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*Lionel's  
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*Carl Soderstrom's  
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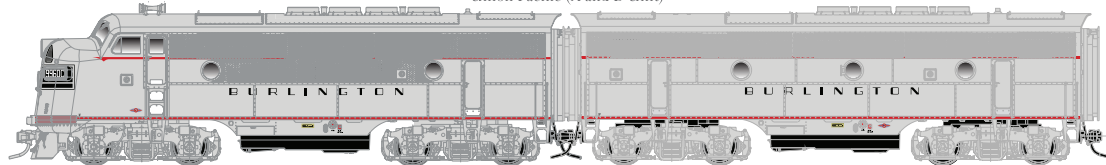
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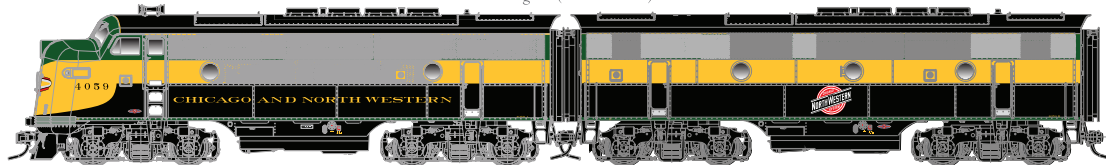
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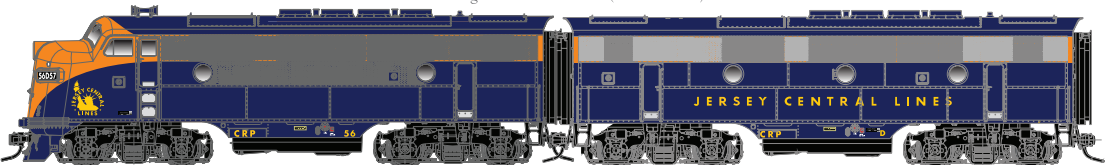
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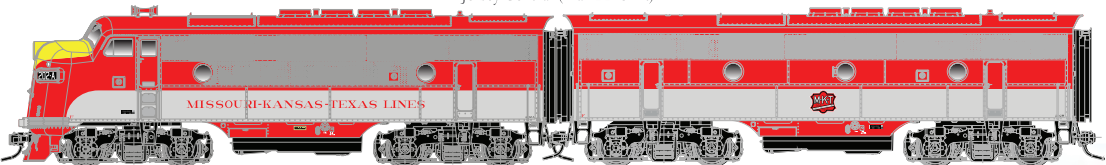
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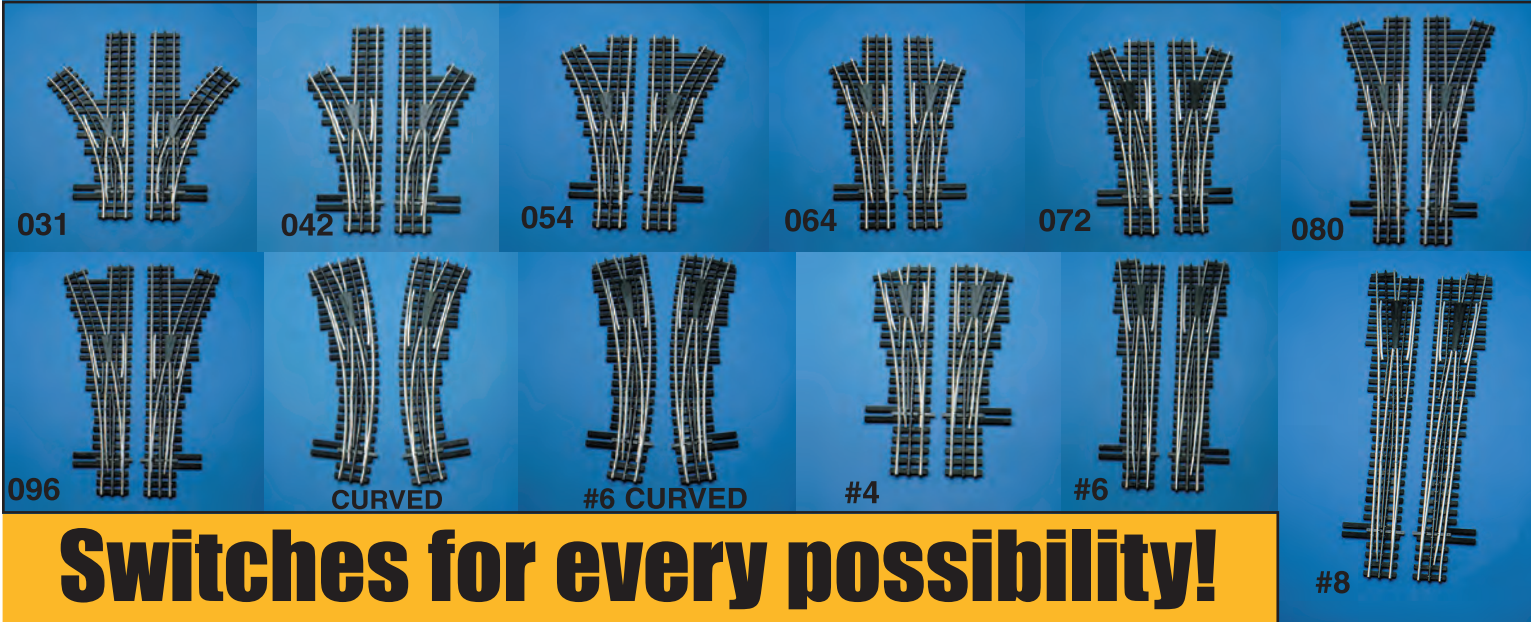


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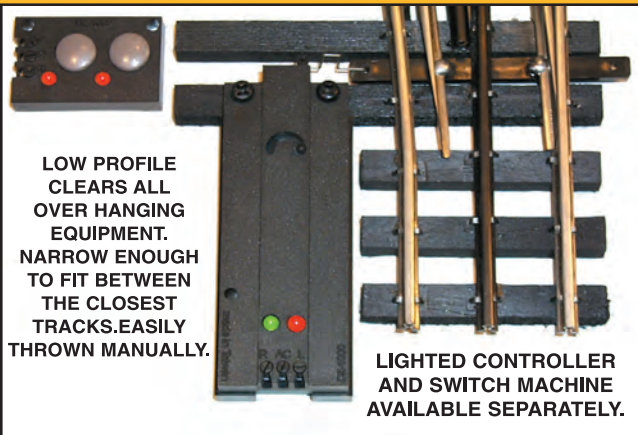


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## ON THE COVER

It is early evening on Carl Soderstrom's 3-rail O gauge layout. His friend Tim Fiss captured this shot of a Western Hobbycraft Brill trolley heading to the suburbs with its workaday-weary passengers. Inside this issue, you'll see more nighttime photos of Carl's layout, and in a future issue we'll take another look at his rail empire in daylight hours.

*Photo by Tim Fiss*



### **Publisher**

Richard P. Melvin  
publisher@ogaugerr.com

### **Editor-in-Chief**

Allan Miller  
editor@ogaugerr.com

### **Special Projects Editor**

Ed Boyle  
ed@ogaugerr.com

### **Associate Editors**

Jim Barrett  
jim@ogaugerr.com

George Brown  
george@ogaugerr.com

Kathryn Brown  
kitty@ogaugerr.com

### **Advertising Manager / Graphics Design**

Don Pedicini, Jr.  
don@ogaugerr.com

### **Dealer Manager**

George Seil  
dealers@ogaugerr.com

### **Design & Layout / Pre-Press**

W-Graphics Digital Services, Inc.  
ogauge@teamwgraphics.com

### **Subscription Manager**

Linda Melvin  
linda@ogaugerr.com

### **Merchandising Manager**

Cari Fanta  
cari@ogaugerr.com

### **Section Gang**

Bill Bramlage  
John Ciccarelli  
Frank Cozzi  
Jim Policastro

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## Another Milestone

The magazine in your hands may be destined to become a collector's item. You are reading the 250th issue of *O Gauge Railroad*. From a humble beginning back in 1969, *OGR* has grown to become one of the leading magazines in the O gauge railroading hobby. We thank you, our loyal readers, for helping us build the magazine through your subscriptions and purchases at your local hobby shop, bookstore, or newsstand.

Jim Barrett, Ed Boyle, and I are the owners and partners in this company. It is a partnership that works because each of us brings different talents and skills to the overall effort. I took over the reins as publisher with Run 189 back in 2002. Since then, I've had the chance to work with some very talented people in publishing the 61 issues that have been produced under our ownership.

We have a small but mighty staff of great people who work hard to bring you this magazine seven times each year. Editor-in-Chief Allan Miller, Associate Editor George Brown, Associate Editor Kathryn Brown, Advertising Manager Don Pedicini, Dealer Manager George Seil, and Merchandising Manager Cari Fanta all do their part to build each issue of *O Gauge Railroad*. And of course I have to give special mention to my wife, the Lovely and Gracious Linda, who watches over the company finances, pays our bills, and makes sure I don't spend too much money.

On a personal level, being involved with this magazine has been a terrific experience. I have met so many wonderful people who enjoy the O gauge railroading hobby that I would be hard-pressed to remember them all. I've had the chance to see some spectacular layouts because I've shot still pictures for the magazine and videos of layouts. It has all been fun. Someone once said that if you truly enjoy what you do, you won't work a day in your life. If that's the case, then I am a very lucky guy because I have not "worked" around here for a long time.

### Comments from Jim and Ed

I guess this just proves the old saying that "Time flies when you're having fun." I started writing for *O Gauge Railroad* in July of 1996 and first appeared in Run 148. That was almost 15 years ago; it just doesn't seem possible!

Since that time, I've met thousands of our subscribers, read your letters, and answered thousands of questions. I've personally visited and photographed scores of train layouts for our magazine and videos. It just seems like a couple of years ago that we took the reins of OGR Publishing, but even that has now been more than nine years. How can that be?

During all this time, we have worked hard to give you the best product possible,

and will continue to do just that. Thank you all for being loyal readers.

—Jim Barrett

A lot has changed since I first joined *O Gauge Railroad*. It has been quite a journey from "Collector's Gallery" columnist to Advertising Manager and finally to a partner in the business as well as Special Projects Editor for the magazine. Along the way, I have worked with the extraordinary people who are my co-workers and partners and have interviewed some of the fascinating folks who influence what we run and what we collect.

Best of all, I think, I have been able to talk with the readers of our magazine and the viewers of our videos and have found out from you just how much it means to be part of the O Gauge Railroad family. I have gone from being a lone hobbyist to a member of the family, and it feels great!

After nine years, I am excited to see that best is yet to come. We are back in the video business; the digital version of *OGR* is growing; and, best of all, *O Gauge Railroad* magazine continues to get better and more relevant for O-gaugers. Not bad for the first nine years of our company.

—Ed Boyle 



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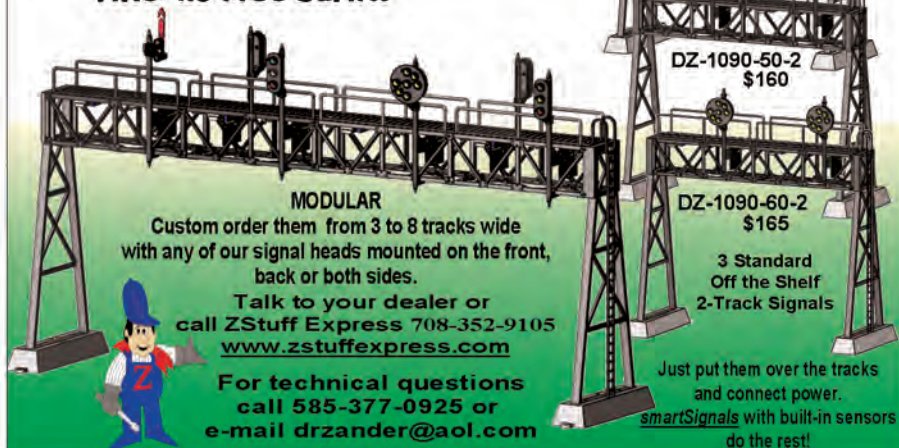


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## Run 250 for OGR – Run 25 for Me!

Trains of any scale or type were about the last things on my mind back in 1969 when this magazine was founded. I was serving my second tour in Vietnam at the time and had other things occupying my time and attention.

Even when my long-neglected childhood interest in trains was rekindled in the mid-1970s, O gauge—those most treasured toys of my boyhood years—were not given so much as a passing thought. Instead, I reentered the model railroading hobby in N scale, thanks to the gift of an N scale starter set given to me one Christmas by a co-worker in Hawaii. That involvement expanded a few years later first into Z scale and then into Large Scale—two scales very much at opposite ends of the model railroading spectrum.

But all that changed on Christmas Eve in 1981 when I was presented a copy of Ron Hollander's new *All Aboard: The Story of Joshua Lionel Cowen & His Lionel Train Company* book. One thorough read, accomplished in a single, very long night, and I was hooked on O gauge once again. Truly an example of the power of the written word!

I visited a local hobby shop the very next day and returned home with a car full of Lionel MPC trains, additional rolling stock, track, accessories, and a transformer. I had a small layout up and running in a matter of days (a photo of it appeared in Run 239). Soon thereafter, I asked my mom to ship the remaining items from my boyhood Lionel postwar collection to Hawaii, and the die, as the saying goes, was cast.

But even after rediscovering O gauge, some time passed before I became familiar with *O Gauge Railroading* magazine, although it likely was referenced in some of the many books I purchased that dealt, either in whole or in part, with model trains.

Indeed, my first exposure to *OGR* actually resulted from my association with this magazine's primary competitor, *Classic Toy Trains*. I had moved back to the mainland in the late 1980s to pursue doctoral studies at the University of Maryland at College Park. In the course of researching a sociological study related to Lionel catalog artwork, I contacted Bruce Greenberg, founder and president of Greenberg Publishing Company, and he invited me to make use of his firm's extensive archives in nearby Sykesville, Maryland. Soon thereafter, I became managing editor for Greenberg Books and, after Kalmbach Publishing Company acquired the Greenberg line, managing editor of the book division at that firm. While with Kalmbach, I wrote several articles for *Classic Toy Trains* magazine and obviously had to stay abreast of what the competition was doing. It was around that time that I discovered *OGR*.

After leaving Kalmbach in the early '90s, I was contacted by Myron Biggar, then owner and publisher of *OGR*, and asked to put together a new second edition of the *O Gauge Railroading Primer*. Later, while working as managing editor with another hobby book publisher, I wrote a comprehensive article about Lionel O gauge trolleys for *OGR*, followed by a product review of the then-new ETS trains. I also wrote several model railroading books for my employer at that time including one titled *Getting Started with Lionel Trains*. But my full-time association with this magazine began well over a decade later, commencing with Run 226, the January 2008 edition. This current issue, Run 250, marks Run 25 for me—a mere 10 percent of the total lifespan of the magazine. But I must say that it has been a fun ride thus far!

It's important, I believe, to keep in mind that this magazine

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isn't just published *for* our readers; it's largely produced by our readers. Look through the pages of any issue and you'll see that the bylines on the majority of layout features, how-to articles, and photos credit folks who are not part of the regular *OGR* staff. That's because these individuals wrote the material in their own words, and in many cases either they or a friend also created the photographs. To be sure, I devote a lot of time to editing and, when necessary, working closely with an author over time to shape things into their final form, but what you see in the published product pretty much represents that individual author's words describing his or her own approach, perspective, and techniques.

But please don't think that you need to be a skilled or experienced writer or photographer to see your layout or project appear in the pages of this magazine. If you or someone you know has something to share with the O gauge community, don't hesitate to let us know about it. It's really as easy as sending an e-mail to [editor@ogaugerr.com](mailto:editor@ogaugerr.com) along with a brief description of the proposed article and, if possible, a couple of sample photos. I will make every effort to respond promptly with a "yea" or "nay," and if the subject appears to be something that will likely appeal to our readers, I'll send along a copy of our easy-to-follow "Author Guidelines."

I like to think that we in the OGR family are doing our part to support and grow the O gauge segment of this great hobby. There's no disputing that our favorite leisure pastime has seen significant changes in recent years, and there will undoubtedly be more changes in both *OGR* and the hobby's future. We have over the past 15 or so years seen the production of a treasure trove of O gauge product and technological advances, the likes of which could not have been dreamed of by those of us who were in the hobby back in the 1980s or before. This magazine—the largest devoted solely to this segment of the model railroading hobby—will remain true to our goals of providing the best possible value to our readers and advertisers with content that informs, educates, inspires, and entertains.

Pending some truly miraculous scientific developments and medical breakthroughs, I won't be around to see the 500th issue of *OGR*, but I do hope that there will be a 500th issue. I remain very confident that this creative hobby of ours will most surely be enjoyed by many future generations. After all, the mystique of railroading and model railroading is very hard to avoid. 🚂

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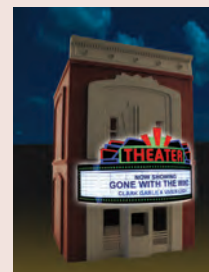
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During WWII, B&O's Mt. Clare Shops in Baltimore, Maryland, erected 40 of the road's new T3 class 4-8-2 steam locomotives to help with the burgeoning war traffic. In another first for O gauge, Sunset Models is building 1:48 scale models of the B&O Mountain type in Life-Time Brass. Each 3-rail model has Cruise Commander

speed control, RailSounds 4.0 with two or four chuffs synchronized to the driver's rotation, and Turbo III smoke. Minimum curves are O54 for 3-rail and 56" radius for 2-rail. Available with the huge Vanderbilt tender (shown) or the standard B&O coal tender, the no-deposit reservation price is \$1,199.95 with anticipated arrival in June 2011. Reserve at your 3rd Rail dealer, 800-373-7245, or [www.3rdrail.com](http://www.3rdrail.com).



### Patriotic Geeps

Finished with Weaver Scalecoat paint and assembled at Weaver's factory in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, these GP38-2 diesels feature the 1976 bicentennial color schemes from Conrail and Boston & Maine. Liveries for 11 other roads as well as undecorated units are also available as listed on the Weaver Models website. These Geeps feature 1:48 scale dimensions, two motors with flywheels, die-cast running gear and fuel tank, and a molded plastic body on a stamped steel frame. Available in 2-rail or 3-rail with TMCC, RailSounds 4.0, and EOB speed control at \$409.00. Also available are 2-rail without sound for \$299.00 and 3-rail with elec-

tronic reverse and bell-horn warning sounds at \$299.00. Minimum curves are O31 for 3-rail or 36" radius for 2-rail. Weaver Models, P.O. Box 231, Northumberland, PA 17857; 570-473-9434; [www.weavermodels.com](http://www.weavermodels.com).

### I Love Toy Trains Encore

The 14 videos of the award-winning *I Love Toy Trains* produced by TM Books & Video between 1993 and 2005 have drawn repeated requests from fans, young and old alike, for an all-new video. Tom McComas and his crew have answered the call, and the *I Love Toy Trains—All Aboard* DVD features all-new footage with a mix of real and toy train action, state-of-the-art special effects, and new songs by singer and songwriter James Coffey. The 40-minute program sells for \$9.99 and is available at many local hobby shops and online outlets as well as directly from TM Books & Video, P.O. Box 9228, Michigan City, IN 46361; 800-892-2822; [www.tmbv.com](http://www.tmbv.com).



### GE's Inaugural Diesel

In the early 1960s, GE began sales of its new line of locomotive for universal duty with the 2500 hp U25B. Of the 478 U25Bs built and delivered to 17 railroads by the time production ended in 1966, the Erie-Lackawanna bought 27. The 1:48 scale U25B from MTH captures the workhorse appearance of the full-scale U-boat from Erie and features MTH DCS with Proto-Sound 2.0, fan-driven smoke, and Proto-Scale 3-2 trucks with coil-operated Proto-Couplers. Available with tinplate or scale wheels at \$429.95 from your MTH retailer in Erie-Lackawanna 2504, 2505, and 2510 (shown) as well as Great Northern, New York Central, Santa Fe, and Southern Pacific.

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### Figures and Fixtures

Woodland Scenics has two new sets of detailed layout accessories available in their ever-expanding O scale Scenic Accents line. One is the sculpted and hand-painted A2763 Pedestrians, which includes four men and two women. The other is the 17-piece A2764 Street Accessories set that includes six parking meters, manhole covers, fire hydrants, trash cans, benches, street corner mailbox, vintage folding door telephone booth, and woman rummaging in her purse. Suggested retail for either of the two sets is \$24.99. See the entire Scenic Accents line and other Woodland Scenics landscape products at your local hobby shop or visit [www.woodlandscenics.com](http://www.woodlandscenics.com).



### Broadway Limited

With its first run of the PRR Broadway Limited sold out, Golden Gate Depot is taking orders for a second run of 75 train sets with four cars in each set. Built from extruded aluminum, each car has flush-mounted polycarbonate windows

with window frames, shades, and even Venetian blinds. Detailed interiors include painted figures and overhead LED lighting. Three different sets of cars are offered to create an eight-car Broadway Limited with four Blue Ribbon Fleet coaches. Price for each of the three available four-car sets is \$699.95 with arrival expected in the second half of 2011. To reserve your sets, see your Golden Gate Depot dealer or order at [www.goldengatedepot.com](http://www.goldengatedepot.com).

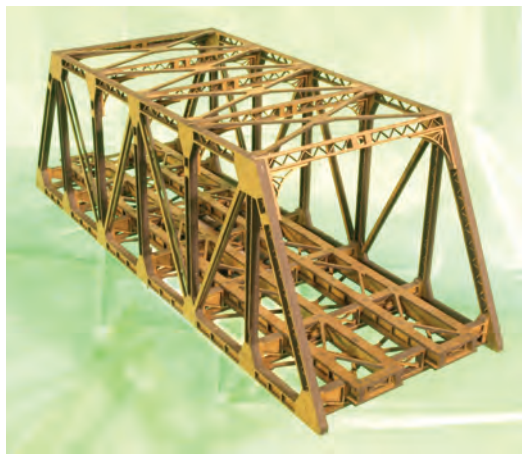


### Weirton Steel Set

Patrick's Trains is offering an exclusive, uncataloged MTH set in Weirton Steel livery. The set includes a 4-6-0 steam locomotive equipped with Proto-Sounds 2, Weirton Steel gondola car, tank car, N-5 caboose, 12 sections of RealTrax to form a 31" x 51" oval, RailWare interactive DVD, and a 50-watt transformer with wireless Digital Remote Commander. Also available is a separate Weirton Steel discharge hopper car that can only be purchased with the set. Number 30-4211-1 sells for \$379.99, and the separate sale 30-75367 hopper is \$44.95. Available exclusively from Patrick's Trains, 142 29th St., Wheeling, WV 26003; 304-232-0714; [www.patstrains.com](http://www.patstrains.com).

