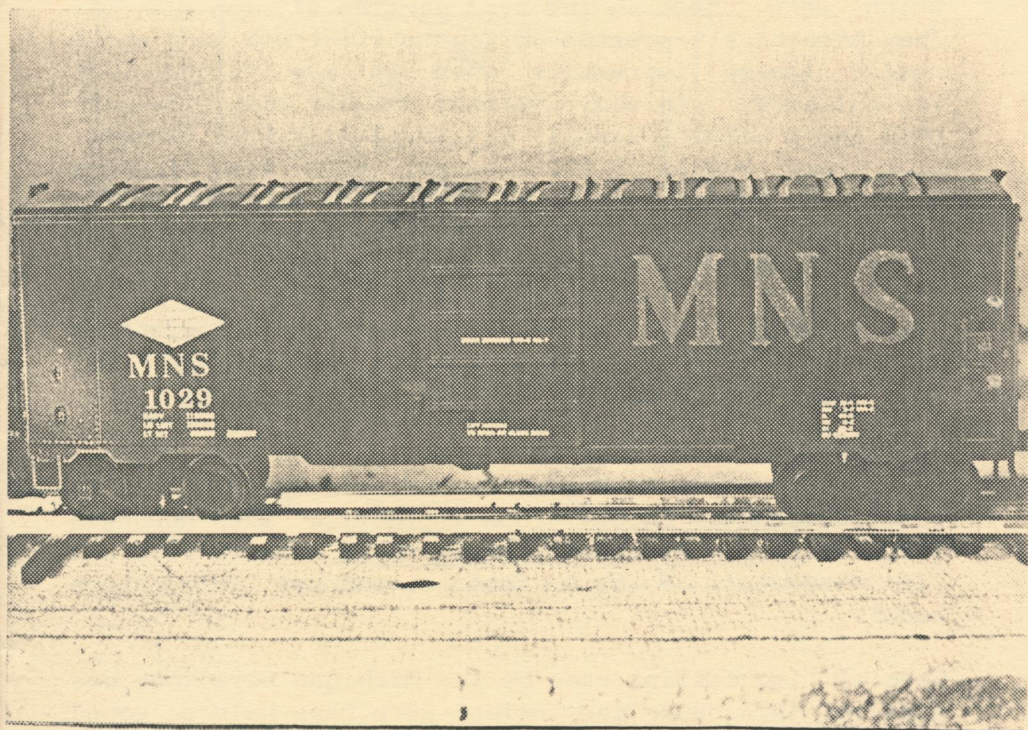


ESSENCE

A monthly publication of the
S Scale Special Interest Group

1:64 scale modeling with 1:1 fun

October 1986



Minneapolis Northfield & Southern is a bridge railroad which managed to make money even during the Great Depression. It is called "The Dan Patch Line" because Northfield, Minnesota is the birthplace of that famous racehorse. This American Models car has been modified to represent a rare prototype. Most MN&S cars had the letter "S" painted right-side-up.

Ken Zieska photo.

Modulitis

Don DeWitt, Chairman
Module Committee

What a convention!!! The NASG's "Michigan Interchange" brought modules together from Missouri, Wisconsin, Michigan, and New Jersey to form a layout which was awesome to say the least. It consisted of about 240 feet of mainline plus a jillion sidings and yards (see drawing).

