

President's Message



I wish to thank all whom were involved with Winterfest, another successful year. A special well done and thank you to our new Chairman Bob Pawlak.

My thoughts on why attendance for the show was down this year:

1. Price of parking.
2. Price of admission to show. The Amherst Railway Society has no control on the price of parking. Attendance was off by 25%. This years total was 16,953. Last year it was 19,650.

Looking in the buildings for bargains this year was tough, not many. It is nice to meet with manufacturers and ask them what plans they have for upcoming year and to make suggestions.

The new items coming out in the next year will blow us away. Atlas will be doing the MP-15 and the sample they had at the booth looked great. I was taking to Ron Wood and Dan Pawling about how well our modules run. When I was at the convention in Virginia this year they had an inspection of the modules to make sure the were SHOW READY. If you did not get a sticker with approval you were not allowed to enter it in the layout. We will be making up forms and stickers to apply to our modules that have been inspected. It will save us time in the future. All modules will have to pass if they want to be on one of our layouts. Our club has the best looking and running modules, GOOD WORK!

Pictures of Winterfest supplied by Dan Pawling, Sr., Mark Ferracane and Roland

Northeast Ntrak, 41 Easy Street, Lowell, MA 01850-1731, Web Site - www.northeastntrak.org

Winterfest 2005 Comments by the Editor

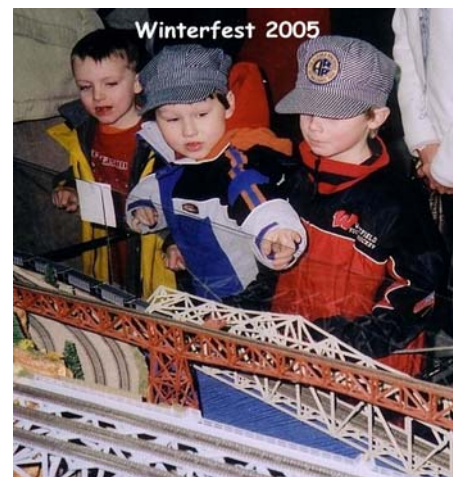
The eleventh annual Winterfest is in the record books. Winterfest was started eleven years ago by Jim Whitehead as a way for the Ntraker's going to the Springfield show to get together and exchange ideas and interests. Jim over the ten years built it up to a mini convention with 70 to 100 attending. Jim stepped down last year after ten years. Bob Pawlak stepped in to continued Jim's hard work with Winterfest. Winterfest came off without a missed beat this year. The guidance given by Jim Whitehead to Bob Pawlak made the transition seamless. A big thank you must go to Bob Pawlak for all the work put into the success of this years Winterfest program. Thanks to Jim Whitehead for all his assistance in helping the transition to go so smoothly. Winterfest was a complete success and everyone there is looking forward to next year and the twelve addition of Winterfest. Bob thanks for a job well done. Jim ten years ago started something worthwhile and it is great to see that it is going to continue under the leadership of Bob Pawlak. Good luck to you both for your time and effort.

This was the first year in some time that all the modules were in place on Friday night.. We must give John Dunne a pat on the back for that. Saturday morning was left to putting things together and running trains. One comment I heard from some of the attendees on Saturday was a lack of anyone in charge. I would have to say I agree. I was there as were many others from outside of Northeast Ntrak. We did not have anyone there to get the completion of the setup going. Everyone was just standing around waiting for someone from our club to come in and take charge. Next year we need to have people at the layout on Saturday at 7am to oversee the completion of setup. Frank Dignan and Ernie Pools were greatly missed this year. Springfield is our biggest show and we host many clubs, this is the time for us to make sure everyone from our club is there to help. We must make sure that we have people assigned to oversee operation at all times. May I say that this was the first

time in a few years that the towers were manned almost the full time the show was open to the public. It did help in being able to keep trains running. Before I end my comments I would like to thank Dan Pawling for all the time and effort he put forward to help make the show successful. Dan has only been a member a short time and already has contributed greatly to Northeast Ntrak.

This years attendance for the two days was 16,953. It seems as if the attendance is dropping. Not to many years ago for the two days it was around the 20,000 mark.

Just my thoughts on Winterfest 2005.



