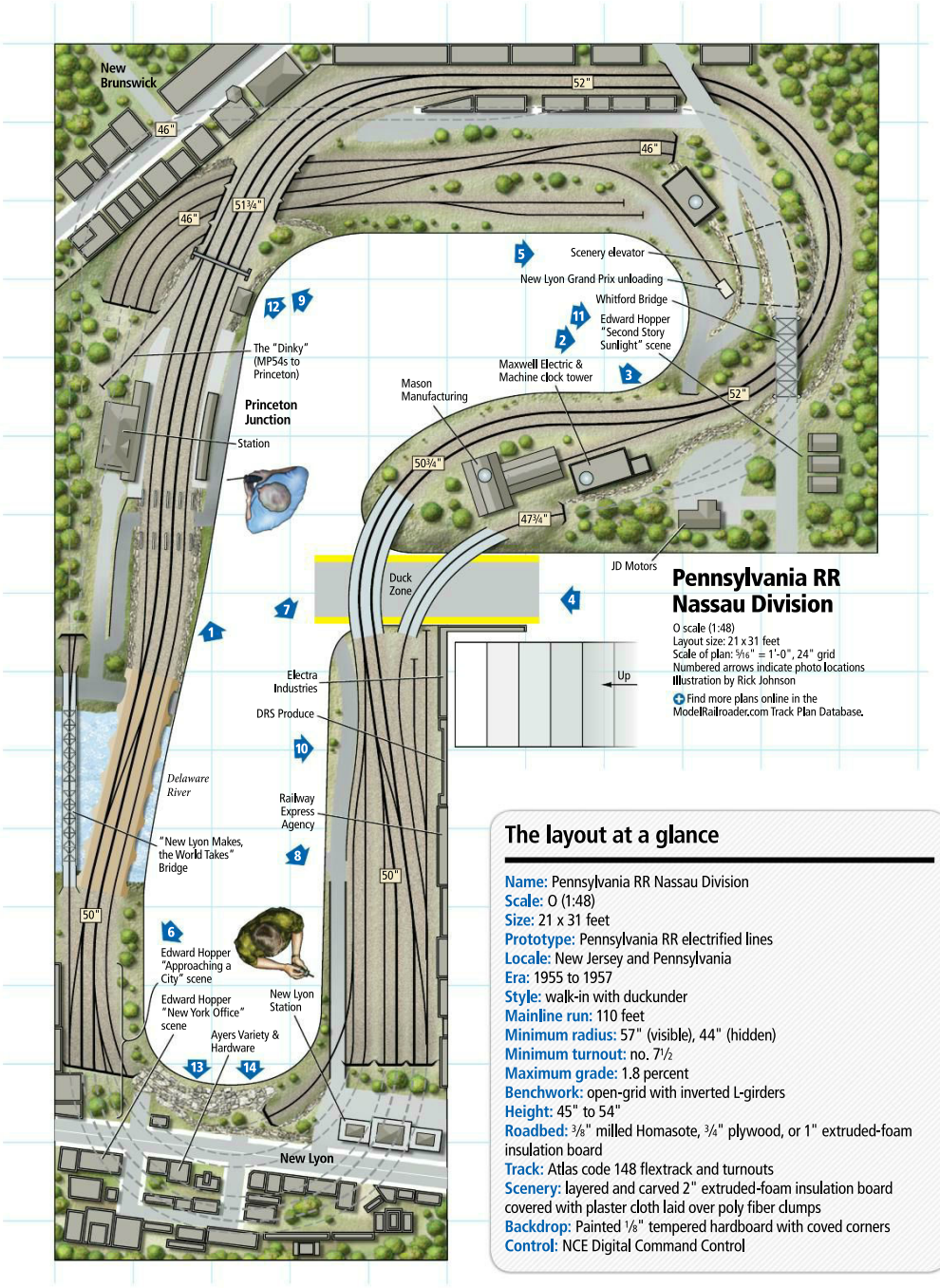

The layout at a glance

Name: Pennsylvania RR Nassau Division
Scale: O (1:48)
Size: 21 x 31 feet
Prototype: Pennsylvania RR electrified lines
Locale: New Jersey and Pennsylvania
Era: 1955 to 1957
Style: walk-in with duckunder
Mainline run: 110 feet
Minimum radius: 57" (visible), 44" (hidden)
Minimum turnout: no. 7½
Maximum grade: 1.8 percent
Benchwork: open-grid with inverted L-girders
Height: 45" to 54"
Roadbed: ⅜" milled Homasote, ¾" plywood, or 1" extruded-foam insulation board
Track: Atlas code 148 flextrack and turnouts
Scenery: layered and carved 2" extruded-foam insulation board covered with plaster cloth laid over poly fiber clumps
Backdrop: Painted ⅛" tempered hardboard with coved corners
Control: NCE Digital Command Control

A clock tower, support columns, and mock-ups

3 Both the finished clock tower in the foreground and the paper mock-up in the background help conceal basement support columns.

Like many model railroaders with basement train rooms, I had to contend with unsightly support columns in the middle of my layout space. Thankfully I only had to deal with two.

I concealed the three visible sides of one support column with an illuminated, working clock tower. The three clock mechanisms are from battery-powered alarm clocks. I printed the clock faces on glossy photo paper that I sanded thin, then glued to electroluminescent panels from Miller Engineering (www.microstru.com).

A building mock-up partially conceals the other column. The temporary structure is painted in its final colors. I also added some basic scenery, vehicles, and other details to help me make sure the structure fits the space.

When I'm kitbashing, I'll make photocopies of the kit wall sections, print them out on heavy paper, and use those to construct the mock-up. I took this approach with the shorter, white-walled building with a gray roof. This mock-up represents a structure that will eventually be made with walls from a cast-plaster kit.

If I'm scratchbuilding, I first draw the structure in Microsoft Power Point and then print out the wall sections. An example of this approach is the taller tan building. I'll later use these wall sections as templates for the walls of the final structure.

The duck zone

4 A rubber mat marks the "Duck Zone."

For my layout to fit in my train room, a duck-under was unavoidable. Therefore, I did my best to make it as tolerable as possible. With safety tread, yellow stripes, and the words "Duck Zone" printed on it, a black rubber mat shows visitors when and where to keep their heads down. I also added some long assist bars (I prefer to call them "grab irons") on both sides of the Duck Zone to help visitors get back up.

The scenery elevator

5 A powered TV stand provides easy access to hidden track.

My scenery elevator is the result of watching too many old James Bond spy movies. When the elevator is down, it fits seamlessly into the surrounding scenery. The heart of this device is a TV lift from Firgelli Automations. When activated, it lifts a scenery section to the ceiling, allowing easy access to hidden tracks.

With the scenery elevator, I don't have to worry about where to set the lift-out section. It's also entertaining for guests of all ages and, for me, that's one of the most pleasurable aspects of model railroading.