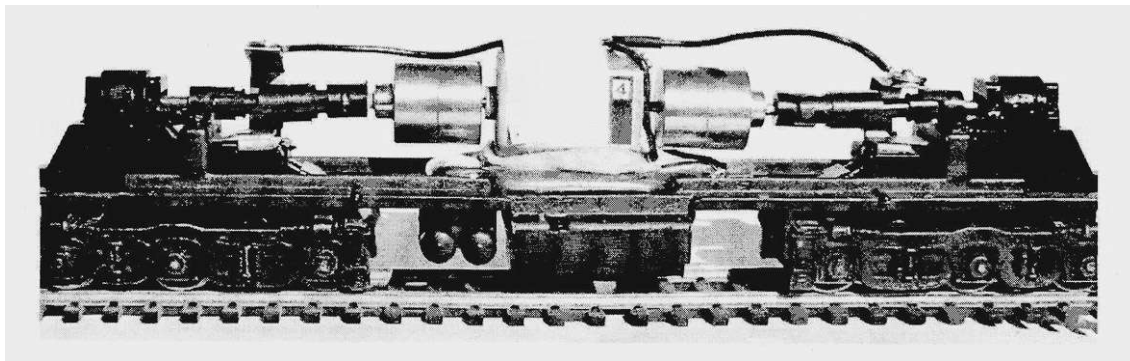


Product Review:



ModelTorque ATC Transmission System

Reviewed by Gordon Fletcher

I was recently given the opportunity to put a ModelTorque Automatic Torque-control Coupling fitted to an Athearn SD9 through its paces.

Once the correct ATC was selected — there is a range of sizes available to suit the various weights of locomotives — installation was relatively easy. The motor and flywheels matched up to the Athearn drive train being used. The only time consuming part was waiting for the silicon motor mount to set, as standard Athearn mounts weren't reusable.

After the silicon had set overnight the locomotive was able to be reassembled for testing. After a few minor adjustments, as with any repowered loco, it operated on its own quite nicely. If anything, the loco performed a lot smoother than any with a standard Athearn mechanism.

The most noticeable difference from a conventionally powered loco was that the ATC equipped unit had to build up torque before it could move off, whether on its own or pulling a train, just as the prototype has to do. You really have to drive this unit just as the prototype has to be driven, increase torque as required to move the load, and slacken off down grades or the train will really take off. One plus from this is, that as the motor can never be stalled, you will not have to face the possibility of a burnt out motor.

The next test was to run in a consist with other locos. The unit ran beautifully with Athearn, Kato, Atlas, P2K and variety of Mashima powered locos, causing no problems, whether heading, in the middle or at the end of the consist.

Next for me was the big test, as an end of train helper.

Cautiously the train was set moving and after a slow lap more speed was applied, up to full throttle, curves and 2 to 3% grades presenting no problems. I gave it one last test, to see how sensitive the ATC coupling was. The ATC loco was placed at the tail end of a thirty odd car mixed freight as a pusher, with a slow loco at the head end. Up hill and around 30" radius curves with three empty Roundhouse 60 foot flat cars in the middle of the consist. Operation was successful with no derailments.

This is the major plus, for, if like me, you want to operate mid train and or end of train helper units, the ATC equipped loco automatically adjusts its speed to that of the other locos. No need for speed programming with DCC, or matching speeds with other DC powered locos.

The great news is this transmission system will work equally well with either a standard DC throttle and block system, or DCC.

In my opinion the price is excellent. If I was considering repowering a loco, the cost is more than comparable with a new Sagami or Mashima motor, so consequently it would have to be at the top of the option list.

The one negative aspect about the ModelTorque ATC powered locomotive, it was a little noisier than most standard models, but certainly not objectionably noisy. Remember, prototype diesels are also noisy anyway.

In my opinion it is well worth using these transmission units as a repowering option to revive a loco in anyone's fleet, or if wanting the extra realism obtainable with the torque converter to achieve more prototypical operation.