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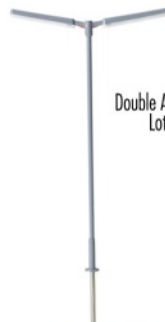
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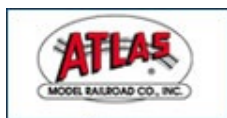
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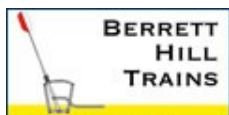
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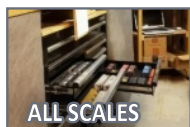
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Compiled by JOE FUGATE



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KEN PATTERSON



Electrical Impulses: Sound decoder best practices

JOE FUGATE



Mike Mackey's Texas & St. Louis layout

the MRH STAFF



Crowdsourced hay bales

MICHAEL ANTEAU



Savvy Modeler online: All about frog juicers

Compiled by the MRH STAFF



March 2023 news and events

RICHARD BALE and JEFF SHULTZ

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PUBLISHER'S MUSINGS



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2023

JOE FUGATE: LAYOUT TOURS ARE BACK
(LATEST TRIP TO DALLAS) ...



THAT'S RIGHT, LAYOUT TOURS ARE BACK! We went on the road again and shot six layout tours in late February.

As of spring 2020, nobody wanted strangers coming into their house to look at the trains, so our routine of shooting a bunch of layout tours every year fell by the wayside.

We had a few layouts in our backlog, but we burned through that pretty quickly and it's been mighty slim pickings since.

On to Dallas

The 2023 NMRA National Convention this August is in Dallas, Texas. Our pre-Covid routine practice has been to visit a number of layouts in the convention town the winter before.

So in late February, we went to Dallas for a week and visited six layouts. Our standard approach is to shoot lots of footage for a TrainMasters TV layout tour, and to shoot still photos for an MRH cover story as well on the layout.

Let's go over the six layouts we visited and give you a preview of what's coming over the next several months in MRH and on TrainMasters TV.

I also need to give a lot of credit to Mike Mackey, who did a lot of the footwork for us in setting up these layouts for tour.

Mike Mackey's Texas & St. Louis

Mike's layout has some of the most interesting automation features we've seen with his fancy LED lighting. Mike can simulate dawn-to-dusk lighting on his layout as well as various kinds of moonlighting at night.



1. Mike Mackey switching Tyler yard on his Texas & St. Louis layout.

We also noted how much Mike likes home automation. When he walked into his darkened layout room he called out, "Alexa, turn on the layout lights." Then he said, "Alexa, turn on the layout" and things came alive! Pretty snazzy.

We also found Mike's fondness for narrow gauge and his rationale for it interesting. Since Mike models the Cotton Belt in Texas, historically, the Cotton Belt had a good amount of narrow gauge back in the day.

Mike reasons the Feds would not let the Cotton Belt get rid of all its narrow gauge trackage, so almost one third of Mike's layout is narrow gauge. Another third is dual gauge trackage, with the rest of the layout being standard gauge.

That's certainly one way to scratch the narrow gauge itch!

We feature Mike's layout in this issue, and look for Mike's layout video to hit TMTV by the end of March.

Texas Western model railroad club

Mike Mackey's also a member of the Texas Western club in the Fort Worth area, so he arranged for us to have a day touring and shooting the club layout. This is a new space for the club, so they've only been there a few years.



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That said, they've got a lot done already and they have a great expansion plan for their space. The layout is double-decked as well, so there's a lot of layout going into this space.

The club happened to be having an operating session that evening, so we hung around and shot a lot of folks running a whole collection of interesting trains and rolling stock.

We're especially excited about the TMTV segment for this club, since it's going to have a lot of train-running action thanks to all the op session footage we shot during the evening op session.



2. Banner in the entryway to the Texas Western club.



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Mike Ross' Virginian

The next layout was a particular treat for us: Mike Ross and his Virginian railroad, in O scale.

I love the mass and heft of O scale and a large fully scenicked O scale layout is a sight to behold. I wasn't disappointed!

O scale Virginian articulated locomotives, what a treat that was. Mike assumes the Virginian never got absorbed into a merger, so he's doing some prototype freelancing as well with a secondary modern era op session now and then with modern equipment.

For example, Mike's modern Virginian stack train looks just wonderful rolling through his gorgeous Appalachian mountain scenery.

Expect to see Mike Ross' Virginian in the May issue of *MRH*.

Dean Ferris' Oregon Joint Line

It's always fun to see a well scenicked N scale layout and Dean Ferris' N scale Oregon Joint Line didn't disappoint! It doesn't hurt that I grew up in Oregon and I'm very familiar with the eastern Oregon region Dean is trying to model.

Dean has taken full advantage of the high scenery to trains

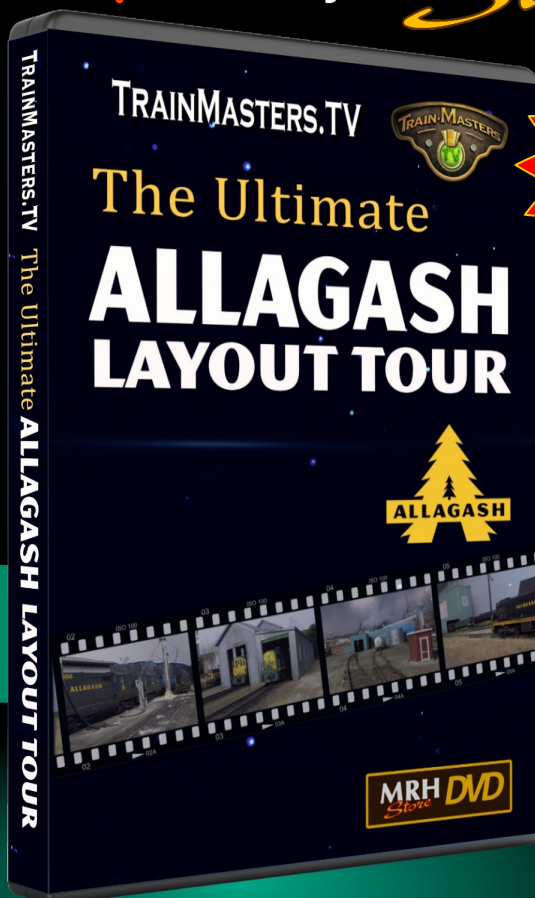


3. Mike Ross giving us a tour of his O scale Virginian layout .



4. Dean Ferris running a freight through his N scale Oregon Joint line.



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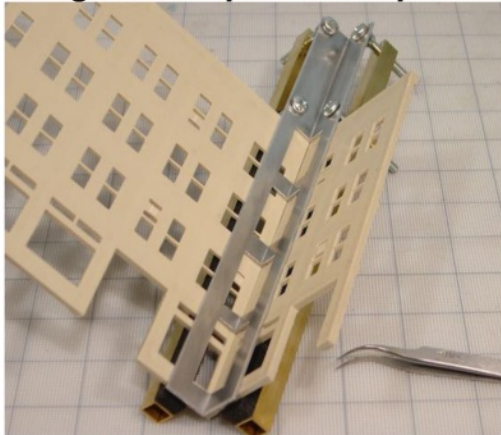
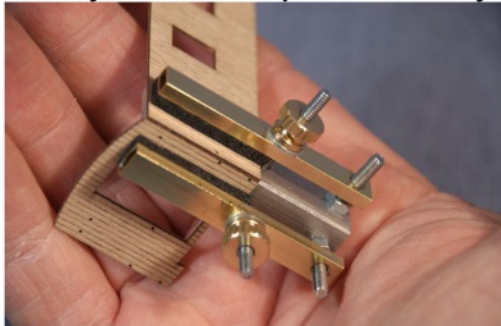
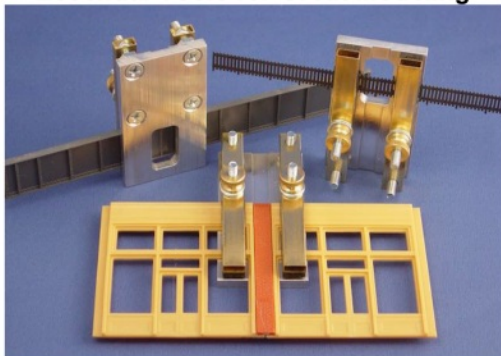
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ratio possible in N scale.

Dean also very much gets the negative space concept with model layouts, so he's got a lot of "nothing" rural scenes on his layout.

Be prepared to see a lot of amazing layout images and so delightfully realistic video of Dean's layout in action on TMTV.

Look for Dean's layout as the cover story in the June issue of *MRH*.

Mike Armstrong's Rock Island

By this time, we'd already seen four fantastic layouts and had some great stills and video in the can.

As if it could not get any better, we visited Mike Armstrong's Rock Island next. Another fully scenicked and operational layout, this time modeling the part of the Rock Island Mike grew up near as a kid.

He even included the town of Nevada, Iowa (pronounced Nuh-VAY-dah) where he did a lot of railfanning as a kid. Just

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look for a kid on a bicycle down near the railroad tracks on the layout – that's Mike!

Mike's layout fills a large dedicated room over the garage and it's double decked as well. Mike likewise has made wise use of negative space scenes, where there's "a lot of nothin'" between those Midwest towns, replicating real life railroading.

We'll be featuring Mike's Rock Island as the cover story in the July issue of *Model Railroad Hobbyist*.



5. Mike Armstrong running a train through his home town of Nevada, Iowa on his Rock Island layout.

Jerry Hoverson's Rocky Mountain Central (standard gauge) and Colorado Pacific (narrow gauge)

The last stop of our Dallas layout tour week was Jerry Hoverson's layout. Jerry has both standard gauge and a fair amount of narrow gauge as well, all fully scenicked.

Just an aside: we've never seen so many scenicked railroads as we did on these layout tours. Most layouts we visit have some part of the layout that's not yet finished.

Except for the club layout and a bit of Mike Mackey's narrow gauge area, the rest of the layouts we visited were all fully scenicked. What a feast for the eyes!



6. Jerry Hoverson runs a narrow gauge freight through a scene on his Colorado Pacific line, part of his Rocky Mountain Central layout.



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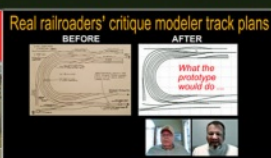
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Anyhow, Jerry's done some amazing things with under layout access, including a piece of scenery that goes all the way to the floor at the end of a peninsula that's completely removable.

Watch for Jerry's layout story in the August MRH, out just before the Dallas Convention.

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The 2023 reader survey is still on, please visit this link if you haven't yet taken it:

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Most liked articles in [February 2023 issue](#) of *MRH* are:

- 1st** Upgrade a brass 2-6-2T
- 2nd** Repairing finished trackwork
- 3rd** First Look: Run like a Dream - Rolling stock

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- 1st** Rails on the ceiling
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JIM SIX

**Getting Real: Central Vermont Railway boxcars 1900-1960**

MARTY MCGUIRK

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Best of the

MRH FORUM



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2023

Compiled by **JOE FUGATE**



Drawers – most overlooked feature of good benchwork

MRH forum member **GT Mills** started this thread which suggests that adding drawers to your benchwork might be a good idea. Forum member **IronBeltKen** (Ken L.) posted his example photo above:

“Home Depot tool cabinet with 3” drawers – just perfect for storing rolling stock”

See the full thread for more great drawer ideas!



[View the full thread on the MRH website](#)

▶ **MRH’S MONTHLY GREAT MODELER POSTS**



1. *MRH* forum member **J Emerson** has a thread on the forum about his Emerson Coast RR detailing project, most recently outlining the construction of a line of buildings along Red Hook Wharf.

Red Hook Wharf

MRH forum member **J Emerson** (JE) has a thread chronicling the development of the Red Hook Wharf scene on his Emerson Coast Railroad.

JE has been discussing how to detail the wharf with various structures and he's been showing us step-by-step photos of the progress. Photo [1] is something of a milestone, with the structures finally taking shape:

"I've completed the basic fronts of four structures in this area and now can place them together. I need to decide the angles to add some variety and then figure out the footprint for all of them on the pier."

JE has a great eye for modeling, and we especially enjoy how he's adding life to the scene with figures. Check it out!

[View the full thread on the MRH website](#)



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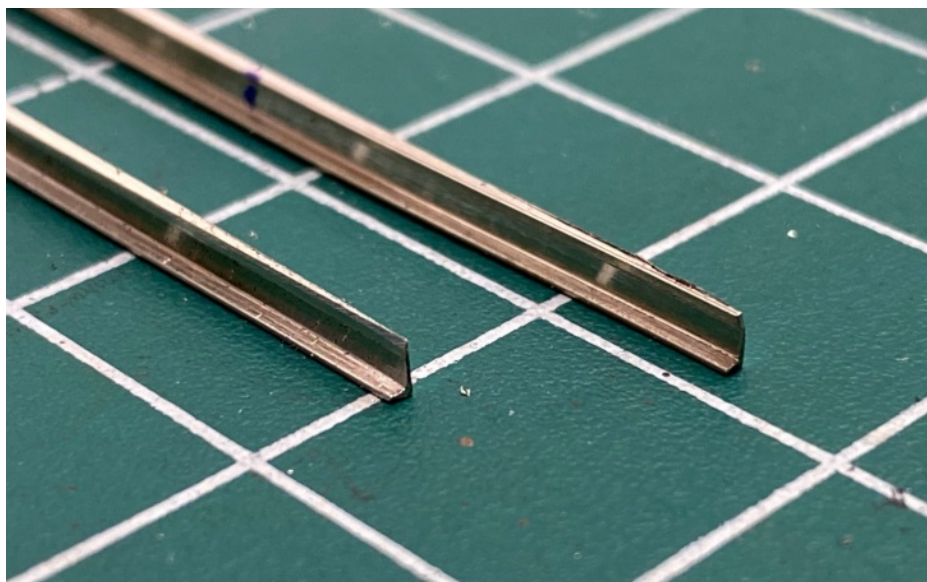
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2. *MRH* forum member **Matt Goodman** posted this image in answer to **eastwind**'s question about how to best file turnout points.

Making good hand laid turnout points

MRH forum member **eastwind** (Jerry G.) started this thread by asking:

"I'm looking for pictures, instructions, or videos on how to make turnout points. Not the Fast-Tracks way where you file away a portion of the stockrail head, but a more prototypical way where the point rail fits [flush with] the stock rail head."

Matt Goodman [2] and many other folks have posted great answers on this thread. If you have questions about how to best file your turnout points for a snug fit, be sure to check out the full thread for ideas.

[View the full thread on the *MRH* website](#)



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3. *MRH* forum member **cv_acr** (Chris V.) posted this fascinating thread about batch building CPR ore cars en-masse with 3D print-bashing.

The great CPR ore car project

MRH forum member **cv_acr** (Chris V.) kicked off a thread bemoaning how you can't get accurate models of these Hart-Otis cars, so he decided to see about doing a fleet build himself:

"The progress of 3D printing technology is the game-changer that now allows the possibility of getting some more of these cars actually made, and I've been working on some designs, and this thread will document the efforts to build a unique fleet of cars via resin kits and 3D printing."

From there, Chris documents for us what he knows about the prototype cars (with photos).

Follow along as Chris shows his trial and error journey in getting some nice 3D printed bodies and details for these cars. Photo [3] shows the superb progress to date!

[View the full thread on the *MRH* website](#)



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Recent weekly photo fun thread ...

Each week, our forum has a weekly photo fun thread. The most recent thread has some nice photos, as we show below.

[View the full thread on the *MRH* website](#)

4. *MRH* forum member **CP Rail Quebec Sub** (Pierre D.) a number of eye-catching photos of his modeling on this recent photo fun thread. This photo is just one of many outstanding photos of his work.



