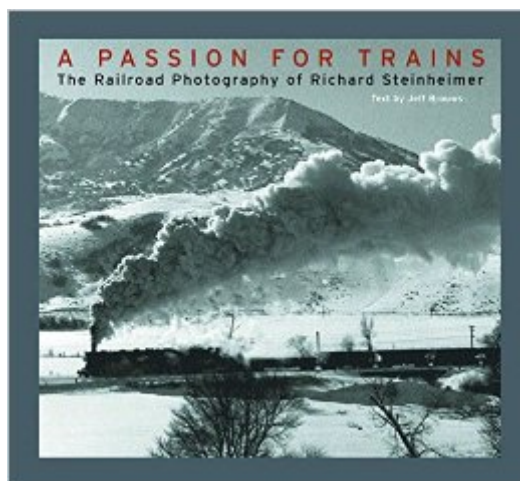


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A Passion For Trains: The Railroad Photography Of Richard Steinheimer



Synopsis

A tribute to the most revered railroad photographer of our time. To the true rail fan, Richard Steinheimer is an authentic hero, the best of the best. This, the first full-length celebration of his work, presents 160 of his duotone images, with an introduction by Jeff Brouws. A pioneer in train photography, Steinheimer lived through and documented the railroad's heyday and its decline. He is one of very few photographers who appreciate the aesthetics of all locomotives, from steam engines to the latest diesel-powered behemoths. He has a particular fondness for the landscape of the American West, and many of his images situate trains in the larger geography and culture of the time. Known for taking pictures at night, in bad weather, and from risky perches on top of moving train platforms, Steinheimer has an enormous creativity and productivity. 160 duotone photographs

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

My favorite railroad art photobooks are Winston Link's 'Steam Steel & Stars' and 'Starlight on the Rails' (also by Jeff Brouws) now this book of beautiful photos by Richard Steinheimer joins the list. Jeff Brouws writes, in his interesting introduction, about the typical train photo of the distant past being the 'a smoking wedge', that is, a three-quarter angle shot showing the front and side of an engine with the rest of the consist disappearing into the distance in a wedge shape and don't forget the smoking stack. Fortunately for us Mr Steinheimer pushed this rather narrow view of photography a lot further and took great photos of trains in an environmental setting. The 153 images in this book are most likely some of his best work and they all reveal the Steinheimer characteristics: beautiful

framing, compositions, tonal qualities and well-chosen subject matter. His compositions and framing just seem so right and the only other train photographer who has a similar ability, in my view, is Greg McDonnell. The selection is first class, steamers and diesels, day and night (and many in snow) yardwork or out in the landscape. A nice touch, I thought were the frequent shots of railroad folk going about their business. Turn over the pages and frequently a photo will grab you, like plate 139 taken in 1952 and looking down on Green River station in Wyoming, it is a real life version of a model train layout with the people, cars, buildings and Union Pacific's City of San Francisco frozen in time or plate 144, a 1964 Santa Fe depot interior shot showing the operator's desk and bursting with visual detail. As this is an art photobook I'm pleased to say it looks the part, the duotones are beautifully printed on excellent paper, the layout and typography could not be better. I think this book is a wonderful record of one of the few great train photographers. ***FOR AN INSIDE LOOK click 'customer images' under the cover.

Black and white photography's superior ability to communicate both detail and atmosphere is dramatically demonstrated by Richard Steinheimer's *A Passion for Trains*. This is one of the most totally satisfying railroad books I own, and I own over a hundred. Steinheimer has a unique ability to display both the railroad and the faces and geography of its environment. Landscape and nature over conspire against railroaders, as Steinheimer frequently demonstrates in *A Passion for Trains*, yet the weather never quite overwhelms the trains or the men who keep them moving. The photographs contain detail you can just about feel. Text on most pages is limited to a single line identifying the location. Thumbnails at the back of the book contain an additional paragraph about each photo. If you have a passion for trains, you'll love this book. It covers a wide variety of railroads, geographic environments, and weather. Many of the photos will soon become your favorites. In fact, I considered getting a second copy, just to be able to frame some of the pages! The term "coffee table book" is often used derogatorily. Yet, what's wrong with a book so fine that you'll want to keep it on your coffee table where you, and your friends, can frequently enjoy it?

As the antique dealer haughtily remarked to a customer who expressed shock at the astronomical price of an exquisite 1780 Philadelphia Highboy, "My dear sir, it is sufficient that it is available." So it may be said of Richard Steinheimer's big new book of railroad photographs, *A PASSION FOR TRAINS*. The images are superb, indeed, in a class by themselves. These are pictures that anyone who is interested in great photography will admire, regardless of whether or not they care about railroads and trains. It is regrettable, therefore, that the reproduction of Steinheimer's photographs in

this volume aren't far better than they are. The problem is that the blacks are consistently too dense, with a disturbing loss of shadow detail in nearly every instance. Furthermore, the whites are generally grey and flat when they should be bright and buoyant. It is difficult to tell from the book whether these defects are a result of poor printing, poorly made, excessively contrasty photographic prints or a combination of the two. However, flaws notwithstanding, it can safely be predicted that many railroad enthusiasts and some photography buffs will snap this work up (as I did myself), gratefully acknowledging that it is sufficient that it is available. For nonpareil examples of photograph reproductions as they should be, see CALIFORNIA (Adams, Little, Brown, 1997), IN THE LAND OF LIGHT (Smith, Houghton, Mifflin, 1983), COURT HOUSE (Pare [ed], Horizon Press, 1978), NEW YORK, EMPIRE CITY 1920-1945 (Stravitz, Abrams, 2004) and THE CHRYSLER BUILDING (Stravitz, Princeton Architectural Press, 2002).

Long known to be the greatest American railroad photographer, Jeff Brouws has finally produced an artistic monograph which is worthy of Dick Steinheimer's long career. Filled with many never before published images, the book not only gives you a glimpse at Stein's amazing vision, but even at some of his early works, and his failures, showing you the progress of the man's talent. Additionally, Brouw's erudite introduction provides an in depth study of the man and his skills, and the long search for and development of them by Stein. The text alone is an eye opener for any who would dare to follow in Dick's footsteps, and as such, the book is highly recommended to all railroad photographers who wish to elevate their work to an artistic achievement that is something more than inbred provincial documentarianism.

The photographs capture more than trains, but never less. They capture the beauty of the land that trains opened up. They bring us people, both on and near the trains. His sense of composition draws us into the scene and makes us want to look at it again and again.

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