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# R&L Lines Track Scrubbing Car

Review and Photos by George Brown

Over the years, a number of track cleaning cars have hit the market with some more successful than others. Several years ago, I bought a track cleaning car that is cute to look at and that works well, but changing its square felt cleaning pads is an exercise that has deterred me from using it on a number of occasions.

A couple of weeks ago, Allan Miller told me that a track cleaning car, made in America, was submitted to *OGR* for a "Smoke Signal" new product announce-

ment. Because the railheads on my layout were about as grimy as they come and desperately in need of a good cleaning, the editorial CCRR would be a good tryout for this new cleaning car. A quick "ship it" put the wheels in motion, both figuratively and literally.

## Construction and Features

I've seen a number of track cleaning cars over the years, but the R&L Lines car is distinctive, beginning with its name, Track Scrubbing Car. As shown in Photo 1, a hefty frame of 1/4" thick 6061 aluminum carries two washable foam rollers under it with an 18-8 stainless steel pipe on top for additional weight. Although elastic cloth bands wrap around the pipe and appear to hold it to each of four cradles, the pipe is actually bolted rigidly to the frame.

Lionel die-cast freight car trucks with operating couplers

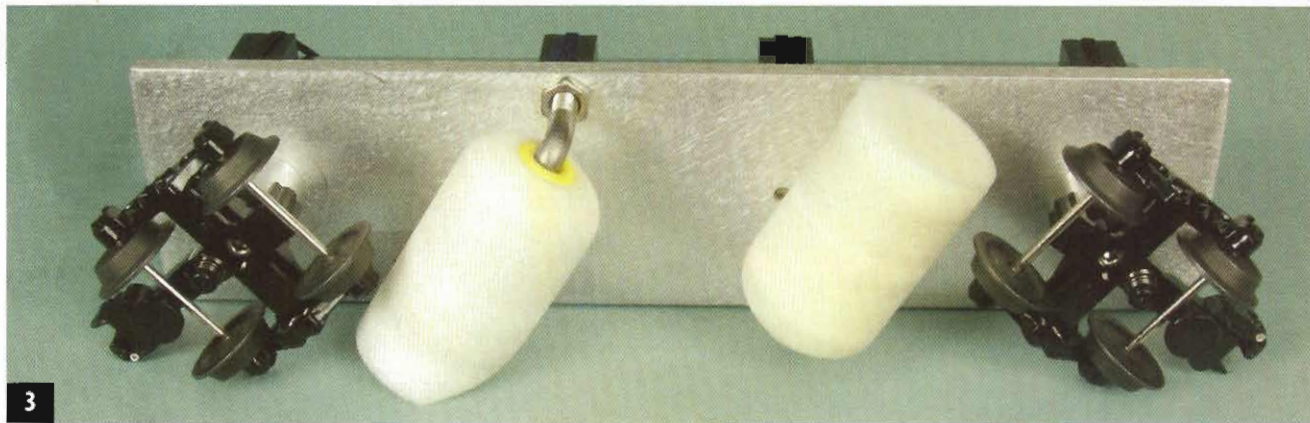
carry the car with 1/2" stainless steel spacers between the trucks and frame. Underneath the frame, two 2" x 1-3/8" foam rollers revolve on stainless steel spindles set to a 30-degree angle across the car and track (Photo 2). Each car includes four rollers, which are off-the-shelf hardware store items for trim painting. Overall car length is 11" between coupler faces, and its height is 3-1/2" above the rails. With two foam rollers installed, the car weighs just over 2 lbs.

Spindles for the rollers thread into the frame and are easily adjusted up and down for more or less roller pressure on the rails and also laterally for a greater or lesser angle to the track. Instructions that come with the car explain adjustment of the spindles. To install a roller, simply push it onto the spindle. Pulling the roller off the spindle is just as easy.

The pair of foam rollers helps make this car unique in both appearance (Photo 3) and cleaning ability. As the car moves along the track, the rollers revolve, and with their angle to the track, they actually scrub the rails. Additionally, according to the brochure



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for the car, this angle gives the rollers a contact surface with the rails of 15 mm instead of 1.5 mm for a straight roller or pad. Photo 4 shows both rollers installed with the car sitting on a length of track.


