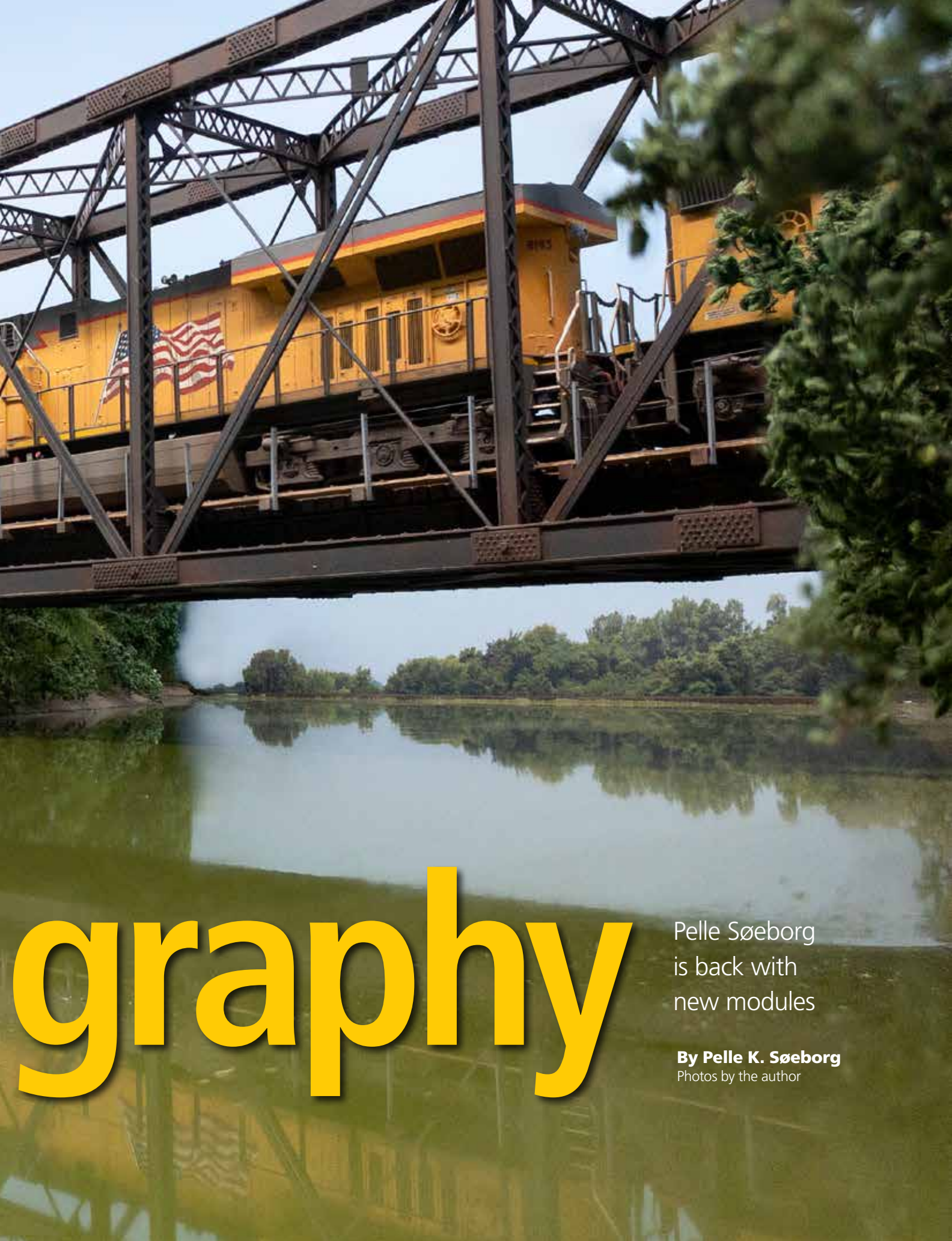


① The river scene on Pelle Søeborg's new two-section module is his absolute favorite. It's hard to believe that this scene is only 20" deep. The entire module is 6'-8" long.



A module designed for
photo



graphy

Pelle Søbørg
is back with
new modules

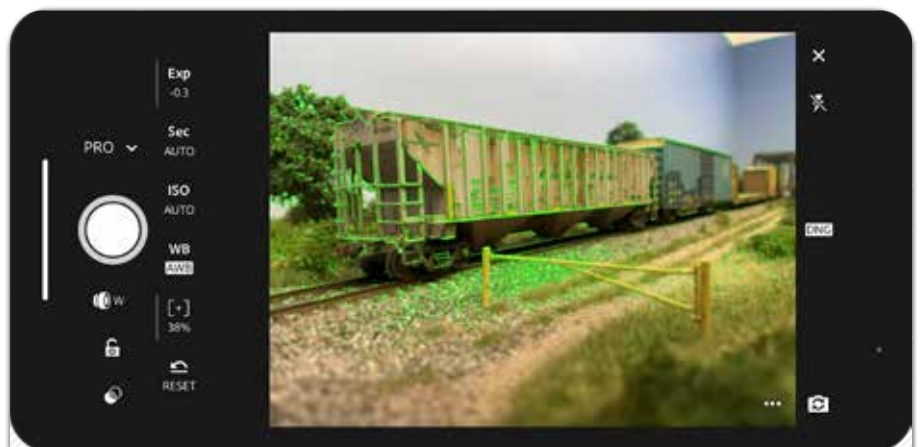
By Pelle K. Søbørg
Photos by the author



② Even a small module can offer the illusion of vast spaces. The backdrop obviously plays a big role, even though it's a simple blue sky.



