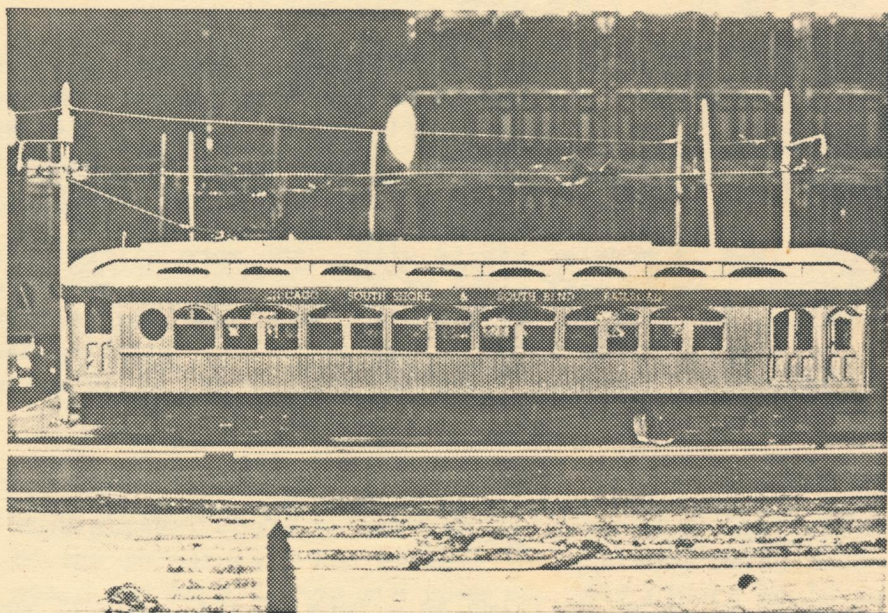


ESSENCE

A monthly publication of the
S Scale Special Interest Group

1:64 scale modeling with 1:1 fun

April 1987



A Chicago South Shore & South Bend interurban comes to a stop for a traffic light where its private right-of-way crosses a city street on its way to Michigan City terminal.

Even when the steel rails were wet and slippery, the big battleship obeyed road signals just like the little Chevys and Flivers that crossed its path. The big interurban stopped at RR crossings too, so steam trains could go by.

Model & photo by Roman Papierz.

A radical proposal:
PUTTING THE FUN BACK INTO MODEL CONTESTS
by Dave Jasper

Railroad model contests have gotten out of balance. It seems to me contests should have two principal goals. First, to encourage modelers to "show and tell" their own personal efforts, and second to promote the hobby to others as attractive and do-able.

On another level, I presume that the ranking of model builders was intended to attract participation by appealing to the competitive streak in us all. Another purpose of ranking would be to promote advancement in modeling quality and honor performance.

But let's look at where we are now. Contests are for an elite group. The common modeler would never presume to enter just for "show & tell" value. Worse, rather than promoting the hobby as accessible, the contest standards emphasize tedium and total hours of labor.

The less a modeler starts with, the more points are earned. We've lost sight of the end result, and have focused on what we started with and how long it took when starting from nothing. Surely modern modeling has dramatically improved, whether because of or in spite of judged contests.

I think it's time we examine the question of whether we are judging the finished model or the modeler's skill, patience, and visual acuity.

I think of model building as a form of art, but if you prefer "craft", the same applies. Traditionally, art (craft) has been judged entirely on the result: the finished work, independent of materials and methods. Artists group similar materials and methods and call them "mediums". For example: stone sculpture, oil paint, B & W photographs, etc.

Currently we have many categories in our contests, such as diesel locomotives and passenger cars. (I don't see much skill difference between these two, except the power chassis which is often manufactured anyway.)

Let's restructure model contests into categories something like this:

SBS: Scratch-built, static
SBO: Scratch-built, operating
(Less than 10% commercial parts.)

