

Final report /31st International Model Railway Exhibition Cologne 2014/
26th November 2014

An inspiring showcase of model railway highlights and much more:

IMA Cologne 2014 convinces on all levels

***Cologne.* Satisfaction was evident among the hosts at Koelnmesse as well as the organisers Messe Sinsheim GmbH - at IMA, the International Model Railway Exhibition in Cologne. Around 60,000 visitors came to the exhibition centre from 20-23 November 2014, attracted by true-to-scale model railway layouts, steam powered vehicles of all kinds, and by LEGO Fan World and the LEGO KidsFest. So IMA 2014 was again able to repeat the success of previous events.**

A first-rate event combination awaited the constant stream of model railway fans, live steam friends and LEGO enthusiasts of all ages at IMA 2014 in Koelnmesse, Cologne's trade fair centre. As Europe's largest model railway event, this year's IMA hosted 191 exhibitors from 12 countries. The illustrious names of market leaders were as much in evidence as the creative workshops of small-series manufacturers. One of them was KOHS&Company, first-time exhibitor from the USA, adding stars and stripes to the IMA flag. So the range of products and services on show left nothing to be desired for the audience who for the most part were highly knowledgeable, confirming once again that IMA is the leading trade fair as well as an key source of ideas and entertainment for model railway enthusiasts.

Railway modellers were able to find inspiration for their own creativity in the 20 model railway layouts in all gauges, and the precision and close attention to detail with which they are constructed never fail to amaze spectators. Many of the layouts depicted European landscapes, ranging from Finland to the mountain panoramas of the Alps. The detailed replica of a Japanese landscape with high-speed railway line in gauge N also attracted attention. A definite highlight of IMA 2014 had come exclusively to Cologne from Liverpool. The impressive layout 'Liverpool Lime Street' in gauge EM - a large gauge used mainly in the UK - represents Liverpool's Lime Street station in the period around 1945. Special features of the layout include its sophisticated electronics, the large fiddle yard and a router which can set over 200 different routes into and out of the station. The layout of the "Club Modélisme ferroviaire d'Albens" from Albens in France was on show in

Germany for the first time. A river landscape with great attention to detail is the focal point of their layout "Challieres". Express trains including the TGW alternate with interesting freight train combinations.

Obviously such works of art as these model railway layouts also fascinate the younger visitors, potentially the next generation of modellers, especially as the two aspects of practical modelling and the use of digital technology complement each other perfectly. Andreas Wittur, manager of Messe Sinsheim and organizer of the IMA, stated at the opening press conference: "Especially for teenagers and young adults, whose free time and leisure activities are today strongly influenced by digital media, railway modelling offers not only rediscovery of the haptic experience and hands-on model making, but also combines the practical with the digital element".

The increasing significance of digitalisation in railway modelling was evident in the programme of the Model Railway Forum, held for the first time in Cologne, and also at the Rail Community's digital workshop, where topics such as "Digital sound for locomotives" or "Installation of a decoder" were on the agenda.

As in previous years IMA 2014 again gave all-round high priority to active youth promotion. Within the framework of special activities, youngsters were actively introduced to this fascinating hobby and could expand their existing knowledge at 'Junior College Europe', run by the Federal Association of German Rail Friends (BDEF) or the youth project "BahnKids" by the model railway association MOBA. Youth work is also an important issue for manufacturers, and exhibiting companies Märklin, Auhagen, Busch, Faller, Noch and Viessmann dedicated an area of 200 m² to active model railway play and creativity. As there was a significant increase in the number of families among the visitors this year, the measures for the promotion of young modellers had no trouble in reaching their target group.

At Lego Fan World, not just families but also many a 'best ager' succumbed to the fascination of the colourful bricks. The LEGO Modellbau Fans Rheinland e.V. transported visitors into a world of fantastic landscapes with replicas of existing buildings in miniature scale 1:48. And at the LEGO KidsFest, explorers of all ages could delve into their favourite LEGO theme world and give rein to their own creativity. About 500 million Lego bricks awaited the eager constructors.

For the eighth time IMA was accompanied by the Cologne Live Steam Meeting, where 80 participants from the UK, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany and even Japan came together to present all manner of steam-powered scale model vehicles in action, much to the delight of the audience.

This year many of the IMA visitors again took on long distances to travel to by far the most popular European model railway exhibition. Around one third of the surveyed visitors gave their travel distance as 200 km or more. Once again a high proportion of visitors from abroad came from the Benelux countries, and this year an increased number of visitors made the long journey from Switzerland to be in Cologne. According to the visitor survey the popularity of IMA is based on the coherent concept of the show, in which emphasis is placed on a wide variety of exhibitors and international model railway layouts. Finally almost 90% of the visitors were highly satisfied with the International Model Railway Exhibition in Cologne 2014 and definitely plan to return in 2016.

The next IMA with its accompanying events will take place again at Koelnmesse in November 2016. Those who cannot wait that long to return to the fascinating world of model railways have the chance to do so at "Faszination ModellBAHN" from 06 - 08 March 2015 in Sinsheim. For detailed information visit: www.faszination-modellbahn.com

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