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## Silk City Bridges

Silk City Bridgeworks offers a line of bridges and elevated structures in many styles and configurations. Pictured is a double-track, 24" Warren truss bridge based on Pennsylvania Railroad drawings. This bridge, made of Masonite, can be ordered in lengths ranging from 24" to 48" in either single-track or double-track configuration. Track spacing on the model is 3-1/2". The height will accommodate any O scale car including all double stacks. Price of this bridge is \$235.00. Silk City Bridgeworks, 185 6th Ave., Paterson, NJ 07524; 973-553-1555; [www.njhirailers.com](http://www.njhirailers.com).



## Trinity Industries Covered Hopper

Prototypes for the CSX 5161 cu ft center-sill hoppers transport bulk shipments of grain. On the CSX car, the elongated loading hatches open while the outlet chutes model those with gravity-pneumatic feed. This 1:48 scale Atlas O model features etched metal roof walks and platforms in addition to metal stirrups and grab irons. Other road names have the correct styles of hatches and chutes. Both 3-rail and 2-rail trucks have rotating roller-bearing caps. Minimum curves are O54 for 3-rail or 36" radius for 2-rail. Other new road names in this release are DM&E, GATX, SIRX and UP-CMO, with each car wearing one of four available numbers per road. New road numbers are also available in BNSF livery. \$82.95 (3-rail) or \$87.95 (2-rail) from Atlas O dealers. 

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### How would you like to show your trains and layout to your fellow O gauge railroaders?

You can take your photos using a digital camera capable of at least 3.3 megapixels set to the best JPEG image. Please send only original, unedited JPEG files. Color prints of 4"x 6" or larger are also fine. Be sure to include brief notes about the trains in the photos and any other information you'd like to share, such as the size of your layout, unique scenery, make of track, power supply or control system, and so forth.

We are looking for quality photography with good lighting and clear images; however, on-camera flash photos are generally not acceptable. Send your photo, CD, or prints to Readers' Rails, 33 Sheridan Road, Poland, Ohio 44514-1680. Or you can e-mail your image and text files to [editor@ogaugerr.com](mailto:editor@ogaugerr.com).

Jim Dorsey photographed this diminutive On30 Porter locomotive hauling a mine train across a trestle on Greg Reimann's Peedyvill RR in Norco, California. Greg's 8' x 12' railroad features both 3-rail O gauge and On30 narrow gauge, each operating in appropriate settings. His roster includes examples of Lionel, MTH, and Bachmann motive power and rolling stock. We hope to show much more of Jim's layout in a future issue—a great example of what can be accomplished in a modest space.



Jim Policastro has created a scene on his layout that contrasts the very old with the very new. That's a vintage Lionel 253 tinplate boxcab overtaking a contemporary Amtrak Genesis made by Williams. Of course, we know that in the real world, that Genesis locomotive would have to be parked or crawling along to be overtaken by a boxcab.





A Santa Fe maintenance crew has joined the crew of that Santa Fe Geep idling in the background for a quick bite to eat at Eric's Drive-In. The proprietor of this establishment is none other than Eric Cartman, that overweight, self-centered character in the notorious "South Park" TV series. Bill Pyper of Salem, Oregon, created some new graphics and placed a plastic model of Eric atop a Scale University Dari-King Drive In. The scene is on Bill's Mendacity Canyon Railroad.

Ron Mauch of Wichita Falls, Texas, builds a different O gauge layout in his garage every Christmas season, and here's one view from his 2010 project. This amusement park features animated accessories from Lionel, Department 56, Lemax, and Disney, and is being served by rail transportation from the past, represented by a Lionel 4-4-0, and the future, as exemplified by that Disney World monorail.



It's a hot day on Daniel Kleine's layout in Hobart, Indiana, and a crew of workers is icing a Railway Express Agency refrigerator car prior to its loading. A few ice blocks have gotten away from the loader and are now watering the weeds. The icing platform is an enhanced Suncoast Models craftsman kit. Another scene from Daniel's layout appeared in "Readers' Rails" in Run 248, and we inadvertently credited that photo to David Kleine. Honestly, it was Daniel's photo!



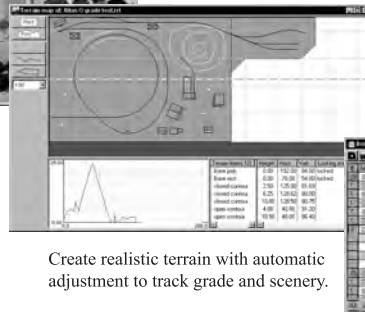
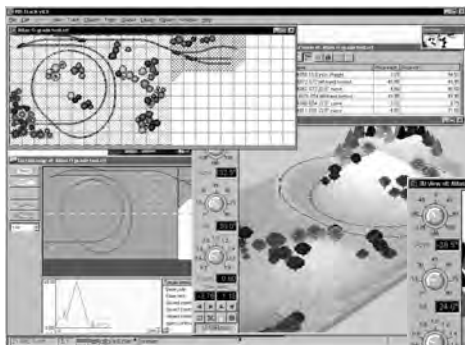
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## Sunset/3rd Rail North Shore Line Silverliners

Review and Photos by George Brown

As with other interurban railroads during the first half of the 20th century, the North Shore Line was an electrified rail link connecting the cities of Chicago and Milwaukee with passenger and some freight service. The line ran along the shore of Lake Michigan and was completely electrified using trolley wires. But by the late 1940s, the interurban era was waning

across the country including on the North Shore Line. Unlike the major railroads that had the capital to invest in new stainless steel streamline trains, the North Shore Line was already experiencing irreversible annual losses.

By 1950, in an attempt to retain what was left of its declining ridership and to hopefully attract new riders, the North Shore Line repainted several of its existing cars in a clever scheme of red and specially decorated silver that simulated fluted stainless steel. This bold paint scheme and the catchy name of Silverliner were supposed to make the line's interurban passenger cars built in the 1920s and 1930s by several different manufacturers, such as Standard and St. Louis Car, look new and modern. But even with a fresh coat of bright red and fluted silver paint, the cars were no more than refurbished equipment from before the Great Depression.

On North Shore Line tracks and in the streets of Milwaukee, the cars ran under trolley wires using traditional trolley poles for electrical pickup. However, in Chicago the cars ran on the city's elevated commuter rail system using power from a third rail shoe on each truck. Rounded ends and full-swing couplers let the North Shore Line cars negotiate the tight curves encountered on urban streets and elevated lines. These cars were slightly over 55' long and normally seated 52 passengers in the coaches.

The prototype dining car, built by Pullman in the late 1920s, was the same length as the coaches without traction motors or trolley poles. Electricity for the car's heat and lights came from the powered cars via cables. However, the dining car did have control equipment at each end for running the train if necessitated by the car's chance location at the head of its train.

I understand that many of the North Shore Line's cars from the late 1920s and early 1930s were capable of speeds in the 80–90 mph range. Some are still operable today at railway museums, while others are on static display.





### Construction and Features

Our 1:48 scale three-car set of North Shore Line Silverliners consists of a powered and a nonpowered coach plus a non-powered dining car. This set was 1 of 50

Silverliners built for 3-rail operation, and an additional 25 sets were built in the North Shore Line's Greenliner livery. Sunset/3rd Rail built the same number of sets for 2-rail operation. The powered coach is lettered as car number 739, while

the nonpowered or dummy coach is number 738. The dining car is lettered as number 415, which was the only prototype diner repainted in the Silverliner scheme.

As with all 3rd Rail products, the Silverliners were handcrafted in China from flat and etched sheet brass plus lost wax brass castings. I understand from Scott Mann, president of Sunset/3rd Rail, that the red paint on the models is an exact match for the color of the real Silverliners. In a phone conversation with Scott, he explained how he and his builder went through numerous attempts before they achieved success with the paint color. I can't attest to the accuracy of the red paint, but I can say without reservation that the shadow gray striping over the base silver does an amazing job of simulating fluted stainless steel.

As with prior products from 3rd Rail, the exterior of each car is highly detailed, as shown in the photos. The trolley poles are cosmetic only and can be put either in the raised position or latched down. As on the real North Shore Line cars, trolley poles are only on the coaches and not on the

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dining car. However, all three cars have simulated wooden walkways on their roofs.

On both 3-rail and 2-rail versions, operating scale Kadee couplers mounted in sprung draft gear boxes couple the three cars together. Because each car as well as the complete train is bidirectional with either end running forward, both the powered and dummy coaches have a headlight mounted realistically on the vestibule door on one end. Naturally, the headlight faces the track ahead, or behind. At the other end of each coach, the end door has prototypical brackets for holding a headlight. Only the headlight on the powered coach is directional—the headlight on the dummy coach lights continuously regardless of the train's direction. No headlight or mounting brackets are on the dining car.

Details underneath the floor of each car are profuse with a number of them visible at normal viewing angles. I especially liked the detailing on the truck side frames, which are lost wax castings. Even the third rail pickup shoes of the real cars are cast into these side frames. Of course, only

holding the car upside down reveals the full effect of the underside detailing. What really surprised me was the handsome dark brown satin finish rather than the flat black usually painted on railcar undersides and trucks, especially since the passenger steps and tube pilots on each car are gloss black.

Each truck on the powered and dummy cars carries a center-rail pickup roller. On the powered coach, a small DC motor with a gearbox on each axle powers each truck, and a pair of rubber tires provides excellent traction. According to Scott, the powered coach pulled not only



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its two dummy cars but also a six-car set of his Golden Gate Depot streamline passenger cars. Inside the powered coach, electronics for the TMCC, Cruise Commander, and RailSounds 4.0 systems occupy nearly two thirds of the coach area and are hidden behind bulkheads and blackened windows.

As attractive and detailed as the individual cars are on the outside, their interiors are the set's star attraction. The forward third of the powered coach as well as the entire dummy coach has coach seating with several painted figures in place as passengers. The dining car interior has not only the dining section complete with tables, chairs, and passengers but also the kitchen area. Both the dummy cars also have the requisite lavatories, but with clear windows instead of the prototypically correct frosted glass. After all, with frosted windows, the interior details would be hidden from view. The control stations at both ends of each car are modeled and are also closed off making full vestibules for passenger entry and exit from the car. I

expected at least the station at the front of the powered coach to be set up for running the train with a motorman at the controls, but not so. A voltage-regulated LED light strip mounted in the roof of each car provides constant brightness lighting of each car's interior.

### At Trackside

From their inaugural run and through my entire review, the Silverliner's motors and drive gears were delightfully quiet. With a low gear ratio, startups were slow and smooth with no lunging or jerking. I expected the same performance characteristic throughout the train's entire speed range and was pleased with the show the Silverliners put on.

On the editorial Carpet Central Railroad's Atlas O72 and O54 main lines, O72 crossovers, and a temporary loop with O45 curves, the Silverliners tracked without fault. Their minimum curve is advertised as O42, and given the limited swing

of the scale couplers, that's pretty good. The only operating anomaly I noticed was the dining car lifted slightly as it tracked through the crossover between my two main lines. The problem turned out to be that one of the pickup roller assemblies wouldn't telescope as it should. After a minor adjustment plus some light oil on the metal frame for the roller, the car tracked solidly.

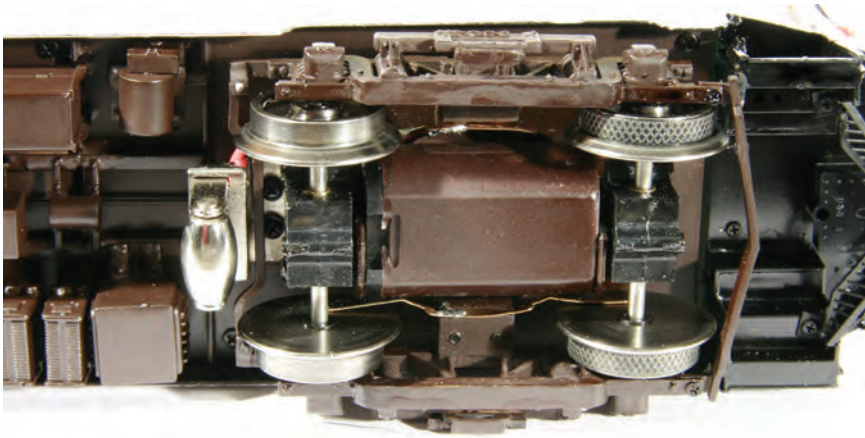
As delivered, the Cruise Commander board is set up for 100 speed steps with speed control enabled. Except for a couple of turns around the CCRR in conventional operation, I ran the Silverliners exclusively using command control. I found the combination of the Cruise Commander with the truck-mounted DC motors to be pleasingly responsive to changes in the throttle settings for increasing or decreasing the train's speed.

To select 32 or 100 speed steps and to turn the speed control on or off, the Cruise Commander uses command sequences entered through the hand-held controllers. Running the Silverliners with 100 speed steps requires either the original TMCC system or a Legacy control system operating in CAB-1 mode. Entering the Silverliner into my Legacy system as a TMCC locomotive with RailSounds worked fine in 32-step operation without having to reconfigure the Cruise Commander board. But in a nutshell, I preferred 100-step operation.

As the performance testing results show, the three cars of the Silverliner set with their small motors and LED lighting strip are literally cool runners. Their current draw proved to be incredibly low—so low that I ran two sets of tests just to verify the readings.







## At the End of the Run

For the traction fan and modeler, the North Shore Line Silverliner set could prove interesting. Yes, its retail price is expensive, but considering the set is hand-built brass and available only in small double-digit numbers, it could definitely have an appeal. 🚂

### North Shore Line Silverliner set

Retail price: \$1,199.95 at 3rd Rail or 3rd Rail dealers

800-373-7245; [www.3rdrail.com](http://www.3rdrail.com)

### Silverliner Performance

(sound: on; speed control: on)

**Weight of Powered Coach:** 2 lbs, 12 oz

**Weight of Nonpowered Diner:** 2 lbs, 4 oz

**Weight of Nonpowered Coach:** 2 lbs, 9 oz

**Distance Between Pickup Rollers:** 4-1/4"

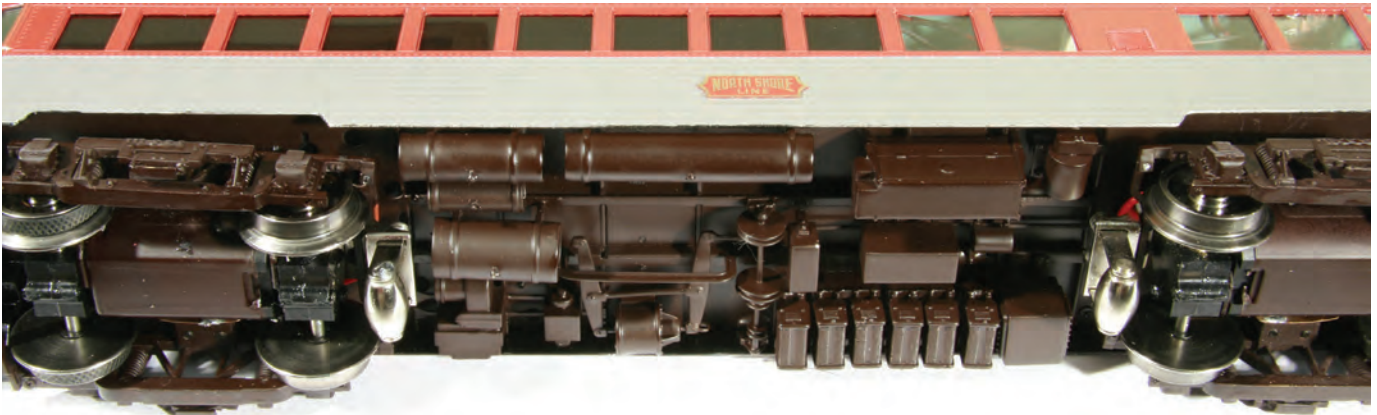
**Tractive Effort:** 1 lb, 8 oz @ 7.9 V, 4.1 A, 32.4 W

**Minimum Sustained Speed @ 18 VAC:**

2 scale mph @ 0.3 A, 5 W

**Maximum Tested Speed @ 18 VAC:**

60 scale mph @ 0.9 A, 16 W



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# Atlas O EMD Phase 2 F3

Review and Photos by George Brown

Between late 1946 and the end of 1948, EMD built its 1500 hp F3 diesel locomotives in four slightly different variations, which are colloquially referred to as Phases 1 through 4. The Atlas O F3s featured in this review are 1:48 scale 3-rail models of the early Phase 2 locomotives built for the Western Pacific Railroad. The prototypes of these early F3s had four flat-topped 36" fan housings with tall shrouds on the roof of both A and B units. Additionally, the vent at the upper rear of the body was considerably longer than the same vent on Phase 1 units. On Phase 2 F3s, wire mesh screens covered the full length of the upper body panel, including all the vents and radiators. Two portholes on each side of the A unit had wire mesh screens between them that covered four rectangular openings. Note that the B

units had three portholes on each side with no vents or screens between them.

## Western Pacific F3s

In mid-1947, the Western Pacific took delivery of three new A-B-B sets of Phase 2 F3s to power its portion of the California Zephyr. Owned and operated jointly by the Burlington, Rio Grande, and Western Pacific, the California Zephyr was a premium service streamline passenger train that ran between Chicago and San Francisco beginning in the late 1940s. Each trio of Western Pacific F3s pulled its train on the WP's portion of the California Zephyr's route westward from Salt Lake City.

All three sets of the WP's California Zephyr F3s were loaded with options from EMD including stainless steel sides, steam generators, dynamic braking, and two headlight housings. A Mars light was in the upper housing, with a standard headlight in the lower one, which was mounted on the nose door. Road numbers for the WP's three sets of F3s were 801, 802, and 803, while individual units within each set were identified as A, B, and C.

Our evaluation models carried engine number 801 on the powered A unit's number boards, with the powered B unit lettered as 801B and the nonpowered (dummy) B unit as 801C. In

keeping with the real California Zephyr F3s, only the A unit was lettered with the Western Pacific road name. The first B unit wore the Western Pacific Feather logo on its side and its unit number of 801B in small characters on the lower rear corner. The second B unit had no road markings other than its unit number of 801C, also in small characters on the lower rear corner.

## Other Phase 2 F3s

Before I get into the construction and features of the Western Pacific F3 models, here's an overview of what other road names Atlas O offers in this initial release of the Phase 2 F3s and what individual units are available. Depending on the road name and how much extra pulling power you want, you can couple together one or two powered units along with one or more dummy units. With the number and mix of units available in each livery, I recommend perusing the Atlas website or its quarterly catalogs for a full matrix of available F-series models.

Except for the B&O two-pack of powered and dummy A units, A and B units are sold separately in either powered or dummy versions with correct unit numbers and details for each road. Liveries for both powered and dummy A units are Central of Georgia, Erie, Missouri Pacific, and Southern Pacific. Powered and dummy B unit road names are Erie, Missouri Pacific, and Southern Pacific. Powered and dummy Phase 2 B units are also available in





New York Central to run with Atlas O's previously released Phase 1 F3s.

## Construction and Features

As with other Atlas O Master Line diesels, the Phase 2 F3 utilizes a molded plastic body with a die-cast metal frame. Each powered unit rides on die-cast trucks with a flywheel-equipped can motor driving both axles through a metal gear train. Control electronics include TMCC, under license from Lionel, plus Engineer-On-Board speed control from Train America Studios. Lionel RailSounds 4.0 reproduces the signature bark of the EMD normally aspirated 567 V16 diesel and also the characteristic whine of the real F3's generator. Dummy units are built the same as their powered siblings but without the motors and electronics.

As the accompanying photos show, separate details abound on all three units.

On top of the bodies are scale-sized lifting rings and fan housings with separate fan blades inside. The twin exhaust stacks deliver smoke from a fan-driven smoke unit located inside each powered A or B unit. See-through screens cover the vents for the dynamic brake resistors. At the back of each roof are the stacks and popoff lines from the steam generator. Even the A unit's horns are detailed with bolt heads at the diaphragm end.

On the body sides are wire handrails and see-through screens that cover the openings for the vents and radiators. But unlike the open vents and grilles on locomotives from other manufacturers, Atlas seals all of these openings with plastic that is finished appropriately for its location. By sealing the body shell, it essentially becomes a large base reflex chamber for the RailSounds system. The speaker rides inside the die-cast fuel tank located under the center of the engine, and with the

sealed body and die-cast frame, the resulting deep base sound is amazingly realistic...and exciting.

Clear windows at the A-unit's cab help to acoustically seal the body and also protect the two crew members inside the cab from the elements. Separate wiper blades enhance the windshield, and on each side are simulated automotive-style vent windows. Inside the cab is a plastic shroud that hides the front motor from view. Porthole windows are a translucent black plastic with silver trim simulating metal frames.

All three units are closely coupled with realistic operating diaphragms between them. These two-piece plastic diaphragms telescope as necessary, especially as the engines travel through turns. At the back end of the A unit and both ends of the B units are separate MU cables and a tinplate knuckle coupler. As is a general practice on O gauge car body diesels like the F3s, the couplers between each unit do not operate.





A coil-operated tinplate coupler is only on the A-unit's truck-mounted pilot. Most consists of car body diesels are A-A, A-B-A, or A-B-B-A with the trailing A unit coupled to the train. In these cases, simply using the TMCC, Legacy, or DCS controller opens the trailing A unit's coil coupler to either couple or uncouple the locomotives from the train. But with the Western Pacific A-B-B set, the dummy coupler on the second B unit mates with the lead car in the train, which makes coupling or uncoupling a manual operation.

