

One Man's Thoughts about O Scale 2-Rail

What is it that makes O Scale 2-rail worth the effort? O Scale can be expensive. Both N and HO engines, cars, and track can be had at a much less cost. The radiuses that are required for O Scale can use up a fair amount of space. There is not nearly the breadth and availability of ready-made items in O Scale as there is in HO and N. Also, only ½ of 1% of the hobby, according to the latest NMRA surveys, are in O Scale 2-rail, as opposed to approximately 80% in HO and N. So what is it about O Scale 2-rail that holds us?

I can only speak for myself. I agree with what I once read on an Amtrak poster: "Life is a journey, not a destination." (A bit of humor here, as this was early Amtrak, so it was well that you not be too concerned about your destination!!) My journey has been from Lionel through 23 years of HO, to what is now 20+ years of O Scale 2-rail.

In hobby shops, one finds HO and N scale. But I believe that one discovers O scale 2-rail. Like Alice through the looking glass, we find not a rat hole, but a port hole through which we discover a ¼" to-the-foot world that really seems to capture the essence of what is elusively called "railroading".

Certainly proponents of other scales feel the same way. Yet watch people's reactions when an O Scale 2-rail model is presented for a contest or display. I have seen firsthand, particularly at local level shows where O Scale 2-rail is often unknown, a distinct pause, even among diehard N and HO modelers. They may then quickly turn aside or mutter words about cost, but beginning at that moment, O Scale 2-rail trains eloquently speak for themselves. I am not trying to brag here. After asking about cost or space or other very reasonable questions, many people turn away.

But . . . I believe that there will always be those few who will not turn away. They'll get curious. They'll ask more questions and they will want to know more. They will then begin to discover many of O scale's hidden advantages, such as the physics of scale, or the exciting future of radio-control electronics.

A group such as the O Scale Kings, in conjunction with the O Scale magazines that are put out by a dedicated few, can nourish and encourage such questions. A vast amount of experience and camaraderie is there to be shared.

We need to be up front about the facts of O Scale 2-rail, both positive and negative. The 1/4 inch world is open to all, but not everyone can or will play. That's okay. You don't need to build an empire to enjoy model trains and, in my opinion, people do find a way to pay for what they really want, although we must be realistic about what we can afford.

In the end it's all model railroading. O Scalers can be secure enough to recognize some advantages that other scales may enjoy. But you just might be surprised to find what lies behind the looking glass. For the nominal cost of a scale auto at a swap meet, membership in the O Scale Kings and/or the purchase of a magazine can be your entry into the truly remarkable world of 1/4" scale railroading.

Sincerely,
Rick Liebich

Board Member, O Scale Kings
25 Year Life Member, NMRA

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