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Trainini

German Magazine for Z Gauge



The Alb Ascent Century Project

End of the Year on the Moselle
Fourth Generation Flocking

Introduction

Dear Readers,

and then it happened again! At the beginning of this year's Advent season, I attended a wonderful exhibition in Duisburg on the first weekend of Advent to celebrate Model Railway Day.

On the following second weekend of Advent, I travelled to Zell an der Mosel, where the Z gauge community gathers every two years to celebrate the end of the year. You can read all about the meeting in this edition.



Ralf Junius
Editor

On the third weekend of Advent, my club in Wuppertal met up and the **Trainini®** team got together for their annual virtual Christmas party. If you're wondering why this takes place via video conference, it's because we're not only spread across Germany and Europe but even live on different continents.

Digital media is the best way for us to get together – it has been that way for the past twenty years. Virtual meetings are nice, as we don't see each other very often throughout the year. But of course, a real meeting is much better. This was demonstrated by the meeting in Zell an der Mosel mentioned above.

And what has happened again? As I type these lines, Christmas and the end of the year are just around the corner, and my list of things I still wanted to do is just as long as in previous years. I always tell myself that next year I will plan everything better. Where has the time gone?

With this issue, you now have the 12th edition of this year in your hands or open on your screen. The year 2025 is coming to an end and has been a special one for us in the editorial office.

In October, we had the pleasure of celebrating the 20th anniversary of **Trainini®** together with you. But that is by no means all we reported on during this period. Our year in review video is currently in the final stages of production, in which we aim to summarise many of the highlights.

At the beginning I thought that not much had happened this year in terms of model railways. But now that I have reviewed and compiled all the editions and topics from 2025, I must revise my statement. There were a lot of exciting events and models. The aforementioned episode 49 on **Trainini TV** will also provide you with an answer.

On behalf of my editorial colleagues, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you very much for your interest in our magazine, now 20 years after its first issue. We therefore wish you not only much enjoyment reading and browsing, but also, above all, a peaceful and contemplative Christmas season surrounded by your loved ones and friends. This naturally includes a smooth transition into 2026 with continued good health.

Sin-Z-erely,

Ralf Junius

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We thank Ulrich Budde and Eisenbahnstiftung for their photo support.

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Cover photo:

After its descent through the steep section, the 18 505 passes through Geislingen an der Steige station with a train of blue CIWL cars, while a pusher locomotive attaches itself to a freight train. The luxury train is reminiscent of the days when the legendary Orient Express took this very route on its way from Paris to Vienna.

Intercity Experimental von Märklin

The Dawn of a fast-paced Era

With the Intercity Experimental, class 410, the German Federal Railways wanted to usher in a new era. The high-speed train symbolised a modern company like no other before it. It had to be ready by the big anniversary on 7 December 1985 at the latest, and the same applied to the models from Märklin. In 2025, Z gauge is now making a comeback.

In 1985, almost simultaneously with the premiere of its prototype, Märklin introduced the five-part ICE (later ICE-V) class 410 as models in H0 and Z gauge (item no. 8871). The railway's test vehicle promised prestige for model railways, too, and was intended to transform the outdated Federal Railway into the transport system of the future.



On one of its numerous test runs, the Intercity Experimental passes through Wuppertal-Oberbarmen on 25 September 1987. Photo: Wolfgang Bügel, Eisenbahnstiftung

In 2025, after around thirty years, a model of this train (88716) will be released again. Updated to today's technical standards, it will be produced in a one-off series for MHI. We are taking this opportunity to take a closer look at this new product.

We will begin by taking a look at the high-speed era of German railways, which began exactly 40 years ago with the public presentation of the ICE and a record-breaking journey on 26 November 1985.

However, the beginnings of high-speed rail transport in Germany go back even further: Wolfgang Vaerst, the first president of Deutsche Bundesbahn from 1972 to 1982, laid the foundations for today's long-distance transport system during his tenure: Intercity '79 ("Every hour – every class") and setting the decisive course for ICE transport.



The vehicle bodies for the power cars were manufactured in the M3 workshop at Krupp in Essen. On 31 July 1984, both bodies had already been primed: 410 001-2 on the left and 410 002-0 on the right, which was transported to Henschel in Kassel for final assembly shortly afterwards. Photo: Ulrich Budde | Bundesbahnzeit

He was also responsible for the start of construction of the two high-speed lines between Hanover and Würzburg and Mannheim and Stuttgart, designed for a planned speed of 250 km/h, as well as the development work from 1979 onwards that led to the construction of the first multiple unit between 1983 and 1985.

The maximum permissible speed of the prototype train was 350 km/h, which was higher than that of all subsequent ICE series trains of all generations. It was exceeded several times during various demonstration and record-breaking runs.

The new train was put into service with great publicity in 1985, the anniversary year of the German railway. This was a fixed requirement, which put the project under considerable pressure, but it was ultimately met.

At the end of February 1985, the 410 002-0 power car was displayed for a photo shoot in front of the Thyssen-Henschel factory in Kassel. However, the official handover date to the Federal Railway was 19 March 1985 at Krupp in Essen, with the 410 001-2.

However, the invited guests, experts and media representatives had to wait a long time in wintry weather before things could get underway because the responsible DB board member was stuck in traffic on the A3 motorway in his official car: "You'd be better off travelling by train!"



On 19 March 1985, 410 001-2 was officially handed over to DB during a ceremony at Krupp in Essen. It is clear to see that the power car does not have any wind defectors next to the pantograph (cf. Märklin model). Photo: Joachim Schmidt, Eisenbahnstiftung

Another ceremony was held on 31 July 1985 at the MBB factory premises in Donauwörth to mark the handover of the middle cars, during which power car 410 002-0 symbolically broke through a wall of polystyrene blocks with the coupled middle cars.

After that, various presentations and high-speed test drives were scheduled as part of the acceptance and approval process until the end of November. This was followed by an extensive measurement programme in January 1986.

After DB had made no fuss about a record-breaking journey at 323 km/h during preparations, the Inter-City-Experimental was to be presented to the public on 26 November 1985 with an official record-breaking journey from Bielefeld via Gütersloh to Hamm (Westphalia).

At 11:29 a.m., the fully occupied train reached its maximum speed of 317 km/h, and again reached 316 km/h that same afternoon. This set a German record for wheel-rail vehicles in the 410 series and, at the same time, a world record for three-phase rail vehicles – the TGV, which was already in regular service at the time, was still of a more conventional design.

The first time the 300 km/h threshold was exceeded, it caused a public sensation. Newspaper and book reports described in detail how the passengers on the fully occupied train stared at the digital display in the cars and watched the landscape fly by outside.

What they probably didn't notice were the high safety precautions taken for all high-speed journeys: closing the opposite track, setting all signals along the route to green and then conducting an ultrasonic inspection of the tracks using a test train.

Another railcar was on standby in case repairs were needed on the overhead line. During the record-breaking journey, a safety locomotive travelled ahead of the train, with another following behind the ICE. As a precaution, all bridges and stations along the route were guarded to prevent attacks and incidents.



On 28 April 1988, at km 288.81 on the new line, a Class 410 train became the first rail vehicle to reach the magic mark of 400 km/h, and shortly afterwards even exceeded it. This sparked jubilant cheers in the driver's cab of the 410 001-2, as the TGV Sud-Est had already been relegated to second place. Photo: Ulrich Budde | Bundesbahnzeit

Once the first high-speed section between Fulda and Würzburg was partially operational, it was possible to increase the speed even further towards the target. On 1 May 1988, the Class 410 set an absolute world record of 406.9 km/h, relegating the TGV Sud-Est to second place.

While this record remained unbroken within Germany until today, it was already surpassed internationally in December 1989, when the TGV Atlantique significantly exceeded the previous record with a speed of 515 km/h. However, the train, now known as the ICE-V, had long since fulfilled its purpose, as the order for the first 20 power cars had already triggered the series production of the 401 series (Intercity-Express).

The train was subsequently used to test components for future trains and, after conversion, primarily for the ICE 2, which was to operate as a wing train and therefore had to be easily connected using a Scharfenberg coupler. On 1 January 2000, the 410⁰ series – with the ICE-S there was also a 410¹ series – was finally taken out of service.

Middle cars and bogies

In his speech before the maiden voyage on 26 November 1985, Transport Minister Dr. Werner Dollinger made clear the hopes associated with the German high-speed train and the role it was expected to play.

He spoke of a play on words and gave three meanings for the abbreviation ICE: in addition to IC for Intercity, the E initially stood for "Experimental" for the test and trial train, which then stood for "Express" for scheduled services with series trains.

At the same time, however, he also referred to the prospect of cross-border high-speed transport networks, which is why the E should stand for "Europe". He believed that European cooperation, as was now the case in aircraft construction with Airbus, would be successful.



On 11 July 1988, 810 001-8 (demonstration car 1) in Würzburg offers a glimpse of its air-suspended MAN coupling frame bogies, which Märklin intends to reproduce with the Fiat bogies. Photo: Ulrich Budde | Bundesbahnzeit

This hopefully also explains why the Intercity Experimental (Class 410) was not only intended to serve as a test bed for technical solutions, but also had great significance in terms of its interior, with which the German Federal Railways also wanted to usher in a new era, partly modelled on modern aviation.

These included new seats that reclined at the touch of a button and converted into a reclining chair with a height-adjustable headrest. In demonstration car 1 (810 001-9) of 1st class, they were presented in the familiar 2+1 seating arrangement, with wine-red upholstery in a subtle grey and brown colour scheme.

A tray with a circular recess for securely holding

Antiquarian literature tip

As soon as the 410 series (Intercity Experimental / later ICE-V) was launched, a book was published that focused on its development, commissioning and visions for the future associated with the train.

It also served as an important source for some passages in this article, but is now only available second-hand:

Eberhard Krummheuer

ICE Intercity Experimental
Der neue Zug der neuen Bahn
Abfahrt ins Jahr 2000 (The new train on the new railway
Departure into the year 2000)

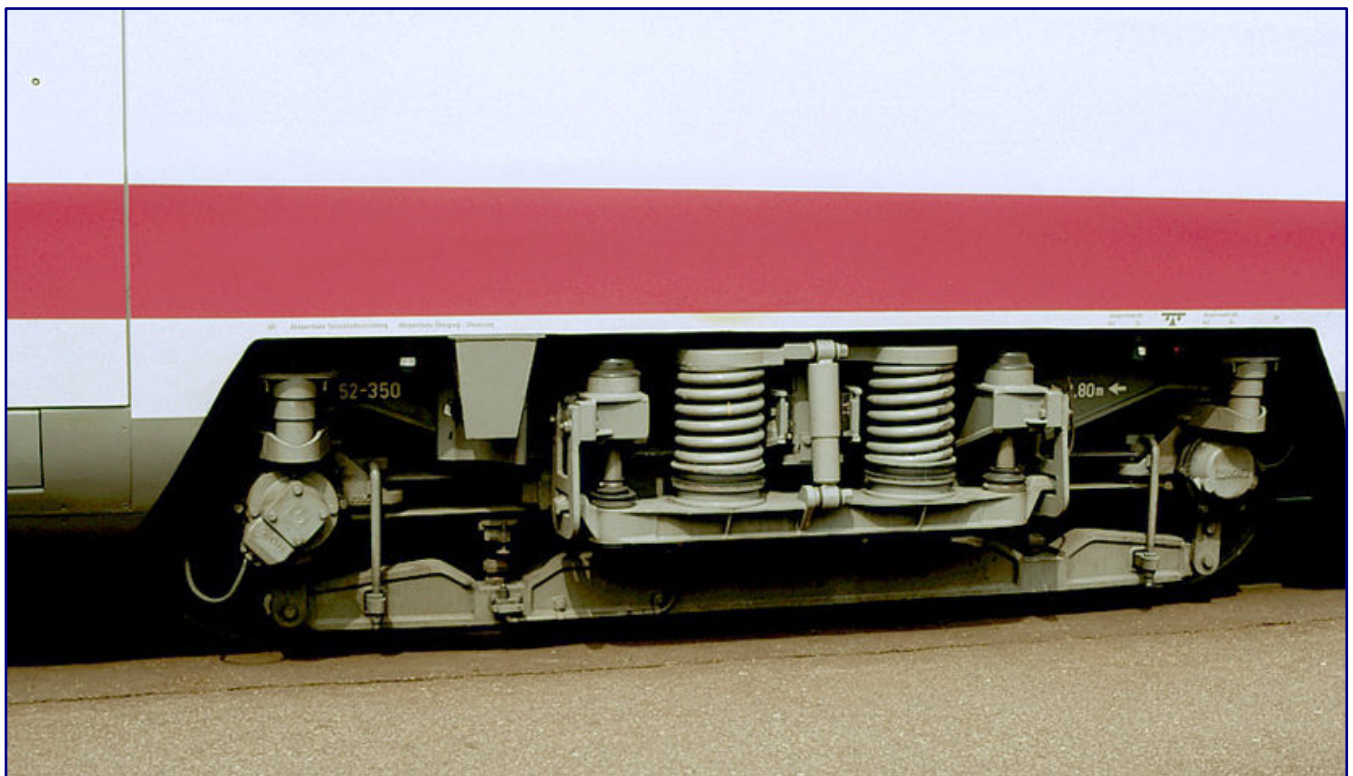
ELV Verlag GmbH
Munich 1986
ISBN 3-923967-25-X

glasses and bottles was integrated into the side and could be swivelled in front of the seat. The folding luggage compartments above the windows were also similar to those used to securely store hand luggage on aeroplanes.

The windows were triple-glazed, and a blind could be lowered or raised at the touch of a button in the cavity between the two inner panes. LCD display panels enabled a completely new passenger information system. At two demonstration points in this large-capacity car, a seat-back telephone built into the backrest of the front seat presented a possible variant for series production.

Instead of rigid seating arrangements, part of the open-plan area featured a cosy seating area designed as a lounge for meetings during business trips. It was separated from the aisle by tinted glass panes. This was a clear break with the decades-long tradition of compartments in passenger coaches.

The following demonstration car 2 (801 002-7) also featured a second-class open-plan compartment as a further interior variant. Here, the seats described were narrower and arranged in a 2+2 configuration. The customer had ordered lime green upholstery.



The demo car 2 (810 002-6; pictured here), on the other hand, was equipped with MD52-350 type steel-sprung bogies, like the measuring car. The detailed photograph taken at Donauwörth station on 16 May 1986 allows a direct comparison with the incorrectly equipped Märklin model and those of the Bpmz 291 large-capacity cars from the same manufacturer. Photo: Ulrich Budde | Bundesbahnzeit

The layout, which differed from the other two cars, was also evident in the different division of the window panes in the middle of the car. Here, there was a sideboard on one side of the aisle and a toilet on the opposite side.

The most important car for the subsequent test operation was, of course, the measuring car (801 003-5), as a high-performance measuring system had been developed specifically for this train. It was equipped with screen terminals, computers and electronic displays.

Compared to other trains, high speeds require a number of special solutions, particularly in the areas of drive systems, bogies, and pantographs (and the Re 250 catenary system). Increased requirements in terms of weight, reaction speed, and contact pressure led to the familiar single-arm pantograph being replaced by the DSA 350, which was fitted to the Intercity Experimental.



The most important car for the subsequent test operation was, of course, the measuring car (801 003-5), as a high-performance measuring system had been developed specifically for this train. It was equipped with screen terminals, computers, and electronic displays.

The drive bogies of the power cars were equipped with double-row tapered roller bearings to guide and lubricate the axles. The controllable decoupling of the drive mass ("UmAn"), which was tested on the DE 2500 (now on display at the German Museum of Technology), was also used in the 410 series and gave the bogies their typical appearance.

The cars also benefited from new developments. While the MD52-350 steel-sprung bogie, a further development of the Minden-Deutz design known from the Bpmz 291 large-capacity cars for 350 km/h, demo car 1 ran on a newly developed bogie with air suspension, which resembled the bogie of the Eurofima Avms 207 cars.

New approaches were also needed for the car transitions. The rubber bulges that had been standard up to that point had already reached their limits in terms of noise, pressure and cold in the Intercity trains,

and the developers also rejected rubber outer bellows or an accordion system due to the forces involved and the aerodynamics of the train.

Linke-Hofmann-Busch achieved a breakthrough in Salzgitter with a design inspired by nature and based on the principle of the spinal column. The end of the car was no longer characterised by a straight front wall, but took on the radial shape of a joint head.

The transition element acted as the counterpart to a joint socket. It absorbed the movements and forced them firmly into their hemispherical shape. This meant that the closed drag pattern was maintained even in tight corners, offering no further surface area for the wind to attack.



Today, it is not only the two power cars from the new Märklin edition (item no. 88716) that have to stand up to rigorous comparison with their prototype.

The entire train was designed to minimise air resistance. All handles and grab rails were recessed into the outer shell, the shape of the power car was determined using wind tunnel and water tests, and continuous roof lines were dispensed with.

The dark-tinted side windows were also seamlessly bonded to the outer wall, creating a continuous, dark window band (with oval windows in the entrance doors) that gave the train a futuristic look. DB did not want to spoil this image at the transitions between two cars.

A look at the model

As early as 1985, immediately after the prototype was launched, Märklin entered the race with models of the Class 410 Intercity Experimental in two different scales. The entire five-part unit was reproduced and divided into a four-part basic set consisting of two power cars, measurement and demonstration car 1 (8871) and a separately available demonstration car 2 (8771).

They remained in service until 1998, but in the meantime had to serve as replacements for a replica of a production train (88711) – the differences from the 401 series were immediately apparent even to laymen. In addition, the 410 001-2 and 410 002-0 power cars underwent a modification during their production period.



Unlike the models produced from 1985 onwards, this year's MHI edition features the correct colours of the original: today's standard is the RAL colour chart, but back then, model trains were still painted according to how they looked under incandescent light.

The dividing line between the chassis and frame was moved along the entire length of the frame edge. Previously, the housing between the bogies had been lowered in the area of the floor pan, which had been somewhat distracting. After 1989, the wheels were nickel-plated in black.

