

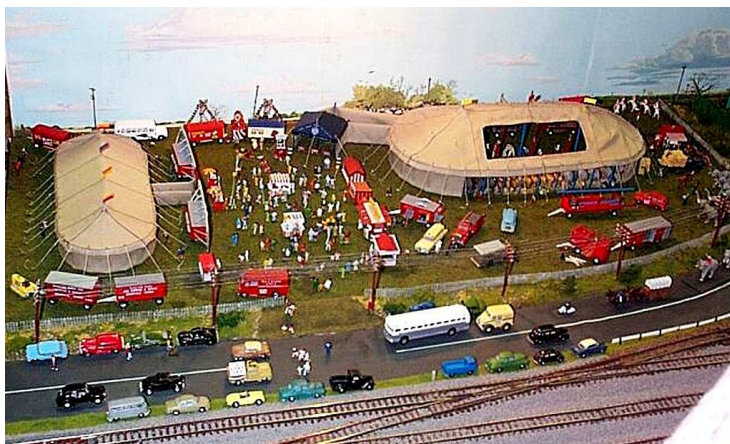
Royal American Shows in "N" Scale

by Roland R. Kelley



Picture 1: [L to R] Roland Kelley and Peter Wisniewski with "The Jim Fitzgerald Memorial Awards, Contest Chairman's Award at the Capital Limited N Scale East 2014 train show.

To give you a little history about my Royal American Shows model, it started in 1997 with the train itself. First I started to build the wagons to put on the flat cars, with maybe ten or so flats loaded I decided to start building the fair grounds. I already had an N-Trak module depicting the early 1950's RBB&B circus. I decided to rework the module by placing the circus scene of the module on a removable flat-plastic base. Then I could build a carnival scene on a similar plastic base, so I could interchange the circus and the carnival. Below is what the circus layout looks



Picture 2: Original 1950s RBBB circus on the module.

like. Then I start to build the carnival lot. I purchased as many kits of rides as I could find at the time, but there weren't many amusement ride model kits available in "N" scale. American prototypes of back lot wagons and concessions stands were not commercially available either. In order to fill the lot I had to build most of everything else from scratch. The first ride purchased was the IHC Merry-go-Round. Talking with Peter Wisniewski, another member of our N-Trak club, he said it would be great if we lit the MGR and he also told me that he could help with that task. As he was the technical guy we started. As Peter started to put together the lights, I went ahead and drilled 240 holes into the MGR and then installed 240 fiber optic strands to simulate light bulbs. After that was done I started painting the MGR, horses and the people riding the MGR. When the MGR was completed we both thought that it came out really well and it got us motivated to move on.



Picture 3: A good photo of the carnival lot on display at the NV Ntrak Show in August 2014.

Peter started to light the other rides I had purchased and all the AC motors included with the rides were replaced with DC motors which are much more reliable. Peter also built a power-supply/timer circuit board that could control all the lights and rides on the layout. All the rides can be turned on or off, and when are on they can be configured to run continuously or start and stop on a timer. The speed of each ride can also be controlled. So while Peter was doing that I started to build the layout and all the back lot and concession tents. This was in a two and a half by one foot area. On the next page [Picture 4] is what it looked like when we were finished. At this



Picture 4: The two and a half by one foot area that made up the finished carnival lot.

stage there were about 250 people in the layout. Most of them were hand painted. All the rides are filled with people.

To build this model it took a lot of research on Royal American Shows as I had never seen them in-person. They did not play the east coast. First I read the "Carnival Trains" book by Bob Goldsack and then "Royal American Shows" by Bob Goldsack and Fred Heatley. Using the books and research on the Internet I found many pictures which assisted me in accurately building my model of the carnival. Color pictures were especially helpful in making the decals for lettering the outsides of many different wagons. Many of the decals were custom-printed.

Once the model was completed and I started to display it at train shows, the spectator's reaction was great. But the model as-built to fit in the existing space only included a partial midway. It was missing one of the midway's ends. I still had more information at my disposal and I wanted to complete the carnival lot. So Peter and I got back together and he did two things: First, due to many hours of operation, many of the originally installed light bulbs have burned out, and the motors/gearboxes needed maintenance/lubrication. Just like the real rides do. Peter first serviced the mechanical items. Then, since the time the carnival model was initially built, very small white-color LED's (Light Emitting Diodes) have become widely available, Peter decided to replace all of the original micro light bulbs with LED's. Not only the LED's are brighter and run cooler than light bulbs, they also have practically unlimited life, so they should never need replacing. Peter then started to work on the new two foot by one foot addition to the carnival lot by installing LED lights

on the concessions and tents which I scratch built to fill the area.. On this addition to the midway only the people figures and the rocket are not scratch built. Even the bumper cars are built from scratch by Peter. See Picture 5.



Picture 5: Scratch-built bumper cars in the Scooter. The figures were purchased.

The carnival layout depicts it in the early 70s. The final change, and a crowning touch, made to the carnival layout was to illuminate the previously dark entrance gate [Picture 6]. This was completed in the summer of 2014.



Picture 6: Newly illuminated entrance gate.

Next is a picture of the completed Carnival. It took Peter and me many years to complete this model and it was a lot of fun. But the biggest reward we have is seeing smiles on spectator's faces. For many of them it brings back memories of when they visited traveling carnivals during their youth. Some can even relate to certain rides which are depicted on the model - like the octopus ride which gets noticed quite often. Others even say that they can even smell french fries and cotton candy coming from the miniature model. To

enhance the effect of the model I have a small DC player placed under the carnival module softly playing the original RAS carnival music. At this point we are just enjoying showing the carnival modules to the public and have no plans to add anything - just maintaining it in a working shape.

Picture 7, below, shows the completed carnival lot. Picture 8, below, shows the whole 10 foot layout with the train at one end and the carnival up and running at the other. To see the carnival in action check out these two movies:
<https://youtu.be/8QmDaR8InbI>
<https://youtu.be/LDrmAic8YpI> ♦



Picture 7: shows the completed carnival lot with complete lighting.



Picture 8: showing the entire "N" scale layout with the complete Royal American Shows carnival.