

## Comparing Auto Racks -- \$7.50 vs \$26.35 by Bob Gatland

A number of years ago I picked up several Arnold open auto racks for \$4 each. I threw out the Arnold trucks and couplers and installed Micro-train couplers and trucks for an additional \$3.60 bringing the total cost of each car to \$7.60. It took a bit of fussing to get the trucks on, but I've dealt with a lot worse conversions. These cars have been sitting on my shelf for quite some time now awaiting their call to service.

Those of you who follow the prototype closely know that when

The lettering on the Micro-train car is —as always—excellent. The lettering on the Arnold car is also pretty good but simpler. Many of the smaller lettering details are simply not there.

I was surprised at how close the proportions of the two cars are. They are both about the same length and height and won't look out of place running together.

The Micro-train car has stirrups, the Arnold car does not. I



**This Norfolk & Western open aut rack was produced by Arnold. Micro-trains trucks and couplers were added.**

tri-level aut racks first were introduced in the late 60's, there were no protective sides or tops on them. It didn't take long for the railroads to figure out that a lot of automobiles were being damaged in transit and costing them considerable amounts of money in claims. First sides were added to the autoracks. Later roofs were added to completely cover the cars inside.

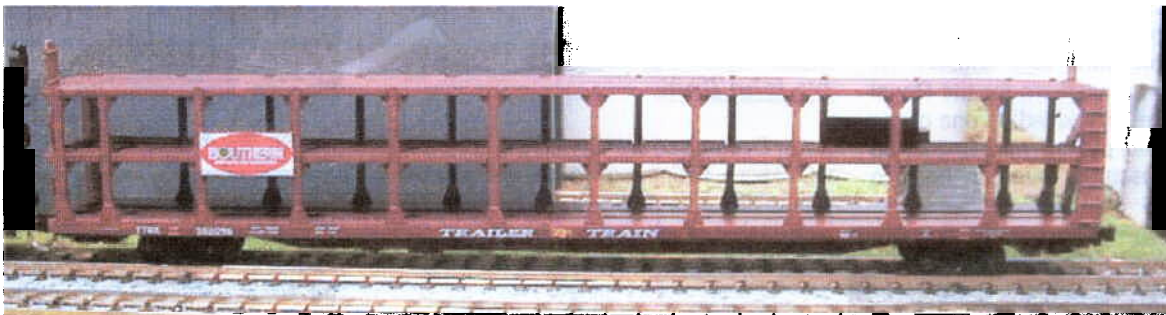
So the cars you see in these photos will be right at home on my Erie-Lackawanna era trains.

This past month Micro-trains delivered their version of the open side auto rack. I picked one up at a discounted price of \$26.35. Do a bit of math and you should come up with a difference of

suppose that these could be added without too much difficulty by an experienced modeler. Both cars have metal in their underframes. I didn't weigh the cars, but they feel as if they are about the same weight.

Both cars are crying out for loads of automobiles. Make sure that you find models of cars from the late 60's to the early 70's to tie down to the decks.

I have noticed that of late the prices of freight cars have increased dramatically. We see details that were unheard of a few years ago such as etched brass roofwalks and actual grabe irons instead of molded on ones. Most cars now come with



**The Southern aut rack is one of the latest offering by Micro-trains.**

\$18.75 between the Micro-train car and Arnold car. What do you get for the extra money?

The Micro-train car has a highly detailed underside. The Arnold car suggests brake details and is rather sparten.

The Micro-train car has a better looking paint job in my opinion. The Arnold car could use a bit of dull coat and some weathering to greatly improve its appearance.

Micro-train compatible couplers instead of the gross looking Rapido couplers. I guess that the \$4 freight car has become a thing of the past.

As I wander around the exhibition hall at the Springfield Winterfest Convention this coming February, I wonder if I will see Arnold and Micro-train open auto racks sitting side by side on a dealer's table. If I do, which ones will I pick up?