

#139 FEB 2022

# N SCALE RAILROADING

THE BEST OF 1:160 SINCE 2000

## Kim Saign

- Painting Wheels in Mass Quantities

## Kirk Reddie

- Another Simple Test Track

## Sandy Smith

- Model Yucca Plants
- Bridges Between Benchwork



# N SCALE RAILROADING WELCOME!

**T**his issue's cover reminds me of Tom Lehrer's "The Wild West Is Where I Want to Be" (inspired by his time at Los Alamos working for the NSA)

Mid the yuccas and the thistles  
I'll watch the guided missiles  
While the old F.B.I. watches me

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CLUBS  
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∞  
AND SEE WHAT  
HAPPENS!**

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**W**elcome to *N Scale Railroading* #139, the February, 2022 issue.

Page 04. **New Products.**

Page 06. **Kim Saign** shares how he paints the faces of his N wheels *en masse*.

Page 23. Outside of Road Runner cartoons, I'm not I've seen yucca plants. Fortunately **Sandy Smith** is shares how he modeled this exotically named plant.

Page 40. I have been focusing on several long passenger train consists with different manufacturers of wheels, trucks, and couplers. It is a lot easier to test on a purpose built track rather than on the layout, though that is the ultimate test.

Page 46. Generally it is a good idea to avoid duck unders. Even nod unders can be a nuisance. **Sandy Smith** shares how he built two bridges that are easy to work.

Page 46. **NCalendar** and **NSR Contributor News.** I have seen images of cool projects that will hopefully become articles. I love sharing these... and I heard this can inspire folks to complete a project. ▀

**N SCALE RAILROADING**

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**N**  
Scale

## NEW FEF-3 GREYHOUND "RACING" TO YOUR LOCAL HOBBY SHOP!

Kato's premier Union Pacific Steam engine gets a face lift with the release of the long-awaited "Greyhound" paint scheme! With a two-tone gray appearance highlighted by sharp yellow striping, FEF #8444 in the Greyhound paint is sure to set your heart racing with its striking looks and smooth operating performance!

Kato's N Scale FEF-3 is fully featured with a silky-smooth operating coreless motor design that excels at low crawling speeds as well as high performance pulling, with functioning side-rods that work the drivers just like the real locomotive. The FEF-3 is available as a standard DC engine, with factory installed Digitrax DCC, and with ESU LokSound (as a special order - contact your hobby shop to reserve yours).



The Greyhound scheme dates back to the late 1940's and was an effort by the UP to unify the color schemes of their engines with their cars, replacing the traditional all black look with a two-tone gray that matched the heavyweight cars of the time, and continued to match with the more recognizable gray and yellow scheme that would come later.

A perfect pairing with this new Greyhound release is the 7-Car Union Pacific Excursion Train and Water Tender 2-Car set, also currently available! The UP Excursion Train features a special assortment of UP heritage cars, including the distinctive "Kenefick" Business car and "Promontory" Museum car. All cars are available with pre-installed interior lighting for maximum realism!



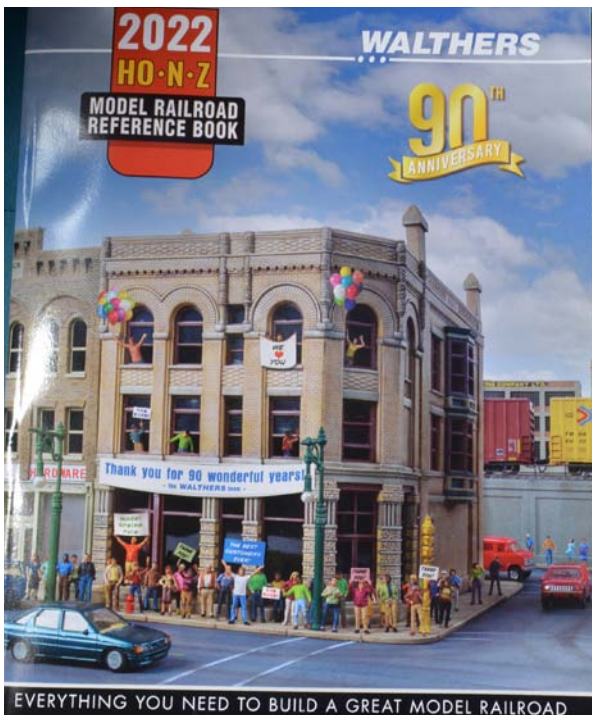
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#126-0403-LS	<b>NEW!</b> N Union Pacific FEF-3 (4-8-4) "Greyhound" #8444 w/ ESU LokSound DCC	\$475
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# N SCALE RAILROADING NEW PRODUCTS



Kansas City Southern de Mexico 3493 is Dash 8-40C and Atlas 40-004-213. I am impressed by the sound on my DCC test layout.



The 938 page 2022 Walther's all scale (HO, N, & Z) is out. It is amazing to see how many items are available.



70-ton ore car Milwaukee Road 75157 is Atlas 50-005-754. I also have 75203, 75214, 75219, and 75220.

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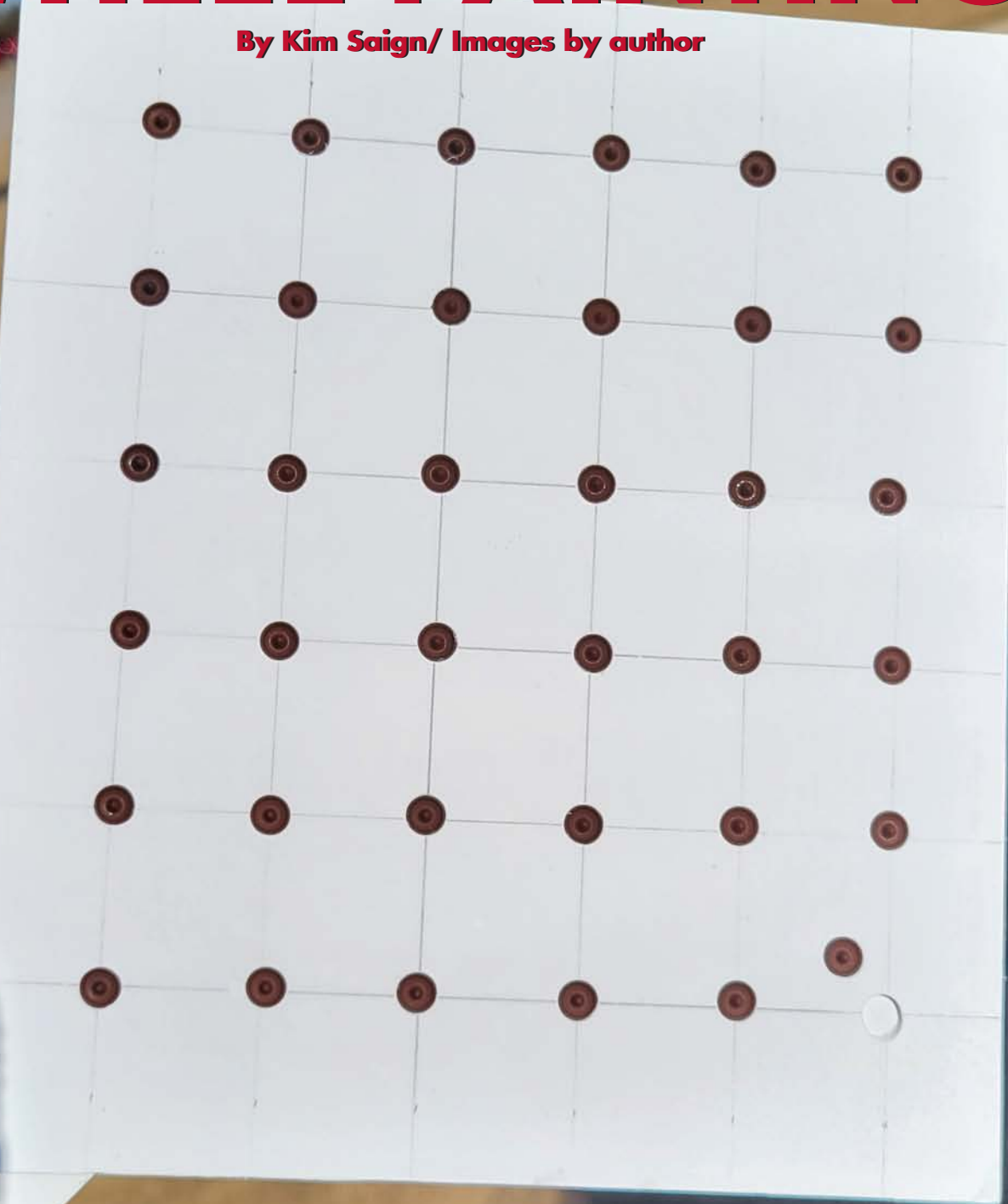


For more information on these and other high quality Atlas products,  
visit your local hobby shop or [www.atlasrr.com](http://www.atlasrr.com)!



# WHEEL PAINTING

By Kim Saign/ Images by author



00

I figured out 30 years ago it's far more productive to do things in batches rather than a few at a time. Painting wheel faces is one of those tasks. When prepping a car to go on the layout it's much better to select a set of wheels from your stash that you previously painted sometime prior than to stop what you're

doing, get out the airbrush, paint four axles, wait for them to dry, then proceed. We're going to build a jig to paint 36 wheels at a time. I chose 36 because it used to be the MT low profile wheels came 12 to a pack so multiples of 12 made sense. Of course you can build your's to accommodate more or less.

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01



Image 01. I had a scrap of .040 styrene that was about the size I was looking for. This was about 6" x 7". I drew a grid of six lines vertical and horizontal on the styrene leaving a margin of at least .75" all the way around. The reason we selected a .040 thickness is we don't want any paint to get on the tread of the wheel. So it needs to be as thick or a little thicker than the tread of the wheel.

02



Image 02. The wheel diameter varies depending on the manufacturer. I needed to paint Micro-Trains 36" wheels this time. So I measured the diameter of the wheel.