For the scale 3-rail hobbyist, each F3 A unit includes a separate scale pilot with an operating scale coupler for owner installation on the unit's frame using instructions in the operating manual. With the scale pilot installed on the locomotive, Atlas suggests a minimum O72 curve—O36 is the minimum curve with the truck-mounted pilot.

Installing the scale pilot without the scale coupler is a relatively easy process, and the engine can be put back to its original condition with the tinplate pilot and coil coupler. About 20 minutes and a #1 Phillips screwdriver were all I needed to temporarily install the scale pilot without its coupler. However, installing the scale coupler along with the scale pilot is irreversible because the modification requires cutting the coil coupler mount off the front truck. To be candid, if the A-B-B trio of F3s were mine, I would have already converted the A unit to a scale pilot and coupler by this point in my review.

The paint and decoration on our evaluation F3s were quintessential Atlas O—in a word, flawless. The Western Pacific color scheme isn't particularly intricate, but the dominate silver with light orange

and satin black trim gives the three units a visual prominence regardless of their surroundings. I especially liked the hand-painted details around the fuel tank fills. And the detailed die-cast truck side frames are simply spectacular in their silver finish.

## At Trackside

As noted in the performance specifications, four motors and 16 driving wheels made for a load-lugging set of diesels. For their relatively short length, the powered F3s had a higher than normal weight on their driving wheels, and the rubber tires on eight of those wheels were a big help in developing an impressive tractive effort.

I ran the locomotives using both the original TMCC Command Base and CAB-1 and the new Legacy system with the Legacy Command Base and CAB-2. Even though the EOB speed control was designed for the original TMCC hardware, it performed equally well with Lionel's Legacy system in either CAB-1 or TMCC mode.

On the CCRR rails, the triple-head F3s were fabulous performers at all speeds with one exception. Both the A and B units are capable of running on O36 curves. However, on each of our B units, the step beside the front truck conflicted with that truck's brake cylinder linkage. This conflict restricted truck swing to my O72 curves. Although Atlas states that the B units will negotiate O45 or wider curves, neither of the leading trucks on our evaluation B units would swing enough to run on my O54 loop.



But it's a very dark cloud that doesn't have a silver edge somewhere. In the case of the Atlas F3 B unit, each step is separate from the body with a screw fastening it to the cast frame. A few seconds with a #0 Phillips screwdriver, and the two conflicting steps were off of each unit, which to me was a cleaner way than removing the brake cylinders and linkage from the front truck. All three units then ran fine on my O54 curves and also on a temporary O36 loop of track.

As to the F3's audio-visual features, wow! With the F3's body serving as a base reflex chamber, I found the sound reproduction from the RailSounds 4.0 repertoire to be more than just pleasing. I enjoy railroad sounds, especially those emitting from the exhaust stacks and horns of real diesels. To me, the diesel exhaust sounds emanating from the pair of powered units was...awesome. And for O gauge railroaders who like smoke from the exhaust stacks, the powered F3s generated enough white smoke to effectively emulate a real EMD 567 with trashed piston rings on all 16 cylinders.

On the front of the A unit are the prototypically correct headlight and Mars light with golden white LEDs. The first



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time I powered up the locomotive, the Mars light immediately caught my attention with what initially appeared to be a realistic oscillation. But instead of oscillating, the bulbs are actually two LEDs on each side of the light housing that toggle alternately on and off. Running the F3s in reverse turned off the headlight and Mars light and illuminated a pair of red LED marker lights.

As I lay on the floor in my train room with the 1:48 scale F3s idling only a few inches away, a waft of air from outside the open widow reminded me of a similar cold and rainy winter night of years past. On that long ago January night, I stood beside several idling F units that had just arrived from Dallas. All that was missing from the Atlas F3s to complete that scene from years ago was the scent of diesel exhaust fumes mixed with that distinctive aroma of hot steel.

## At the End of the Run

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit with the 1:48 scale Western Pacific 801A, B, and C from Atlas O. They will undoubtedly prove to be stellar performers at the head of a train comprised of the forthcoming California Zephyr passenger cars from Atlas O.

1637-1 Western Pacific F3 #801A (powered)

1638-1 Western Pacific F3 #801B (powered)

1688-1 Western Pacific F3 #801C (unpowered)

Retail price: \$499.95 (powered), \$219.95 (unpowered) at Atlas O dealers

Atlas O; [www.atlaso.com](http://www.atlaso.com)

## Atlas O F3 TMCC Performance

(smoke units: off; sound: on; speed control: on)

**Weight on A-Unit Driving Wheels:** 4 lbs, 7 oz

**Weight on B-Unit Driving Wheels:** 4 lbs, 4 oz

**Weight of Nonpowered B-Unit:** 2 lbs, 14 oz

**Distance Between Pickup Rollers:**

1st and 2nd: 1-1/2"

1st and 3rd: 6-1/4"

1st and 4th: 7-3/4"

**Tractive Effort @ 18 VAC:** 3 lb, 4 oz @ 5.4 A, 97 W

**Minimum Sustained Speed @ 18 VAC:**

2 scale mph @ 1.5 A, 27 W

**Maximum Tested Speed @ 18 VAC:**

60 scale mph @ 1.8 A, 32 W

## Test Train

Eight O scale 80 aluminum passenger cars; train weight 13 lbs; pull to move train 12 oz; (amps for car interior lights excluded from performance data)



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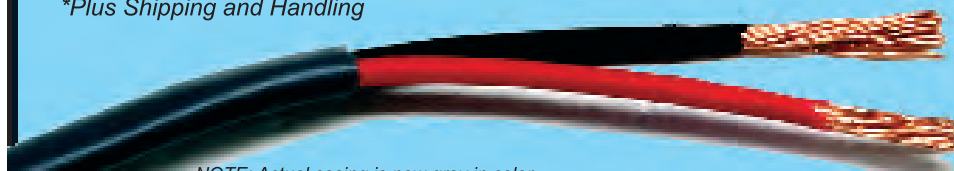
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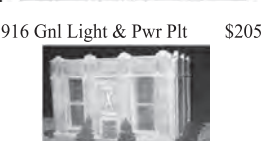
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GG-1 179 PRR x 5, Am, CR

NW-2 C&O, SF, Seabd 155

FA-1 AA 225 B 80 ABA 299

B&O, LV, L&N, NYC, PRR, RI,

SF, WM, LNE, GN

PA-1 AA 225 B 80 ABA 299

SF, PRR, RG, UP, D&H, NYC, CP

F-7 AA 205 B 70 ABA 269

Am, ACL, B&O, Burl, C&O, GN,

Lack, NH, PRR, UP

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B&O, D&H, PRR x 2, NYC, Demo

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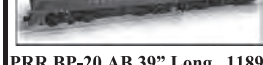
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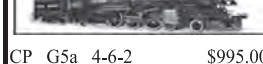
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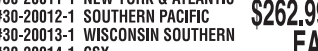


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# A Showcase Layout

Article by Marty Fitzhenry    Photos by Jim Barrett

Eliot Weisman has spent the greater portion of his life in show business and also a good part of it as a model railroader.

His first layout in 1947 was just a simple loop, but from that early beginning, he was hooked. A second layout was located in the attic of his family's home in New Rochelle, New York. That layout held two main lines and two sidings. Then came college and getting started in a career, and he put his trains aside in favor of the Wharton

School of Business and a major in accounting and law. He subsequently spent several years in the accounting field, and in 1969 went on to put his experience to work on Wall Street.

In 1974 Eliot began a career representing various show business artists. His enthusiasm for this business, like his fascination for trains, went right to the top. He represented Frank Sinatra, Liza Minnelli, Paul Anka, Julio Iglesias, and Ben Vereen

and is still active today with Don Rickles and Steve Lawrence and Edie Gorme. Although he leads a very active professional life that places a great many demands on his time and attention, he nevertheless manages to make time to follow his interest for model railroading.

In 1990 he contracted with Don Danhauser and Vernon Peachey of Model Railroad Custom Benchwork to design and build an extensive multilevel layout that



Eliot's layout combines realistic scenes with his extensive collection of Department 56 buildings. This MTH Santa Fe E8 is seen on the inside main passing a mixed freight headed in the opposite direction.





The roundhouse area features a 36" fully indexed turntable that easily accommodates his largest motive power.

would occupy the garage of his Florida home. The layout would feature two main lines with reversing loops, a large freight yard, and a roundhouse area. There was also one more requirement: it had to include his extensive collection of Department 56 ceramic buildings.

A few years later, Eliot moved to another home in Florida. Being a true fan of 3-rail trains and a great showman, he planned and prepared for his greatest layout yet by adding a 20' x 50' hurricane-proof room onto his new home. This room has natural lighting as well as high ceilings and custom track lighting throughout and is fully climate-controlled. Once the space was ready, he once again contracted Don and Vernon to build his long dreamed about layout and showcase for his trains and Department 56 collection.

The design for this new layout was the handiwork of Eliot alone. He knew exactly what he wanted and needed to do to create the show layout that exists today. He designed a track plan comprised of five major loops set on three separate levels.

Each loop includes reversing loops, and all three levels can be accessed by any train. For example, it is possible to take a locomotive out of the roundhouse on the lower level and ultimately maneuver it up to the top level.

The layout uses Ross track and switches exclusively and is equipped with a custom-made 36" fully indexing turntable. Each of the two lower main lines as well as the two second-level mains crosses a custom-built two-track fully operational bascule bridge that was designed and built by Vernon. All switch motors are Tortise machines.

Once the layout was installed in the new train room, work began on the fine details. The layout was designed to highlight significant phases and places in his life, so New York and New Jersey scenes are amply represented.

Eliot spent time positioning his Department 56 buildings around the layout. He developed a New York City area on the top and topped it off with a lighted 4' tall Empire State Building. If you look down on Times Square, you can see the



Both this coaling tower and the nearby high-voltage transmission tower are imposing structures located near the engine servicing area.





This commuter run is passing through a suburban area en route to the heart of the Big Apple.



A number of Lionel operating accessories are featured on the layout, including the Icing Station (above) and the 464 Saw Mill (below).



ball drop for New Year's Eve. The layout also has Christmas villages, amusement parks, and a spooky Halloween scene, which are all created with illuminated Department 56 structures. Don installed over 3,000 trees in the various scenes along with all the additional landscaping details.

About the same time Vernon and Don were installing the layout, Eliot heard about the new DCS that MTH was introducing. He also knew about TMCC from Lionel and was uncertain whether to go with DCS or TMCC. That uncertainty was removed when he met with Mike Wolf who persuaded him to give DCS a try. At this point, the layout had been wired for a common ground. Mike suggested that Eliot meet with Bill Lucas, owner of Ready-to-Roll Trains in nearby Miami, to discuss the most effective ways of incorporating DCS into his new layout. Bill, in turn, advised Eliot to get in touch with me since I also have a condo in south Florida.

I looked at the layout and tried a few different things for him and determined that if he wanted to make this a DCS layout, it really should be rewired from scratch. When I advised him that this was the route he should follow, he said, "Go do it." I started rewiring it, and two weeks later it was done. Testing revealed that it had perfect DCS signal on every inch of track with consistent "10" readings showing on the hand-held remote. The layout now has three TIUs and five Z-4000 transformers. Yard tracks, reverse loops, and turntable tracks are on toggle switches. I also installed TMCC even though his locomotives of choice these days tend to be PS2 locomotives.

Eliot is a very accomplished DCS operator and has no problem making up train consists or completing any number of complicated moves and operations.

After we had reached the point with the layout constructed, control system in place, and trains up and running, I figured we were pretty much done with the major aspects of building the layout. However, while Eliot and I were walking together through the TCA York Train Meet, his attention was drawn to the intriguing display of Miller Engineering lighted signs and to the assortment of lighted vehicles created by Jack Pearce. Multiple purchases later, his layout has now taken on yet another look.

Eliot always strives to improve on what to some of us would appear to be an already perfect thing. Just when we thought everything was about as fine as it could get, he decided that he wanted a large city built over the north end freight yard. He still had many Department 56 buildings in his collection and wanted them used on the layout. Walter Brooks from Malden, Massachusetts, and I constructed the benchwork for this city addition and installed many of the buildings. Don once again





A Dreyfuss J3 Hudson with its PT centipede tender hauls the 20th Century Limited across the layout's most impressive trestle.

Any roads that appeal to Eliot are apt to be seen operating on the layout. Here, NYC, UP, and PRR passenger trains surround a couple of RS diesels with a consist of refrigerator cars.







**ABOVE:** The main control panel provides a full schematic of the three-level, five-loop track plan.

**RIGHT:** No showman's layout would be complete without a colorful Southern Pacific Daylight playing the rails.



**LEFT:** A commuter train passes the animated amusement park. The layout also features a Christmas village and a Halloween scene.

**BELOW:** Eliot has worked with many show business stars over the course of his career including a couple of the folks seen in that billboard at lower left. The SD70ACE exiting the tunnel is an MTH model.



Eliot (right) with his son David



## A gantry crane for your steam locomotive servicing facility



# The All-Important Ash Pit

Article and Photos by Eliot Scher

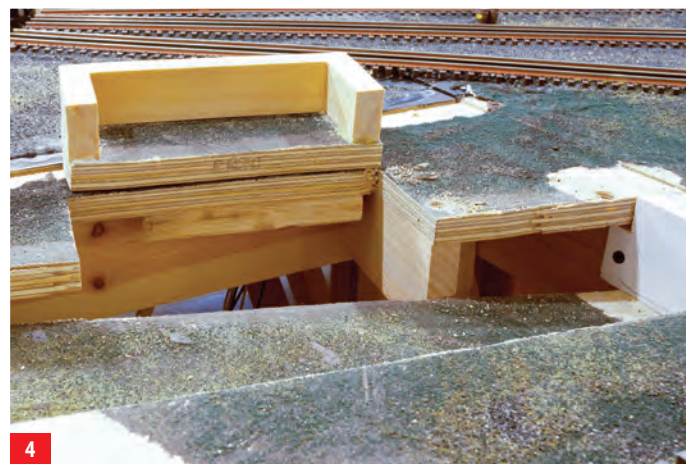
Every facility serving steam locomotives needed some means of emptying out the firebox. So if you want to make a truly inclusive model of a steam locomotive servicing facility, as I did, you will need an ash pit somewhere on the grounds, as depicted in Photo 1. Having researched quite a few excellent sources on steam engines and locomotive servicing facilities, I learned that unless the firebox of a coal-fired steamer was cleaned out regularly, the locomotive would lose power and efficiency. A fire needs lots of air to burn cleanly and hot. The problem was that coal-burning steam locomotives produced great quantities of ash residue that needed to be emptied or “cleaned” from the ash pan. If the fireman and engineer did not empty the firebox or “dump the fire” in a timely manner, the locomotive would lose power, slow down, or fail. Coal-burning steamers, therefore, could be limited in distance according to when and where they could remove the ash residue.

After a steam locomotive completed its run and entered the

servicing facility for cleaning, lubrication, and any repairs that had to be made, it was then turned for its next trip. Before the steamer could begin the journey, it took on water and coal, and the firebox was emptied. Ash pits, therefore, had to be central to the entire facility and were often found on or near coaling tower tracks.

I decided to construct my ash pit with two tracks (Photo 2). One track would enable a steam locomotive to have its firebox straddle the pit, and the other would have a grade descending into the pit area so a waiting gondola could be loaded with ash. Then I decided to build a gantry crane that would span both tracks. The crane would have a clamshell bucket that dropped from a winch house, which would run the width of the crane’s bridge on its own rails. The entire gantry crane would move on tracks parallel to the pit. I really liked my plan. There was only one drawback: I had never done anything like this before.





I started by “imagineering” what the gantry crane would look like. I studied photos of railroad cranes I found on the Internet and began to acquire structures and castings that might work. I was still a long way from having the confidence to start. All of that changed at the TCA York Train Meet.

While strolling down the aisles at the meet, I discovered a gantry crane kit that was an ideal fit for my plan. I got home with my crane kit, rubbed my palms together, and began my project. It wasn't long, however, before wild ideas came over me. The crane kit's parts looked good, but I was interested in certain aspects of a gantry crane that were more substantial than the kit allowed. The kit used bass wood for the crane's legs and cardstock for the gusset plates. I gulped and reached for my bin of Atlas truss bridge parts. I chose various bridge beams, trusses, and gusset plates that I found in my parts bin. Using the gantry crane template provided with the kit, I fabricated new crane legs and rolling crane feet that looked much more substantial. Now, I had to make these new pieces fit the crane. Working slowly and deliberately, everything came together. I was amazed; the gantry crane looked pretty good.

Now, on to the pit! Railroads used all types of manpower and mechanical conveyances to remove ash from a steamer's ash pan. Once the ash was emptied from the ash pan, it could be loaded into waiting gondolas using cinder hoists, conveyors, gantry cranes, or manpower, which was the least expensive, but inefficient. Because it wasn't easy to shovel loads of ash into gondolas





riding on track at the same level as the steamers being serviced, yards used track that ran parallel to the pit but descended to a level that made it easier to heave the ash over the side and into a waiting gondola. That is the plan I decided to adopt.

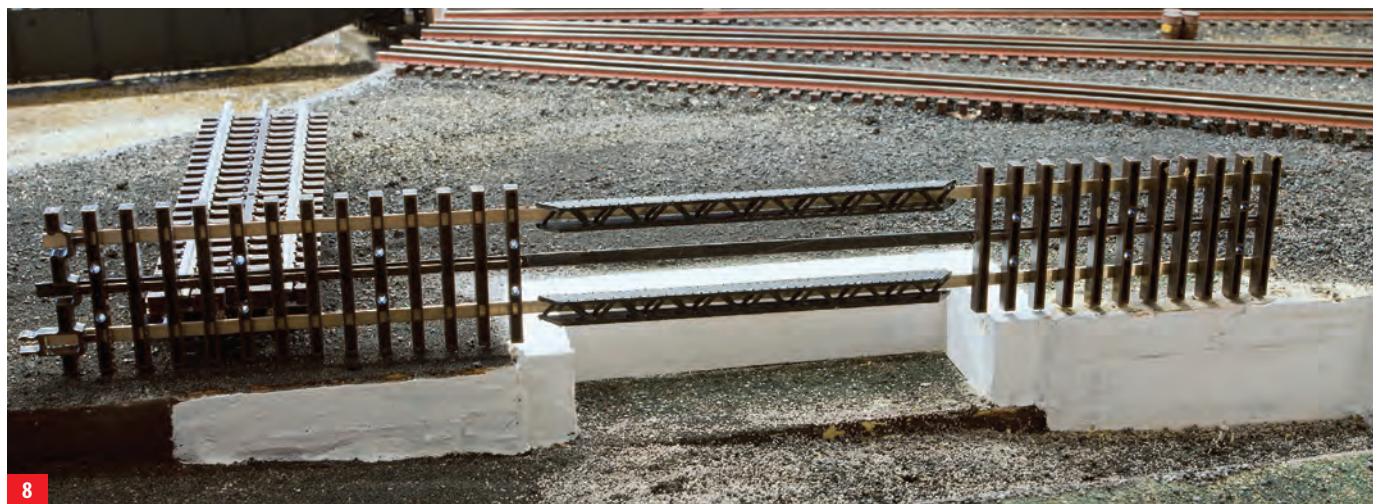
Using the gantry crane as a starting point, I measured an area that would leave enough room to run a steamer with a long tender into the pit forward or reverse. I also needed enough room on the gondola's approach track so the angle of descent for the gondola

would be manageable for my yard crew. Of course, I had to select an area of the layout where I could avoid cross-member supports below the plywood base and cut the track that would descend (Photo 3).

Once I made my cuts for the pit placement and gondola track, I used a small block of wood to brace the descending track against the plywood tabletop with a grade that would be workable for my ash crews (Photo 4). The rectangular section shown in the photo would become my pit floor.

Now I could begin construction of the ash pit. Using the rectangular shape as a starting point, I added three sections of 1x3 pine board to the sides and back. I also cut out a 1x3 pine board in a wedge shape that would serve as the permanent back wall of the pit area (Photo 5). I fit the pit box back into the area that the pit box floor was cut from and countersunk screws into the 3/4" plywood tabletop to secure the pit box. With the pit box secured, I installed pine board cut to fit below the tabletop on either side of the ash pit as concrete walls for the pit area. All of these walls were then puttied, spackled, sanded, and primed (Photo 6).

When dry, I used Bragdon Enterprises at [www.bragdonent.com](http://www.bragdonent.com) weathering powders to produce a weathering effect on all of the pit area surfaces (Photo 7). Everything in the pit area must be concrete or steel because of the intense heat of the hot coals from the ash pan residue. I did not paint the walls because weathering







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powders gave me the look I was after.

The next step was construction of the pit track. I started with a long straight section of Atlas track, already weathered, and removed about a dozen ties. The number depends upon the width of the pit. I then cut two identical beams from my box of Atlas truss bridge parts and glued both below the outside rails of my track (Photo 8). Each of those beams need concrete or steel support sections vertically aligned with the pit floor. I used wooden dowel painted to simulate concrete to support the beams under the pit track. An ash pit is not an area where you want a derailment, so heavy steamers need plenty of support. I then installed all connecting tracks to the ash pit and descending track to ash removal. All track was weathered prior to installation.

With the track installed and my concrete support beams in place, I began laying the wooden ties that held the gantry crane rails. Wood glue worked well for this once I aligned the two rows of my O scale ties to be perfectly parallel to the pit walls. I was

careful how I placed the gantry track so I had plenty of room for my steamers. I painted the gantry crane rails a deeper rust color than the approach tracks and, with the ties in place, used Zap-A-Gap to glue the O scale rail down to the ties.

The rail must be straight. I used a steel straightedge to ensure this was the case. An accurate measure of the distance between wheel flanges on the gantry crane feet was required for correct placement of the rails prior to gluing. There are, of course, no track gauges for gantry cranes. I glued one rail down first, measured carefully, and then glued the second rail. Now I was ready for some ash, cinders, and a figure or two.

To simulate ash, I used some cinder ballast and light gray weathering powder (Photo 9). I fired up my Lionel Vision 0-8-8-0 with blow down effect and moved it into the pit. I was very pleased with the result and amazed at how realistic it all looked to me. I felt I had created something special. 