③ CSX power leads a train in the opposite direction. A simple thing like a service road along the track not only looks good, but also creates the necessary free space you need to get a good shot of a train.



The Adobe Lightroom camera app lets you manually adjust ISO, exposure, white balance and focusing. The green outlined areas tell you what's in focus.

Making a cell phone do more

I take all my pictures with my iPhone. I shoot via an Adobe Lightroom camera app. It has a professional mode that allows you to shoot in RAW and manually adjust ISO, exposure, and white balance, and manually focus. I shoot a series of pictures of the same scene with different focal points. Then I stack and merge them in Photoshop to get maximum depth of field. Some manual patching and touch-up is required to get a perfect result. – Pelle Søbørg

After my first modules were finished, featured in the February 2021 issue of *Model Railroader*, I needed something to keep me occupied during the winter months and COVID-19 lockdown, so I began planning my next

project. I settled for a two-section module with a single-track main line that would fit on top of my closet if I needed to store it to make room for other projects. Like my first module, it follows the specifications of the European FREMO-US standard.

The module consist of two 0.5m x 1m (20" x 3'-4") sections. I stayed with the Midwestern theme for several reasons. First of all, I still have plenty of scenery material left over from when I built my Daneburg layout, but also because I traveled that area on my most recent trips to



Pelle designed the sections so they can be put together in two ways. The blue numbered arrows indicate the photo locations.



④ As on his previous modules, Pelle used Central Valley Model Works tie strips with Micro Engineering rail for the track. The ballast is from Arizona Rock & Mineral. Pelle mixed three shades: 130-2 Northern Pacific, 135-2 Union Pacific, and 138-2 CSX/Southern Pacific.

the United States, and it therefore stands freshest in my memory.

One square meter isn't much area if you want plenty of space between the different elements, so I planned for a simple scene featuring a bridge crossing a river and a country road crossing the track. I love bridges and trestles and have never missed an opportunity to incorporate one on previous layouts, so I had no

doubt that a bridge should be an element on this module, as well. It's the signature structure, actually.

The bridge is a Central Valley Model Works 150-foot Pratt truss bridge kit. For my money, CVMW offers the best looking bridge kits on the market. The kit requires some skills to build, though. For one thing, you have to cut all the girders to correct lengths and angles. I added a

The layout at a glance

Name: Midwest Modules
Scale: HO (1:87)
Size: 20" x 6'-8"
Prototype: Primarily Union Pacific, but could be any Midwestern operator
Locale: generic Midwest
Era: modern
Style: FREMO-US modules
Mainline run: none
Minimum radius: none
Minimum turnout: none
Maximum grade: none
Benchwork: laser-cut plywood modules
Height: none
Roadbed: cork
Track: Central Valley Model Works ties and Micro Engineering code 83 rail
Scenery: extruded-foam insulation board
Backdrop: photo print on lightweight PVC
Control: none

walkway along each side of the track to make the bridge look more up-to-date.

Though my modules follow the specifications of the European FREMO-US standard and can be part of a large modular layout, participating in FREMO events is not my main goal with them. I designed them to be optimal for photography. Taking pictures of my trains in realistic looking scenes has become a

Building a layout for photography



After Pelle made drawings for the module frame parts, he had them laser-cut. The framing is 1/2" birch plywood.



The basic terrain consists of foam insulation board. The roadbed is cork.



The sections can be combined in two ways, which gives more photo locations. The photo to the left shows how the modules look if they will be part of a FREMO event with the mandatory "valley profile" at each end. The photo to the right shows how the modules can be rearranged if Pelle needs more scenery in the background when he takes a picture.



nice spin-off of my model railroad hobby. To optimize the photo possibilities I designed my module sections so they can be combined in two ways.

I included spaces where I can place my camera – in this case, my phone. The scenery is designed so these open spaces blend in with the rest of the scene and won't be noticed. It could be in the form of a service road or just a simple thing like not placing a bush or a tree that will block the view from where I want to shoot.

With the scenery materials we can get today, the bar for how realistic it's possible to make your scenery look has been raised quite considerably. I use everything I can find that looks usable. I have even found stuff in a Warhammer game shop that was useful.

All in all, this has been a rewarding little project. I'm quite happy with the result, which I will enjoy for a while until I start on a new one. [MR](#)

5 A rural road and a passive grade crossing is the main feature on one of the module sections. The pavement is made of Woodland Scenics Smooth-It plaster. Pelle made the cracks with a pointed tool. The coloring consists of several light black washes with a little brown added to the mix.