# LOOK AT THOSE BUSES!



[CLICK HERE](#)

03



Image 03. Next I measured drill bits looking for one that was just a bit smaller in diameter. In this scenario I found a #1 bit to be .001" smaller than the wheel which was close to perfect. BTW I bought a drill set with bits 1-60 just so I would have this kind of granularity when drilling specifically sized holes. After having the 61-80 set that nearly all hobbyist have it made sense to get an index with the bigger bits too.

04

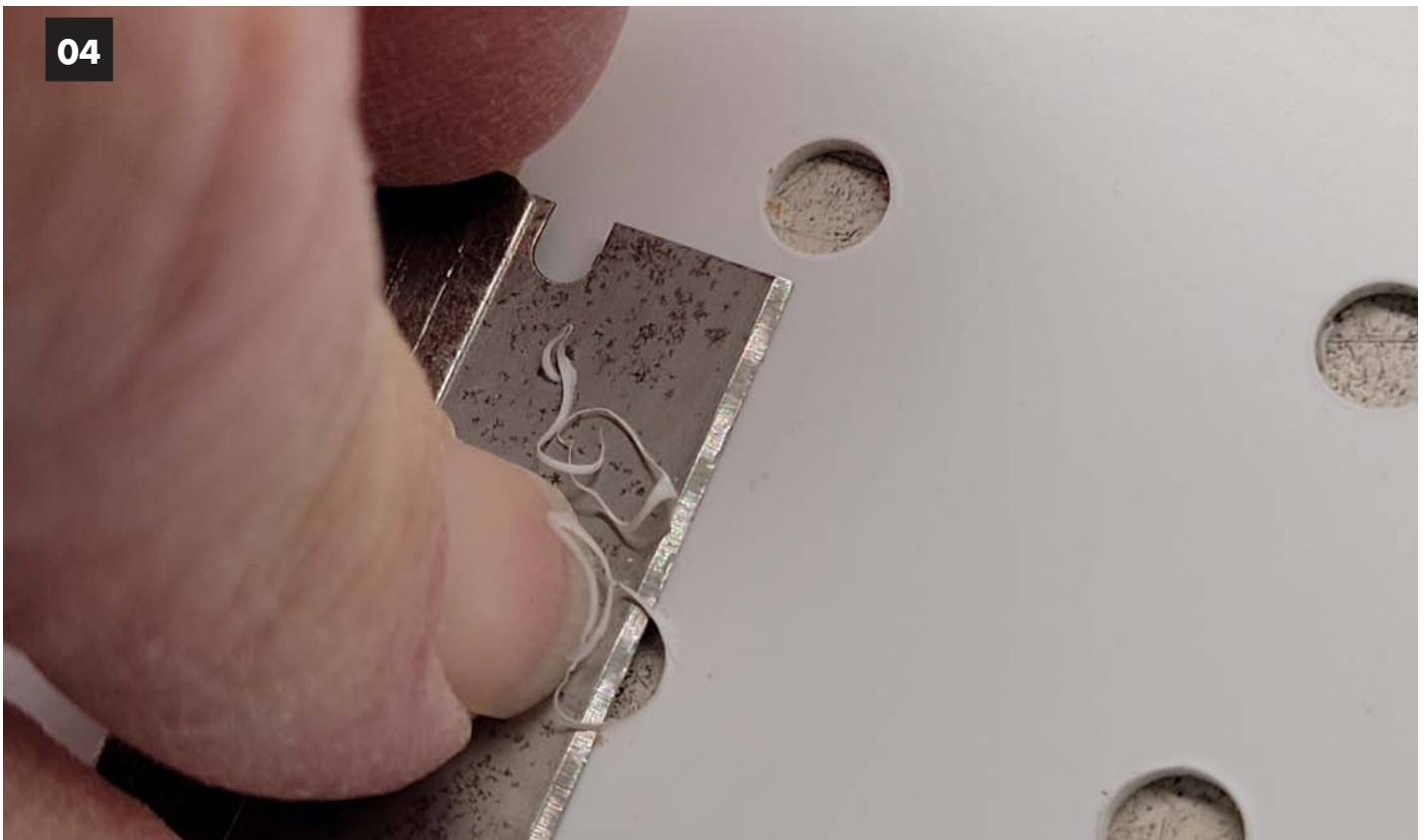


Image 04. Drill a hole at the intersection of the grid lines. Try to keep it at a 90 degree angle. The first hole I drilled the bit

slid which rendered that hole unusable. Use a single edge razor blade to shave off the ridge created when drilling.

## Electric locomotive Re 6/6, SSB



item# 734120

DC

item# 734190

DCC



Rendering

## 2 piece set: Grain silo wagons, BLS



item# 830310

Tgpps

Tgpps

CAD drawing

## 2 piece set: Grain silo wagons, SSB



Tgpps

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CAD drawing

item# 830312

All images show photomontages!

## FLEISCHMANN start the new model railway year with full power!

On the occasion of the anniversary "175 years of railways in Switzerland", FLEISCHMANN is realizing further important models for all friends of Swiss railways. As a completely new design, the massive Re 6/6 rolls onto the N-gauge rails. The FLEISCHMANN assortment is also expanded with freight car models such as the Pwgs41, the Tgpps or the Eanos. These important prototypes are now also available as contemporary models to choose from! As usual with FLEISCHMANN, the models score with many details, separate plug-in parts and fine engravings. All details typical for the era, such as lamps, stairways, snow ploughs and shunting platforms, are accurately reproduced in the model.

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TRADITION AND PASSION

05



Image 05. We need to create a box frame around the styrene sheet with the holes. Make it at least as tall as the length of the axles. A 1/2" is the minimum for this project. This is so we can set it down without disturbing the wheels while in the jig. I was just using scrap styrene I had left over from some other projects so that dictated what I used.

06



Image 06. I wanted to have a handle on this jig so I could hold it without getting a lot of fashion colors on my hands like rust and weathered black. So I used a 12" piece of .080 styrene for the side with the handle. On the other sides I used .060 just

because that is what I had on hand. For stiffness I added gussets at each corner. I found the handle wasn't stiff enough so I doubled the thickness with a second piece of .080 styrene and added a gusset.

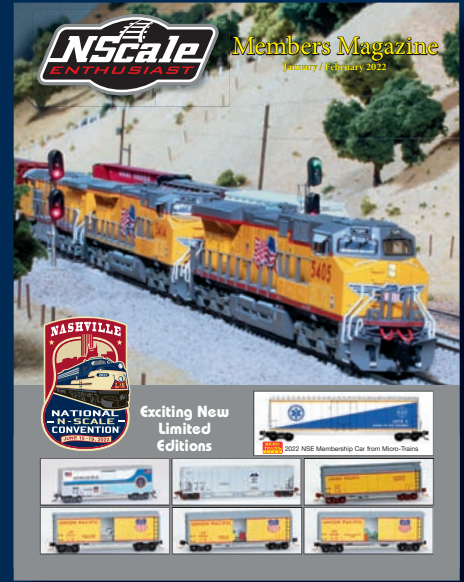


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07

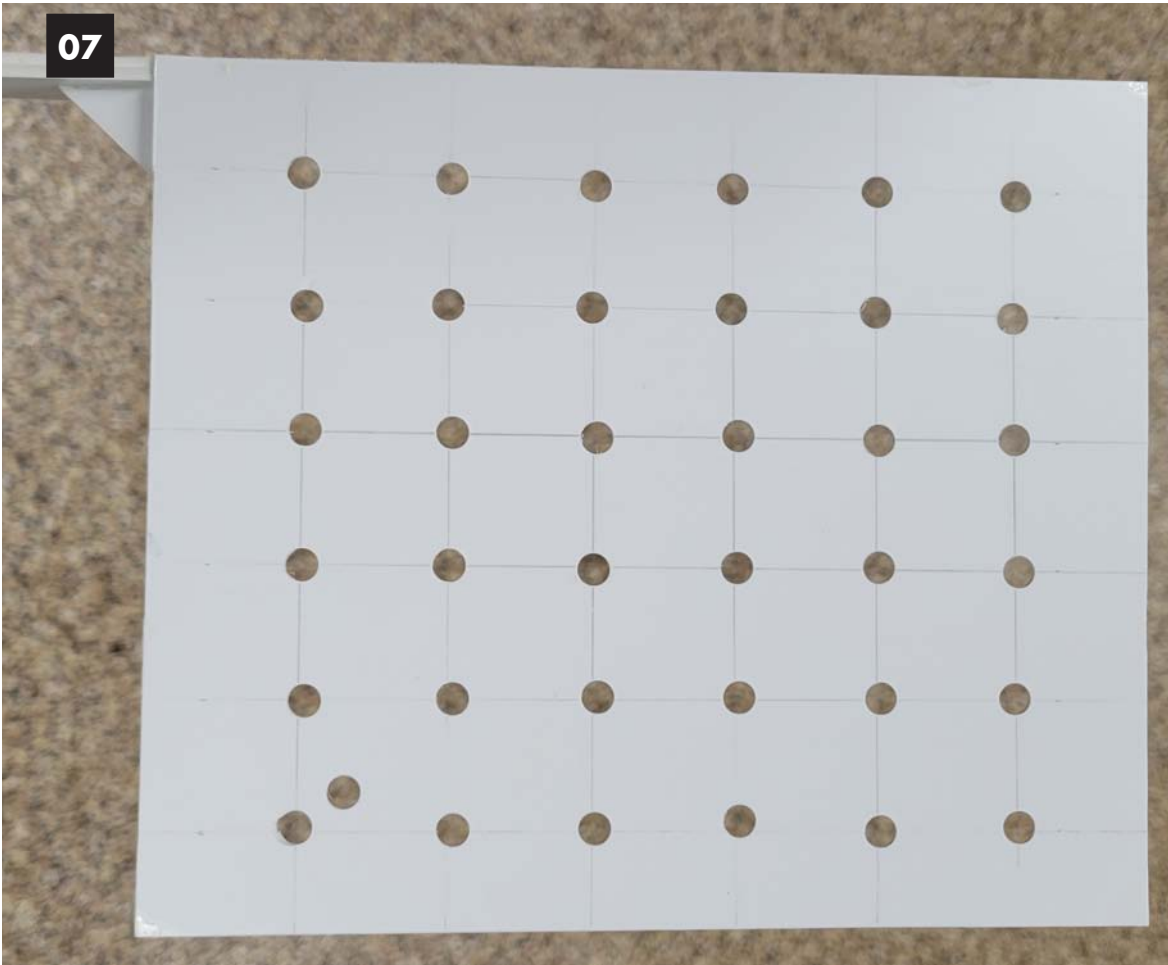


Image 07. I'll admit I didn't think ahead but this one came out designed to be held in your left hand which is perfect for me because I paint with my right hand.