5. Nicely detailed rolling stock is always an eye-pleaser, and this photo of **JD.Hill's** modeling work really stands out. We love the nice crisp detail, and it just looks “right” – plus it doesn’t hurt the surrounding scenery just adds to the realism of this photo. Our hats are off to JD Hill for taking the time to post this photo to our recent photo fun thread.



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WHAT'S NEAT

column



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2023



KEN PATTERSON COVERS THIS MONTH:

- **KEN** CONTINUES A FOUR-PART SERIES ON BUILDING A NARROW GAUGE RAILROAD
- **KEN** INTERVIEWS BACHMANN'S **MATT STERN**



click to play video

PHOTOS AND VIDEO OF SUPERB MODELS

THIS MONTH CONTINUES A FOUR-PART SERIES ON BUILDING AN H0n3 shelf module and the layout it will fit in. Matt Stern joins Ken via Skype to show some new and upcoming products from Bachmann.

Building a narrow-gauge railroad, part 2



1. Ken routs out a 1" x 1" slot the around the foam layout base.

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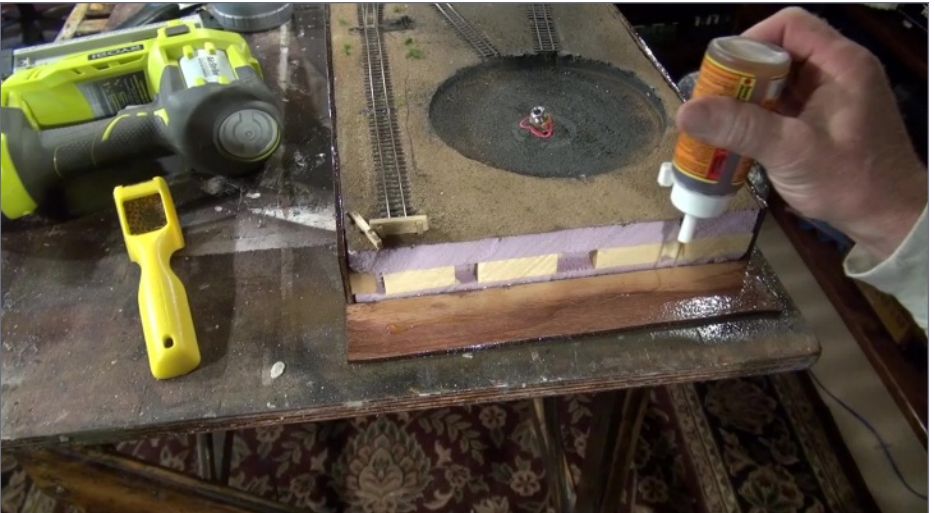
2. Ken will then glue 1" x 1" x a few inches pieces into the slot to use in securing the board he will encase the sides of the module in.



3. Using water-activated Gorilla Glue, Ken glues the wood pieces into place.



4. After the wood sections have dried, Ken glues the pre-stained plywood frame on, securing them with crown staples.



5a (above), 5b (top, right). Ken does the same for the end pieces.



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5b. (See caption bottom, left)



6. To add light to the shelf the module is on, Ken installs an angled valence. He'll install an LED light string later.



7. With the module largely done, Ken turns his attention toward adding structures to it. This is a B.T.S. small water tank he assembled in about 15 minutes.



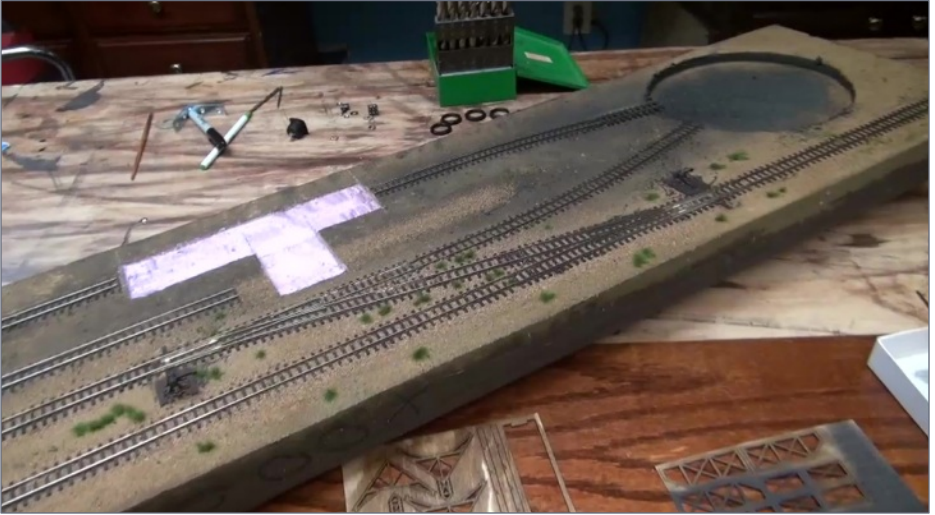
8. Ken decided to add B.T.S.'s McCabe narrow gauge engine house to the module. Before assembling the kit, Ken paints and stains all the pieces. The exterior walls are painted a dark color to enhance the rubber cement weathering he'll do later.



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9. For the base of the building, Ken cuts the building shape out of the foam.



10. Ken inserts a Plexiglas base for the building into the depression, and here he is placing the floor of the kit on it.

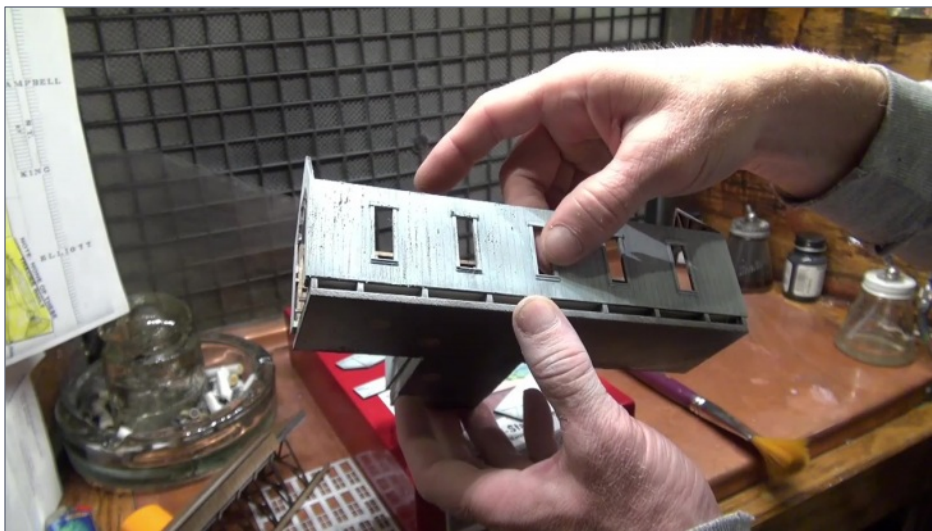


11. Using a dental pick, Ken applies a dot of glue to the roof structure of the kit.



12. Once he's assembled the shell of the building, Ken paints it with rubber cement.





13. After spray-painting the shell over the rubber cement, Ken distresses the paint by rubbing his thumb over it, exposing the darker paint underneath for a peeling paint effect.

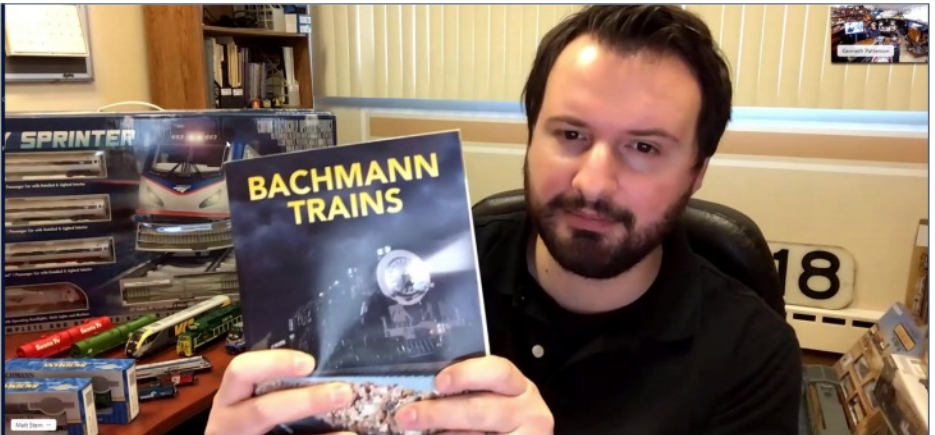


14. Here the module is outside with two backdrop sections behind it. Ken decided to leave the roof off.



15. This photo shows how the two backdrop sections are located in relation to the module, with the Mississippi River in the background. Part 3 of this series will run in the *April Model Railroad Hobbyist*.

Matt Stern presents some new and upcoming products from Bachmann



16. Bachmann's Matt Stern shows off the cover of the 2023 Bachmann catalog, which features a photo taken by Ken.



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17. N scale commuter Chargers are coming soon, as shown by this Altamont Corridor Express locomotive. It will also be available in a Coaster scheme.



18. Matt is holding a Central Railroad of New Jersey Northeast Steel Caboose in N scale. It will also be available in Conrail.





19. This is the HO scale Charger, which is coming in a VIA Canada paint scheme. They are also producing the Venture passenger cars to go with it.



20. This upcoming Reading GP40 is part of Bachmann's SoundValue line and will be equipped with a Soundtraxx Economi decoder.



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21. Two new paint schemes for Bachmann's HO scale coil car are Santa Fe and Burlington Northern. The cars are equipped with removable covers and include separate coils.

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22. Two new additions to the 50' outside-braced boxcar line in HO scale are the Berlin Mills Railway and Montana RailLink. The cars are equipped with end-of-train flashers.



23. A new rail-cleaning car is this 40' Louisville & Nashville Impact Demonstration Car, modeled after a prototype car with clear sides that could show employees what happened to loads when cars were coupled at above 4 mph. A Santa Fe version is available now. A 40' track-cleaning gondola is also available in several paint schemes.



24. The HO scale Northeastern Steel Caboose will be available in a New Haven McGinnis scheme.



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25. The last item is the HO scale City Sprinter train set which is available now. Equipped with a DC ACS-64 Sprinter, there is a sound and DCC upgrade kit available. The set also comes with concrete tie EZ-Track, which is appropriate for the Amtrak Northeast Corridor.

To see all of Ken's construction tips and methods and the new and upcoming products from Bachmann, click on the video link at the beginning of the article. ☒

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Sound decoder best practices



JOE FUGATE ON GETTING THE MOST
OUT OF DCC SOUND DECODERS ...



**Electrical
Impulses**

Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2023



IN THE MRH READER SURVEYS WE'VE DONE OVER THE YEARS, we find a strong interest in DCC sound decoders. In fact, 80% of those who use DCC also have at least one or more sound decoders in their roster. If you want to get the very most out of your sound decoder-equipped locos, there are some little-known best practices that can be helpful. So let's dive in.

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SOUND DECODER BRANDS

There are five major vendors of sound decoders:

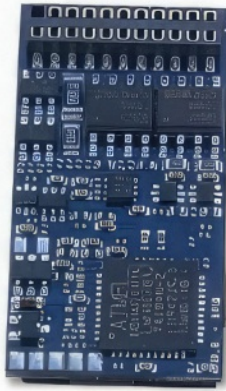
- Digitrax
- Model Rectifier Corp (MRC)
- ESU LokSound
- SoundTraxx Tsunami
- TCS WOWSound

Digitrax decoders use technology from circa 2013 and have somewhat limited sound options. MRC sound decoders are limited to a few diesel-only options, although the prime mover sounds can be turned off to get sounds for electric locomotives. MRC sound decoders can be used with their “Black Box” product to get sound for DC locomotives.

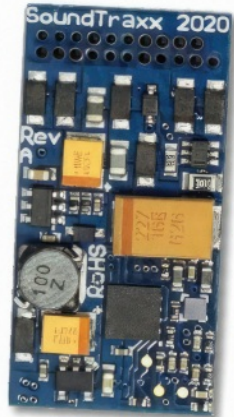
TCS WOWSound



ESU LokSound



**SoundTraxx
Tsunami2**



1. In this article, I'm focusing on the feature-rich sound decoders from the big-three vendors, TCS (Train Control Systems), ESU, and SoundTraxx.



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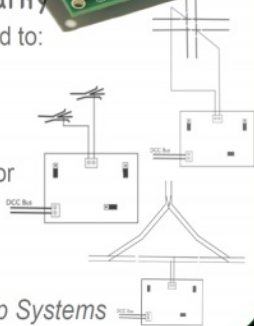
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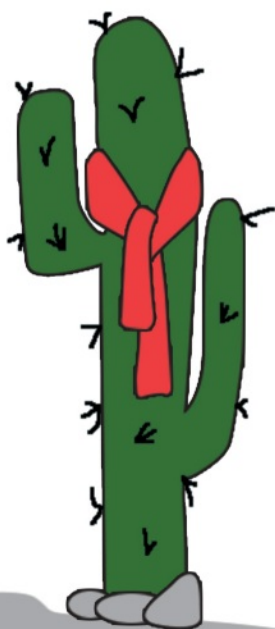
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The most advanced and feature-rich sound decoders come from the big-three: ESU, SoundTraxx, and TCS (Train Control Systems). For the purposes of this article, I'm focusing on these premier sound decoders from the big-three.

ESU's most recent V5 series was released in 2019. SoundTraxx's Tsunami-2 decoders came out in 2016, as did TCS's v4 WOWSound decoders.

SOUND DECODER LOCO CATEGORIES

Sound decoders from the big-three cover these different major loco categories:

- Steam
- Diesel
- Electric

With each loco category, you can get an assortment of different prime mover sounds (big steam, light steam, EMD, ALCO, etc.) as well as a huge assortment of whistles, bells, and horns. In addition, you can get a large assortment of ancillary sounds such as brake squeal, coupler clank, and the like.

These big-three sound decoders also include advanced loco control with rich momentum options and various types of braking.

SOUND DECODER BEST PRACTICES

Best practice 1: Standardize on a single sound decoder vendor if at all possible. Avoid mixing sound decoder brands, especially on layouts with diesels.

Rationale: If you want to make things easy on your operators, you will want to standardize function keys to specific sounds. Unfortunately, there's not much function key similarity across sound decoder brands. You will need to dumb-down a lot of sound features if you wish to standardize function keys to same sounds across brands.

Even though the same F-key gets used, the sound may not behave the same across brands, either. For example, SoundTraxx Tsunami-2 and TCS v4 WOWSound default to sound on upon power up, and you need to press F8 to mute the sound. ESU LokSound, however, defaults to sound off and you need to press F8 to turn on the sound, which includes a complete loco startup sound sequence from a cold start.

If the loco is making sound, F8 is an immediate mute on Tsunamis and WOWSound, but it initiates a prime mover shutdown sequence on LokSound decoders. Again, not all function key behaviors are created equal, even if the F-key number is the same.

Here are the three different vendors' standard function key features mapped out, first for steam decoders [2], then for diesel decoders [3].

Best practice 2: When consisting locomotives, do not consist different brands of sound decoders together.

Rationale: Because there is no commonality in momentum and braking motor control among different sound decoder brands, it's nearly impossible to consist different brands together and have the consist perform well.

For example, Tsunami decoders have multiple braking functions: Train brake/independent (loco) brake (F11), with a separate function key (F12) to toggle between train brake and independent brake. Dynamic brake (F4) does more than just sound, it also applies a gentle braking.

