



Dennis Andreas

# Railroad Report

## Rivarossi Heisler Steam Locomotive

*HO Craftsmanship at its finest.*

This month our friends at Hornby have provided a wonderful Rivarossi Heisler steam engine in HO for review. As you may already know, for over 100 years Hornby has been a household name across the pond, as they say in the UK. Hornby also has a strong presence and following in the US providing upscale European manufactured products not only in this country, but around the entire world as well.

Rivarossi is one of the world's most famous Italian manufacturers of scale model railways. Rivarossi was founded in 1945 by combining the last names of the two founding partners, Riva and Rossi. In 1990 Rivarossi began a dramatic expansion, first acquiring Lima Models, then in 1992, Jouef (French) and in 1997, Arnold (German) model and toy companies. It was during 2004 that Rivarossi was acquired by Hornby.

Since the beginning Rivarossi has been producing the highest quality models and railway systems. Its products are considered to be some of the most exotic model trains on the market. The Rivarossi models are exact 1/87 scale and are made using the highest quality materials. Rivarossi offers some of the most detailed and finest running products available to the model railroad hobbyist.

A common sight on working railroads a century ago, over 4000 Heisler locomotives were built. The Heisler locomotive was the last variant of the three major types of geared steam locomotives designed by Charles L. Heisler. He received a patent for the design in 1892 following the construction of a prototype in 1891. Although somewhat



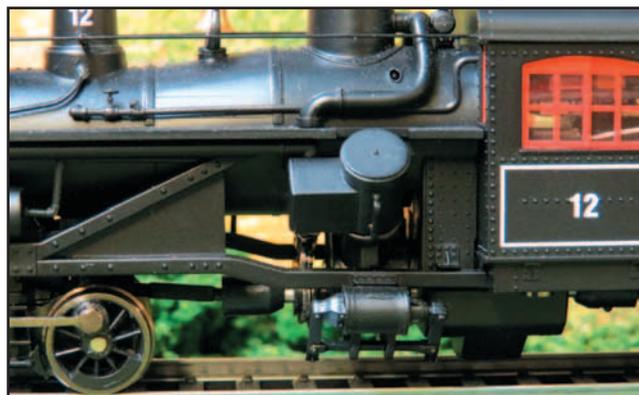
similar to a Climax locomotive, Heisler's design featured two cylinders canted inwards at a 45-degree angle. This formed a V-twin arrangement. Power then went to a longitudinal drive shaft in the center of the frame that drove the outboard axle on each powered truck through bevel gears in an enclosed gear case riding on the axle between the truck frames. The inboard axle on each truck was then driven from the outboard one by external side connecting rods. The Heisler was the fastest of the geared steam locomotive designs, and yet was still claimed by its manufacturer to have the same low speed hauling ability.

The locomotive arrived packaged in a very protective box used to prevent damage during shipment. Like all Rivarossi engines, the Heisler features flywheel drive for

smooth operation and in this case a 21 pin digital decoder plug has been factory installed. The Heisler reviewed is painted to match the number 12 used by the Georgia Pacific Corporation. Additional items supplied with the engine are a spare geared axle and wheels, alternate oil tank cover and an appropriate stack to match the coal or oil tank. Also included are two spare couplers.

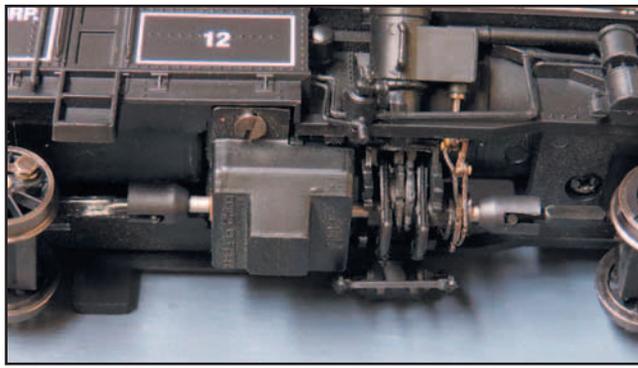
There are lots of great details to be found on the

engine. The rivets are all properly positioned and are even sized correctly for HO. The scale piping has to be seen to be believed, and the writing on the name plate is crisp and completely legible. Added details are items like the bell, and whistle flutes and the front lamp housing which are all formed in brass.



*Details such as the properly positioned 1/87 scale rivets are everywhere and the piping must be seen to be believed.*

After reading the instruction manual, the engine was placed on some rails so its operation could be evaluated. Using a Bachmann EZ-Command DCC controller and selecting the standard factory program of #3 the little Heisler was brought to life. Besides #3 which puts the loco in motion, the buttons were set as follows:



*Drive to the front and rear trucks is through two dog-bone couplers which are hidden from view once the loco is railed.*

Function #1 controls the basic running sounds. Functions #2 and #3 are the Horn and Bell sounds that include a realistic Doppler fade. Function #4 is an interesting coal shoveling and burn sound. Function #5 is a slow air pump. Function #6 adjusts acceleration mode and braking. Function #7 adds curve squeal. Function #8 provides rail clank Function #9 does a cylinder blowout. Lastly #10 which equals #0 for this engine controls the directional running lights. The Heisler sound board has additional functions 11 thru 19. Those sounds include couplers, sanding, brake release two more whistles and even some ash pan dumping sound. The sound board is complete, there is nothing more to be said.

On the mechanical side, the Heisler "Vee" system of operation activates exposed pistons on the side of the chassis and a crank below the frame. This is accurately reproduced by Rivarossi, and it is a wonder to view in action.

Even with all its great looks, the real thrill is in running it. Since this is a sound equipped DCC engine it was only

natural that start-up be done right, so to begin a little steam blow-off was executed. In full scale, an engine of this mass starts slowly and takes time to get moving and the run-up speed is carefully controlled to be as scale as possible. The same thing happens when it's time to slow down, speed is gradually reduced and brake sounds can be applied as needed. But should one get caught

up in the moment and disaster is eminent, the emergency stop button will bring everything to a halt very quickly.

This engine was a pleasure to run. The engine itself, with all its exposed and moving parts is hypnotic. The sounds are very well executed, they actually make you feel like you are part of the layout as the engine is passing by, and this only adds to the enjoyment of operating the Heisler. The bottom line is not only does everything work as advertised, everything works extremely well.

The Rivarossi line of locomotives is a great addition to your more serious train enthusiast customer and his collection of locomotives. And they are also the next step for your customers who have only recently entered the hobby, but have been bitten by the bug.

This gem of a Heisler locomotive, along with the entire line of Rivarossi products, is available exclusively through Hornby. **HM**

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