

Review: A Little Big Red Car

Showcase Miniatures

by Thomas Knapp, MMR 101



Showcase Miniatures Pacific Electric "The Hollywood Car" Kit

SKU 5010 \$74.95

Lighting Kit

SKU 5010LED \$12.95

According to the Showcase Miniatures web site, the model built from this kit is "... LOOSELY modeled after the actual prototype and got its inspiration from a 1988 film [about] a famed rabbit." The film is "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" – a movie that combines live action with animation set in 1947 Los Angeles. The "loosely modeled" prototype is the Pacific Electric 600-756 "Hollywood" car. Characters in the movie are frequently seen riding streetcars of the Pacific Electric; Roger is framed as an elaborate scheme by villain Judge Doom and a freeway company to shut down the electric interurban and streetcar system (add

Photo 1: February 1960 at Morgan Yard, the last nine "Hollywood" cars (foreground, with "Blimp" cars in background) await the trip to the scrap yard on Terminal Island. (By permission of Ralph Cantos, Pacific Electric Historical Society – www.pacificelectric.org).



Photo 2: Showcase Miniatures version of a 600-series Pacific Electric "Hollywood" car on a Kato B-B power chassis; note the pole in the image on the right; it uses the old reliable NCAT design of shoe (or "trolley") to track overhead wire.

General Motors to the mix and it is not far off what actually happened).

At one time, the Pacific Electric was the largest operator of electric railroad passenger service in the world, with 2,160 daily trains on over 1,000 miles of electrified lines (both

standard gauge and narrow gauge "Yellow Cars") spreading out from Los Angeles. Local service on Hollywood Boulevard was provided from various surrounding areas by several lines down the years (some of 3'-6" gauge): the Hollywood Boulevard Line via Hill



Photo 3: The Showcase Miniatures short “Hollywood” car next to a 1980s model of a 1200-series “San Berdoo Twelve” Pacific Electric interurban (originally ordered in 1913 for the San Bernardino route).



Photo 4: Vintage newspaper add for “The Big Red Cars.”

St. Line, the Subway-Hollywood Line, the Hollywood-Venice Line, and the Laurel Canyon Line. These lines served Angelenos from as early as 1909 to as late as 1959. The 600-756 Hollywood cars were built by St. Louis Car Company from 1922-1928 and operated

on street trackage up until the end in 1959. (Several different types of Pacific Electric cars are currently running and on display at the Orange Empire Railway Museum in Perris, California.)

The kit, like the movie, is a caricature, being shortened by 1/3 and lacking some of the side doors. However, it makes a great model that could be used on street or interurban trackage. The kit is designed to fit a Kato powered B-B chassis 11-105, 11-106 or 11-107 (not included – available online from multiple sources including *Amazon.com*). It includes cast lead-free pewter ends, a detailed cast resin roof, etched stainless steel and brass for sides, doors, window frames, grabs and hand rails, trolley poles, and fenders (not actually used on the Hollywood cars), and, laser-cut clear glazing, destination signs printed on clear plastic, printed advertising signs, and some very fine Microscale Pacific Electric decals.

The assembly is straight-forward and easy, laminating the etched sides together with CA glue and gluing to the cast metal ends. I painted the assembled ends and sides the two-tone Pacific Electric scheme separately from painting the roof flat aluminum.

I painted the Kato chassis flat black before attaching the body with four 00-90 screws. The kit includes etched stainless trolley poles. I substituted a pole made from phosphor-bronze wire following the well-proven NCAT design (www.teamsavage.com/ncat/) for one of the poles, allowing operation with overhead wire.

The optional lighting kit includes printed clear plastic inserts for the destination signs on each end of the car and LEDs for illuminating these from the back. When installed with the printed destinations, the effect is quite good. I deviated from the kit wiring diagram (which has the destination signs directionally illuminated along with the headlights) so that both are illuminated all the time; those of us know all too well the rear destination signs tells us what street car we just missed as we run, panting, up to the stop!

This is a great weekend project that creates a very distinctive nod to street railway history. Add some poles and overhead wire to your cityscape, and bring public transit to your N scale citizens. 🚃