The old models were powered by a three-pole motor, and the lighting was still provided by incandescent bulbs. Since the basic design of the new edition has not changed, unlike the technology, we will refrain from conducting a detailed test and will present the model in a somewhat more compact form today. The current model (88716) is delivered in five parts, i.e., with all three intermediate cars in one package.

Among other things, the bogies remained unchanged. This means that both power cars are correctly equipped, while all three intermediate cars still do not run on correct replicas. The Fiat bogies from the Eurofima cars were again installed on all three intermediate cars, which are similar to those on demo car 1 (air-sprung coupling frame bogies), but have a shorter wheelbase. The coupling shaft was separated again for this purpose.

The demo car 2 and the measuring car ran on MD52-350 bogies with steel suspension. These look completely different, but would be a comparable compromise (also with too short a wheelbase) and are also available from Bpmz 291 in the mould kit. With identical coupling separation, Märklin could have come much closer to its prototype here.



The rounded ends of the power cars and centre cars were typical of the multiple unit later designated ICE-V. Incidentally, the demo car 2 (810 002-8; left) and measuring car (810 003-4; right) shown here were to have the MD52-350 bogies shown on page 9. The window layouts of the two cars differ in the middle of the car; in the 1985 edition, the car numbers between these two examples were swapped!

The side wind deflectors in the pantograph area, which can only be found in drawings from 1984, also do not correspond to the delivery condition of the prototype. The fact that they were not visible on the trains delivered is confirmed both by photographs of the prototype and by the memories of Ulrich Budde, who was involved in the development of the power cars as a Krupp employee at the time.

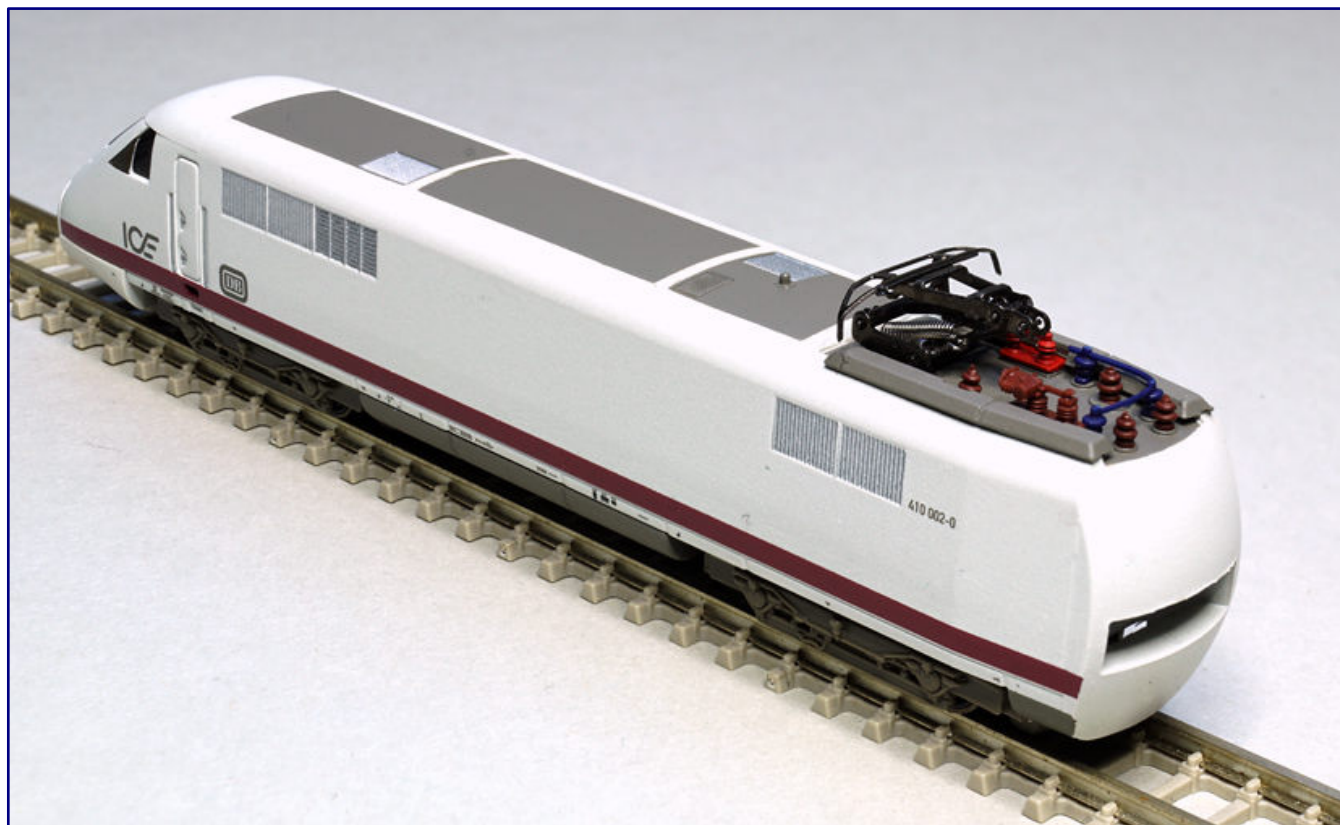
When the first models appeared, this was still excusable, as they were probably based on the design drawings of the prototype due to the timely release. The actual series condition soon proved otherwise and, in our opinion, could have been implemented without additional effort.

Märklin and an MHI representative were therefore already made aware of this at the Spielwarenmesse 2025 (2025 International Toy Fair). A correction was deemed impossible, citing the imminent production schedule in spring 2025.

Unfortunately, however, the subsequent eight-month delay was not utilised either. This is all the more regrettable, because it is a separately manufactured part that requires recesses or drill holes in the housing and manual assembly. In our opinion, omitting it would probably have saved effort.

On the other hand, the fine roof equipment in the area of the pantographs (brown, blue, and red) is reproduced very well and in multiple colours. The white paintwork with grey frame and red-purple decorative stripe also appears to be well done. A comparison of the model with a colour chart shows RAL 9003 signal white, RAL 7023 concrete grey and RAL 4002 red-violet.

As with the previous series, the clean and clearly legible printing includes ventilation openings on the middle cars, but is otherwise significantly more extensive and also truer to scale than its predecessors. Other plus points include the colour-contrasting grab rails and door handles.



In addition to the completely inappropriate bogies on the measuring and demonstration car 2, the side wind deflectors on the power cars (see photo on page 10) are also easily identifiable as errors. Märklin has missed the opportunity to approximate the prototype by omission. However, the multi-coloured roof equipment is successful.

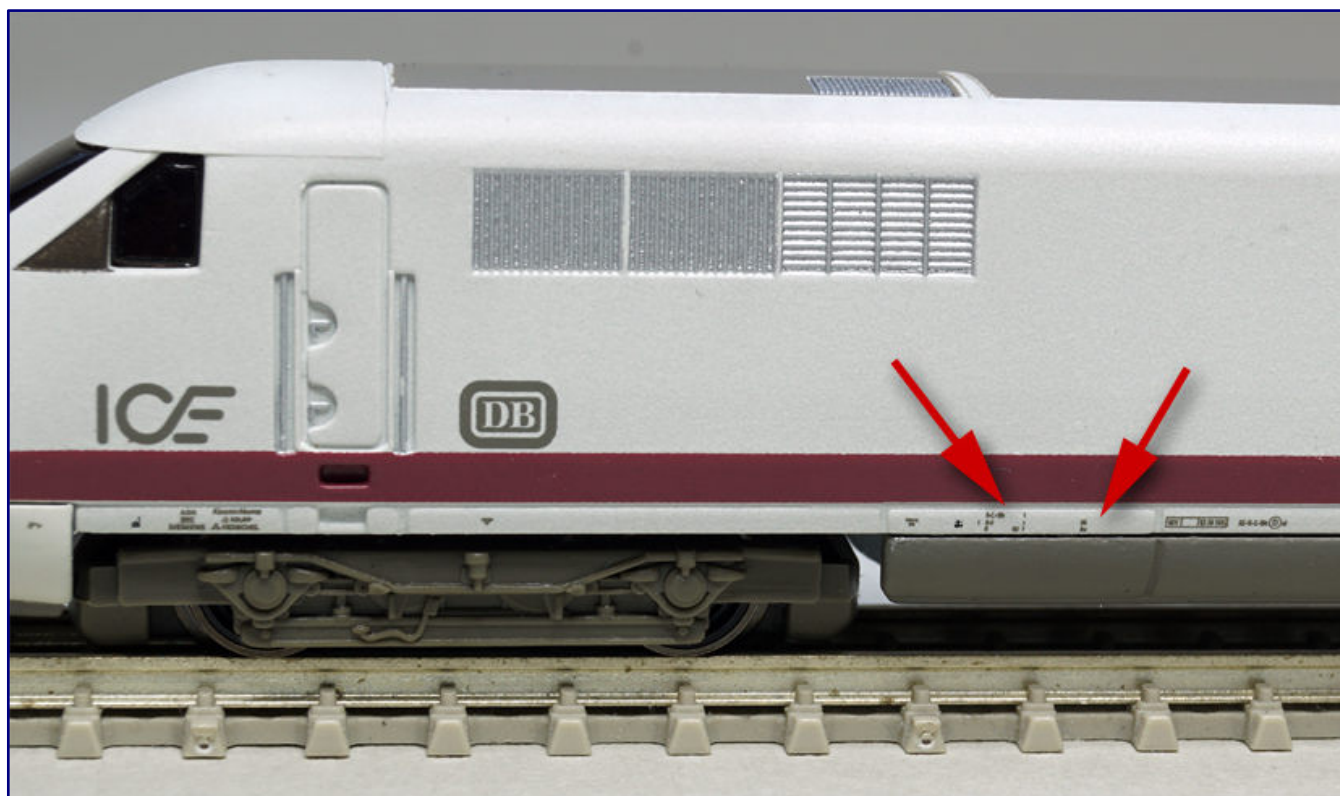
Based on the addresses, the new model can undoubtedly be classified as being in its first year of operation. The inspection date of 2 October 1985 refers to the acceptance of the two power cars, while the missing information on the management and depot behind BD and Bw and the incomplete brake grid indicate the ongoing process in the anniversary year 1985.

The darker-tinted windows of the visible and blind windows, which hardly allow a view inside unless the interior lighting is on, represent a significant improvement. This brings the train much closer to the prototype and highlights the typical silhouette of the long side. Only on the front windows of the driver's cabs does the dark tint seem somewhat out of place.

Only partially new technology

The technology inside has been extensively modernised and brought up to date. Both power cars now feature bell-type armature motors, which ensure smooth running and low operating noise. The changeover screws for overhead line operation have also been moved inside. The lighting in the power cars and centre cars has been upgraded to maintenance-free LEDs.

This means we have warm white front lights and red rear lights on the power cars, as well as flicker-free interior lighting in all three centre cars. Unfortunately, however, this product enhancement is not without its pitfalls. The train no longer even comes close to reaching its prototype speed and therefore does not give the impression of travelling at high speed.



The model can be dated to its acceptance condition: the brake grid (left arrow) is still incomplete, and a depot and the associated railway authority have not yet been labelled (right arrow). However, the UIC grid (following the right arrow) shows the acceptance date as 2 October 1985. Incidentally, the bogies of the power cars are excellently reproduced.

Although the prototype was approved for speeds of 350 km/h and achieved a record speed of 406.9 km/h, the model, with a nominal voltage of 10 volts, remains below the values of the series trains at the equivalent of 272.8 and 276.1 km/h, depending on the direction of travel. This does not really reflect well on an ICE train. The measurements were taken several times using a light barrier with the aid of the MTS-100 device from Hallig Modelle.

Incidentally, the front and rear ends of the power cars apparently draw their own power. The continuous power connection via the couplings only serves to supply the motors and interior lighting. A diode circuit ensures that traction current is only drawn at the leading power car and that it stops in non-powered sections.

This split power supply also confused us at first: both power cars displayed peak or tail signals, but the traction power was not sufficient to set the five-car set in motion.

We identified the problem because, depending on the direction of travel, one or all of the interior lights were not working. It was therefore clear that the power was not being conducted properly and was not reaching one of the two motors. The interior lighting failures allowed us to pinpoint the exact location of the problem.

The cause was a faulty electrical coupling that was defective ex-works, which we had just about considered to be operational, but unfortunately this was not the case. A second one doesn't look much better, but at least it passed the test. The package contains exactly one replacement copy in an unsealed bag under the thermoformed insert.

This reinforces our main criticism: the coupling rod with contact spring plates on both sides has been retained unchanged, even though it had previously been the subject of criticism from customers. Märklin failed to make the changes that were later implemented in the VT 11⁵.

This must lead to customer frustration, especially since our test model proves that this jerky and vulnerable form of mechanical and electrical coupling has already caused problems at the manufacturer's plant, at least in our case.

If defective goods then leave the factory and the customer has to find a replacement themselves, this does nothing to contribute to customer satisfaction. All of this takes on added significance when you consider the price tag. We believe it is entirely possible that prospective buyers will leave this model, which is hardly suitable for long-term use, on the shelf, especially as replacements are likely to be difficult to obtain soon.



The pros and cons of this model are closely matched: the single-arm pantographs are difficult to raise and require considerable force, and behind the closed appearance of the transitions are extremely damage-prone couplings, for which Märklin does not even offer replacements. On the other hand, the printing appears almost perfect, because in addition to the ventilation openings (next to the door), we also find the push buttons for opening and closing the doors and the non-smoking pictogram.

With regard to the single-arm pantographs installed, which at least resemble the DSA 350 prototypes to some extent, we will leave it at this note regarding their non-scale size. More annoying is their reluctant function.

For some time now, we have observed that the newly designed models are extremely difficult to unhook in order to let them contact the contact wire. They require a lot of force, which makes damage likely. The lock can only be released by moving it sideways with considerable force, which also pushes it close to its mechanical limits. Many customers are reluctant to do this, especially as the accompanying instructions do not mention it.

continued on page 18



From the side, the dark-tinted windows look perfect, as they accurately reproduce the closed window strip of the original. However, the same effect appears a little too dark on the front window of the driver's cab – a compromise we are happy to accept, as all the transparent parts are likely to be attached to the same sprue. Compared to the previous model from 1985, the printing on the ventilators is also better reproduced, as the white bars between the individual elements were previously missing.

Märklin has so far failed to take action on this issue, even though at least one dealer has already clearly pointed out the problem and urgently requested a remedy. If these models, which are unsuitable for practical use, are damaged within the first six months, we believe that the seller has a duty to replace them under the statutory warranty, with the burden of proof lying with the seller.

Incidentally, an operating manual is also included with the product and its warranties. We mention this because, in our opinion, the manual included with the product and available online is flawed: the two-step procedure illustrated therein for removing the drive head housing proved to be unworkable.



No other Märklin model in Z gauge has achieved such a successful closed train formation in every driving situation as the Class 410. The prototype also made it easy for the manufacturer here.

We refrained from applying greater force because this would probably have caused damage. According to the instructions, the housing at the rear in the area of the clutch shaft should be pried open with a screwdriver and then pushed forward.

However, this fails due to the lack of a suitable starting point and the necessary resources. Since the drawing shows a model of the ICE 3, which did not even exist when the 410 series models were first released, we assume that this is due to mixed-up or inaccurately updated illustrations. A request for clarification has been sent to the manufacturer.

If we now draw a final conclusion, unfortunately it is mixed and could have been avoided. Visually, the model stands out clearly and pleasantly from its predecessor, except for the missed opportunities with bogies and wind deflectors, thanks to its printing and dark-tinted windows. The flicker-free LED interior lighting adds to the attractive appearance.

The new motor technology has also made for a much smoother ride. However, the top speed is noticeably too low, dampening enthusiasm, because the gearbox has not been adapted to the bell-type armature motor in line with the model.

Overall, we unfortunately rate this model as only suitable for limited use. These couplings are not designed for frequent connection and disconnection, and in our opinion, this will very quickly lead to a defect in the electrical connection. According to the Märklin website, the spare parts (E269620) are still not available today, as was the case with the predecessor 8871 for many, many years.



Operating the Intercity Experimental model should be enjoyable, but its technical weaknesses could quickly land it in a display case. The model's significantly low maximum speed is also noticeable.

Similarly, the uncooperative pantographs remain an imposition and do not contribute to sustainable customer satisfaction. Taken together, these two factors could quickly turn the forefather of German high-speed rail transport into nothing more than a display model. But then it would be far too expensive for that.

Manufacturer of the basic model:
<https://www.maerklin.de>

Model gallery with information:
<https://www.bundesbahnzeit.de>

„Überholstelle Lamerden“

Teil 5

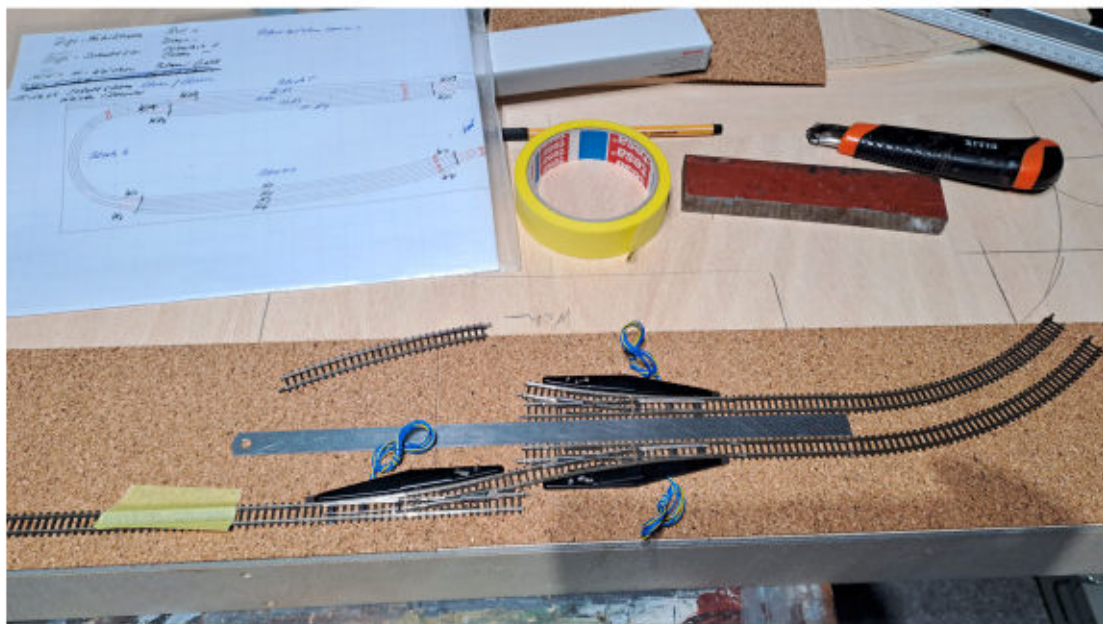
Gleise verlegen - Teil 1 - Der Schattenbahnhof

In dieser Folge platzieren wir unsere vorbereitenden Gleise und Weichen erstmals auf der Anlage, welche zuvor mit 3 mm Korkstreifen beklebt wurde. Hier dient der ausgedruckte Gleisplan als Vorlage. Der Kork wirkt als Schallabsorber und als Grundlage für das spätere Schotterbett. Sind alle Schienen und Weichen an der richtigen Stelle, werden alle Teile Stück für Stück miteinander verbunden und mit einem Kreppband provisorisch fixiert. Diese Maßnahmen sind für den späteren Schienenverlauf erforderlich, auch die Bohrlöcher für die Anschlusskabel können damit direkt ermittelt werden. Ein 4 – 5 mm Holzbohrer ist die beste Wahl. Obwohl die Kabel wesentlich dünner sind, haben wir bei der finalen Gleisverlegung immer noch ein wenig Spiel.

