

A Few Words From Steve Franks About RollerCoaster Tycoon 2 and His Real World Track Packs

Greetings fellow RCTers,

With the arrival of Mr. Sawyer's RollerCoaster Tycoon 2, I have been busy examining and updating the **Steve Franks Collection** of *Real World Track Packs*. This is a great opportunity to not only update the tracks themselves should new photographic detail warrant it, but to take advantage of any new track elements introduced with RCT2. And most importantly, I am fitting out each RCT2 coaster with accurate station complexes and auxiliary details based, as closely as possible, to the actual photographs in my library. Naturally, given the limitations of the new RCT2 graphic elements, it may not be possible to recreate an exact station complex, but I hope to at least capture the "flavor" by adhering closely to the style and layout that I see.

I have just posted a new bench (October 2003) so that you can enjoy my latest efforts. Please take the time to download my new and "standardized" *Master Bench*, which is posted on this website. Not taking advantage of downloading my "standardized" *Master Bench* will rob you of the great and accurate detail that has been added to the new RCT2 track files. My new *Master Bench* has been fashioned such that it is backward compatible with all my previous RCT2 recreations - any recreation posted before October 2003 at RCT station and RCT2.com. My *Master Bench* supercedes the old Nirvana Gardens bench.

As I work to update my **Collections** page please take note that each ride's description will contain the terms: RCT2 Track Added, or RCT2 Ready. RCT2 Track Added is self explanatory with the updated pack including not only the original RCT/LL/Gold version, but the new TD6 track file with additional screenshots if required, and the document file amended to reflect the details of the new track file. RCT2 Ready are packs where no new TD6 track has been added due to lack of any photographic information to make a real station. At the rate I am going, I doubt that too many such packs will exist in the roster. But in such cases, most of my old TD4 track versions are still useable in RCT2 by simply importing the TD4 file into the new tracks folder. No changes in the track file name is required for it to be listed in the RCT2 tracks roster.

Since I am examining each track with a fresh eye, there may be updated packs which will feature updates to the old TD4 track file as well. Since my aim is to present fellow RCTers with the most accurate recreations possible, I will always seek to improve my packs even if its just a tweak involving a few track sections. That is my commitment to realism.

Some updated packs will retain the old sample thumbnail screenshot for the following reasons:

- 1.) To expedite the updating process, I am cramming as many coasters on a single bench as possible to reprofile their tracks and recreate the stations. Filling in the surrounding area of each new coaster with auxiliary rides and detail merely for a photogenic screenshot would waste too much valuable time.
- 2.) Any improvements to the updated track, like the station complex, may appear too small in an overall screenshot to be of any visual value.

Where updated rides, such as terrain intensive coasters require it, I may include a RCT2 bench as installing the coaster on your own bench may prove to be impossible if not difficult at best. I am thinking of Kennywood's coasters, or my *Cyclone* @ Puritas Park as examples, since they are ravine coasters requiring high land tables.

My reasoning for combining the new RCT2 tracks with my old ones is that anyone downloading my comprehensive packs today who still uses RCT/LL, or RCT/Gold will have benefit of my newer tracks immediately when the day comes that they opt to purchase RCT2. This may present some consternation with some users that don't like the idea of downloading my packs again, but I hate the idea of separating my track files. Make note that many of the older packs in your possession may have photographs of the actual ride which were later removed earlier this year. Please be sure that you retain the contents of the old pack and import just the newer doc file and all track files so that your old packs will remain complete but up-to-date. Sorry for the inconvenience on this point.

Many coasters in Mr. Sawyer's RCT2 have new track elements. These will be employed where advantageous in the new TD6 tracks. Sometimes this simple swapping of track may require a complete overhaul of the entire circuit! If this becomes necessary that is what I will do to insure that my recreations are accurate.

One great disappointment to me is the new Block Brake track featured in RCT2. On real coasters, a track circuit is broken up into several computer controlled sections called blocks. This concept is taken from real world operations of railroads who have been using "Block Control" techniques for more than a century. By chopping up track into several blocks, a roller coaster's computer can monitor the position of each train as they move along the circuit, and keep the trains safely separated from each other by only allowing one train to occupy a section [block] of track at any given moment. Should a following train come too close to the train ahead, the computer will use the brakes in a block to "trim" or slow the trains to maintain proper separation, or in case of an emergency, stop all the trains completely at the next respective block brakes, thus, preventing a potentially deadly crash.

