

Simple track cleaning in N and OO/HO gauge

Ten Commandments Models now offers the effective KPF Zeller track-cleaning cars in the UK, writes **Nigel Burkin**.



KPF Zeller offers a range of tools for fine tuning and cleaning including a range of rolling roads and track-cleaning cars to suit OO/HO and N gauge track. The cars are sold by Ten Commandments Models in the UK. An O gauge version will become available in the near future.

NEWCOMERS TO RAILWAY modelling soon discover that one of the most frustrating things about a model railway is when trains cease to run as well as they should. Although modern standard models are heavy and equipped with flywheels together with well-engineered current collection systems, they are not immune to track 'dirt'.

Stalling and stuttering becomes a problem and for no obvious reasons as to the cause. Erratic operation caused by dirt is particularly frustrating when experienced with expensive digital sound locomotives. The sound becomes broken and can cease to operate altogether. Running lights and interior lighting in coaches are also affected unless there is a super capacitor-based 'keep alive' system included as part of the circuit.

Dirt accumulating on the surface of the rails is invariably the cause of poor running, dirt that also makes its way on to the wheels of your stock. Dirt is the result of dust (old skin cells!) settling on the rails between operating sessions then becoming mixed with oil and various other contaminants as trains pass over the track during an operating session. The resulting layer of indescribable grime causes electrical conductivity between wheels and rail to degrade to the point where reliable current supply to the trains

becomes intermittent. Metal flywheels in locomotives will carry a model over small dead spots caused by dirt but anything more than that will see your lovely smooth-running models take on a completely different character.

The solution to this problem is as simple as cleaning the track (or rather the running rails) every time you plan to have an operating session. This leads on to the question of how to best clean the track. Well, ask that question of a dozen experienced modellers and you will get a dozen different techniques: track cleaning is seen as a black art. However, it does not have to be that way and in fact track cleaning can be really easy!

Track rubbers appear to offer a very simple and straightforward method of cleaning the track. Problems with the use of track rubbers arise because they scrub the surface of the rail quite aggressively and this can wear the top of the rail down after a while. Furthermore, cleaning with track rubbers is very time consuming – time that could be used to do some modelling or enjoying the layout!

Using a track-cleaning car such as the KPF Zeller featured in this review will save a great deal of time and take the drudgery out of layout maintenance, especially if your layout has a great deal of track. By making track cleaning a routine task when preparing the layout for an

operating session, you can be confident that dirt will not spoil the fun of running trains. Furthermore, a track-cleaning car with soft cleaning pads will not damage the top surface of the rail in the same manner as a cleaning rubber.

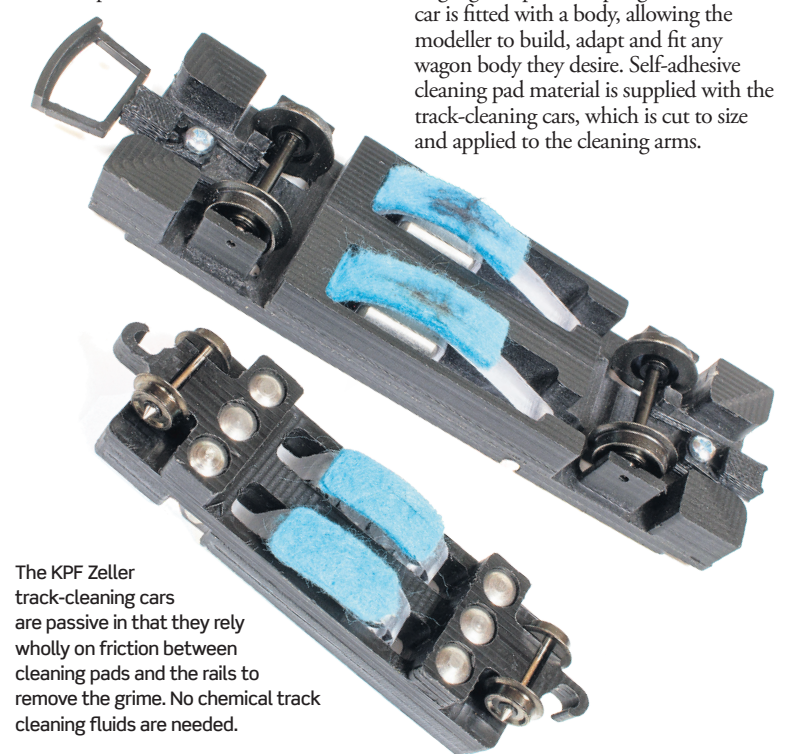
Introducing the KPF Zeller track cleaning cars

I am always interested in any technology that takes the effort out of track cleaning. The KPF Zeller OO/HO and N gauge track cleaning cars sold by Ten Commandments Models are particularly effective at cleaning the rails of any model railway. Both cars operate on the same principle, which is to apply pads of soft cleaning material to the rails on pivoted and weighted arms. Track cleaning is achieved through simple friction between the rail and cleaning pad without the need to apply potentially damaging track-cleaning solutions.

Cars for both scales are specially designed for the job rather than being made by adapting existing model rolling stock. Each one consists of a specially machined chassis with just the right amount of weight added to the N gauge car for effective track cleaning. The OO/HO model is equipped with NEM coupling pockets which will accept any NEM-362 compatible coupling including Kadees. The model

is supplied with a standard tension lock coupling hook to get you started. Metal wheels make the car as free-rolling as possible, allowing for the friction between pad and rail.

The N gauge model has a universal hook integral to the chassis of the track-cleaning car: one being fitted to each end which will engage with standard N gauge 'Rapido' couplings. Neither car is fitted with a body, allowing the modeller to build, adapt and fit any wagon body they desire. Self-adhesive cleaning pad material is supplied with the track-cleaning cars, which is cut to size and applied to the cleaning arms.



The KPF Zeller track-cleaning cars are passive in that they rely wholly on friction between cleaning pads and the rails to remove the grime. No chemical track cleaning fluids are needed.