Show Schedule

Apr 2 & 3 Greenberg Show
Shriners Auditorium, Wilmington, MA
Set-up Sat 8am Show 10am to 4pm
Sun 9am 10am to 4pm
Dan Pawling, 617-244-5261

Apr 24 Hooksett Lions Club, Hooksett
Memorial School, Hooksett, NH
Set-up 8am Show 10am to 4pm
Ron Wood, 603-889-0741

May 12 Children's Hospital, 300
Longwood Dr., Boston, MA
Set-up 7am Show 9am to 3pm
Robert Pawlak, 781-862-2485

N Scale Sound (DCC) **by Bob Gatland**

Introduction

My earliest recollection of listening to the sound of an N scale locomotive goes back close to twenty years. One of the participants at an NTRAK layout followed his train around the layout with a hand-held tape player that was playing the exhaust sound of a steam engine. He got good exercise, and the crowd got a kick out of it. There were no bells or whistles, but come to think of it, he also had one of those wooden train whistles that he could blow on. It was a start. Most of you have probably heard sound units in action in the larger scales. O scale and larger locomotives now offer a variety of sounds in addition to the usual whistles, bells, and chuffing for steam engines and exhaust sounds for diesels. In the past several years the bar has been raised higher in these scales to include sounds such as couplers mating, steam generators hissing, and even coal being shoveled. Additional sounds and refinements will follow.

HO scale manufacturers are making the move, too. Sound systems are—or will soon be—a standard offering on higher end DCC equipped locomotives. N scale is bound to follow suit, but with limitations. For example, the newest Con-Cor offering, the 2-10-2 USRA steam locomotive, has provisions for a speaker and a wiring socket for a decoder in the tender. Still, your work will be cut out. It's a lot more than a drop in conversion, and the space is extremely tight.

N Scale Sound

It is being done now, but it is not all that easy or down right impossible for certain N Scale locomotives. Size is a limiting factor. Sound decoders are much larger than regular decoders. Speakers are another story. The larger the speaker, the greater the maximum volume. It's as simple as that. This limits your options. For steam locomotives look for larger sized tenders. For diesels a full width body will be

easiest to work with.

There are other factors to consider. Your locomotive must be a quiet runner or its noise will drown out the sound effects. How much metal has to be removed to install a decoder and a speaker? Will the completed locomotive be able to pull any cars?

Consider installing the sound decoder and speaker in an unpowered diesel unit. Be sure that the dummy unit has excellent power pick up from the tracks. An electrical connection between the power unit and the dummy is recommended to ensure satisfactory sound production. Blinking lights are a slight annoyance; sound interruptions will be much tougher to cope with.

Still another option is to place a sound decoder in a car that can coupled behind the locomotive. You will need to find a way to pick up current from the wheels. How noisy is your home layout? How well does the roadbed absorb the sound of rolling trains? Do you want to show off your sound equipped locomotive at a NTRAK layout? You had better do it before the crowd arrives. Do you have an abundance of metal wheels on your cars—such as on a long train of lighted passenger cars? Play it safe and borrow a sound equipped locomotive to test run on your home layout before committing yourself to the expense and effort involved in installing sound systems in locomotives.

I'm sitting here at my computer looking at two speakers from Tony's Train Xchange. The mini size speaker, which is about all I can hope to get into the medium sized tender on the Con-Cor 2-10-2, puts out .4 watts. The next size up, which will not fit in the tender, puts out 1.0 watts. That's a huge difference in sound energy.

Can Your DCC System Handle Sound?

Before you invest a sound equipped locomotive, make sure that your DCC system has the necessary buttons to turn on the bell or sound the whistle or horn. One of the function keys should be non-locking. As you discuss the purchase of a sound system, talk to your friendly DCC supplier and make sure that you aren't

wasting your money.

Can You Handle the Installation?

As far as I know, there are no simple DCC pop-in sound systems available in N scale. You will have to create a space for the speaker and mount it. You may also find it necessary to cut holes in the engine or tender's shell to allow sounds to be heard more clearly. The decoder will have the usual assortment of wires to handle the motor and lights. Add to this the two wires that run to the speaker. You will definitely have to solder most if not all of the connections. A sound decoder is larger than a regular decoder, and creating a space for it will also challenge your modeling skills.