Unfortunately, Mr. Sawyer's block brakes have a default speed of 4 mph which cannot be adjusted by the user. On actual coasters, block brakes will either let trains pass with their speeds unaltered, or be trimmed back to preset operational requirements for normal and smooth operation. We do not have such liberties with Mr. Sawyer's block brakes. Consequently, when using his blocks, trains will abruptly slow to 4 mph regardless of need. This only serves to muck up an, otherwise, decent ride with unnecessary (and unrealistic) slowdowns that may prevent trains from actually completing their circuits, or seriously impairing train performance. For these reasons, after updating more than a dozen tracks so far, I have found no compelling reason to employ them on the grounds of safety or realism. They only mar the performance of my tracks and I will not use them on 99% of my tracks. Where actual blocked trim brakes exist on a recreation they will continue to be reproduced using standard brakes "trimmed up" to allow trains to pass unaltered in speed, or "trimmed down" to reflect real world operations. Hopefully, Mr. Sawyer will fix this in a future patch or expansion pack. At present, block brakes are utterly useless and simply frustrating from my point of view.

While Mr. Sawyer has, for whatever reason, seen fit to bust up the mini-steels into several trivial categories based on train type, and spreading the track elements out among them to the point that many of my original mini steels may not be reproduceable for RCT2, he went to the other extreme and combined the wooden coaster tracks into just one type -- the Wooden Twister. This act of vandalism (my opinion) has ruined the aesthetic visuals of this type coaster by offering only the heavily banked 50 degree track. Such extreme and heavily banked track has always looked ugly and disfigured to my draftsman's eye, and I hated to use the Twister track for esthetic reasons even though Prior & Church recreations require it. Many of the old classic coasters of the Miller/Allen design philosophy use only slightly banked tracks (10 to 20 degrees) to impose high lateral forces on the riders. Making such recreations in Twister track is simply an egregious sin! That is why so many of my classic woodies employ usually flat turnarounds -- to reflect banking angles that were even less then the 30 degree banking angle offered in Mr. Sawyer's old standard Wooden Coaster track. Needless to say, anywhere I find track in actual wooden coaster photos that is less than 25 degrees it will likely remain flat in my recreations as using 50 degree angles is just too exaggerated and ugly to be any more correct!

At this writing, no one has offered a trainer that can swap out train types, nor has Mr. Drexler come forward with an RCT2 anti-cheat code patch to exploit this feature. Many of my older recreations had their trains swapped for other train styles which were more in keeping with what I see in actual photos. Take my ***Giant Dipper*** @ Santa Cruz for example. The original trains were of the old Prior & Church "articulated" design. But as this coaster was restored, the old P&C trains were retired in favor of the more modern Morgan trains. While I did find that RCT2, in this case, accepted my swapped in Morgan style trains, the anti-cheat code caused the coaster to break down within seconds of opening the ride. Since there is no Drexler patch for RCT2, it will be necessary to live with whatever style of train is offered for that particular track.

For the time being, any new coaster recreations will likely continue to be offered in both RCT/LL/Gold and RCT2 where possible as I am still bouncing between both versions.

For reasons only known to Mr. Sawyer, with the wave of his hand, he changed the old height mark values from 4.3 feet to 5 feet without rescaling his track accordingly. This has only served to making accurate recreations even more difficult with track pieces that are now, in effect, 14% longer. This may not sound like much, but my previous recreations, which were built according to the old and more accurate standard, are not downsizeable to the new and arbitrary height standard. In the case of ***Giant Dipper*** @ Santa Cruz, for example, this 73 foot coaster is now 85 feet tall! Any attempts to downsize the ride totally demolishes any prospects of recreating the first turnaround. For this reason, no attempt is being made to downsize my recreations. The new RCT2 measures are arbitrary and not derived from an actual scale like the old torturous height mark was. It should also be noted that while your old rides will have suddenly grown in stature, their physics did not change! The trains on my ***Giant Dipper's*** new 85 foot lift hill travel no faster than they did when the lift was 73 feet tall in RCT1. For the above reason, it may be necessary to continue making some recreations to the old standard when the new height standard makes work impossible. Such situations will be noted in future track pack doc files. I do not accept the new height mark standard as legitimate or correct.

RCT2 has expanded the number of coaster tracks into a bewildering number. To aid in the making of recreations, Mike Robbins of RCT Station has seen fit to create a document file which matches up all the RCT2 coaster tracks with their Real World counterparts in terms of what company designed them and a real coaster named as an example. I heartily recommend downloading this valuable document if you are making your own recreations.

Meanwhile, as I work to update my present *Real World Track Packs*, I may offer a new coaster now and then. But as each update requires at least 3 or 4 days of my time, the entire conversion process is rather slow going. It involves reviewing old photos, examining the old track, looking for possible new photos that may aid in my update, making any necessary track changes, creating a new station complex, making new screenshots, and updating the doc file.

In the meantime, I do enjoy getting feedback from you all regarding my tracks.

Regards,
Steve Franks
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