KBS: Kit-bashed, static
KBO: Kit-bashed, operating
(Assembled and designed by modeler, multiple sources. More than 10% non-commercial parts and parts intended for other uses.)

MCS: Modified commercial, static
MCO: Modified commercial, operating
(Detailed, painted, refined, reworked by the modeler.)

The judges would use separate criteria to judge each of the three major category types along the following lines:

SBX: Fineness of detail, fidelity to prototype construction, number of parts made and used, etc.

KBX: Design, creativity, ingenuity of use of parts & materials.

MCX: Total effect, overall appearance of realism.

"Operating" would be defined as powered by some motor device in nature. For example locomotives, swing bridges, and some cranes are powered. All others would be "static". A caboose would be static, even though the doors may open and the wheels turn. A structure with operable windows would still be classified as static. These articulating features would earn points for their fidelity to nature, however.

Fidelity within each of the six major categories would be based on the following cross-categories:

Historical Prototype (HP).

An individual prototype at a specific time in its history.

Class Prototype (CP).

A class of prototype as they generally appeared.

Interpreted Prototype (IP).

Based upon an individual or class of prototype, but modified or interpreted by the modeler.

Freelance (FR).

Something which could have or may have existed, and is reasonable and probable.

Fantasy (FT).

Something imagined by the modeler which probably never had a prototype and is evaluated for entertainment value and creativity.

Judging would include faithfulness to the above cross-categories. Operating models of considerable complexity would be evaluated on faithfulness to their prototype appropriate to the cross-categories. For example, a steam loco powered by steam would earn more points than one powered electrically. Also, static models of operating prototypes would lose points.

Under this proposal, relatively simple models which are well done would rank higher than complex models which are not so well done. I believe judging is currently done this way.

However, more complex models would rank higher if all other things are equal. A steam locomotive would outrank a baggage car only if both models replicate the same percentage of parts with the same fidelity and overall appearance.

I believe that such a restructuring of judging criteria will bring forth a wealth of enjoyable and admirable models in categories like KBO/FR without ignoring the achievements of the SBO/HP modelers.

This entire proposal would be a radical departure from existing practice, even if most find merit in it. Consequently, we should approach any change with due deliberation.

I propose that we first try these categories in the NASG. Incidentally, it might foster the notion that "S is the model builder's scale". But my real intent is to give this proposal a thorough try-out before interfering with those who are seeking NMRA Achievement Awards at the divisional, regional, or national levels.

Have I made any waves? (Brain waves or otherwise?) Do any of you have a reaction? Let's dialogue through the SSSIG and see if we can start a movement.

REACTION TO A RADICAL PROPOSAL by Ken Mackenzie

One of the privileges of editing this newsletter is the chance to read and reflect on submissions like Dave Jasper's proposal before they even get into print.

But this privilege can easily be abused. If I have a pet peeve, it's the network newscasters who go on the air with an "instant analysis" immediately after a major Presidential speech. I don't want to listen to some pundit's reaction to the President's ideas until after I've had a chance to mull them over for myself.

If you are annoyed (or unduly influenced) by "instant analysis", then skip this piece until after you have:

1. re-read Dave's proposal,
2. formed your own opinion,
3. written a letter to *Essence* telling us what you think, and
4. mailed the letter so we have material for the next issue of the newsletter.

Then it will be safe to read on.

First of all, Dave Jasper's proposal is a commendable piece of work. He raises several fundamental questions about the nature of contests and the nature of judging. Clearly, serious thought has gone into his proposal, and it deserves serious consideration from us.

Is this an SSSIG subject? After all, the model contest rules affect the whole NMRA. Some discussions of this subject have appeared in the NMRA Bulletin during the past year. Nevertheless, I think we should talk about

it for several reasons.

1. We are likely to come up with fresh ideas because S scalers are probably a bit more innovative than average. If we felt obliged to accept the norm, we would all be modeling in 1:87.

The forthcoming SMOD modular wiring standards are an example of the kind of "better idea" which can result when 1:64 modelers put their heads together.

