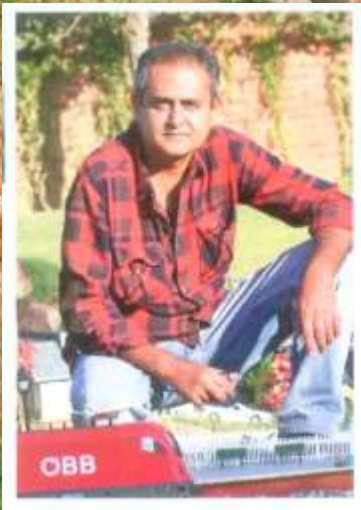


# रेल बंधु RAILBANDHU

THE RAIL TRAVELLER'S MAGAZINE  
रेल यात्रियों की पत्रिका

DECEMBER 2011  
दिसम्बर 2011



## HOLIDAY HOBBY: TRAIN MODELLING

- Adesh Grover



THIS MAGAZINE IS FOR ON-BOARD READING. KINDLY DO NOT TAKE AWAY.  
यह पत्रिका सिर्फ ट्रेन में पढ़ने के लिए है। कृपया साथ न ले जाएं।



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The casinos of Goa have managed to pull in the family crowds



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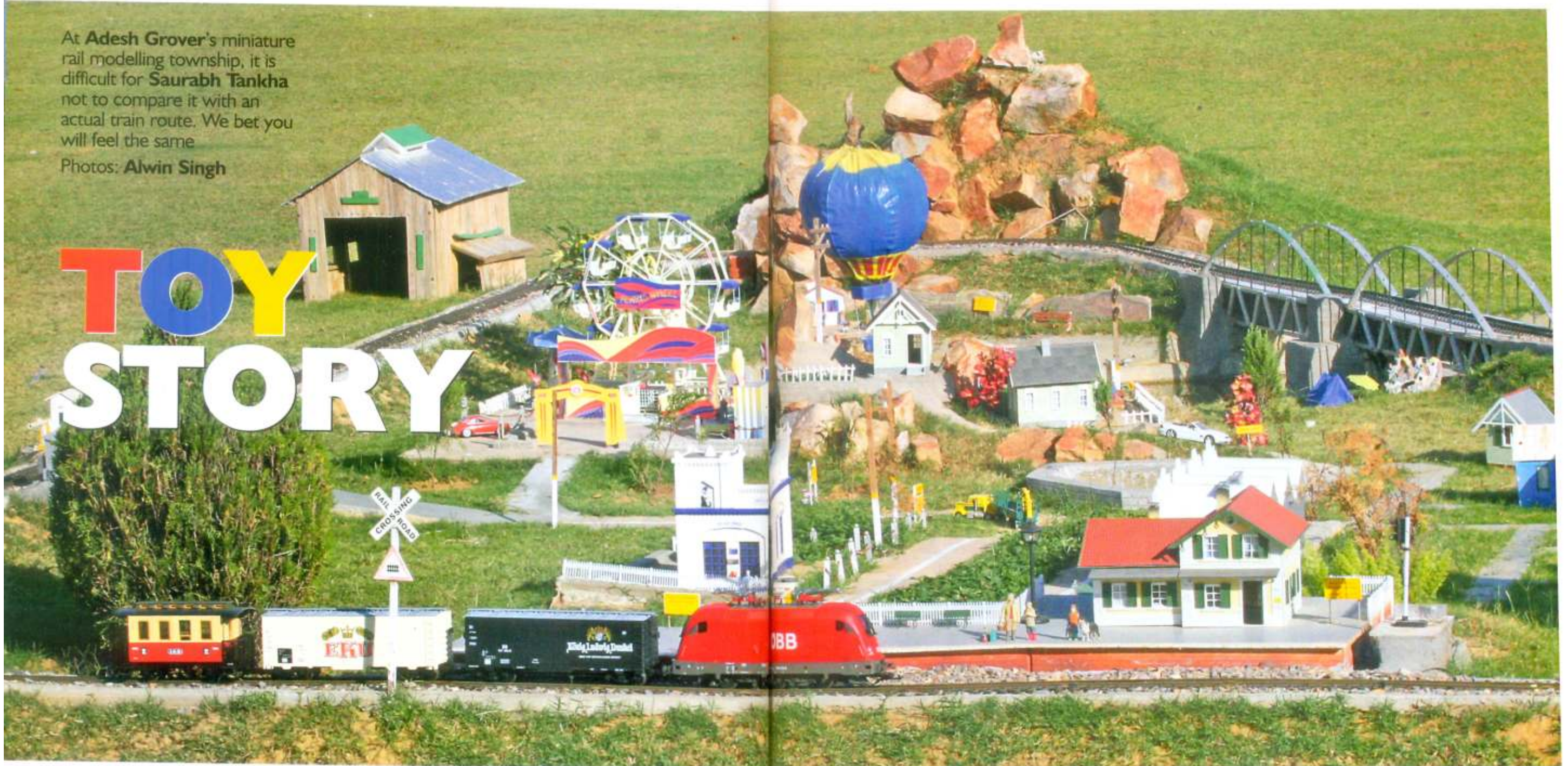