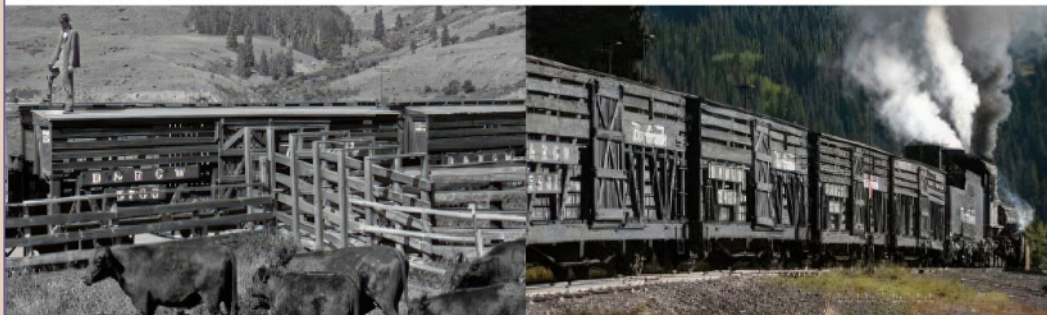
WOWSound decoders have a highly granular train brake-only (F7) that applies the brakes +20% with each press, with brake release being on a separate function key (F6). Dynamic brakes (F4) has a complex behavior that cycles through six different phases, one with each press of F4.

LokSound decoders have a train brake set / release that toggles on one function key (F17) and an independent (loco) brake on a



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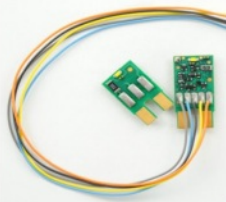
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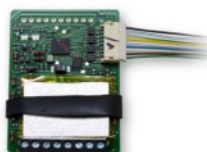
Soundtraxx



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different function key (F10). Dynamic brakes [F4] toggles the sound only on/off. To further complicate matters, LokSound decoders have a Drive Hold feature that toggles between sound only and motor control.

Braking rate configuration varies considerably between the different brands.

Not being able to consist different vendors' sound decoders together will be less of a problem for steam modelers than for diesel modelers. Steam locos often run one locomotive on the

Tsunami 2 Steam		WOWSound v4 Steam		LokSound v5 Steam	
Default Functions		Default Functions		Default Functions	
Function Key	Effect	Function Key	Effect	Function Key	Effect
F0(f)	Headlight, Dynamo	F0(f)	Generator/Headlight	F0(f)	Headlight
F0(r)	Backup Light, Dynamo	F0(r)	Generator/Headlight	F0(r)	Headlight
F1	Bell	F1	Bell	F1	Bell
F2	Whistle	F2	Whistle	F2	Whistle
F3	Short Whistle	F3	Short Whistle Blast	F3	Coupler
F4	Cylinder Cocks	F4	Grade Crossing Quill	F4	Coast Mode
F5	Cutoff+	F5	Cylinder Cocks Open/Close	F5	Mars Light
F6	Cutoff-	F6	Brake Release	F6	Cab Light
F7	Dimmer	F7	Train Brake	F7	Manual Cylinder Cocks
F8	Mute	F8	Mute	F8	Sound Off/On
F9	Grade-Crossing Signal	F9	Rotate Whistle/Bell	F9	Heavy Load Mode
F10	Blowdown	F10	Johnson Bar Down	F10	Independent Brake
F11	Independent/Train Brake	F11	Johnson Bar Up	F11	Coal Shoveling
F12	Brake Select	F12	Injectors	F12	Dimmer (headlights)
F13	Couple/Uncouple	F13	Air Pump	F13	Class Lights
F14	Switching Mode	F14	Blower	F14	Air Pump Variable Speed
F15	Wheel Chains	F15	Momentum Mode Selection	F15	Air Pump Slow
F16	Water Stop	F16	Idling Sounds	F16	Injector
F17	Fuel Loading	F17	Shoveling Sound	F17	Brake Set/Release
F18	Ash Dump	F18	Blow Down	F18	Ash Dump
F19	Wheel Slip	F19	Ash Dump	F19	Blowdown
F20	Injector	F20	Water Fill	F20	Safety Valve
F21	Sander Valve	F21	none	F21	Airhorn
F22	Cab Chatter	F22	none	F22	Grade Crossing Sequence
F23	All Aboard/Coach Doors	F23	none	F23	Oil Headlights (no dynamo)
F24	FX3 Function Output	F24	none	F24	none
F25	FX4 Function Output	F25	none	F25	none
F26	FX5 Function Output	F26	none	F26	none
F27	FX6 Function Output	F27	none	F27	none
F28	FX7 & FX8 Function Output	F28	none	F28	none

(varies by sound project)

Twelve functions common

2. You can get 12 sound functions to be common between the big-three vendors' steam sound decoders. Unfortunately, there is no consistency across all three vendors when it comes to other sounds or features like momentum and braking.

front of a train, so consisting won't be a concern in that case. You may want to consist a helper steam loco back in the train to the head-end power, and when you do, you will want to make sure the two steam locos use the same brand decoder.

Best practice 3: If you want to economize by mixing sound and non-sound decoders in the same consist, standardize on a decoder brand where the non-sound decoders also recognize the sound decoder braking and momentum features.

Rationale: Obviously, one way to save money is to mix sound and non-sound decoders in a loco consist. This best practice is the

Tsunami 2 Diesel		WOWSound v4 Diesel		LokSound v5 Diesel	
Default Functions		Default Functions		Default Functions	
Function Key	Effect	Function Key	Effect	Function Key	Effect
F0(f)	Headlight	F0(f)	Headlight	F0(f)	Headlight
F0(r)	Backup Light	F0(r)	Headlight	F0(r)	Headlight
F1	Bell	F1	Bell	F1	Bell
F2	Airhorn	F2	Horn	F2	Playable Airhorn
F3	Short Airhorn	F3	Short Horn Blast	F3	Coupler
F4	Dynamic Brake	F4	Grade Crossing Quill	F4	Dynamic Brakes
F5	RPM+	F5	Dynamic Brakes	F5	Rotary Beacon
F6	RPM-	F6	Brake Release	F6	Front Ditchlights
F7	Dimmer	F7	Train Brake	F7	Switching Mode
F8	Mute	F8	Mute	F8	Sound Off/On
F9	Grade-Crossing Signal	F9	Rotate Whistle/Bell	F9	Drive Hold
F10	Straight-to-Eight	F10	Notch Up	F10	Independent Brake
F11	Independent/Train Brake	F11	Notch Down	F11	Radiator Fan Sound
F12	Brake Select	F12	Prime Mover Ignition	F12	Dimmer (headlights)
F13	Couple/Uncouple	F13	Coupling	F13	Rear Ditchlights
F14	Switching Mode	F14	Un-coupling	F14	none
F15	Handbrake	F15	Momentum Mode Selection	F15	Fast Spitter Valve
F16	HEP Mode or Turbine Start/Stop	F16	Crew Alert On/Off	F16	Spitters on Shutdown
F17	Fuel Loading	F17	Windshield Wipers	F17	Brake Set / Release
F18	General Service	F18	Air Spitter	F18	Sanding Valve
F19	Straight-to-Idle*	F19	none	F19	Short Air Let Off
F20	Steam Gen. or Auxiliary HEP Gen.*	F20	none	F20	Compressor
F21	Sander Valve	F21	none	F21	Slow Spitter Valve
F22	Cab Chatter	F22	none	F22	Air Dryer
F23	All Aboard/Coach Doors	F23	none	F23	none
F24	FX3 Function Output	F24	none	F24	none
F25	FX4 Function Output	F25	none	F25	none
F26	FX5 Function Output	F26	none	F26	none
F27	FX6 Function Output	F27	none	F27	none
F28	FX7 & FX8 Function Output	F28	none	F28	none

(varies by sound project)

Seven functions common

3. You can get seven sound functions to be common between the big-three vendors' diesel sound decoders. Unfortunately, there is no consistency across all three vendors when it comes to other sounds or features like momentum and braking.



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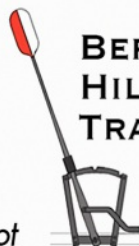


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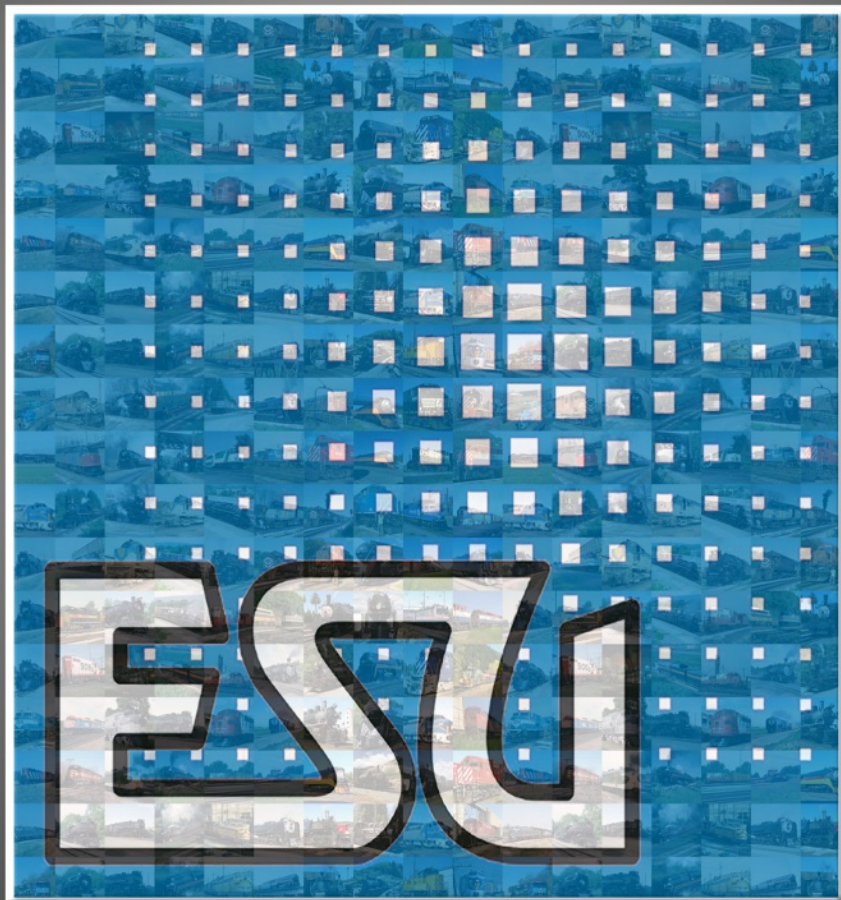


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4. Not being able to consist different vendors' sound decoders on steam layouts where most trains just have one locomotive on the point won't be much of a problem. The freight train in the background also just has one loco on the front. *Photo by Joe Fugate on Jim Dufor's Cheshire Branch Boston and Maine*



5. Diesel layouts, however, typically will have more than one loco on the point, so making sure all the locos being consisted use the same vendor's sound decoder will be important. *Photo on Joe Fugate's Siskiyou Line 1*

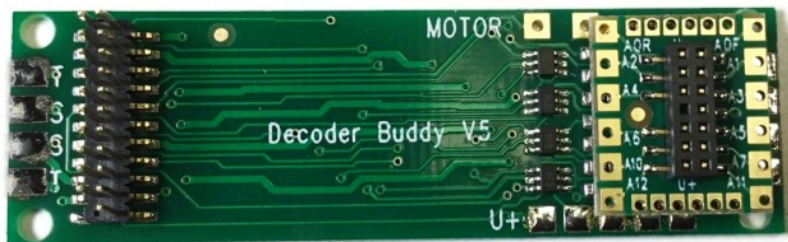
single largest differentiator between the three premier sound decoder vendors:

ESU LokSound: Non-sound LokPilot v5 decoders implement all the braking and momentum features of their sound decoders and can be seamlessly consisted.

SoundTraxx Tsunami-2: SoundTraxx's mobile (non-sound) decoders implement only the train brake feature from their Tsunami-2 sound decoders. You will not be able to use the independent brake or the dynamic braking in a SoundTraxx mixed sound and non-sound consist.

TCS WOWSound: TCS's non-sound decoders do not implement the rich braking and momentum features of their WOWSound decoders. You cannot consist TCS's sound and non-sound decoders unless you completely dumb-down the sound decoder braking and momentum motor control features.

Best practice 4: Avoid buying locomotives with the sound already installed. Instead buy the non-sound locomotive and install the sound decoder yourself. Installation-assist boards such as the Decoder Buddy makes installing a sound decoder in HO or larger relatively straightforward. N scale sound is still something of a frontier feature, so be prepared to machine the frame to do a sound decoder installation.



6. For HO and larger locomotives, the Decoder Buddy (v5 shown here) makes installing a 21 pin MTC sound decoder pretty straightforward.



Rationale: Locomotive vendors tend to cut special OEM deals with sound decoder vendors to add proprietary features to just that decoder in that specific manufacturer's locomotive. This means locos with sound already installed will tend to be non-standard to some degree and may not play well with the other locos in your roster.

If you're not up to installing sound decoders yourself, you can always shop around to pay an experienced installer to do it for you. It may cost more than getting the sound already installed, but you will have fewer standardization hassles if you install the vendor's standard sound decoder instead of an OEM customized version.

Best practice 5: If you want to easily include stay-alive in your sound locos, standardize on a more robust connector with more pins than the standard 8- or 9-pin NMRA connector. For HO scale or larger, prefer the 21-pin MTC connector. For N scale, prefer the Next18, PluX16, or PluX22 connector.

Rationale: These extra-pin interfaces make it easy to find a soldering pad for stay-alive. You typically want a stay-alive circuit in a sound-decoder-equipped loco to provide consistent sound without any drop-outs and to smooth out the performance of the locomotive.

Basically, to install stay-alive module you need to connect one side to the V+ (blue) decoder pin, and connect to the GND pin on the other side to feed stay-alive power to the decoder.

Install assist boards such as the Decoder Buddy work with the 21-pin MTC decoders and have soldering pads for the stay-alive modules, making an install of a sound decoder into a locomotive far easier than general hard-wiring. Getting into the details of doing a sound decoder install is beyond the scope of this article.

SUMMARY

These best practices are something of the hobby's dirty little secret when it comes to implementing DCC sound on a layout in a seamless way. In summary, you will do well to standardize on a single sound decoder vendor for your entire roster and to avoid buying locos with sound already installed. That simplifies your layout operation considerably and gives you the freedom to mix and match locomotives on your trains as desired.

You can ignore these best practices, but you will have to dumb-down the sound and motor control features of your pricey sound decoders – or you will have to deal with inconsistent function keys features across your roster. ☑

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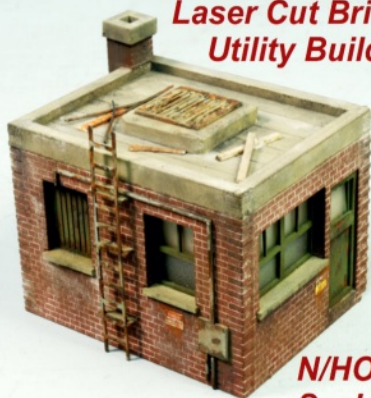


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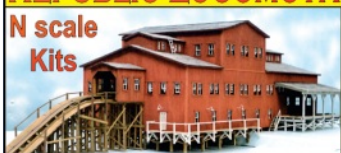
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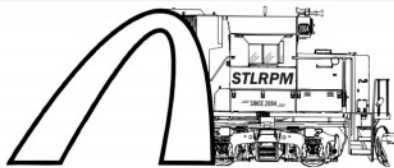
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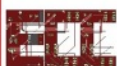
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Mike Mackey's Texas & St. Lo

JOE FUGATE VISITS THIS STANDARD GAUGE/NARROW
GAUGE LAYOUT ...



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This layout can be viewed at the
2023 Texas Express
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1. The engine terminal in Tyler Yard on Mike Mackey's Texas & St. Louis clearly shows its Cotton Belt / Southern Pacific heritage.

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MIKE MACKEY'S LAYOUT IN THE GREATER DALLAS/FORT WORTH AREA WILL be open for tours and op sessions during August 2023 as part of the 2023 Texas Express NMRA National Convention. To learn more about this convention, or to register, please visit this website: 2023texasexpress.com

I visited Mike in late February, 2023 and toured his layout, taking photos and video. I sat down with Mike and talked about his journey in the hobby and his layout..