08

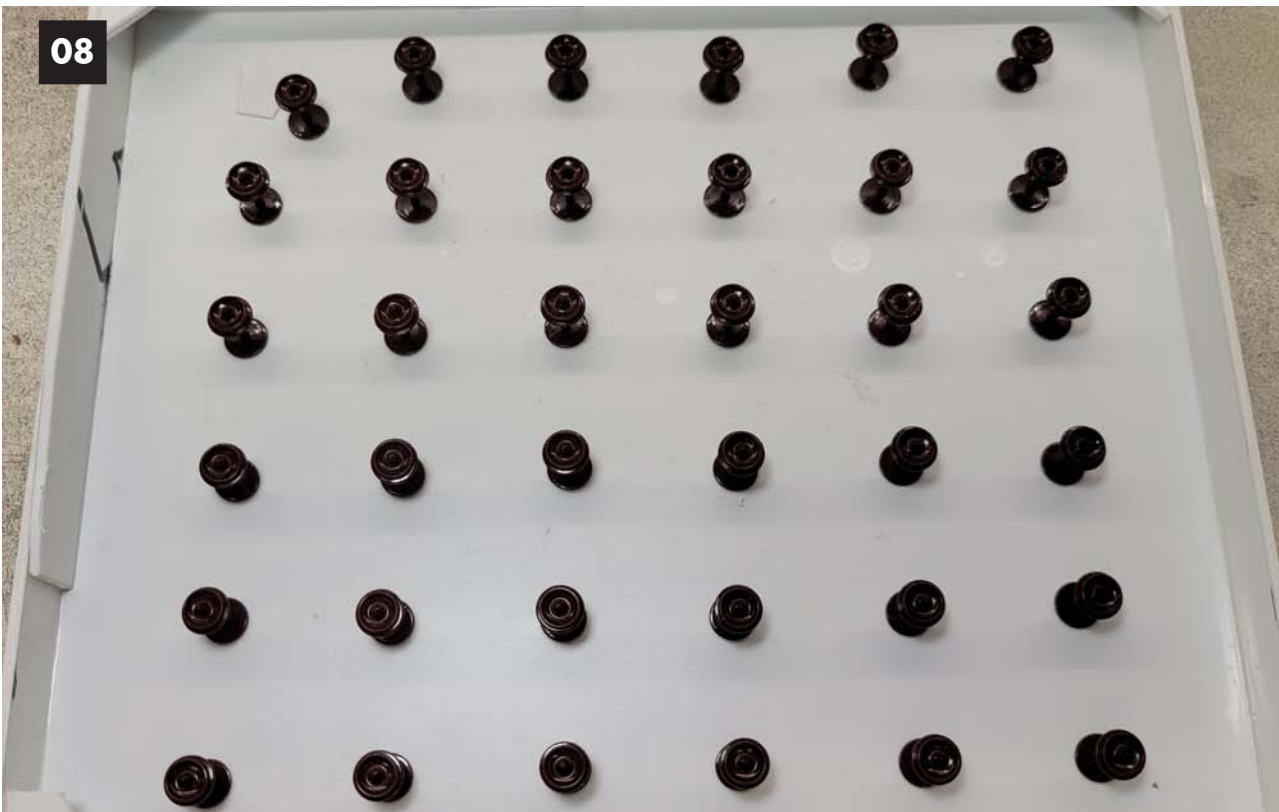


Image 08. From the back side insert the MT 36" wheels in the 36 holes. You'll find they tend to snap in. You can see I covered the hole I mis-drilled so paint can't spray through the hole.

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09

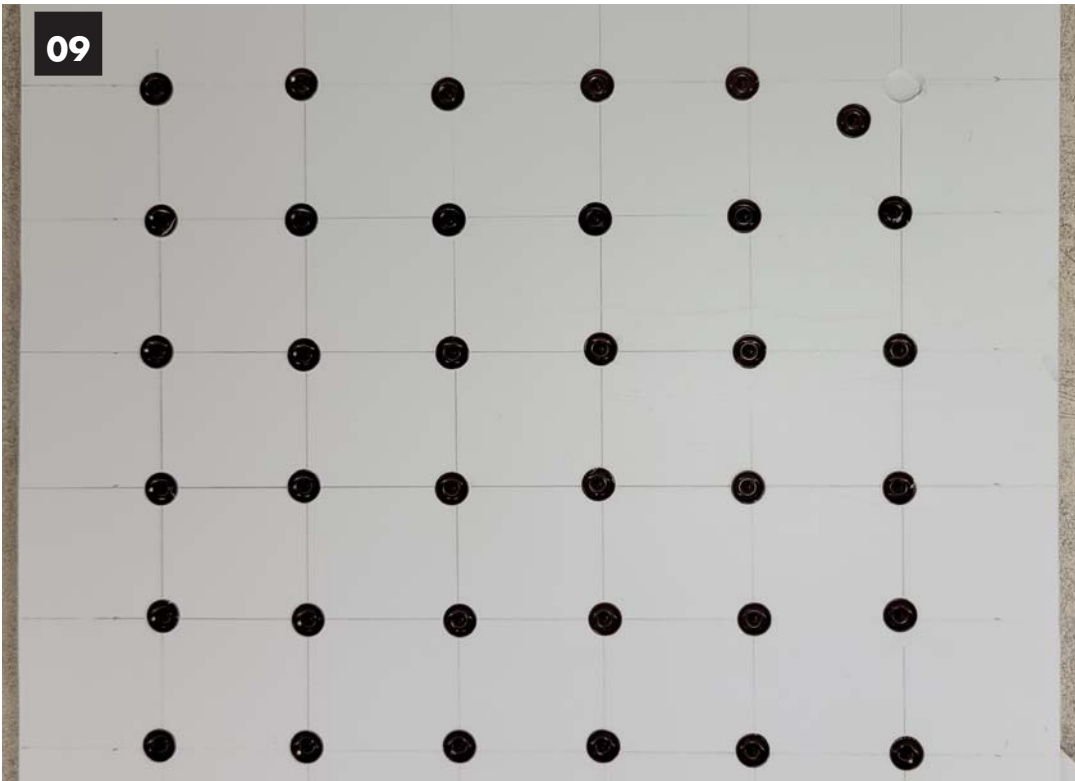


Image 09. From the front side you see only the wheel face. None of the tread is exposed.

10

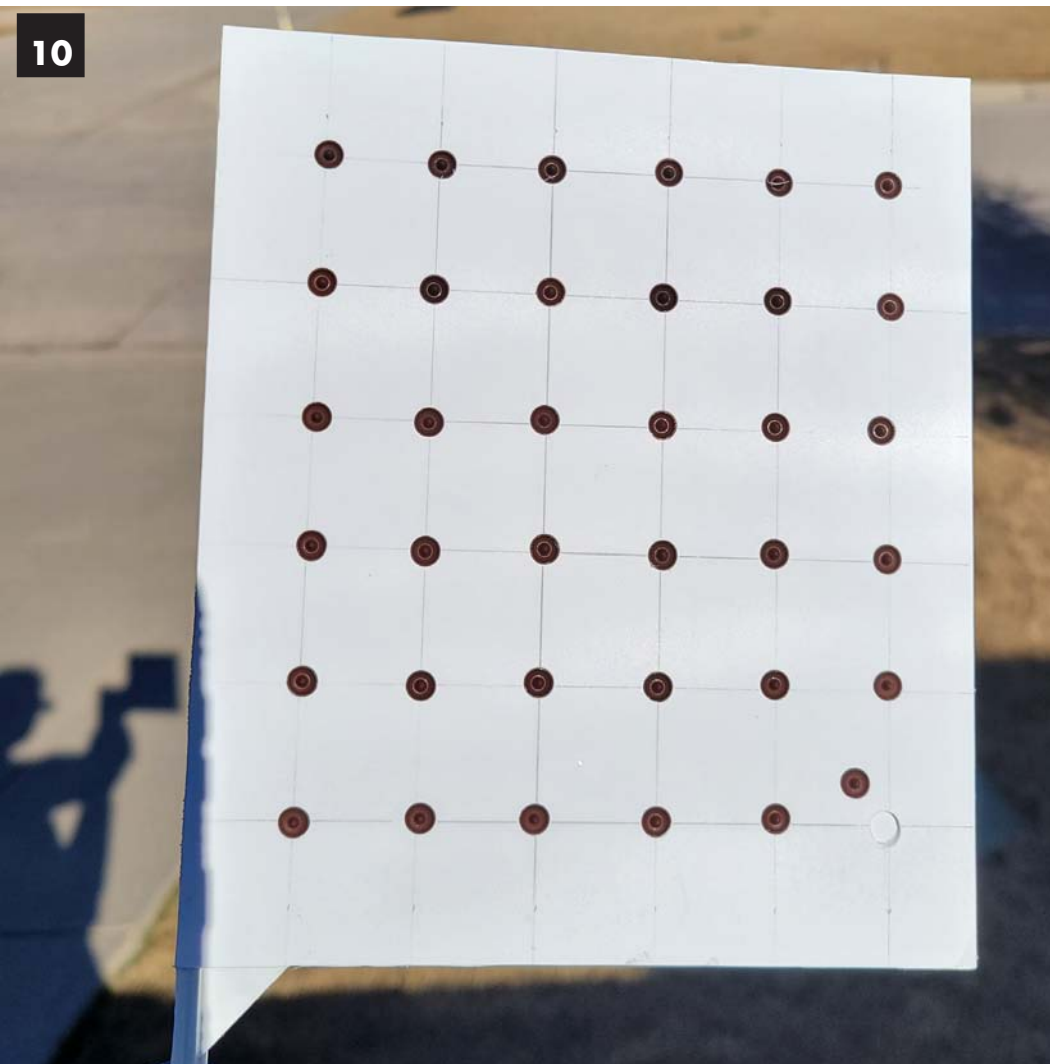


Image 10. For this batch of painting I only wanted to apply a flat finish. An MT brown wheel with flat finish looks close to rust.



