

Class 15 takes... LITTLE LOCO INTO THE BIG LEAGUE

A new name in ready-to-run 'O' gauge delivered its debut locomotive at the end of January. **MIKE WILD** gives the Little Loco Company's debut 7mm scale BTH Class 15 the once over.

IT IS A BOLD MOVE to jump head-first into ready-to-run model production, but the Little Loco Company has done it with gusto and chosen a fantastic subject for its debut model – and in 'O' gauge too. Little Loco revealed its 7mm:1ft scale British Thompson Houston (BTH) Type 1 project in April 2016 (HM107) with the aim of delivering a high specification model in a short space of time. It took a little longer than anticipated, but that extra wait has definitely been worth it – not least for the increase

in onboard technology that has been created for this model. First though, a little history. The BTH Type 1 Bo-Bo diesels, later Class 15, were a pilot scheme design for a sub-1,000hp diesel locomotive. They were built between 1957 and 1961 and intended for trip freight, empty stock workings and other light duties. The fleet was withdrawn between 1968 and 1971 with all but one being scrapped. The sole survivor, D8233, is currently being restored at the East Lancashire Railway and the Little Loco Company will be making a donation to support its resurrection from sales of the new Class 15 models.

THE MODEL
Delivered in a sturdy cardboard box, the Class 15 comes suitably packaged, tipping the scales at just over 2kg. Everything is factory fitted apart from the numbers and crests, making this model literally ready to

set to work straight from the box. It is being offered in both Digital Command Control (DCC) ready (with a Plux22 socket) and DCC sound fitted by Little Loco, although all versions are equipped with all necessary wiring and speakers for a plug and play sound installation. Little Loco is also able to supply the Zimo MX645P22 decoder with its own custom sound file pre-loaded to analogue customers wishing to upgrade to sound. Our sample is a sound fitted version selected to test the attractive proposition of a full complement of sound and lighting features through the Zimo nine function decoder. External detailing is excellent in all respects. Assembly is superb and this standard continues throughout the locomotive from the handrails along the bonnet to the etched metal roof fan grille, etched steps, fully detailed bogies, sprung buffers and bufferbeam fittings.

An impressive feature of the model are its factory fitted folding headcode discs. These can be positioned to suit any type of train headcode – or all left open if you want to have the '15' at the head of the Royal Train – and with digital control you can even select which lights are turned on individually through the use of Functions 20-23. This level of ingenuity and attention to detail is definitely to be applauded. Moving back to the cab and the clear glazing gives a perfect view of the detailed interior which is also illuminated with a press of Function 0 – if you are running an analogue version the head and cab lighting comes on when the locomotive starts to move. Colour application is neat and smart throughout with crisp edges to the yellow warning panels, suitably coloured bogie and pipework connections and even SKF

roller bearing logos picked out in red over yellow. 'O' gauge modellers are used to receiving unnumbered motive power, but in this case the Little Loco Company has included a water slide transfer sheet offering a selection of numbers with crests plus a set of etched metal shed and works plates to complete the model. The transfer sheet covers all periods. **PERFORMANCE**
The Class 15 departs from what we have previously seen for Bo-Bo diesels and above in 'O' gauge

ready-to-run as it has much more in common with the inner workings of an 'OO' gauge locomotive. There is a centrally mounted motor with twin flywheels driving two cardan shafts to the bogies. This combination provides all wheel drive, but also means that there is no need for expensive large scale decoders to operate it on DCC. On top of the motor case is the main Printed Circuit Board (PCB) which houses a Plux22 decoder socket. The sound fitted version uses a Zimo MX645P22 decoder and sound file created by *Hornby*

Magazine DCC sound contributor Paul Chetter and includes use of nine functions to control the four headlights at each end individually together with independent control of cab lights – the taillights are non-operational. This is impressive to say the least, but even better once you hit F1 and turn the sound on. Twin speakers provide a superb quality audio track from the Class 15 – created using recordings from the preserved locomotive's engine and unusual but endearing horns – while the decoder also includes Zimo's brake function (F2) and can also replicate coasting (F6), light and heavy loads and more. In terms of performance the motor and drive train proved plenty capable of handling a 15

wagon goods on our test track with smooth power control throughout the speed range. It also happily negotiated pointwork. Second radius 'O' gauge curves were the limit for our sample, but third radius were comfortable. **OVERALL**
Little Loco Company's debut locomotive is hands down a superb package and one which delivers a potential new breed of 'O' gauge model. Its similarities with 'OO' gauge make it an ideal step up to the larger scale and alongside the recent arrivals of the Dapol Class 08 and BR standard wagons it further enhances the appeal of this scale. For us this is a fantastic product which has been well thought out. It runs well, looks great and sound evens better. (MW)

**FIRST
REVIEW**

THE DETAILS	
Manufacturer:	www.littleloco.co.uk
Cat No:	BTH15-GDS-D5
Description:	Class 15 Bo-Bo, BR green
Scale:	'O'
Price:	£475 (DCC sound), £375 (analogue)
Era:	5
DCC:	DCC sound fitted, Plux22 socket, Zimo MX645P22
Couplings:	Working screw link couplings



Little Loco Company's Class 15 is a stunning addition to the range of ready-to-run 'O' gauge locomotives.