Nun sollte an der Schienenaußenseite mit einem Filzstift der Verlauf der Gleise aufgezeichnet werden. Es ist eine Hilfslinie für die spätere finale Fixierung der Schienen dienlich.

Lesen sie weiter auf der Website zum Projekt unter:

https://www.1zu220-shop.de/Projekt2025:_:123.html



Beachten Sie auch unsere Angebote auf www.1zu220.de !

28-metre layout in Geislingen

Climbing the Alb Cliff

On 29 June 2025, the Geislinger Steige celebrated the 175th anniversary of its commissioning. A big celebration with a wide-ranging programme and many special steam train rides had been organised for the occasion. A key part of the activities was the recommissioning of the large Z gauge layout in the Alter Bau (Old Building), which Märklin and our editorial team supported with matching models.

The Geislinger Steige is the most famous climb in the Swabian Alb and has become a buzzword for railway fans. On its 175th anniversary this year, it seems to be more present in people's minds than ever before. But the term climb is not reserved for the railway, not even in this Swabian town.

Since Roman times, there have been more or less developed ascents around Geislingen, trade routes for carts and horse-drawn cars that climbed the Swabian Alb. But it was not until the 19th century that the time seemed right for an efficient ascent of the Swabian mountain range.



In May 2024, the view from the hillside overlooks Geislingen (Steige) railway station with its footbridge and historic terminal building

In the young Kingdom of Württemberg, the importance of the new medium of transport, the railway, was recognised early on and seen as an opportunity to successfully tackle the widespread poverty throughout the country.

Indeed, the much-praised Swabian railway, on whose route from Heilbronn to Friedrichshafen the Geislinger Steige is located, was to change people's lives forever. Its construction was decided upon with the law concerning the construction of railways on 18 April 1843.



The ruins of Helfenstein Castle offer a magnificent view of the start of the incline, still within the Geislingen city limits. Shortly before the last right-hand bend, just before the railway line disappears, if you look closely, you can see the tower of the cemetery building, which can serve as a reference point on the model railway.

The biggest obstacle was the topography, because the Swabian Alb had to be crossed between Geislingen and Ulm. Only after various alternatives had been examined, initially favoured and finally rejected, was the ramp known today as the 'Geislinger Steige' built between 1847 and 1850, which is the shortest, but also the steepest route.

It is 5.706 km long, which translates to a length of almost 26 metres on the Z gauge scale. The layout in the Alter Bau ("Old Building", local history museum of the town of Geislingen an der Steige), which we would like to present today, measures 28 metres in order to also take into account the access tracks to the stations and turning loops.

Walking past it, the possible overall view and the almost unimaginable dimensions quickly reveal the pioneering achievement that was once accomplished here and what a magnificent structure it is.

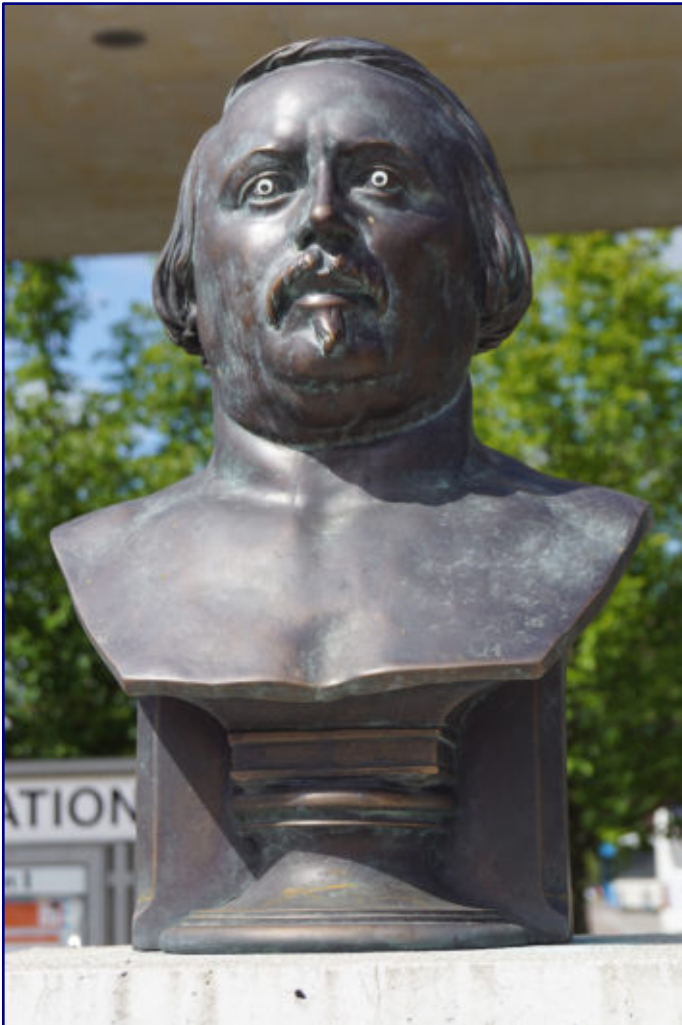
The young and prematurely deceased chief engineer Michael Knoll and senior civil engineer Karl von Etzel, who later became famous for the Brenner Railway in Tyrol, were entrusted with the construction. Michael Knoll is commemorated to this day by the Knoll monument about halfway along the route, and both men are also depicted at Geislingen railway station.

The construction and operation of the railway brought prosperity to what was then still a small town, but it also presented challenges, as the 3,000 workers needed for the project could not all be recruited from the immediate vicinity.

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The last location of the former Geislingen depot now houses the sidings for two class 185 banking engines (photo above). The Alter Bau ("Old Building"), a large granary dating from 1445/46 (photo below), now houses the municipal museum, which has a 28-metre-long model railway layout on one gable end.



At Geislingen railway station, this bust commemorates senior civil engineer Michael Knoll to this day.

They all had to be housed and provided for, while social tensions were guaranteed, as they were almost exclusively simple and poor people who could only earn a sufficient livelihood through hard physical labour.

The history of Daniel Straub, who came from a family of millers, is also closely linked to the Geislinger Steige.

He was introduced to railway construction at an early age by his cousin Michael Knoll and set up a workshop in Kapellmühle for sharpening tools and repairing machines.

By expanding into mill construction carpentry and iron foundry for the manufacture of machines, as well as by investing in a metal products factory, he rose to become an important German industrialist.

His work led to the creation of WMF (Württembergischer Metallwarenfabrik), a company that is just as closely connected to the construction of the Steige, and is still based in Geislingen today.

Groundbreaking mountain railway

After a few route optimisations, the railway ramp ran and still runs along the eastern slope of the valley. It was designed as a double track from the outset and was extended accordingly in a timely

manner. Over its course of almost six kilometres, it climbs 112 metres (51 cm in the model).

The Geislinger Steige is laid out according to the standard for mountain railways. During construction, no one could imagine that a line of this gradient and length could be mastered using friction alone. The K.W.St.E. commissioned the development of a new steam locomotive, the Alb class, which was to be specially tailored to these requirements.

After the project was successful, its engineers gained great fame and were in high demand as construction engineers. The Geislinger Steige was to benefit from its pioneering reputation and pioneering role for many years to come.

During the ascent to Amstetten, the curve radii decrease to 278 metres, and the maximum gradient is 22.5 ‰. Although the Schiefe Ebene ("inclined plane") near Hof is older, the Alb incline is considered the first railway mountain crossing in continental Europe.

However, operation was and remained a major challenge for the Royal Württemberg State Railways (K.W.St.E.) and its successors.

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At the Schimmelmühle photo location (photo above), we find today's Straub mill, which dates back to Geislingen's former Kapell miller Daniel Straub. The Mühltal embankment and the Mühltal rock (photo below) mark the remains of the Alter General (Old General, name for a rock formation), which had to be blown up to build the path and clear the way over the Albtrauf mountain ridge.

In the age of steam locomotives, almost every train had to be pushed, which is why the track systems in both Geislingen and at the upper terminus in Amstetten had to be sufficiently large.

Geislingen station was rebuilt several times and adapted to the increased volume of traffic. This can also be seen in the layout, which reflects the operating conditions of 1925 (i.e., the 75th anniversary): the small depot that houses the push-pull locomotives, which are maintained and repaired here, has been moved away from the immediate station area and relocated a few hundred metres back from the start of the incline.



At the upper end of the climb stood the old Amstetten station restaurant, behind which (not visible here) ran the track of the Amstetten–Gerstetten local railway.

The machines in use changed over the years, of course, and were closely related to the train loads that had to be transported up the ramp. At the Reichsbahn, the Class 95, formerly the Prussian T 20, became the dominant push-pull locomotive on the Steige. The Geislinger Steige was the main route for the 'Schöne Württembergerin' (Beautiful Lady from Wuerttemberg, Class C / Class 181).

Train traffic at that time was varied and included all types of trains. Until the outbreak of the First World War, even the Orient Express took the route via Geislingen, although only one operational stop was planned here on the uphill journey.

From 1917 onwards, the only German six-coupler, the Württemberg K (later class 59), came into service, a distinctive machine specially designed for the requirements of this line.

After the DRG was founded, standard steam locomotives also increasingly found their way here. For many years, for example, the Class 86 was used on the Tälesbahn railway line from Geislingen to Wiesensteig.

Further increases in train loads led to the line being electrified at an early stage. This was accomplished under the supervision of the Deutsche Reichsbahn on 30 May 1933. With the E 93, another train and pusher locomotive had been developed that was specifically designed to meet the demands of this steep gradient. Its maximum permissible speed of 70 km/h corresponded exactly to the maximum permissible speed on the climb.



Only a small section of the narrow-gauge Albbahn railway between Amstetten and Laichingen remains, which is now operated as a museum railway.

Thanks to the E 93, many pushing services were eliminated and operations were streamlined. With the outbreak of war, its more powerful successor, the E 94, quickly arrived here and also dominated operations for a long time.

It was eventually replaced by the E 50 (class 150), the 151 and, today, the 185. Two locomotives are permanently stationed in Geislingen for pushing operations and can be seen from the castle ruins of Helfenstein in front of the station.

Mammoth project at a scale of 1:220

The Geislinger Steige had and still has several well-known and striking landmarks that are also defining features of a model railway layout. Of course, they are always related to the operating period depicted.

Frieder Welle, an enthusiast who passed away in 2016, was personally dissatisfied with the replicas that had been created prior to his initiative. Every attempt was severely limited by the sheer incredible length requirements, which only allowed for short sections or a significant compression of the route proportions.



It is almost impossible to capture a 28-metre-long model railway layout in a single photo. Here, we focused on the depot, which is located outside the immediate station area, Geislingen station with the Tälesbahn railway on the forecourt, and the last houses on the outskirts of the town along the Steige (see also photos on pages 21 and 22).



The section shown begins at the municipal gasworks, which had a railway connection and where town gas was produced from hard coal. To be able to replicate this, as well as the Amstetten station exit towards Ulm at 28 m, a construction scale of 1:250 was chosen and correctly adhered to. Due to the material in 1:220 scale, the track centre distance now requires caution on the part of operators when trains cross.

This was particularly true of Bernhard Stein's replica in the early 1980s, which had to comply with the eight-metre limit for exhibition booths. It was widely acclaimed at the time because it demonstrated the full potential of Mini-Club. In addition, its builder had selected distinctive features and deliberately placed them in the spotlight.

However, anyone familiar with the location should have been able to quickly recognise and see through the compromises. This was not enough for perfectionist Frieder Welle, and he set about creating an exact scale replica of the climb for the 150th anniversary in 2000.



In 1925, the Tälesbahn railway still ran from the forecourt to Wiesensteig, whose terminus included a small segment turntable. The station building and the steel footbridge near the tavern make it easy to find your way around: today, the central bus station stands on the site of the large goods shed. The level crossing in the background has been replaced by an underpass.

He was able to recruit additional helpers as early as 1998. According to publications by the city of Geislingen, there were twelve additional individuals; however, based on the recollections of our contact person Jan Frese, the total team consisted of eleven individuals. Therefore, the exact number of individuals involved in the project remains unclear for the time being.

In any case, it all started in 1998. With the help of this team and the support of city archivist Hartmut Gruber, documents, photographs and plans of the more than six-kilometre-long route between the former Geislingen gasworks and Amstetten railway station were compiled.

The year or period in which the events were to be reproduced still had to be determined. The present was ruled out, as it could be explored directly in the reality. The recent past also offered little appeal, as it had already served as a template for Bernhard Stein.

On the other hand, the period before 1900 posed major problems, as photographic documentation was not yet common at that time. In addition, there was a lack of suitable rolling stock on a scale of 1:220.

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We are approaching the eastern edge of Geislingen (photo above), which can also be seen on page 22. The road to Amstetten (photo below) characterised the townscape then as it does today, as it has been replaced by a federal highway. The steel footbridge over the railway, which the push locomotive has just passed, has also been preserved to this day. Currently, it is almost impossible to reach due to overgrowth.

The available documentation and the range of models offered by Märklin ultimately led to the choice of 1925. This was exactly halfway between the opening of the climb section and the upcoming anniversary. Many sections are still recognisable today, while the operation before the electrification of the line promises even more excitement.

Railway facilities and residential buildings along the entire route were planned down to the last detail and, in over 3,700 hours of work, created as models that are as true to the originals as possible. All structures directly connected to the railway, such as station buildings, locomotive sheds and signalmen's houses, have been reproduced in their entirety and in their typical colours.



This photo is a great example of how big the place is: At the cemetery with the distinctive tower, we hit the edge of Geislingen and get closer to the Rohrach valley.

All other buildings were simplified, but given their correct size and shape, resulting in a harmonious settlement image. This decision was certainly not only due to time constraints, since the presentation date of 29 June 2000 was fixed, but also to the fact that not every former house had been documented in a photograph at some point.

Consequently, questions remained about the design and colour of the facades, as well as the size, number and arrangement of windows. The viewer should therefore see exactly what they could see in historical comparative photographs (and nothing more). And this calculation should work out, as our photographs prove.

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The gatekeeper's houses (photo above) also appear in historical photographs but no longer exist today. They provided a home for six families who were responsible for operating the nearby Knoll signal box. Behind the uphill bend, we reach the Knoll monument (photo below), which is marked by a sign on the road and is currently being passed by class C '4000'. Here, too, there is a bust on the masonry, and a fountain powered solely by hydropower. It marks the middle of the incline and is roughly halfway along the route from Paris to Vienna via the Geislinger Steige.

Traditional construction methods were used, as lightweight construction was not yet very widespread at the turn of the millennium. Sections of forest in the interior were constructed using wire mesh and covered with foliage material. This is not noticeable due to the dense vegetation, especially as tree trunks can be seen at the edges.

However, the help of relevant manufacturers such as Busch and Noch was also required for this project, without which it would have been almost impossible to finance. The initiator was able to win them all over, especially as he wanted to create something lasting that would not be demolished after the anniversary.



The express train, pulled by a class 03 steam locomotive with a class 181 locomotive in front and a class 86 locomotive behind, has just passed the Knoll signal box and reached the Mühlthal embankment (see photo on page 25 below). At the Mühlthal rock, the road almost reaches the level of the railway line again. In the valley, we can still see the Schimmelmühle (Schimmel mill) on the right.

Märklin, based in nearby Göppingen, also generously supported the project, primarily by providing the rolling stock required for operation. The company also supplied a section control system for the 28-metre track, which made it possible to run several trains simultaneously on the huge layout.

On 29 June 2000, the layout was ready for operation in the Jahnhalle, and visitors to the Steigenfest were able to watch passenger and freight trains coming from the gasworks and arriving at Geislingen station. Of course, no push-pull locomotive was used here; the journey up and over the Steige could be followed without any long stops.

After entering the steep section, the train soon reaches the outskirts of Geislingen, passing its last settlements and finally the cemetery. On its way, it also passes under a small footbridge, which still exists today.

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The view from the Schimmelmühle (Schimmel mill) high above the Mühlthal dam and the Mühlthal rock (top photo) illustrates the enormous difference in height in the model and the original. Meanwhile, the next express train has reached the Mühlthal dam (bottom photo), this time led by two Schöne Württembergerinnen (Beautiful Ladies from Württemberg), which are travelling on their regular route in this area.

The journey continues steeply along the road, which has long since given way to a newly routed and better paved federal highway, past the four gatekeeper's houses that were frequently photographed after the opening of the climb. The road and railway line now run at significantly different elevations from each other.



We are already approaching Amstetten, the upper end of the climb: the road has now exceeded the level of the railway line in order to cross it on a bridge (photo above). On the other side, on the left, is the brickworks, Daniel Straub's workshop. Even today, the main road crosses the railway line at this point. Shortly afterwards, we come to the Montenovo building materials factory (photo below), from where we can look back at the brickworks in the background.