MRH: Mike, let's go back to the beginning. Why model trains? Why not some other hobby?

Mike Mackey: When I got started in model building as a teenager, I did over 50 models in one year, both cars and airplanes. Unfortunately, after I had built them, they didn't go anywhere. I wanted something that had some action to it, so model trains became my preferred model-building hobby.

MRH: And where did it go from there?

Mike: Back when I started in the hobby, it wasn't cool to be "playing with trains" when you were in high school or junior high school. I kept it on the down-low. Some of those early models are still in my collection.

In fact, I still have an application to the NMRA from back in those days where I could have signed up for a lifetime membership for one hundred dollars. Of course, to a 16 year old, one hundred dollars is a world away.

So I didn't join the NMRA back then, but I started doing trains again years later after life happened – the family, the kids, and





2. Mike assumes the FTC never allowed the Cotton Belt to abandon their narrow gauge trackage, making his layout unique with both narrow gauge and standard gauge trackage as a transition-era Texas-based railroad. We love the contrast in this scene between the narrow gauge equipment in the front and the standard gauge equipment in the back – all of it being HO scale, of course.

everything. A friend of mine several years ago said to me: *you need to come back into the hobby again.*

I still had a lot of my trains stowed away. I started pulling them out and joined a local club. That led to me finally joining the NMRA and to where I am today – serving on the International board of Directors of the NMRA.

MRH: That's been an interesting journey. So, introduce us to your layout from the perspective of a non-modeler.

Mike: When any of my friends or relatives walk into my train room, it's always pleasant to see the look of awe in their eyes. I strive to build a layout that has a museum quality to it, with lots of detail. I have built some layouts professionally before, but I especially want to get that extra level of detail here in my own space.

When someone who isn't a modeler comes in and looks at this layout – it's not just a typical toy trains layout, so to speak, which is what I think most of them are expecting. They walk in and see all the buildings, the roads and cars, they see details everywhere, and they find a complete world in miniature. And that's really what I'm trying to replicate here.

MRH: What is your rationale for this particular layout subject? For example, we notice you not only model standard gauge, but you model narrow gauge and a fair amount of dual gauge as well.

Mike: I grew up in Tyler, Texas, literally the founding location for the St. Louis Southwestern (Cotton Belt) Railroad. After growing up, and watching those trains go by day after day, I hired out for the railroad. My former father-in-law was general chairman of the Cotton Belt Clerk's Union.

I told him I wanted to go to work for the railroad and *magically* – imagine that – in the next class for Brakeman/Switchman, I was in the class! It pays to know somebody, I guess. I went to work for the railroad, so I've always had an allegiance to the Cotton Belt.

I model East Texas. I started out trying to model the time frame when I actually worked for the railroad... the 1970s and 80s. That made sense, because that's what I knew – I worked around it every day.

I switched those cars, I rode those engines, and I traveled the tracks in that area. I've gradually rolled my time period back, and now model 1958, a year after I was born. This gives me some flexibility to have different types of locomotives, whether they be a little bit of steam, diesel, or whatever.

One of the things I have on my railroad that's a little bit different is that I have some standard gauge, as well as narrow gauge and dual gauge [2]. My rationale is that in true life and true history, the Cotton Belt was the second longest narrow gauge railroad in the United States. Second only to the D&RGW. The Cotton Belt had over 400 miles of narrow gauge track.





3. All of Mike's layout has many highly detailed industry scenes, such as this one inside McCarthy loop with Legacy Furniture in the foreground and Montgomery Broom in the back. Also note the dual-gauge trackage on the main to the left.

In a feat of unbelievable engineering, they closed the railroad down at midnight on a Friday night and went to work on the railroad, changing it from narrow gauge to standard gauge, and opened back up at 12:01 AM on Monday morning and *had changed the entire railroad from narrow gauge to standard gauge in 48 hours!*

At one point, I had the opportunity to pick up some narrow gauge equipment, and a lot of my friends had been pushing me to get into narrow gauge – to go to the dark side, if you will [laughs], of model railroading.

I also wanted to remain true to my Cotton Belt roots. As I was trying to figure out how I could model narrow gauge and standard gauge at the same time, then it dawned on me... "You know your Cotton Belt history, you've got this!"

MACKEY'S TEXAS & ST. LOUIS | 7

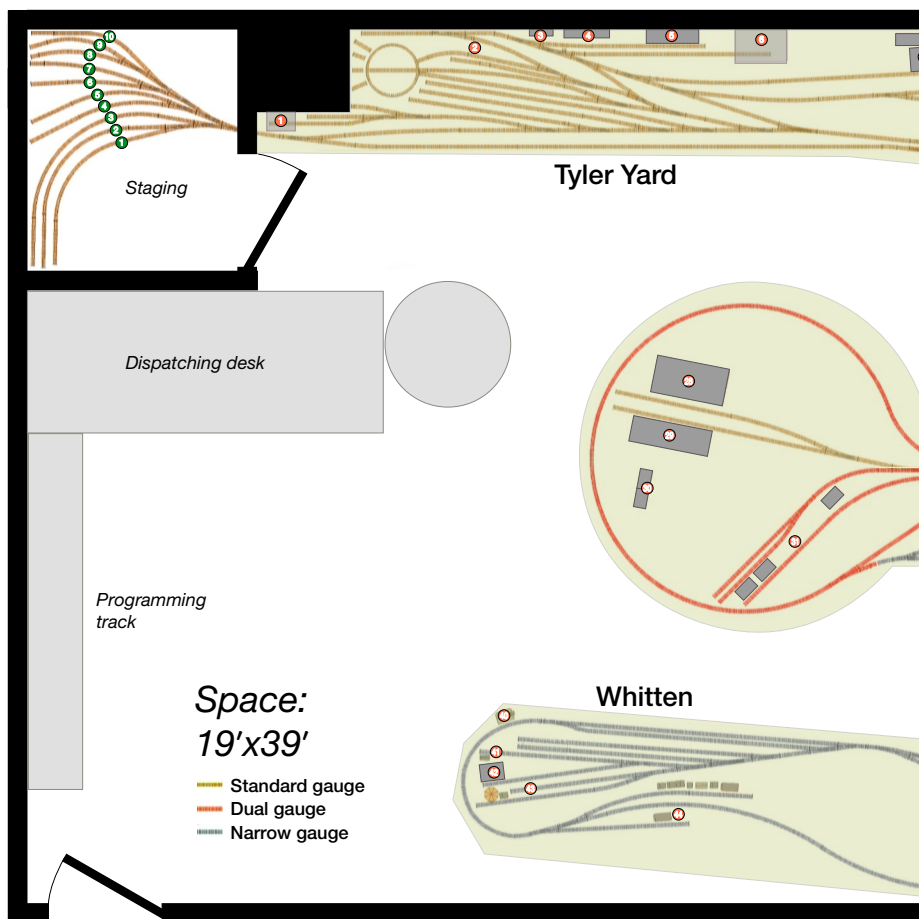
So, in my version of revisionist history, the Feds would not allow the Cotton Belt to divest itself of the narrow gauge track serving some cities and industries. Consequently I have a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Cotton Belt called the Texas & St. Louis.

Staging Tracks

1. St. Louis-1
2. St. Louis-2
3. Memphis-1
4. Memphis-2
5. Texarcana-1
6. Texarcana-2
7. Pine Bluff-1
8. Pine Bluff-2
9. Chicago-1
10. Chicago-2

Structures

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. REA Warehouse | 11. Opendoff's Oysters | 21. Blackhawk Slaughter |
| 2. Coaling tower | 12. Carnation Milk | 22. Blackhawk Packing |
| 3. Mabry Flour | 13. Boston Seafood | 23. Nemchek's Scrap |
| 4. Tower/yard office | 14. Bradford Pipe | 24. McCarthy Freight |
| 5. A&P Groceries | 15. Tyler team track | 25. McCarthy Depot |
| 6. Domino Sugar | 16. Warth Paint | 26. Theater |
| 7. Tower ice house | 17. Purina Foods | 27. Gas station |
| 8. Icing platform | 18. Reggie's Veggies | 28. Legacy Furniture |
| 9. Firestone | 19. Henderson's Hay products | 29. Montgomery Broom |
| 10. Cowles Cold Storage | 20. Stock pens | 30. Mudflap Cafe and Tr |



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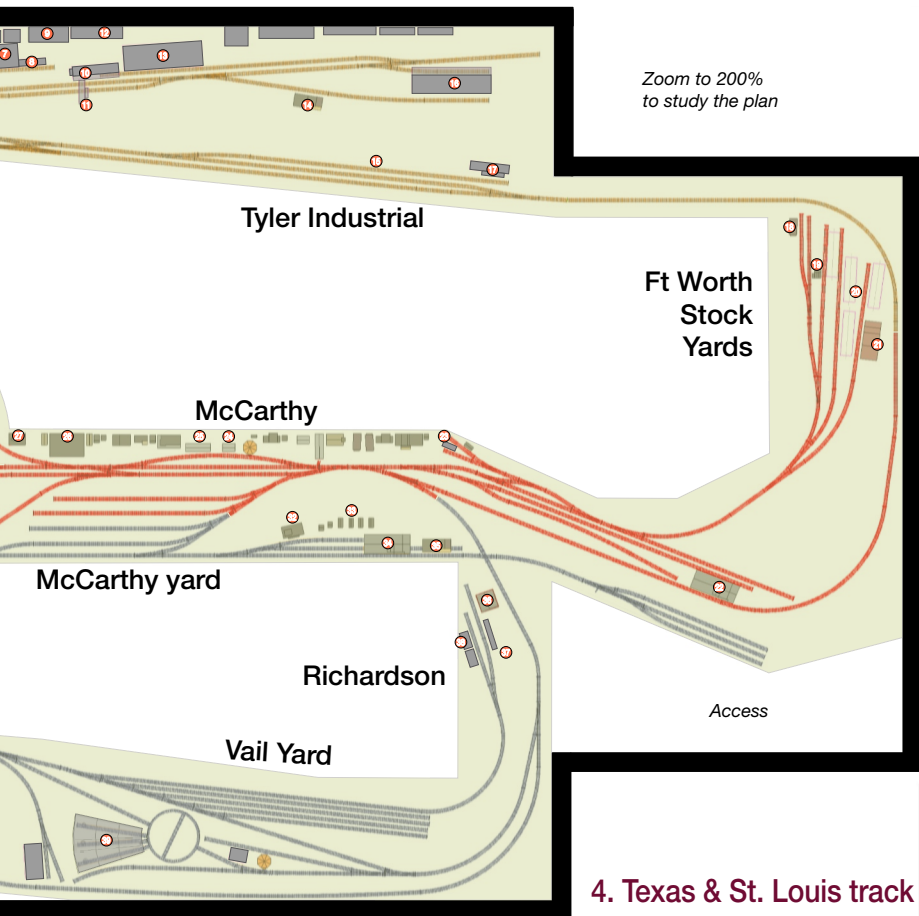
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This is also the name of my railroad, which by the way, was the original name of the Cotton Belt – the Texas & St. Louis. It went into receivership in the late 1880s as the Texas and St. Louis, and came out as the St. Louis Southwestern. But in my version

House
Plant
se
uck Stop

31. La Gloria Petroleum
32. Coaling tower
33. MOW / yard service
34. McCarthy enginehouse
35. McCarthy car shop
36. Richardson Mercantile
37. Montgomery Feed & Supply
38. Richardson fuel transfer
39. Vail Roundhouse
40. Whitten Depot

41. Whitten LCL Warehouse
42. Iroquois Brewery
43. Whitten engine facility
44. Palmer wire and cable



4. Texas & St. Louis track plan.

of revisionist history, the Texas St. Louis lives on as a narrow gauge railroad and still serves some of Texas.

MRH: How did you develop the track plan? Was it easy or did it go through a lot of iterations?

Mike: This is version 2.0 of the Texas & St. Louis. The track plan evolved as I moved from one house to another. I had layout version 1.0 at 90% to 95% complete when the vice president of land acquisition decided it was time for us to move to another location.

When she saw the tear growing in my eye, my wife realized that she was asking a lot. So she said, "Don't worry, you'll get a bigger layout room and a place for your trains."

True to her word, my layout room went from a 15' by 19' space for my railroad to this 19' by 39' space, over double the size. The track plan evolved due to the availability of extra space, and I've been able to incorporate some new things into this version that I couldn't in the other.

I enjoy switching and car movement operations – that's what I truly love. There's not a lot of area on my layout that offers purely mainline running from location to location.

I wish that it did have that, but I've got a lot of buildings and industry scenes. I'd rather do switching and host operating sessions where others can join me, rather than just have those mainline trains running across the country.

MRH: When, then, did you start construction on this layout?

Mike: Construction on this layout started four years ago. Four years ago, March of 2019, we moved into this house and this is what you see after four years.

MRH: Did construction go like expected, and did it progress as fast as you wanted?

Mike: Construction of the layout has progressed very rapidly. I'm very pleased with that. Could it have gone faster to my liking? Absolutely [laughs]. But I have a day job and I'm not retired.





5. Mike's layout is mostly flat but he does have some elevated industry scenes like the Blackhawk Packing Plant shown here, located between the Ft. Worth stock yards and McCarthy. Mike uses a 2% grade on the spur to get the cars up to this level.

Luckily, I've got some great friends who have pitched in and helped. For a layout this size to be this far along in four years, I couldn't have done it all myself. And I've had some very good friends who have helped me out with that. I'd like to thank Duane Richardson, MMR, Jeff Palmer, MMR, Pat McCarthy, Tom Pearson, Bruce Petrarca, MMR, "Speed" Muller, Joe Leising, Cole Rash, Lorrie Palitti, Gerald Mabry, John Garfield, Dick Brannan and of course my biggest supporter, my wife PJ. I know I've forgotten to mention some others, but I thank everyone for their help.

Sure, I wish it could have gone faster, but it still moved along pretty good. By the time the National Convention rolls around in August, it's going to be close to the same level of completion that the other layout was four years ago.

MRH: Let's get into some nitty-gritty details of this layout. What's the ruling grade and what brand of track are you using?

Mike: Since the layout is primarily a switching layout, there's not a lot of up and down. It's almost at zero for the ruling grade. There are a couple of places where an industry has an elevated track to be switched, but that's about it. The narrow gauge has some elevation change as well. At the most, it's no more than 2%.

As far as trackwork is concerned, I'm using a few Atlas switches, but I primarily use Peco and Micro Engineering switches and Micro Engineering track with just a bit of Atlas track. All code 83.

MRH: About how many feet of main line do you have?

Mike: I have about 400 feet of mainline right now. Trains can run on a number of sidings, industrial areas, and yards as well. I couldn't begin to tell you the layout total trackage.

MRH: Any rough idea of the number of turnouts?

Mike: Oh, 200 or more turnouts and growing. I just laid a few more three weeks ago because I realized the Ft. Worth Stock Yards needed a runaround. I put in dual-gauge turnouts, which are getting very difficult to find, unfortunately.

MRH: What about the minimum radius?

Mike: Because the layout's dual gauge, narrow gauge obviously can go around a tighter curve. It's 17" radius on the narrow gauge. On the standard gauge, about 20" is my minimum.

I run all short locomotives and short-wheel-base cars. I don't have any cars on the layout longer than a 40-footer except for some short passenger cars. I'm talking about 60-foot passenger cars.

In operations, I restrict the longer cars to places where they're not going around tight curves. I instruct the operator to take his power off the head end, move it to the other end, and reverse his direction rather than going around a loop to reverse a train.

Because of operational restrictions, I'm able to have a few longer cars, but they're not going around those short curves.





6. A military train rolls past McCarthy Yard on its way to Tyler and points beyond. As you can see, McCarthy has a lot of dual-gauge trackage since it's a major terminus on the narrow-gauge Texas & St. Louis.

MRH: What have been the greatest challenges for you on this layout?

