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# Three decades of **RDCs**



**BUDD'S BRAVE LITTLE RAIL DIESEL CAR CARVED  
OUT A SPECIAL ROLE IN PASSENGER SERVICE**

BY KEVIN P. KEEFE // Photos by J. David Ingles, collection of Brian M. Schmidt



**D**espite the postwar boom in new postwar long-distance passenger trains, by 1949 it was clear that part of the business was in trouble. American railroads remained obligated to operate a dense feeder network of local trains and branch-line service, nearly all of which lost money. Enter the Budd Company, the upstart carbuilder with a brand-new answer: the Rail Diesel Car, or RDC. Powered by a pair of rooftop 275-horsepower General Motors diesel engines, the stainless-steel, lightweight 85-foot RDC promised to cut operating costs. Budd called it “an important step forward in railway transportation.” In his March 1953 “All About the RDC” issue, *Trains* Editor David P. Morgan wrote, “If the RDC record to date means anything at all, it strongly suggests that a fresh examination of the entire passenger business is

in order. No one who’s familiar with RDCs would be apprehensive about the results of such an investigation.”

Several railroads went with the RDC. By the time RDC manufacturing ended in 1962, Budd had constructed nearly 400 of them. Boston & Maine bought the most, more than 100, and made them the backbone of its Boston-area commuter network. Other significant commuter operators included Central of New Jersey, Baltimore & Ohio, New Haven, and Reading. New York Central put its *Beeliners* to work on routes as far-flung as Detroit-Mackinaw City, 300 miles. Canadian Pacific dispatched 55 RDCs all across Canada. The RDC even had a small but memorable role in advanced passenger-train technology. NYC President Al Perlman strapped a pair of GE J-47 jet engines on an RDC and ran it beyond 183 mph across northwest Ohio in 1966. Budd rejiggered some RDCs to create New Haven’s six-car *Roger Williams* trainset.

The RDC also attracted photographers, including the prolific J. David Ingles, former editor of *Trains* and longtime senior editor of *Classic Trains*. Over three decades, Ingles trained his camera on RDCs all over North America, as well as collected RDC images from his father, John S. Ingles, as well as various friends. As the images on these pages confirm, the RDC was a fascinating addition to the railroad landscape.



It's late in the game for the RDC as three-car BC Rail train follows the Fort St. James line and crosses the Muskeg River in north-central British Columbia on Sept. 14, 1987.





Central of New Jersey 560 leads another RDC at Aldene, N.J., on its way to Communipaw Terminal in November 1966.

One of New York Central's "Bee-liner" RDCs departs Detroit's Michigan Central Station for the trip north to Mackinaw City, Mich., in the 1960s.



Trailing exhaust from three pairs of Detroit Diesel engines, Canadian National train 645 roars through Copetown, Ontario, on Oct. 7, 1967. John S. Ingles





**Baltimore & Ohio's RDC-equipped commuter train (right) flanks B&O's daily Pittsburgh-Washington, D.C. Speedliner (left) at Pittsburgh's B&O station on March 26, 1962.**

**Budd meets Bombardier: An MBTA RDC mingles with newer commuter cars at Boston's North Station on Dec. 31, 1979.**



**Contrasting color schemes: Boston & Maine Budd cars and an RS3 gather at Fitchburg, Mass., approximately 50 miles northwest of Boston, April 1963.**







A visit to Toronto finds repainted Canadian National D-200 traversing the busy yard complex in July 1964. How many switchers do you spot?