We reach the wide Rohrach Valley, while the railway continues to wind its way close to the rocks, following their course. The Knoll monument on the mountainside opposite the former Knoll signal box plays a special role: it marks the middle of the Geislinger Steige and also symbolises the halfway point between the cities of Paris and Vienna, which were served by the Orient Express.

Finally, the Mühltal valley opens up to the right of the railway line. Even though the main road is now at a slightly different elevation, the Mühltal dam and the Mühltal rock are easily recognisable.



We have reached Amstetten station! Three railway lines converge here. In the foreground, we see the narrow-gauge Albbähnle railway to Laichingen, whose model trains were built entirely in-house. Behind the houses, we see the track of the local railway to Gerstetten, which at that time was not yet connected to the state railway line, where a heavy freight train with a former G 12 is waiting to descend. By the way, the station restaurant shown on page 26 is mostly hidden here by the old Gerstetten station building.

This rock is what remains of the Alter General (Old General), which once blocked the path across the Albtrauf and had to be largely blown up to make way for the railway. At the foot of the dam stands the Schimmel Mill. Today, this site is home to the Straub Mill, which dates back to the metal goods manufacturer Daniel Straub.

The steepest section now lies ahead of us, but at the same time we are already approaching our destination, Amstetten. There are no more steeply rising rocks, and the area ahead of us opens up again on both sides. The road now crosses a bridge to the other side of the railway line.

At this point, the federal highway does the same today. If we leave it and turn off, we come to the brickworks, where Daniel Straub set up his repair workshop and rose from being a miller to an industrialist.

Meanwhile, the train continues towards Amstetten station, where the steep section ends. On the right is the Montenovo building materials factory, whose current branch belongs to Saint-Gobain. On the left, we see the sidings and storage tracks of Amstetten station, where three lines meet that were operated independently of each other.

From its own platform located to the left of the station building, the local railway departs in the direction of Gerstetten, now a museum railway operated by the Ulm Railway Friends. To the right of the state railway line, at the same level as the main line, are the narrow-gauge tracks of the Albbähnle railway.



At the edge of Amstetten Bahnhof, the railway and road still cross each other today, but no longer at the same level.

Today, only a fragment of this railway remains, which is also operated by the museum. At that time, the track also extended beyond the station in the opposite direction.

By the way, Amstetten railway station is not located in the historic town centre. Settlement here only began after the construction of the Geislinger Steige, which eventually led to the development of a second town centre, which was given the name Amstetten Bahnhof.

Our climb ends here. In reality, the pushing engines would now be uncoupled and run back to Geislingen. Instead, the model

train disappears in the direction of Ulm into a dark box that conceals a turning loop. Once it has passed through, it also travels back to Geislingen on the opposite track.

The fact that this model railway journey is possible today and that we can travel back in time a whole hundred years on a scale of 1:220 is not something that can be taken for granted. Although donations from Geislingen citizens ensured that the true-to-scale replica of the railway could continue to be displayed after the 150th anniversary, that is only part of the story.

For a full 25 years, the large model was on display behind a glass wall on the gable end of the Alter Bau (Old Building). However, as it was no longer in operation, it fell into a deep sleep. Protected from direct sunlight and dust deposits, it remained in good condition overall, requiring hardly any repairs or improvements.

But simply applying power and watching trains run was not reflecting reality. The electrical system had to be checked and understood so that repairs could be carried out here too, and at the same time, many metres of track had to be cleaned at great expense.

Since Easter, Jan Frese, and Alfred Wäse, who were both involved in the construction of this layout, have been working meticulously with other helpers to bring this unique showpiece back to life. The locomotive models from back then in particular needed to be cleaned, serviced and re-lubricated.

Fortunately, Märklin once again provided rolling stock, and so nothing stood in the way of a successful second premiere on 29 June 2025. We were also able to support the sidings and passing loops with suitable models in order to attractively recreate the bustling activity of the 1920s on what is probably the most beautiful and accurate model of the Geislinger Steige.

Visit to the museum in the Old Building:
<https://stadtmuseum-geislingen.de>

Trainini TV – Episode 48:
<https://www.youtube.com/TraininiTV>

Gras-Master 4.0 professional set

Noch's innovative Flocking Device

When Noch introduced its Gras-Master around 20 years ago, it made electrostatic flocking much more accessible to model railway enthusiasts. Where previously expensive professional equipment would be hired, this torch-shaped tool now found its way into the homes of many hobbyists. And this year has seen the launch of, already, the fourth generation of this useful device.

It seems almost as if the product managers at Noch in Wangen, Germany, were thinking of the adage "Perfect is the enemy of the good" when they began developing the device presented today. Two decades ago, when they first launched the first-generation Gras-Master, their product was still unrivalled.

The only alternatives before that were to hire an extremely expensive professional device, provided that the local dealer had one in stock, or to approach layout landscaping in a different way. The latter would boil down to coloured sawdust or modern flock material, unless the model railway enthusiast wanted to go to great lengths to try other ways of making blades of grass stand up in a realistic manner.



At the beginning of November 2025, we exhibited and demonstrated the new "Gras-Master 4.0 Professional Set" (item no. 60125) at the model railway show in Erkrath-Hochdahl. Its practical application is also on display in episode 46 of [Trainini TV](#).

It was no surprise, therefore, that other suppliers jumped on the bandwagon and introduced their own static grass applicators. Soon, devices with similar functions but with different power supplies or different shapes appeared in the catalogues of Faller and Heki.

Numerous smaller manufacturers in Germany and the USA followed suit, with their products showing a noticeable similarity to the original, while at the same time striving to further optimise their usefulness.

The specialist from the southern German Allgäu region soon reacted to the competition and continued to develop his own product. Its second-generation device became even more powerful, which was relevant for those enthusiasts working with larger scales, as longer grass fibres require higher tension fields.

They also added a finer dosing device for allowing access to confined spaces. This was a tool that was extremely useful for working in our scale, but unfortunately it disappeared from the market again with the third generation Gras-Master.



The professional set comes with a useful storage and transport case. The economic calculation of purchasing either the professional or the regular Gras-Master 4.0 set depends on one's individual need for all the extra accessories and features included with the professional version.

Meanwhile, competitors increased the field voltage and made the grass containers transparent so that their contents could be checked and refilled in good time. Replaceable containers also became increasingly popular.

However, this came with higher prices; Noch was still committed to offering an affordable tool. After all, that is where the roots of the company's successful business model lie. Its third-generation device came in a new shape, but otherwise stuck to the previous formula.

However, the availability of two different versions made a decisive difference from then on: depending on the area of application and their individual requirements, existing customers could choose between two performance levels.

For many, the standard version was sufficient, which got more powerful anyway from one generation to the next. For more demanding applications, there was also the "Profi" version, which was powered by



The fourth generation of the Gras-Master operates with an integrated Li-ion battery. A suitable "USB-A to USB-C" cable is included for charging. When plugged in and connected to a suitable power supply, a red LED indicates that charging is in progress.

several AA batteries instead of a 9 Volt block battery. With this product version, no one needed to shy away from long grass fibres.

The next generation

In fact, we still enjoy working with the Gras-Master 3.0 Profi edition, but the fourth generation now available represents a huge leap forward and takes the device back to the front of the pack! When the two 3.0 versions were first presented at the Nürnberg Spielwarenmesse (Nuremberg Toy Fair), we spoke to the company.

Upon expressing our regret for the lack of transparent storage containers, they promised that this would change with the fourth-generation device. They cited technical reasons as to why this had not been possible already with the 3.0 version. We were surprised by this statement, as transparent containers had long been feasible elsewhere.

It simply remained unclear why the device should work less well with a crystal-clear moulded container than with a white (or later also yellow) one. Noch provided the answer at the 2025 Nuremberg Toy Fair and to everyone at the beginning of October.

Apparently, Noch did not want to simply indulge in playing with colours and pondered a way to develop a new interchangeable container system that was completely reliable, both in terms of function, but also with respect to easiness of exchanging containers.

This has been achieved with a simple bayonet mount: the container is placed on the rod and turned slightly until the ball lock clicks into place. To change it, it is also turned 1 to 2 cm, which presses down the ball. The container can now be replaced.



Noch offers three container sizes for its current products. The detail flocking tool (bottom right) is designed for finishing work where the other alternatives are too large.

This may only be done when the device is switched off to avoid accidentally touching parts under current. A standard container, which is always included in the scope of delivery, a detail flocking container (item no. 60128) and an XL flocking replacement container (60129) are available as storage containers. Each comes with sieves of different mesh sizes.

The Gras-Master 4.0 Professional Set (60125) presented here includes all three containers. It is primarily aimed at clubs, their members and builders of large-scale layouts, which is why it is designed to cover all potential use cases. For this reason, the scope of delivery also includes a soft case for safely storing and transporting all parts.

For purely private users with more limited tasks, a more affordable version, "Gras-Master 4.0" (60120), is also available, which generates a fixed voltage of 15 kV. In the professional version, it can be adjusted between 11 and 20 kV using a rotary control knob.

Another innovative feature compared to the previous version is the switch from battery power to a powerful lithium-ion rechargeable battery. In the standard model, the 2,200 mAh storage capacity is sufficient for up to four hours of continuous operation, while the professional model, with its 3,000 mAh capacity, allows between three and ten hours of operation, depending on the voltage setting.



The longer the selected grass fibres are, the larger the mesh size of the sieves should be: Here we see examples of the three sizes supplied for each container diameter.

Both devices are charged via a USB-C port, which is standardised to 5 volts input voltage and complies with the standard for today's mobile phones. Accordingly, a cable for connecting USB-A to USB-C is included, and the power supply unit with the appropriate specification can be easily taken from the phone or purchased separately. Internally, the new products operate with 3.7 volts DC voltage.

A simple on/off slide switch puts it into operating mode. The desired tension can now be set on the professional device and adjusted at any time. It should be adjusted according to the fibre length used, and it is advisable to set it generously, as too little tension will impair the straightening of the fibres during insertion.

The voltage, which may be set too high, is indicated by the pulling of fibres and makes it difficult or impossible to apply the stalks to the landscape. In such a case, the voltage is readjusted, but this time in the direction of the minus sign.

An LED display provides information about the status and function: When the device is switched on, a green light indicates that it is ready for operation. If a second LED also lights up orange, this indicates that the battery is low and needs to be recharged.

When the function is switched off and connected to the charging cable and power supply unit, LED 1 lights up red. When charging is complete, it changes back to green. The battery capacities are sufficiently dimensioned so that even natural ageing processes do not significantly restrict operating times.

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Image above:

There is a metal pin in the cup holder of the handle, to which high voltage is applied during operation. Its task is to conduct the voltage into the container.

Image below:

A metal plate is attached onto the top of all containers as a counterpart, which absorbs the tension and distributes it across the entire diameter of the base.



When the device is switched on, a green LED indicates that it is ready for operation; when switched off, the green light indicates that charging is complete. On the professional device, we also find the voltage selector switch on the right. Another useful idea was the stand integrated into the handle, which protects the Gras-Master from unwanted movements – incidentally, a weak point of some alternative products.

Noch recommends to only start charging when the orange LED lights up and then continue until the battery is fully charged. Do not store the device for long periods with a low battery charge; deep discharge should be avoided. When transporting the device, please note that a Li-ion battery is a hazardous substance and may require special precautions.

Practical tests

Operation of the Gras-Master has not changed fundamentally with the new product presented today. The adequate sieve is selected to match the fibre length, with the mesh size being narrower the shorter the material used.

As before, the application of fibres is also influenced by gently shaking the tool. As expected, the opposite pole in this new edition is also a crocodile clip that can be attached, for example, to a needle that has been inserted into the glued area onto which the fibres are to be applied. In principle, it is sufficient to place the clip near the target area.

The only difference from previous versions of this device is that the storage containers are now removable. All electrical components are still housed in the handle, but there is a detachable contact on the mounting surface for the flock container that connects to the metal plate inside it



A bayonet mount with a locking ball that is pressed in against spring force with a counter-recess (see arrows) in the container ensures a secure hold and easy replacement when changing containers.

This offers two advantages over versions 1 to 3: As mentioned at the beginning, the containers can be exchanged during operation. This also allows multiple flocking layers with different materials in a single operation, optionally using the flocking templates (60139) and grass stamps (60137).

The container is then simply changed during the ongoing process. Since there is likely to be little demand for XL flock containers, particularly in Z scale, it seems advisable in many cases to expand your own equipment with one or two additional standard-size flock replacement containers (60127). These are not explicitly mentioned in the product description, but are also available from Noch.

They always come with three sieves and a lid, which also allows grass fibres to be stored permanently. Those who are not afraid of investing in a larger container inventory may be grateful for this storage option with quick access – it is certainly not a must-have.

Noch also offers an optional storage space solution with its “work station”. However, we prefer to store grass fibres in plastic containers of the kind still offered by Noch a few years ago. We don’t mind transferring the grass fibres into a replacement container, but we also find a second container very helpful.

Since we usually work with three different types of fibre, the detailed flock applicator included with our test device is the third addition. It holds the materials that we will use the least and that will most likely need to be applied precisely and in hard-to-reach areas.

This attachment with its long silicone neck finally replaces the previous precision dosing device, which we had sorely missed. A cable inside the tube carries the high voltage to the end plate in the small container. It is bendable and can therefore reach every corner of the layout – a really good idea from Noch.



The Gras-Master 4.0 fits securely in the hand, allowing for longer working time, in line with its high battery performance.

Filling or emptying the containers has become more convenient and, in some cases, somewhat safer. Provided that the user follows the manufacturer's instructions. When a container is disconnected from the easy-to-grip handle, it immediately becomes de-energised, as the capacitors in the circuit are located outside of it.

Touching the metal plate in the bottom of each replacement container (which is perceived as unpleasant) has no consequences when filling or emptying. After all, contact cannot always be avoided, because thorough cleaning can only be achieved with a vacuum cleaner and a damp cloth. Incidentally, fibres adhering to the silicone hose proved to be stubborn in our test, and we do not want to put them in the storage bag.

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Wherever larger containers cannot be used and even the handle of the tool would be in the way, we resort to the detail flocker (photo above), whose bendable silicone hose makes almost any target area accessible. A suitable cable with USB-A and USB-C connectors on the opposite side is included for charging (photo below). The appropriate plug-in power supply can be borrowed from a mobile phone charger.

Final verdict

We wouldn't want to be without the Gras-Master 4.0 in this "professional set". It may not revolutionise electrostatic grassing, but it is and remains a useful and effective tool for building dioramas and layouts.

Its higher purchase price compared to the third generation, which remains available in the basic version, is offset by the gains in flexibility, efficiency, and speed when working. The adjustable working voltage, which covers all scales, and, thus, also caters to the needs of model railway enthusiasts who work in different scales, is an advantage of the professional version.



The removable and sealable containers not only allow for quick changes between different types of fibres but are also suitable for storing grass fibres during breaks. This is particularly useful when creating your own mixtures from different products.

Procuring the device by a model railway club, where members could also borrow the device on an ad hoc basis, seems like a sensible idea for saving costs. Noch also takes this into account with its well-thought-out and modular design.

In our tests, we did not identify any need for even higher operating voltages, as offered by some competing products, and these would only benefit the very large-scale end of the model railway spectrum.

We would also like to point out that although the voltage range is harmless to healthy people and even a small electric shock is as inconsequential as contact with an electric fence, we must not forget pre-existing conditions.

These include well-known and as yet undiagnosed heart conditions, but in any case, the instructions and the device itself contain warnings for patients with pacemakers. We do not know whether smaller suppliers in particular have given this sufficient consideration or even conducted tests. Noch, at least, addresses this product safety issue in an open and transparent manner.



A non-slip handle, power supply via a powerful battery, replaceable and sealable containers with level control at all times, plus a secure stand for when the device is put down: the Gras-Master 4.0 from Noch is a well-designed tool in every respect that buyers will quickly find indispensable.

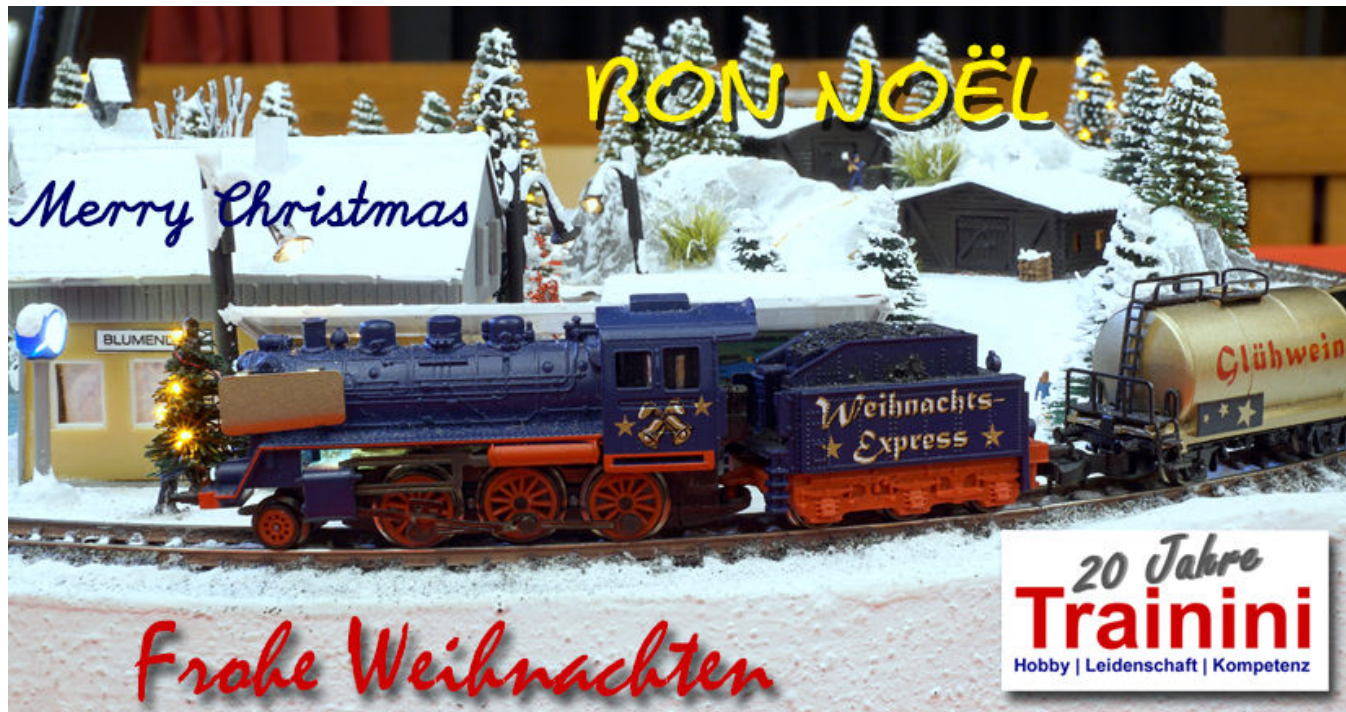
Our final verdict is therefore that we have discovered a well-balanced and sensibly equipped device that can grow even further with the evolving needs of the model railway enthusiast. Compared to its predecessor, the new features represent a significant leap forward.

