

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE 2023

42

## Sunset at Devon

Rick Abramson's New Haven HO scale layout.  
*Rick Abramson photo*

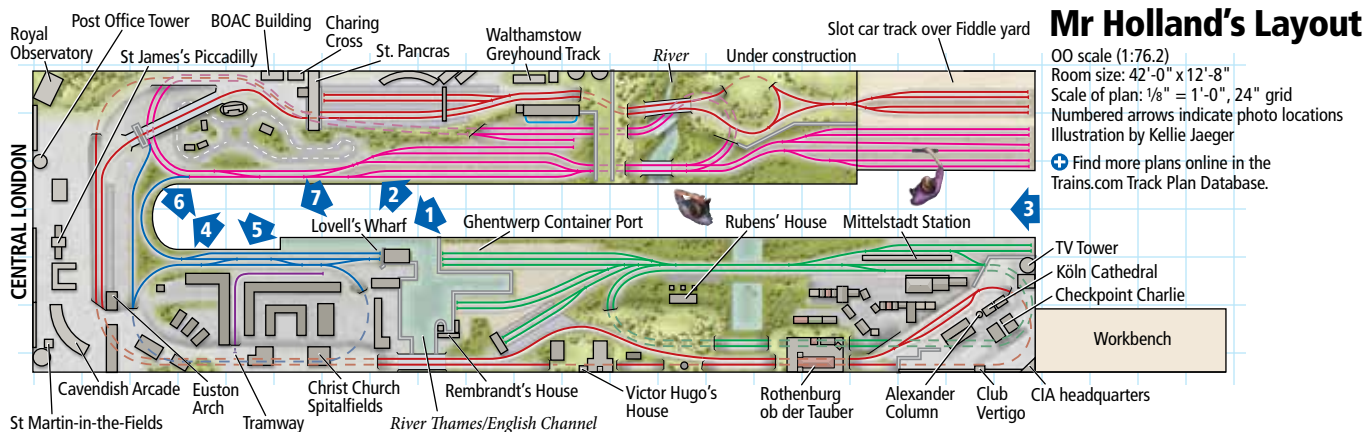
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### On the cover

MR's Cody Grivno inspects an HO scale Dash 9. Learn how he detailed this model on page 54. *Photo by Connor Bruesewitz/Saturn Lounge*



### Track plan at a glance

**Name:** Mr Holland's Layout  
**Scale:** OO in London, HO in Europe  
**Size:** 12 x 50 feet  
**Maximum Grade:** None  
**Benchwork:** MDF  
**Height:** 28" to 39.5"  
**Scenery:** Assorted techniques  
**Backdrop:** Painted sky

allows for tall buildings and hills to sit against a flat wall. The benchwork started at 4 feet wide, but in many areas my track plan evolved, and the baseboard got extended out by up to a foot.

I got some friendly set painters to create the sky and had some help with laying my preliminary track design. One long loop around the whole room comprised the run for the Eurostar. Five smaller loops run around London and its suburbs. The continental Europe part of the layout is separated from the rest by water, including its docks, countryside and towns.

After the basic trackwork was

understanding, and looking back, they seemed quietly delighted that I was going to be out of the way. I was enjoying myself in a new room, approximately 14 x 50 feet, above an extension to our house.

### The models

As a working musician, I've spent my life touring. Early on I was on the road in the USA with the band Squeeze, and more recently I've toured around the

British Isles, mainland Europe, and the world with my big band. When the opportunity arises, I liked to explore the local model shops. This meant that over time, I had accumulated boxes of buildings, accessories, etc. I worked using the well-known hoarder's rule: buy it when you see it, not when you need it.

Whenever possible, I like to travel by train. One of the train journeys I always

enjoy is going from London to Paris, Amsterdam, or Brussels on the Eurostar. This modern-day express travels though highly contrasting landscapes, cities, and towns over a relatively short distance of a few hundred miles. My idea was to somehow fit an impression of this into the new room as well.