The manual for the sound decoder runs to 40 pages—all be it half-sized pages. You will definitely have to put your newly wired locomotive on the program track and set a number of CV's to modify the sound output to our liking.

If all of this talk scares you, consider having the installation done by a pro. For example, Tony's Train Xchange will answer your questions and even do the work for you. Keep in mind that you will probably put sound in only one or two locomotives.

External Speakers

Do you have a small home layout or is there a specific area where you would enjoy running a locomotive back and forth such as in a yard? If that is the case, you will be able to set up a sound system that includes external speakers. They can be placed under the layout or hidden in structures on the table top.

The big advantage here is that you can use larger speakers that will produce a better quality and volume of sound than small speakers. You can get by with several decoders wired to the external speakers. For steam era layouts, a decoder for small steam locomotives and one for large locomotives can be used in conjunction with the standard, non-sound decoders used in your locomotives. For diesel era operations you can get by with a EMD and an Alco sound. To get an
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Winterfest 2005 Wrap Up
by Bob Pawlak

Winterfest 2005 is history, although not as nail-biting an experience as the Patriot's Superbowl game (except perhaps for its new chairman this year). At least 11 different Ntrak clubs were represented by 75 primary registrants from as far and wide as Ontario and Quebec Canada to the north, Florida to the south, England to the east, and California to the west. The resulting Ntrak layout was 30' x 68' and we still had room for the model contest show case table and photo contest display board table. We had the equivalent of 43 four foot modules plus four, 3' outside corners, a 3' inside corner, a transition corner module, and a 4' corner leading to a separate peninsula ending with the Northeast Ntrak Club's 6' end loop module. That resulted in about 176' of mainline tracks around the main loop plus about 52' more of Red Line Route track around the peninsula. All modules for the layout were in their final position and about half were clamped and had their connector tracks in place before 5:00 PM Friday night!

We were pleased that Micro-Trains Lines, Inc. donated a car to each primary registrant this year. About 20 different varieties of cars were handed out, drawn at random, during registration on Friday night. This car was in addition to the traditional MT car we get from Tucker's Hobbies that was handed out on Sunday afternoon. (Remember that the pick of the Sunday car is based on the order of postmark of the check that completes the Winterfest registration process, so register as early as possible next year.)

The commemorative T-shirts (new this year) and extra British pint glasses (new this year) were also handed out during registration. They were imprinted with this year's orange theme color, Winterfest 2005 logo. We have about 36 more glasses for sale at the reduced price of \$3 each or 2 for \$5 (please contact Bob Pawlak). The 4 clinics were well presented and well attended on Friday night after registration. The topics were: Tips and Techniques for Building Etched Metal Kits; Making Aspen Trees and Similar Single Trunk Deciduous Trees; N-Scale Sound Systems; and Beyond Benchmark.

The Long Island Ntrak Club brought the extra DCC equipment needed and the Northern New Jersey Ntrak Club brought the

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Saturday morning the layout is running and the crowd is upon us.



Friday afternoon getting things set-up



Dan Pawling, Sr and Jr at the Dinner on Saturday Night.



Dan Pawling Sr and Ron Wood preparing for Photo contest entries



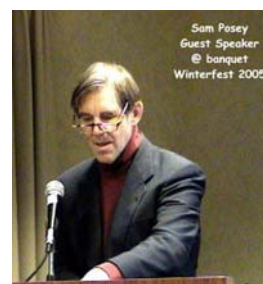
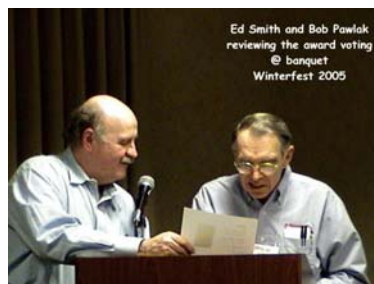
Dan Pawling, Jr (Left) and Our President Mark Ferracane at the Dinner Saturday night. Mark is taking a quick nap after a hard day of training.



Austin Plyem (left) ready to enter his models into the contest with Ed Smith (right) getting prepared to accept them.