# Night Scenes

Article by Carl Soderstrom    Photos by Tim Fiss



I have always been thrilled by trains at night. When I was a young boy, my favorite thing to do with my trains was to get them running and then turn off all the lights in the room. Dad would point out how fantastic the lighted passenger trains looked. You could easily envision yourself standing and watching the real ones go by with all of their beautiful lights. My son, Drew, shares that fascination as well, and I wanted to replicate that feeling with this layout.

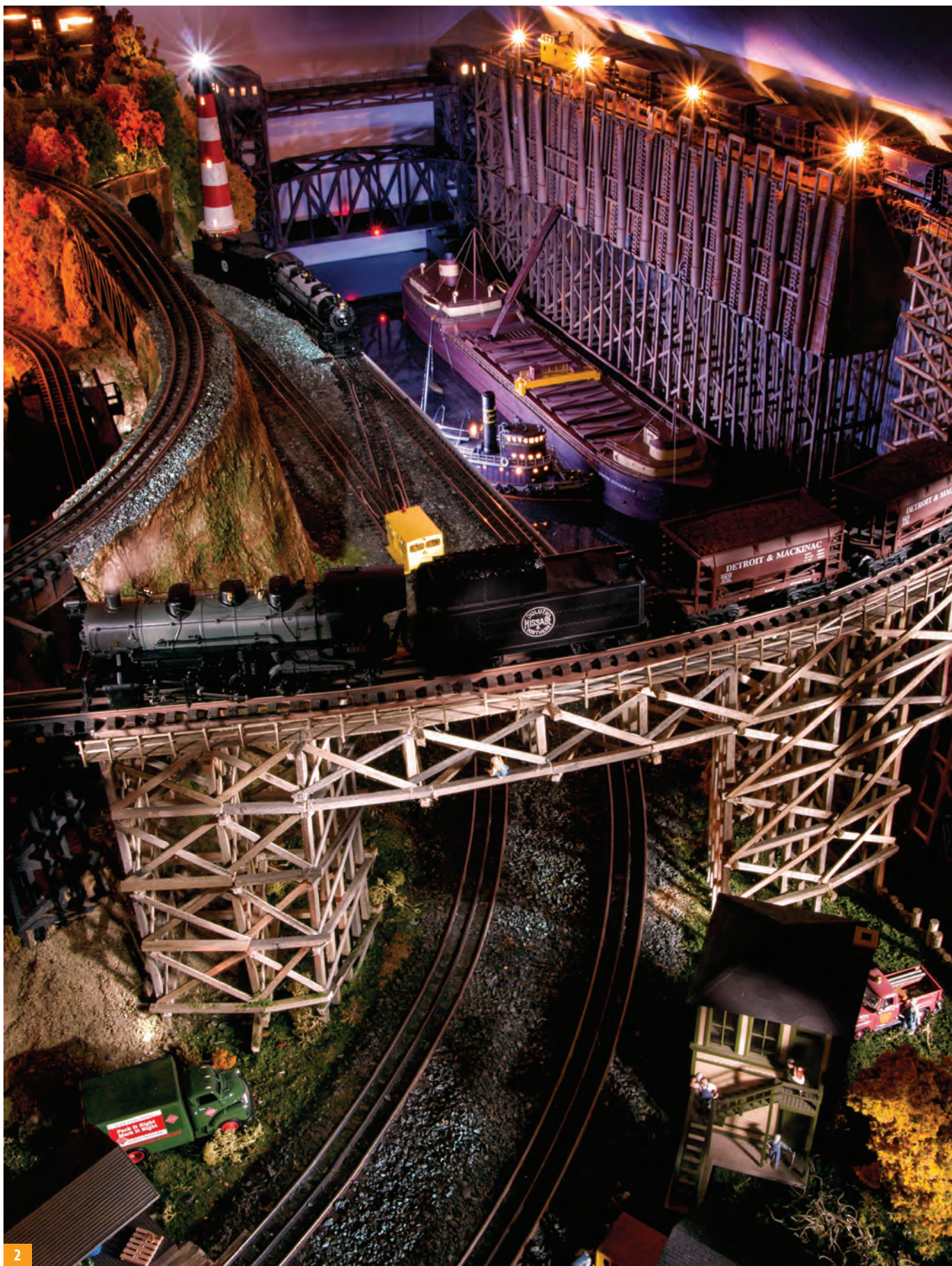
My layout was designed by Don and Dave Cardiff and me. We didn't really set out for it to be the spectacular nighttime viewing layout that it ultimately became. We just knew that we wanted the trains to weave in and out on different levels that crossed over and under one another. We also wanted scenes that made sense such as a river near a town that transitioned into the countryside and eventually into the mountains. The result is a layout that looks great in normal room light and presents a new and even more dramatic appearance, at least in my opinion, when day becomes night.

Our nocturnal journey through the layout actually starts with a river channel next to a bustling river city. An iron lift bridge is nestled beneath a trestle that takes the Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range out to the ore dock (Photo 1). Barges towed by tugs transport loads up the river channel, past a lighthouse, and on to the lake. The *Edmund Fitzgerald* takes on loads at the ore dock for another trip across Lake Superior (Photo 2). The dock is busy and illuminated for the night shift workers.

Moving through town, you take in a busy city center with trolleys, people scurrying along the streets, and a fire burning at the fireworks store (Photo 3). A large Erie Triplex might be seen rolling past a junkyard with several dozen cars of coal. On the outskirts of town, a chain gang is hard at work, while prison guards supervise their efforts (Photo 4). A Union Pacific weed sprayer glides by, also working to improve the track conditions.

Throughout the countryside, workers at a large lumber mill continue their labors into the evening (Photo 5). Logs destined to become finished boards are dumped into









the mill pond where workers position them for a conveyor that will transport them to the spinning saw blades. Out the other side come sawdust and other byproducts of the work, including finished lumber ready to be taken back into town for use. A large water tower is on site in the event that the ultimate in disasters, a fire, hits the lumber mill.

Further along into the country lies the mountainous region. The highest mountain is about 10' tall and was created by Alex Cardiff.

Trains handling lumber can be seen at three different levels (Photo 6). One level is about 6' off the floor and allows most visitors a better view of the nighttime lumbering activity. A waterfall that cascades to a lake at the foot of the mountain is traversed by three bridges. The lake is actually on the floor of the layout room.

There is work going on in this area tonight. An avalanche of rock and mud has nearly buried one tunnel portal. A crane and many men are hard at work. Nearby, a nighttime work train has shown up. A spotlight car, another crane, and a welder contribute to the efforts of the crew that is working to clear the debris (Photo 7).

I am proud of my layout. A daylight panoramic view of it can be seen in Photo 8. My dad also helped with the layout, and Drew helped with some of the lower levels and also worked on nearly every aspect of the layout right along beside me. My fiancée, Jennifer, made most of the trees. The Cardiff's were professionals and were all too willing to teach us as they





worked, and they allowed us to participate at every step. I got to do something nearly everywhere on the layout. I didn't build the entire thing, but I get to tell my friends that I participated in every step of the

process. I'm proud of that, and with guidance and direction from the Cardiffs, the results are fantastic.

Tim Fiss, my professional photographer friend, brought the layout further to life

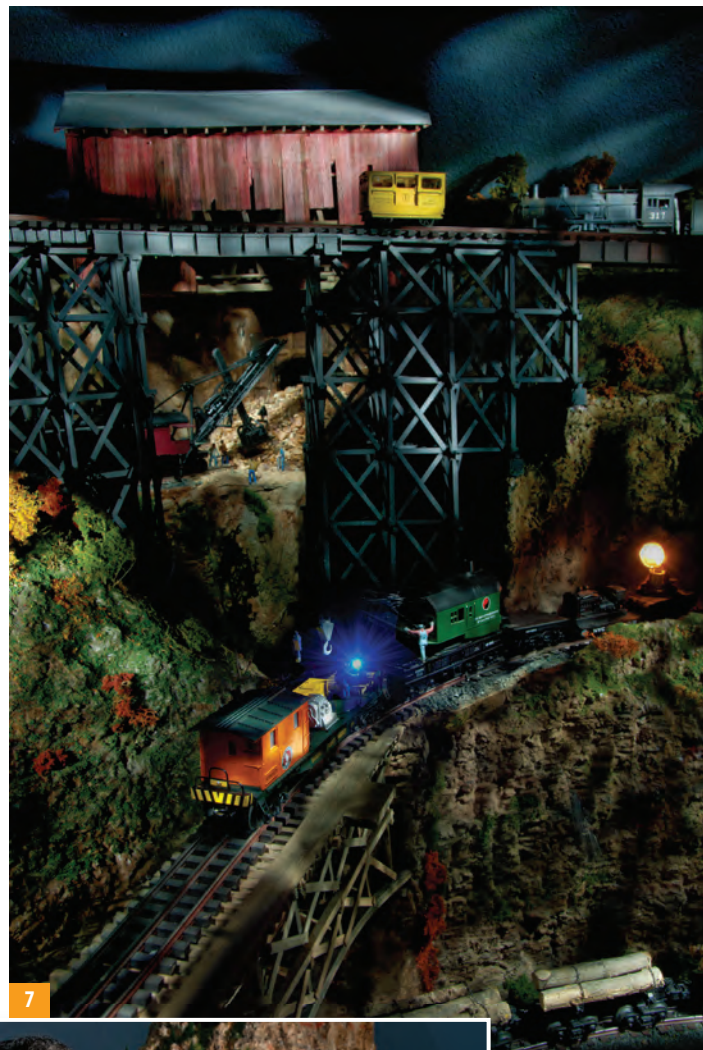
with his outstanding photos. My layout is exactly what I wanted and is beautiful day and night! 📸



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Carl and Drew Soderstrom





# Evolution of a Vision

Article and photos by Ed Boyle and George Brown

*In this article, we present the development of the Lionel Vision Line Genset Switcher based on Ed's visit with Jon Zahornacky at Lionel's development center in California and George's comprehensive investigation and testing of a production model. Ed begins with The Wow Factor.*



## The Wow Factor

One of the basic ideas behind the Lionel Vision Line was to exploit the capabilities of the new Legacy control system with advanced features that would make running O gauge locomotives more realistic and more fun. On the steam side, the end result was the brawny Pennsylvania 0-8-8-0 switcher and the massive Santa Fe 3000 Class 2-10-10-2 Mallet.

Whether steam or diesel, an essential element built into each locomotive package had to be the “wow factor.” O gauge hobbyists needed to be impressed on an emotional level with the unique new things each Vision Line locomotive could do. A mere laundry list of technical specifications and features would not spell success for the Vision Line, which was going to be expensive to develop and produce with price tags to match. Lionel O-gaugers



had to perceive that the *benefits and prestige* of owning Vision Line locomotives were worth the price Lionel was asking for the pieces. Translating initial sticker shock into owner pride and satisfaction was the key to winning over the upper end of the O gauge market, and the wow factor was the way to do it.

Pushing these advances was Jerry Calabrese, CEO of Lionel LLC, and that meant that Lionel's Chief Technical Officer Jon Zahornacky and his team of talented innovators, fellow engineers, and technicians became the primary "pushees" of the Vision Line. They had an especially interesting time in bringing the Vision Line Genset Switcher to 3-rail O gauge reality.

## The Genset Development Challenge

Lionel took aim at producing the latest diesel designs on American rails when it selected its candidates for Vision Line products. The General Electric ES44AC Evolution Hybrid decorated in the spectacular blue and green demonstrator scheme was the choice for six-axle mainline machines. Also picked was the revolutionary 3GS21B genset switcher built by the National Railway Equipment Company for modern yard duties. Lionel delivered the genset switcher in two liveries: the gray and Armour yellow of the Union Pacific and the solid black of the Norfolk Southern. Reproducing the operating characteristics of this ecologically friendly new generation switcher in the Lionel model provided its own unique challenges, which were different than the hurdles that were overcome with the other Vision Line designs.

The prototype genset switcher gains its significant environmental benefits and operational fuel efficiencies from an ingenious use of three separate generator sets, or gensets, that power the switcher's four traction motors. George will describe the prototype switcher and its gensets in more detail later in this article.

All this distinctive sound and smoke action needed to be convincingly simulated in the Vision Line model. The relatively small

and narrow genset switcher body also had to accommodate command control electronics along with horn, bell, and dialog scene sounds. Also, there are ElectroCouplers and other functions, not to mention electric motors to power the genset switcher on the rails.

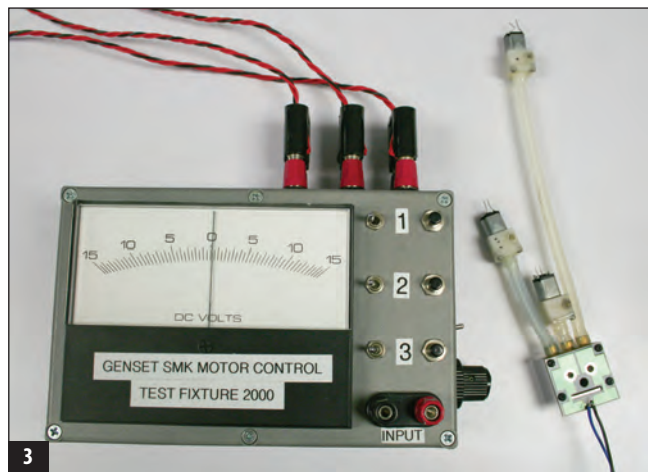
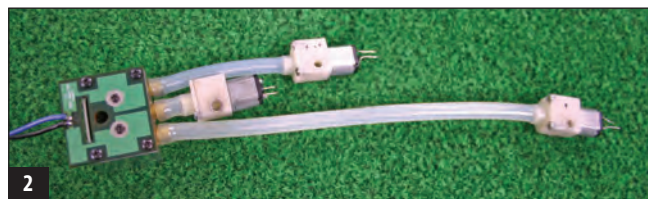
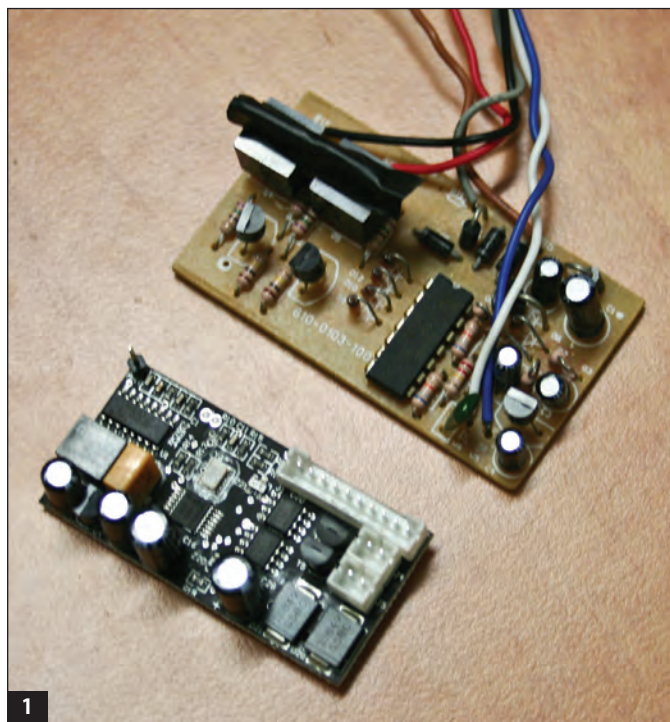
These additional features in a restricted space called for miniaturized electronics like the board you can see on the bottom of Photo 1. However, according to Jon, the biggest challenge was developing smoke units that could be reliably synced with the sounds of the gensets. Jon gives special credit to the RailSounds team. They developed an audio system that was directly connected to the smoke system, which allowed nuanced sounds that were precisely tied to the actions from the exhaust stacks and the operation of the exhaust stack caps. Watching and listening to this action provide a genuine "wow moment" even if you have seen it several times before.

Several different smoke production designs were tried before the team settled on the final choice. The thing in Photo 2 that looks like a giant deep-sea squid laid out on the grass was a sample of a single smoke unit that would have fed all three stacks. Photo 3 shows a testing unit used in smoke unit development.

It turned out that three separate smoke units worked best for the genset switcher's application because using individual smoke units provided more realistic smoke output and tighter control over the sound to smoke interface.

Additionally, the project called for a detailed cab interior, which took up the space normally occupied by the motor for the front truck. That meant the genset switcher would have only one motor instead of two, which in turn led to the development of a new type of traction tires to increase the switcher's pulling power.

Miniaturizing the electronics was the first step in creating a software-based system that controlled many more functions with fewer components. When the innards of an engine like the genset switcher talk to each other, you can tie more functions together realistically. Plus, you are well on the way to having an advanced







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software-controlled system that will provide these benefits to a wide variety of Lionel locomotives. Now, George takes over to give you an overview of the prototype and the details about the Vision Line Genset Switcher in Norfolk Southern livery, its electronics, and its capabilities.

## The Genset Switcher Prototype

As Ed mentioned, National Railway Equipment makes the 3GS21B genset road switcher, which is one product in the company's N-ViroMotive line of ultralow emissions locomotives. This fuel-efficient switcher has three gensets and rides on type B two-axle, two-motor Blomberg trucks.

Each genset is a modular package consisting of a 700 hp turbocharged Cummins six-cylinder industrial diesel and a generator, both of which are mounted on a steel skid for rapid replacement. Additionally, each genset has its own radiator and coolant supply as well as its own air induction and exhaust systems. The three gensets running together can produce 2100 hp.

Although the individual gensets run independently under computer control, their generators are wired in parallel to provide the power necessary for the locomotive to move its load. For light loadings, only one genset runs. As the load increases past a point determined by the switcher's on-board computer, it starts the second genset thereby making more electrical power available to the traction motors. And when load increases even more, the third genset is started. Conversely, as the need for motive power decreases, one or even two gensets shut down. When the locomotive is idle for a period of time, the remaining genset also shuts down. The computer keeps the number of operating hours close to the same between all three gensets by running the one with the lowest number of hours the most.

## Close Encounter of the First Kind

Opening of the shipping container with "Open This End" boldly printed on the top was the first of several pleasant surprises, or encounters, with the Vision Line Genset Switcher. Inside was...wow...a decorative glossy black box with a color photo-

graph of the Norfolk Southern genset switcher emblazoned on the visible surface shown in Photo 4. Following that first encounter with what I understood to be one of Lionel's best, I hoped the beauty wasn't only box-top deep and that the locomotive inside was worthy of such a grand introduction.

My hopes soared as I lifted the surprisingly heavy model, an ounce shy of seven pounds, from its Styrofoam carrier. The die-cast 1:48 scale replica of Norfolk Southern 300 shown in Photo 5 was complete with pilots that were part of the frame, as on real locomotives. I was surprised with this departure from the usual architecture for 3-rail locomotives where the pilots and couplers mount on and swing with the trucks.

Also included was a packet with the items shown in Photo 6: the owner's manual, smoke fluid with a dispensing funnel, exhaust stacks, and memory module for loading the engine's data into the CAB-2 remote controller.

## Construction of the Genset Switcher

The entire locomotive is die-cast including the body. The wire handrails extending from behind the cab to the rear platform are actually the antennas for receiving the radio frequency signals for Legacy commands. Plastic stanchions support these handrails and electrically insulate them from the metal body and frame.

On the front pilot are separately applied MU hoses, each with a silver-painted connector end, as shown in Photo 7. Although they are difficult to see in the photo, two illuminated ditch lights with white LEDs behind the lenses are on the pilot. Painted in safety yellow are the wire handrails, grab irons, and coupler cut lever. Although the coil-operated ElectroCoupler is mounted on the locomotive's frame, its lateral swing is more than enough for the switcher to negotiate O42 curves. A spring-loaded cam mechanism keeps the coupler centered when it's not in use.

On the lower front faces of the hood are two hatches that swing up to open, but it takes a small pointed tool such as a jeweler's screwdriver or perhaps a wooden toothpick to open them.

The top of the front hood comes off revealing the cavity and connector for installing a 9-volt alkaline battery. This owner-supplied battery is only needed for power backup of the RailSounds





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system in conventional operation. A small magnet, visible on each of the inner sides of the hood, holds the top in place.

Separately applied wire grab irons add to the cast-in details on the long hood as do the separate brake cylinders and air line on the trucks, as shown in Photo 8. Under the left side of the cab, the covers open for the battery boxes with simulated batteries cast inside.

Behind the cab for each of the three genset positions are the lifting brackets, wire screen see-through air intakes, etched metal radiator grilles, and removable metal exhaust stacks. Photo 9 shows the hood for genset 2 as well as the realistic exhaust stacks with operating caps. Although the switcher is shipped with the stacks in a separate pouch, installing them takes just a moment following directions in the owner's manual.

Photo 10 shows the details at the back of the locomotive. Three hatches on the rear of the hood swing open, with the upper

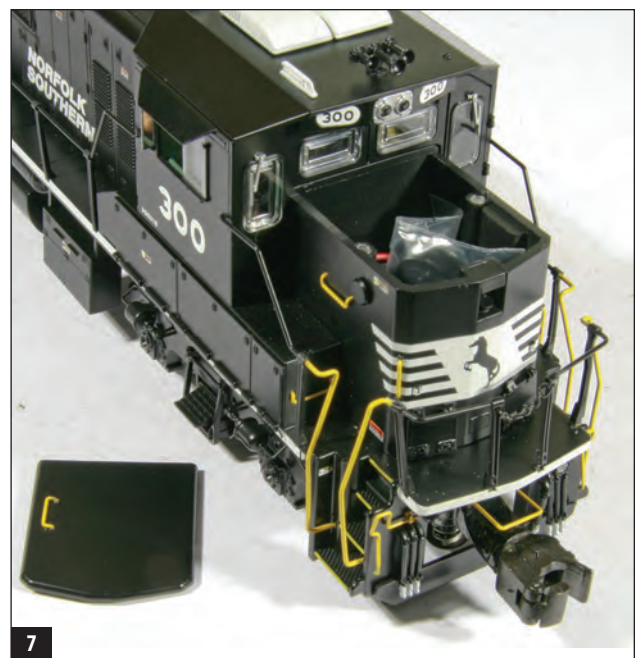
one held closed by a small magnet. As with the two opening hatches on the front hood, the lower hatches on the rear hood need a pointed tool of some sort to open them.