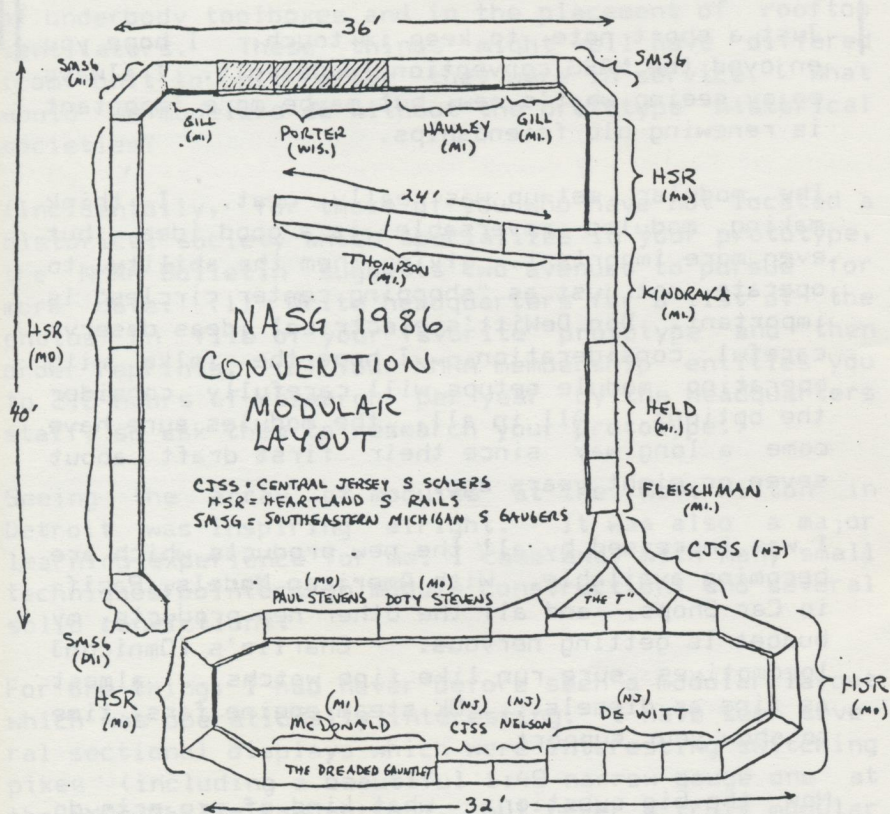
The Heartland S Gaugers brought about 75 feet of modules which made a big impression on everyone. They brought both of their 10 foot diameter 3-section ends which were used in the oval portion of the layout. They brought a 4-section 32 foot multi-track yard which really looked impressive when it was filled with freight cars. In addition they brought Dody Stevens' NMRA award-winning sawmill module (8 ft), Paul Stevens' junk yard module (8 ft), as well as a fine looking module by George Simmons (8 ft). I'm sure the Heartlands Club layout grabs the attention of everyone at the train shows in Missouri!

Twelve feet of modules from the Badgerland S Gaugers in Wisconsin were brought by Chuck Porter and Ken Mackenzie. They were built by Dave Koehler, Jr.

The Michigan group made an impressive show also. They contributed three 90-degree corner modules, as well as personal modules by Gaylord Gill (8 ft), Skip McDonald (12 ft), Sig Fleischman (4 ft), Dave Held (8 ft), and Jim Kindraka's 8 by 4 foot (L-shaped) interchange module.

Special impressions made by the Michigan boys (besides hosting this super convention) were Dave Held's sound system for both diesels and steam engines, Jim Kindraka's interchange module, and the remnants of Gaylord Gill's NMRA award-winning module that had been destroyed in transit to Milwaukee and was now being rebuilt. I shudder to think of the moment that Gaylord discovered that catastrophe! Skip McDonald's module which I call the "dreaded gauntlet" kept us all busy in the oval. On this module, both main lines share a single gauntlet track through a long tunnel. We needed

special watchmen and controllers to keep the trains apart. We did pretty well ... only two head-on collisions.



New Members

Heatwole, Jack C.

Route 1, Box 325
Penn Laird, VA 22846

Kloes, Richard

9735 West Morgan Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53228

Mayer, Daniel D.

47 Chestnut Street
Cooperstown, NY 13326

BIG QUESTION

Just a short note to keep in touch. I hope you enjoyed the NASG convention in Detroit. I always enjoy seeing what's new, but maybe more important is renewing old friendships.

The modular set-up was really neat. I think making modules reversible is a good idea, but even more important, giving them the ability to operate not just as "shopping center circles" is important. Don DeWitt's electrical ideas deserve careful consideration. I hope the folks with operating module setups will carefully consider the options. All in all, the modules sure have come a long way since their first draft about seven or eight years ago.

I was impressed by all the new products which are becoming available. With American Models, Pacific Car Shops, and all the other new products, my budget is getting nervous. Charlie's [Omnicon] locomotives sure run like fine watches... almost as fine as diesels... OK steam engine fans, time to show your support.

Now the big question: what kind of projects do you have in mind for the group and/or **Essence**? Would you like us to review products, start arguments, or whatever? I think the Pines & Prairies S Scale Workshop has members who can do any of these things. Just let us know.

