

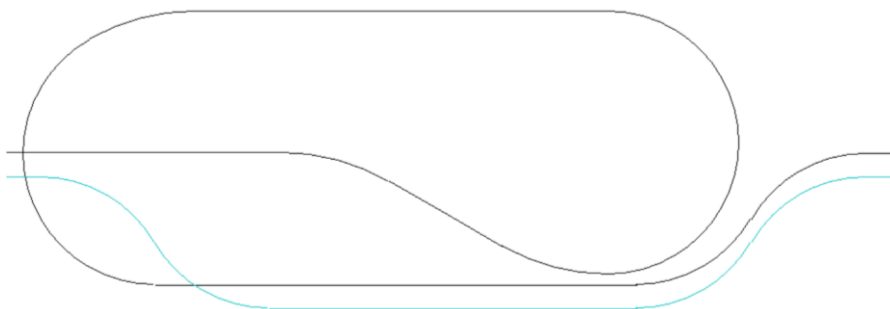
Andrew's Musings Part 9

Back 20 years ago when I got back into model railroading . . . hey, I haven't told you the start of it from when I was very young and 1 gauge and then there's the Z gauge as well . . . let me get the HO module story finished first . . .

Back 20 years ago after purchasing the ICE starter set, my family lent support to my "little" venture by buying some kitsets for me. One of these was a "winter set" with the picture of a small village at night with the street lights glistening off the snow. With great anticipation I opened the box expecting a village to pop out of it. Instead what came out was powder for creating a snow covering and various icicles to transform a village to its winter setting. Yes, a little disappointing, although if I had thought about it the village would have to be half Z to fit inside the box. On the other hand though it gave me the idea of having a snow covered module at some stage. This goes with my love of bridges, tunnels and mountains (and skiing for that matter), just in this case the snow line will be down a bit further.

So this idea has been in the back of my mind while I've been working on the others I've described so far. I'd also invited my father in law Maurice to build a module or two and he came back with an interesting idea of having a train disappear into a tunnel and the next time you see it, it is travelling in the complete opposite direction. I had gone as far as making the end plates for him, when he quite wisely realised he wouldn't have the space to store the modules, so returned them to me.

So now I have these end plates, an interesting plan for the track layout and a "winter set", along with an operating gondola that I bought off Rex Meijering at a really good price! The track plan is in the shape of a paper clip, where the train comes from the left on the outside line straight into a tunnel under the mountains and reappears at the opposite right hand end of the double module heading 180 degrees back towards the left hand side again, just 10cm lower down. It passes by the alpine resort's station, before entering another tunnel on the left, doing a second 180 degrees to head right again, however this time popping out early so the audience can see the train curving its way up the side of the mountain slightly above the village it has just come through, before exiting the module to the right. Here's an initial concept of the track layout to give you an idea.



Admittedly with all the tunnels, the trains are hidden more than half the time as they go through this landscape, so the rest of the scene needs to be interesting to look at. I'm sure it won't disappoint. The moving gondola transports skiers from the resort village up to the top station where a helicopter is spinning its rotors (with the push of a button) in preparation for takeoff. From there the people ski their way back down to the bottom station past a moving snow groomer, a traditional alpine café and between the trees. And they actually do ski down, with the assistance of the audience to spin a wheel. I asked the Bike Barn to help with building the chain mechanism which was a bit of an unusual request for them . . . they were rather intrigued. There's a lot going on to the

left of the scene, which has me wondering what to do animation wise on the right hand side in the village proper. Possibly some people moving around the buildings in some manner. I'm sure I will work it out. Whatever it is, it will look great with its "winter set" covering. Maybe someone sliding over or possibly a snow ball fight using fans? Might be a bit hard to see a 1/87th size snow ball.

One other aspect of this double module, given that most of it is covered from view, is the ability to have a hidden loop around the back. In fact the module can be stand alone, with two trains operating on it, the first train leaving the station before returning again a wee bit later, before the other one leaves and returns in the opposite direction. It just means the line creeping up the side of the mountain doesn't have anything happening on it, unless I have a "shuttle train" on it going back and forth with a snow plough to clear the line (I bought the rather expensive Marklin snow plough wagon rather reluctantly, until I put it on the layout and it fitted what I wanted it to do perfectly – I feel slightly better about spending the money now).



Yes the whole thing is still very much a work in progress, although it has moved on from these photos from two years ago . . . almost ready for the papier mache to be applied which will really make a difference to how it looks, but at least with these chicken wire shots you can get a vague idea of the track work underneath the mountains.