Mike: Patience is my biggest challenge. Becoming a Master Model Railroader – I'm fortunate enough to be MMR number 573 – has been a huge thing for me. I am basically impatient and I want things done rapidly (remember those 50 models in a year?), so I tended to sacrifice quality for quick results.

Getting my MMR has been a journey in patience for me. I've had to learn patience through the achievement program in the NMRA. I've learned that "good enough" isn't always so, and as soon as you understand that "good enough isn't," then you've truly started to become a Master Model Railroader.

MRH: That's some sage advice, Mike. Have you experienced any nasty surprises while building this layout?

Mike: I would say yes, there have been some electrical issues that popped up in my haste to get things running. I should have

done some things that I didn't do, and those are being corrected as we find them. I'm setting up power districts for the control system for example. It's electrical things like that that I'm really looking at.

MRH: Electrical seems to be a lot of modelers' bug-a-boo. What do you like most about this layout?

Mike: The most enjoyable thing for me on this layout is adding detail – and I'm adding more each and every week. I want to literally start at one end of the layout and go square foot by square foot and max out the detail on every single square foot. That's my ultimate goal on this layout.

There's a lot of detail already here. I really enjoy detailing out a scene and making little vignettes with a story within a story, making each little scene come to life. That's what draws visitors in and causes them to spend time here studying the layout.



7. The Ft. Worth Stock Yards are a major industrial area. Like the rest of the layout, this area has lots of interesting detail. Also see [8].





8. Another view of the Ft. Worth Stock Yards.

MRH: You certainly do have a lot of details here already. We know you love to add detail, so what's your least favorite aspect of this layout?

Mike: The least favorite aspect of my layout is the fact that I don't have as much space as I wish I did [laughs]. I'm constantly having to battle my friends who say, "just knock a hole in this wall ... [laughs]."

Unfortunately, I've pretty much maxed-out my space here. Going into an attic space that's not climate-controlled isn't a good idea – I don't want to risk the climate control of this room to get more space in an area that's not climate-controlled. The lack of space is my only detriment here, and I feel as is the greatest shortcoming.

MRH: I think you have a lot of company when it comes to wanting more layout space! If you had it to all do over again, would you do anything different?

Mike: Would I do anything different on a second go-around? I don't think so. I'm pretty happy with the way this layout is turning out.

I might maybe do a little more undulation as far as the landscaping, and more culverts maybe. I will be adding those in on the narrow gauge expansion that I'm doing, so I think I'll be happy with that.

The narrow gauge will also have more bridges. I've always been a fan of bridges and trestles. I've got a pretty good-size one here that's five-and-a-half feet long. And I'll have more bridges on the narrow-gauge side as we continue that track expansion.

MRH: What's your least favorite part of doing a layout and how do you motivate yourself to do it anyway?



Mike: My least favorite part of doing a layout – which I've had to overcome because I do so many layouts for people across the country – is probably the construction phase. Just sawing the wood, screwing it together, and all that.

I enjoy layout design – I enjoy doing track plans. Scenery is my sweet spot, I love doing scenery work. I do clinics on scenery all the time. Laying track is something I have gotten better at through the years. I used to slap it down until I realized that that's why my trains were derailing!

Now I have much more finesse whenever I put track down and make sure the joints are right, and the turnouts come together, and everything works better. The actual construction of the superstructure of the layout is the least favorite of anything in the hobby for me. It's a necessary evil to get on to the more fun parts of doing a layout.

MRH: How did you pick your layout height?



9. Almost a third of Mike's layout is 3-foot narrow gauge known as the Texas & St. Louis Railroad. Mike's alternate history says the FTC would not let the Cotton Belt divest itself of all its narrow-gauge trackage.

Mike: I picked this layout height of 46" because it was comfortable for me. I've been a member of several clubs before where I enjoyed this height.

I'm not a tall guy. I'm five-ten-and-a-half, so I'm not in the six-foot club. The layout is tall enough for me so that my eye-to-layout distance is good. It's a little bit tall for my grandchildren to enjoy, but I can fix that with step stool – and of course they're going to get bigger.

It's just tall enough that you can get under it if you need to, but low enough that you can still have that view that you can look down on and operate it well.

MRH: What control system do you use here?

Mike: I have recently changed to NCE, I was for years an Easy-DCC guy, primarily because the system is manufactured here in Dallas / Fort Worth where I live. Keith Gutierrez and his team have been tremendous to me. I'm still a fan.



10. Mike has one of the most elaborate programming tracks we've ever seen. It's actually a part of his previous layout that he just couldn't part with, and it fits nicely in his layout room right next to his computer.





11. Mike has a number of these shelf areas around the layout to avoid having folks put their drink on the layout or lay things on it. The shelf attaches to the layout with a French cleat, so they're removable when needed.

When I was introduced to the NCE system, I really liked the throttle layout, and that they offer different types of throttles. I switched about a year-and-a-half ago, and I'm very pleased with it. I've got a combination of tethered throttles and wireless throttles.

MRH: Interesting. So, what kind of decoders do you use and why?

Mike: I use a variety of decoders. I've had friends bequeath me engines and do decoder installations for me. I've got everything from first-generation Digitrax, to Soundtraxx Tsunamis, to TCS.

Most recently I started using more TCS decoders because I have a relationship with the company. I'm good friends with some of the people who work there.

MRH: How do you usually program those decoders?

Mike: To operate this layout, I use JMRI and DecoderPro. I also use PanelPro for operations.

I keep all of my locomotives in the roster electronically on my computer with a backup on a separate computer. I've got a programming track that is separate from the railroad.

Some people say I've got the most elaborate programming track that you could possibly ever think because it's fully scenicked, and bi-level and dual-gauge [10]. It's probably overkill, but it was an extra piece of layout from my version 1.0.



12. You don't often see an empty lot modeled, but Mike has this nicely done empty-lot scene on his layout. He uses colored grout for his dirt because it's pre-colored, and dampening it with water hardens it nicely, yet it remains dusty-looking like dirt. *(Reminds us of zip texturing, which we've written about as well. – ed.)*



Somebody said, "You ought to use it for a programming track" and it did fit perfectly in the space. So now it's my programming track!

MRH: We notice you have some nice little layout shelves distributed around the layout fascia that are removable. Tell us more about that.

Mike: I've got a lot invested in this layout, and I do not want one of my operators or a visitor to set a drink or the like on the top of the layout. I came up with this little shelf that is removable, but it's also a workstation, if you will.

It's a small crescent-shaped shelf that hangs on the side of the layout with a French cleat. It's got a place for a notepad, a place to set your drink, a place for pencils and/or pick-sticks, and a flashlight should you need it.

MRH: We notice you seem to like what we might call "the techy stuff." Can you elaborate on that for us?

Mike: Yes, I enjoy playing with more advanced things like servos, lighting, track sensors, and things like that. I like the automation, as you can tell. Those things are fun for me.

When I walk into the room and I can tell my home automation system to turn on my layout and to turn on the lights. I can tell the system to adjust the thermostat or turn on a fan. I can ask it to play music in the background if I want. I enjoy that kind of automation, yes.

MRH: What are your thoughts on layout size and this layout? Can a layout become too big?

Mike: I think this layout fits this room nicely. When talking to others about constructing a layout, I know model railroaders want as much track as they can stuff into a room.

The typical layout doesn't make room for parking spaces, and such things a town would need to justify being there. Where

are the streets, parking lots, and people in the area? Where are all these people who operate this city going to park? Where do they live? Where do they come from? Can you see them moving about in the city?

Another of the biggest pitfalls I see from layout to layout, is lack of aisle space. I am not a tiny guy. I'm a wide body as they would say, and I don't like to rub somebody I'm passing in the aisle.

On this layout, absolute minimum aisle space is 38". I've got a couple of choke points that narrow, but typically it's 42" aisle space if possible. I designed it that way because I want the operators who come here to be comfortable and not feel stuffed into a spot.

Can a layout become too big? Yes, if you cram too much layout into a small space, it can be too big. Can a club layout be too big?



13. The Mud Flap Cafe and Truck Stop illustrates how Mike works to detail nearly all his structures. The interior is completely detailed and lighted, as can be glimpsed through the windows.



Same holds true if you stuff too much club into a small space so that it's not comfortable.

You will find if your operators and visitors, are crammed into tight places, tension and anxiety will go up – and those are not conducive to having fun playing trains.

MRH: That's a great answer! Let's talk about your scenery. What do you do for your scenery?

Mike: I use a variety of techniques in scenery. I sometimes use hard shell, and I use molds to help with rocks. I also will sometimes hand-carve them. It all depends on what I'm going for at the time.

I do a clinic on using floral foam for scenery terrain. You can go to a wholesale florist supply and buy a case of florist foam. Get the "wet" florist foam rather than the "dry" foam. "Wet" foam simply means it will absorb water, it's not actually wet.

Wet foam is more dense than the dry. Not because you will pour water over it, but it's more dense and it gives you some good characteristics as a scenery base. I've used both and I like the wet florist foam better.

You can glue blocks together with hot glue and come up with a large shape. You can use any kind of knife or even an uncoupling skewer to carve it and shape it.

You can paint it, and paint does not attack it. You can put a ground color down, and then put your ground foam over it and build up a scene. You can create a vertical rise pretty easily using florist foam, even to the point where it's just small undulations in the area.

It is easy to use, you can glue it anywhere and it just works.

MRH: One drawback we've seen with floral foam is if you plant a tree, it easily can start to wiggle because of how soft the foam is.

Mike: Okay, so two things: Number one, glue the tree in the wiggly hole or just put it in a different spot [laughs]! Just move it over a quarter-of-an-inch or half-an-inch.



14. Mike has Jim Vail's detailed engine house on his layout. Jim passed several years ago and Mike was lucky enough to acquire some of Jim's narrow gauge layout as part of the HOn3 portion of his Texas & St. Louis.

Also, I use grout over the foam rather than plaster. You can get grout in different colors, then sprinkle it and wet it, and it stays. I will wet it and it will become hard and stay in place.

MRH: Let's talk about the structures on your layout. Kitbash, scratchbuilt, straight-off-the-shelf, what do you have?

Mike: The structures on my layout are something I'm very proud of because I'm honoring some legacy model railroaders. I've built a number of structures myself; they're everything from kitbash to scratchbuilt.

But some friends who are no longer with us have contributed buildings to this layout. Some structures came from famous model railroaders. Unfortunately we lost Dick Elwell recently. I have a couple of buildings that were on his layout and they're on my layout now.

Those of you who know narrow-gauge railroading will know Jim Vail. I've got an entire section of Jim's layout called Crested Butte Yard that I'm incorporating into my layout.



A friend in California who salvaged a part of Jim's layout when it was being removed from the house asked if I wanted it. I was able to arrange transport of it from California to Texas, and now it will become part of my layout. The roundhouse where some of Jim's locomotives once sat are now going to sit in that same roundhouse again (I have 4 of them). How crazy is that?

I was able to talk to Kate Vail when the estate was being liquidated and I acquired four of Jim's narrow gauge locomotives and four cars as well.

I've got some structures that a late friend of mine, Leo Palitti, built. I've got some structures from Cliff Robinson's MUT lines, and I have some of Bill McClanahan's rolling stock. I have two structures from Gil Frietag's Stony Creek and Western. I have several structures from the legendary Bobbye Hall's shop display.

I like that I'm honoring the legacy of great model railroaders and I like to tell that story. One of my ambitions is to make a coffee table book and tell the whole story of the different modelers who have contributed to this layout and to show how I put it all together.

I've been taking pictures of the layout construction all the way through and I want to tell the history of the railroad and the history of the buildings and so on.

These buildings are important to me and I get somewhat emotional about it because they mean a lot.

MRH: That's a wonderful backstory for your structures, Mike. Let's look at running the layout – do you host regular operating sessions?

Mike: I like to have operating sessions as much as I can. One of the things that my wife likes to is go on crafting retreats. When she leaves town, and I'm unsupervised, this house turns into an operating session over and over and over again.

She'll normally leave town on a Thursday. We'll have operating sessions Thursday night, Friday morning, Friday night, Saturday

morning, Saturday afternoon, Saturday evening, and Sunday morning – and sometime even Sunday afternoon before she gets back.

My friends enjoy it when she goes on a crafting retreat because they know it's operations time on the Texas & St. Louis!



15. Sunset over Tyler yard. Mike has programmed a Phillips automated hue LED lighting system to get these effects.



16. Same location as [15], Tyler yard at full moonlight night lighting.



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MRH: You have some pretty fancy lighting on this layout. Tell us about that.

Mike: I found a lighting system called the Phillips Hue Lighting System, H-U-E lighting system. The Phillips Hue lighting system has Bluetooth LED bulbs that are capable of displaying any of 16 million colors. That's a big spectrum and they're individually programmable.

I have programmed a sequence that will allow for operators to run from sunset to sunrise. Literally, the lights go down in the room to sunset, the moon comes up, you get the blue-green hue of the nighttime. It will stay that way for a period of time, and then the sun will come back up and you get the glow of the oranges and the reds as the sun rises. Ultimately, it's full day-light again.

A couple of operators wanted to do night ops over here one night. As I mentioned, the crescent fascia work stations all have a flashlight on them that represents a switchman's lantern. The light changed hues so gradually from afternoon to evening to moonlight that their eyes became accustomed to the light. They never used their switchman's lantern to read the numbers on the cars when they were switching.



17. Same location as [15, 16], Tyler yard at early sun-up morning lighting.

When then the lights started coming back up, I turned to one of them and I asked, "Do you notice anything different?"

The operator at that station asked, "What are you talking about?"

I said, "It's sun up again."

"Wow, it happened so gradually I didn't even realize it!" he said.

That's exactly the subtle effect I was looking for.

MRH: Your layout will be open for the NMRA National this summer. What do you hope convention-goers get out of this layout when they come visit?

Mike: I'm hoping they enjoy their opportunity to see the layout and see a layout that lives up to their expectations. That's really what I'm hoping for.



18. Mike Mackey having fun switching cars in Tyler yard on his Texas & St. Louis railroad.



I've wanted to have a finished layout in my lifetime (Is a layout ever *REALLY* finished?) – one that people will enjoy coming back to over and over again. I'm hoping they tell their friends, "If you go to Dallas Fort Worth, you need to make it over to the Texas & St. Louis Railroad." For years when I was a kid 16, 17 years old, I would buy the train magazines.

We all started out with *Model Railroader* and, and *Railroad Model Craftsman*, and I would slobber all over those pages and drool at the layout pictures. Never did I ever in my lifetime, believe that I would have a layout that someone like TrainMasters TV or *Model Railroad Hobbyist* would want to come and feature *my layout*.

I thank you for the honor of being able to have my layout featured with you. Thank you so much!

MRH: Well, you're welcome, Mike! Thanks for letting us come visit the Texas & St. Louis, it's been a pleasure. ☑

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Crowdsourced hay bales



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2023



MICHAEL ANTEAU GETS ASSISTANCE FROM **MRH**
FORUM MEMBERS TO CREATE REALISTIC HAY BALES ...

MY PLANS CALLED FOR A CATTLE PEN NEAR NICHOLAS YARD. After several years of spotting cattle cars along an empty spur, I purchased a Campbell's Scale Models Stock Yard kit (no. 400).

This is an excellent kit that lends itself well to kitbashing. I chose to divide it in two, and ended up with a cattle pen for Nicholas, and another for the town of Angela's Landing.

The kit comes with plans and parts to make “feeding fences” in the railings [1]. I’d never seen this before, but I really liked the detail, so I included fences in both pens.

I wanted to add hay bales and loose hay to these areas to accentuate the feature. A quick search of the Internet didn’t turn up anything, but I figured this might be an easy item to build from scratch.

Building the hay bales was easy, but my first ideas didn’t pan out so well. I turned to the *MRH* forums and solicited advice on my blog. My readers provided some excellent suggestions, and a little help from my friends resulted in much better hay bales.