# BOTH SIDES OF THE POND AT GREAT PRICES!



KATO's exceptionally popular UP Heritage SD70ACe locomotives are returning after an 11 year absence. The first two in the series are D&RGW and MKT. These models are **now in stock** in limited quantities and likely to sell out quickly. Don't miss out!



The 2022 New Items brochures from FLEISCHMANN and MINITRIX can now be downloaded from our website. This is the one time of year we can offer discount pre-order pricing on these masterpieces of model engineering. See website for more.

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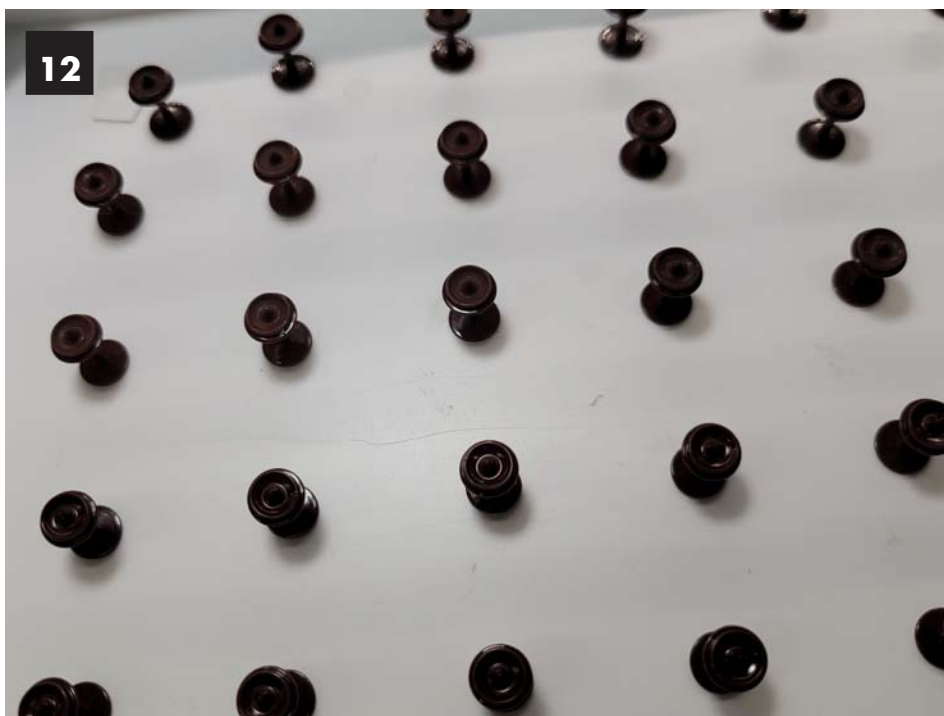
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11



Image 11. Here is the back side showing the wheels are still clean and free of overspray from painting. Resist the temptation to spray this side. You'll get paint on the treads.

Image 12. Pop the axles out and turn them around so the other side can be painted. You can see the top three rows have been turned while the bottom three have not been turned yet.



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13



Image 13. After painting the other side pop the wheels out of the jig. Here we see the difference between a factory finish vs. a flat finish on a MT brown wheel. I think it looks close to a rusty wheel.

14



Image 14. I use a cloth to wipe the tread and axle point to be sure both are clean. You can see the cleaned axle point on the left wheel.



Image 15 & 16. About 25 years ago I made my first wheel painting jig for MT 33" wheels. It was initially a haphazard collection of 36 holes with not a lot of thought put in to it. Back then black was the only color wheels MT sold. So putting a rust color on the wheel face required painting a color on. This jig has been used for over a 1000 axles and still works well. Back then I used an airbrush in a spray booth so the need was to just be able to sit it down and spray. Now I use a spray can

from Tamiya or Tru-color. Both make great paint that stops out-gassing pretty quick. So having a handle on my new jig allows me to just step outside, spray the wheels and let the aroma stay outside with no prep or cleanup. While I only used Tamiya flat finish on these wheels. Using a rust color produces great results as well. Using a flat finish on black wheels provides a good finish for use in solid bearing trucks because those wheels always are coated in black grease.





Image 17. Here is how I store my painted wheels. These stackable containers are available at Michaels as well as other stores. Each batch I paint usually has an intentional variation of some sort. Sometimes depending on how heavy the paint

was or if I used a combo of colors. By putting each batch in a container of its own it's easy to keep them separated for easy selection for your project. ▸

# YUCCA... YUM

By Sandy Smith/ Images by author



**N** scale has progressed massively in the 50 odd years I have been re-railing cars. The same can be stated for all of model railroading with the all technical advancements, prototypical accuracy and product availability. As always scaling

things down into 1:160 is not always easy for manufacturers. The physics of materials and manufacturing processes get in the way. Being the clever N scaler chaps that we are, there are always opportunities. We have all had the desire to have something that is not made, yet.



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I bought a package of the J.T.T. trees and shrubs, # 95535 Cattails in HO scale from the hobby shop. (Image #2) Always being on the lookout for arid area/desert plants I thought with

a little cutting, some paint it might work as a western Yucca. I probably wouldn't have ordered these off of my computer but looking at them in the store, in the basket they went.



03



04



They are 3/4" long plus a little bit more stem/root length for an H0 planting or about 65 inches in 1:87. That works out to a mere 10 feet tall in N. Too tall for any N scale yuccas, until we start chopping. With all that said, I do have some Organ Mountain Models yuccas, that were produced by Fifer Hobbies a few years ago that I cherish and save for the key locations on the layout. (Image #3) There is a video on line of how to replicate these plants at, [www.fiferhobby.com/how-to-make-yuccas-video/](http://www.fiferhobby.com/how-to-make-yuccas-video/).

I started by cutting the leaves about half way or down to about 3/16" long to make them about 30 scale inches long. (Image #4)



05

Being made in a brilliant spring light green I dulled them down to a darker green. (Image #5) The leaves are a fiber/plastic and the center is metal wire. The center stems or reeds I touched up with an off white color to represent a white blooming Yucca.

I snipped off the very end of the center stem since the Yucca plant variety I choose doesn't have growth beyond the blossoms. The base is quite long and I planted them as deep as I could in the layout scenery to hide some of the length.



06

Are these pieces perfect representations of properly scaled Yucca plant at 5 feet tall? No, not really but the beauty of N scale is they look great to the human eye which accepts things sometimes a bit out of scale. It is the camera that doesn't particularly love N scale. They are all about the same in height

but adding some static grass clumps, here or there, 2-4mm long (scaled to 1-2 feet tall), should offset the uniformity. The cat-tails from JTT are pretty durable things to work from so have at it if you need some Yucca plants. (Images 6 & 7)



Image 08: A prototype.

Next article...“Ever try and put scale lemons on a proper N sized grove tree, it’s not easy.” ▶

# YET ANOTHER SIMPLE TEST TRACK

By Kirk Reddie/ Images by author



Image 01. My NP 407/408 and its multiple brands of cars are tested on 12 3/8" radius curves of the test track.



Image 02 Unitrack:  
20-120 x 3 (R 12 3/8; 4 x 45 degree);  
20-100 x 1/2 (7 5/16" long);  
20-026 x 1 Rerailer track (4 7/8" 2 pcs);  
20-041 x 2 (2 7/16" feeder track).

This gives a run of just over 12'.

Walther's Goo secures that track wonderful (so far!)

Most of us can use another test track. I've built several but needed one specifically to test long passenger trains on 12 3/8" radius, the minimum radius on my layout. A "figure 8" is a great test of reverse curves (both right and left) but limits the size of the trains. I realized that I can get another package of four sections and add one curve to each end and use the other two sections in the center to reverse direction. One must have a tangent (straight) track between reverse curves the length of the longest car in a train. For N passenger equipment, that is usually a hair longer than 6". So I used Kato's 7 5/16" straights. I also used a package or rerailer tracks and a pair of feeder tracks so their total length equals 7 5/16".

The goal was to mount the test track on a hollow core door, which had to be at least 28" x 60". We found a 30" x 60" door for \$10.00. Here we go!



Image 03. I drew out the plan to make sure the track fits the door, in this case a 30" x 60" hollow core door. Put the track together, center it, and then I mark where I want to drill holes for the electrical track feeds. We want at least 6 1/2" straight tracks between the reverse curves.



Image 04. Kato Unitrack is normally the easiest to set up. However I want to use multiple types of throttles so I clipped the plugs so I could use Euro connectors.

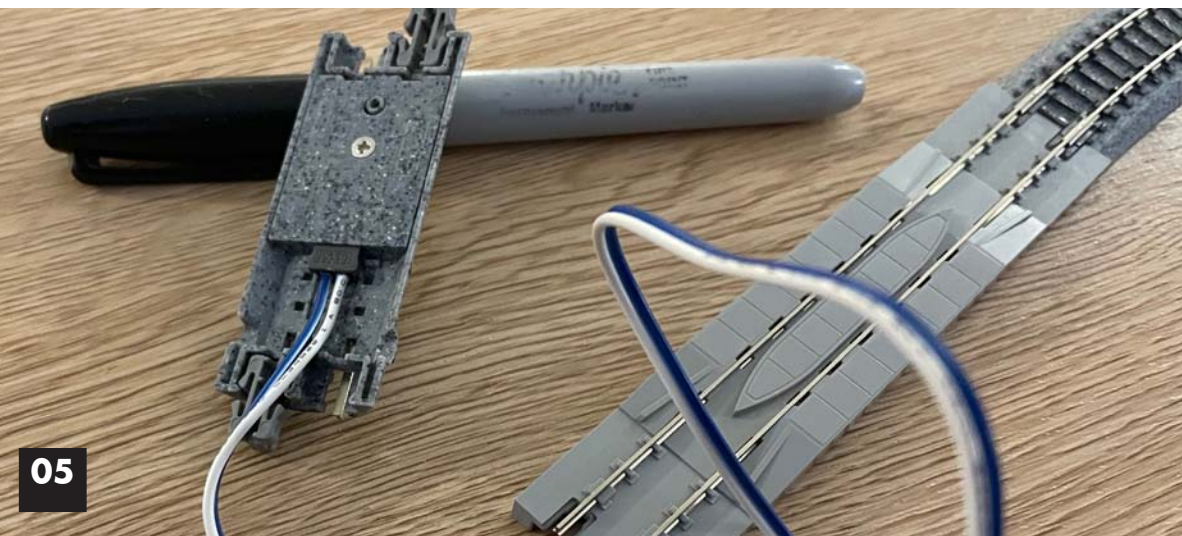


Image 05. The underside of the feeder track accepts the plug. Somehow I messed this up... the first time this has happened to me. I should have tested the plugs after I clicked the plug into the track. You are warned!

