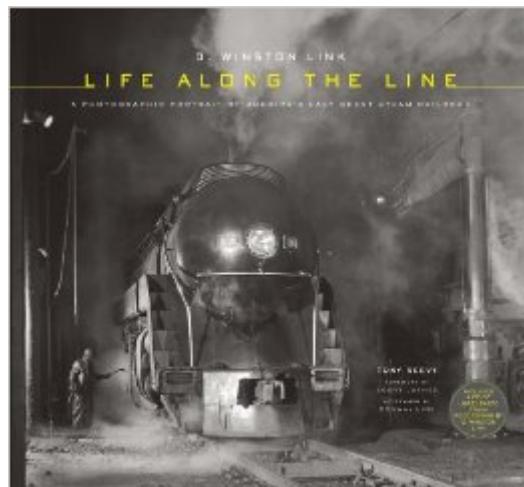


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O. Winston Link: Life Along The Line: A Photographic Portrait Of America's Last Great Steam Railroad



Synopsis

O. Winston Link photographed the Norfolk and Western, the last major steam railroad in the United States, when it was converting its operations from steam to diesel in the 1950s. Linkâ™s N&W project captured the industry at a moment of transition, before the triumph of the automobile and the airplane that ended an era of passenger rail service. His work also revealed a small-town way of life that was about to experience seismic shifts and, in many cases, vanish completely. Including a collection of more than 180 of Linkâ™s most famous works and rare images that have never before been published, O. Winston Link: Life Along the Line offers a moving account of the people and communities surrounding the last steam railroad. The book includes a cd of Link's recordings of the railroad.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (63 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

At last Abrams gives us a third helping of wonderful Link photos. The first book, 'Steam Steel & Stars' in 1987 introduced him to a wider audience and now he's firmly established as a great American photographer, something railroad fans have known for years. Of the three Abrams books I think this is the best because it is so comprehensive and also a first-class production. Like Richard Steinheimer, another great railroad photographer, Link believed there was more to this kind of work than snapping a smoking wedge shaped consist powering along a track. Both of them creatively explored the engines in and out of use, employees who made it all happen and the places and towns along the track. Link took it further by creating remarkable night-time tableaus of steamers

passing through towns and the countryside. The book's 180 photos (twelve in color) are in five sections: 'Railroaders' looks at all sorts of Norfolk & Western employees; 'Iron Horses' covers the various units N&S used and Link chose this railroad because it was the last to use both steam and diesel; 'Side by Side' with trains on the mainline; 'In the Land of Plenty' has a lovely selection of photos of small towns, stations, passengers, stores and buildings in the N&S region. The last section: 'How it was done' is, I think, one of the strengths of the book. It's a detailed look at how Link worked, not just with cameras but how he took movies and did recordings. The landscape book (just over 11.5 inches wide) is an excellent production. Printed with a 200 screen on a quality matt art paper. None of the photos bleed off the page edge and they all have extensive captions though I did find it slightly annoying that captions are only on every other spread even though nearly every page had space for them.

I've just skimmed through "Life Along the Line" and find it to be a superb book in all respects. Added: I've spent more time with this book and have ordered another one for a family member as a Christmas present. My opinion of the book is even higher than when I first wrote this review.... It's a superb volume. It's about railroading. Yet it's also an historical documentation of the passing of an era, the era of steam locomotion as it transitions quickly to diesel locomotion. It also documents the lives of many who worked for the railroad and who lived beside the railroad in small hamlets, isolated from much of the world at large. I quickly noticed the high quality matte paper. It has very little reflection to direct glare into my aging eyes. Much appreciated in this day and age of glossy books and magazines. As a photographer, I noted the incredible detail of the photos, the composition, the included backgrounds. the careful use of depth-of-field, the exquisite use of artificial lighting. This tome more than does justice to Link's skill and talent at taking photos. The reproduction is first rate. You'll find pleasure in viewing these photos more than once or twice. Link did a marvelous job of taking portraits of the people he met during the course of his years-long project. These are more than 'studio' portraits. They are portraits of the men and women in their element. Again, the photos are nearly perfect in every respect. They are not nameless faces. In nearly all photos, he has also documented their names and their locations. He shows his respect and enjoyment of all of the people he met and worked with during this project. The book includes a number of color photos taken by Link as well.

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