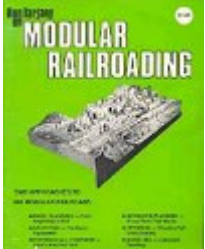


Modular Model Railroading Books

There have been only five books written that deal with modular model railroading. Since I now have copies of four of these, I thought I would do a review of them for the club. The only book I don't have is the *The NTrak Module "How To" Book* by Jim Fitzgerald.

Ron Tarjany on Modular Railroading

	<p><i>Ron Tarjany on Modular Railroading</i> Ron Tarjany Tarjany Publications 1980 65 Pages</p>
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The earliest of the four books, this one covers two specific example modules. This book covers the bare minimum on scenery techniques and building assembly, but those are not the primary focus of the book. The book has chapters on module track planning, basic framing using dimensional lumber, as well as narrow-gauge modeling. The description of construction techniques is short, and somewhat rambling in its presentation.

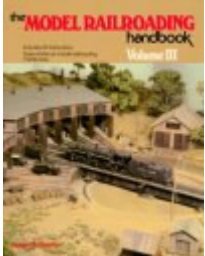
Strong Points:

- Covers most of the general ideas needed when dealing with a module.
- Discusses incorporating HO narrow-gauge railroading into a module.

Weak Points:

- Build *these* two modules *this* way. No points or much room for adaptation.
- Standards used as reference are unique to his group, not NMRA/NGM compatible.
- Often instructions and such minimal, without reference to other sources.
- Weak-quality photographs.

The Model Railroading Handbook, Volume 3

	<p><i>The Model Railroading Handbook, Volume 3</i> Robert Schleicher Chilton Book Company 1982 185 Pages</p>
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This book has lots of example modules and track plans. Also puts forth the idea of the home layout as based on modules. This covers both NTrak and HO NMRA-style module standards. Since this is Volume 3 of a series, he doesn't spend much time on scenery techniques, track laying, or similar (those are covered in Volumes 1 and 2), but concentrates on the specifics of modules as compared to traditional layouts. Also has a very nice turnout control using model

airplane linkages and a single-throw switch to power-route the turnout frog. Occasionally makes references to the other two volumes in the series.

Volume 1 has been revised twice, but Volumes 2 and 3 have not.

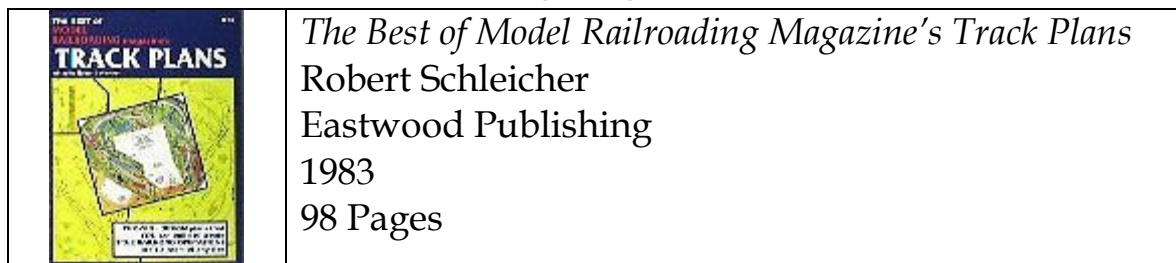
Strong Points:

- Lots of module track plans and scenic suggestions.
- Lots of good ideas about using modules as the basis for a home layout.
- Strongly similar to NGM standards (tracks on 5in and 7in from front).
- Best overall book on the subject of HO modular model railroading.

Weak Points:

- Only refers to traditional construction techniques using dimensional lumber (no foam or luan plywood).

The Best of Model Railroading Magazine's Track Plans



This book complements the *Model Railroading Handbook, Volume 3*. Minimal duplication of plans between the two, and this one has a nice Timesaver-based plan. He spends equal time on N-gauge and HO-gauge modules. The author also promotes again the idea of the home layout built using modules. More information is given on adapting modules into a home layout, as are considerations for a multi-module set. Emphasizes plans over techniques.

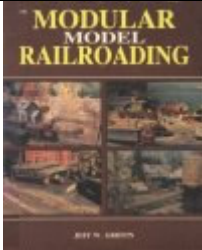
Strong Points:

- Lots of good track plans, virtually no duplication with *Model Railroading Handbook, Volume 3*.
- Lots of good ideas about using modules as the basis for a home layout.
- Modules follow Ntrak or NMRA standards, as applicable.

Weak Points:

- Several of the modules are more “sectional” in approach, in that they will *only* connect with one or two other specific modules.

Modular Model Railroading

	<p><i>Modular Model Railroading</i> Jeff Griffin TAB Books 1986 130 Pages</p>
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This book starts by introducing the NMRA HO standards and the now-defunct Interrail standards. Interrail had a lot in common with Free-Mo, but until the advent of DCC it wasn't very easy to operate such layouts. Jeff briefly covers module design and construction techniques using dimensional lumber, and demonstrates one module, which is primarily foam. There isn't a lot of module design discussion, and the book does not cover basic model railroading techniques.

Strong Ideas:

- Refers to foam and other new, lightweight techniques for module construction.

Weak Ideas:

- Barely any module track plans, including for the ones he describes how to construct.
- Minimal information on designing a module track plan.
- Spends a lot of space on the Interrail standards, and then doesn't do anything with them later in the book.

Conclusion

None of the books cover any of the modern advances in DCC or module materials, which is understandable since they were written back in the 1980's. All of these books are out of print and only available via used book dealers, swap meets, trains shows, and places like eBay.

There is certainly an opening for a high-quality book about modular railroading that covers DCC, modern materials, and advanced design and alternate standards. This could either be a book that covers the additional concepts for modular model railroading and refers to other books for things like scenery techniques, or a more comprehensive book that covers all the basic skills for model railroading, but using modular standards for the basis of the book.