

New MyLocoSound Blue

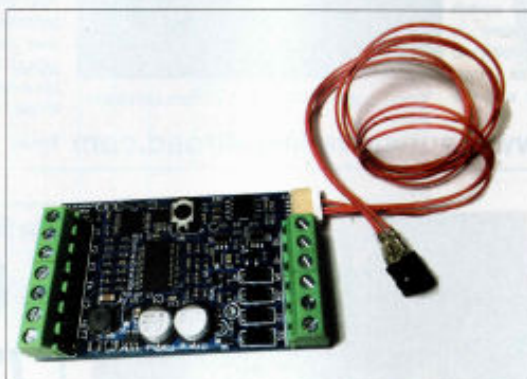
PRODUCT REVIEWS *Continued*

Realistic diesel sound

In the last issue I reviewed MyLocoSound's new steam-sound board. The diesel version of their "MyLocoSound Blue" is now available. This is a standalone sound system with a mix of digital and analog sounds. It's designed to work in traditional track-powered installations as well as with third-party battery R/C systems. Since it's designed to be a more budget-friendly sound system than the higher end, all-digital systems, it is not DCC-compatible. To that end, it does a credible job.

The board is physically identical to the company's steam board, with the same screw-terminal connections for motor, speaker, external battery power, and sound functions (more on this later). It is 2½" long by 1½" wide, so you should have little trouble fitting it into almost any size diesel critter. There's also a socket for an external infra-red sensor that can be used to trigger sounds and for programming once the board is installed. You will need only to place the IR sensor (about ¼" square) inconspicuously inside a cab window or other location where it can "see" the IR signal from the transmitter.

Installation of the board is simple and the online instructions have easy-to-follow diagrams for many installations. If they don't list the specific control system you operate, it will likely be similar to one



of the ones they do show. I didn't have a spare diesel sitting around, so I used the Bachmann 2-6-0 that I previously used for the steam locomotive installation. (Hey, some amusement park "steamers" are powered by gas or diesel engines, so it's prototypical, right?)

If you're going to be operating this board in a track-powered environment, you will need an external 9V battery to power the board when the track voltage gets low (sold separately). The board can be programmed to automatically shut off after one minute or you can use the IR remote to turn the sounds on and off.

The board comes with seven different "prime mover" sounds programmed in, as well as seven different horn sounds. There's only one bell sound but it's a nice, generic, air-rung bell, as heard on many diesels. Like the steam board, there are three "geographic" operating scenarios; North American, British, and Australasian. There are subtle differences in how the sounds function between each of these scenarios; for example, there is no bell under the British setting.

Programming is done via a universal TV remote. The instructions say to use a "Sony" code. The steam instructions say to use code 0140, though the diesel instructions do not get that specific. You can purchase a universal remote from G Scale Graphics that will work with the board. The instructions are clear on programming the board. Each aspect to be programmed has a number and there's audible feedback on the board to let you know which selection you have set for any

given aspect.

The board has screw terminals that allow you to manually control various sounds, like the bell and horn. If you're running with track power, you can hook these triggers up to magnetic sensors and use track magnets to trigger the sounds. If you're using a third-party control system, you'd hook the connectors to the various auxiliary triggers on the particular controller you're using.

Concerning sound quality, remember that this is a budget-friendly board, so if you're used to listening to the prototype or high-end digital sound systems, you're going to hear some differences. That having been said, I think there's room for improvement here and there as well.

There are several prime movers to choose from. They range from small industrial to large modern-diesel sounds. At idle, they all sound good. When you turn the throttle up and the engine "RPMs" increase, things begin to vary. First, there are differences in how the sounds react to the throttle, based on which throttle mode you have selected. First is the "manual" mode, where the engine RPM sound changes proportionally with the voltage. The "mechanical transmission" mode is useful for gas-mechanical critters that have manual transmissions. In this, the RPMs increase, then drop and increase again, simulating a change in gears. Next is what they call "notch 5," where the motor RPM increases to notch 5 (about 60% throttle). Finally,

VITAL STATISTICS

Digital/analog diesel sound

MyLocoSound

Available from:

G Scale Graphics

5860 Crooked Stick Drive

Windsor CO 80550

Price: \$79

Website: www.gscalegraphics.net

MyLocoSound "Blue" diesel sound system; suitable for track power or battery R/C; not DCC compatible. Dimensions: 2½" x 1½" x ½"

PROS and CONS

PROS: Easy installation; sounds can be easily adjusted via handheld remote; instructions well-written for installing and programming

CONS: Some horns not very realistic; prime-mover sounds change depending on throttle mode

there's "notch 8," where the motor RPM increases to notch 8 (100% throttle) when the throttle is increased.

The first thing I noticed was that the "notch 8" sound is not the same as that in the "manual" mode with the same prime mover, when run up to full throttle. In most cases, the "notch 8" sound, to my ears, is a little cleaner and more realistic than that of the manual setting. Your ears may differ, and the variation may actually give you a bit more flexibility in choosing the sound you want. When running in "notch 8," the prime-mover sound responds to changes in speed. If you slow the locomotive, the engine sound will

drop to idle, then wind back up once the locomotive reaches its new speed.

I didn't notice any difference between the "manual" setting and the "notch 5" setting. Both settings seemed to respond to changes in the throttle the same way; the higher you set the throttle, the faster the motor sounded.

To my ears, the horns leave something to be desired. They just don't sound clean to me—too electronic. You can adjust the pitch of the horns but there are weird harmonics that keep them from sounding realistic to me. The supposed "single tone" horn had two tones. You can program the board to give you prototypically

correct directional horn signals for moving forward and reverse.

All sounds can be adjusted for individual volume. You can also use the remote to adjust the prime-mover sounds so that the idle is lower or higher, as you wish.

Like the steam board, this MyLoco-Sound board offers reasonable sound for a reasonable price. The prime mover sounds—especially at idle—really impressed me. I have an earlier version of this board in one of my locomotives, and this one is a marked improvement over that—much more prototypical sounding. This board well fills a much-needed niche in this hobby. —K Strong

Online extras

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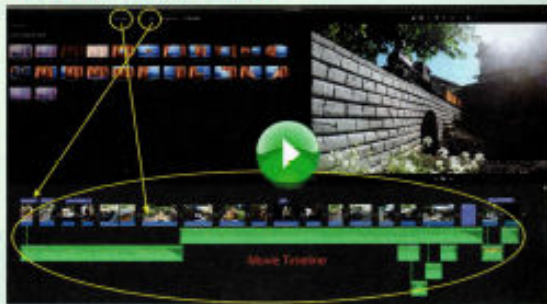
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