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At Adesh Grover's miniature rail modelling township, it is difficult for Saurabh Tankha not to compare it with an actual train route. We bet you will feel the same

Photos: Alwin Singh

# TOY STORY



Train with a view: One of the two rail modelling layouts at Adesh's weekend home

For a moment you feel you are Lemul Gulliver, standing tall in a fairytale land. While the legendary captain encountered a race of tiny people from the island country of Lilliput after a shipwreck, present-day Gulliver Adesh Grover has chosen to create one at his weekend home in Manesar, Haryana. And this is as much a picture book countryside complete with farms, greens, sienna-roofed cottages, hard-working people, water wheels, warehouses and of course, the little red train. The morning's first brings in the post, chugging past signals, curling around

a waterfall, climbing hills and worming over bridges and finally pulling into a neat little station to pick up waiting school children. Now if only they miraculously came alive and tapped their happy feet.

But this is a model town, where the lights come on at night as the train slows down at level crossings, making everything look real even as its inmate dolls wait for a breath of life. A goods train starts and I stand on an elevated platform to get a panoramic view of Grover's world. He is a practical man with dreamy eyes who graduated as a mechanical engineer but now runs an advertising agency

along with his wife, a hint that he isn't entirely a nut fitting into a bolt man. Says he, "I first saw tracks mounted on an oval 6x3 ft board in a neighbour's garage when I was five. Time passed but my love for train models didn't subside one bit. Incidentally, when my brother-in-law returned from one of his foreign trips years later, he got a train model kit for his teenage daughter. Though I fancied it from day one, I couldn't ask for it. Luckily, she didn't like it, so I got round to putting it together. I remember it was a Lima model though quite basic. I got it home and spread it out on a plank of wood."

Of course, the cost of equipment and lack of space were major impediments with a non-availability of rail equipment in India. "However, things changed when Hornby (leading brand of model railways in the UK) appointed a distributor in India. Along the same time, ordering on the Internet became easy and my holidays started taking me to distant shores. Slowly, my collection grew and so did my understanding of the nuances of the craft of modelling. I decided to expand my collection and move beyond the dining table," says Grover.