### The layout

The room was a good length and width, able to accom-

3. This view shows much of Jool's layout. He designed it after talking with Rod Stewart about building large layouts. The fiddle yard (lower right) has a OO scale slot car track above it (just out of photo).

modate almost 100 feet of layout in a long narrow U-shape. The internal pitch of the roof starts at five and half feet from the ground. The benchwork at its lowest level is 35", slightly lower than ideal, but this

installed, I expanded the layout with a working tram, an operational London Underground (subway) loop, a working arterial road, and a motor racing circuit. Above the benchwork, I added a valence concealing powerful strip lights.

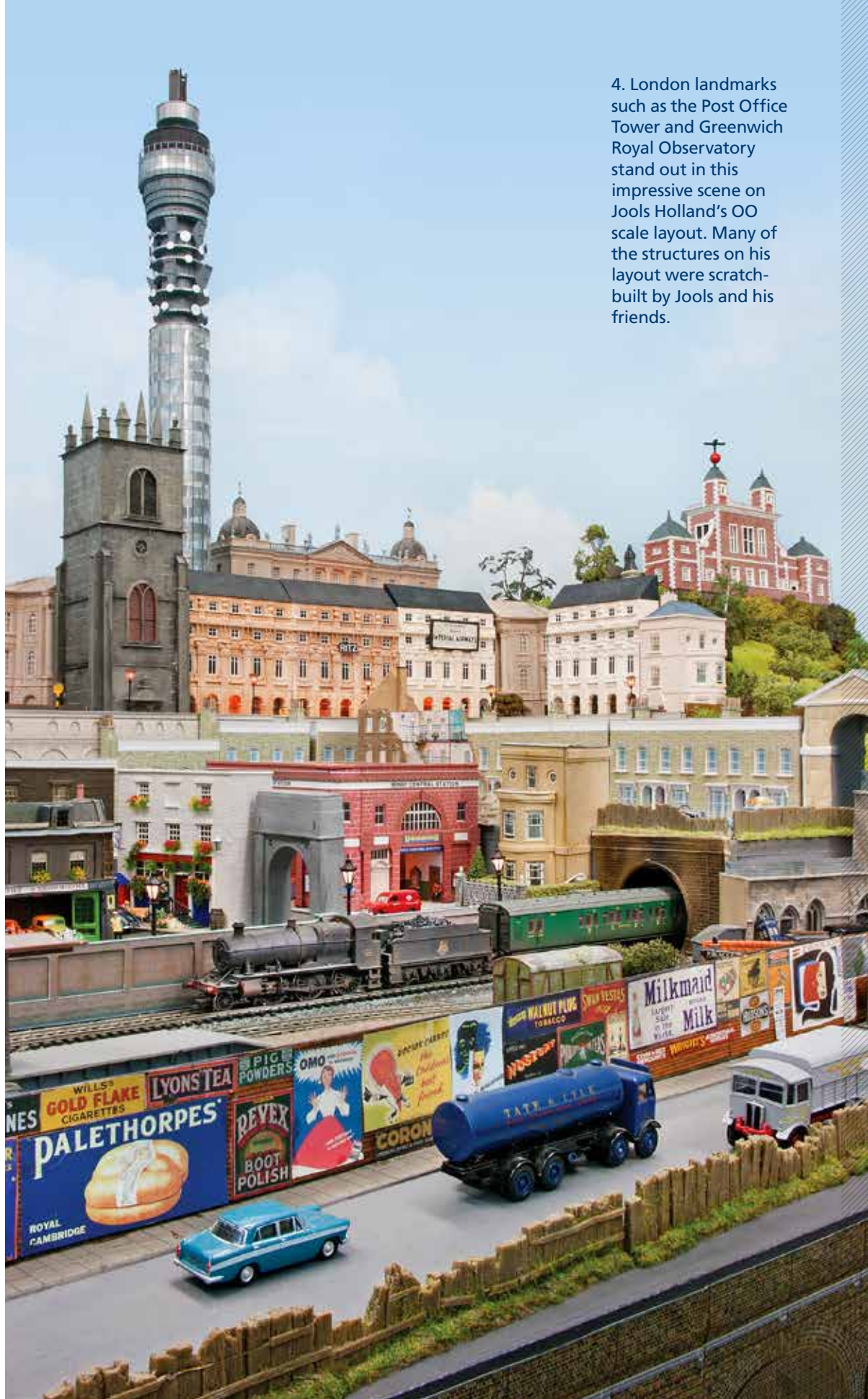
With the track in place, I was ready to create cities, towns, hamlets, farms, valleys, mountains, and rivers. I included docks and industries, served by the operational transport links of sea, road, and rail, giving me a lot to model.