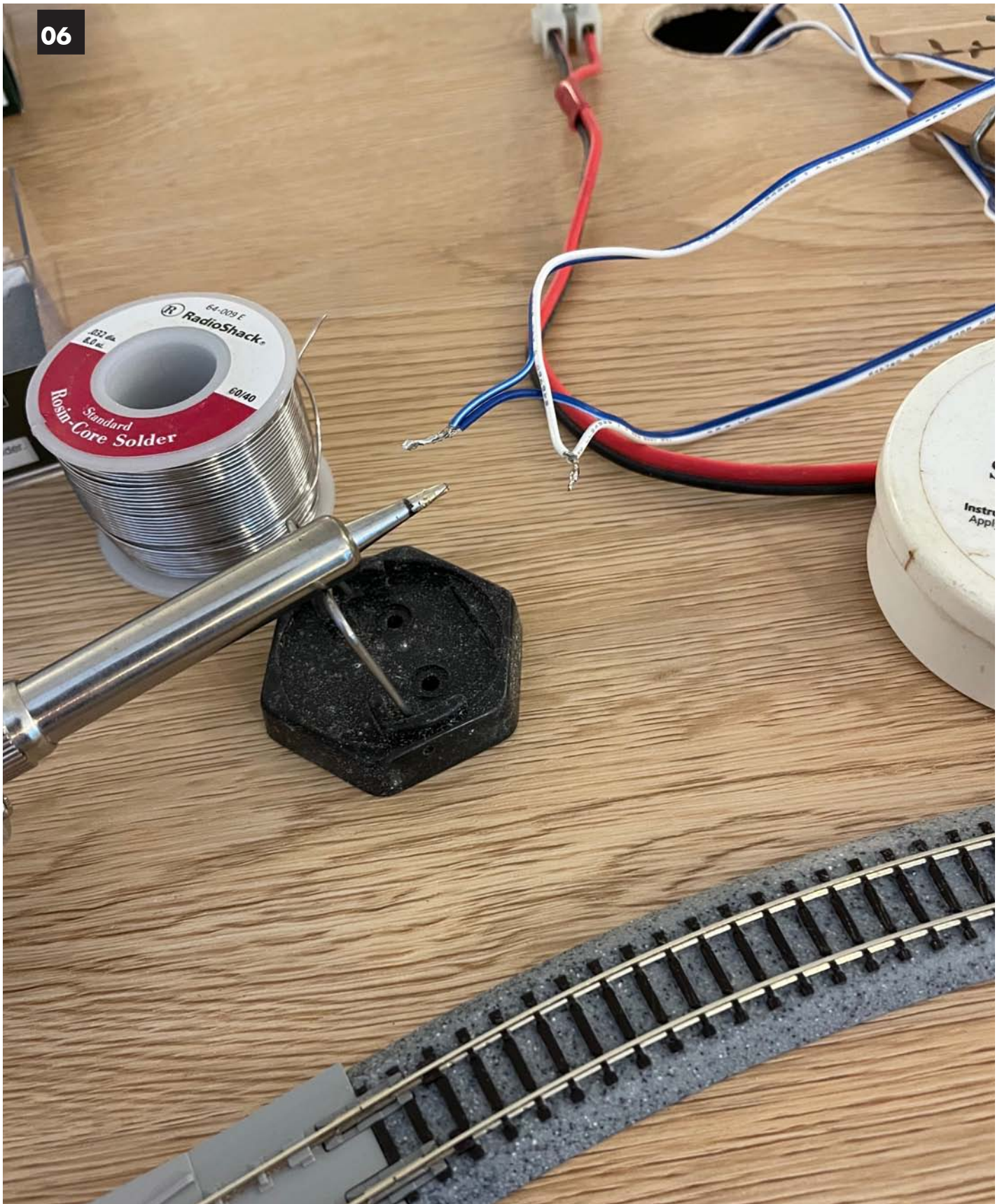


Image 06. I believe in massive parallelism so I put in two feed tracks. These need to be soldered together before they are screwed into the Euro connector. Make a good mechanical fit before soldering.



Image 07. This is the bottom of the door. Bill is drilling access holes. The goal is to have all the wires inside the hollow core door. The drill bit is from a set of door bits.



Image 08. Bill improvised a tool to grab and bring wires to the hole on top near the Euro connector.



09

Image 09. Bill shows the feed wires through the bottom of the door.



10

Image 10. I couldn't find my good wire strippers, lugs, and crimp tool... I used this Atlas throttle that used these push/clip system. The wires are stranded and I soldered the ends so they are now solid.



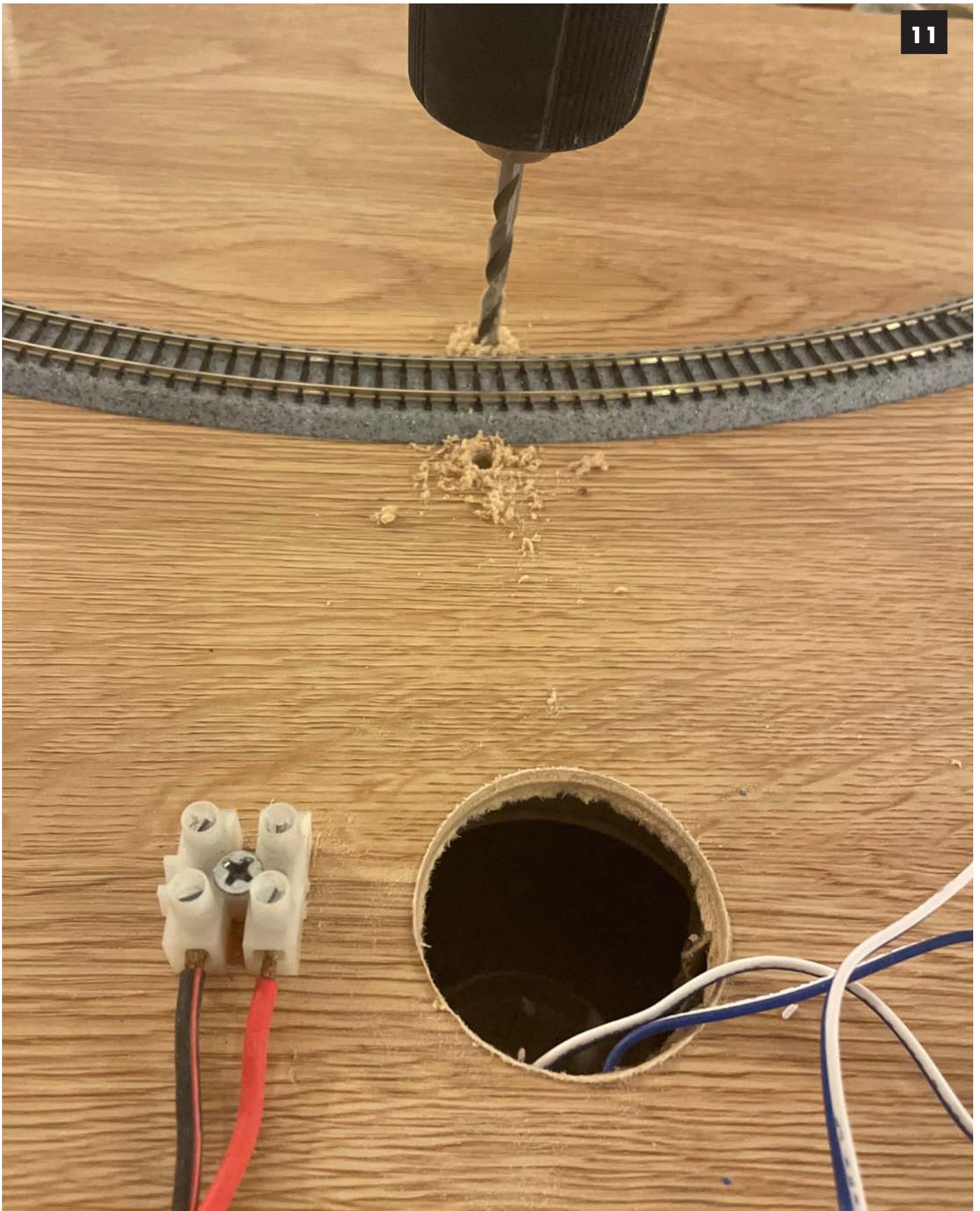


Image 11. Once I realized I messed up the Kato feeder track plugs, I had some large gauge solid wire nearby. So I picked a location closest to the already installed Euro connector.