I have enclosed a copy of the drawing which the Soo Line Historical & Technical Society published of the S00 M-1 gas electric. I don't know for sure, but it seems that the drawings of the B-3 and M-1 are identical. That means another prototype for Don's gas electric.

Ken Zieska

[Lacking permission from the SLH&TS, their drawings of the SOO M-1 are not reprinted here. I agree that the SOO M-1 seems almost a dead ringer for the NP B-3 pictured in Scenery Unlimited's ad. The only differences seem to be minor variations in the size and shape of underbody toolboxes and in the placement of rooftop ventilators. These things might well have differed from unit to unit after they were in service. What would we modelers do without the prototype historical societies?

(Incidentally, for those of you who have not located a historical society which specializes in your prototype, the NMRA **Bulletin** suggests two avenues to pursue for more data: (1) Write headquarters for a list of the photos on file of your favorite prototype and then order reprints. (2) Your NMRA membership entitles you to 2.5 hours of research per year by the headquarters staff, so ask them to research your prototype.)

Seeing the array of modules at the Novi Hilton in Detroit was inspiring alright. It was also a major learning experience for me. I came away with many small techniques/pointers on module construction, and several solid convictions.

For one thing, I had never before seen a modular layout which was operationally interesting. I have seen several sectional displays which were interesting switching pikes (including a beautiful 1:48 narrow gauge one at the NMRA Boston convention), but never a truly modular one. This was a major revelation! Yes Virginia, a modular layout can function as a model of a railroad.

For another thing, I came to appreciate some of the advantages of not having a skyboard. I subscribe to the walkaround school of operation, with manual uncoupling and manually throwing of track switches. This style, which is almost a necessity in a modular setup, seems too uncomfortable when reaching over a skyboard; part of the illusion of running your own real train is jarred. Also, it is very natural to chat with a person on the other side of the module - unless there is an intrevening skyboard; then things become a bit stilted.

Because a skyboard makes a module more photogenic and allows more variation in scenery, it might be a good idea to consider skyboards as optional so you can add them for mall shows and pix, and can leave them off for operating sessions.

Finally, I came away convinced that S modular exhibits are clearly the best way to get other NMRA members interested in 1:64 scale modeling. The Novi layout had much more attraction for model railroaders than a conventional round-and-round display would have had.

Concerning future projects: the biggest challenge will be to take advantage of the next NMRA national convention. Some of us will be there, but we need something to show. In addition to the promotional ideas discussed at Boston, the following letter from Gil Hulin suggests some others. Ed.]

EUGENE CONVENTION

I'm not sure if I will get to do any S scale modeling in the months before the 1987 NMRA convention in Eugene. I have hundreds of hours of work left to do on my 30' by 30' "0" scale railroad before it will be ready for tour guests, and my other involvements with the convention committee will increase throughout the next year. I am responsible for all ticketing of events that require tickets.

Accompanying is a form letter that I am mailing to all SIG coordinators. In addition to offering free table and meeting space to all SIGs, the '87 convention will have space for all modular layouts whose builders want to participate. Although this is not my personal area of concern, I am not currently aware of any S scale layouts in the region. You are welcome to announce an open invitation to S module groups to participate in the 1987 NMRA convention. Interested parties may contact Convention Chairman Bill Bain, P.O. Box 10445, Eugene, OR 97440. [Or Don DeWitt. Ed.]

Gil Hulin

Fellow SIG Coordinator,

As chairman of the NMRA's "O" Scale Special Interest Group I have experienced the frustration of trying to arrange display and meeting space for my SIG at an NMRA national convention. As a member of the 1987 NMRA convention committee, I want to put this experience to work in trying to make arrangements easier for you.

For a start, the convention will establish a "SIG Row" on the floor of the exhibit hall, where every SIG requesting space will be allotted one table with chairs free of charge. Obviously, we hope that you will provide some type of visual display that will be of interest to model railroaders and the general public visiting the show. If you need more than one table, additional tables will be available at our cost (which will be much less than in larger cities).

If you don't have the manpower or the interest to maintain a separate table, space will be available along "SIG Row" for those groups that just want to supply a stack of literature for distribution. This may be at one of the tables assigned to NMRA Groups Officer Ken Hampton as his base of operation.