That is why we are recognising Noch's commitment to innovation by nominating the Gras-Master 4.0 Professional Set (60125) for our best 2025 New Releases of the Year award in the Technology category.

Supplier website:
<https://www.noch.com>

Trainini TV – Episode 46:
<https://www.youtube.com/TraininiTV>

Season's greetings



Dear Readers,

2025 was a special year for us, as the magazine you are holding in your hands celebrated its 20th anniversary. We had the pleasure of celebrating this milestone with many of you on 4 and 5 October.

When we launched this magazine in August 2005, we never dreamed of the significance it would one day achieve in the German and even international magazine market.

However, many people have also left us along the way, including some in recent months. We would like to honour their memory and remember them. Behind this lies the Christian message of peace and eternal life.

At Christmas, a celebration of peace, we hope and pray for all people around the world who are threatened by war, disease and terror. To all those who are able to feel safe and secure, we send our best wishes for a happy 2026 and hope you have a joyful and, above all, peaceful Christmas season.

Your Editors' Board

Note for English readers: The literature section that follows is not translated into English because the original texts of the books involved are in the German language. The original German is left here for information purposes only.

175 Jahre Geislinger Steige

Pionier der Ingenieurskunst

Am 29. Juni 2025 jährte sich die Inbetriebnahme der Geislinger Steige auf den Tag genau zum 175. Mal. Dieses Jubiläum bot Anlass für ein großes Bahnhofs- und auch das Veröffentlichen eines neuen Buchs auf aktuellem Stand zu ihrer Geschichte. Es erschien erste wenige Tage vor dem Fest und lag uns nicht rechtzeitig vor, um termingerecht zu besprechen.

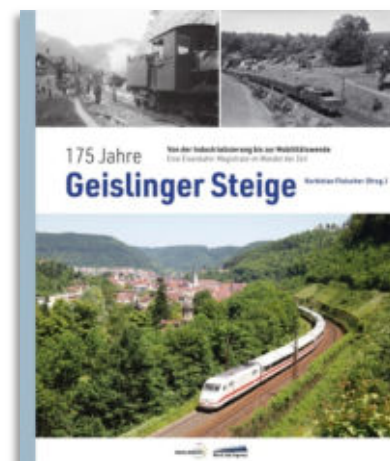
Korbinian Fleischer (Hrsg.)
175 Jahre Geislinger Steige
Von der Industrialisierung bis zur Mobilitätswende
Eine Eisenbahn-Magistrale im Wandel der Zeit

Nord Süd Express GmbH
Hattenhofen 2025

Gebundenes Buch
Format 22,0 x 26,5 cm
160 Seiten mit über 180 teilweise farbigen Abbildungen

ISBN 978-3-949665-35-6
Best.-Nr. 201005
Preis 36,95 EUR (Deutschland)

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Korbinian Fleischer scheint genau der richtige Mann zu sein, um ein Werk wie dieses zum Erfolg zu führen. Obwohl er zu den jüngeren Eisenbahnfachautoren gehört, blickt er auf jahrzehntelange Erfahrungen und schon einige Titel zurück.

Zudem ist er in der Region tief verwurzelt und im Museumsbetrieb unterwegs. So erkannte er den Wert des Steigenportraits, das vor 25 Jahren erschienen war und wir im Sommer vorgestellt haben. Es bildete die Basis für ihn und die weiteren Autoren.

Gleichwohl ist seitdem noch ein Vierteljahrhundert Geschichte hinzugekommen und einiges, das damals eher Vision war, ist heute Gegenwart. Aber auch nicht alle Befürchtungen scheinen eingetreten zu sein. Das allein bietet schon Stoff genug, ein neues Buch zusammenzustellen und zu konzipieren: Bewährtes fortführen, Neues integrieren.

Wer dieses Buch aufschlägt, der fühlt sich gleich gut mitgenommen. Dr. Philipp Lintner, Stadtarchivar in Geislingen (Steige), stimmt gleich nach den obligatorischen Grußworten in seinem Vorwort auf die Inhalte ein und ordnet das vorliegende Werk treffend ein.

Wir geben daher einige seiner Zeilen wieder, die es auf den Punkt bringen: „Mit den Jahren verändern sich beschriebene Sachverhalte, insbesondere im Verkehrswesen, das in den letzten 25 Jahren einem großen Wandel unterlag.“

Allein der Umstand, dass die hier erwähnten Veränderungen weiter anhalten, rechtfertigte eine aktualisierte und fortgeschriebene Geschichtsdokumentation. Der forschende Ansatz ist zudem noch gar

nicht mal so alt: Das vor 25 Jahren erschienene Buch war das erste seiner Art, das sich auch dem Heer an Arbeitern und ihrer Situation sowie dem gesellschaftlichen wie wirtschaftlichen Wandel widmete.

Der Herausgeber hat die Texte von Historikern und erfahrenen Eisenbahnern durchgesehen und editiert, um sie auch in diesem Buch als wichtige Basis dessen unterzubringen. Anschließend hat er diese Geschichte fortgeschrieben und um wichtige Aspekte des 21. Jahrhunderts erweitert. Ohne Zweifel ist dabei das neue Standardwerk zur Geschichte der Geislinger Steige entstanden, von dem wir gewiss noch einige Jahre sprechen werden.

Das ausgetauschte und neu hinzugefügte Bildmaterial ordnet Dr. Philipp Lintner wie folgt ein: „Während Historikergenerationen wechseln, haben sich nicht zuletzt durch die Vernetzungen des Internets neue Quellen ergeben, die die Geschichte der Steige neu beleuchten, insbesondere aber auch neues Bildmaterial zutage gebracht haben.“

Dem ist nur hinzuzufügen, dass auch diese Aufnahmen perfekt reproduziert und treffend ausgewählt worden sind, um die Aussagen des Geschriebenen zu begleiten und anschaulich zu dokumentieren. Selten hat das Lesen so viel Spaß bereitet und so gefesselt.

Werfen wir einen kurzen Blick auf die Inhalte: Ab dem 29. Juni 1850 stand auch das letzte und steilste Teilstück der württembergischen Hauptstrecke Heilbronn – Stuttgart – Ulm – Friedrichshafen für den Betrieb bereit. Auch 175 Jahre später gilt die Geislinger Steige immer noch als technische Meisterleistung.

Die vielen bislang unveröffentlichten Fotografien und Illustrationen dokumentieren sowohl den Bau, die Modernisierungen, die Elektrifizierung als auch den Betrieb auf der Geislinger Steige. Eigene Kapitel befassen sich mit dem Schubbetrieb, mit den Nebenbahnen (Lokalbahn nach Gerstetten, Albbähnle nach Laichingen und Tälesbahn nach Wiesensteig), mit den Bahnanlagen des früheren Bergwerks Staufenstolln und dem Kehrbahnhof Eydtal - von beiden ist heute nichts mehr zu sehen.

Ebenso im Mittelpunkt stehen die Lokomotiven und Züge, die auf der Geislinger Steige zu sehen waren. Dazu gehörten auch Luxuszüge wie der Orient-Express und TEE, D-Züge mit klangvollen Namen, später Intercity und Interregio – heute erklimmen immer noch einige ICE die 22,5%-Steilrampe.

Nicht vergessen wurden auch die Güterzüge. So spannt sich der Bogen beim Lokmaterial von den legendären württembergischen Maschinen der Klassen C und K über die schweren Fünfkuppler der Baureihe 95 bis zu E 93 und E 94.

Auch die E 17 war hier Stammgast, E 50 und 151 beherrschten den Schubbetrieb unter der Ägide der Bundesbahn und schließlich landen wir bei der Baureihe 185 der Gegenwart, aber auch den Lokomotiven und Triebzügen, die heute den Personenverkehr bestimmen.

Keine Frage, dieses Buch ist einzigartig und nicht nur für regional Ansässige und interessierte Menschen zu empfehlen. Auch Eisenbahnfreunde gleich welcher Herkunft und vor allem auch Modellbahner können sich der Faszination Steige nicht entziehen und werden hier fündig.

Modellbahnanlagen in mehreren Maßstäben zeigen deutlich, welche Begeisterung dieses Thema findet und wie auch freie Interpretationen von den Impressionen dieser Vorlage profitieren. Vielleicht liegt das auch daran, dass aus dem Tal der Blick auf die Trasse gut möglich ist und sich die Berge hinter ihr erheben? Das erlaubt eine optimale Höhenstaffelung.

Im Buch ist das übrigens auch gewürdigt: Die heute vorgestellte Anlage der Geislinger Steige erhielt ein eigenes Kapitel mit tollen Fotografien am Ende dieses Buchs, das überraschend ausführlich ausgefallen ist.

Publisher's webpages:
<https://www.nordsuedexpress.de>

100 Jahre Einheitsdampflok Der Nachlass der DRG

Mit den Baureihen 01 und 02 beginnt 1925 die Geschichte der Einheitsdampflok. 17 Baureihen waren 1924 ursprünglich geplant, von denen elf in den folgenden fünf Jahren tatsächlich realisiert wurden. Ein Filmportrait setzt ihnen und den noch folgenden Einheitslok-Baureihen ein Denkmal, das ihr Entstehen, den Betrieb und auch die Museumszeit aufgreift.



CFT Video Berlin
100 Jahre Einheits-Dampflokomotiven
Das erfolgreiche Typenprogramm der DRG

EK-Medien GmbH
Freiburg (Breisgau) 2025

DVD-Video
Bildformat 16:9
Tonformat Dolby-Digital 2.0
Sprache deutsch
Laufzeit ca. 58 Min.

Best.-Nr. 8679
Preis 22,80 EUR (Deutschland)

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Mit diesem Jahr wird auch ein weiteres Jubiläum zu Ende gehen: Die Einheitsdampflok der DRG ist 2025 ganz 100 Jahre alt geworden. Wie viele Baureihen gehören zu dieser Typenfamilie?

Wenn wir das laut fragen, wird kaum jemand die korrekte Zahl auf Anhieb nennen können. Aus einem ersten Typenplan gingen bald Maschinen vor, die ursprünglich nicht angedacht waren oder die für Spezialaufgaben konzipiert worden waren.

Die Frage, ob zwei Zylinder genug seien, oder doch Dreizylinder- und Verbundmaschinen die Zukunft gehören sollte, wurde durch Vergleiche mit parallel beschafften Musterlokomotiven beantwortet. Manche Konstruktionen, wie etwa die Baureihen 01 und 03, gelangten schon vor dem Krieg an ihre Grenzen. Dieselbe Lok, erweitert um einen dritten Zylinder, war plötzlich doch gefragt.

Die Baureihe 80 erwies sich für ihr Aufgabenfeld als zu aufwändig und stellte hier das starre Festhalten am Einheitskonzept in Frage. Die Baureihe 89 in zwei Ausführungen erschien als vereinfachte Konstruktion aber erst viel später.

Nicht vergessen wollen wir die Ära der Stromlinie, die unter anderem die Baureihen 05 und 61 hervorbrachte. Diese längst noch nicht vollständige Aufzählung macht deutlich, wie umfangreiche die Typenpalette schließlich geworden ist.

Und trotzdem bildeten alle Einheitsdampflokomotiven zusammen nur einen Bruchteil des DRG-Gesamtbestands ab. Viel alltäglicher waren und blieben erfolgreiche Konstruktionen aus der Länderbahnzeit, die bis weit nach Zweiten Weltkrieg in Dienst standen.

Der vorliegende DVD-Beitrag hat sich der Aufgabe angenommen, diese Geschichte aufzuarbeiten, alle Einheitsbaureihen zumindest kurz zu portraituren, ihre Bedeutung zu würdigen und sie auch historisch einzuordnen.

Dafür mussten die Produzenten tief in die Archive greifen, um Fotos und Aufnahmen aus der Zeit ihres Entstehens und der ersten Dienstjahre zusammenzutragen und aufzubereiten. Gezeigt wird auch der Betrieb bei der Bundesbahn bis zum Abschied 1977 sowie bei der Reichsbahn bis 1980.

In den dreißiger Jahren nahm das Programm mehr Fahrt auf und es folgten Baureihen, die wir noch nicht erwähnt haben: 41, 45, 50 und die ihr nahestehende 23, dazu Exoten und Einzelgänger wie die 06, 71 und in die Baureihe 99 eingeordnete Schmalspurlokomotiven.

Auch die „entfeinerten“ Kriegslokomotiven der Baureihen 52 und 42 werden hier den Einheitsdampflokomotiven zugerechnet. Das ist viel Stoff für 58 Minuten Filmbeitrag. Bilder aus dem Triebwerk und dem Führerstand bereichern das Ergebnis zusätzlich.

An vielen Stellen stützt sich der Film auf Aufnahmen des Museums- und Plandampfbetriebs, wie er in ähnlicher Form gut bekannt ist. Die Aufnahmen sind aber dahingehend passend geschnitten, dass es stets spannend bleibt und es nicht zu vertraut wirkt.

Diese „neuzeitlicheren“ Sequenzen umfassen nämlich tatsächlich den Zeitraum von 1985 (Sonderfahrtenprogramm der DB zum Jubiläum) bis in die Gegenwart. So sehen wir auch Maschinen, die seit mehr als 20 Jahren nicht mehr betriebsfähig sind oder zwischenzeitlich in privaten Museen verschwunden sind.

Das Wiedersehen macht Freude, was den Produzenten offenbar bewusst war, denn so haben sie auch die Lokomotiven besucht, die im Ausland unter Dampf stehen, einen Schwerpunkt bilden unsere Nachbarn in den Niederlanden.

Zu Wort kommen auch Eisenbahnhistoriker wie der verstorbene Alfred Gottwaldt, der sich den Einheitslokomotiven auch sehr eingehend gewidmet hat. Das einzige, was die Filmfreude etwas trübt, ist eine sehr unkritische Haltung zum Konzept und seinem Anwenden.

Die DRG hatte nie im Sinn, die leistungsfähigsten Dampflokomotiven Europas zu erschaffen, sondern legte stärkeren Wert auf die Kostenseite: rationelle Wartung, geringe Betriebskosten und schnelles Beschaffen von Teilen durch Austauschbarkeit zwischen den Baureihen.

Dass der Vater der Einheitsdampflok, Richard Paul Wagner, dies wie ein Dogma vor sich hertrug und mit starrem Festhalten an seinen Überzeugungen so manchen Irrweg beschritt, fällt in diesem Film völlig unter den Tisch.

Wir hören kein kritisches Wort zu Langrohrkesseln und einem Übermaß an Strahlungsheizfläche bei Verzicht auf eine Brennkammer, die bereits einige Misserfolge bei den vorgestellten Baureihen erklären würden. Weitere Fehler, die ebenfalls untergehen, hat es ebenso gegeben.

In Summe sehen wir einen ansprechenden und informativen Film, der an der kritisierten Stelle aber etwas zu einseitig ist und so die gebotene Distanz vermissen lässt. Dadurch werden Erschaffer und Konstruktionen ein wenig glorifiziert, wie es historisch dann doch nicht passend

Publisher's webpages:

<https://www.eisenbahn-kurier.de>
<https://www.ekshop.de>

16th Advent gathering in Zell (Moselle)

Eindrucksvolle Rückkehr

After the end of the coronavirus restrictions and the resumption of the Advent meetings, the mood among participants never suffered. However, visitor numbers on the exhibition day declined significantly. This trend was not only stopped in 2025, but also reversed significantly – the Advent meeting is back!

No one who has experienced the biennial Advent gathering in Zell (Moselle) would want to miss it or voluntarily skip it. To ensure its long-term future, responsibility for organising the event was transferred to Z-Freunde International e.V., several years before the enforced break due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Nevertheless, over two editions (2019 and 2023), the number of visitors from the region declined noticeably. Organiser Jörg Neidhöfer must also have been frustrated, as he informed us that he intended to step down from his role in 2025.



Thanks to the poster, the ELNA 151 MB steam locomotive built by Harald Ruppelt has also become a symbol of the Advent gathering. Starting with this edition, it will now be regularly exhibited on site.

But what followed was such an impressive experience that all intentions were revised. The main reason for this was apparently a change in the advertising concept in the run-up to the exhibition day on 7 December 2025: in addition to putting up posters locally, Jörg Neidhöfer had also visited kindergartens in the region and provided them with flyers and posters.



The model for Gerhard Maurer's successful replica, also featured on the poster, will be the meeting point for the first Zetties to arrive on Friday evening. In the historic waiting room (right wing), new acquisitions and homemade models will be passed around and explained at the club table.

And so, on Sunday, there were significantly more children in the hall than we had been accustomed to seeing at previous events. Naturally, this also meant an increase in the number of adult visitors. 350 guests filled the hall almost completely throughout the entire period, setting a new all-time record.

The Moselle Wine Night Market in Traben-Trarbach, held in vaulted cellars, may also have played a supporting role. In recent years, it has become a crowd puller with national renown. This is now even noticeable in Zell (Moselle) in the high number of overnight guest bookings.

Be that as it may, perhaps further specific links will emerge in this area over the coming years. Until then, we will certainly enjoy the positive response and celebrate the success that is bringing our hobby to the wider public.