### At Trackside

I put some track cleaning solution on two rollers, set the car on the track, and coupled it to a diesel switcher—then came the fun. As the abbreviated train ran around my inner of three concentric main lines and traversed all combinations of my dual reverse loops, I was pleased, no, amazed at how much crud the R&L Lines car scrubbed off the rails after just a few passes. This car, which outweighs some of my postwar and MPC Lionel locomotives, tracked solidly over my tubular rails and O22 switches—no snags, no derailments. After cleaning the track, I installed a pair of dry rollers to dry and polish the just-cleaned rails. My other two main lines got the same treatment. The results were spectacular with clean, shiny rails in less than 20 minutes for my 10' x 10' layout.

R&L Lines recommends Goo-Gone or a similar citric-based cleaner, but since I already had a bottle, I used track cleaner from Life Like Trains. The foam rollers supplied with the car are reusable after cleaning them with a detergent that emulsifies the accumulated oil and grime. For cleaning the rollers, I had good luck with a solution of our favorite dish-washing detergent in warm water.

### At the End of the Run

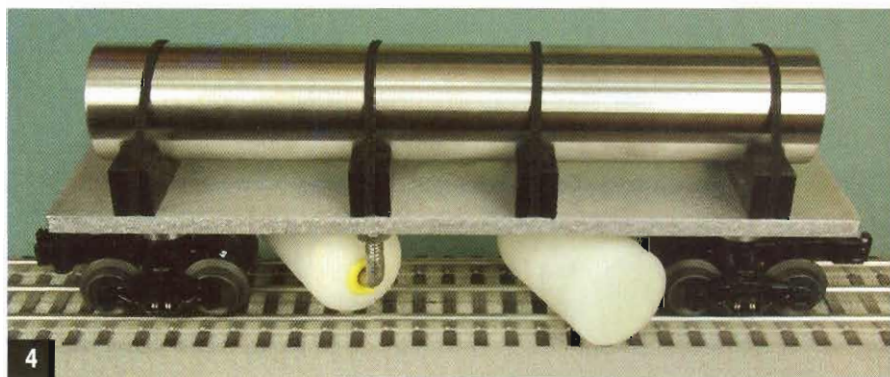
The R&L Lines Track Scrubbing Car is well built, and its design works great. Because of the car's success at cleaning my incredibly grimy track

and the ease of working with its cleaning media, the intended product announcement quickly developed into this review. For large layouts or small, I give the car my Green Aspect Award for clear track ahead. 

### Track Scrubbing Car for 3-rail O gauge

Retail price: \$99.99 from R&L Lines retailers

R&L Lines; 920-465-7913; [www.rllines.com](http://www.rllines.com)



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Each car features ALL METAL construction made with pride in the USA. We build each car by hand from 6061 aluminum and 18-8 stainless steel trim. To give the car a realistic look we incorporated a stainless steel pipe load. Each car features Lionel die-cast sprung trucks with operating couplers. (Exception: G Scale version has plastic couplers and trucks.)

At the heart of the system are foam rollers that offset at an angle to the track. The approach is so revolutionary that a provisional patent has been granted and a permanent patent has been applied for!

**Features:**

1. Incorporates a 30 degree across the rail scrubbing action.
2. Significantly quicker cleaning of the rails.
3. A wider area of the foam roller contacts each rail (15mm of contact versus 1.5mm for a straight roller or pad).
4. Roller absorbs ten times the amount of dirt over a straight line.
5. Offset rollers can clean all three rails on main lines and down to sharp O-27 curves.
6. The height and angle of each roller is easily adjustable.
7. O-Gauge weighs 2.4 pounds, Standard is 3.8 pounds, G Scale is 3.8 pounds.
8. Reasonably priced.
9. Replacement scrubbing rollers are easily available at low-cost.
10. ***Cleans better than any other cars on the market today!***