2. There is a fair amount of craftsmanship in every one of our modeling projects. So we are less in awe of the occasional bit of scratchbuilding than our HO or N scale brethren. Plus we tend to have less time to squander on any single model; they all require some time.

3. If model contests were more appealing, we might see more S scale entries. More 1:64 models displayed in public at NMRA events would increase S scale's recognition (popularity?) among serious modelers.

4. S scalers may be the least competitive group in what is basically a non-competitive hobby. We may see a way to prevent the competitive aspects of a contest from getting in the way of its fun.

Also, since Dave suggests an experiment by the NASG, I am forwarding a copy of his proposal to NASG President, Ed Loizeaux for consideration by that organization.

I think the goals of Dave's proposal are the right goals. Winning is a much less important than encouraging entrants to share their results with the rest of us (and ours with them).

Seeing a wide variety of appealing models on display can be interesting, stimulating, and often instructive. If the display occurs because the models are entrants in a model contest, there is the added spice of deciding which ones you like best and seeing if the judges agree. And the ingredient of competition insures that the models will look their best.

Ideally, the sight of all those excellent models should be inspiring. We should come away from the contest resolved to do likewise, muttering "Wasn't that BH&FP caboose a little beauty? I'm gonna build one like it for my railroad."

But excellence is a funny thing. In too big a dose, it can be downright intimidating. Have you ever walked through a model contest display where there were only a few entrants and every model obviously took at least 500 hours to build? If so, you may have walked away wondering:

Why anyone would spend that much time on one model?
How did those modelers ever get a whole railroad built?

Maybe they are all retired and unmarried.

Maybe I am in the wrong hobby.

Excellence is not very inspiring if it seems completely unattainable.

Have you ever seen a purple ribbon attached to a model you would never have looked at twice, and wondered why the most beautiful model in the show (in your unbiased opinion) got no recognition at all? Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but beauty doesn't earn many contest points.

Here are some other ideas to think about when deciding how to improve model contest participation:

Why have separate categories for operating models unless the quality of operation is one of the things being judged?

Shouldn't fineness of detail and overall appearance be judged in every category?

Semantics: How about using the term "self-powered" instead of "operating", and "stock" instead of "modified commercial"?

Why not decide all rankings by popular vote? No one can define quality, but everyone can spot it when they see it. This works well at our local NMRA divisional meets and at S FEST.

Modeler's Notebook

UNDER-COATING YOUR MODELS

S. Cratchit

Do you "under-coat" your models? I'm sure you wouldn't paint the underbodies of your rolling stock with rust-inhibiter, but do you pre-color the model before applying the real paint? If not, you may want to try it. Your paint jobs may look better if you do.

The model railroading literature is full of hundreds of useful techniques for solving the many small challenges we encounter in our quest for realism. But who can remember them all? A great technique is often forgotten long before you come across an opportunity to use it. This is probably why most of us stick to the same methods of construction and painting over and over again. Once we find a method which gives us acceptable results, why rock the boat?

I came across the idea of "under-coating" because I got interested in building with plastic instead of with wood and card stock.

I was enjoying Rusty Westermeyer's hospitality during the Christmas holidays when I got a chance to see some of the fine model building he does. Rusty has a talent for rapid scratchbuilding in styrene, and we were discussing the advantages of working in plastic when he brought up a major problem he has been having.

"It's very difficult to paint plastic so it looks like wood", he said. "For one thing, the paint has a tendency to thin out in places, and some whiteness of the plastic blushes through." I was worried. Most of my models are of wooden cars and structures. If plastic didn't represent wood well, it was probably going to be the wrong material for me.

A few weeks later, Rusty told me he had tried something different. He had painted an entire plastic model black before applying the true color. The idea had come from something he read about the way Jess Bennett paints his locomotives.

Rusty likes the way this black "under-coating" works on plastic. Blushing is eliminated. Scribed lines, cracks, and wood-grain crevices (where the final color didn't penetrate) show black as though they are in shadow.