1. A feeding fence included with the Campbell’s Stock Yard kit.



MY FIRST ATTEMPT

My first idea was to cut the hay bales from foam, dip them in hay-colored paint, then dip them in static grass [2-5].



2. Using a scale ruler as a guide, I used a hobby knife to cut the foam to 2'x2'x4' blocks to represent hay bales. The smaller pieces represent hay bales that have broken apart.



3. I dipped the foam blocks in raw sienna model paint, which was slightly darker than the static grass to provide depth to the finished bales.



4. With the paint still wet, I dipped the bale in static grass. Dipping it in a cup full of grass made the covering too thick, so I spread some grass in a thin layer on waxed paper for another attempt.



5. I glued some greener static grass to the bale after the first layer dried. The finished hay bales looked hairy and uneven, and the tweezers wiped some of the grass off during handling.



The result was a mess. The static grass clumped up, and the tiny foam blocks were difficult to handle. Another effort with trimmed field grass from Woodland Scenics yielded the same results. I needed something different.

HELP!

For assistance with my efforts, I turned to my *MRH* blog, forum.mrhmag.com/post/nicholas-ashley-creek-railway-12202457. I've been chronicling my layout build on this blog since January 2016, and I've received a lot of advice and assistance.

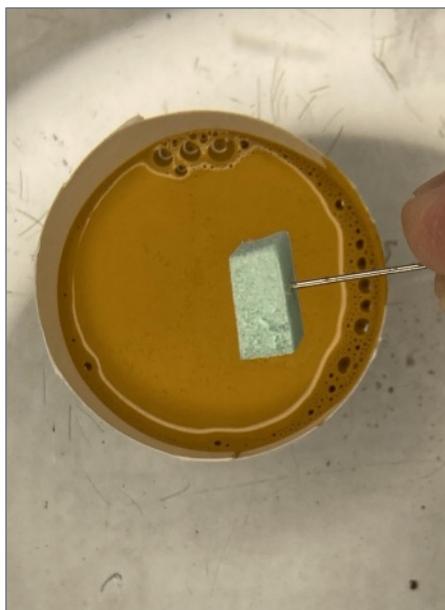
It's also fun to look back at my posts for the past six years to see how much progress I've made. If you haven't participated in the *MRH* forums, I encourage you to do so. They're free and fun.

With the help of forum participants, my second round of hay bales came out much better [6-9].



6. At my wife's recommendation, I switched to yellow oxide from Golden Acrylics to paint the hay bales. The lighter color was a closer match for the hay bale look I wanted.





7. I tried sticking the foam blocks with pins for dipping them in paint instead of using tweezers. This gave me much better control.



8. Forum member Paul (@pldvdk) suggested using fine sawdust instead of static grass. I keep some in a coffee can for use around the layout, so I gave it a try. If I do it again, I'll sift the sawdust to remove the larger pieces.



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Though much improved from my first effort, these sawdust bales still needed something to make them pop. They lacked a certain element to distinguish them as hay bales, rather than blocks of sawdust.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

I would probably have stopped at this point if not for a post from forum member Bagley (@bagley). He posted a link to a Luke Towan video on YouTube about making hay bales (www.youtube.com/watch?v=neAbGyHFFUE). Luke is a fantastic modeler and I highly recommend viewing it.

Luke's method is terrific – he uses balsa to create the blocks for his hay bales, uses wire to mount them for work, then coats them with static grass – but I was too far down my road to turn back. However, it showed me the detail I was missing: the twine binding the bales together.



9. The sawdust hay bales looked much more like the real thing than those of my first effort. They are convincing from a distance, but still lack fine detail.



I tried sticking the foam bales on a pin and tying them with thread as Luke does with his balsa wood bales, but my foam bales were so light it was extremely difficult. Then I realized my bales would only be viewed from the top at a distance. I decided to follow Alan McClelland's advice and model only what's necessary [10-13].

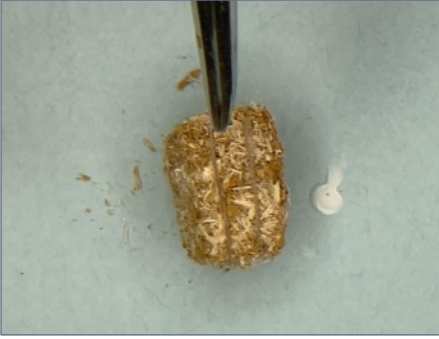


10. I used tan thread to simulate the twine binding on my hay bales. I cut the thread to the length of the bale with a hobby knife, with two pieces for each bale.



11. I put a small drop of white glue on an index card, and used tweezers to draw the thread through the glue to give it a sticky coating. This coating also reduces and hides the fuzziness of the thread.





12. I laid two of the threads across each hay bale.



13. The addition of twine made the blocks of sawdust into convincing hay bales.

Paul, Neil (@Neiler) and others on my blog suggested that hay usually has a greener tint than my bales, which more closely resemble straw. There are many sources of feed for livestock. Alfalfa grass, orchard grass, etc., all have different tints.

My hay bales struck the right chord for my untrained, city-boy eye, so I left them as is. When combined with the feeding rails and a small scene, they look good enough to eat, at least for the cows [14]. ✓



14. Farm workers unload a truck at the stock pen for hungry cows.



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MICHAEL ANTEAU



Michael comes from a railroading family. His grandfather was an engineer for the C&O, and his father was an engineer for CSX.

Michael was first bitten by the model railroad bug watching his dad's Lionel trains, and he built his first 4x8 layout at the age of ten. Michael is now working on his "dream" layout, a prototype-freelanced coal hauling railroad set in transition-era West Virginia.

Michael lives in Northwest Ohio and works in Information Technology. He is married and has two grown children. When he is not working on the Nicholas & Ashley Creek RY, Michael enjoys playing piano, biking, hiking, and traveling. ■

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SAVVY MODELER *Online*



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Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2023



All about frog juicers

YouTuber **Dubai Trains** has this superb video discussing ways to power a frog, and then shows in detail how a frog juicer does its magic. He shows the loco moving over the frog with an inset video showing the frog juicer in action. Nice!

If you've ever wondered what a frog juicer is and how it works, then this video is for you. The video closeups are sharp and clear, and the explanations are easy to follow. ☑



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MARCH NEWS

column



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2023

RICHARD BALE AND JEFF SHULTZ
REPORT THE LATEST HOBBY
INDUSTRY NEWS ...



O SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



New O scale models coming from **Atlas** during the 4th quarter of this year include a Pullman-Standard PS-2 twin-bay covered hopper. Road names will be Chicago & North Western, Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range; Full-O-Pep Feeds, Jersey Central, Southern Pacific, and U.S. Borax.



Atlas expects to release a new production run of O scale PS-1 boxcars late this year. Road names will include Cotton Belt, Maine Central, New Haven, Erie Lackawanna, Port Huron & Detroit and Western Pacific.



O scale Coalporter gondolas decorated for Santa Fe, Burlington Northern, CSX, David J. Joseph, Pennsylvania Railroad and Reading & Northern are included

THE LATEST MODEL RAILROAD PRODUCTS, NEWS & EVENTS

in Atlas's 4th quarter production schedule. All of the Atlas O scale models in this report will be available for both 2-rail and 3-rail operation.

Info: shop.atlasrr.com

HO SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



New HO scale freight car kits coming from **Accurail** include this 40' Milwaukee Road single-sheathed wood boxcar. The model

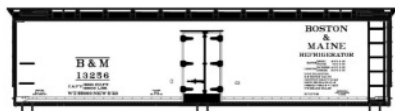
is based on a prototype built in 1929.



This Norfolk & Western 3,200 cu. ft. twin-bay covered hopper car is based on a Center Flow prototype built by ACF in 1966.



Accurail plans to release a three-car set of Great Northern 36' double-sheathed wood boxcars this summer. The cars will also be available separately.



This 40' wood reefer car will be available decorated for the Boston & Maine Railroad, the Nickel Plate Lackawanna Dairy Line and Chesapeake & Ohio. All versions of the HO scale kit are based on prototypes built in the 1920s



All Accurail HO scale car kits come with appropriate trucks with Delrin wheelsets and Accumate knuckle couplers.

Info: www.accurail.com



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R. Bale

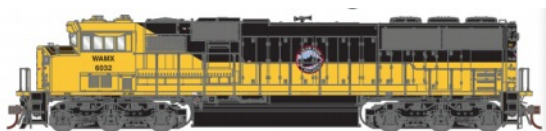
EMD SD60M AND SD70M DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES

In 1984 EMD introduced the 3,800hp turbocharged SD60 road switcher. It became a winning design for EMD with 537 being sold. EMD began offering the SD60 with a wide-nose safety cab with a three-piece high-visibility windshield in 1989. Units with the safety cab and Tri-Clops windshield were identified as SD60M. Continuing on the successful SD60-series, EMD launched the next step in locomotive evolution with the 4,000hp SD70-series high-horsepower road switcher in 1992. While the shape and location of a few appurtenances such as traction motor blower housings, radiator intake grilles and walkways were juggled around, the general appearance of the SD60 and SD70 were similar. The major difference between the two locomotives was internal, with the SD70 getting a new 4,000hp prime mover, a new alternator, and new traction motors – all controlled by microprocessors. Another significant change was upgrading the standard HT-C high-traction trucks to the revolutionary HTC-R high-traction self-steering radial truck.



Athearn's production schedule for July 2024 includes an HO scale EMD SD60M diesel

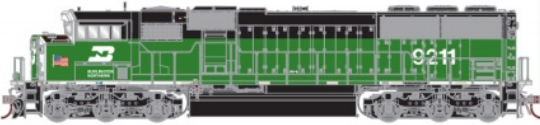
locomotive. The list of road names for the Genesis series model begins with Union Pacific in both standard and Primed for Grime paint. The locomotives lighting system includes ditch lights and illuminated number boards.



Genesis SD60M models decorated for WAMX-Webb Asset Management, and

Hudson Bay Railway are based on ex-UP locomotives and have

many of the same details including ditch lights, a small EMD front plow and the late notched nose.



Models decorated for Burlington Northern and BNSF will have ditch lights, illuminated front and rear number boards, white anticlimbers and a small EMD front plow.

Ex-Soo Line SD60Ms acquired and repainted by Canadian Pacific will have front and rear ditch

lights, front and rear illuminated number boards, a winterization hatch and a small EMD plow in front.



Completing Athearn's 2024 release of SD60M diesels is a CSX unit and an ex-BN locomotive

decorated for the Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad that features ditch lights mounted on the front deck. All of the SD60Ms in this release will come with EMD HT-C high traction trucks.



EMD 4,000hp SD70M demo and lease units coming from Athearn in July 2024 will have a

large front plow, round front ditch lights, and a can-style roof antenna.



Former EMD demo units acquired by CSX were repainted and fitted with a Nathan P-3 horn.



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correct Nathan P-3 horn, a small GPS dome and ditch lights.



plow and round ditch lights mounted on the front deck.



Norfolk Southern locomotive. Spotting features include deck mounted front and rear ditch lights, a PTC antenna array, a small EMD-type front plow, a late four-panel radiator body and a sloped cab nose.



include a 4,300hp SD75M. The Genesis model will be available decorated in Santa Fe's late 1980s Superfleet scheme. Both freshly painted and Athearn's Primed-for-Grime scheme will be offered. .



turbine was its ability to operate on Bunker-C fuel, a cheap, thick, low-grade oil that remains after crude oil is refined

Union Pacific SD70Ms included in Athearn's 2024 release will have a prototypically

Lake State Railway SD70Ms are ex-UP units fitted with a small EMD-style front

The Ontario Northern SD70M Genesis model coming from Athearn in July 2024 is an ex-

Athearn 2024 production of the SD70-series of EMD diesel locomotive will

Another production run of Athearn's Union Pacific gas turbine locomotive is scheduled for release in July 2024.

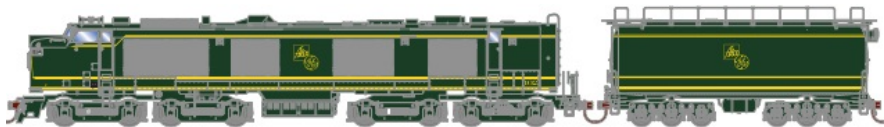
The concept behind the

into higher quality products such as gasoline and diesel fuel. Like the 551,720 pound prototype, Athearn's HO scale Genesis version rides on two sets of AAR Type B trucks connected with a span-bolster for a B+B-B+B wheel designation. Athearn will offer UP turbine locomotives No. 59 and 60 complete with 22,000 gallon tenders. Details include sectional grilles, sectional air intakes, short nose door and aluminum-painted trucks.



UP turbine locomotives UP No.51 and 58 will be available without

tenders. They will have Farr side grilles and trucks painted grey. No. 51 will have a tall nose door while No. 58 will have a short nose door.



In addition to Union Pacific, fantasy gas turbines with tenders will be available decorated for Southern Pacific, Chesapeake & Ohio and as a GE demonstrator. This new Athearn Genesis slab side turbine will have several additional features over previous runs including a separately-controlled MARS light, emergency stop big-hole light, classification lights, number boards, and a backup light.

The three Athearn Genesis locomotives in this report will be available as DCC models with a DCC decoder and SoundTraxx Tsunami2 sound. DC models will be DCC-ready with a 21-pin plug.

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R. Bale

EMD MODEL 40 SWITCHER

Electro Motive's Model 40 locomotive was a diminutive two-axle, two-motor industrial switcher built between 1940 and 1943. It was powered by two 150hp diesel engines. The Model 40 had a rigid, non-equalized frame that limited it to low-speed operation. The center-cab design provided excellent visibility for the one-man crew. Of the 11 units built, Electro-Motive retained one for duty at its diesel plant in McCook, Illinois.



all-wheel drive, dual machined flywheels, and a heavy die-cast frame. Road names will be Electro Motive, U.S. Army, and Borg Warner Calumet Steel. Unlettered models will be available in yellow, dark red, light blue, and faded yellow over red. The HO scale model was originally a Roundhouse product. It was introduced in 2003 and produced from tooling cut by Brian Leppert.

To service customers needing small batches of liquids, North American Car Company introduced a series of 30' tank cars in the

Athearn will include an EMD Model 40 light switcher in its July, 2024 production schedule. The model will have bi-directional LED lighting,



early 1970s. Although they rarely carried beer, the shape of the short 8,000 gallon cars quickly earned them the nickname Beer Car. Athearn's HO scale version will have a detailed manway and vent, photo-

etched metal platforms, wire end and platform railings, and McHenry AAR upper and lower shelf knuckle couplers. Trucks with machined metal wheelsets will be either Bettendorf- type plain bearing or modern 100-ton roller-bearing type. Road names will be Hamm's, Penguin Ginger Ale, Wyandotte Chemicals, Vulcan Chemicals, and GATX.



Athearn is preparing tooling for new HO scale 60' cars that began life in the mid-1970s as Santa Fe Hi-Cube Bx-172

boxcars. The cars were built with Youngstown 10' sliding steel doors. GTW purchased 76 of the cars in 1985 and sent them to QSR/GE Rail Services in Texarkana, AR where they were refitted with two 8' plug doors. In the mid-2000s, the cars were purchased by Midwest Railcar and Wisconsin Southern for general service. As for the remaining ATSF cars that were not purchased by the GTW, they were purchased by the Mid-Michigan Railroad, a 1987 short line startup with 40 miles of track.



Photo courtesy Charlie Slater

Models with 10' sliding doors will be available from Athearn decorated for Santa Fe, Wisconsin Southern and Midwest Railcar. Road names

for cars with paired 8' plug doors will be Grand Trunk Western and Canadian National. Details on both versions of the all-new model include wire grab irons, coupler lift bars, trainline hoses, etched-metal coupler platforms and running boards, full underframe detail, X-panel roof, and Buckeye S-2-C truck with metal wheels.