### Urban planning

For me, the most enjoyable part of the creative process has been laying out boulevards and town squares with attractive buildings, then picking them up and starting again to improve the scene. I wonder if many modelers, like me, are really frustrated town planners.

The generous size of my layout has allowed me to have the room divided into different sections separated by scenic breaks such as hills, rivers, and valleys. I have modeled about 25 feet of mainland Europe. At the far end is Cold War-period Berlin with Check point Charlie, the British embassy, KGB, and CIA headquarters. A Berlin Wall reflects in a strategically placed mirror to make it look larger.

A university and art museum appear on the layout, the



4. London landmarks such as the Post Office Tower and Greenwich Royal Observatory stand out in this impressive scene on Jools Holland's OO scale layout. Many of the structures on his layout were scratch-built by Jools and his friends.



5. A double-deck tram rumbles past a variety of kit and scratchbuilt structures on this busy London scene. The pannier locomotive in the foreground is shunting coal wagons at the docks.

latter featuring small and changing contemporary art shows. A theater, concert hall, and nightclub called “Vertigo” are included to provide the inhabitants with an evening’s entertainment.

The main square has a fine replica of a triumphal column, which in reality sits outside the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg Russia. I bought mine in the gift shop when I was fortunate enough to visit. Surrounding the base of the column is a market scene set up by my youngest, but now grown-up daughter Mabel. A sta-

tion next to the main market square on the upper level welcomes international trains.

### Scenic breaks

I use scenic breaks to carefully separate scenes from each other. On the lower level, Mittlestadt station services the commuter trains and goods wagons on the Berlin inner and outer ring. From here viewers travel past the first scenic break which is the hilltop medieval town of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, the inspiration for Ian Fleming’s *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

Then they go on through a picturesque

mainland Europe and Great Britain, or to be more specific, my stylized Ghent-werp Port and the riverfront of my 1950s Greenwich. An ocean or sea really does present great challenges of compression to the modeler, so I decided not to bother and was content with modelling a strip of water to represent London’s Thames on one side and Scheldt, the great working Flemish River, on the other.

### London

Some of the buildings seen in Greenwich and old London are particularly fine examples of work by the late Doug Hudson. I also kitbashed a few myself. The river police station was copied from a print by artist Rex Whistler.

John Howe built the operational London tram for me. The last trams in London ran in 1952, therefore, in this section the scenes date from that period. It includes fine models of important 17th- and 18th-century London churches before they were repaired after being damaged in the Blitz. Various London pubs, working men’s cafes, shops, houses, bomb sites, and a workhouse add to the post war atmosphere.

One the great pleasures for me has been creating cityscapes, especially re-creating lost and demolished buildings both large and small. I have a model of my grandmother’s fruit and vegetable shop,

which was bulldozed to make way for a new road.

I also have a model of the wonderful Euston railway arch. It was built in the mid-19th century and was the magnificent portal to the north-west and Scotland from London. It was demolished despite huge protests in the early ‘60s. It’s a fine model built to a slightly smaller scale of 3mm per foot instead of 4mm. This scale was also applied to the city churches, as I feared they might dwarf their neighbors otherwise.

The grander neighborhoods of central London are represented with garden squares and associated mews houses, as well as the American Embassy. These charming, cobbled mews homes were originally built for the servants and horses. They were later used by the upmarket motor trade and as homes for pop stars, artists, and spies. Many of us fondly remember them as the settings of groovy 1960s TV shows, where they were inhabited by *Danger Man*, *The Avengers*, and *Man in a Suitcase*.

### Changing times

As in full size cities, the centers tend to be the earliest parts, as reflected by the architecture.