Hardware on top of the cab includes the air conditioner units, antennas, and horns shown in Photo 11. Also visible are the separate windshield wiper arms and sunshades for the crew. The two cab windows on each side slide open, while the external mirrors pivot into position. Crew doors at both the left front and right rear of the cab swing open, with small magnets holding them closed. Below the right side of the cab, the doors for the battery boxes are actually a single panel that drops down to access the control switches and sound volume control, as shown in Photo 12.

Lifting the removable roof off the cab reveals the industrial green interior of the cab that features not only the two painted figures of the crew but also the detailed control stand shown in Photo 13. Again, small magnets hold the cast roof in place. Rich Melvin,



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our resident locomotive engineer, commented to me that all the levers on the control stand are correct, but the entire casting is somewhat oversized. Unfortunately, what the photo doesn't show is the attractive backlighting for the gauges.

On our evaluation sample, the satin black paint and graphics were applied flawlessly, but with one rather major error. The Norfolk Southern symbol and stripes on both ends of the body are reversed with the rearing horse facing left instead of right. Whoops! On the plus side of the model's decoration, I found several of the placards and the locomotive's NRE data plate to be legible under a magnifying glass.

## Mechanical Running Gear

Photo 14 shows the underside of the locomotive with its dual pickup rollers on each truck and dual speaker grilles in the fuel tank casting. A single DC can motor equipped with the requisite flywheel and metal gears powers the four wheels on the rear truck. Two traction tires are on one of the powered wheelsets.

The die-cast power truck has Lionel's unique quick-release



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13

mechanism. With the locomotive held upside down, only a quarter turn of the truck is necessary to separate it from the motor and the rest of the locomotive. Putting the truck back on is nearly as easy once everything is aligned properly.

## On-Board Electronic Systems

To access the equipment inside the model, the long hood has to come off, which is a task I do not recommend attempting. Under that densely packed hood are the main motor, wire harnesses, the three motor-driven smoke units, some more wire harnesses, and electronic boards, two of which are plugged into a motherboard. These boards include the SFC2 smoke fan controller 2, RS6 RailSounds 6, RailSounds power supply, RCDR receiver/driver, OBLC on-board lighting controller, and TAC2 infrared transmitter controller. To be candid, until I talked at length with Jon, I was not aware of the overall technical complexity and new electronics that make up the Vision Line Genset Switcher.

Development and evolution of Vision Line products has included the revising and redesigning of the electronic boards with the current emphasis on developing completely new software. Although the genset switcher uses several of the existing boards developed for previously released Legacy locomotives, the major-

ity of the software for these boards is new. This development effort eliminated many of the bugs and revision pitfalls of the old software for TMCC, Legacy, Odyssey, and so forth. What became the design for the production models with three smoke units would have been impossible to deal with in the framework of the old software.

In the past, the command architecture for TMCC and Legacy systems was one-way communication. Commands issued at the remote controller progressed out through the system components to the target controller in the addressed locomotive. The locomotive performing the command, such as blowing the horn, was the only tangible indication that the command was correctly received. It was like shouting an order to a companion with no reply coming back other than seeing that person doing what you requested.

Several of the new electronic boards within the Vision Line Genset Switcher now have two-way, or bidirectional communications between them, which is critical for synchronizing the output of each of the switcher's three smoke units to the sounds of gensets starting, revving up or down, or stopping. For example, at the simulated shutdown of one of the gensets, the instant the smoke blower motor stops and the exhaust stack cap drops closed, the sound system generates the hollow metallic clank of the cap dropping into its stack. This clank is a recording of the real genset's exhaust cap closing. While this particular complete audio-visual effect is subtle, it's amazing in its own right.

Additionally and under software control, the smoke units emulate the real locomotive's rotation of its gensets' running times. Each time a genset shuts down, a different one starts the next time, or rather a different smoke unit starts simulating the rotation of genset 1, 2, or 3. When the locomotive runs under either simulated or actual light to heavy loads, one, two or all three smoke units run with their output proportional to the laboring sounds of the genset diesels.

Regarding the RailSounds 6 recordings of the genset, Lionel's Director of Audio Development, Rudy Trubitt, explained how he and Audio Engineer Carson Day, along with Kurt Bakun of National Railway Equipment Co, spent an entire day at the NRE plant in Dixmoor, Illinois, recording the sounds of the prime movers,



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systems, and warning devices on a new full-sized NRE 3GS21B genset switcher. The recordings that the sound team mixed into the RailSounds repertoire were made at various points on board the locomotive as well as at several distances from the subject.

Lights on the locomotive are LEDs controlled from the on-board light controller board. They include the directional headlights and ditch lights, number board lights, cab lights, and ground lights.

Along with increased technical complexity comes the need for specialized troubleshooting tools, especially on high-tech model trains like the Vision Line Genset Switcher. A removable panel on top of the long hood, located just behind the cab, as shown in Photo 15, allows access to electronic test points used during manufacturing. Additionally, an infrared transmitter is located in the bottom of the fuel tank between the speakers, as shown in Photo 16. Currently, this transmitter is used in manufacturing to verify the electronic systems are operating correctly and the correct software is controlling the locomotive's features. In the near future, Lionel Factory Authorized Service Stations will also be able to use data sent by this transmitter for troubleshooting of the locomotive's complex electronics systems.

## Vision Line Genset Switcher at Work

Loading the locomotive data from the memory module into the Legacy system took mere moments, and reprogramming the engine's ID was equally easy. Of course, opening the hinged panel located under the right side of the cab made for quick access to the engine's mode switch.

Initial startup of the switcher surprised me with its unbelievably slow and smooth motion of less than 1 scale mph. In fact, it took 65 seconds to move a scant 20" with no hesitation either deadheaded or with a train in tow.

The cab lights, which are on when the locomotive is stationary, turned off when the engine started to move. Both headlights and ditch lights turned on at this time, and one of the gensets audibly started, accompanied by lifting of a stack cap as wisps of smoke blew out of one stack...the center one if I deciphered my observation notes correctly. Blowing the horn initiated a prototypical alternating of the ditch lights, which lasted for about five seconds.

As I eased the CAB-2 throttle open, the ground lights turned off as the engine responded with a smooth increase in speed that I've not witnessed before from a locomotive equipped with Odyssey speed control. But then, what I was enjoying was Odyssey II with

fresh software, and what a difference! In all speed ranges, the genset switcher proved to be a smooth runner. I don't know if wow is in order here, but very nice is definitely appropriate.

Increasing the load using the CAB-2's train brake control and throttle caused the sounds of the second genset starting and the smoke to start blowing out of the front stack. Adding more throttle brought the sounds and smoke of the third genset starting and coming online. The show was rolling both literally and figuratively.

With the switcher stopping, sounds and smoke for two of the gensets ceased quickly. After approximately 30 seconds with the switcher stopped, sound and smoke representing the remaining genset shut down, punctuated by the stack cap's hollow clank.


At the next startup, smoke emanated from a different exhaust stack with each successive startup exercising a different smoke unit. I didn't track operation of each smoke unit, but I suspect the smoke control software keeps the overall operating times between the three units relatively equal.

A tractive effort of 1 lb, 12 oz is respectable for a single motor locomotive and more than adequate for a switcher. And when considering the low ratio drive gears, it's no surprise that the switcher is not a speed merchant. But then, a top speed of a little over 60 scale mph is impressive even for a low-g geared freight car mover.

With a weight as heavy as many die-cast steam locomotives, the genset switcher dependably tracked my Atlas O54 and O72 main lines as well as the crossovers between them. The 1:48 scale 3GS21B was in its element as it shuttled freight and passenger cars around the several sidings on the editorial Carpet Central Railroad.

With our standard test train of 15 scale-sized freight cars in tow as well as several heavier consists, the switcher never slipped its drive wheels and used surprisingly low current at a track power of 18 volts. At 1 scale mph, the switcher drew a scant 1.2 amps with its sound running and one smoke unit putting out a low volume of smoke. At 60 scale mph with sound and all three smoke units running at full output, my ammeter displayed a nominal 1.9 amps.

## Evolving Vision Line

Without a doubt, the Lionel Vision Line Genset Switcher is a product of technical evolution. And from what I understand is under development at Lionel, the end of the technical and product evolution is nowhere in sight. I found the model of the NRE genset switcher to not only be a fun locomotive to study and run, but it also had a lot of, as Ed puts it, "wow factor." 



Attention O Gauge Railroading families!

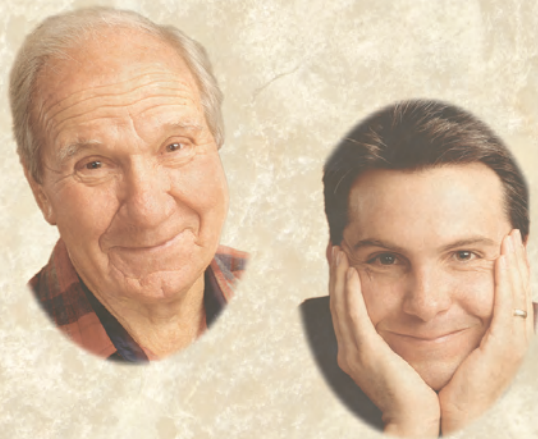
# Train Your Dad on June 19

William Shakespeare penned that “It is a wise father that knows his own child,” and it’s no less true that a wise child will also be pretty well equipped with knowledge about his or her father. And if Dad is an O gauge model railroader, the ideal time to display some of that knowledge would be on Sunday, June 19—Father’s Day. Showing support for Dad’s leisure time interests is certain to bring a smile to his face and a warm feeling to his heart on his special day. Sure beats the heck out of a new tie, wallet, shirt, or cell phone case!

At OGR Publishing, we and a group of our valued advertisers want to make your Father’s Day gift shopping easier, so we’re

providing this special gift guide that spotlights a variety of interesting and affordable products. All of these potential gifts cost less than \$100, and there’s sure to be something in the assortment that will please your dad (or granddad, uncle, husband, or other important man in your life).

Browse through the list, do a bit of detective work to learn what Dad already has or may really like to have, and then contact our advertiser directly to purchase a gift that’s sure to please. One more piece of advice: when you present it to your guy, be sure to accompany it with a big hug and a sincere “Thanks.”

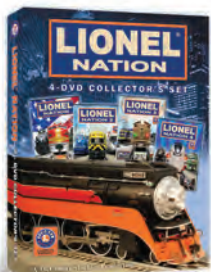


## Marburger Farm Dairy Tank Car

Available from C.T. McCormick Hardware is the latest in a continuing series of Pittsburgh regional items made by MTH. The uncataloged 30-73335 Marburger Dairy Chocolate Milk modern tank car is lavishly decorated with authentic and colorful graphics that are sure to appeal to Marburger Farm Dairy fans. The tank car sells for \$46.95 plus shipping. C.T. McCormick Hardware, 147 South Main St., Zelienople, PA 16063; 724-452-6130; [www.cttrains.com](http://www.cttrains.com).



## DVDs for the Citizens of Lionel Nation



TM Books & Video's *Lionel Nation* series is a video magazine featuring all things Lionel. Each hour-plus show is filled with layout stories, operating tips, interviews with collectors, and more. This set of four DVDs features exciting Lionel action. Included are Lionel Christmas displays in Manhattan, Norm Charbonneau's spectacular hi-rail layout, the Lionel show display of 36 trains in action, and David Dansky's amazing prewar and postwar collection. See a fine mix of Lionel trains ranging from the standard gauge classics of the 1920s to the latest Vision Line locomotives. Special sale price is

\$59.99 plus shipping from TM Books & Video; 800-892-2822; [www.tmbv.com](http://www.tmbv.com).

## O Gauge Quad Hoppers in New Road Names



This CP Rail Quad Hopper (Item No. 47620) joins new Union Pacific and CSX versions in the Williams by Bachmann line of hopper cars that are available in seven other popular road

names. These nicely detailed cars measure 10" long and 3-1/2" high and will navigate O27 curves. Features include a durable ABS plastic shell, die-cast trucks, metal wheels, operating couplers, prototypical graphics, metal floor and brake wheel, and interchangeable coal load and lid roofs. The cars retail for \$43.95 each. See them at your Williams by Bachmann dealers or visit [www.bachmanntrains.com](http://www.bachmanntrains.com).



## JT's Mega-Steam

JT's Mega-Steam has a reputation of being the "World's Best Smoke Fluid!" due to the volume of smoke it produces, the quick dissipation into the air, and the 39 light and realistic scents that are sure to please not only the train engineer but other members of the household. Mega-Steam is tested and proven safe for use in all smoke units when following the manufacturer's directions. Proudly made in the U.S.A. See the JT's Mega-Steam ad in this issue. Order on-line at [www.megasteam.com](http://www.megasteam.com) or call 434-589-2660.



## Old Time General Store for Any Layout



This O scale old general store from Scale University commemorates an American icon and the type of structure that once could be found almost anywhere in rural America and can often still be found. This kit features laser-cut wood, peel-and-stick trim and roofing, a cast metal chimney, a full sheet of signs, and a decal. Structure has a 5-1/2" x 9"

footprint. Easy-to-follow instructions are included. \$79.95 plus \$5.95 shipping (figures and vehicles sold separately). To order, go to [www.scaleuniversity.com](http://www.scaleuniversity.com).

## 1930s Gas Station Kit (with 1930s Gas Prices)

Valley Model Trains offers an O scale gas station of the type that was a real cornerstone of rural America. This fun little kit includes lots of detail parts and provides a great opportunity to add all kinds of additional detail such as rusty cars, junk piles, or whatever. This is a laser-cut wood kit that requires assembly and painting. 4" x 6-1/4" with overhang. \$50.99 plus \$8.00 shipping. Mail your order to Valley Model Trains, P.O. Box 1251, Wappingers Falls, NY 12590 or call 845-297-3866.



## Sweet Boxcar to Celebrate the Fourth of July

MTH has a line of high-quality, traditionally sized RailKing freight cars that feature durable, nicely detailed bodies and colorful paint schemes for O gauge railroaders. This specially decorated Fourth of July boxcar comes with a blinking light on the car's side in the shape of a fireworks sparkler. It's the ideal way for Dad to start his summer railroading this Father's Day. Item #30-74642, the RailKing M&M's Fourth of July boxcar, sells for \$59.95 plus shipping and can be ordered from [www.mth-railking.com](http://www.mth-railking.com).



## Light Up Dad's Passenger Cars

Direct from Dallee Electronics are these LED lighting boards. They work with any type of track power and have no interference problems operating with standard DC or AC operation, TMCC, DCS, and DCC. The lighting strips are available in three different hues of warm white, cool white, and amber and are priced at \$34.95 for the 10" strip or \$54.95 for the 18" strip. To order, e-mail Dallas at [dallas@dallee.com](mailto:dallas@dallee.com) or visit his website at [www.dallee.com](http://www.dallee.com) to see these and more great items.



## Make a Splash with a Tennessee Aquarium Car

Lionel produced its most striking and highly detailed aquarium car for the Lionel Operating Train Society (LOTS) in 2009. The Lionel 6-52553 Tennessee Aquarium Car features die-cast metal trucks, operating couplers and frame, a powerful maintenance-free motor with on/off switch, and interior illumination, and it operates on O27 curves. \$99.00 includes shipping and a one-year membership in LOTS.

Order one for yourself, your father, or grandfather today. Call 513-598-8240 to order or send your check or money order to LOTS, 6376 W. Fork Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45247. Deadline to order is June 30, 2011.



## Seated Passengers for the Coaches on Dad's Roster

Golden Gate Depot's Little People Premier Figures 1930-1950 Set includes 36 uniquely decorated seated figures of this period. These figures make perfect additions for any of your passenger cars. Only \$24.95 per package plus \$5.00 shipping. Place your order at [www.goldengatedepot.com](http://www.goldengatedepot.com) or e-mail [sales@goldengatedepot.com](mailto:sales@goldengatedepot.com). Or you can mail your check or credit card information to Golden Gate Depot, 231 Market Place #223, San Ramon, CA 94583.



## Lionel NASCAR Collectibles

Lionel celebrates the formation of its new Lionel NASCAR Collectibles line with this special boxcar paying tribute to car number 7 of JR Motorsports Lionel NASCAR Collectibles Chevrolet that raced in the NASCAR Nationwide Series Kansas Lottery 300 on October 2, 2010. The boxcar features die-cast metal sprung trucks, a metal frame, operating couplers, and opening doors. To find a Lionel Authorized Dealer near you, visit [www.lionel.com](http://www.lionel.com) or call 800-4LIONEL.





## Digital Reference Sources

HSL, an official Lionel licensee, offers several great Father's Day options. The *Lionel Consumer Catalog Digital Archive* consists of four volumes of catalogs covering the years 1900-1995. The *Lionel Magazine Archive* includes three volumes of *The Lionel Magazine* and *Model Builder* magazine. The *Lionel Postwar Service Manual Digital Archive* rounds out the Lionel archive series. Each product is \$50.00 plus \$5.00 shipping for the total order. Full details are available at [www.hslinc.com](http://www.hslinc.com) or call 800-779-2802.



## Smoke-Up the Train Room with Classic Cedar

Supersmoke Classic Cedar scented smoke from Bart's Pneumatics Corp. is available in 4 oz bottles with a safety cap at \$14.00 each plus \$9.00 shipping. Supersmoke is nontoxic in both liquid and vapor form. Order at 717-392-1568 or direct from Bart's Pneumatics Corp., 1952 Landis Valley Rd., Lancaster, PA 17601. Visit [www.bartspneumatics.com](http://www.bartspneumatics.com) for more information.



## Wooden Freight Dock Kit

Brennan's Wooden Freight Dock is the third in its Ultra-Realistic kit series. Modeled on a Chicago and Alton prototype, this quality O scale craftsman kit features Northeastern Scale Lumber and comes with complete, detailed, step-by-step illustrated instructions. Templates make it another excellent project for the learner. The freight dock has a footprint of 3" x 14" as a stand-alone structure, but it can easily be modified into a loading dock suitable for any building. \$32.95 plus \$5.95 shipping. To order, go to [www.brennansmodelrr.com](http://www.brennansmodelrr.com).



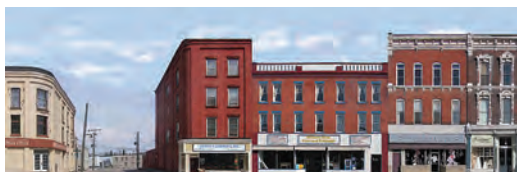
## Smile, Dad! You're on Wireless Color Cam

Haven't you always wanted to be like Casey Jones? Now here's your chance. With a Wireless Micro Color Cam system, you can feel the thrill of being inside your model train. Just connect the receiver to your TV and, presto...change-o, you can see what your model train engineer sees just as if you were riding in the engine cab. You can also record the video and audio on a VCR or DVD recorder. Complete systems start at just \$99.95 and make a great Father's Day gift. To order, visit [www.wirelessMicroColorCam.com](http://www.wirelessMicroColorCam.com).



## Scenic Layout Backdrop

Enhance your layout with a photo-realistic backdrop from SceniKing. A backdrop adds depth and perspective to your layout, making scenes look much larger. All SceniKing scenes are developed from photographs taken at locations around North America. Kit #U050 Downtown Stores for O scale is 12" long x 13-1/2" high and costs \$64.95. For detailed information about the full range of available backdrops, visit [www.sceniking.com](http://www.sceniking.com).



## True Scene Modeling DVD

Help Dad give his layout a more realistic look with True Scene's Model Landscaping Fibre. Get started with this DVD that demonstrates how to use this material to make a country meadow, bury an accessory, lay track, make a snow scene, create a plowed field, and more. Special Father's Day gift pricing is only \$10.00 for True Scene's DVD titled *Easy Model Scenery*. Call 716-523-7305 to order or visit [www.truescene.com](http://www.truescene.com).



## O Scale Wooden Timber Trestle

Want a real wooden trestle for Dad's layout? Bridges from On Track Trestle are all built by hand. They come fully assembled, stained, and detailed and are ready to install with no assembly required. This is not a kit! All of On Track Trestle's standard trestles range in price from \$18.50 for the Small Gap to \$66.00 for the Deep Canyon. Visit [www.OnTrackTrestle.com](http://www.OnTrackTrestle.com).



## Brass Construction Tool Houses

Weaver Models offers two types of tool houses made of brass. Choose from G1957, Cement with Maroon Trim Tool House with Horizontal Siding, or G1958, Buff with Brown Trim Tool House with Vertical Siding. Each structure features 1/4" scale dimensions, sturdy brass construction with scribed details, simulated glass windows, and a stovepipe on the roof. Only \$65.00 each plus shipping (shipping charges will be calculated and added based upon the weight and destination of the package). For more information, go to [www.weavermodels.com](http://www.weavermodels.com).





## Special Run SP 0-4-0 Porter Locomotive

Limited to only 200 and made exclusively for The Western Depot, this 3-rail 0 gauge Southern Pacific Porter 0-4-0T is a great gift for that special man. This model features 1:48 scale die-cast body, operating smoke unit, illuminated cab, operating headlight, a 3-position reversing unit, and both tinplate and scale couplers. Regular price is \$110.00, but buy it for Father's Day for only \$99.99 plus shipping. To purchase, call 530-673-6776 or go to [www.westerndepot.com](http://www.westerndepot.com).



## Populate Dad's Layout

Detailing is always an intricate and interesting part of any layout, and figures rank among the most important and noticed details. The folks at Artista Accessories have a whole array of detail items and figures ranging in price from \$5.00 to \$43.00. Visit [www.artista.com](http://www.artista.com) to see the full assortment.



## Time for Some Road Repairs

Buy Dad a complete road maintenance scene for his layout. Woodland Scenics Road Crew A2761 and Road Crew Details A2762 together include 31 hand-painted pieces. This scene is the perfect way to add that special eye-catching touch to any layout. Prices are \$23.99 for the A2761 set and \$24.99 for the A2762 set. For more information, contact Woodland Scenics, P.O. Box 98, Linn Creek, MO 65052-0098; 573-346-5555; [www.woodlandscenics.com](http://www.woodlandscenics.com).



