My Radio Control Operations (and why I went with RC)

by Jim Petropulos, October 2006

[Editor's Note: Jim models Cuban and other Central American sugar cane railways in G scale at his home in the Los Angeles area.]

My Roundhouse Fowler 0-6-2 “Plantation Type” came with a Futaba 27 Mhz AM, 2- channel set, in 1989. It glitched at times, but it was the way to go, if building a railroad over the ground with some mild grades included as I did.

My Roundhouse #24 2-6-2 came with a Hitec 75Mhz AM, 2- channel set, in 2000. This glitches once in a very great while, but way better then the earlier Futaba 27 Mhz (very good response and low prototype speed). I can switch cars around easily with it.

Besides excellent control on grades, I can slowly back my locomotives from the steaming up tracks out through the open-air engine shed (which is all metal construction) with out any glitching!

Radio Control has improved quite a bit these days, and the latest equipment is GLITCH free.

I tried installing the RCS DEC-10 unit for live steam from Australia for my Fowler, but I could never program it properly, so got another Hitec setup, like my #24 has. “Plug n Play”!! I still have the RCS unit (and plan to sell it to anybody that wants it.) I just couldn’t work it, even corresponding with Tony Walsham of RCS-RC. The instructions are very detailed and long, also in very small print. (I’m a Plug N Play type when it comes to RC “stuff”.)

Last year I acquired an ACUCRAFT Plymouth industrial diesel, and had it converted from DC to battery power with RC control. I had EMW (Electric & Steam Motor Works - Jonathan Bleise: www.retrains.com) make the conversion.

It also uses a Hitec unit. It is a 75 Mhz FM unit. It doesn’t glitch at all. The engine has a charging jack in a rear window to recharge the NiMh (Nickel Metal Hydride) batteries without their removal.

The diesel is chain/sprocket driven with very prototypical low speed crawl.

I like to use the diesel when I don’t have enough time (or too lazy) to fire up a steam engine, and also as the yard pilot. Just flick on a switch like the real thing – no filling, oiling, lighting up or waiting for the water to boil etc….(Even in model running you can see how diesel’s less labor intensive ways have an advantage over steam).

Viva Vapor!