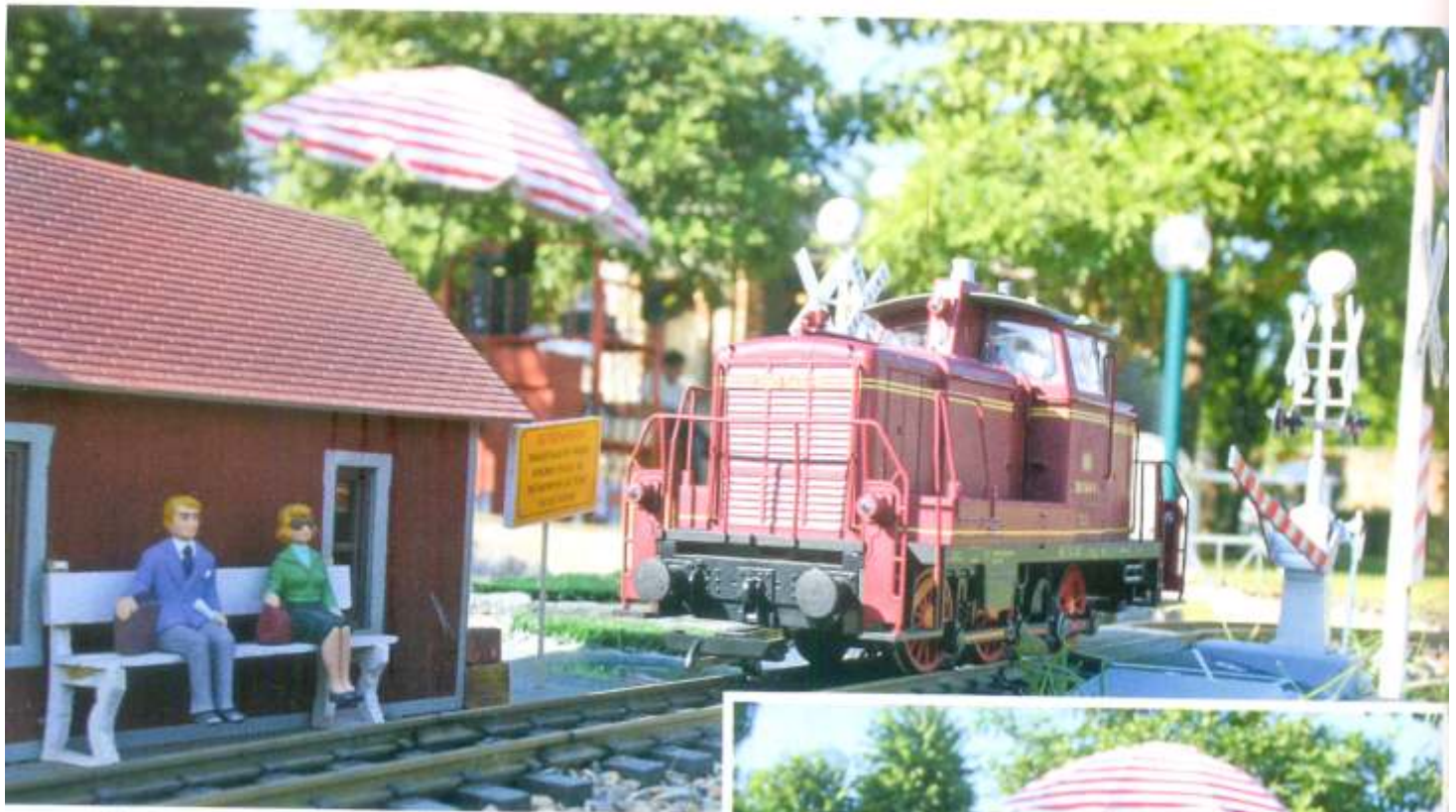
*I started building the garden layout in March 2011. I've named it Never Enuf as I feel there'll always be something more that I will want to add to it. Over the last seven months, I've laid tracks to cover about 2,000 sq ft with 400 ft of tracks. Running trains outdoors is a different experience and more challenging — Adesh Grover*

He then created space for his new railroad empire, the terrace of his East Patel Nagar home in Delhi. This was the room where, out of sight from his neighbours and friends, he nursed his secret passion. From one end of the shed to the other, along the wall, he placed a wooden platform on which he laid a 200 ft rail track. The model scale, termed HO, had locomotives, bogies and wagons running on electric tracks just like their real counterparts. These came with the minutest detail — windows, doors, chimneys, vacuum pipes, metal rails, signalling devices, railway huts, water cranes, rai-side industries and loco sheds. Grover spent two hours everyday, working into the night occasionally to lay the tracks, set up bridges, crossings, roads, stations and so on. "Whether it is assembling kits, creating scenery, scratch-building or collecting, operating and maintaining them, this hobby, with its unmatched variety, has kept me thoroughly engrossed," shares he.

He wanted to do something bigger, so he decided to put the open space in his weekend home to good use. "I remember having found the Germany-based garden railway model manufacturer Lehmann Gross Bahn (LGB) Stairz years ago. Today, I've to admit that I've grown to love this toy and the G scale, often referred to as garden trains in general, for the variety it offers. I started building the garden layout in March 2011. I've named it Never Enuf as I feel there'll always be something more that I will want to add. Over the last seven months, I've laid tracks of 400 ft to cover about 2,000 sq ft. Running trains outdoors is a different experience and more challenging," he says. Over the years, he has shared his work with only a handful of railroad modelling enthusiasts as it is a reclusive hobby and one ends up spending hours alone with just music and thoughts for company.