Info: www.athearn.com



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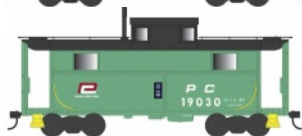
Bowser has set a March 2024 release date for a large selection of HO scale class N5 and class N5c steel cabooses.

Pennsylvania Railroad decorating schemes for the N5 cabooses include PRR New York Zone with black roof and Trainphone, and PRR Central Region in Futura lettering.



Additional schemes include PRR Keystone with yellow cupola and Trainphone, PRR Eastern Region, PRR Northern Region with Trainphone, PRR Western Region, PRR Panhandle Division, PRR Railway Express Agency service, PRR with plain Keystone, orange body with black roof; PRR Chesapeake

Region with plain Keystone, PRR Pittsburgh Region with shadow Keystone, PRR Northern Region with Trainphone, and PRR Western Region.



Non-PRR schemes for Bowser's N5 caboose include Conrail, Detroit & Mackinac, Penn Central and Boston & Maine.

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R. Bale

PRR N5c CABOOSES AND TRAINPHONE

The Pennsylvania Railroad's first mass-produced steel caboose was the class N5, which made its debut in 1914. Modified versions of the N5 appeared over the years with the most distinctive design being the N5c introduced in 1942, a period when streamlining was in vogue. The radical design of the N5c, which included porthole windows and a streamlined cupola, was intended to blend esthetically with the PRR's famous streamlined T1 duplex steam locomotives. These unique cars would go on to serve PRR successors Penn Central and Conrail for many years. Some cabooses were equipped with Trainphone, the Pennsylvania Railroad's system for voice communication between train crews and dispatchers. Trainphone antennas looked like handrails on the roof of PRR cabooses and locomotives. The Trainphone used electromagnetic induction with the low frequency signal passing through the rails. The system worked although the range was limited to a few hundred yards or so. The biggest problem with the Trainphone was that it could not work in PRR's electrified zones because of interference from the overhead electric supply and electrical equipment on the locomotive. PRR abandoned the Trainphone system in the 1960s.



Bowser's HO scale Pennsylvania Railroad class N5c cabooses with porthole windows will be available decorated for PRR Central Region, PRR Eastern Region with Trainphone, PRR New York Zone, and PRR Western Region with Trainphone.



Orange cabooses with a Keystone will be available both with and without a Trainphone. N5c cabooses with a Shadow Keystone and Trainphone will be available for PRR Northern Region and PRR Pittsburgh Region.



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Additional schemes include PRR Shadow Keystone Southwestern Region, and PRR Shadow Keystone with Trainphone and yellow cupola. N5c cabooses decorated for Conrail and Penn Central will be included in this production run. Features on Bowser's N5 and N5c HO scale ready-to-run models include separate hand grabs, brake wheel, air tank and triple valve. The models will come with appropriate trucks with metal wheels and knuckle couplers.

Info: www.bowser-trains.com



R. Bale

EMD GP20 LOCOMOTIVE

Except for the short, square turbocharger stack and the flared radiator fans, the EMD GP20 is virtually identical in appearance to a late-production GP9. Following successful turbocharging experiments with nine Union Pacific GP9s, EMD introduced the GP20 in 1959. The turbochargers increased the output rating of EMDs model 567 16-cylinder engine from 1,750 to 2,000 horsepower.



GP20 road switcher. The models, which are available now, are based on a road switcher EMD built between 1959 and 1962.



Road names on this latest release will be Arizona & California, Santa Fe (two schemes including Kodachrome), SSW-Cotton Belt, CWRY-Commonwealth Railway (Genesee & Wyoming),

Broadway-Limited has completed the second production run of its HO scale

Penn Central, Toledo, Peoria & Western; Union Pacific, USAX-United States Army, and Wisconsin Southern.



In addition to the authentic road names listed above, Broadway Limited's

GP20 will be available in five fantasy schemes including Amtrak, BNSF, CB&Q, New York Central and Southern Pacific.



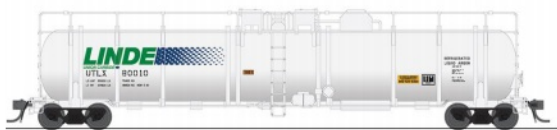
All versions of Broadway Limited's HO scale GP20 are equipped with

Paragon4 DC/DCC Sound & Control System.



Broadway Limited has also announced a run of High-Capacity Cryogenic tank cars in

HO scale. The prototype cars are capable of transporting over 15,000-gallons of liquid as cold as -320 degrees Fahrenheit. The models come in three types featuring two roofwalk options, roller bearing trucks with metal wheelsets, Kadee-compatible knuckle couplers, and separately applied details such as handrails, grab irons, ladders, brake housing, and brake wheel.



Roadnames available in this release are Airco, Air Products, Air Reduction, Big 3,

Liquid Air, Linde, UTLX (white and black), and unlettered for each car type.

Info: www.broadway-limited.com



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drop-bottom gondolas to dealers. Cars with steel sides will be available for Southern Pacific, Great Northern, Union Pacific and Denver & Rio Grande Western.



Cars with board extensions above the steel sides will be available decorated for Southern Pacific, Western Pacific, and Spokane, Portland & Seattle.



A Southern Pacific car with board sides will be available with plywood extensions.



InterMountain is preparing to start production of both 8,000 and 10,000 gallon HO scale tank cars. Reservations are being accepted through March 31.



Decorating schemes include, SHPX-Shippers Car Line, Shell Chemical, GATX, Tidewater Associated Oil, U. S. Army, and two Gulf schemes.

Info: www.intermountain-railway.com



Kadee has released its prototypically accurate 40' Pullman-Standard PS-1 boxcar decorated for ATSF. The ready-to-run model promotes the *Grand Canyon Line* on one side and a *Ship And Travel Santa Fe All The Way* slogan on the opposite side – a scheme ATSF applied to its boxcars from 1947 through 1958.

The HO scale model includes full height ladders, running boards, and 6' seven-panel Superior doors. The model rides on



Bettendorf-type plain-bearing trucks with metal wheels.

Info: www.kadee.com



Moloco is booking reservations for Union Pacific 50' boxcars with a combination of plug and sliding doors filling a 15' 2" opening. The HO scale models replicate class BC-50-5 and BC-50-6 cars built in UP's Omaha shops beginning in 1959. Both classes will be available decorated with the *Be Specific-Ship Union Pacific* slogan.



Both classes will also be available with a three-color shield on the left and the *We Can Handle It* slogan on the right side of the car.



The BC-50-5 car will be available decorated with both a shield and the *Ship and Travel The Automated Rail Way* slogan on the right side of the car. A MOW car in Quartz Green will also be available. Undecorated kits will be included in this release. Reservations for guaranteed delivery will be accepted through March 30, 2023. Information on a release date is pending.

Info: www.molocotrains.com



Rapido Trains is booking pre-orders for Canadian National GMDD GP9RM locomotives and matching slugs. The

HO scale models replicate GP9s rebuilt at CN's Pointe St. Charles shops in the early 1980s. The extensive rebuilding project involved three locomotive groups: The CN's 4000/4100



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series were rebuilt as road units, the 7000 series as switchers and the 7200/200 series as mother/slug pairs.

Lacking a prime mover, the slugs drew power from the mother to operate traction motors. The long hoods were cut down and their weight was increased with ballast. The external difference in the slugs was the application of either Blomberg or Flexicoil trucks.



Features on Rapido's GP9RM locomotive include detailed piping and traction cables, metal handrails, front and rear plows or curved plate pilots, and detailed Blomberg trucks. Lighting features include track lights, classification lights, control stand lights and flashing belt pack light on select mother-slug sets, and working ditch lights on 4000, 4100 and 7000 series locomotives.

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The initial release of the GP9RM will be available decorated for Canadian National in a choice of either the stripe or large noodle scheme. GP9RM/Slug sets will be available in CN early and CN late schemes.

Info: www.rapidotrains.com

Tangent Scale Models has released an all-new HO scale model of a GATC 4500 cu. ft. covered hopper. It is available now in four road names with each having distinctive road-specific details. An ATSF model with 13-side posts represents a car refurbished in the early 1980s. Details include a Morton brake platform and walkways, Miner outlet gates and a Klasing 1150 hand brake.



A CB&Q car decorated in its original 1965 gray has 15 side posts, Apex walkways, and Wine outlet gates.



A CGW version of the GA 4500 covered hopper from 1965 has 13 side posts, Apex walkways, Miner outlet gates and a standard wheel

mounted on an Equipco power brake mechanism.



Completing Tangent's list of GA 4500 covered hoppers available now is a CRDX-ADM lease car from 1966. The model comes with Morton walkways and brake step, an Ajax power handbrake and Wine combo-style outlet gates. All versions of Tangent's 4500 mentioned in this report come



with 100-ton Barber S-2 trucks with metal wheels and rotating bearing caps.



Unpainted kits, without couplers, are available for both the 13-post and 15-post body types.

Info: www.tangentscalemodels.com



HO scale freight cars coming from **Walthers** this summer include this all-new 57' 4750 cu. ft. triple bay covered hopper.



Features on this Mainline series model include a clerestory-style roof, late Trinity jacking pads and pulling tabs, 1990s-era square

corner roof hatches, and 100-ton roller-bearing trucks with 36" metal wheelsets.



Road names will be Illinois Central Gulf, Burlington Northern, BNSF, Kansas City Southern, Louisville & Nashville, CSX, and Missouri-Kansas-Texas.



Walthers this summer is this 60' Pullman-Standard flatcar. The HO scale model will come with 70-ton roller-bearing trucks with 33" metal wheelsets.



Multiple road numbers will be available for Burlington Northern, BNSF, Erie, Soo Line, and four Trailer

Train schemes including HTTX, OTTX, TTCX and VTTX.

Info: www.walthers.com



Yarmouth Model Works is selling a resin kit for a Soo Line stock car. The HO scale model replicates cars built by Haskell and Barker in 1921. The prototype Soo cars were numbered

in the 29600-29999 series. The kit features a pressure cast resin body, injection molded sill steps, a tiny 3D printed brake staff support, custom etchings, laser-cut running boards, custom decals from Black Cat, and Andrews truck frames by Tahoe Model Works.

Info: www.yarmouthmodelworks.com

N SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



Bluford Shops is accepting pre-orders through April 10, 2023 for a group of bay-window cabooses. The

N scale models are based on prototypes built by International Car. The release will include IC Phases 1 and 4 cabooses as well as the half bay-window design. The ready-to-run model will come with operating knuckle couplers, metal wheels, wire grab irons and window glazing. Availability is planned for 2024.



Two historic Santa Fe cars, No. 999653 (half bay window) and No. 999654 (Phase 1 car) will be included in this release.



Three New York Central half-bay cabooses will be available in oxide red with the NYC oval logo.

Norfolk Southern retained a portion of their caboose fleet to serve as shoving platforms. NS No. 555761, a former Southern



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Railway Phase 1 caboose, received new paint with the stallion version of the NS logo and a Southern Railway logo.



Southern Railway's final delivery of Phase 1 cabooses will be available in three numbers



In applying its own paint scheme to Phase 4 cabooses inherited from Erie Lackawanna, Conrail elected to retain the running boards and ladders on two cars.



In the late 1970s, during the failed negotiations to merge with the Union Pacific, the Rock Island painted some Phase 4 cabooses

solid white with the Route Rock moniker. Bluford will offer this unique paint scheme in three numbers.

Info: www.bluford-shops.com



R. Bale

NORFOLK & WESTERN Y6B LOCOMOTIVE

The Y6b version of the 2-8-8-2 is a four-cylinder compound articulated steam locomotive the Norfolk & Western Railroad built in its Roanoke Shops between 1936 and 1942. The Y6b was designed to haul heavy,

slow moving coal trains in the mountainous districts in the N&W's Pocahontas, Radford and Shenandoah Divisions. As built, the Y6b developed 152,206 pounds of tractive effort, with later modifications bringing them up to 170,000 pounds. By comparison, the Union Pacific Big Boy locomotives developed 135,375 pounds of tractive force. Since coal traffic was N&W's largest source of revenue, there was considerable reluctance to switch from coal-burning steam locomotives to oil-burning diesels. It was not until 1952 that N&W tested a Y6b locomotive against a four-unit EMD F7 diesel set. The tests indicated that fuel costs were roughly the same, however, diesels eventually won out for lower maintenance and other operational costs.



numbers in the standard in-service black paint scheme.



Two fantasy paint schemes, one in blue and one in maroon, and an undecorated version are also available in this release.



The model features Paragon4 Sound and control system featuring Rolling Thunder. Additional features include rubber traction tires, and built-in capacitance for consistent electrical pickup. A minimum track radius of 9.75 inches is required.



Broadway Limited plans to release N scale versions of EMD's NW2 and SW7 switch engines next month.



A total of 1,141 of the 1,000hp NW2s were built between 1939 and 1949. Using the same model 567 prime mover, EMD boosted the engine's output to 1,200hp for the otherwise identical SW7 introduced in 1949. The SW7 would remain in production for just three years with a total of 491 being completed.



Road names for the N scale NW2 will be Baltimore & Ohio, Bangor & Aroostook, CB&Q, Canadian National, Denver & Rio Grande Western, Elgin, Joliet & Eastern; Lehigh Valley, New York Central, Santa Fe, Pere Marquette, Southern Pacific and Union Pacific.





Southern Railway, Texas & Pacific and the U S Army.



An undecorated version of the N scale locomotive will also be available.



Both the NW2 and SW7 will be equipped with Broadway Limited's Paragon4 DC/DCC Sound & Control System.

Info: www.broadway-limited.com



InterMountain is accepting advance reservations through March 31st for an N scale 5277 cu. ft. boxcar.



Eight decorating schemes will be available in this production run including Canadian National, CSX, Rock Island, Southern Railway, Burlington Northern Santa Fe (ex-Railbox), Grand Trunk Western, and Montana Rail Link.

Info: intermountain-railway.com



New N Scale models from **Micro-Trains** include this 50' McCloud River Railroad boxcar with one and a half plug doors. The model depicts a weathered car that has been updated with Barber roller-bearing trucks and has had the running board removed.



This CSX triple-bay coal hopper comes with a removable load. CSX

Transportation acquired the car when it merged with the Chessie System.



Built in 1949, this 40' boxcar with Bettendorf –type plain-bearing trucks was rebuilt in 1966. It belonged to a series of 53 cars operated by the Manufacturers Railway Company.



Micro-Trains 50' Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe boxcar No. 100001, with an oversized herald, represents the

initial car in Santa Fe's Shock Control program that included a "floating underframe" and movable bulkheads to prevent damage from track induced shock.

Info: Contact a Micro-Trains dealer.



Texas Special train in a two coach set.



Railsmith has announced several new products this month, beginning with the coaches 'Olivette' and 'Pasadena Hills' as part of the

Also announced is Rock Island Coach pair #3, the Chisholm Trail and Hawthorn.

Info: lowellsmith.net/railsmith

Z SCALE PRODUCT NEWS



Showcase Miniatures is selling a Z scale kit for a freelance version of a Pacific Electric trolley. The kit includes lead-free pewter castings, photo-etched stainless steel detail parts, a 3D printed shell, pre-cut



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window glazing, door/window masks and Pacific Electric decals. Illustrated instructions for assembly and painting are available for viewing on the SM website.

Info: www.showcaseminiatures.net

NEW STRUCTURES & SCENIC SUPPLIES



Athearn's July 2024 production schedule includes an HO scale Ford F850 box van. Decorating schemes in this release will be Union Pacific, Great Northern, Missouri Pacific, New York Central and Irv & Son Moving. Unlettered models will be available in white and yellow.



Athearn has included an emergency rescue truck in its July 2024 production. The HO scale model is based on a Ford C series cab-over-engine. Decorating schemes will include Fire Ground Support, Valley Fire Department, County Fire Department, Tri-County SWAT, Rural Fire District, and Department of Public Safety.



Both the F850 box van and rescue truck will have clear window glazing and rubber tires.