Glenn Berg is experienced with modeling in plastic, so I mentioned this "under-coating" technique to him. It turns out that he uses a variation of this technique to simulate weathered wood:

- Glenn first "distresses" the plastic to create a wood-grain texture.
- Then, he applies a fairly thick under-coat of Southern Pacific gray paint.
- Next, a very thin coat of the final color is added (thinned 20-30% with white, for fading).
- Finally, Glen lightly sands through the final coat to expose the under-coat and create a weathered wood effect.

He may sometimes create a larger weathered area by applying a small amount of liquid friskette mask material before the final color. Then, after painting, he lightly uses a Brite Boy to remove the mask.

Another reference to "under-coating" appeared in the March 1987 issue of *Model Railroader*. Apparently, this technique works for wood and metal, too. According to the article on the Moose Jaw Lumber Company, Harry Bonham stains all wood parts with Weather-It and dips all metal parts in Blacken-It before painting them. Is that why the pictures of his models look so good? His railroad will be on tour at the Eugene NMRA convention, so we can ask him then.

It is funny how you keep running across the same idea again and again, once you pay attention to it. Maybe everybody is "undercoating" their models except you and me, and we never noticed.

I'm going to try "under-coating". How about you?

S Dispatches

S. Cratchit
and Glenn Berg

Here is some S-related material which recently appeared in the hobby press. Magazine abbreviations are:

MG: Model Railroading	PT: Prototype Modeler
MM: Mainline Modeler	SG: S Gaugian
MR: Model Railroader	SH: S Gauge Herald
NG: N.G. & Short Line Gazette	SN: Sn3 Modeler
RC: Railroad Model Craftsman	DI: NASG Dispatch

SCALE DRAWINGS

Alco PA-3 diesel locomotive	MM Mar 87 p58
D&RGW Telephone booth	NG Mar/Apr 87 p29
EMD F40PH diesel locomotive	MR Apr 87 p82
Read Lumber Company Narrow Gauge Camp Car	NG Mar/Apr 87 p79
Santa Fe FT-A diesel locomotive	SG Mar/Apr 87 p44

PRODUCT REVIEWS

AMSI scenic brush & turf	SG Mar/Apr 87 p11
Chooch flat car loads	SG Mar/Apr 87 p11
Design Preservation Models styrene building kits (HO adaptation for 1:64)	SG Mar/Apr 87 p10
Finestkind 40-Stamp Mill	MG Apr p66
Hoquat Hobbies Pickle Car	SG Mar/Apr 87 p10-11
IHC Storefront houses (HO, but dimensions are closer to 1:64)	MR Mar 87 p50
Railmaster Sn3 White Pass & Yukon diesel body kit	MR Mar 87 p54

LAYOUT FEATURE STORIES

Tracking Sn3 (Medhurst's)	SG Mar/Apr 87 p38-39
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SCRATCH-BUILDING

Finding Elusive S Decals	SG Mar/Apr 87 p34
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MODELING ARTICLES

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| GMO Offset Side Hopper | MM Mar 87 p40 |
| Gondola Conversion | SG Mar/Apr 87 p18-20 |
| Installing new scale motors | SG Mar/Apr 87 p14 |
| Making Tracks (prototype and 1:64 data) | NG Mar/Apr 87 p42-44 |
| Modeling a Minnequa Turn: part 1 | SG Mar/Apr 87 p33 |
| PFE's Ice Reefers (prototype data for model soon to be released in S by PRS) | RC Mar 87 p81 |
| | RC Apr 87 p59 |
| PS-1 40-Foot Box Cars, part 6 | MG Mar 87 p45 |
| PS-1 40-Foot Box Cars, part 7 | MG Apr 87 p |
| Simple Way to Superdetail Snap-Track | MG Apr 87 p35-37 |
| SSL&S steam engine construction | SG Mar/Apr 87 p16+ |

Correction: In the February issue, two earlier articles on PFE's ice reefers were attributed to MR. In fact, they appeared in the January and February issues of RMC

Help wanted: Do you subscribe to *Mainline Modeler* or to *Prototype Modeler*? We need volunteers to cover both of these magazines regularly for this column. Send your input to the *Essence* editor.