The smaller layout has more curves and mountainous stretches, even an operational hill ropeway





(Above) A couple of passengers wait at the platform as a train model approaches the station. (Right) A farmer watches the train go past his home

"G scale is available in a scale of approximately 1:24 to 1:32 and runs on a 45 mm gauge. Much larger than HO and generally not as accurate, this scale is meant for outdoors and most of the available equipment claim to be resilient to wear and tear. Well, this claim is being put to the test now. All the tracks, made of brass, are laid permanently out on the green along with other structures made of UV-resistant plastic. While everything has withstood one harsh Indian summer and a good monsoon, it is too early to comment on the endurance of the materials," informs Grover. While an engine costs around \$250, the bogies can be bought for anywhere between \$30 and \$600, depending on their size, gradation and manufacturer which includes LGB, Piko, Bachmann, Aristocraft and MTH. The tracks roughly cost ₹300 per running feet.

"Conventionally, model trains run on a two-rail track which is powered by a DC power supply. Voltage supply to the tracks is varied to alter speed and polarity changed to reverse direction of travel. With the advent of Digital Command Control (DCC), trains now correspond with the power controller through decoders installed in them and provide use of functions to control sound and light," he adds.

*Never Enuf* has been one of the most gratifying experiences of his life. "Making viaducts and portals from cement, bridges from metal ropes, buildings from cement and sun-