What would a train show be without seeing Dennis Yip taking his rest after a hard morning or training. He has passed it along to Mark as you can see in above picture.



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extra standard DC throttles needed for the large layout. We used our club's 6, block-occupancy signal lights and 4 headsets for the 3 tower operators and layout supervisor during each 1-hour shift. Trains were rolling before the show opened at 9:00 A.M. Saturday morning and the layout was running at capacity by about 10:00 A.M. The Red Line was converted to DCC operation before 11:00 A.M.

The paid attendance for the two-day Amherst Railway Society train show was 16,953 this year which was less than the typical attendance of about 18,000- 20,000 for the last few years. The numbers of model and photo contest entries were also lower this year for some unknown reason. There were only single entries in 4 of the 13 contest categories. To counteract this trend and to offer more incentive for the contests next year, the more significant door prize donations were given as prizes to the 1st place winners in each category.

The guest speaker at the banquet, Sam Posey, author of the new book *Playing With Trains: A Passion Beyond Scale*, was excellent and very well received. Sam, his wife Ellen, and their son Mark made an extended visit to our layout on Sunday. Sam still prefers HO scale but I think he now has a much better appreciation for N-scale, portable show layouts, and what makes Ntrak people tick.

Our sponsors were generous again this year and provided a wide selection of quality N-Scale products for the door prizes distributed after the banquet. Remember that the web pages of all our sponsors are listed at www.northeastntrak.org. Click on Winterfest Information, click on Winterfest Support, and then click on a sponsor's logo. You might consider sending a personal thank you to the sponsor of your door prize. Of course the best way to thank our sponsors is to purchase their products.

I have tried to thank all those who contributed to helping Winterfest publicly at the banquet, personally by phone or note, or at least by e-mail. But for those I may have missed unintentionally, please accept my heartfelt thanks by virtue of this article. There were things I should have done as the new chairman this year that I didn't do and things that could have been done better. Hopefully, these will get fixed next year. If anyone has comments or suggestions for improvement of Winterfest, please use the "Winterfest Feedback" form found under "Winterfest Information" on our web page for that purpose or contact me directly.

If anyone has any idea at all of a possible guest speaker for next year, please drop everything and tell me your idea before it dissolves from your mind.

I suggest everyone get started on models and photos for the contests next year and continue working on completing those new modules. Any module that has previously received the "Best of Show" award or the "Paul Ohegyi Scenery Excellence Award" is "disqualified" from receiving them again so we need more new modules to compete for these top awards.

Save the date for Winterfest next year - January 27-29, 2006!

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appropriate sound for a locomotive you wish to run, consist the sound decoder with the locomotive.

Soundtrax is working on a DCC based system that will track locomotives as they pass through power sub districts and transmit the sounds to related, nearby speakers. This could be an interesting development.

The Bottom Line

Installing a sound decoder in a N scale locomotive is still a challenge and should be attempted only by modelers with considerable skill working with decoders. Factory equipped sound is not too far away. Con-Cor seems to be just about ready to offer factory installed sounds systems in one or more of its steam locomotives. They already offer a Alco PB unit with sound. Despite the frustration of installing the sound unit, the reward of hearing the sound unit in action makes it worthwhile to try at least one installation.

"I AM IN HEAVEN"

by D.Pawling, Sr.

Thank you, all who were involved in the highly successful operation of the 2004 Winterfest. From the early mission statements to Email registration, thru the show and "convention" arrangements and activities" to post-show follow-up messages, the great amount of hard, concentrated and dedicated work paid off in smooth-running and highly enjoyable weekend. Northeast NTrak certainly showed the positive benefits of building on the work and experience of the retiring management team and the seamless integration of the new crew's innovations. I congratulate and thank Northeast NTakers, the invited participants, the sponsoring organizations, and the train show's sponsor, The Amherst Railway Society.

While standing watch at the Bridges Canyon, I was able to see the pleasure and appreciation of the visiting public, particularly one young man, about age 4. He climbed up on a box and studied the canyon scene -- his face said it all -- "I am in Heaven."
(See picture on page 1)



Ready for the show to begin Saturday morning. Picture by John Sing



The banquet Saturday night at the Hilton. Picture by John Sing