Tickets, please.

The NMRA S Scale Special Interest Group is approaching its second anniversary, so it is time to start thinking about paying your dues. All SSSIG memberships and all *Essence* subscriptions will expire on July 1, 1987.

If you are an NMRA member, \$6.00 will renew your SSSIG membership (including *Essence*) for two more years. If you are not a member of the NMRA, \$6.00 will provide you with a subscription to this newsletter for two more years (through June 1989).

Send checks to: Ken Mackenzie, 5969 Sugarbush Lane, Greendale, WI 53129.

The Heartland S Rails group of Kansas City continues to meet regularly at members' homes throughout the metropolitan area. Several modules of the club's modular layout were exhibited at the 1986 Area NMRA Fall Meet.

During the December holidays, the group set up and displayed its large modular layout at shopping malls, and at the Mid-America Train Meet. Both tinsplate and scale equipment were displayed and operated by fifteen club and family members, who greatly enjoyed talking with the thousands of shoppers and passers-by. Operation was enhanced by recent re-wiring and use of portable radio-headphones.

The Heartland S Rails continue looking forward to hosting the 1991 NASG national convention (contrary to previously published reports stating otherwise).

Construction and expansion is underway on a number of home layouts. Plans are also being finalized on the construction details of the group's new trailer for transporting the modular layout. Heartland's commitment to S scale continues with the scheduling of several layout shows this year. Indications are that 1987 will be a year of membership growth. Jack Keiser, the newest member, has graciously loaned the use of his ample basement as a temporary "home" for the modular layout.

If you are interested in this live-wire S group, contact:

Jim Graham, 10834 Sheley Road
Independence, MO 64052
or Richard Wholf, 512 South Douglas
Lee's Summit, MO 64063

New Members

Trumann Garrett

P.O. Box 176
Trevor, WI 53179

Richard Y. Wholf

512 South Douglas
Lee's Summit, MO 64063

Cinders

GEEPS

In February, we talked about the possibility of a brass geep from Omnicon Scale Models. The kit will be a GP40 consisting of a Samhonsa mechanism, a very basic plastic body shell from Wabash Valley (resurrecting the original Enhorning molds), and truck frames from SouthWind. As with the economy F units, this will be a well running, modestly priced kit with the potential for true super-detailing by the addition of every imaginable detail part to be made available separately from SouthWind.

It is inspiring to see this spirit of cooperation among our 1:64 manufacturers. This way everybody wins, especially us modelers who thirst after quality on our limited budgets.

PENNSY CONSIST

Charlie Sandersfeld is excited because Ed Peterson, a retired industrial designer, is teaming up with Omnicon to produce plastic P-70 coach and baggage car kits. The trucks will be produced by SouthWind. Jettie Padgett of SouthWind is working on an R50B express refrigerator car to match.

RDC CARS

Omnicon is planning to import three flavors of RDC cars this year. A run of 100 RDC-1 coaches is planned (half powered and half unpowered). RDC-2s and RDC-3s (30 of each) are planned to provide matching baggage/combines and RPO cars. The cars will be nickel-plated brass for the stainless steel look. These models would make up a complete train for the "end-of-steam" era. Pilot model is due this summer, with production units planned for autumn.

AMERICAN MODELS

According to Stack Talk, the latest American Models car is a good looking Lehigh Valley outside-braced hopper. Things are progressing on the GP-9, and rumor has it that Ron Bashista is thinking about an RS-3. I will keep my fingers crossed.

NARROW GAUGE PLANS

According to the *Narrow Gauge & Short Line Gazette*: Mike Blazek, 3351 Nevada Ave., Costa Mesa, CA 92626, offers a line of excellent RGS/D&RGW building and structure drawings. Send him a SSAE for a list of the drawings available.