In addition to display space, the convention will make available to each SIG a 90-minute slot in the clinic schedule for a presentation of interest both to your members and to all convention registrants who may be potential members. You might use this meeting time for a 45- to 60-minute presentation of your area of specialization, followed by a brief business meeting of the SIG. If you need additional time for SIG business that would not be of interest to non-members, we can provide time and space elsewhere during the convention, without tying up clinic rooms.

Sincerely,
Gil Hulin

[Thank you, Gil. I have only attended three NMRA national conventions, so I am no expert, but your plans for SIG participation seem extraordinarily gracious and well thought out. In Boston, the SIG space was a separate room which few attendees ever entered. No SIG elected to staff a table there, because the action was always elsewhere.

Space in the exhibit hall will get more exposure and will be easier to recruit staffing for, because someone manning (or is it personing?) a SIG display can see a lot of the exhibit area and meet the general public as well as other attendees. This worked well at Milwaukee in 1985, where the NASG had a centrally-located display in the exhibit hall. In addition to publicizing 1:64, their booth became a natural place for S modelers to make friends and "hang out" between scheduled events.

I think a joint showing by the SSSIG and the NASG would be appropriate for Eugene, and I will contact the NASG Promotions Chairman to suggest this. Because the NASG convention will be in Chicago the same month, I do not look for the excellent kind of 1:64 activity at Eugene which we had in 1985 at Milwaukee.

Hopefully, we can organize a modular layout for Eugene. I urge members who may attend the Eugene convention to let us know as soon as possible. If no modular layout materializes, I will throw together a small operating display railroad so folks can see a bit of S/Sn3 in action. It will be designed to sit on one or two 8-foot tables at our "booth". Ed.]

BOSTON PICNIC NEWS

Well school has started again, and I'm riding New Jersey Transit into Hoboken on the old Erie mainline. During the fall and spring terms, parking lots are so full that it's not worth driving.

I just received the August issue of **Essence**, and I must say that your cover photos are getting better and better! Do you realize that the "freight" in the cover photo was pulled by Bill

Daiker's 2-8-0? I think. At least that is his gondola and caboose on the end, and I suspect the engine was his too.

With regard to the NMRA picnic, about 10 visitors met about 10 Bristol S Gaugers at Ron Mistretta's home for a nice cookout that ended up inside when it started to drizzle. Visitors included John and Thelma Bortz, Dick Iannacone, Don and Evon DeWitt, Roy Pinch from Florida, John and Gail MacSweeney from Connecticut, Leo Lirios from Massachusetts, and Bob Watson.

Some of the Bristol S Gaugers acting as our hosts were Ron Mistretta, Tom Coughlin, Paul Riley, John Medland, Doug Peck, and Reggie Smith. After the eats, we climbed to the third floor of Ron's house to view his tinsplate layout.

Next we piled into about 6 cars and headed for Tom Coughlan's home and the Berkshire Central railroad. Jeff Wilson, Dave Held, and Gale Irwin had visited Tom's railroad earlier in the week. Although a railroad is never complete, Tom's is inspirational. It is fully scenicked with outstanding structures and many many unique locomotives and rolling stock.

He even had his Big Boy running. This is astounding since it had previously taken a dive to the floor when someone forgot to pull down the drawbridge. Tom sent the 4-8-8-4 to a friend in Texas who repaired it for him.

After Tom's layout, we drove to John Medland's home to visit his large tinsplate layout. All in all, it was great to meet our northeastern cousins in S!

Don DeWitt

[What a fun time the picnic must have been. I am still kicking myself for having missed it. The Bristol S Gaugers deserve our sincere thanks for providing 1:64 modelers with such a fine opportunity to get together.

Would someone like to volunteer to do a photo story on the Berkshire Central for the NMRA **Bulletin**? Also, I think any one of Bill Daiker's models would make a fine "Model of the Month" in **Model Railroader** magazine.

I'm glad you appreciated the cover photo; I know that you are an unbiased judge of such things. The picture was on the first roll taken with my new camera, and the camera didn't break!

Congratulations, by the way, on the award which your module took at the NASG convention. It is very well done and must be a lot of fun to operate. Now that you have agreed to succeed Tom Hawley on the NASG Modular Standards Development Committee, will you still find time to model? Ed.]