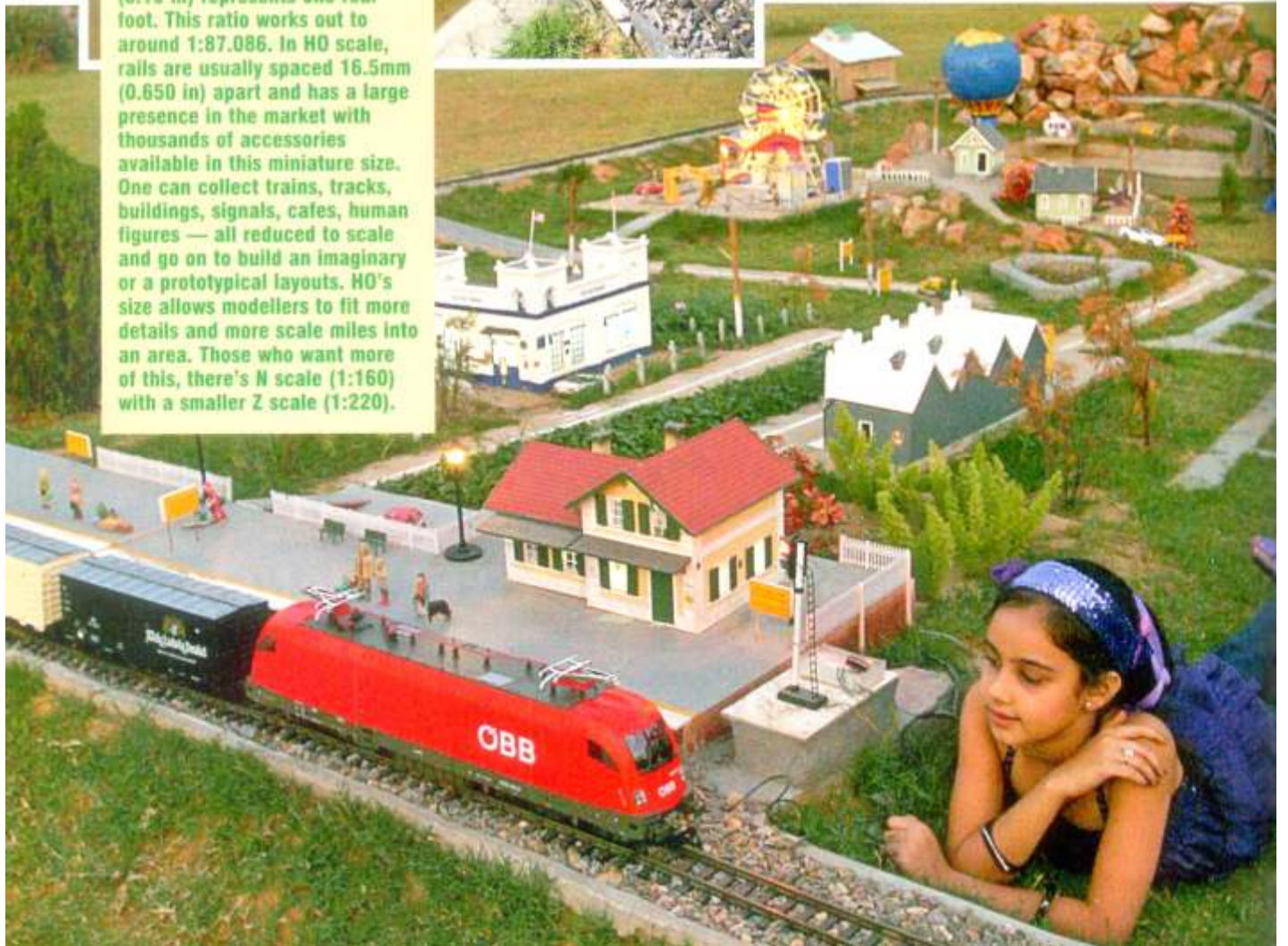


Commercially, miniature trains are available in different scales. Modellers pick up their scale depending upon what fascinates them and according to the space at their disposal. HO scale is the most popular. In this, 3.5mm (0.15 in) represents one real foot. This ratio works out to around 1:87.086. In HO scale, rails are usually spaced 16.5mm (0.650 in) apart and has a large presence in the market with thousands of accessories available in this miniature size. One can collect trains, tracks, buildings, signals, cafes, human figures — all reduced to scale and go on to build an imaginary or a prototypical layouts. HO's size allows modellers to fit more details and more scale miles into an area. Those who want more of this, there's N scale (1:160) with a smaller Z scale (1:220).

board and fences from wood has been a challenge. There is an equal number of kit-built buildings and scratch-built structures. To add aesthetics and visual elements to the layout required changing the landscape to incorporate a mountain for the ropeway trolley, planting dwarf greens and making new ponds and waterfalls. Hundreds of metres of wire had to be laid underground and I anticipate the need for more," he says.

The control section, from where these trains run, is incorporated on a rack with the output of a transformer to the track and accessories for a plug and play setup. After nearly seven months of back-breaking effort under the scorching sun, it was truly a delight to see the Taurus and Stainz engines go around the two circuits which have now been completed. The two circuits are simple loops which have utilised about 400 ft of track. "Expecting maintenance nightmares, I've postponed points and sidings till a later stage. Whatever be the length and size of the layout, it appears there's more that can be done. More trains, more buildings, more fun... both in making and operating. Work is now on