The prototype of this 60' container was introduced in 2015 specifically for the Canadian market. West of Ontario, the Canadian government allows Long Vehicle Combinations (LVC) up to 40 meters (131 feet) in length. Many operators consider one 60' trailer both easier and safer to pull than a pair of tandem trailers. In rail service, the 60' containers are typically carried in the top position of a 53' well car. Athearn's July 2024 schedule includes two versions of these unique containers. Both versions are decorated for Canadian Tire.

Info: www.athearn.com



Berkshire Valley Models has released a new O scale kit for Woody Wagon, a 1932 depot hack. The kit is composed of unpainted laser-cut wood and white metal castings. Assembly and painting is required.

Info: www.berkshirevalleymodels.com



The newest HO scale kit from **Fos Scale Models** is a small industrial brick structure named Zingraff Casting. Details include a rooftop skylight, dust collector and a large sign. The kit includes numerous separate details including drums, welding tanks, and a dumpster.

Components in the kit consist of cast unpainted Hydrocal and laser-cut walls, injection molded plastic windows, 3D printed parts, and assembly instructions. When assembled the model has an approximate foot print of 6" x 6.5". Figures in the illustration are not included in the kit.

Info: fosscalemodels.com



Frenchman River has released Miner's Supply, an O/On30 scale craftsman kit designed by Thomas Yorke. The kit is composed of approximately 20 resin castings, laser-cut windows signs, corrugated roofing, and aluminum flashing material. Miner's Supply can be built to rest on a flat surface or on a slope.

Info: frenchmanriver.com

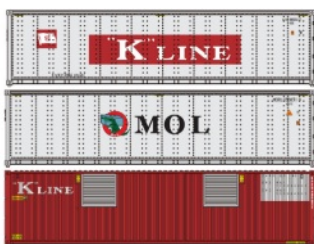
Jacksonville Terminal Company has released a six-pack high-cube reefer set in N scale. The set contains three 40'



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K-Line reefer containers, two 40' MOL reefers, and a K-Line power pack container.



In HO scale, JTC is releasing 53' True Ocean container three-packs in SeaStar two-tone and OceanEx.

Info: jtcmodeltrains.com



Maple Leaf Trains has released a new set of HO scale figures. They are cataloged as VIA Passenger Train Attendants set #1, however, the unpainted 3D printed figures can be modified and painted to

represent an unlimited variety of trades and human activities.

Info: www.mapleleaftrains.com



Minifer, a France-based producer of structure kits, has released an N scale kit for a multi-story silo. The model is based on a structure located in Pont-sur-Yonne, France. The kit is composed of laser-cut wood and card stock. An assembly manual can be downloaded from the Minifer website. The assembled model is 6.30" tall. It has a footprint of 3.50" x 3.15".

Info: www.minifer.fr/en



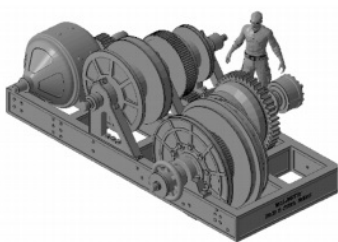
Monster Model Works is selling HO, S and O scale kits for this Two-Story Storefront structure. The craftsman-style kit can be built with a single door or dual door entrance. The kit includes walls, cornice details, arched lintels, and corner pieces all 3D laser-engraved as American Bond brick. Additional components include a brick

chimney, both single and dual door entrances, arched double-hung 4-pane Peel & Stick windows and rear door. The kit comes unassembled and unpainted.



Also new from Monster Model Works are HO scale 3D engraved basswood sheets called Messy Mortar Brick. Unpainted 12" x 6" and 12" x 4" sheets are available in thicknesses of 1/8" and 1/32".

Info: www.larkspurlaserart.com



Multiscale Digital has added this Willamette Iron & Steel 300hp electric yarder to its assortment of 3D printed details. The model is based on a Willamette yarder used to drag downed trees at a logging site. The vintage 1920s item is available in HO,

TT, S and O scales.

Info: www.shapeways.com/shops/multiscale-digital



Oak Hill Track Supply has announced the availability of #6 steel manganese frogs in HO scale. Part of the Roadmaster series of track products, the frogs are created from

railroad engineering drawings. The frogs are available separately, in a turnout kit, or as part of a completed turnout.

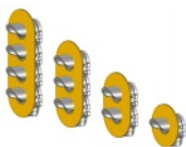
Info: www.ohrtracksupply.com



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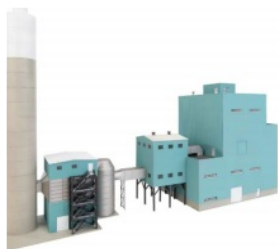
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Showcase Miniatures has added multi-aspect color-light signal heads to its growing line of HO scale signals.

Info: www.showcaseminatures.net



New **Walthers Cornerstone** kits scheduled for release this spring include this Lakefront Energy Power Plant. The multi structure complex can be setup in a variety of arrangements.



Also new is this coal conveyor system that includes a central transfer house.



Walthers plans to release this HO scale Cornerstone kit that assembles into a rotary car dumper this spring.



Additional Cornerstone kits coming from Walthers this spring include a small substation and wood utility poles.



The utility poles will also be available as a gondola load.

Info: www.walthers.com

NEW DECALS, SIGNS AND FINISHING PRODUCTS



Great Decals has released a new HO scale water-slide lettering set for the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad *Saving Bonds* boxcars. Each set provides the *Share in Freedom* slogan and flaming torch logo.

Info: www.greatdecals.com



National Scale Car has issued several new HO scale decal lettering sets

printed by Cartograf. The prototypically accurate water slide decals include Item D233: Delaware, Lackawanna & Western 1926 ARA double-sheathed boxcar *Route of Phoebe Snow*.



Item D231: Delaware & Hudson 1932 ARA boxcar.



Item D232: Delaware & Hudson 36' double-sheathed boxcar.



Item D234: Rutland 36' and 40' double-sheathed box and automobile cars.

Info: nationalscalecar.com



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! BRIEFLY NOTED AT PRESS TIME ...

Broadway Limited has just released HO scale Union Pacific FEF - 2/3 steam locomotives to dealers. New N scale models coming this spring include EMD F3 and F7 diesel units and a PRR T1 4-4-4-4 steam locomotive ...

KatoUSA is accepting applications for a sales representative working out of its headquarters in Schaumburg IL. Detail at katousa.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Job-Descriptions-of-the-Sales-Representative.pdf

Monster Model Works has a new 3D etched kit for HO scale sidewalks ...

Morning Sun has released a downloadable digital reprint of Michael Spoor's *CB&Q Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment* ...

Walthers is planning another run of City of San Francisco cars with new names and numbers. Delivery of the HO scale Proto series cars will begin in the spring of 2024. Coming this summer is a Proto series 89' Thrall enclosed bi-level auto carrier. Mainline models on the way include a Railgon gondola, Greenville wood chip hopper and a 68' bulkhead flatcar. New Cornerstone items include a Chocolate Factory and Antenna Array ... ■

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SELECTED EVENTS



Model Railroad Hobbyist | March 2023

MARCH

Please check with any organization hosting an in-person event for the latest status of the event.

Ongoing 2023

ONLINE, Zoom, dates vary, see website. Operation Special Interest Group Meetups – limited attendance available.

Info: www.opsig.org/Virtual

Archive: www.opsig.org/Virtual/Past

ONLINE, Zoom & YouTube, Wednesday & Saturday, see Facebook page. “New Tracks” Meetup, hosted by Jim Kellow, MMR.

Info: newtracksmodeling.com

YouTube: www.youtube.com/channel/UCMA_VhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA

[VhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMA_VhPb5pjdkAYTdXLceJA)

ONLINE, Facebook & YouTube, dates vary, see Facebook page. “NMRax” organized by Gordy Robinson, Martyn Jenkins, Gert Muller, Jordan Kramer.

Info: www.facebook.com/groups/nmragroup

ONLINE, YouTube, every other Saturday. 4th Division, Pacific Northwest Region, NMRA hosts online layout tours and clinics.

Archive: www.youtube.com/c/4DPNRMovies

ONLINE, Zoom, Second Tuesdays, 8pm Eastern. "Off the Beaten Track" featuring Narrow Gauge layouts, clinics, and manufacturers.

Info: groups.io/g/NNG

AROUND THE USA, IN-PERSON, Various dates. ScaleTrains Road Trip.

Info: www.scaletrains.com/roadtrip

March-April 2023

CALIFORNIA, CROCKETT, April 22-23, 2023. Carquinez Model Railroad Society Open House. 645 Loring Avenue.

Info: cmrstrainclub.org

CALIFORNIA, HEMET, April 15-16, 2023. Model Railroad Festival of modular layouts, including California South Coast On30, Orange County HO, ZoCal Z scale, and Puerta Margarita mini-layout. Exhibits include Riverside and Chula Vista Live Steamers, SoCal Railroad Museum, and a Mini Car show. Four Seasons, 237 Seasons Blvd.

Info: Dave Balser, on30man@gmail.com or 760-436-6139

CALIFORNIA, SACRAMENTO, April 26-30, 2023. Rails By The River 2023, Joint Pacific Coast Region/Feather River Rail Society Convention. Courtyard By Marriott Sacramento Cal Expo, 1782 Tribute Rd.

Info: pcrnmra.org/conv2023/index.html

INDIANA, NAPPANEE, March 18, 2023. 18th Annual Train Show, sponsored by the Elkhart Model Railroad Club. Claywood Event Center, 13924 N 110 W (County Line Road).

Info: www.emrrc.com/index.php/2023-train-show

ILLINOIS, DUPO, April 8, 2023. The Sons of The American Legion Spring Train Show. Dupo American Legion Post #485, 200 S 5th St.

Info: comptrain2002@yahoo.com

ILLINOIS, WAUCONDA, April 15-16, 2023. Lake County Model Railroad Open House. 107 S. Main St.

Info: www.lcmrr.org



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KENTUCKY, LOUISVILLE, March 18, 2023. 33rd Annual Division 8 Train Show and Sale. Holy Family Parish Saffin Center, 3938 Poplar Level Rd.

Info: div8-mcr-nmra.org

MICHIGAN, MUSKEGON, April 29, 2023. Annual Model Train and Hobby Expo, sponsored by the Muskegon Railroad Historical Society. Cardinal Elementary School, 2310 Marquette Ave.

Info: 6ftwoody@comcast.net

NEVADA, VIRGINIA CITY, March 30-April 1, 2023. Sn3 Symposium. Silverland Inn & Suites, 100 North E. Street.

Info: sn3symposium.com

NEW YORK, BATAVIA, March 26, 2023, Great Batavia Train Sale, sponsored by The Genesee Society of Model Engineers, Inc. . Richard C. Call Arena, Genesee Community College.

Info: www.gsme.org

NORTH CAROLINA, HICKORY, March 31-April 1, 2023. 21st Annual NC Railroad Expo, sponsored by by the Newton Depot Authority and Alexander Chapter (NRHS). Hickory Metro Convention Center, 1960 13th Ave Dr SE, I-40 Exit 125.

Info: hickorytrainshow@gmail.com

OREGON, CORVALLIS, March 18, 2023. Winterail 45 railroad photography exposition and rail collectible sale. Corvallis High School, 1400 Northwest Buchanan Ave.

Info: www.winterail.com

Future 2023 by location

NEW ZEALAND, MOSGIEL, DUNEDIN, May 6-7, 2023, Dunedin Model Train Show. Taieri Bowling Club, Wickliffe Street.

Info: dunedinmodeltrainshow@gmail.com and dunedinmodeltrainshow.nz

ARIZONA, FLAGSTAFF, June 7-11, Grand Canyon Special, Pacific Southwest Region Convention, High Country Conference Center, 201 West Butler Avenue.

Info: azdiv-nmra.org/psr2023convention/index.php

CALIFORNIA, CROCKETT, April 22-23, June 24-25, August 26-27, September 10, October 14-15, December 9-10, 2023. Carquinez Model Railroad Society Open House. 645 Loring Avenue.

Info: cmrstrainclub.org

GEORGIA, CARTERSVILLE, September 14-17, 2023. Cartersville Express, 2023 South East Region Convention. Clarence Brown Conference Center, 5450 Ga-20.

Info: 2023serconvention.org

ILLINOIS, ST. CHARLES, June 11, 2023, Kane County Railroadiana & Model Train Show and Sale. Kane County Fairgrounds (Front Building), 525 South Randall Rd.

Info: www.rrshows.com

INDIANA, FT. WAYNE, October 19-22, Fort Wayne Rails, 2023 North Central Region Convention. Holiday Inn Purdue Fort Wayne, 4111 Paul Shaffer Dr.

Info: div3.ncrnmra.org/fort-wayne-rails-2023

KANSAS, OVERLAND PARK, July 27-29, 2023. 2023 Mid-Continent Region Convention. Holiday Inn, US69 & 87th St.

Info: www.mcor-nmra.org

MINNESOTA, BLOOMINGTON, May 18-21, 2023. 2023 Thousand Lakes Region, NMRA convention. Best Western Plus Bloomington-Mall of America, 1901 Killebrew Dr.

Info: www.thousandlakesregion.org/2021-bismarck-con

MISSOURI, ARNOLD (St Louis Area), May 13, December 9, 2023. After the Storm Train Show. Arnold Eagles Club, 1725 Jeffco Blvd.

Info: Steve Mantia, (314) 369-3949

PENNSYLVANIA, ALTOONA, October 19-22, 2023, Round the Curve to Altoona, 2023 Mid-Eastern Region Convention. Altoona Grand Hotel, 1 Sheraton Drive.

Info: mer2023.org/index.html

PENNSYLVANIA, MARS (Pittsburg area), May 4-7, 2023, Rails to Pittsburgh, Mid-Central Region NMRA Convention. Doubletree by Hilton, 910 Sheraton Drive.

Info: www.keystonedivision.org/convention/index.html



TEXAS, GRAPEVINE (Dallas Area), August 20-26, 2023. NMRA National Convention, Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center, 1501 Gaylord Trail.

Info: www.2023texasexpress.com

TEXAS, GRAPEVINE (Dallas Area), August 25-27, 2023. National Train Show, Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center, 1501 Gaylord Trail.

Info: www.nationaltrainshow.org/2023/ntsdfw.html

VIRGINIA, FISHERSVILLE, May 7, 2023. Shenandoah Valley Model Train & Railroading Show. Augusta Expo, 277 Expo Rd.

Info: kauffmanb@gmail.com or 540-209-2698

WASHINGTON, TACOMA, May 10-14, 2023, Prairie Line Experience, 2023 Pacific Northwest Region Convention. Comfort Inn & Suites Downtown Tacoma, 2611 East E Street.

Info: pnrtacoma2023.org

WISCONSIN, WAUPACA, June 17-18, 2023. 33rd Strawberry Fest Model Rail Show, sponsored by the Waupaca Area Model Railroaders. Waupaca Recreation Center, 401 School St.

Info: www.wamrltd.com ■

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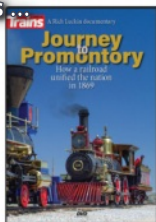
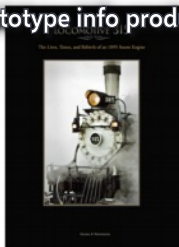
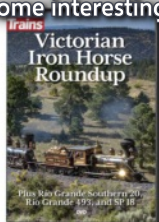
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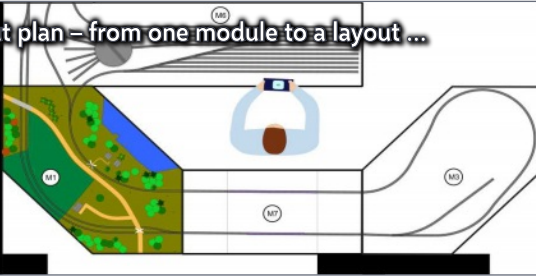
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