## Ball Signal and Shanty

Model Rail Scenes has produced an authentic New England ball signal with movable balls and a shanty that is lighted and weathered. The ball signal size is approximately 3" x 8". The signal was used in the early years of railroading to indicate the right of way at rail crossings. The signals were typically situated by a shanty, which would store the extra signal lights. This Model Rail Scenes exclusive is only \$60.00 plus shipping. For more information, contact Model Rail Scenes, 7 Green St., Dover Foxcroft, ME 04426; 207-564-7292; [brian@modelrailscenes.com](mailto:brian@modelrailscenes.com); [www.modelrailscenes.com](http://www.modelrailscenes.com).



## Loads for Steel Mill Modelers



St. Charles Model Works (SCMW) and Trainloads.com have added to their line of steel industry loads and detail parts. SCMW offers a slag pot and separate ring for use as flatcar loads and three different sizes of ingot molds and matching ingots. These are available as gondola loads with

blocking. One ingot mold also includes a separate hot top or "topper." All pieces can be purchased separately or configured as loads for gondolas and flatcars with or without weathering. Prices range from \$5.00 to \$25.00. See [www.scmmodelworks.com](http://www.scmmodelworks.com) or [www.trainloads.com](http://www.trainloads.com) for more info.

## Scrub Those Rails!

Need some assistance with track cleaning? Look no further. The Track Scrubbing Car from R&L Lines works great with O gauge track. Models are also available for standard gauge and G scale. Price is \$99.95 for the O/027 version plus shipping. For more information, send e-mail to [bob@rlines.com](mailto:bob@rlines.com), call 920-465-7913, or visit [www.rlines.com](http://www.rlines.com).



## U.S. Bridges—U.S. Made

Enhance your layout with American Made Steel Bridges featuring a 36" long bridge that can support up to 16 lbs. The decks are 24-gauge steel, and the side struts are 18-gauge flat wire. The double long bridge is \$100.00 plus shipping. For more information, contact Quality Adjustments, P.O. Box 151, Winter Haven, FL 33882-0151; 863-299-2588; [www.americanmadesteelbridges.com](http://www.americanmadesteelbridges.com).



## Display System for Dad's Trains

Glenn Snyder Display Systems offers self-contained satin finish extruded aluminum model train display shelves. The shelves are hardened and engineered to support the heaviest of toy train locomotives and they fasten to walls without the use of any brackets. Raised rails hold trains in place.



The anodized finish will never chip or oxidize and is easy to clean. The shelving is available in combination HO and S gauge at \$12.00 a section and O gauge at \$15.00 a section. Also available is a combination of O, standard, and LGB gauges at \$24.00 a section. To order, call 877-852-4676.



*Terry Johnson's full-feature train show*

# A Treat for the Senses

Article by Terry Johnson    Photos by Marc Silverstein

Visitors descend the stairs into my layout room not knowing what to expect. But as the 7' tall mountain at the bottom of the stairs comes into view, reactions are invariably the same: "Wow!"

Gazing around the 27'x 27' layout, you will almost immediately notice two more mountains that stretch from floor to ceiling. Backdrop Warehouse photo murals grace the perimeter, and in the cen-

ter of the room, you'll soon spot a yard packed with postwar Lionel accessories. You may decide that you would like to operate a few of them just as you may have done in the olden days.

One level down, there's a modern intermodal yard where you can operate one of the two Lionel 12741 Intermodal Cranes. You will have an opportunity to practice unloading the first trailer with a

bill of lading that lists the load as cardboard. No sweat! Once you have mastered that, you can unload the second trailer. The content of this trailer depends on what you would like to unload. It may contain Xbox 360s, Waterford crystal, Rembrandt originals, or new postwar 6464-series Lionel boxcars. Regardless of the contents, the unloading process is accompanied by the sound of breaking



Smoke and the early morning fog envelop trains as they traverse routes on two of the layout's various levels.



glass and shifting loads. A sound module adds realism to the fun.

There's a 28-car trailer train with Union Pacific power on the head end parked in the intermodal yard, awaiting orders to depart. A Choochoocam hidden in the nose of the lead locomotive will treat you to a cab ride, and you'll see yourself in a TV monitor as the train takes its first curve. If you are a youngster, you might run alongside the train, waving while you watch yourself on TV. If you are an adult train guy, you more than likely will do the same thing.

In another area on the layout, there's plenty of activity in and around the bustling city. At the always busy station, agent announcements fill the air as an F40-PH Amtrak locomotive prepares to get underway. The horn blows twice, a bell clangs, and the Surfliner passenger consist gracefully eases out of the station. Not far from the station, children at recess are noisily playing in their schoolyard. Elsewhere around town, you hear vehicles driving around, dogs barking, and church bells ringing.

Suddenly, you hear a fast, low-flying helicopter streak by. Something unusual is happening! You see a mountainous area in the center of the layout room with a lake surrounded on three sides by rugged mountains. The whole area is pretty much devoid of color. You have read about black holes where gravity is so dense that light cannot escape? This must not be quite that powerful because light is escaping, but color is not. Maybe this is just a "dark gray hole." Welcome to Area 51!

If you throw one of the toggle switches, the lake surface slowly retracts into the base of the mountain. Another switch opens a viewing port disguised as a retaining wall. Peering inside, you can see a vintage Lionel 175 Rocket Launcher nestled inside the cavern. Throw a third switch, and you can see what looks like liquid oxygen fuel streaming from the launch pad. It is interesting what a Seuthe smoke unit sealed inside a 35mm film canister that has been pressurized by an aquarium pump can do.

After the gantry is retracted and the firing timer is cocked, a countdown commences. The sound of a military jet blasts overhead. As the timer nears zero, you may have a bad feeling about this, but it is too late. Against your better judgment, you press the "fire" button, and the rocket



The largest bridge on my layout is a giant lift bridge that spans a 3' wide canyon. This bridge connects the main layout to an 18' long three-track yard that is capable of providing three long trains with ready access to the main line.



A Lionel 6220 bell ringer switcher pulls a work train around a dedicated loop just 20" above the floor. The layout has two of these dedicated loops that run smaller trains and allow children to get in on the action.

screams out of the cavern and strikes the ceiling some 5' above. Just as quickly as it launches, the rocket falls back to earth, usually out of reach. You throw more switches, and the fuel is turned off. The port closes, the lake surface returns, and all is quiet again.

There are plenty of bridges and sidings on my layout. The largest, a giant lift bridge, spans a 3' wide canyon. The lifting portion is an Atlas 40" single-track Pratt

truss bridge. The two towers are built from Erector Set girders and angles. Two motors sit atop each tower and they can easily lift the counterweighted bridge. The bridge connects the main layout to a three-track yard that is 18' long. At any given time, a total of 18 trains have immediate access to the layout.

Trains run around one of two multi-level main lines on GarGraves track. The superelevated curves are minimum O72,





An example of eye-catching detail on my layout is this massive 8500 HP gas turbine out of UP's "big blow" turbines that is awaiting transfer to the scrap yard. The Amtrak RS diesel, now UP property, is on hand to handle the task.



A geared locomotive slowly winds its way across a curved wooden trestle that hugs the tortuous cliffs.





Here's an overall view of Area 51 where the military is involved in top secret activities both above and inside the mountain.



A crew is doing some heavy work on an FM Trainmaster that is undergoing an extensive rebuild.



A Union Pacific train, resplendent in the Armour yellow paint scheme and headed by a gas turbine diesel, gracefully winds its way through the countryside. Those hikers on the hillside, obviously not devoted railfans, don't appear to be the least bit fazed.

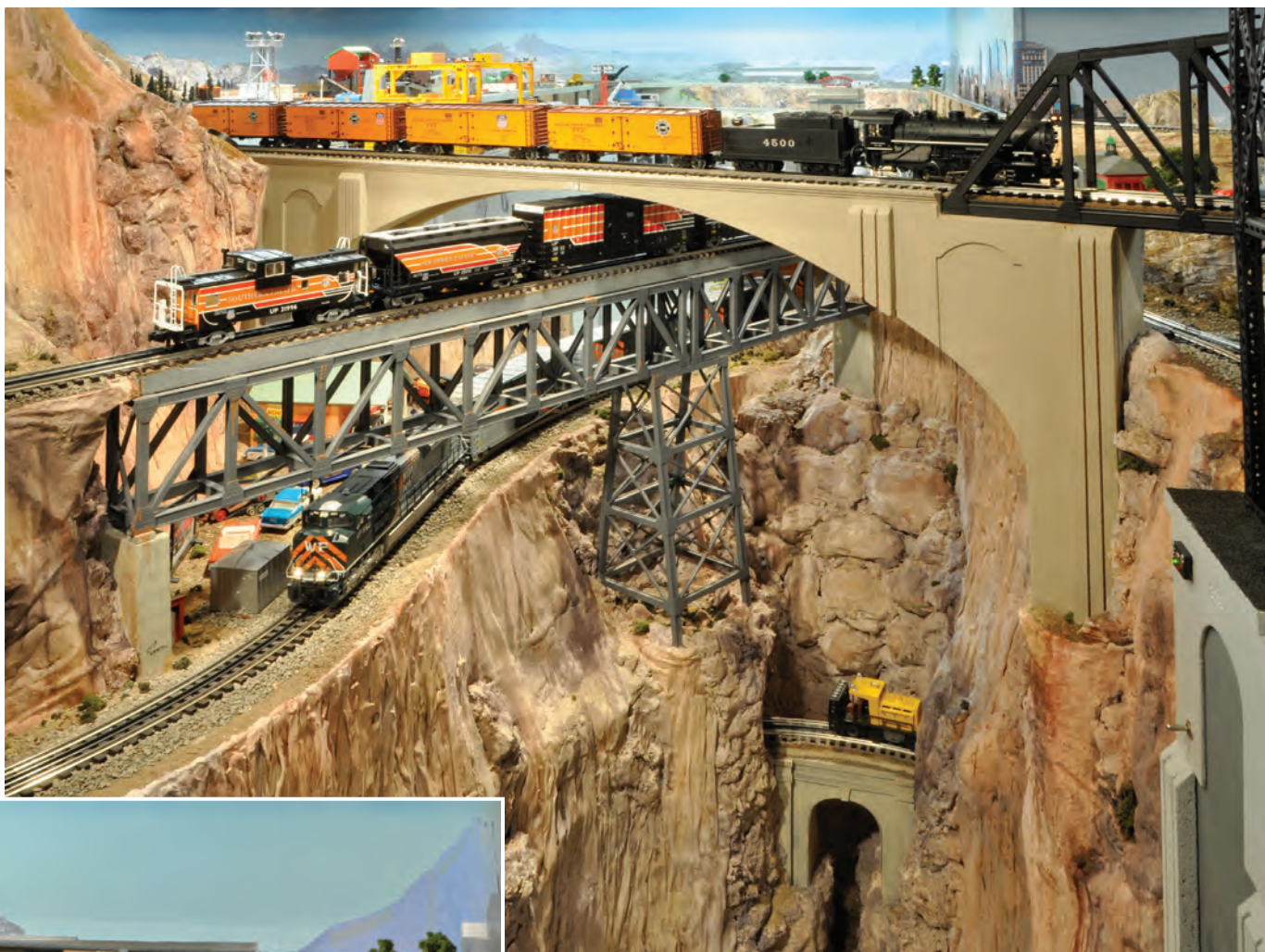
with Ross Custom switches handling the routing. Maximum grade on the layout is less than 2 percent, which is a breeze even for that 28-car trailer train.

Engaged with watching the trains and operating the various accessories and animated features, you may not immediately realize that a computer program has control of the room lighting and a multitude of special effects. These effects are what I feel really bring the layout to life over and above the trains operating smoothly along their selected routes. Here are just some of the effects I've added, most of which require a personal visit to be fully appreciated.

- Overhead lights dim and brighten to simulate the passing of the day.
- At night, thousands of stars generated by two lasers provide a celestial show.
- Fluorescent paint provides the illusion of nighttime lights in the Scenic Express city landscape background.
- Hidden black lights bathe the layout in a twilight glow for evenings.
- Light towers, buildings, and Miller Engineering lighted signs dominate the night scene.
- A dancing campfire warms a group of hobos who have gathered to swap accounts of their travels.
- A welding flash occasionally flickers from the back shop...Jim Barrett at work, perhaps.
- Floor-level rope lighting guides you around the mountains.
- As evening approaches, there are sounds of chirping crickets and hooting owls.
- The busy locomotive service facility area features sounds of couplers closing, back shop machinery running, and sundry other sounds associated with various operations.
- The vanes of a furnace blower fan hidden high in one wall direct wind back and forth over the entire area.
- A smell of fresh rain comes from an ozone generator, which pumps a small amount of ozone into the room.
- A flash of lightning is followed by a loud clap of thunder provided by a subwoofer. Placed around the ceiling are five lightning projector strobes that project lightning bolt images onto the walls. More frequent lightning is followed by even louder thunder sounds. A two-channel soundtrack is mixed and synchronized to a special effects program.
- A projector creates the illusion of moving sheets of rain on the wall. It also creates a believable moving tornado image.
- Tornado warning sirens echo in the distance via a subwoofer and special soundtrack.
- Fog rolls in and blankets the floor. As it rises to track level, the room brightens with approaching daylight.

It's obvious that I enjoy adding special effects to my layout in an effort to make the entire experience even more realistic and believable, and I have even more ideas for your next visit. I believe in the adage "always leave them wanting for more."





Multiple levels of the floor-to-near-ceiling layout are visible in this wide view.



The Amtrak Surfliner boards passengers on the upper level of the main passenger terminal, while two more trains attend to similar duties on the lower-level tracks.



UP Challenger 3976 steams past a Lionel Operating Oil Drum Loader, a contemporary reissue of a classic American Flyer accessory, while Amtrak's Surfliner glides by overhead.





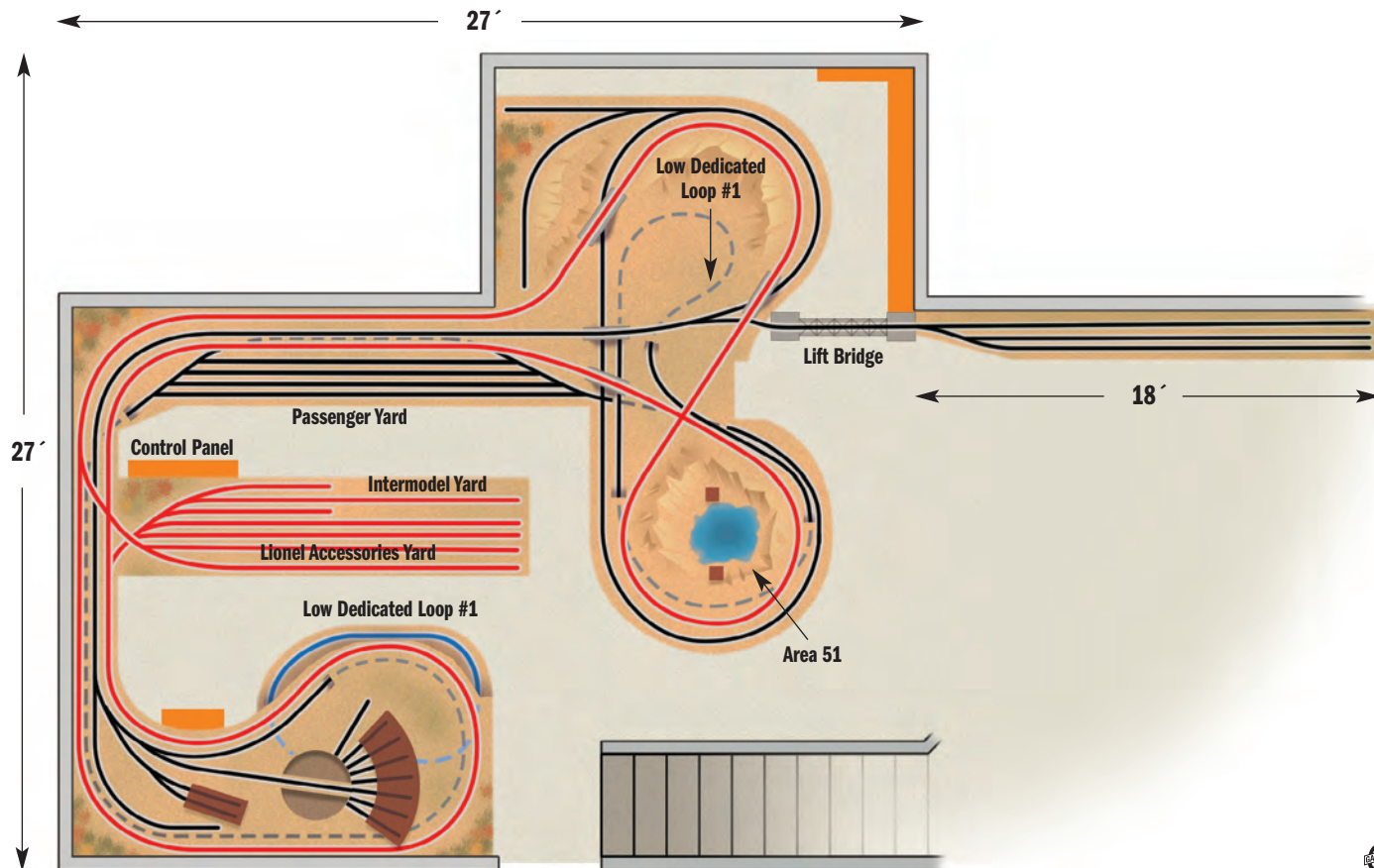
The Pacific Surfliner, headed by an Amtrak Genesis locomotive, departs for points south.



This overall view of part of my layout illustrates how the scenery and trains run from near floor level to above shoulder height.

## About the Author

Terry Johnson was born in Tucson, Arizona, in the mid-1950s and now lives in Michigan with his wife, Diane. The couple's two sons live close by. For the past 26 years, he has been a field sales consultant with a dental supply company. As a youngster, he rode the Southern Pacific Golden State Limited and Rock Island Rocket trains to visit relatives in Illinois and attributes multiple trips on these trains to sparking his lifelong interest in railroading. Over the years, he has had train layouts in N and HO scales as well as in 3-rail O gauge. Terry assures us that he has rarely been without an operating layout. To view videos of Terry's layout, search "TJ's trains" on YouTube.





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## How Sweet It Is!

Photos by Rich Melvin



It is not often that a railroad club car gives you a craving for sweets, but that is what happened when I saw the 2010 Lionel operating car from the Railroad Museum of Long Island (RMLI) in its authentic-looking white and blue Entenmann's baked goods box (Photo 1). For a few moments, all I could think of was that Entenmann's box filled with its signature Raspberry Danish Twist breakfast pastry. Then, with an effort, I wrenched my mind back from sweets to club cars.

### Creating the 2010 Entenmann's Operating Boxcar

I think the RMLI and Lionel hit a home run with collectors with this car and its packaging. The striking white and blue window box that first caught my eye and my appetite used colors and logos that were carefully matched to samples provided by Entenmann's and nicely integrated with Lionel orange and blue colors and logos (Photos 2, 3, and 4). This innovative box design was the brainchild of Bob Mintz, chief design engineer of the RMLI.

Obtaining the necessary permissions for the 2010 Entenmann's O gauge club car was the responsibility of Al Schwartz, club car agent for the RMLI. Al and his Entenmann's counterpart have





5

worked with each other since the RMLI proposed its first car to the company, the 2008 trailer on flatcar (TOFC). The reaction of Entenmann's to the 2010 club car and packaging was positive.

Getting the okay to use corporate colors and logos for this type of project is essential, but it is only the first step. Al Schwartz, Bob Mintz, and Vice President George Faeth, the trio responsible for club cars at the RMLI, learned that the next steps are even tougher in today's manufacturing environment in China. Giving the decoration information to Lionel, selecting the type of car to be produced, and specifying the custom Entenmann's packaging began a long process of working with Lionel and the Chinese manufacturer. During this period, the members of the club car troika at the RMLI played the "would you take..." game with the Chinese factory, rejecting three prototypes that were not quite right until an acceptable sample was approved. All this lengthened the time before the cars were delivered, but the accompanying photos demonstrate that the wait was worth it. The 6-52557 rides on premium sprung trucks and is complete with a little dark blue man holding an Entenmann's box as a final touch (Photos 5, 6, and 7). The people at Lionel and the RMLI who toiled to make the 2010 Entenmann's Operating Boxcar happen can be proud of this one, and we can be glad they made the effort.



6

## The 2008 Entenmann's Donut TOFC

The 2008 RMLI Entenmann's TOFC (6-52497) was also designed by Bob Mintz (Photo 8). The end result was a simple, handsome, blue-on-white scheme for the trailer that highlighted two delicious-looking chocolate donuts with a focus on a bite out of one of them (Photo 9). After the first public appearance of the car on Long Island, the 2008 TOFC became known as the "donut" car by many viewers. George Faeth reports that women seemed to be especially attracted to the decoration on the sides of the trailer and bought a fair number of cars as gifts. The dark blue sides of the flatcar are labeled in white with a joint Lionel RMLI built date of 06-09, the number 9008, Long Island and the stock number 52497 of the car, all of which are more than enough information to establish its identity. Like a lot of good cooks, Bob Mintz took some ordinary ingredients, the standard components of the Lionel TOFC, and turned them into something special. The TOFC stands on its own as a collector piece, but I was anxious to see what the 2008 and the 2010 cars would look like together. They are a sweet combination on a number of levels (Photo 10). Playing the match game in collecting is about making connections. This one is so good that it virtually demands more RMLI Entenmann's cars be created for a series. As this is written, a third car has already been designed by the redoubtable Bob Mintz and is awaiting approval by Entenmann's. If a third one successfully runs the gauntlet to production, I am going to order early.



7



8



## The Marketplace

The collector marketplace has already spoken about the value of the first two cars, neither of which is available from the RMLI any longer. A search of the secondary markets, including auction sites, reveals that the 2008 TOFC, when occasionally available, goes for \$175 to \$200. Once the RMLI supply was sold out, the 2010 operating boxcar selling price quickly climbed to over \$125 with the trend toward the up side. Not bad for miniature baked goods.