RESPONSE TO KEN ZIESKA'S LETTER:

I agree totally with Ken. As it stands now, after the "buying spree" most of us have sufficient motive power to keep our trains rolling. Obviously we all have our "pet" desires which may or may not be satisfied in the near future. Because most of us are in a position to "pass" on the next brass jewel if it doesn't meet our needs, I agree that the importers of S brass must be very careful.

However, there are "trial balloons" and then there are "trial balloons". I want to see what a manufacturer has in mind to import. That means pictures! There are more things to buy than I can afford in one year, so my money goes to the manufacturer who "pampers" me with photos of his intentions.

Don DeWitt

[Perhaps the best example of such "pampering" is by Bill Peter of P-B-L. His **Sn3 Dispatch** contains so many mouthwatering photos of his products that it is like a magazine. Without pictures or drawings, very few of us can assess whether a new product will fit with what we are modeling. Ken Zieska's discovery that the NP B-3 works as a S00 M-1 is an example. Ed.]

Essence is "newsy", interesting, and a very welcome facet of S Scale. One of the best things about S Scale is "S scalers". Reflecting on the NASG convention at Novi: it was all that I expected and more. I regret that I had to cut my stay short, but next time I'll make better arrangements. I'll have to, because I've been asked by Don Heimberger to do a clinic. (I presume it's within his scope of duties to ask. And assuming that it is, I've agreed.) The clinic will be on industry and related cars, and I'll be emphasizing the steel industry. This reminds me, I had better get busy taking photos or there may not be a single steel plant open 'ere long.

Summer has taken its toll as far as activities on the C&OR are concerned. However, Fall is fast approaching, and with it comes "M.R. Time". My wife Alice and I are going to England in mid-October. We're going to cover the northern half including Scotland and get in some train travel. English trains are great - fast, clean, and comfortable, as well as being on time.

I have a bunch of projects in store for the season. Nothing major except for an interchange yard. This is an expansion of the "beyond the basement" concept, and I think it will add to C&OR operations.

You mentioned the need for pictures for Essence. What type do you need for reproduction? I'd be pleased to provide.

On a recent trip thru Minneapolis to Canada, I spent the evening with Ken Zieska. He has a railroad that will really be something. The completed lower loop must be a scale mile or two, and operates flawlessly. A big yard is about ready to go into service, and then the fun really starts: switching!

We were joined by "Rusty" Westermeier and Tom Lennon. A delightful evening.

Jerry Schnur

[Your European train-riding plans sound like a dream come true. I look forward to your clinic after having seen pictures of the C&OR. I photocopy directly from color or black and white prints. No slides, please. Unfortunately, the prints themselves get chopped up in the process, so I am unable to return those which are printed. This is a very low-budget operation. Ed.]

LUCKY US

Well, it must almost be time for another issue of **Essence**, so I thought I would send you a quick note covering almost everything I know that is worth knowing.

On the new product side.....

The American Models gondolas are available, and they make a neat addition to the line. The really good thing about them is that they are significantly different from the Trainstuff kit which was out several years ago as well as being different from anything useful you can convert from old American Flyer. Assembly is so easy that a die-hard S scale modeler may feel embarrassed, but I guess we deserve to get a break. Besides, it gives us more time to do other things. I also note that American Models has improved the quality of their lettering. So, in one evening you can build, lightly weather, and add a very nice piece of rolling stock to your railroad.

Another group of items which I received were the castings from Southwind Models. While the complete line of castings is not available yet, the items available are really well done. With these castings a person can further doll up a fine American Models FP-7, or really convert a Wabash

Valley F unit shell into a true F-3. I have always envied HO modelers because they had great [modern] detail parts available. Now I think we have the same level of quality detail parts. I particularly recommend the single horn set and the windshield wipers to dress up your FP-7. Check out the Pyle backup light; while it is smaller than the light used by the SOO, it may be right for you.

Lucky us, the brass F units are not dead..... Overland has announced that they will produce the F-3A, F-7A, F-3B, and F-7B units in brass. From their flyer, I think the units will have every detail but dripping diesel fuel. I am watching the response to this offering because I am not sure the demand will support more F's, given the availability of FP-7's and the detail parts from Southwind. In fairness to Overland, if the quality of the F's approach the quality of the S-2's (and I think it will) the units will be fantastic. See your dealer for introduction special prices.