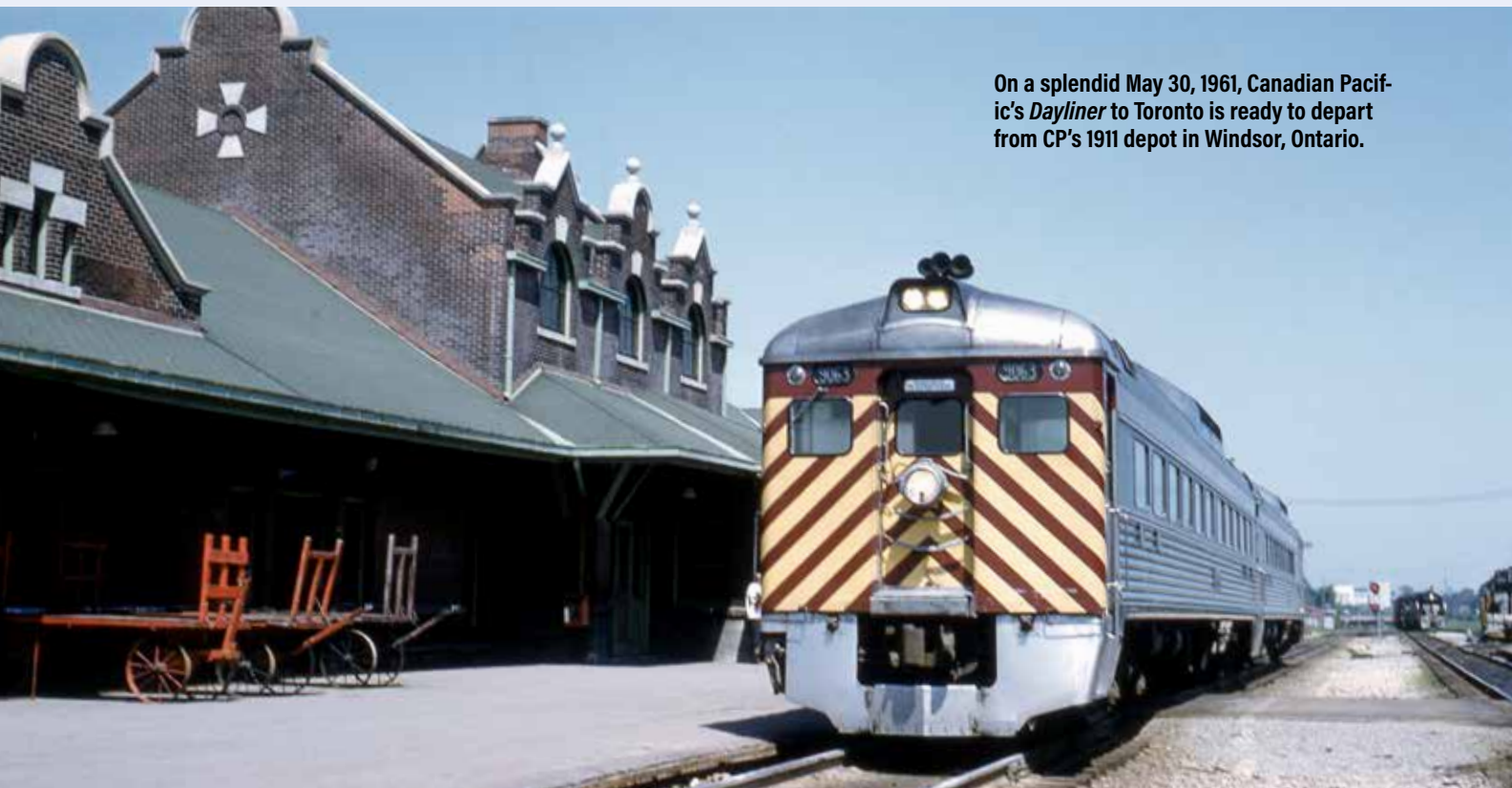
New York Central M-497, famously outfitted with a surplus GE J-47 jet engines, crests 180 mph at Bryan, Ohio, in July 1966 in high-speed tests. John S. Ingles







Baltimore & Ohio's Pittsburgh commuter train pauses at the old station at McKeesport, Pa., in September 1964.



On a splendid May 30, 1961, Canadian Pacific's *Dayliner* to Toronto is ready to depart from CP's 1911 depot in Windsor, Ontario.





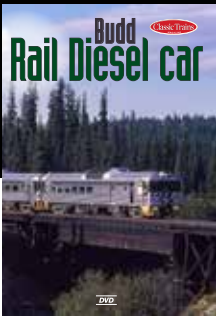
Operating on the ex-Dominion & Atlantic, a pair of Canadian Pacific RDCs poses at Digby, N.S., on May 25, 1978.