12

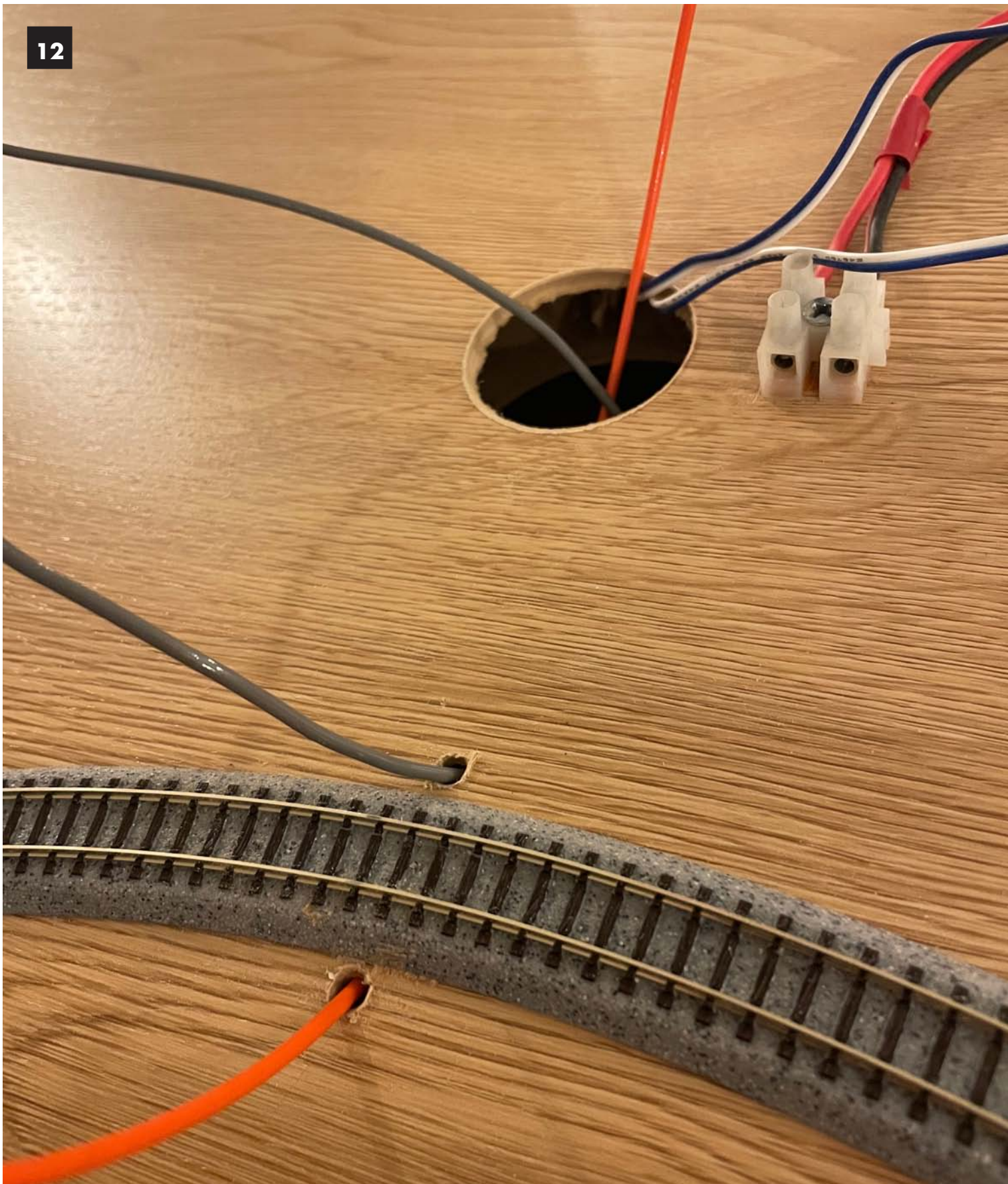


Image 12. The solid wire is much easier to move underneath the top of the door..



Image 13. Bill cut the door down to 60", which leaves an open end. Bill cut down a scrap wood. Bill used DynaGrip to glue the wood to close the end. Bill used a pair of small nails to close the open end.



Image 14. The view of the end. Yes: The interior of the hollow core door here is cardboard.



15

Image 15. It isn't that important, but here is how Bill covered the factory doorknob opening.



16

Image 16. Bill started with shaving down a dowel and inserting it into the latch. This also extends into the main hole where the new hole filling pieces will be attached.



Image 17. Bill cut smaller circles that rest on the dowel. This is the first of two.



Image 18. Bill added a second circle and lined up with the grain. The glue dries clear. This isn't cabinet grade but it does look a lot better than a big hole.

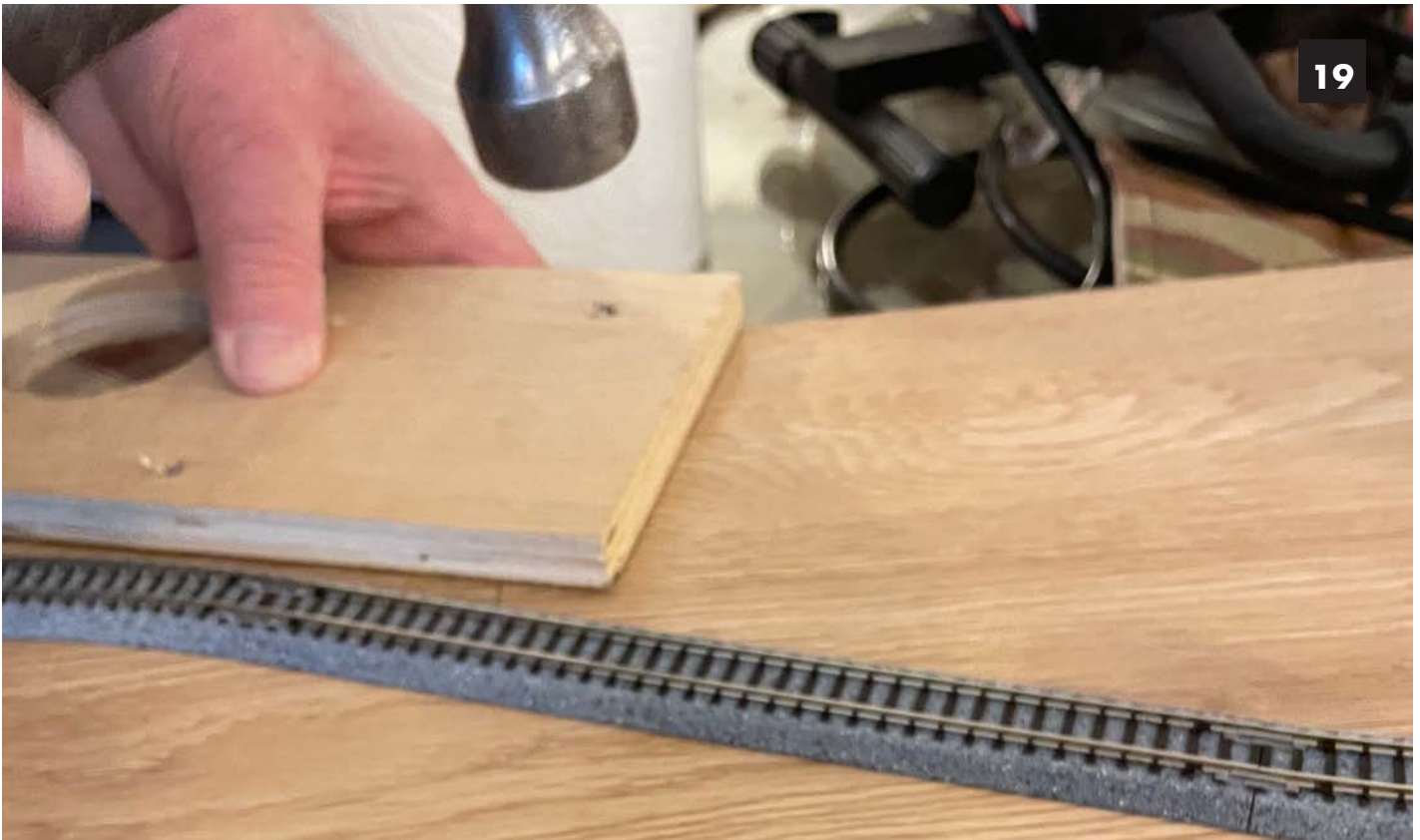


Image 19. I thought this was a hammer but Bill called it a "Whammer" and uses it with a piece of plywood to persuade the plug to settle into the hole.