In any case, the desire for a repeat event was palpable and was clearly expressed by the participants without any doubt: as they said their goodbyes, there were constant greetings for a reunion in 2027, and even Jörg Neidhöfer, who was visibly moved, could not refuse. He then announced 3 to 5 December 2027 as the dates for the next meeting (exhibition day) 5 December 2027).

Delighted by this, we would now like to go through, in order, what made this gathering so special and worthwhile once again. Our report begins on 5 December 2025, because traditionally, the first arrivals get together on Friday evening for an exchange of ideas.

The spirit of Christmas

They stop off at the old Moselbahn railway station and engage in technical discussions in the former waiting room over good German cuisine, fine Mosel wine, or beer. The popularity of this gathering, where models and homemade items are also on display, is evident from the room occupancy: all tables were fully booked, and it was impossible to get a seat without a prior reservation.



Among the treasures on display was this 01 519 from the Märklin conversion, completed and serviced by Bahls Modelleisenbahnen (photo above). On Saturday, the official Advent get-together took place (photo below), filling the Turmblick restaurant to capacity. As can be seen on this table, each participant received a small St. Nicholas bag, because today is 6 December 2025.

Quite a few Zetties travel exclusively for this evening and the set-up on Saturday. None of the participants will need to use the entire time slot from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. to pose their best pieces or get a system ready to operate.

This process takes place at a leisurely pace, with the focus always on personal interaction between those present and on showing and demonstrating the items they have brought with them. This also gives rise to a constant stream of shop talk.



Jörg Neidhöfer received special honour and recognition with this car, which was designed personally for him by Matthias Vogel und Thomas Heß.

This form of gathering shapes the character of the Advent meeting, which is officially advertised only as a model railway exhibition on Sunday. When it gets dark in Zell, another club meeting follows.

In 2025, it will take place again on the other side of the river at the "Turmblick". All registered participants can expect a small St. Nicholas bag, because it is 6 December. This surprise further enhances the pre-Christmas atmosphere. By the end of the evening, all exhibitors are in the right mood for the following day.

After a good night's sleep and breakfast, it's time to get going. Everyone heads back to the Zeller-Schwarze-Katz-Hall and gets their vehicles ready. Here, too, friendly conversations ensue before a surprisingly large crowd of visitors arrives at the door at 11:00 a.m.: Let's go!

Like all these guests, a colourful mix of Zetties, curious locals and families with children, we now set off on a tour of the hall. All the exhibits are arranged in a circle here, ensuring that we don't miss a single one as long as we look to the right and left.



At Jörg Erkel's "Helenensiel" layout, ZFI presented special models that had just arrived from Märklin. These are the 2023 annual car (left in the photo above), which has already been delivered to members, and the car for Altenbeken 2026 (photo below), which again has different prints on both sides (yellow and light blue base).

Right at the entrance, we are greeted by the stand of the organising Z-Freunde International e.V., where Jörg Neidhöfer (organiser and initiator), Sylvester Schmidt (trade fair representative), and Axel Hempelmann (chairman) welcome us.

Not only are special cars from the ZFI and the Kanonenbahn on display here, but questions are also answered. The exhibition's traditional centrepiece and an important landmark of the former Moselle railway can also be found here: the model of Zell railway station built by Gerhard Maurer.

This is the historic building where the Zetties met on Friday evening, but this year there is something new here. The "151 MB", an ELNA steam locomotive from the former private railway, built by Harald Ruppelt himself, now has a permanent place on the small diorama. It will now be a regular feature, serving as a reminder of Harald.

New and special

And ZFI itself also has something new to show, which is being presented next door by Jörg Erkel. He has travelled here with Dirk Kuhlmann's "Helenensiel" layout and is now exhibiting it for the second time after a long break.

Here you can experience digital automatic operation with current catalogue products from Märklin. In a freight train, we discover two examples of the special car for the 2026 Z gauge weekend in Altenbeken (item no. 8617.155) – thanks to the alternating printing. They have already been delivered to the club, but will not be sold for exhibition until mid-May.



Trafouchs presented its new winter products in Zell: six elegant travellers for Era I (photo above), two kayakers (photo below left) and the sailor with boat (photo below right). The sails, which are moved by the wind and therefore look very lifelike, are particularly appealing.

We also discover something new at the boat landing stage. Here, a covered freight wagon of the Gbs class, which at first glance appears inconspicuous, awaits our camera. The specimen shows signs of



The miners leaving (left) and arriving (right), which Birgit Foken-Brock also showed again in Zell, are also in high demand.

weathering, two repair patches and the incomplete number 71 693-9. This is the long-overdue ZFI annual wagon 2023 (98216), which apparently replicates a museum model.

The next stand also presents new products. We have arrived at Trafofuchs, where Birgit Foken-Brock first shows us elegant travellers for Era I. The two kayakers and the small sailing boat with one occupant are also very popular. Those who did not attend our anniversary exhibition also have the opportunity here to admire the miners entering and leaving the mine.

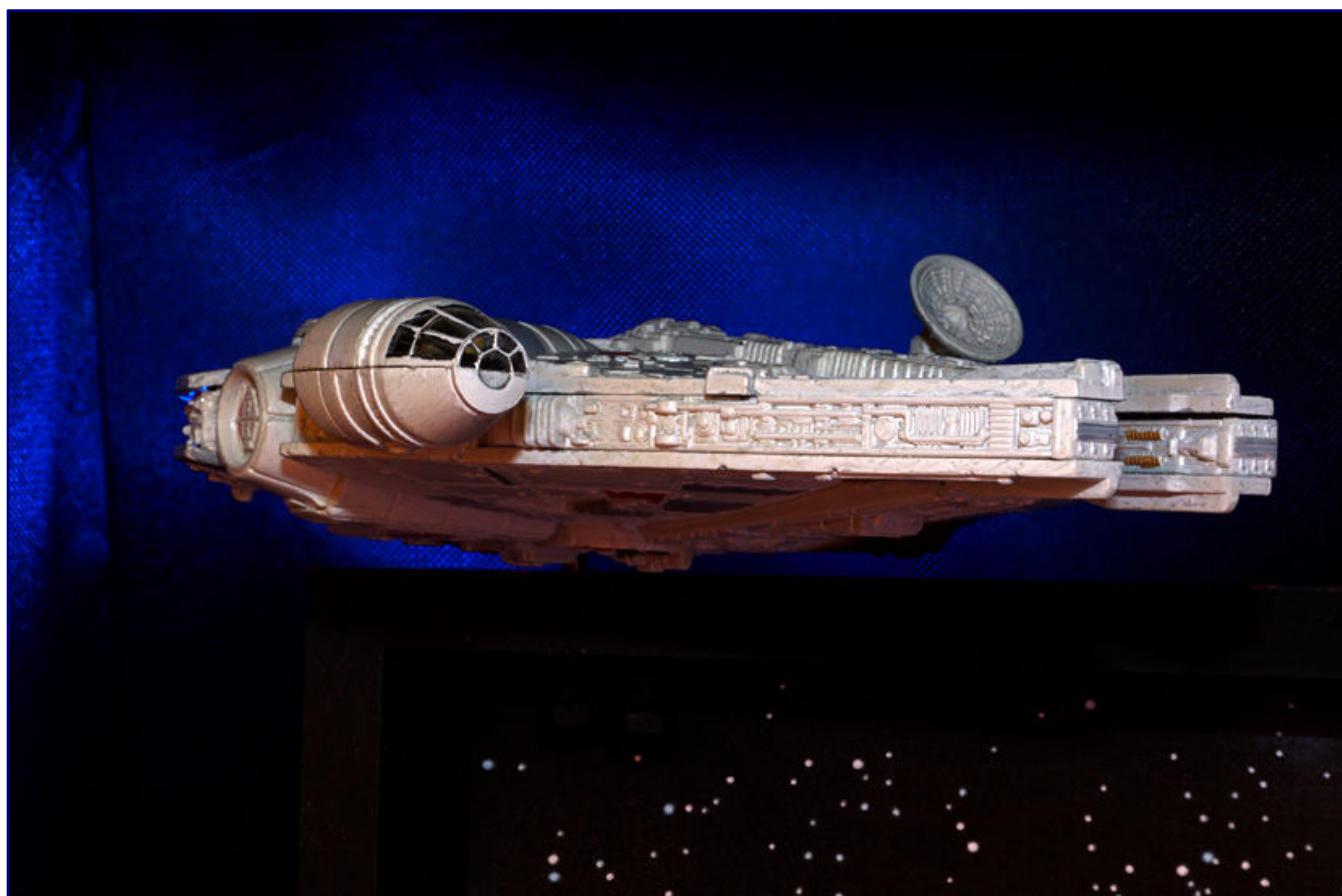
Rainer Tielke has returned with his double-decker bridge. This exhibit is already well known in Zell, but it is always in demand, as the original can be viewed in the neighbouring village. For the first time, we are experiencing the digital version of the TGV Sud-Est from Azar Models running smoothly and steadily on this layout. Rainer chose the original orange version.



Rainer Tielke looks beyond borders and, to the delight of visitors, allowed his TGV Sud-Est from Azar Models to run on the double-decker bridge.

Next door is Torsten Schubert with his large repertoire of illuminated models, some on dioramas, in various scales. In this case, our attention is drawn to the Millennium Falcon and a light sabre battle from the Star Wars film series.

continued on page 63



Torsten Schubert once again displayed well-known film scenes. They enriched the repertoire of effectively lit vehicles and dioramas.

Now we must turn our attention to the left, where equally fine things can be admired in the “inner circle”. Here we encounter Hermann Kammler (“Bagger-Hermann”) and his functional dioramas, showpieces by Manfred Forst featuring moving cars or train traffic, and model ships beyond the Z gauge scale.



Manfred Forst's railway revolved around Hessian museum buildings (photo above), which were transported back to the era of regional railways. Günter Falkus impressed visitors with, among other things, the historic city skyline of Gdańsk (photo below).

Günter Falkus wants to prove once again that smaller is impossible. In keeping with the season indicated by the calendar, he presents us with scenes from the eternal ice with polar bears and from historic

Gdańsk. And ships are always involved. Whether motor-driven passenger ships reflected in the sea or sailing ships of bygone times, the level of detail is unique.

Ronald “Larry” Schulz has taken a seat next to him. However, he only shows off his oval track on Saturdays, as he is one of those who have come here as a visitor. At least there is time for a chat and to admire his small works from different eras, featuring cars and locomotives. He is one of those who go to great lengths to make technical improvements to production models.



Two further special exhibits: Günter Falkus' other motifs also revolved around the themes of “snow and ice” and transported us to the Arctic (photo above). Reimer Gätcke gave us a glimpse of the moving engine of his Shay steam locomotive from LGB (photo below), which was displayed in an elegant showcase with an integrated roller test bench.

Reimer Gätcke from “team Z hamburg” presents his LGB Shay steam locomotive “West Side Lumber Co. No. 7” with running engine on a roller test bench under a glass cover. Many visitors are likely to be amazed by such an unfamiliar-looking US forest railway locomotive and have questions about its origin.

Ulrich Günther and Peter Sturm decided to participate at short notice and are now also presenting their work. Uli has brought along a section of his large home layout, which is still under construction, showing a multi-span bridge, a freight station and a depot. Guests only realise the scale of this “slice of the cake” when they see the photos from his home layout room and can locate the exhibit within it!



Uli Günter (photo above) shared his large home layout with visitors, bringing along two segments and supplementary documentation, and certainly whetted the appetite of many for their own projects within their own four walls. Peter Sturm (photo below) sat, as he does at every exhibition, on the visitors' side in front of his suitcase and actively sought conversation with the guests, who enjoyed watching him assemble the trains and then operate them.

Peter Sturm, who has brought along his new "Laacher See" suitcase layout, has the opposite effect. Here we can see matching freight trains and Märklin's rail bus, while Peter takes plenty of time to explain everything to his audience and point out special scenes.

Be there and join in

Hans-Heinz Vogt is offering used Märklin material, which gives visitors the opportunity to add one or two finds to their personal collections. Alongside him, younger visitors are also catered for: Ralf Junius has once again set up the small children's layout next to his model railway Advent wreath.

The offer to try driving the mouse rail bus around the track is gladly accepted. At the other end of his stand is the diorama "The monkeys are on the loose!", but something is different now. In fact, it is the craftsmen who have taken possession of it.



This time, Ralf Junius had given his diorama a special touch with Trafofuchs 0 gauge figures. On the table, we can see his children's layout, and there were some free printouts of the **Trainini Photo Calendars 2026** to take home.



Photo left:
Unfortunately, Reiner Helfenstein had to contend with a power outage at times. Otherwise, his modular layout featured the Rheingold 1962, among other things.

They belong to size 0 and were designed, printed, and painted by Trafofuchs. Here, they demonstrate how to get this little work of art ready for action.

None of this bothers Reiner Helfenstein. Unfortunately, however, he has to contend with a power failure on one section of track on his digitally operated layout.

This gives us the opportunity to take a photo of the stationary Rheingold train; we also enjoy watching a demonstration of how it powers Vollmer's burning house with an evaporator that uses distilled water and therefore does not produce any harmful vapours.

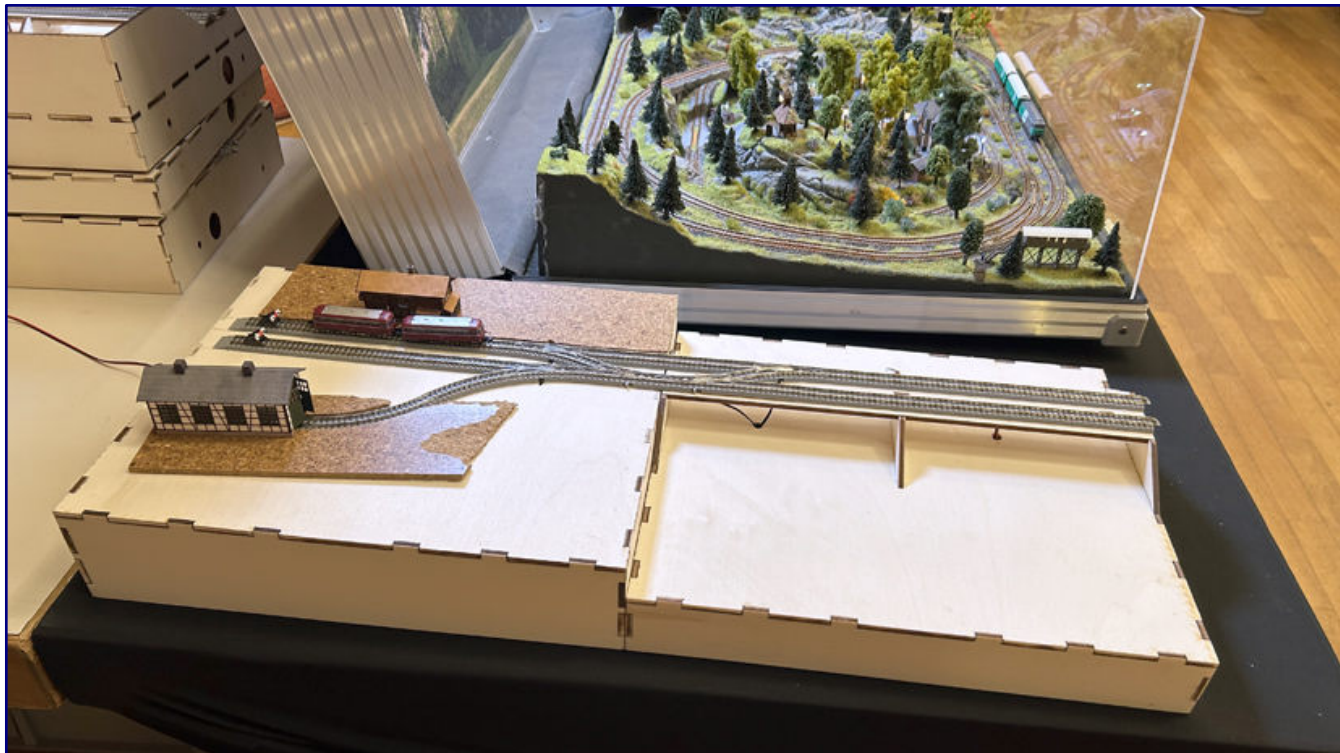
In the "outer circle", we now encounter the longest stand at the exhibition. It belongs to the active members of the Rhine-Moselle regulars' table. Hans-Georg Kunz demonstrates the Engers-Urmitz Rhine bridge in operation. What makes his showpiece special are the different stages of construction, which he can depict by swapping the superstructures: origin, transition period after the Second World War and today's construction method.



The Hubertushöhe layout, which is still under construction, impresses with its enormous height (top left photo), while Hans-Georg Kunz stays closer to the ground and has sought a real-life model in the Engers-Urmitz Rhine bridge (top right photo). Other exhibits at the meeting included table (bottom photo) and suitcase layouts.

The railway line climbs steeply up the Hubertushöhe. While trains run in an oval below, the eye is drawn to the rail bus, which climbs metre by metre along rugged rock faces and through spiral tunnels until it reaches the mountain station. The other regulars have brought table and suitcase sets with them, on which we discover a lot of Märklin material that is doing the rounds here to the delight of visitors.

Michael Boost also has plenty of roundabouts on display. These can be found on his well-known suitcase layouts as well as on an Advent wreath with a snowy landscape. At the same time, he is promoting the easy-to-use "T-Trak-Z" modular system, which we are also enthusiastic about, with three showpieces currently under construction at the edge of his presentation.



Michael Boost not only displayed his Advent wreath and two suitcase layouts, but also promoted Trainsetter's T-Trak Z system with (a total of three) module boxes that had not yet been landscaped.

Michael discovered the samples at our anniversary exhibition, spoke to the supplier Trainsetter there, and has now chosen three different landscape cross-sections himself. Together, we want to develop this idea to such an extent that every beginner can quickly achieve success with it.

We have now left out our own stand. For the Zetties, we are showing our latest diorama, "Pumpkin Farm", which will soon be renamed "Späinghausen" due to the interchangeability of its buildings. Visitors wander with their eyes across the pumpkin field to the farm and also discover the illuminated pumpkin with a grimace.