As you venture farther into the suburbs, everything becomes more modern. This has allowed me to easily mix eras,



6. Many of the buildings on Jools layout, such as the BOAC building and Charing Cross Station shown here, are the work his friends Doug Hudson and John Howe. This section of the railroad features an operating motorway, and elsewhere is an HO scale racetrack.

including 1930s buildings, such as a copy of the art deco Arnos Grove Underground station and a working overground suburban loop.

Above this sits my St. Pancras International Station, with its historic brick and glass structures. From here, the *Eurostar* embarks upon its journey around the long loop to Ghent-werp and Berlin.

Beyond this there are modern blocks of flats and Walthamstow Greyhound racing stadium. The end of this scene is my industrial area home of Slag Effluents (industry) Works.

The last and most recently finished section gives view-

ers a break from the crowded mess and grime of the city. It's a lush valley spanned by viaducts and other bridges and leads up to a hilltop castle.

Finally, at a height of 50 feet is an operational motor racing circuit. It is an OO scale 1960s slot car system, Minic Motorways. The cars can be competitively raced;

this seems to give enormous pleasure to many of our visitors. Below this is a fiddle yard from where the rolling stock can be fed into different parts of the layout. In the last year, I have converted to DCC, which has improved operations enormously.

### Sage advice

I must thank my friends, family, and the professionals who have helped me to achieve my layout. The wonderful thing about a big layout is that there is always some corner to redevelop or improve.

Thirty years ago, a kindly old, white-bearded gentleman who ran a now long-



7. Jools Holland is a musician, broadcaster, and a founding member of the rock band Squeeze. For the last 25 years he's toured with his big band and has a long running music TV show on the BBC. He has four children and a new grandson.

closed model shop in Southeast London advised me not to try to hurry through things but to enjoy the creative process. He said, "It's your modeling time that will give you the greatest pleasure." I would agree. ●

# 10 tips for a work-weary locomotive



Whether you need a locomotive that has a light coat of dust or one that looks like it's escaped maintenance for a long time, there's a weathering technique for everyone in this 10-tip airbrushing project.

## Use an airbrush and a handful of colors to get a grimy weathered finish in an afternoon

By David Popp  
Photos by the author and Bill Zuback

**Many of today's models**, such as this Rapido Trains RS11, come with high-quality details and factory paint finishes. However, most locomotives purchased by the cash-strapped New Haven RR only looked factory fresh the day they left the builder's plant. From then on, theirs was a hard life of unending road grime and deferred maintenance.

To make the weathered model shown above, I selected a few photos of New Haven diesels and a handful of Vallejo paint colors. I also removed the wheelsets and protected the electrical contacts in the trucks with foam blocks. From there, I fired up the airbrush and came up with the following 10 techniques to quickly turn my RS11 into a weary veteran.

Even if you're not modeling the New Haven, you can use some of the tips shown here to add grimy realism to your model locomotive fleet.

### 1 Fading logos



**Application:** Often, the red N in the logo on a New Haven locomotive wore away on the long hood. The red was painted over white, so this is an easy effect to achieve with more white paint. I took the paint straight from the bottle and applied it to the model with a Microbrush using the drybrushing technique.



**Mix:** 71.001 White, applied to the logo with a brush after wiping most off on a paper towel.

## 2 Roof rot



**Application:** The cab roof on a New Haven diesel locomotive often gained a quick layer of rust. After mixing a pleasing rust color using three different Vallejo paints, I sprayed just the cab roof on the RS11, leaving some of the original red around the edges. Surprisingly, the cab sides never rusted like the roof, with many still retaining solid red paint into retirement.



This view shows the roof rot effect once it's also been combined with the soot application from tip 7. The soot darkens the center of the cab roof, while the red/brown tones of the roof rot provide a rusted metal effect farther down the curved cab surface. Good weathering is often built up in layers using more than one color or technique.



**Mix:** Add enough 71.026 U.S. Flat Brown to cover the bottom of the jar. Add 2 drops of 71.057 Black and 3 drops of 71.105 Brown. Then cut 50 percent with thinner.

## 3 Dark dust



**Application:** You can make black-painted details on a model stand out if you lighten them with dark gray, which is good news for this nearly all-black RS11. This tip works particularly well for models you want to photograph.

