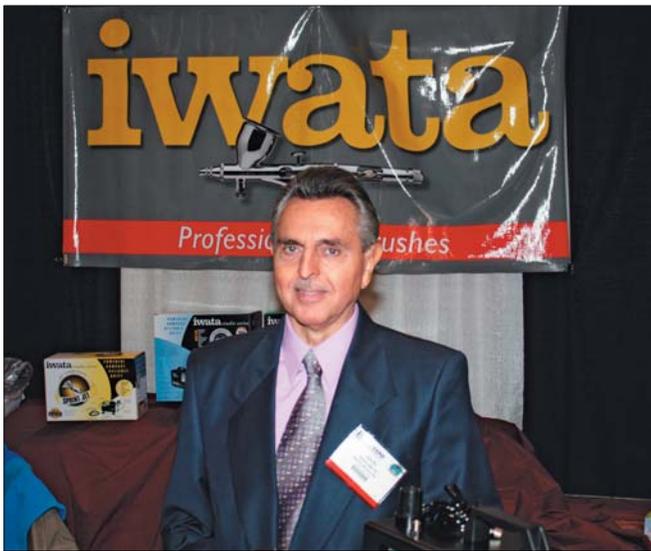
Bachmann Industries Inc. Communications Manager Jack Lynch is justifiably proud of Bachmann's 2009 Christmas Train in HO scale.



The industry Mixer and Awards Banquet was held on Thursday after the show closed for the day. It was obviously popular, as demonstrated by the crowd of dealers and business representatives lining up at the entrance waiting for the doors to open.



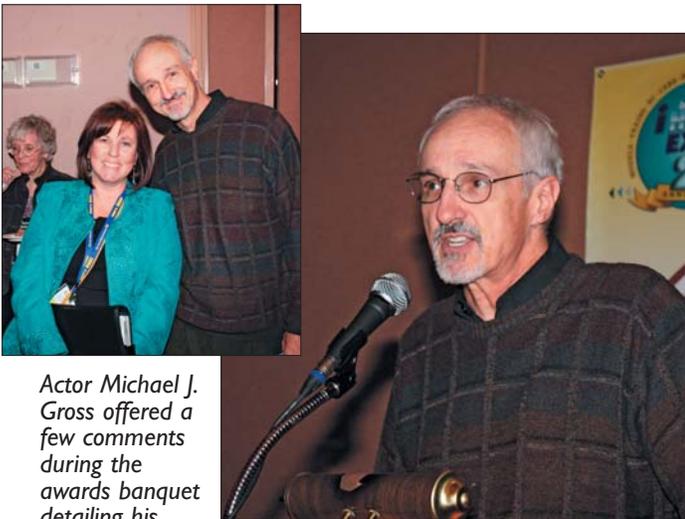
The crew from the syndicated production The Choo Choo Bob Show offers a well earned smile for the camera. Geared towards children, the show is a pleasant mix of scale railroading and a bit of comedy along with song and dance.



IWATA Director of Sales John Smith always found time to explain his product and to answer attendee questions.



Beauty and the Beast: Horizon's Kim Payne talks about the company's newest large aircraft, The Beast, an aerobatic ARF designed by Quique Somenzini.



Actor Michael J. Gross offered a few comments during the awards banquet detailing his childhood in the Chicago area and his passion for model trains. Inset: Gross offers a hug and a smile to HM's Donna Dean.



Neil Isler and Frank Stubitsch from the Great Lakes Slot Car Association were kept busy both Saturday and Sunday offering children an introduction to slot car racing.



Mark Fleming, owner of Mark Fleming Ent., manned his Custom Desktop Solutions booth with his wife, Lynn, during the two dealer-only days.



Xuron Corp. Vice President Abby Robey is always looking for new ideas and input from dealers. Abby received an HMA President's Award for her years of service to the hobby industry during the banquet Thursday evening.



Outgoing HMA President Frank Ritota, right, ceremonially passes the gavel to incoming HMA President Mike Bass.



Kim Franklin of B&B Hobby, Snellville, GA, and Dayna Larson of Woodland Scenics discuss the company's many new offerings. The Woodland Scenics Dealer Demonstration Package is proving to be very popular with both dealers and train clubs that want to teach scenery techniques.



The Hornby America booth was busy during dealer days and consumer days as their many offerings were displayed to show attendees.



MRC's Customer Service Manager Timothy Sandor offers an explanation of how the company's just-released digital train control system works.



Many products were displayed at the Daron Worldwide Trading Inc. booth by brothers Ronald and Gary Marx. The company motto is "Let Your Imaginations Fly."



Euro Model Imports Manufacturer's Representative Morgan Baldrige displays a nicely detailed motorcycle for use on any of today's readily available slot-car track.



Hanny Hamman, vice president of Excell USA, always projects that ever-so-important professional image to dealers and consumers alike.



Hobbico's Rod Clarke shows off the company's "Under \$100" line of products for Christmas 2009.