9



10




11

## A Modest Suggestion

If the series goes to four cars, I would like to suggest a white covered hopper trimmed in Entenmann's blue (Photo 11). At this point, this is just my idea and it hasn't been submitted to Entenmann's, been given the Bob Mintz creative touch by the RMLI, or even shown to Lionel. However, I think an approved and refined version has real potential to become a delicious addition to the Entenmann's club car series. This could be a truly beautiful car, but it would have to be sprayed with a final clear coat to prevent drooling from messing up the image. A collector has to be practical about the care and feeding of his collectibles, and that would be especially true with the Entenmann's Raspberry Danish Twist car.

## The Railroad Museum of Long Island


Creating and distributing club cars for fundraising are a small part of the activities conducted by volunteers of the nonprofit RMLI at its two locations in Greenport and Riverhead, New York. Proceeds from the club cars are being used to restore the Lionel Visitor's Center layout, which was transported in sections by RMLI volunteers from its original location in Michigan. The Riverhead site is the new home of the fabled Lionel

Visitor's Center layout. It was unofficially opened to the public on April 9, 2011, and will be officially unveiled during ceremonies in August 2011. Other exhibits at the two museum sites during the spring, summer, and fall season feature everything from real trains to railroading relevant to the development of railroads on Long Island during the past 175 years. For more information about schedules and events at the RMLI, visit [www.rml.org](http://www.rml.org) or call 631-477-0439 for the Greenport location or 631-727-7920 for the Riverhead site. 



# English as a Second Language

Photos by Rich Melvin

Among the fun aspects of 3-rail O gauge collecting is finding factory errors. As a matter of fact, some folks prefer to collect them. This example came to us from out of the Lionel Conventional Classics set 6-38329. The 2009 set is the modern version of the 1956 Hudson Steam Hauler Freight Set with the postwar number 2261W. The 3562-50 yellow operating barrel car holds pride of place in the order of cars pictured in the set, located right behind the 646 small Hudson. The operating car and the postwar-style Lionel logo paper it was wrapped with were both perfect. As you can see from Photos 1 and 2, the box has the right orange and blue colors, the correct product number on the end flap, and neat printing. However, the Chinese box vendor made *just one mistake*, which you can readily see in Photo 3. Who knows, maybe Lionel is trying out a new product line extension. *LionE Lines* anyone? 





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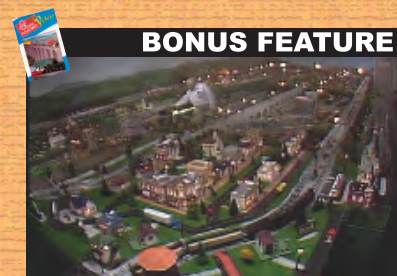
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## Prairie on the Prairie



Beginning in the late 1930s and continuing well into the postwar era, the original Lionel Corporation made extensive use of the 2-6-2 wheel arrangement in its medium-sized steam locomotives. Engines such as the prewar 224 and the postwar 675 and 2025 are still around today, including one of each of them in my own postwar collection.

As popular as the 2-6-2s were on toy train layouts, the Prairie type was not widely used on real railroads. With its symmetric architecture, the center of gravity for a real Prairie was nearly on its middle drivers causing unstable riding characteris-

tics at speed. The reciprocating side rods with their mass near the engine's center of gravity induced severe side-to-side rocking. The engine literally swung back and forth across the track while pivoting on its middle set of drivers, which rendered the Prairie type ill suited for most high-speed passenger service. However, several railroads, especially in the western United States, used 2-6-2s for freight duty.

One of a few surviving examples of the Prairie type is on static display at Brownwood, Texas, in front of the restored Santa Fe depot and connecting Harvey House. Built in April 1902, AT&SF 1080

is one of nine survivors of the 103 Class 1050 Vauclain four-cylinder compound 2-6-2s built for road by Baldwin in 1902 and 1903. All the compound 2-6-2s were converted to simple operation in the period between 1910 and 1922.

Baldwin built over 230 Prairies in six classes for the Santa Fe with the last one retired from service at the end of steam operations in 1956. The Prairie on the prairie at Brownwood was retired in 1953 and donated to the town in 1954.

—George Brown





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# Here's an Idea



My grandson Carter experiences the fun of operating the many buttons on The Play Panel.

## The Play Panel

Article by Bill Bramlage

Photos by Jim Barrett

I enjoy watching children of all ages play with my trains. Recently, I took my two-year-old grandson, Carter, to visit my train friend Ron Theobald. On the side of Ron's layout, there is a panel with several buttons that enable his grandchildren to operate accessories. Carter pushed the buttons with great enthusiasm and many smiles. Based on this experience, I decided to construct a pullout panel on my own layout with many different types of buttons. I have named this operating center The Play Panel.

The design and choice of operating accessories for the panel were changed several times after visiting children of various ages played with the panel. The Play Panel should be easily accessible for toddlers. I found that all reachable accessories have to be durable, and all operating accessories need to be positioned where they can be easily viewed and operated by the children. It seems the most frequently used buttons are those that control sound effects or accessories equipped with sound.

I obtained my soundboards and speak-

ers from Innovative Train Technology at [www.ittproducts.com](http://www.ittproducts.com). It offers multiple types of buttons and switches, and I found the staff to be very helpful. Momentary buttons are used to trigger the various sound effects to preclude having several sound effects operating at the same time. Most accessories function best with on/off buttons. Accessories, like the radar tower, operate well with an on/off switch and do not need adult supervision such as might be required for the reloading of coal, logs, or other loads. Located near The Play Panel is a street that has been placed along the edge of the layout. Young children can push cars up and down this reachable street. The cars and the panel buttons are intended for children to have fun operating and show what they can do.

I've noticed that two-year-old children





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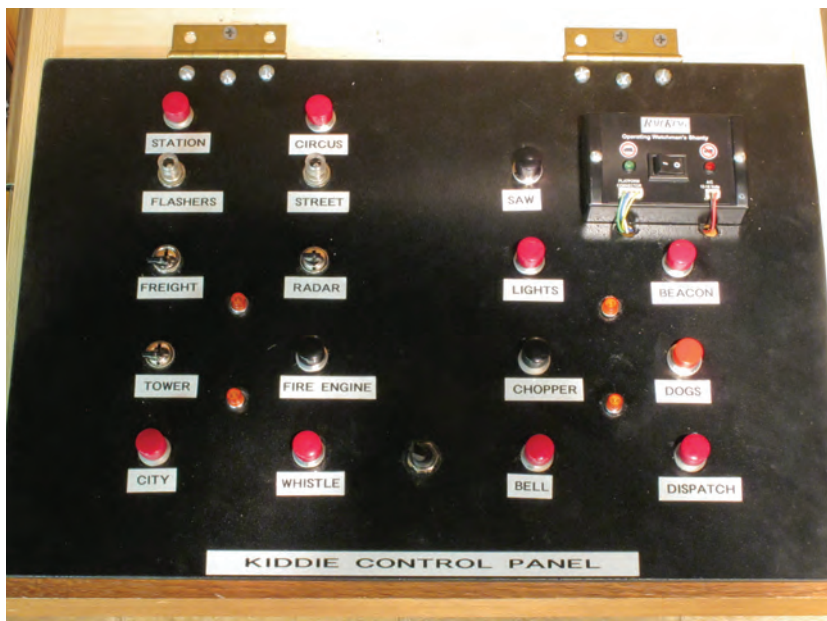
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The Play Panel is installed on a pullout panel. Many of my accessories and operating features can be controlled at this panel.

tend to push the buttons rapidly. The most popular buttons for them appear to be the freight station and the sound effect buttons, such as the barking dogs, the helicopter, and the fire engine. The four and five-year olds seem to prefer the buttons associated with speed, so I used sturdy materials and durable buttons. Seven to nine-year olds check out the buttons on The Play Panel and ask how they work and even why. Older youngsters seem to enjoy playing with all the buttons. We old-timers just like to sit at The Play Panel, smile, and reminisce about past Christmas train layouts or childhood visits to train stores.

I try to avoid using the word "no" with children when operating the layout. Diversion seems to be sufficient and works for me. The Play Panel is a great diversion designed for youngsters of all ages to use and enjoy. 

This is a wide view of The Play Panel located near my many action accessories that respond to the various switches.







# Simple and Effective Wire Hangers for Your Layout



matic increase in the number of wires eventually outgrew the holes I had drilled. Although adding such holes is a simple solution, it becomes a backbreaking task after the top is on the layout and wires are already hanging all over the place, including places where you want or need to drill additional holes.

After a recent visit to a friend's layout that is currently under construction, I saw a simple solution to almost all the wire issues I've ever faced in the past. This solution makes wire management a neat, simple, and effective procedure that can be used on layouts of any size. Chuck Hamner got this idea from Bob Bartizek, who in turn got it from others before him. These hobbyists have graciously provided this solution for the benefit of all of us.

In Photo 1 you can see three different diameters of what is called PVC conduit, not to be confused with PVC pipe. PVC pipe, whether it is schedule 40 or schedule 80, is a much thicker wall material than PVC conduit and is generally unsuitable for what we are going to do here. PVC conduit is identified by its obviously thinner wall construction. That thin wall of the conduit tubing is essential for our intended

It always amazes me how much wire is used when I build a layout. No matter what I plan on, it always seems as though there's more wiring than I could have ever imagined when I started. I suppose that's to be expected as you build because you always think of new things to add as you go along.



On my last layout, I drilled holes in cross members of the table frame and routed wires through those holes from the transformers or control panel to wherever the wires terminated. Even with a powerful drill and a hole saw, that turned out to be a lot of work. Often enough, the dra-





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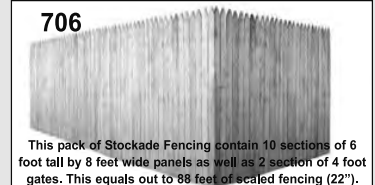


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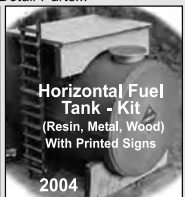
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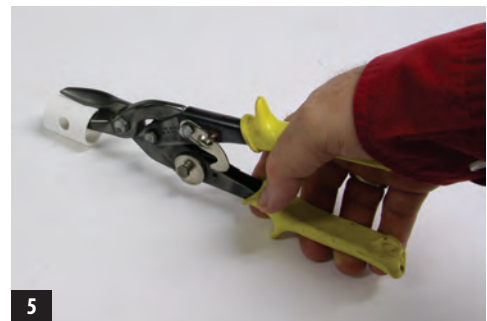
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5

use in this project. Here then is a simple process for making your own low-cost wire hangers.

Buy a single 8' length of 3/4", 1", or 1-1/4" PVC conduit. Use a hacksaw or a hacksaw blade in a jigsaw to cut the conduit into a number of short pieces about 1-1/4" long. Since PVC conduit has such thin walls, the cutting task is an easy one.

Next, use a 1/4" drill bit and drill all the way through from one side of the conduit to the other, as shown in Photo 2. After you have done that, enlarge the hole in just one side of the tube to about 3/8", as shown in Photo 3. The finished result, depicted in Photo 4, shows three different sizes of conduit drilled first with a 1/4" hole, followed by one of the two holes in each piece being drilled out to 3/8".

The next step is to slice through the

PVC tube lengthwise from one end to the other with a pair of sheet-metal shears. Be careful to make the cut midway between the two holes, as shown in Photo 5. Since the PVC conduit has such a thin wall, this is an easy cut to make. The cut conduit will stay sprung tightly closed but can be easily pulled open, as shown in Photo 6.

The reason for the two different sizes of holes is shown in Photo 7. Using a 1" long drywall screw, slide the threaded end of the screw through the bigger hole and then through the small hole. The small hole will hold the screw head up inside the tube. Slip a screwdriver through the big hole and drive the screw through the small hole of the hanger into any wood surface or edge. The screw head will firmly grip the PVC tube to the mounting surface. If you want to hang wires along a wall, as

As seen in O Gauge Railroad Run 249 "Barrett in the Backshop"



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Chuck did, you can do so by first mounting a simple scrap of wood on the wall.

If you want to suspend the wire hanger under the table, simply drive the screw into any handy bottom edge of the layout framework. You could just as easily hang the wire hangers vertically by driving the mounting screw into any table leg in some out-of-sight spot. I like to predrill the mounting surface for the drywall screws using a 1/8" drill, but even that is unnecessary if you are inserting a sharp drywall screw into soft pine lumber.

Wire can be simply threaded through the conduit wire hanger, or it can be inserted into the hanger by prying open the hanger at the split and slipping the wire into the conduit. A

great advantage to this is that if you end up with more wires than you thought you would use, all the wires can be easily removed from the small conduit hanger, and you can then quickly and easily substitute a larger hanger in its place. Yet another advantage of these wire hangers is that you can reroute or replace a given wire fairly easily without disturbing all the other wires. All you need do is slip the unneeded wire out of the hanger you don't want it in and route it along a different path.

Nothing complicated here. It is all pretty easy and straightforward. It's a neat and simple solution to all those dangling wires that tend to make the underside of many layouts look like a giant spider web.



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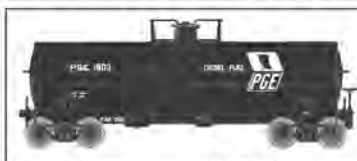
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# Backshop Letters

**Do you have a question about repairing or operating your trains? Do you have a problem with your trains, accessories, or layout?**

For answers, e-mail Jim Barrett (jim@ogaugerr.com). Please include your phone number, city, and state. If possible, also include your work phone number so Jim can respond directly to you, as it may be several months before your question and his answer appear in the magazine. If you are unable to e-mail Jim, you may write to him at OGR Publishing, 33 Sheridan Rd., Poland, OH 44514.

In the *Backshop Volume 9* video, there is a section on installing indicator lights on hi-rail switches. In your opening remarks, you say the approach can use either regular incandescent lamps or LEDs. I was wondering how you would use LEDs since the track power is AC and the LEDs require DC. I am rusty with my understanding of electronics, but using LEDs in the approach would require a DC LED circuit and the AC track power circuit to share the same common.

—Andy Del Collo

*And that is exactly what happens. A DC transformer's DC- can indeed be attached to an AC transformer's AC common, and the two get along quite nicely with absolutely no interference from either into the other's business. With that understanding, if you insulate one entire outside rail (if using GarGraves track, you simply cut the outer rail at two locations over any distance you want), then the presence of any wheel and axle(s) will complete the DC- from one rail through the wheelset to the other rail. By attaching a wire to that insulated rail, it brings the DC- right to the DC- leg of an LED. Bingo, it lights up, showing that something is indeed on the track. —Jim*

In Run 248, Ken Focht wrote to thank you for your advice on using metal foil tape on MTH crossovers. Could you expand on that or tell me where to find that kind of tape?

—Ken Driscoll

*Sure! It is a shiny metal foil tape that heating and ventilating duct installers use to seal the gaps in sheet-metal ducting. It adheres to smooth surfaces and is also electrically conductive. You will find it in hardware stores or home improvement centers. The roll I have is about an inch wide, but this tape comes in rolls up to 3" wide and is easily cut with scissors. It makes a great conductor over areas of a switch that you may be having trouble with due to roller spacing.*

*Be sure to keep in mind that you can't put it directly on the crossing rails where the center rollers of engines travel. That area needs to stay insulated to prevent shorting out. —Jim*

I have some used Lionel Pullman 9500 series passenger cars from the mid-1970s that I need to take apart so I can replace bulbs in them. I can't figure out how to disassemble the cars because there are no

screws in the bottoms, and it looks as if they must snap together in some way. So far, all I have been able to figure out is that the ends and top are separate pieces, and the bottom and sides are one piece. I've tried prying on the top. When it wouldn't separate enough to reveal how it should come apart all the way, I didn't force it any further for fear of breaking something. Can you help me out with some advice on how to get these little puzzlers apart without damaging them?

—Jim Gibson

*They have puzzled me in the past, too. Don't feel like the Lone Ranger on this one. The trick is that the roof and inner window white plastic liner is all one piece. It nests inside the side walls and side window frame area of the car body. Carefully, using a blunt hobby knife, go to the middle of the side of the body and pry between the very top of the body side just below the first seam line of the roof. The body side can and will separate away from the rest of the translucent white window material. The trick is to bow the sides out enough so the plastic catches molded on the sides of the body will allow the roof and inner window material to slide up and out. —Jim*

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I read your article in Run 247 regarding pavement for an intermodal yard with great interest because I have a similar intermodal yard, with one track on a roadbed for the trucks.

My problem is with the Lionel crane. The crane operates fairly well in opening and closing the clamps and moving to and fro, but that requires a considerable amount of power. However, there is a small gear that engages for lifting the inner device up and down, and it seems that this gear has either separated from the drive shaft or cracked. Getting into the housing is no easy task, and trying to remove the cords and gear is even more difficult. I purchased another crane on eBay, and when I received it, the same problem existed. Fortunately, the seller took it back, probably knowing it had that defect.

I don't know where to go to obtain parts or have it repaired especially knowing that the time involved to disassemble and reassemble may make it a costly repair. It has been in this condition for some time, which leads me to believe that this is an inherent problem with the crane.

Have you any ideas or suggestions? The intermodal yard is a wonderful addition and activity to my layout. Moving containers from truck flatbeds and onto the intermodal train bed, and vice versa, is enjoyable entertainment that also requires talent.

—Joseph P. Ingarra

*You are correct. That tiny gear is indeed split and is spinning freely on the shaft. And you are also correct that there is no easy fix for this, nor is there a replacement gear available. All these tiny plastic gears made by Lionel have indeed split due either to the clearance being too tight on the shaft or to the type of plastic used to make the gear. All available replacement gears have been used up, and they too have split, or will split with time.*

*The upside is that there is a fix. It will necessitate you opening up that gear box and carefully removing the*

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6333-1	Frisco 6-bay Cylindrical Hopper #81015.....	\$44.99
6339-1	MP/UP Merger 6-bay Cylindrical hopper #710310.....	\$44.99
6301-1	Burlington CB&Q 3-bay Cylindrical Hopper #85402.....	\$44.99
3001204-1	Genessee & Wyoming (Op. Lifesaver) 3-bay Cyl. Hopper #4081.....	\$56.99
6772-3	Cambria & Indiana 55 Ton fishbelly hopper #330.....	\$54.99

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U4500 series	50' Tank Cars - BNSF, AGP.....	\$42.95
G2300 series	B&O Wagontop Box Cars - Call for availability.....	\$66.95
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RPO cars	Santa Fe, Union Pacific.....	\$59.99
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G1104-L	B&O 4-Car Set 60' Silver/Blue Stripes-Alum Extruded -like new.....	\$250.00
G1201-L	PRR - Tuscan 6-Car Set -All Ribbed - 60' Sealed.....	\$300.00
1041-L	Lackawanna EMD E8 B unit.....	\$100.00
1043-L	Reading USRA 0-6-0 #1320.....	\$250.00
1044-L	Lackawanna 0-6-0 Switcher #161 (only 40 made).....	\$250.00
1040-2	NYC Alco RS11 w/sound #8005.....	\$150.00
1071-S/L	Pennsylvania L-1 Mikado 2-8-2 #738.....	\$595.00
1084-LP	Great Northern P2 4-8-2 Modern Black Scheme #2504.....	\$825.00
1300-S/L	UP SD40-2 #3532, #3500.....	\$175.00
1301-S/L	BN SD40-2 #6773 Green/Black.....	\$175.00
1307-S/L	Chessie SD40-2 #7614, #7619.....	\$175.00
1317-LP	Southern SD40-2 #3310.....	\$175.00
1318-LP	SF SD40-2 Diesel #4997 and #4999 available.....	\$175.00
1320-LP	So SD40-2 #759.....	\$175.00
1322-LP	Burlington Route SD40-2 #679 red/grey.....	\$175.00
1323-LP	B&O SD40-2 #7599.....	\$175.00
1325-LP	D&RG SD40-2 #5261 (upgraded 2.0 MTH).....	\$399.00
1330-LP	NYC U25B Diesel #2505/2512.....	\$150.00
1311-S/L	D&H C628 #610, #612.....	\$150.00
1315-S/L	UP C628 #2902.....	\$150.00
1316-S/L	Conrail C628 #6749.....	\$150.00
G1960	Company Row House.....	\$49.95
U5539-L	Erie RS-3 Diesel Engine Cab #933.....	\$150.00
Z3908	Williams Peter Wit Streetcar - Cleveland Transit.....	\$199.00
E7-214	Williams UP ET AA unit #986 or 989.....	\$289.00

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6-48147/49930	Santa Fe PA AA w/ 3 pk Passenger Set.....	\$620.00
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K42439	Operating Swing Bridge.....	\$149.95
80-2032-1	DAP MTH HO GM74 SD70M-2.....	\$225.00
80-3124-1	NYC L-3B 4-8-2 #4307 w/81-90034 MDT 6-car Reefer set.....	\$550.00
80-3174-1	NKP Berkshire 2-8-4 #765.....	\$409.99
80-3177-1	MTH HO Pere Marquette Berk #1225.....	\$409.95
11-30085	Lionel Corporation No. 216 Std. Gauge Hopper Car.....	\$130.00
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K613-1231	CNJ Extended Vision Smoking Caboose.....	\$64.95
K612-1091	B&O RR Bay Window Smoking Caboose.....	\$64.95
K6253-1891	PRR (Goes to War) die cast ribbed 2-bay hopper - 4pak.....	\$195.00
K6255-1091	B&O 2-Ray O/S Brace Hopper w/load #30805, #30800 ea.....	\$49.95
K623-1231	CNJ Classic die cast hopper.....	\$49.95
K623-1091	B&O Classic die cast hopper.....	\$49.95
K623-1094	B&O Classic die cast hopper.....	\$49.95
K623-1096	B&O Classic die cast hopper.....	\$49.95
K623-1051	ATSF Classic die cast hopper.....	\$49.95
K623-1511	Erie die cast 4-bay hopper #234517.....	\$49.95
K623-1452/53	D&H 'Blue Coal' 4-bay die cast hopper.....	\$100.00
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K623-2115/16	UP Silver 4-bay die cast hopper - pair.....	\$100.00
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K6255-1891	PRR 2-bay O/S brace die cast hopper w/load #220948/963/936 ea.....	\$49.95

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6-27291	PRR Wood Sheathed Box Car.....	\$62.99
6-27395	Atmtrak Express Track Car.....	\$62.99
6-27398	CNW Heritage Mechanical Reefer.....	\$62.99
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6-38216	Rio Grande FT - non-powered.....	\$119.99
6-38611	PRR Junior Mikado w/TMCC.....	\$299.99
6-38687	Western Atlantic 0-4-0.....	\$179.00
6-8006	JC Penney ACL 4-6-4 w/Case and shipper - tested, no papers.....	\$299.00
6-8215	NKP Berkshire 2-8-4.....	\$285.00
6-8378	UP SD40 Diesel.....	\$250.00
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20-20024-3	GTW SD40-2 #6937.....	\$169.95
20-20030-1	EMD SD9043 Mac w/2.0.....	\$389.95
20-20034-1	Northern Pacific GP9 Diesel Engine.....	\$389.95
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20-20050-3	CP Rail E8 non-powered 'B' unit.....	\$150.00
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20-20059-1	PRR Alco FA-2 ABA w/2.0.....	\$659.00
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20-2138-1	UP A816 Diesel #1265.....	\$169.95
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20-2243-1	Canadian National FA ABA w/2.0.....	\$549.00
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20-2897-3	C&O GP9 (non-pwd).....	\$169.95
20-2900-1	NYC GP35 w/2.0.....	\$389.95
20-2900-3	NYC GP35 (non-pwd) #6142.....	\$169.95
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20-2947-3	Conrail Dash 8 40C (non-pwd) #6040.....	\$169.95
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gear and shaft. Before you remove the gear from the shaft, mark the shaft where the gear is positioned. Using a hobby knife, make marks around the shaft on both sides of the gear with the knife's edge. Remove the gear and, using the same knife, roll the shaft on a flat surface with the knife edge, causing it to rough up the part of the shaft where the gear normally sits. Then, using liquid plastic cement like Testors, cement the crack in the plastic gear and let it cure. Be very careful that you don't clog up the space between the teeth. If you do, use a jeweler's file to clean out the gear tooth spacing.