I applied two dust coats of different shades of gray to achieve the look of weathered NH



locomotives I'd seen in photos. The first coat, as shown here, uses dark gray to lighten the black body, pilots, and running gear. I moderately thinned the paint, allowing me to work up the color in layers. You can apply too much, so it's best to work slowly and carefully, taking time to examine your work between each coat.



**Mix:** 1 part 71.055 Black Gray to 4 parts thinner.

## 4 Sand marks



**Application:** For the second layer of dust, I used Vallejo 71.298, a warmer, lighter gray. I use this color on freight cars too. There are two applications on the model. First, I used it as an accent around the sand fillers, trailing it down the front and back corners of both hoods.

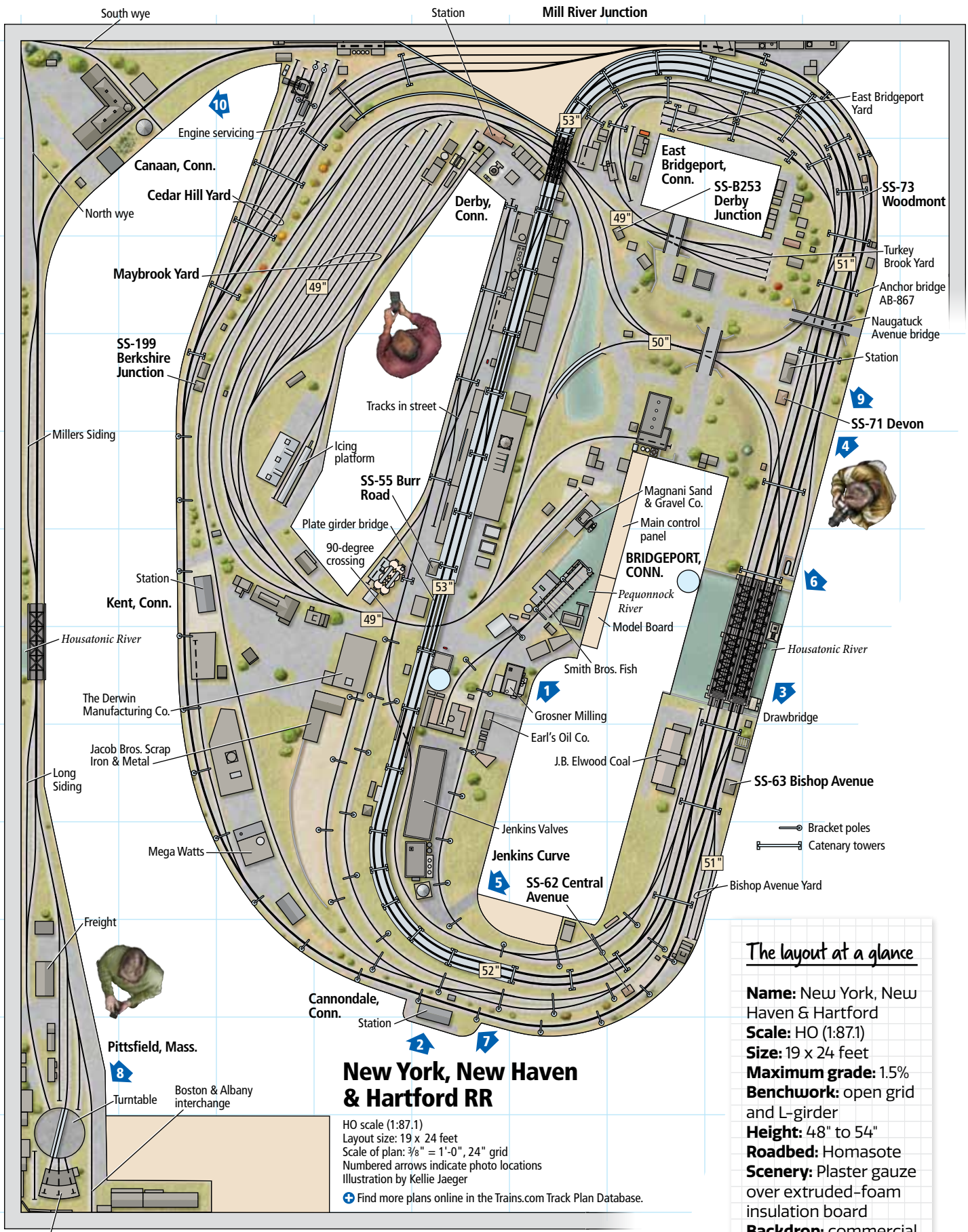
## 5 Light dust



I used a second application, shown in here in tip 5, to add a brighter layer of dust to the trucks and pilots. I also used it to further fade the logos on the long hood and add a heat-bleaching effect on some of the surrounding black paint.



**Mix:** 1 part 71.298 Light Gray to 4 parts thinner. This mix is used for tips 4 and 5.



## New York, New Haven & Hartford RR

HO scale (1:87.1)  
 Layout size: 19 x 24 feet  
 Scale of plan: 3/8" = 1'-0", 24" grid  
 Numbered arrows indicate photo locations  
 Illustration by Kellie Jaeger  
 Find more plans online in the Trains.com Track Plan Database.

**The layout at a glance**

**Name:** New York, New Haven & Hartford  
**Scale:** HO (1:87.1)  
**Size:** 19 x 24 feet  
**Maximum grade:** 1.5%  
**Benchwork:** open grid and L-girder  
**Height:** 48" to 54"  
**Roadbed:** Homasote  
**Scenery:** Plaster gauze over extruded-foam insulation board  
**Backdrop:** commercial photos



# 51 tips to better rooftop details

Good detailing on a layout isn't reserved for track level alone. Rooftops are the most often viewed part of structures on a layout. Seth Puffer shares some of his favorite tips to make sure his visitors have plenty to look at.

## How to raise the level of detail on the part of a structure you see the most – the roof!

By Seth Puffer • Photos by the author