Next to it, the "Industrial Branch" module from the estate of Gunnar Häberer is displayed in fresh colours. Following initial repairs, visitors can now once again enjoy the lighting in the buildings and signals. The functional lanterns also create a warm atmosphere.

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The **Trainini Shunting Diploma** training course led by Kristin Späing (photo above) was also very popular in Zell. Meanwhile, many adults also wanted to try their hand at solving the wagon shunting tasks. Incidentally, the most popular photo subject on the “Industrial Branch” module (photo below) was the 191 001-7 from NoBa-Modelle, which was being towed by 216 216-2 on the section without overhead lines. There were also repeated questions about where this model could be purchased.



The product demonstration included the perfectly designed Opel Kadett 2 models from Modellbahn Union (photo above), which were displayed under tarpaulins and enriched a car transport train consisting of Märklin cars. Dirk Rohwerder wanted to compare his self-converted 56 241 (photo below) with the locomotive of his former colleague Harald Ruppelt, which is around ten years older and was positioned behind it.

On the tracks, newer models are on display, such as the Opel Kadett 2 under a tarpaulin from Modellbahn Union and the 191 001-7 from NoBa-Modelle, which is attracting the most interest from visitors, whether it be for photo opportunities or questions about where to purchase this model. Meanwhile, Dirk Rohwerder, asks for a comparison between his version of 56 241 and that of Harald Ruppelt.

However, the focus of our own presentation is the shunting diploma. Thanks to the support of Kristin Späing, the little ones solve shunting tasks here using Märklin H0 gauge equipment, in which they have to act as traffic controllers, train drivers and shunters.



Gerhard Maurer showed visitors the colourful autumn colours at Heimbach railway station on his dream loop, which shows a section of the Nahestrecke between Heimbach/Nahe and Kronweiler.

There is non-stop activity here throughout the entire exhibition day, and some of the exhibitors would also like to try out this offer, which has been so well received. After all, it is worth emulating, especially since we did not invent it ourselves, but rather adopted and further developed it.

We now come to Gerhard Maurer's dream loop, an autumnal installation based on motifs from his immediate surroundings. It was also on display at this location two years ago, so we won't say too much about it, but rather let the photo speak for itself.

A special premiere

This brings us back to the entrance area, but first we pass a long oval sculpture by Harald Hieber. For him, exhibiting at Zell is almost a first again. He also enjoys the special atmosphere and, having reached retirement age, looks forward to coming back regularly.

Its long route does not focus on the landscape, but rather on digital double-track operation. Two trains run independently of each other on the same circuit, controlled by a Mobile Station 2. This allows it to demonstrate the advantages of digital operation to interested parties.

But the Zetties present also get their money's worth at the end of the event: converted to analogue operation, the RAe TEE II of the SBB, announced by Märklin in cooperation with AZL, finally makes its rounds here.



On his large oval track, Harald Hieber demonstrated digital operation with two trains, as we can see here. At times, his track layout with analogue power supply was used to demonstrate the new SBB RAe TEE II multiple unit from Märklin/AZL, as will be seen in episode 49 of **Trainini TV**.

Although those present complain about the lack of interior lighting, they are all the more delighted with the smooth running of the Swiss multiple unit. The closed train formation in curves is also well received and can be explained by the underfloor coupler guide system – a first in large-scale production!

As part of this article, we would also like to show you the small showpiece “C’era una volta il West” by Thomas Hess. The Shorty combination of an F7 unit circles around a perfectly designed Wild West scene in its centre.

The trains at Klapplingen are constantly on the move in digital mode. Thomas Heß’s new acquisitions also include the Märklin V 90, which has been digitised by Zmodell (Oleksiy Mark) with the aid of a newly developed circuit board. It is not only its proud owner who is enthusiastic about it.

Two years ago, Matthias Vogel from Göppingen caused quite a stir with his Wendestern Mals. Although it was still a temporary test model, it was and remains a unique showpiece. This year, Matthias is travelling with his final solution, which is installed in his new “Breschdlingen” layout.



Thomas Heß transported us to the Wild West on a small driving diorama (photo above). In Klapplingen, however, he presented the V 90, which had just been digitised by Zmodell (photo below).

Several buildings have already found their place, including the self-constructed water tower, modelled on the one in Mals and realised using light-cutting technology. Points, signals and level crossings are operated by a lever bench with a lockable cabinet and crank – another special feature.

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Matthias Vogel has fulfilled a dream with his model of a lever signal box (photo above). From here, he controls points and signals, but also lowers the barriers of the level crossing, which can be seen in front of the track, using the crank on the far right. And as if that weren't enough, we were also able to marvel at the final construction of his turning star, modelled on the one in Mals (photo below), whose water tower he has also built himself in the meantime. It can be seen on the left in the area of the star.

Matthias enjoys showing all this to visitors and always receives appreciative looks. He is still undecided about the landscaping. The previous installation stood out with its rather abstract design and warm wood tones, giving it a completely unique look.

In this case, we would advise him to incorporate scenes with roads and flora. The greenery of the botanical elements would create a beautiful contrast, allow for even more comparisons with the real-life model, and at the same time open up the opportunity to take photographs that create the illusion of a real railway. Let's wait and see!



Matthias Vogel (left) and Thomas Hess (right) wanted to express their personal thanks and appreciation to organiser Jörg Neidhöfer with a surprise (see photo on page 58).

Our tour is now over, but as we all know, the best comes last: Jörg Neidhöfer receives a special honour from Matthias Vogel and Thomas Hess. Both are among the exhibitors with the shortest history of participation, but are all the more enthusiastic about the Advent meeting.

They express their gratitude to the inventor of this meeting with a self-designed railway car. The side wall of a Märklin refrigerated wagon is adorned with the ELNA steam locomotive built by Harald Ruppelt and, to its left, a portrait of the recipient. All of this is stylishly packaged in a wooden box, the lid of which also features the long-standing poster motif.

Impressed by this too, Jörg decides to organise the meeting again in 2027. Those wishing to attend should therefore make a note of the date mentioned at the beginning of this report.

The meeting's "coat of arms locomotive," which was purchased by the editorial team especially for this purpose, will certainly be there again. And if the restoration and repair of Gunnar Häberer's module proceeds according to plan, this showpiece may also be ready to run by then.



Exhibitors with page presence:

<https://www.die-minilok.de>
<http://forstberg.de>
<https://gerhardingen.de>

<http://www.kleinergehtsnicht.de>
<https://michas-moba.de>
<http://www.modellbahn.1zu220.info>
<https://www.trafofuchs.de>

<http://www.z-lights.de>
<https://www.z-freunde-international.de>
<https://z-stammtisch-bayern.de>

Trainini TV – Folge 49 (demnächst):

<https://www.youtube.com/TraininiTV>

Grenzenloser Modellbahnspaß in 1:220

10. Internationales Spur-Z-Weekend



ALTENBEKEN

16. und 17. Mai 2026

Samstag: 10.00 - 18.00 Uhr

Sonntag: 11.00 - 17.00 Uhr

Eggelandhalle, Gardeweg 8

33184 Altenbeken



Z-Freunde International e.V., Bahnhofstraße 18, 85238 Petershausen
www.z-freunde-international.de

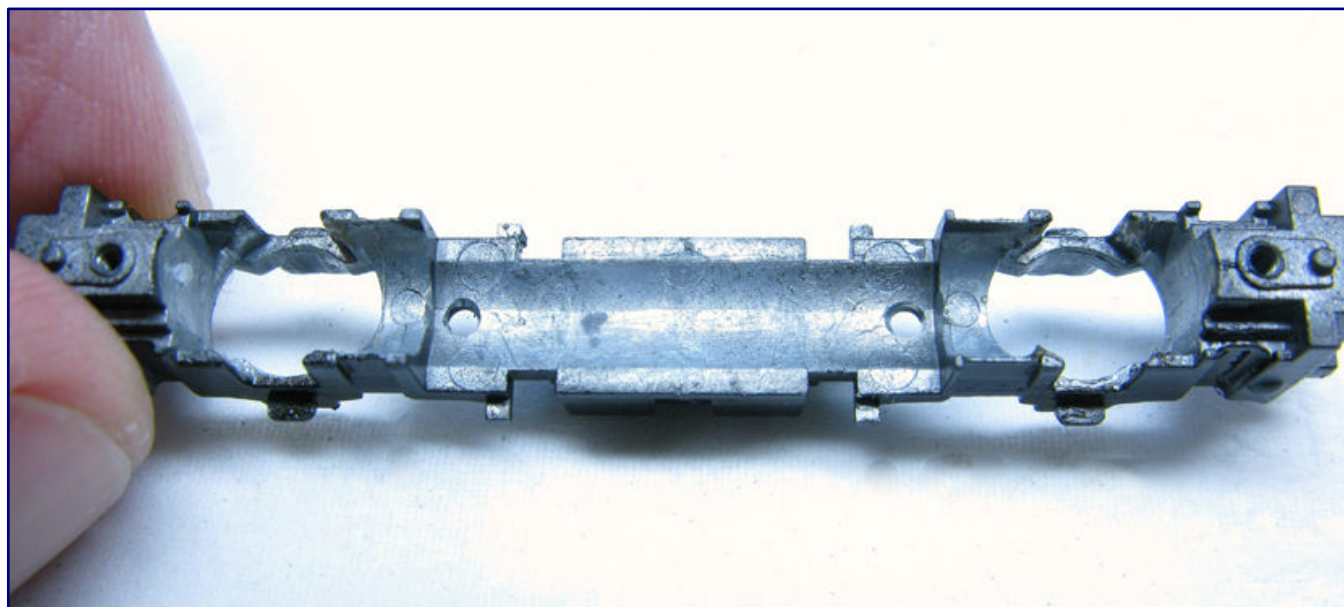
Readers' letters and messages

Zetties and Trainini in Dialogue

Thank you for each letter to the editor and all the feedback that reaches us. Write us (contact details are in imprint) - Trainini® lives from dialogue with you! Of course, this also applies to all suppliers in Z gauge, who would like to introduce innovations here. A representative sample is our goal. Likewise, here we note any events or meetings with significance to Z gauge reference, if we are informed in time.

The following comment was received regarding the test of the new V 90:

Thank you very much for the report on the V 90 in the current issue. On page 9, you caption the photo stating that the chassis is made of plastic, which explains the locomotive's low weight.



Of course, Märklin's V 90 also has a cast block, but it is very light and therefore does not contribute to traction to the usual extent.
Photo: Dirk Rohwerder

That's not entirely correct: the bogies are made of plastic, but the chassis itself is still made of die-cast zinc.

Dirk Rohwerder, Sprockhövel

Editor's response: Thank you very much for pointing out this error in the report, which we would like to correct here. The new V 90 from Märklin (item no. 88510) does indeed have a cast block as the base of its chassis. However, it is very small and therefore relatively light in weight. We were misled by the plastic injection-moulded parts that are attached to it.

About the V 90 and the Heißwolf SFR-4000:

I think the cover photo of your latest issue is very well done. I was also surprised by the "feather-light" V-90 model, as it raises a big question mark about its pulling power. I was only able to partially dispel this doubt in a detailed test on my layout, which can be seen in several parts on my YouTube channel "Klausis kleine Eisenbahn" (@bork11).

On flat terrain on an oval with R2 (195 mm), the locomotive easily managed to pull up to 18 two-axle cars. On a 3 to 3.5 per cent gradient (partly with R1 = 145 mm), the V 90 just about managed to pull six cars. That's enough for me, but certainly not enough for many model railway enthusiasts with larger layouts. My question: How and with what can I weigh down the locomotive to increase its pulling power? Is it possible to use traction tyres?

I bought the SFR-4000 Heißwolf speed controller as soon as it was released. I also presented it in detail on my channel in four parts. I only use it for my older analogue locomotives with 3- or 5-pole motors.

I don't need it for my digital 3-pole motors, and I still control the bell-armature locomotives with the white Märklin speed controllers, if only because otherwise I would have to buy a "Heißwolf" for each of my five circuits. In any case, I don't see any significant improvement in the running characteristics of bell-armature motors. They are quite appealing for such a small gauge, even without pulse voltage.

Incidentally, one note from the description reads: "To protect the motor, the pulse voltage for locomotives with bell-type armature motors (...) should be set as low as possible, but to a maximum of 25 % of the motor's rated voltage. If the starting characteristics allow it, setting a pure DC voltage (i.e., pulse voltage = 0.0 V) is recommended."

Users should also be sure to read the information on locomotives with digital decoders before programming the locomotive.

Klaus Lehmich, Vreden

Editor's reply: Unfortunately, the V 90 does not offer much interior space for installing additional weights. Partitions in the driver's cab area may be an option. Some readers have resorted to using tungsten putty or lead inserts. However, we would like to point out the health hazards associated with heavy metals and the declaration of model trains as toys!

Adhesive tyres are an alternative that has also been considered by many parties. However, the wheel treads of this locomotive are not as easy to adapt as was the case with earlier designs. Additional costs are therefore to be expected. Replacement wheel sets with adhesive tyres are available from the 1zu220 shop.

Programme extension for Phoenix Model Buildings:

Phoenix Model Buildings (<https://www.phoenixmodelbuildings.com>) has apparently added RS Laserkits (<https://www.rslaserkits.com>) to its range. In conjunction with their extensive range of doors, windows and roofing, it is worth taking a look at the range for all fans of North American model railways.



Current Märklin advertising cars:

Two specially commissioned models, which are officially part of the Märklin advertising car range, will be available for purchase at the turn of the year or shortly thereafter.

Image on the left:
Bierwagen Mahn & Ohlerich (Art.-Nr. 8661.087)



The “Mahn & Ohlerich” beer wagon (item no. 8661.087) designed for Era I from the historical inventory of a Rostock brewery can already be ordered from the 1zu220 shop (<https://www.1zu220-shop.de>). The name lettering stands out with a blue shadow. We have already presented it here before Märklin’s version was delivered.



The ZFI annual car 2023 (98216) has different prints on both sides, as can be seen in this comparison of two examples.

Currently still reserved for club members, but available to the general public shortly after the turn of the year, is the ZFI Annual Car 2023 (98216). It is based on a commemorative car belonging to the Eisenbahnfreunde Vaterstetten e.V. (Vaterstetten Railway Enthusiasts Association), which since 2013 has commemorated the forced labour and inhumane accommodation of Dutch prisoners in 1944/45 during the construction of a railway line.

The model and template do not correspond to the Reichsbahn car types, but are intended to commemorate this war crime as a similar design. The model shows weathered paint and patches and is printed differently on both sides.

Hanomag-Offensive at JMC Scale Models:

JMC Scale Models (www.facebook.com/pages/category/Games-Toys/JMC-Scale-Models-341193572911400/) is launching a veritable offensive with regard to the former vehicle brand Hanomag. Fans of Era II will be delighted with models of the legendary “2/10 PS”, better known as the “Kommißbrot”, which was built from 1924 to 1928.



The Hanomag 2/10 PS (left image) was primarily known as the “Kommißbrot” (commissary bread). The small-series manufacturer offers four variants of the post-war Hanomag Kurier transporter (right image). Photos: JMC Scale Models

The post-war Hanomag Kurier, on the other hand, was a commercial vehicle that has now been replicated in various models: box body, flatbed and municipal version.

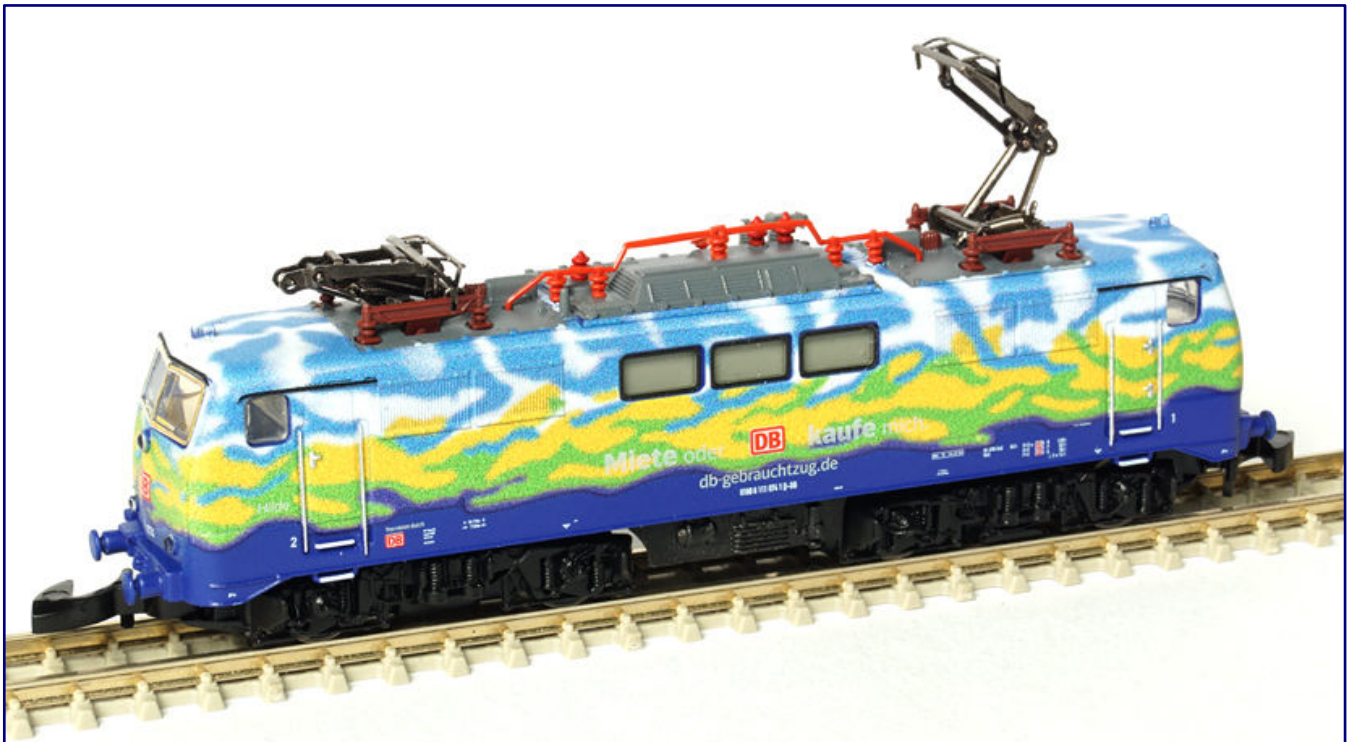
The short road tractor based on this model, which is used by the German Federal Post Office, is also striking. In this case, the Hanomag Kurier, like other vehicle types from this manufacturer, was modified by Enser in Fürth (near Nürnberg (Nuremberg)) and given a significantly shorter wheelbase.