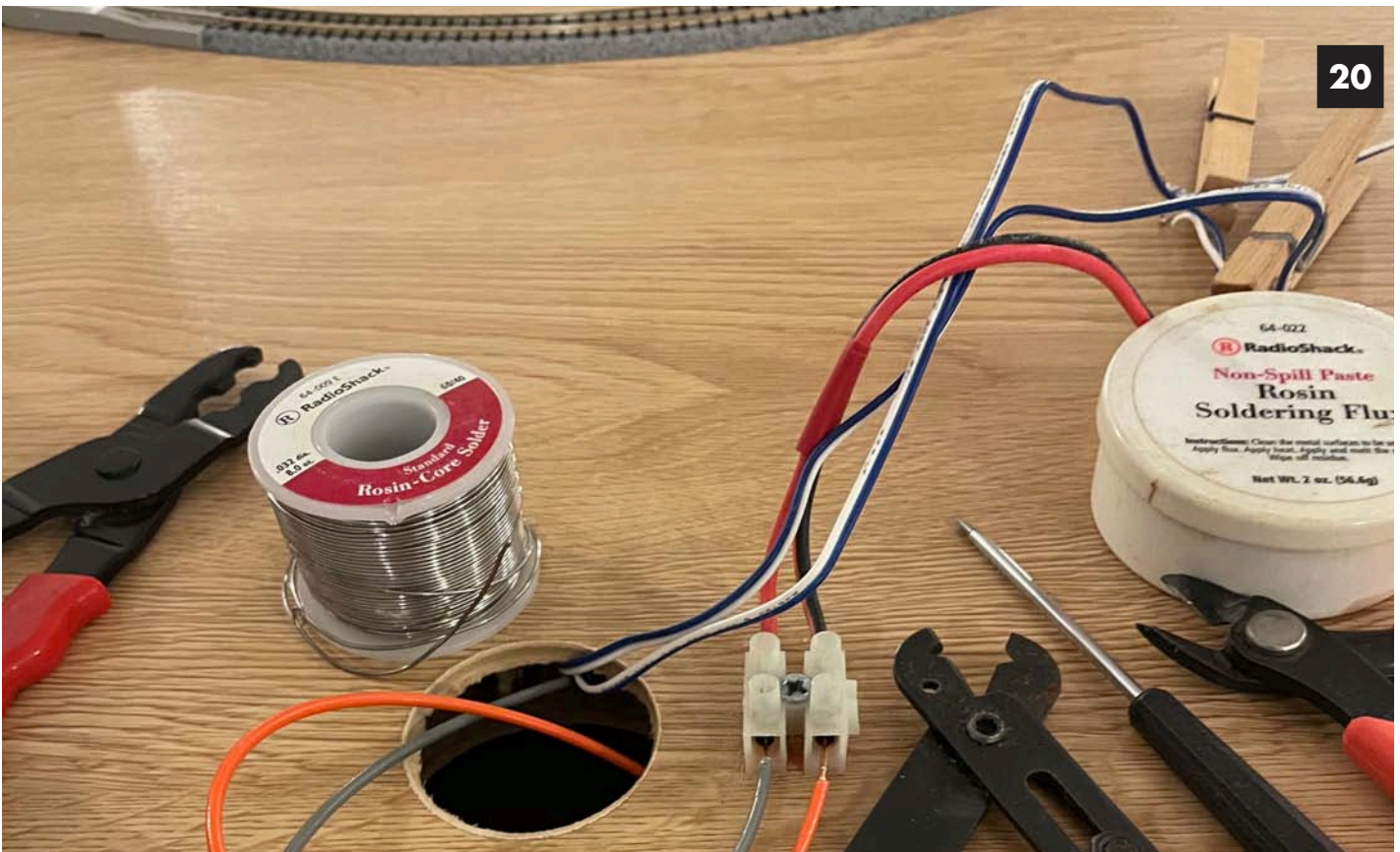


Image 20. Some of the tools used here are a crummy wire stripper, very good solder, solid wire, Euro connector, another crummy wire stripper, a screw driver for the Euro connector, a great Xuron diagonal cutter, and good soldering flux. The hole on the upper side should be large enough to stuff a large 110V plug through so no wires have to hang above the track.

21



Image 21. A single large handle helps when one wants to move the test track.

22

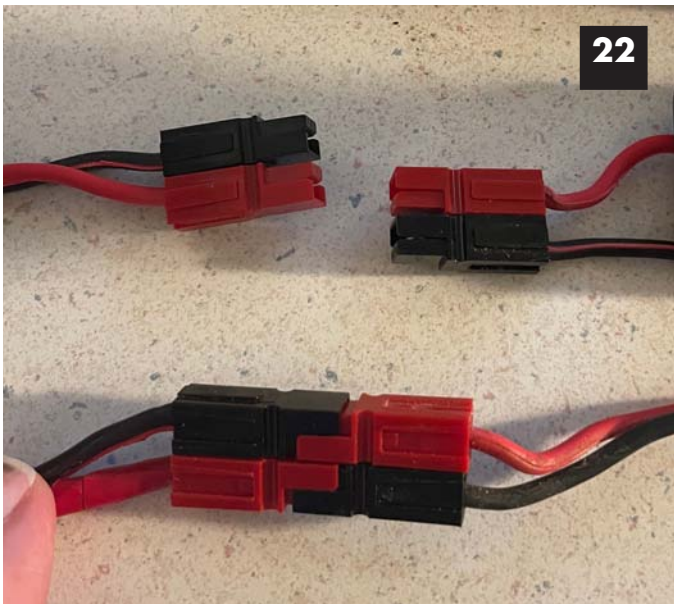


Image 22. Some of my ancient Cinch-Jones connectors are getting cranky so I am switching over to Powerpole connectors. I'm not sure I am using them correctly... but so far they have worked fine. More later.

Image 23. And now we can run trains. This track is designed to test passenger cars in long consists but of course it works to run locomotives, too. I was impressed how good the sound on the Atlas Dash 8 was in DC mode. So now I need to find my good tools because, of course: More projects! ▶



23

# BUILDING BRIDGES

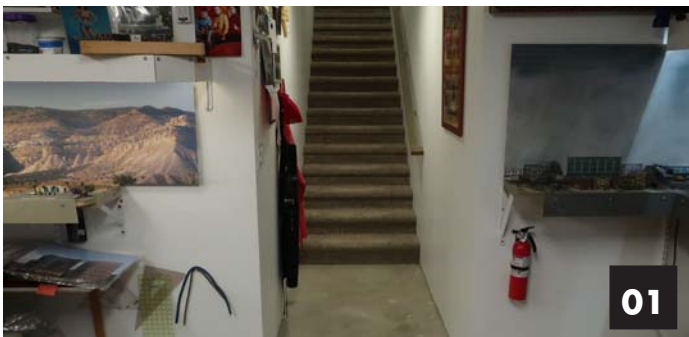
By Sandy Smith/ Images by author



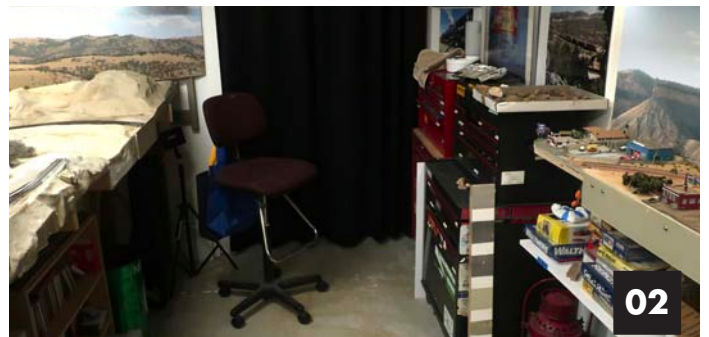
00

I needed to cross an aisle way in my basement, twice. Same aisle, why twice? It was a lost discussion with the building codes folks as to where the second access should be and my wife's desire to have unfettered access to the storage room. The first bridge went across the entrance to the room from the stairway (image 01) and the second across the aisle to the

storage room (image 02). My expansive track plan that has vignettes of the Santa Fe mainline from the Midwest to California, and these two bridges would work well as additional scene divisors. The one at the bottom of the stairs separates Southern California and Illinois, the second, New Mexico and Southern California. Don't worry, it will make sense someday, in a *N Scale Railroading* magazine article showcasing my layout.



01



02



On top of these regulatory and access issues, I really, really, don't like a duck under. After living with an undiagnosed broken back for 40 years and creaky knees...yeah, no duck-unders for me. Being a lifelong N scale builder and acutely aware of the size of our rail and wheels I needed a sure connection from benchwork to lift-out. On top of this realization of N scale physical dimensions and being a pretty lousy carpenter (my

carpentry has been referred to as "advanced children's fort building") I needed something unusual and foolproof.

This article covers what I developed from a concept drawing made by Lance Mindhiem of Shelf Layouts, [www.shelflayouts.com](http://www.shelflayouts.com). Lance's concept in H0 was to slide the rail joiners from the bridge rails over the rails connected on the layout track.



Great idea, but I wanted dependability and an N scale rail joiner is not something I want to risk my precious locomotives to. I have grown fond of the robust nature of the Kato Unitrack products and have used them before. They make an extendable

section (part #20-050) that extends from it's short/retracted length of 3" (78mm) to an extended 4 1/4" (108mm), perfect to span the gap in my carpentry. (Image 03)



The lift out section is a piece of 1x4 lumber with another piece across the bottom to make a T girder. (Image 04)

05



The lift out section is a piece of 1x4 lumber with another piece across the bottom to make a T girder. (Image 04) I originally had blocks of hardwood to hold the lift out on the bench-

work (Good Ol' Mr. Gravity holding things in place) but then switched to some less intrusive metal mending plates than I could paint and landscape a bit. (Image 05)

06



I laid Kato Unitrack across the wooden bridge sections attached the extendable sections, in their retracted positions, and added the transition pieces (Kato part# 20-045 Unitrack to Snap Track) on the ends. After some fiddling, addition and subtraction of straight sections to get the length right on the bridge, I fastened the Unitrack to the wooden lift out section with acrylic caulking, just in case of failure of measurement by me. I soldered the transition pieces (20-045) to the hard