Canceled: Thomas A. Yorke Enterprises announces that S scale versions of their building kits will no longer be offered due to lack of interest.

COMING SOON

Clear Creek Models is advertising that they will be offering Sn3 kits soon. No details were given, but the photos of their vintage freight cars look good. Their address is P.O. Box 1378, Chino Valley, AZ 86323.

Whistles

Here is a recap of new products advertised recently which you may not have heard about. As always, enclose a business size stamped self-addressed envelope (SSAE) when writing for information.

D.J. Custom Builders, Rt 1 Box 52, Defiance, MO 63341:
Custom-built Tomalco Sn3 kits.

Finescale Forest, 2960 Garden Tower Lane,
Georgetown, Ca 95634:
Tree kits (11") and bulk (Caspia?) foilage.

Finestkind Mdls, P.O. Box 25052,
Overland Park, KS 66210-25052:
Small residence structure kit.

Gloor Craft Models, 136 West Water Street,
Oak Harbor, OH 43449:
Craftsman structure kits.

Gold Nugget Emporium, 11765 West Ave., Suite 299,
San Antonio, TX 78216:
Human figures, all shapes. Specify S scale.

Models by Roger Schneck, 7103 Monlaco Road,
Long Beach, CA 90808:
D&RGW Sn3 flat car kit.

Overland Models, 5908 Kilgore Ave, Muncie, IN 47304:
ALCO DL-701 (RS-11) high & low hood diesel locos.
ALCO S-2 diesel switcher.
Alco S-4 diesel switcher.
American Hoist ditcher (S and Sn3).
D&RGW Sn3 auxiliary tender.
D&RGW Sn3 rotary plow #DM with tender.
MLW DL-718 (RS-18) high hood diesel loco.
RGS Sn3 business car "EDNA".

Pecos River Brass, 540 Surf, Suite 118,
Lewisville, TX 75067:
UP 0-56-6 single dome tank car.

Precision Scale Co, 1120-A Gum Ave, Woodland, CA 95695:
D&RGW 6500 series Sn3 bulkhead flat car.
D&RGW 65,000 series Sn3 steel flat car.
D&RGW San Juan Sn3 long RPO car.
D&RGW San Juan Sn3 old model baggage car.

San Juan Trading Company, P.O. Box 3358,
La Mesa, CA 92041:
Custom-built Triangle Scale Models Sn3 kits.

Scenery Unlimited, 310 Lathrop Ave,
River Forest, IL 60305:
Puffing Billy cast Caterpillar stationary engine.
S/Sn3 1987 catalog.
Thinfilm S & Sn3 decals.

Tomalco, Box 158, McCracken, KS 67556:
Sn3 D&RGW #50 diesel switcher kit (re-designed).

Wabash Valley Lines, 2nd & High St, Roanoke, IN 46783:
Extruded aluminum passenger car body kits.

Walthers, 5601 W. Florist Ave, Milwaukee, WI 53218:
O & S Scale 1987 Supplement/Price List.

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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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tions to Essence cost an additional \$6 per year for SSSIG members and \$10 per year for non-members. Subscribers will receive all issues of Essence published in that year.

Essence solicits articles, drawings and photographs on any topic applicable to S scale model railroading. All material submitted is understood to be gratis and contributed for the benefit of the hobby. Deadline for all material published is the first of the month.

Ads are not solicited. However, pre-printed advertising material which is deemed of interest to members may be included with the newsletter. Ad material must be cut or folded to 5-1/2" by 8-1/2", and may be printed on one side or both. Advertiser supplies 100 clean copies. The cost per issue for inclusion of ads in the newsletter is \$5 per 5-1/2" by 8-1/2" sheet and \$10 per 8-1/2" by 11" sheet. Send a copy of proposed mailing to the Circulation Manager for review. Disapproved copy may not be returned.