Shortly after the last issue was published, the “DB Construction Train” wagon set (item no. 87762) became available in stores. It consists of three former conversion wagons and one low-sided wagon.

Märklin's final sprint for the Christmas shopping season:

Shortly after the editorial deadline for the last issue, the “Bauzug DB” wagon set (item no. 87762), which we had already mentioned in an article, arrived at retailers. It consists of three ocean blue construction train wagons based on three-axle converted wagons, supplemented by a short low-sided wagon with a brakeman's platform of the Kklmmo 490 type.



111 074-1 is now also available as a model (88423) for DB Gebrauchtzug. However, buyers will have to wait a little longer for the matching double-decker cars.

Further deliveries are planned for Era VI. The first of these will be the Vectron (Class 193) as a Flixtrain locomotive (item no. 88239). This is a replica of a pure alternating current version, which is why the model only has two pantographs and required modified roof cables. Otherwise, the attractively painted and harmonious-looking model is technically identical to its predecessors.

The 111 074-1 "Hilde" from DB-Gebrauchtzug (88423) has also arrived in stores. This locomotive was given a design closely based on the former tourist train and is now used in push-pull train service.



The 193 series for Flixtrain (88239) is a variant of the Siemens Vectron due to its different roof equipment.

The double-decker cars, which are designed in the same way, are currently still pending. The locomotive model also follows the previous variants of this series in terms of technology, but has round buffers in a prototypical blue paint finish and – it should be explicitly mentioned – no red tail lights, which would have been useful for reversible train operations.

The five-piece Inter-City Experimental series 410/810 (88716) is also available as a special MHI series, which was originally announced for spring. Opportunities for optimisation were nevertheless missed, even though it is a beautiful model with smooth running characteristics. It has already been discussed in detail in this issue.

Incidentally, further models are currently announced for delivery in the near future, including both car sets for the Flixtrain, which will complete the above-mentioned Vectron. Märklin is apparently remaining true to its long-standing "tradition" of putting pressure on retailers with Z gauge deliveries after the Christmas season is over.

New at AZL in December 2025:

The C44-9W locomotives built by General Electric until the first decade of the 21st century are successful competitors to the market leader EMD. Well over 3,000 units were built and are generally still in service today.

After AZL adopted this design in brass technology early on, they have since become suitable for mass production as plastic injection moulded variants. This month, they mark the transition from SP to Union Pacific. The two models (item nos. 65108-1 / -2) still bear the “bloody nose” paint scheme and the large “Southern Pacific” lettering on the sides, but have been supplemented with the UP owner designation and their new operating numbers.



The Union Pacific GE C44-9W (item no. 65108-1) still bears its old SP livery, but a sticker indicates its new owner and valid operating number. Photo: AZL | Ztrack

The other new locomotives are also familiar types: EMD F7A from Gulf Mobile & Ohio (63021-1 / -2), EMD FP7 for Northern Pacific (65308-1 / -2) in Loewy livery, and ALCO RS3 from Chicago & North Western (63328-1 / -2). Somewhat more modern are the EMD SD50 from the C&O fleet for the Chessie System (65003-1 / -2) and the latest edition of the EMD SD70M-2, which is intended for Canadian National (63121-5 / -6).

The fleet is now being expanded with BN freight train escort cars (92009-3 / -4), Illinois Central covered freight cars (905405-1 / 915405-1) and individual containers as cargo from P&O (95201B) and Wan Hai (95233) – both as 40-foot variants.

Autoflood III bulk freight cars from BN (905706-1 & 915706-1 / -2) and compressed air unloading cars from Frisco (916042-1 / 906042-1) are available in packs of two and four. Also worth mentioning is the converted chassis with ballast weight for the visually appealing Märklin freight train accompanying cars (99005), which improves their running characteristics. So far, they are only available directly from the United States (<https://azldirect.com>).

Additions to the product range at Modellbau Laffont:

The announcement of three new products available from Modellbau Laffont (<https://modellbau-laffont.com>) is like a Christmas present. Fans of the Wismar rail bus will find the “Railcar Shelter” (item no. Z10701) an exceptional building model with good visibility.

It was once used in Bohmte (Lower Saxony) not only to store the vehicle, but also to load and unload milk cans that were transported on the roof rack. With the two further deliveries, the manufacturer is clearly responding to the growing range of French model trains.

The Gendarmerie St. Tropez (Z12801) is well known from numerous French films and is now preserved as a museum. In addition to its fine engravings, this house is particularly impressive for its shutters, window grilles on the ground floor and the sticker for labelling. It can also be used as a European town house outside France if the window grilles are omitted.

The French village buildings (Z9601) come in a pack of three buildings that can also be used in Germany or other European countries, but still remain "typically French": a detached house with an upper floor, a half-timbered house and a farm building/workshop. Here, too, fine engravings on walls and bricks contribute to the high-quality appearance.



The Gendarmerie St. Tropez (item no. Z12801) is now a museum. Photo: Modellbau Laffont



The French village buildings (Z9601) can also be used on layouts that are not designed with French motifs. Photo: Modellbau Laffont

What will become of Micro-Trains?

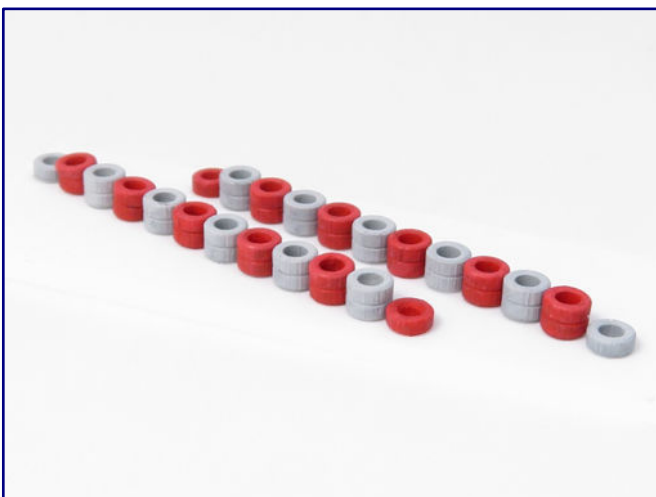
The news from the United States did not suggest that Atlas intended to retain Micro-Trains' rights, goods and tools at their current location. This expectation was also based on the fact that, to our knowledge, the acquiring model railway brand does not yet have its own production facilities in the United States.

The change was discussed with corresponding excitement in forums and elsewhere, with some customers appearing to want to turn away from MTL. German retailer Case-Hobbies has now denied that all moulds are to be moved to China. We ourselves have not received any official notification from Atlas.

Case-Hobbies claims that the moulds are to remain in the USA and that Atlas is currently attempting to recruit former Micro-Trains employees. We are currently unable to verify the accuracy of these statements.



The railcar shelter (Z10701) was once used to load and unload milk cans, providing protection from the weather. Photo: Modellbau Laffont



Racetrack accessories II (item no. 60434; photo left) and go-karts (60441; photo right) from the new products range. Photos: Yellow

Rapid passion at Yellow Dwarf:

This month, Czech 3D printing specialist Yellow Dwarf (<https://www.yellowdwarf.eu>) is focusing on a rather unusual topic in model railways with its go-kart race, which, however, can create extraordinary eye-catchers.

With the matching go-kart companions (item no. 60441) and the necessary race track accessories II (60434), everything you need is already provided to transfer the excitement of a small race track to the model. Both products are shown on the previous page.

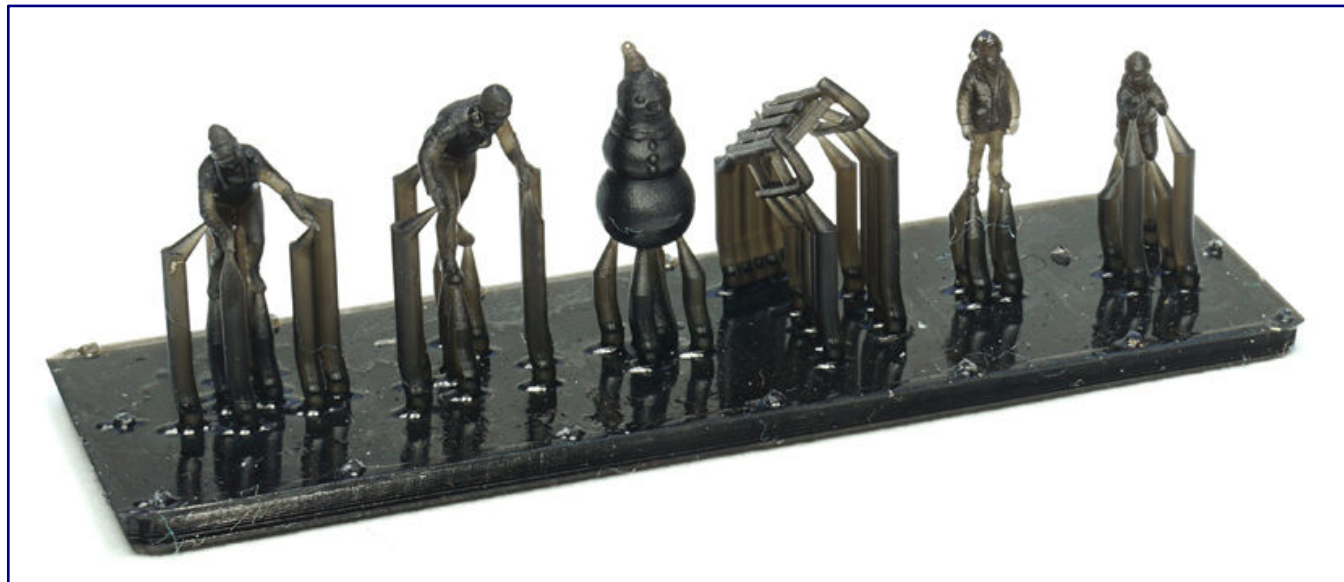
New products and additions at Panzer-Shop:

At Panzer-Shop.nl (<https://www.panzer-shop.nl>), we found a few more new products that we would like to mention here. From the military sector, there is the MAN KAT1 8x8 with flatbed and loading crane, as well as the East German KrAZ 258 tipper with raised loading area.



The civilian vehicles include an IFA W50, consisting of a tractor unit and Minol semi-trailer, as well as a Skoda Octavia and Land Rover 110 station wagon. Road safety is ensured by the VW T3 "emergency services" vehicle, which can also be painted as a police bus.

Until 31 December 2025, orders over EUR 50 will receive the 2025



The VW T3 "Emergency Services" (top left image) can also perform other tasks from the BOS system. For purchases of £50 or more, you will currently receive the 2025 Christmas set (bottom image) free of charge.

Christmas set in the respective gauge as a free gift with their order.

Small but mighty at Z-Otti:

A small Swiss locomotive as a nickel silver kit is now available from Z-Otti (<https://shop.z-otti.de>). The result is the Bm 4/4, an extraordinary model that would probably never have been created without the request from Switzerland. The supplier writes that each of its kits embodies its enthusiasm: passion, precision and love for detail.



The red SBB version demonstrates the appearance of the small Bm 4/4 shunting diesel locomotive. Photo: Z-Otti

The structure consists of nickel silver sheets and a brass chassis manufactured using the lost wax casting process. Powered by a 7 mm bell-type armature motor, it uses Shorty bogies from Rokuhan.

Possible variants include the red SBB version, the blue track-laying locomotive and a yellow tunnel locomotive. Rokuhan and Märklin couplings can be used, as well as wire hooks. The latter offer the special feature of a detailed front guard.



Banana cart from WDW Full Throttle:

Certainly not crooked, but merely intended for transporting fruit, are the new banana cars from WDW Full Throttle: (<http://www.wdwfullthrottle.com>).

The modernised 34' refrigerated wagons with wooden walls are also not painted yellow, but have green side walls in addition to the freight wagon brown.

Banana car (item no. FT/B 9202). Photo: WDW Full Throttle

They ran at the NRCC and immediately attracted attention with a large display of a peeled banana. The pack (item no. FT/B 9202) contains two of these trolleys.



Water towers in wood (item no. 103251; front) and steel (102251; rear).
Photo: Archistories

Water supply via Archistories:

Exclusively on behalf of and for distribution by Ztrack, Archistories has developed two water towers based on North American construction methods. There is a choice of a dark brown steel version (item no. 105251) or a lighter wood version (103251) with a more traditional appearance, but also mounted on a steel frame.

Both reflect the typical and familiar style of US railways, as seen in numerous films. Model railway enthusiasts now have access to an accessory that has been missing for a long time, especially for the era of steam locomotives. A coal tower will follow soon.

Matthias Vogel reports on the Märklin vernissage:

On the evening of 11 December 2025, around a hundred invited guests gathered at the Märklineum to attend the presentation of the new 2026 museum cars. In his speech, Wolfram Bächle, Märklin's

Managing Director of Technology, also personally welcomed the Minister of Transport for Baden-Württemberg. But why was he attending the event?

He is very fond of railways because his parents worked at the Rottenburg freight station. For him, it was an adventure playground, and his love of railways was cemented by the Märklin railway set. Reliable local public rail transport is important to him and the country.

The state therefore acts as the owner of the local trains and makes them available to operators. This ensures comfortable and modern transport under the "bwg" brand. The only thing missing is the appropriate infrastructure.

Märklin is currently producing a Siemens Desiro HC in nominal size H0 in a matching design. The minister will now receive the first model in a matching display case. However, he is not allowed to take it out and run it on the Märklin layout in the foyer of the ministry, according to Bächle. The master craftsman had a lot of trouble attaching the train to the display case. The ministry would receive a second model to run on the layout. "It's a great piece", said Winfried Hermann, expressing his gratitude.

Wolfram Bächle then moved on to the Swiss Crocodile. As the most powerful locomotive of its time, the Swiss Crocodile was a must-have for the Märklin range. Based on just a few design drawings, the most expensive Märklin locomotive of its time was created in the 1930s as a 0 gauge model. It cost 144 Reichsmarks and was produced until 1940.

In the post-war period, resourceful hobbyists assembled a replica from remaining individual parts and spare parts worth DM 600 (!). Today, collectors pay between EUR 25,000 and 30,000 for such a model.

It was a matter close to Mr Bächle's heart to recreate this 0 gauge model, which is of course on display in the museum, as part of the retro model series. This time with a modern digital decoder, but the manual switch lever has been retained visually and is still movable.



As every year, the museum cars were also incorporated into a decoration matching the partner at the most recent vernissage. Photo: Matthias Vogel

This brings us to the most exciting part for us Zetties: the partner company for the Märklin and Trix museum cars in 2006 is Kleemann, based in Göppingen. It was founded in 1857, two years before Märklin, in Stuttgart Obertürkheim as a file cutting workshop.

In the 1920s, screening and crushing plants for rock were developed, which became the company's main product in the post-war period. According to managing director Alexander Knam, the company aims to be the global market leader by 2030. Kleemann has been part of the Wirthgen Group since 2006, which in turn has been part of John Deere since 2017.

Three things connect Märklin and Kleemann: innovation, precision and a passion for their own products. Another connection is the Märklin Days and the International Model Railway Exhibition, which take place at Kleemann in the shipyard hall in Göppingen's Stauferpark. The new museum wagons are being released as Era III models. Did you know that in Germany we consume one kg. of raw rock per person per hour for asphalt, concrete, track ballast, etc.?

The chairman of the German Railway Association, Wolf-Jobst Siedler, greeted those present with a "Moin" and immediately explained that anyone who says "Moin, moin" is a chatterbox. The steam-



The 2026 museum wagon in Z gauge has a "Sparbremserhaus" (economy brake van) and comes with a Tempo tricycle. Photo: Thomas Hess

powered narrow-gauge railway they operate between Bruchhausen-Vilsen and Asendorf clearly demonstrates how railways work and how complex the interplay of all the different elements is.

This also applies to railway brakes, which were operated by brakemen in the early days. They sat exposed to the wind and weather on the roofs of the cars, facing backwards depending on the direction of travel. The open-air museum is now sixty years old. The LGB museum car has been printed appropriately for this anniversary.

The museum offers a matching figure of "Brake Man Guido" to sit on the roof. He was also present in person on a scale of 22.5:1. Finally, the red curtain was lifted and the display case with the museum cars was unveiled.

It was immediately surrounded by a large crowd and photographed extensively. We were able to catch a quick glimpse without the glass panes. In keeping with the theme of the museum cars, there is a specially designed exhibition area.

What would be good for Z gauge?

Märklin has announced its first new products for next year with the 2026 club models, for which Zetties has designed a new Class 65 steam locomotive for the Deutsche Bundesbahn. The high-speed tender steam locomotive, of which 18 were originally built, has been well received, as it promises a completely new steam locomotive design for the first time since the switch to bell-type armature motors.

For several years, fans of Z gauge had looked on with envy at H0 scale, which, also starting out as a club model, had already embraced this gem created in accordance with the DB's "new construction principles."

As the new year approaches, we can certainly dream about what attractive models might be in store for us in the coming years. The slightly smaller Class 66 tender steam locomotive, of which only two were built, would certainly be just as appealing.



The DB new construction tender steam locomotive of the 66 series (item no. 39665) would certainly also look good as a model in Z gauge.

For the half-zeroes, it has just become reality (item no. 39665). Many consider this new steam locomotive to be the most beautiful of the German Federal Railways, but it was undoubtedly the most successful design. It was denied success only because it came too late and the V 100 was already in the starting blocks. So, it is left with the honour of being the last and best steam locomotive design of the DB.

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