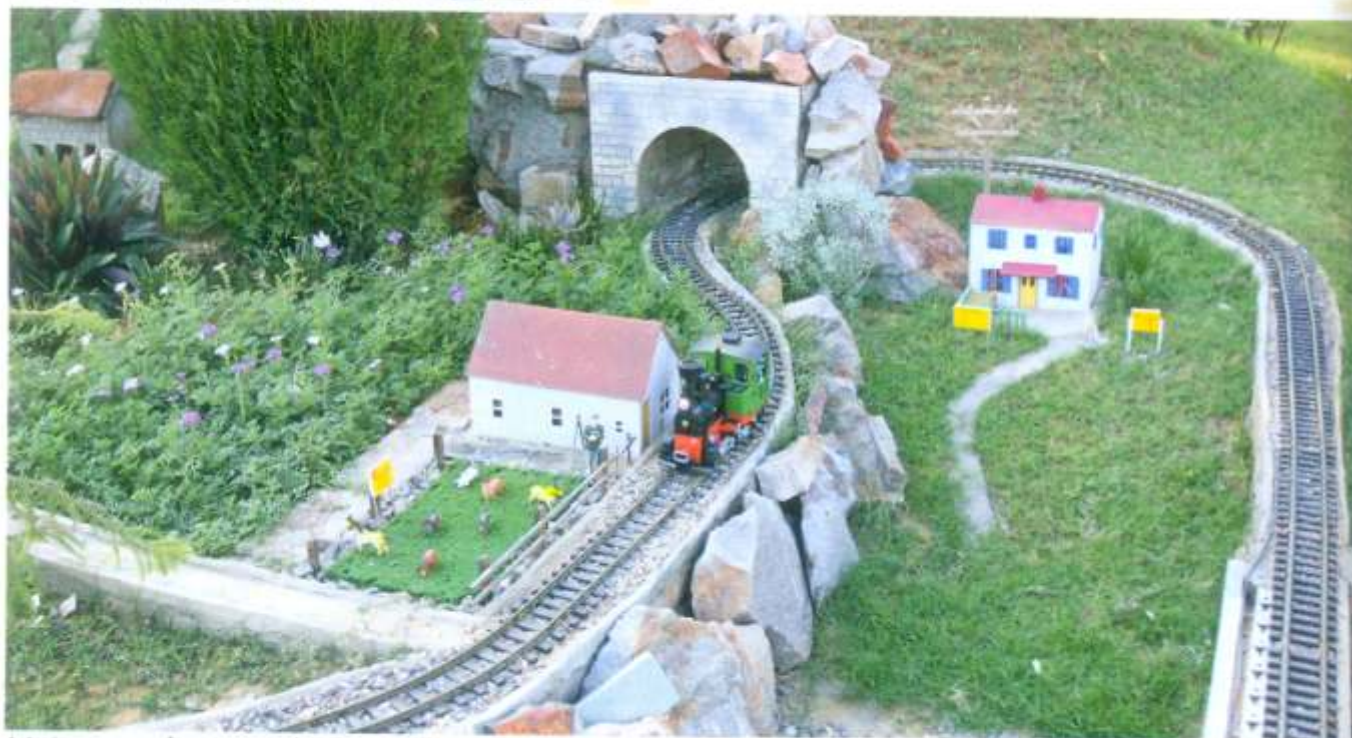
(Left) A Stainz model with a few bogies passes over a bridge and (below) a young enthusiast watches the train as it stops at a platform





## GET STARTED

The best way to take up railroad modelling is to begin with a starter set that comprises a small locomotive and a few passenger coaches with a rail track 4 ft in diameter, running on power supply. Then on, depending on the interest and resources you have, graduate to the bigger versions. You can also search the Internet and read a lot to get inspired. But make sure you keep at it and not get disheartened if you fail for this will happen umpteen number of times before you finally succeed.



A train emerges from a tunnel and passes through farmland

construct a 50 ft-long point-to-point operation with the Aristocrat auto reverse unit," informs Grover.

He then guides us to his "play" area and himself gets behind the control unit. In less than 10 seconds, almost similar to the starting sound of the real engine, the toy train pulls away from the miniature platform. "You must do it like the real world. Start so slow that at first the bogeys don't seem to move..." murmurs Grover as the train enters a tunnel, emerges, goes under a bridge, stops at a red signal to allow another train to pass, then gathers speed. I notice the city, which he claims is still in stages of being built, also has a ferris wheel with a band of four playing alongside to entertain revellers. Not to forget the platform where a few passengers and a coolie await the arrival of the next train.

Grover recalls a story about a railroad modeller friend who, a few years ago, was hauled up by the police as a suspicious

wagon breaker because he was lurking about the rail track for hours one night to record real train sounds for the railroad model he had at home.

"But then, we are like this," he says adding that there's no perfection like recreating reality. "A modeller will take any amount of grumbling about neglect from their families, spending hours everyday to get the right look. Houses, cinemas, station buildings, shops, the models have to be made from the kits. Each kit requires several man-hours of effort. Once the house is ready, it must be weathered to make it look old," he shares. In fact, he once got into trouble with his wife because he took away her food processor to shred foam pieces to make "grass" from it. "As I said, it's an ongoing process. You keep trying and trying till you get it right. Obviously, you need to have patience by truckloads else you can't achieve perfection," he puts in. A roaring engine that zips past me is proof.