Slide the gear back on the shaft and add a drop of mixed epoxy cement, carefully smoothed around the shaft on each side of the gear. Reassemble the gear box, and that should cure the problem.

It's not an easy fix, but every intermodal crane I've seen has successfully been fixed this way. —Jim

I opened one of the grease screw holes on the bottom of my steam locomotive and can see grease as well as air space inside. The instruction manual for this MTH engine says to add grease after "x" number of hours or one year, but they don't say how much to add. How do you know how much to add? I assume, like adding oil to a car engine, that overfilling can be damaging.

—Richard Bush

Generally, my rule of thumb is if you can see it, you're alright. When it comes to internal gears, it's difficult to over grease them. There isn't any pressure build-up, so chances of causing a problem just aren't high. I would keep the grease just visible, but not overly full. The old "x hours of use" thing is nearly impossible to get right anyway. Who keeps track of hours of use with individual locomotives? Sure, I know that MTH locomotives keep a record that can be accessed through the DCS, but how often do we keep the record right by clearing the hours accumulated after greasing a locomotive?

I would recommend using a grease called Red-N-Tacky #2. This grease doesn't get runny when it gets hot. That means it tends to stay in the grease pocket instead of leaking out around the axle and ending up on the track. It's available at auto stores. —Jim

My O gauge layout was made up entirely of Atlas track and switches, A few months back, I changed out four of the Atlas switch motors and installed Z-1000 motors from Z-Stuff, but now I'm having a problem with the power across the switches. The solution is to pull the switch out and then solder a couple of jumper leads to ensure power across the frog. But I'm also looking at RCS switches, and it appears that they come with Z-1000 motors. What's your opinion of these two switches?

—Kevin

I think that they are both good products. I happen to use the Ross switches exclusively on my layout. I have 66 of them that operate flawlessly. Don't be afraid to use more power than the recommended 14 volts. On large layouts with long wire travels, I routinely use 17 to 18 volts. Inside the switch motor, there is a limiting switch that will cut the power to the switch once it has thrown, even if you continue to press the button. For that reason, they simply will not overheat using the higher voltage. —Jim

I have a prewar Lionel Flying Yankee set with the whistle in the power unit. The other day I ran the set, and the whistle once engaged would not stop blowing. When I applied power to the track, it started blowing. The next morning, I tried the engine again. This time the whistle only came on when I engaged the whistle button. I am assuming the solenoid is sticking and was wondering if you have a general cleaning or tune-up procedure I could try. I have a Lionel postwar repair guide, if that helps as a possible reference.

—Ed Case

I think you've got it right. Get yourself a can of tuner cleaner, which is an electronics spray cleaner. Spray it around the contact points and the hinge point where the moving contact attaches to the relay. If that doesn't do it, the relay plate may have become magnetized over a period of time and naturally attracts itself to the coil of the whistle relay. It has been known for a long time that a sharp blow with a hammer to the plunger that travels up and down in the coil will demagnetize it, curing the problem.

To do this, you need to completely



remove the coil plunger. Disassemble the plate from the bottom and remove the coil plunger from the inside of the coil. Holding the plunger with a pair of long-nose pliers vertically on a steel plate, sharply strike the end of the plunger with a hammer. That will actually scramble the magnetic field that has developed in the plunger, rendering it demagnetized.

If this is more than you want to try on your own, take it to a postwar train repairman, and he can do it for you. —Jim

You answered a question for me some time ago about having to ground my layout. Yesterday, I ran into a new problem and am not sure how to fix it. We have been working down from the top of an extensive layout and finally got to the first level on the train table. Then the problem began.

The engine did a stutter-step and stopped. Providing more power only made the engine move about 3" before it stopped again. The track is new GarGraves, and the switches are new Ross. We cleaned the track, but that didn't help. We checked for continuity, which was fine, and had no shorts.

We checked buss wire connections and fixed a couple that needed attention. We then segmented the track, which includes a six-track yard, and again checked for continuity and shorts, and this revealed no problems. We had 17.9 volts on the track. By accident, one of us held a hand over the engine, not even touching it, and the engine ran fine. When we took the hand away, it did a stutter step again.

What's going on?

—Gordy Sauve

*The hand over the engine tells you that your hand is acting like a ground plane (that's not a ground as in electrical ground), keeping an errant signal from getting into the antenna from some other source. That is what's happening. I don't know why that is happening after all the other things you told me, but I suspect the answer is that you have some parallel tracks close by or elevated tracks at that location.*

*Run a simple wire, any gauge or any size and insulated or not, right on the surface of the train table and connected to absolutely nothing on the track. Then connect the end of*

*that wire to a copper pipe or to the faceplate screw on any wall outlet. I know that sounds crazy, but the problem should go away when you do that. Run the wire anywhere between the track your misbehaving engine is on and any other adjacent track. I suspect that you are getting signal interference from those nearby tracks. The signal radiating from the outer rails of one track is "pushing over" the signal radiating up from the track your engine is on. When that happens, the engine cannot see the signal well enough to pick it up on the antenna of the engine.*

*Your hand is acting like a ground plane to straighten out the signals radiating up from the track the engine is on. Adding a simple copper wire on the layout between the tracks is doing the same thing, forcing the signal to go up rather than out. When it goes up, the antenna in the locomotive sees the signal.* —Jim

I have a large hi-rail layout and have been able to operate five trains on DCS with one Z-4000 transformer. Recently, while running my trains, suddenly everything stopped. I checked the transformer and powered backup. The trains ran again for a couple of minutes and then stopped again. If I took a train off the system, it worked better. A friend advised me to wire a light bulb to the out terminals of the TIU to each track. I operate a double-track

main line. I remember you wrote an article about this, but I don't remember which issue. Can you tell me which issue and do you think this will solve the problem?

—Jim Dorsett

*As a matter of routine, you should wire one incandescent light bulb across the output of each channel of every TIU. This bulb will smooth out the digital signal inserted into the channel by the TIU and will improve the track signal by several points on each channel. Having said that, I don't understand yet what the actual stopping is due to. That shouldn't be related to track signal at all.*

*Intermittent stopping is more often associated with an overload on the transformer's power demand. In that situation, the transformer cannot keep up with transforming enough power from 110 volts down to 18 to 24 volts to satisfy the needs of five trains. The cure for that is to add another Z-4000 transformer and divide the output of the four handles so that one handle goes to each channel of the TIU. What that does is provide twice the capacity of power to the same train load, which should cure your problem.*

—Jim Barrett



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# The Helper Engine

George Brown



Arranged clockwise: K-Line Classic 6455 Frisco boxcar, Lionel 8750 Rock GP7, Lionel Standard O 17003 Dupont centerflow hopper, Lionel 9724 MP Eagle boxcar, K-Line Classic 6389 Oil Is All tank car

## Runables

In reflecting about Run 250, I've seen several trends in the O gauge railroading hobby flow and ebb since I joined the Myron Biggar Group and *OGR* in 1998. Of the really big trends back then, collecting trains was immensely popular when my first article published in Run 163, January 1999. Since then and from my vantage points as a product reviewer, columnist, and past Editor-in-Chief of *OGR*, I have watched the hobby evolve to where operating trains has overtaken collecting them. Although I'm certain collectibles and operations will be around for as long as model trains exist, perhaps a third element also exists—one that is obscured by today's ubiquitous O gauge locomotives and cars.

You're probably not going to find a dictionary definition for the word "runables" because there isn't one. To back up a few hours, the title and idea for this column hit me late at night. By that time of the night, I'm frequently over the backside of the fatigue curve and am moving from habit rather than motivation, so a lot of what I think about doesn't make much sense. But earlier the next day as I rooted through a number of my older locomotives and a lot of my rolling stock in search for a train to

set up on the editorial Carpet Central Railroad, I realized many of the pieces in my collection are what I can easily classify as runables. So, what are runables?

Runables are older trains that have no collector value because so many of them are still in existence and they have a lot of scale miles left in them. Best of all and because of the seemingly inexhaustible glut of O gauge trains available today, prices for even new examples of these older trains are downright reasonable...no, implausibly cheap! For example, I saw an asking price recently for an MPC-era Lionel GP7, new in original box, for less than \$130. At this same venue, a new die-cast Joshua Lionel Cowen Hudson from the mid-1970s had an asking price of under \$300, while new MPC and LTI Lionel freight cars were priced at less than \$15 apiece.

Of course, prices for used locomotives and rolling stock are even lower. If a runnable locomotive or car is not in good mechanical or cosmetic condition as a result of heavy use or even abuse, it is more than likely easy to repair, rebuild, or even restore. Parts are either readily available from dealers or can be salvaged from a similar locomotive or car that has been relegated to the status of parts donor. And because they have no collector

value, runables can fall under the knife, saber saw, glue bottle, or even an airbrush for guiltless customization.

These trains can be from several decades ago, primarily the 1970s through the 1990s, and can be made by any of the manufacturers during those decades. The manufacturers can include Lionel in its various corporate incarnations, K-Line, Williams, Weaver, MTH, and others

including some who weren't in the business very long, such as Crown Model Products and Industrial Rails.

My favorites, obviously because I have a number of them, are Lionel locomotives and cars from the MPC and LTI eras, K-Line Classics freight cars, and early MTH RailKing locomotives and passenger cars. All of these trains are colorful and they run great. From the standpoint of quality construction and finish, the early RailKing locomotives and cars were the most consistent, with MPC-era Lionel as a close second. My few early Williams locomotives and Madison passenger car sets have proven to be reliable and are unusual with their high gloss paint. A number of my really colorful freight cars are K-Line Classics, which roll rather well and track both traditional tinplate and hi-rail track with aplomb.

RailKing steamers and diesels that did not have the original Proto-Sound electronics were technically simple, mechanically reliable, and fun to run. As a side note, early RailKing engines equipped with just a reverse unit and electronic horn or whistle are actually rather hard to find now.

A favorite train of mine is the first RailKing release of the Union Pacific Challenger from about 15 years ago plus the matching die-cast water tender and six matching 60 aluminum UP streamline cars. Another favorite is the initial-release RailKing NYC Hudson pulling a six-car set of Williams Crown Edition 60 Madison passenger cars painted in two-





**MTH RailKing Hudson and Williams Crown Edition Madison coach**

tone gray NYC Pacemaker livery. Even without the benefit of electronic speed control, both the Challenger and Hudson maintain a fairly constant speed as they effortlessly pull their trains around the editorial CCRR.

For scale-sized passenger cars, the K-Line Heavyweights are hard to beat and are quite reasonable on the secondary market, especially if used. Be aware that some of the early production Heavyweight sets suffer from poor wiring for the interior lights, but wires are easy to replace. Scale-sized 70 Williams Madison cars of the same era in the 1990s are also still around for fire sale prices, but they pull like the proverbial lead sleds.

In Lionel's four-axle Geeps, U-boats, EP5s, and single-motor F3s, the series-wound motors from the '70s and '80s are not all that noisy and are usually reliable runners. But since these engines have only one motor, their individual pulling power is often somewhat lackluster. However, I found two or more of these engines coupled together are up to just about any assignment on my layout. I just lock the E-unit on each locomotive so it won't get out of sequence with its running mate. Some engines I join together back to back while others look better running elephant style.

My pair of 8750 Rock GP7s along with an LCCA Rock GP20 in the lead pull like blue blazes. As to pulling power of multiple units, my quartet of Preamble Express F3s is awesome, and the total current draw for all four units is quite reasonable for my


postwar ZW transformers. Plus, a custom refinish of the four Preamble F3s is on my list of projects within the foreseeable future. Several of my MPC-era Lionel F3s, Geeps and diesel switchers have already gone down the custom paint path.

As to the handsome but weak six-axle Lionel SDs and U-boats of the MPC era, their intermediate drive gears are relatively soft plastic and they wear out prematurely. But even with their worn-out intermediate gears, my trio of 8380 Lionel Lines SD28s still put in good performances. When their drive gears finally give out, I'll replace them with new gears that I've held in my spare parts bin for a number of years. Of course, having an arbor press and special tools in my train room closet makes repairing engines such as the 8380s a lot easier.

When considering purchase of any old locomotive, look for excessively loose pickup rollers and driver axles that can indicate hard service with little maintenance. Also look for drive wheels that wobble, which can be the result of a bent axle.

However, some drive wheels on Lionel MPC-era diesels were drilled slightly off center so they are not concentric to the axle, and the engine will wobble as it moves along the rails. Another cause of MPC diesel wobbles is that the casting ridges on one or more of the drive wheels were not filed down sufficiently during manufacturing, which is easy to fix.

By the way, if you get any aged locomotive regardless of condition, treat it to a teardown and lube job before putting it into service on your layout. I've seen the results of no grease in a worm and drive gear, and it's a heartbreaker. The powdered brass that used to be the drive gear gets into everything in the power truck and motor and is difficult to completely clean out. Additionally, a main drive gear is not easy to replace without special tools, especially on Lionel power trucks that integrate the motor with the sheet-metal truck frame. On a Lionel series-wound motor, inspect the brushes and replace them if they have swelled and are tight in their holders or are even slightly worn. Motor brushes don't last long under heavy service, but they are inexpensive.

On a Lionel locomotive with a persistently cranky electromechanical E-unit, consider installing an electronic reverse unit. Dalle Electronics has AC reverse units that I understand are quite reliable. For a locomotive equipped with DC can motors and an ailing reverse unit, the manufacturer may still have the reverse unit you need, or, again, Dalle is an alternate source. After all, the point to any runnable locomotive or car is reliable and fun operation on a reasonable budget. 



**Arranged clockwise: K-Line Heavyweight UP Forty Niner observation, Williams 70 Madison diner, Williams U36C**



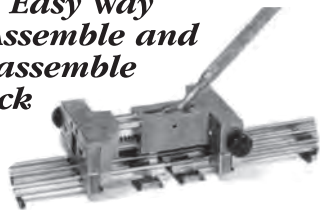


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# Scheduled Meets

**April 30-May 1, 2011**

**ABERFOYLE, ONT** – Open House, Club Premises, Quonset hut at Southern Village I Limits. 128 Brock Rd. 10a-4:30p, Adm: \$8, students and seniors \$6, children \$5. Info: Craig Webb, 257 Broadway Ave., Hamilton, ON L8S 2W7, (905) 527-5474.

**May 7, 2011**

**CHANTILLY, VA** – National Train Day Model Train Show, Regional Library, 4000 Stringfellow Rd. 10a-5p, Adm: free. Info: [www.nationaltrainday.com](http://www.nationaltrainday.com), [jfmasyo@verizon.net](mailto:jfmasyo@verizon.net).

**May 7-8, 2011**

**ABERFOYLE, ONT** – Open House, Club Premises, Quonset hut at Southern Village I Limits. 128 Brock Rd. 10a-4:30p, Adm: \$8, students and seniors \$6, children \$5. Info: Craig Webb, 257 Broadway Ave., Hamilton, ON L8S 2W7, (905) 527-5474.

**May 14, 2011**

**SAN ANTONIO, TX** – TCA 37th Annual Train Show, Garden Ridge Community Center, 9500 Municipal Parkway. 10:30a-4p, Adm: \$6, family \$9. Info: Pat Halpin, (210) 661-4238, [pthalpin@aol.com](mailto:pthalpin@aol.com).

**May 14-15, 2011**

**ABERFOYLE, ONT** – Open House, Club Premises, Quonset hut at Southern Village I Limits. 128 Brock Rd. 10a-4:30p, Adm: \$8, students and seniors \$6, children \$5. Info: Craig Webb, 257 Broadway Ave., Hamilton, ON L8S 2W7, (905) 527-5474.

**May 21, 2011**

**ALBUQUERQUE, NM** – 16th Annual RR Fair, NM State Fairgrounds. 9a-4p, Adm: \$6, under 12 free. Info: Bryan Moseley, P.O. Box 6583, Albuquerque, NM 87197-6583, (505) 345-0657, [mossman@zianet.com](mailto:mossman@zianet.com), [www.gserr.com](http://www.gserr.com).

**May 26, 2011**

**STUART, FL** – TCA Train Show, Knights of Columbus, 7251 SW Gaines Ave. 10a-4p, Adm: \$5, under 12 free. Info: Al Galli, (772) 219-7653, [algalli@embarqmail.com](mailto:algalli@embarqmail.com).

**June 18, 2011**

**REHOBOTH BEACH, DE** – Seaside Train Show, Beach Convention Center. 10a-4p, Adm: \$5, 10 and under free. Info: (302) 537-5557.

**TALLAHASSEE, FL** – Model RR Show & Sale, Florida Fairgrounds, 441 Paul Russell Rd., Bldg 4. 9a-4p, Adm: \$5, 12 and under free. Info: John Sullenberger, (850) 544-1870, [www.bbmra.org](http://www.bbmra.org) or [sullyjws@aol.com](mailto:sullyjws@aol.com).

**June 24-25, 2011**

**WHEELING, WV** – 13th Annual Marx Toy & Train National Convention, Kruger St. Toy and Train Museum, 144 Kruger St. Adm: \$18 without table, \$25 with table. Info: Allan Miller, (304) 242-8133, [allan@toyandtrain.com](mailto:allan@toyandtrain.com).

**June 25, 2011**

**CHARLOTTE, NC** – 8th Annual Rail Fair & Train Show, Metrolina Expo Center, 7100 Statesville Rd. 9a-4p, Adm: \$6, under 12 free. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213, (703) 536-2954, [www.gserr.com](http://www.gserr.com).

**June 25-26, 2011**

**TIMONIUM, MD** – Great Scale Model Train Show, MD State Fairgrounds. Free parking. Sat. 9a-4p, Sun. 10a-4p, Adm: \$9 on Sat., family \$18, \$8 on Sun., family \$15, under 15 free. Info: Howard Zane, (410) 730-1036, [www.gsmts.com](http://www.gsmts.com), [hzanel@comcast.net](mailto:hzanel@comcast.net).

**July 9, 2011**

**DELAND, FL** – 36th Annual Rail Fair, Volusia County Fairgrounds. 9a-4p, Adm: \$6, under 12 free. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213, (703) 536-2954, [www.gserr.com](http://www.gserr.com).

**July 16, 2011**

**LA CROSSE, WI** – Rail Fair RR Show, Copeland Rose St. and Clinton St. 10a-5p, Adm: \$5, under 12 free with adult. Info: 4000 Foundation, P.O. Box 3411, La Crosse, WI 54602, (608) 781-9383.

**July 23, 2011**

**PHOENIX, AZ** – "In The Heat" Swap Meet, Baptist Church, 5757 N. Central Ave. 9a-1p, Adm: Adults \$5. Info: David Jerry, P.O. Box 56305, Phoenix, AZ 85079 or (602) 336-0973.

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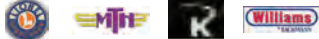
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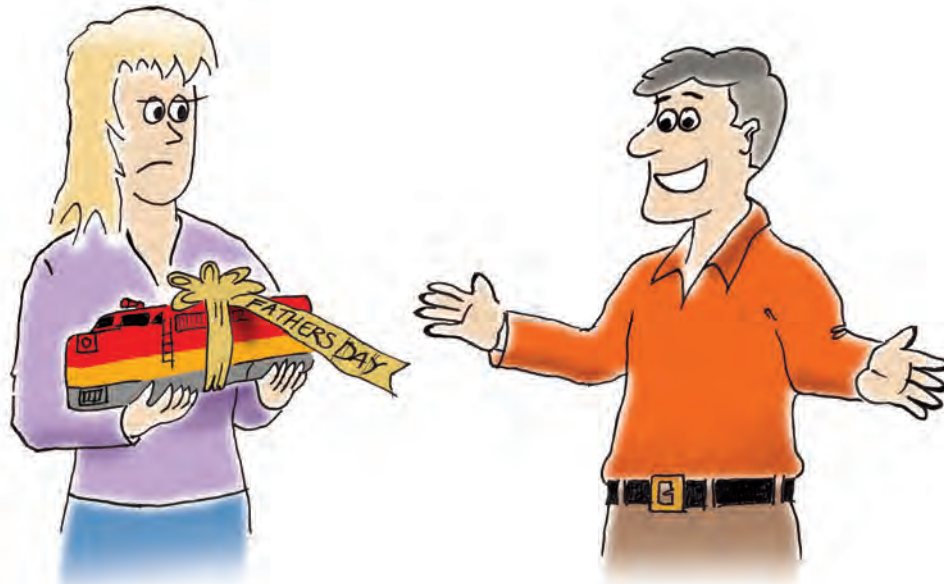
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