Amtrak's train 372, the *Black Hawk*, rolls through Chicago's Bridgeport junction on Oct. 5, 1975. Robert P. Schmidt



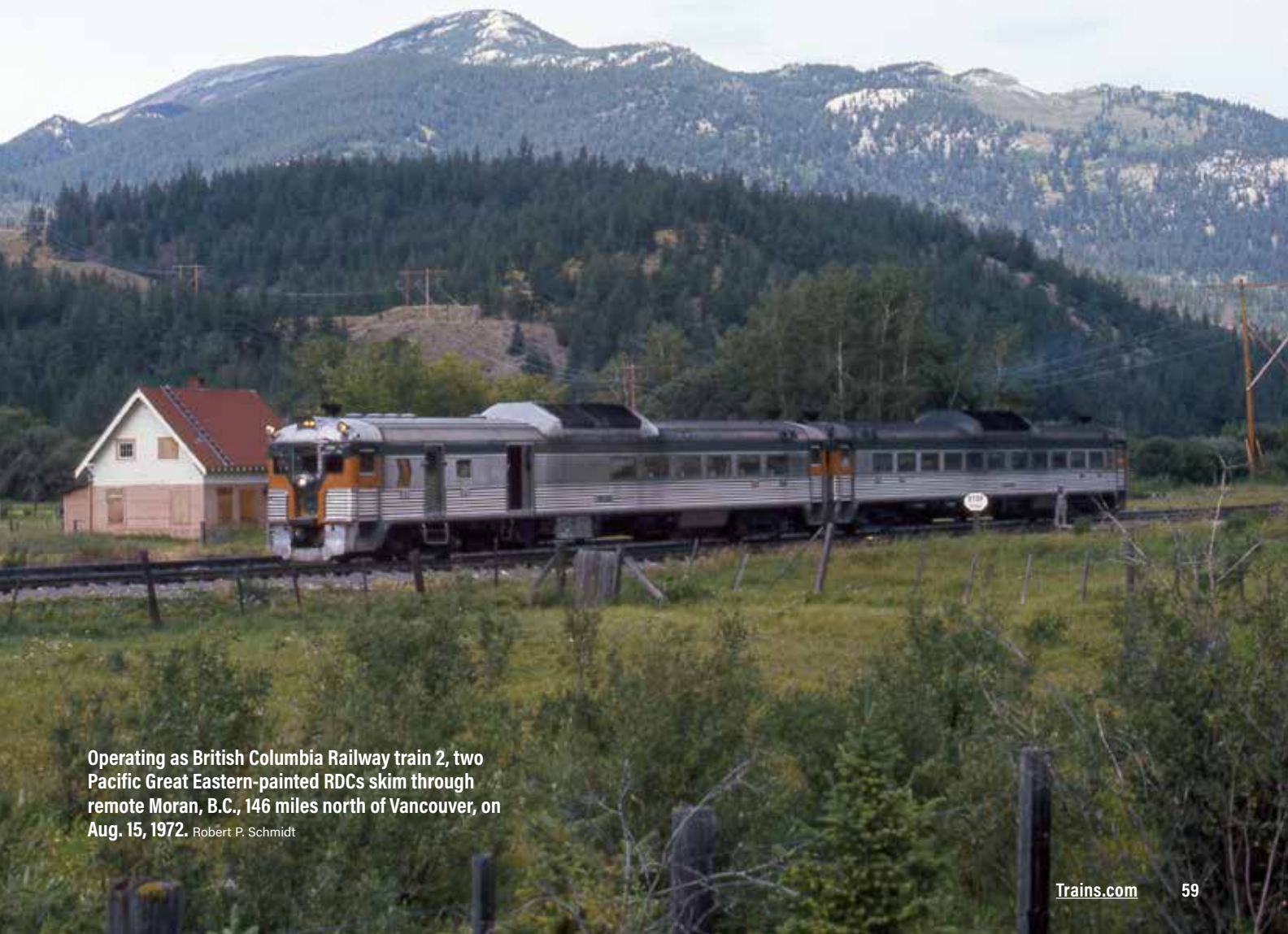




### **BUDD RDC DVD**

Filmmaker Rich Luckin present the story of the Budd Rail Diesel Car from development to today. Learn more about the RDC and its place in passenger train history with this exhaustive documentary. Available at [www.kalmbachhobbystore.com](http://www.kalmbachhobbystore.com).

**Santa Fe's two warbonnet RDCs, DC-191 and DC-192 and out of work, await disposition at Topeka, Kan., on Aug. 28, 1969.**



**Operating as British Columbia Railway train 2, two Pacific Great Eastern-painted RDCs skim through remote Moran, B.C., 146 miles north of Vancouver, on Aug. 15, 1972. Robert P. Schmidt**