

Swiss Ce6/8^{II} 'Crocodile' new from MTH



MTH have recently added a model of the classic Swiss Ce6/8^{II} 'Crocodile' to their growing O gauge range.

To conquer the sharp curves and steep gradients of the Gotthard, the Swiss Locomotive and Machine Works (SLM) designed an articulated electric loco in three sections: a double-ended centre housing two cabs, twin pantographs, and the huge high voltage transformer; and two end sections, each with two electric motors powering a single jackshaft that transmitted power to the 53" drivers, using steam-loco type drive rods. The jackshaft drive was dictated by the motors available at the time, which were too large to be axle-mounted.

The first 33 machines, built in 1919-1921, had the jackshaft driving a main rod connected to both the first set of drivers and a second idler shaft. The second generation, built in 1925-1926, had a simpler arrangement with the powered jackshaft driving a main rod connected to the third set of drivers. In Swiss parlance, the two generations were designated Ce6/8^{II} and Ce6/8^{III} (C for their speed range, maximum 40mph; e for electric; and 6 indicating six driven axles and 8 signifying eight axles total).

Many were upgraded in the 1940s and 1950s, raising the top speed to 47mph and changing the designation to Be6/8.

All were delivered in brown livery, but many were later repainted green.

Initial practice was to run with both pantographs raised, but some locos were later fitted with improved pans that allowed single pantograph operation.

The 'Crocs' were very successful and ruled the Gotthard route into the 1950s, when they were displaced by newer power. Many worked into the 1970s on less strenuous routes and shunting, and several have been preserved.

The model has a die-cast metal body augmented with many moulded plastic parts and added details, including metal handrails, bell, and whistle. It has detailed cab interiors, which are illuminated, and a driver figure at one end. There are working gangway fall plates.

The roof boasts full electrical equipment detail, and two fine pantographs which rise and drop automatically according to the direction of travel; the mechanism is not visible. They can be used for current collection from the overhead; a selector switch is located under the body.

The finish is excellent, with all markings neatly printed – note the 'brass' maker's plates.

The front and rear trucks are sprung for optimum trackholding; somewhat unusually, they are supplied separately for modeller to fit. The minimum recommended radius is 31".

The chassis is die-cast metal, and power comes from a five-pole flywheel-fitted motor. Pulling power should be impressive, as one pair of drivers on each bogie is fitted with traction tyres.



On-board electronics provide constant speed control even when the model is run on plain DC.

The lights use maintenance-free LEDs, and work in Swiss 3+1 style; the single tail light can be either white or red, according to whether the loco is running light or hauling a train. Under DCS control, they can even be set to show the 'working wrong line' aspect with an upper red.

The loco comes factory-fitted with the highly specified Proto-Sound 3.0 digital sound system.

The model can be run on ordinary analogue DC, Digital Command Control (DCC), and MTH's own Digital Command System (DCS).

It runs very nicely on plain DC, and under DCC will recognise 14, 28, or 128 speed steps. In the latter, recommended, mode, one step equals on scale mile per hour.



The basic running sounds work automatically even under plain DC, while under DCC there are many controllable functions, including lights, bell, whistle, forward and reverse pre-movement signal, station announcements, running sounds, brakes, cab chatter, idle sequence, extended start-up and shut-down, front and rear couplers, Doppler effect, level crossing signal, master volume, and individual pantograph control.

Many of these features are adjustable or programmable. However, the model is ahead of control technology as most current controllers cannot access more than the first twelve functions (if that). It does not seem to be possible to re-assign the functions, so the user cannot allocate his favoured eight or twelve to the available function buttons. However, as many of the sound elements occur as part of normal operation, this lack of manual intervention is hardly noticed as the automatic effects are very impressive.

A manual volume control is located under a hatch on one of the bonnets.

The model comes fitted with Lenz-style couplers, which are remotely operable under digital control. Alternative buffer beams with scale working screw link couplers are provided.

The loco is supplied with 32-page A5-size instruction booklets in English and German. The features and controls are explained colloquially and in detail under each operating system (DC, DCC, and DCS), but there is only basic information about some of the DCC CVs.

In summary, it looks good, it runs well (smooth, quiet, and controllable), and it is loaded with advanced features.

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