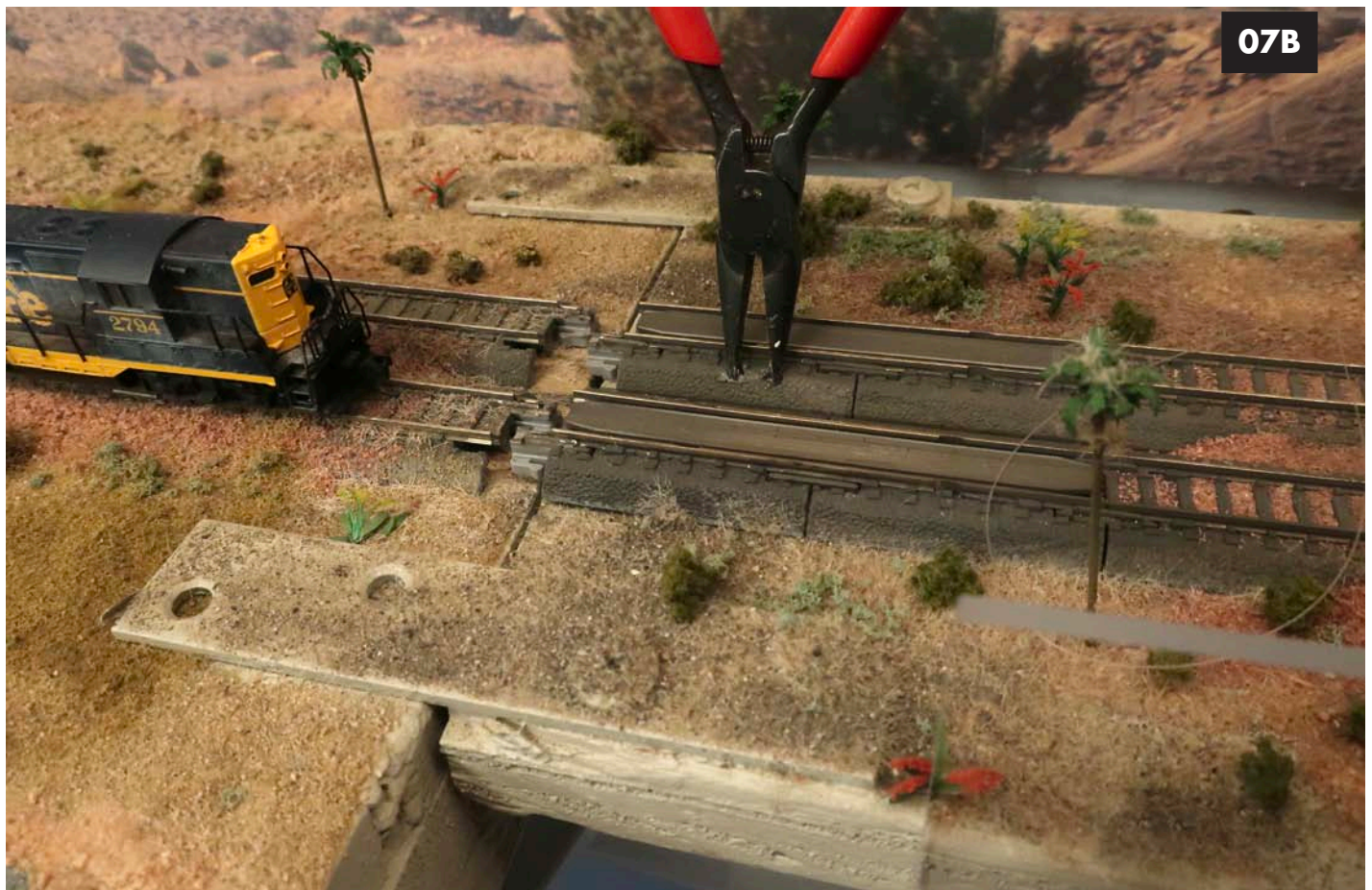
mounted track, (Micro Engineering Code 65 and Peco Code 80). The extendable sections easily span the gaps between the layout and lift-out. Sharp eyed readers will note that the extendable pieces are at different lengths as well. (Image 06) Image 06 shows the New Mexico side of the liftoff section. It is unfinished with regard to scenic things. You can see the extendable piece (20-050) the conversion piece (20-045) and the Micro Engineering track.



07A

Some in place testing yielded a smooth transition after a bit of filing to my sloppy soldering between the transition piece and the hard mounted track. After painting the rails I managed to completely stick the extendable sections, in a half extended position, with spray paint. A little alcohol and the movement,

in and out returned. I decided that even in the best condition the extension sections were just a bit tight. I drilled a couple of holes to be able to grip something, other than the rails, with a pair of needle nose pliers. (Image 7A & 7B)



07B



As these bridges are acting as scene dividers between different terrain, they were landscaped accordingly. Foliage from arid desert to midwest, from palm and Joshua trees to bare winter hardwood. (Image 08) I even transitioned the ballast from a

red rock to a darker grey. I wanted the ballast to match what was on the tracks on either side of the lift out section as well. I covered the Kato Unitrack ballast slopes with undiluted white glue, added the appropriate colored ballast.



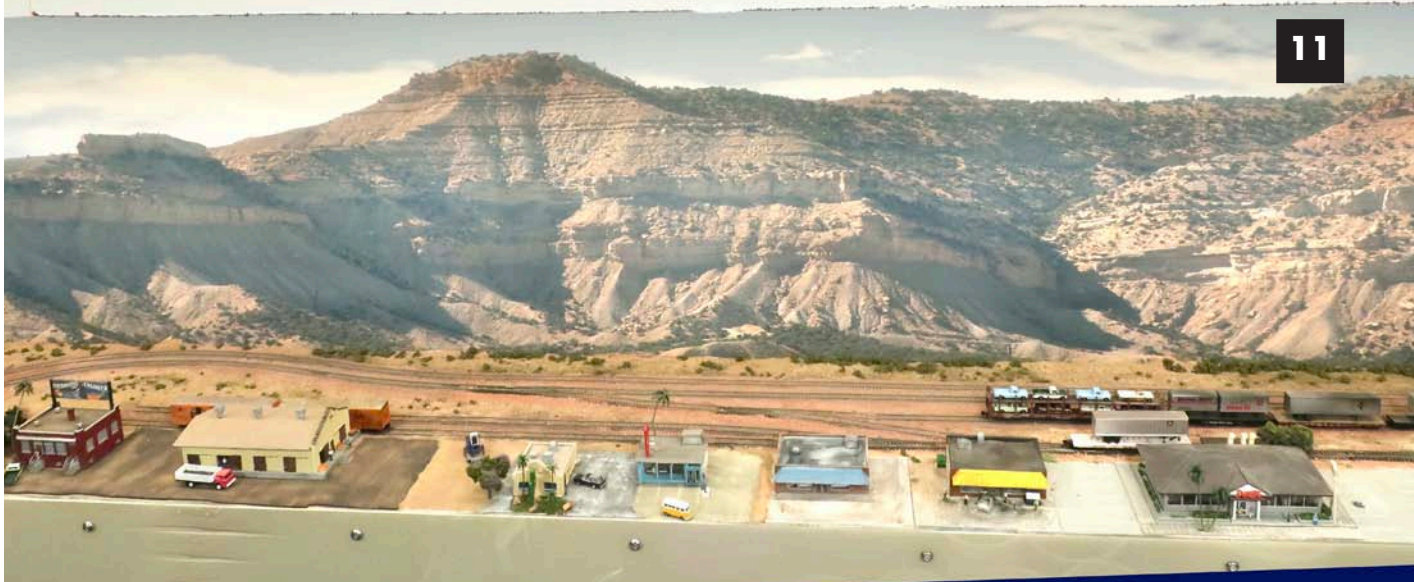
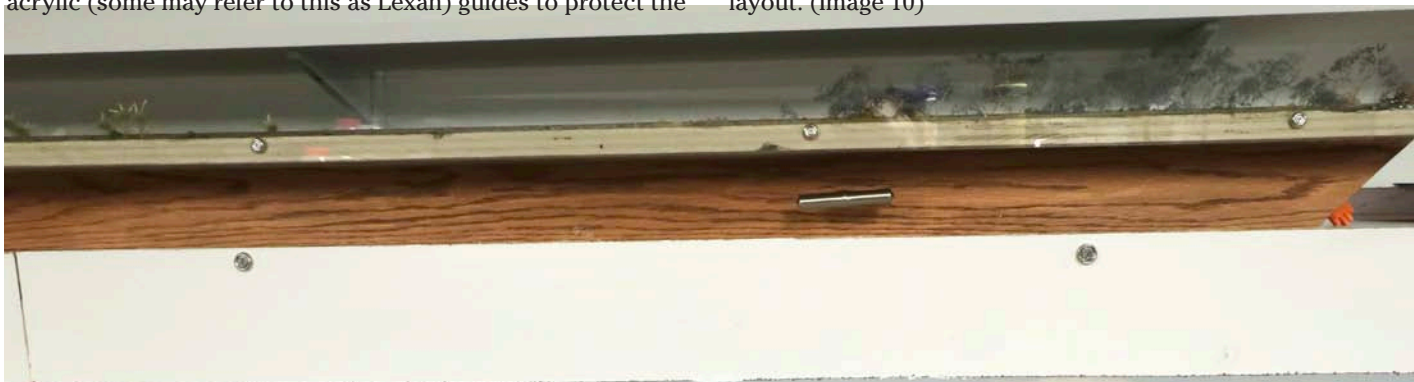
The New Mexico to Southern California is similar in scope although it has a portion of orange groves on the west/California end of the bridge on both sides of the tracks. (Image 09) I know

the sunflower blooms are way too big but I couldn't resist, hey they are all pointing the same way.



I added another dusting of ballast, some wet water and diluted white glue to finish it. To top it all off, I added some acrylic (some may refer to this as Lexan) guides to protect the

delicate trees as these sections are get moved on and off the layout to some storage shelves as the usual position is off the layout. (Image 10)



The dormant winter trees were getting broken and I gained some protection for the rolling stock in the event of a big accident. (Image 11). For handling these pieces more easily, I put on a pair of drawer pulls on the vertical support running across the bottom. This gives me more control as the lift outs are stored on a rather high shelf.

This is probably not the lift-out solution for everyone but for me, it was sturdy enough to survive regular use and simple enough to be built, by me, with confidence of success. The other bit of secret sauce is that due to the connection quality of the Kato rail joiners, there is no need for an additional electrical connection. I discovered this after I wired the NM-CA liftoff, I haven't needed to use the electrical plugs in three years. Being a DC control guy I added a stand alone "yard power pack" to the California scene so I could just switch that section if wanted without lighting up the entire layout. Something similar could be done in DCC as well making a separate power district. During the current construction phase, I don't need to put the liftoff sections in very often. Their use is only really required for the full loop ride of the layout, I hope to use them much more in the future. ▀

# TRAVEL GUIDE N EVENTS

**2022 JUN 14-19 TN** Nashville.  
28th Annual National N Scale Convention  
Registration opens December 06.  
<https://www.nationalscaleconvention.com>

**2023 JUN ??-?? NV** Sparks/ Reno area.  
29th Annual National N Scale Convention. ▶

# N HORIZONS

**RailSmith** has announced they are producing a smoothside 12-4 sleeper. The Union Pacific had some of these in their Western series. RS is going to do the rebuilt Sun series, too. Amazing.

# NEWS FROM NSR CONTRIBUTORS



**Kim Saign.** At 263 scale feet in length Interstate Bakeries can accommodate up to five 50' box-cars on each of its three tracks. Airslides of sugar and flour will also be delivered here. 3D printing and some kitbashing makes industries like this within anyone's grasp.

**Dirk Warwel.** Tacoma Union Station is mostly scratch-build, following plans



published by the Library of Congress. The model is compressed front to back, but to scale left to right. Building material is foam-core with N-Scale Architect brick sheet overlays. All windows are commercial offerings, some are H0 scale. There is still work to be done, mostly the concourse and the butterfly shelters. ▶

# SEE YOU NEXT ISSUE!