**I love details.** Thirty years ago, I built my first craftsman structure kit and found out what details could do to “raise the roof” on my modeling. If you think about it, what you mostly see of a structure on a layout is the roof. On my railroad, a roof has to have one or more points of interest. Follow along as I share some of the common details I use to make my rooftops more interesting for the viewer.



**This is the roof** of VanDeWater Freight and Storage. People always add interest to a scene, so I added a roofing crew beginning some repair work **1**. But that's not all. My layout has that “lived in/worked in” look, so I've included other details as well. I placed a worn and weathered billboard on the roof **2**. There's also a chimney **3** and some vents **4**. And I added a trashcan and old tire **5**, as well as a small workbench **6**. Why would someone bring a tire up to the roof? Maybe to hold something down on a windy day, but no one really knows.

# Building a highway my way

What was once an empty space between two towns on Gerry's layout is now a signature scene, thanks to a simple country road that passes beneath the tracks and seamlessly joins the backdrop.

## Using hardware store materials and a homemade backdrop to build realistic roads

By Gerry Leone • Photos by the author

**Everyone loves looking** at a model railroad layout with oodles of details. It appears there's something everywhere you look. While at first that seems like a good thing, often an abundance of details can be overwhelming. Sometimes your eyes and brain need a bit of a break from sensory overload to get a chance to breathe. In fact, taking a break from highly detailed scenes actually makes those areas stand out a little more. It's why music composers put quiet interludes in their symphonies: it makes the big stuff – the dynamic, dramatic parts – seem even bigger and better.

On a model railroad, I call those quiet interludes "spaces between places." Although those spaces are, for the most part, simple and under-

stated, it doesn't mean they're featureless or boring. In fact, those spaces can be quite interesting – even memorable – in their own right.

Follow along as I create one of those spaces on my HO scale Bona Vista layout. It's a space that all of us have seen in the real world: a rural high-



Roads and all the things that surround them are common, everyday items. However, when they are modeled well, they add as much to the realism of a layout as the detailed and weathered trains also seen in this photograph.

way next to the tracks. Here, it's between the outskirts of my town of Colfax and the detailed lake I built in *Model Railroading: The Ultimate Guide 2022*.

While the project uses many techniques shown in other articles and Trains.com videos, there are some surprising new ones too.