Overland has delivered the Alco S series switchers. They have set new standards of detail, and use a drive system which completely conceals the drive components. Take a look at this unit. It is worth a close look, and you can buy a unit which will fit into any era from late steam to very recent.

On to other things.....

The PPSSW is planning to attend the S Fest in force. Please try to convince the scale-oriented folks in your area to attend. We can bring slides, models, or whatever and have our own mini-meeting.

Ken Zieska

[After this letter was written, Ken called to say that he had received some additional new parts from Southwind. He was particularly enthusiastic about the replacement sideframes for American Models FP-7's and the dummy trucks for use on A and B F-units. According

to Ken, the sideframe castings have good relief and all brake detail including the rod to the brake cylinder. The trucks have code 110 wheels and are gauged to NMRA Finescale (NASG) standards.

We just got a new flyer in the mail from Southwind. It explains which parts to order to build up complete combinations of powered and unpowered sets of F-units. If you have not seen this flyer, write to: Southwind Models, P.O. Box 9293, Plant City, FL 33566.

I agree, Ken, that Southwind is filling a real need where diesels are concerned. I always felt we are better off than HO where steam parts are concerned because of S Scale Loco & Supply. By the way, I hear that all the Overland S units are pretty well sold out.

Several of us Badgerlanders will see you at S Fest in Beloit. You may see 12 to 24 feet of modules there as well. Ed.]

RESPONSE TO MY PROVISIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In the August issue, I suggested to Glen Berg that he lay rail up to the end of his module pending the resolution of physical interchange standards. At the moment, the NASG draft standard for modules specifies no rail or ties within 3 inches of the end of a module. (This was drafted with the idea of using a six-inch piece of flex-track to bridge across modules.) Current practice among NASG-style module builders is to lay ties to the end of a module and stop the rail 3 inches away. The CJSS style is to lay ties to the edge and stop the rail 2 inches away. Don Thompson comments as follows:

I do NOT feel the interchange of rail from one module to the next should be a standard. There is no right way. Both the six inch track and the four inch piece of rail have their advantages and disadvantages. The first is quicker to assemble, while the latter looks better.

I was surprised that in the *Essence* you advised anyone to lay track to the end of the module. I

would hate to count the number of times I have had to re-lay rail, up to a foot from the end, because of it being snagged from being too close to the end. Again, this is a mistake most of us have made.

Don Thompson

[Right you are, Don. Trying to transport a module with the rail running right to the edge is what I call "an accident waiting to happen". Even if you transport it with some sort of shield to protect the end, it might get torn up during the process of mating it to the adjacent module.

Glen Berg and I learned this on the S Team sectional display railroad. At first, the rails went right to the edge, where they lasted one road trip. Thereafter, bridge sections with rails, ties, and roadbed on them were used.

My suggestion to Glen was a stop-gap on the assumption that he would not complete the module and be ready to travel with it until after the physical interchange standards had been ironed out. Progress toward standardization has been so rapid lately, that I expect things to be settled during this modeling season.

How can we NOT have standards for the physical joining of two modules? Without some sort of standards, each builder is left guessing whether his module will mate. Why build a module and cart it across country to a meet if you can't know whether it will operate when you get there? A single standard is best; two different standards are possible (but pointless); but having no standard at all would defeat the purpose.

I agree that the current methods for joining modules all have their good points and their weaknesses. If any one of them were clearly superior, it would have been adopted by acclimation. If a better way can be found quickly, let's find it. Otherwise, let's agree on a way - any single way - and get on with the fun of interchanging.

ESSENCE
5969 Sugarbush Lane
Greendale, WI 53129

EDITOR - Ken Mackenzie
CONTRIBUTORS - Donald Dewitt

Gil Hulin
Jerry Schuur
Don Thompson
Ken Zieska

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The opinions expressed in Essence are those of the authors when signed, or of the Editor when not signed, and are not endorsed by the NMRRA, the Editor, or Coordinator unless specifically noted. The Editor reserves the right to edit any and all submissions for clarity, content, and length.

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To:

Tom Lennon
12400 Cockspur Court
Eden Prairie, MN 55344

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