

1. Introduction to J-Module

29-03-2004

Over the years several modular model railway standards have developed, all dedicated to a certain prototype. Starting in 1972 in the USA with NTrak, modular model railways developed progressively, with many new standards made locally by groups of enthusiasts. No doubt that all these different standards are not compatible. None of these standards, developed in the USA, the UK and Continental Europe are developed to depict the Japanese prototype. The Japanese themselves have developed at least 3 different modular standards, for N-scale alone.

Advantages of a modular model railway

The big advantage of a modular model railway is that the separate modules can be built with limited resources in a limited amount of time, and that the fun can be shared with other modellers. With the modular approach it is possible to build a large layout in a relatively short period of time, precluded that you can form a group of likeminded modellers and can agree on the standards to connect the modules and ensure reliable operation. It is well possible to combine modules with a fixed layout at home. Modules can easily be transported in a normal hatchback or estate car, or a small trailer, so no need to hire a van when your group is invited to an exhibition.

Why 'J-Module'

'J-Module' was set up to cater for the need of a truly Japanese-prototype modular layout, using techniques developed in the past 25 years and with ease of building, operating and setting up in mind. Using existing standards like N-Trak proved to be unsatisfactory, so it was decided to develop a new standard. 'J-Module' is unique in the fact that it is possible to use setrack on the modules, the module lengths chosen fit exactly the lengths of Tomix setrack. Of course it is possible to use other brands of track, but keep in mind that your module should take the Tomix extendable track to connect with other modules.

Disadvantages of a modular model railway

There are a few disadvantages, mainly regarding the planning and appearance of the layout. Modular layouts tend to have long lengths of straight track and less gentle curves than fixed layouts. This is partly due to the modular approach, where each module should fit in any place.

What the standards should describe

The standards will describe the basic shapes of the modules, how they would connect both mechanically and electrically and how they should be presented to the public on exhibitions. Recommendations are given for good building and operating practice. Sometimes I refer to NMRA and/or NEM standards, these can be found on the Internet at <http://www.nmra.org> (NMRA, US standards) and <http://www.morop.org> (MOROP, NEM European standards). In many cases, these standards overlap each other, sometimes there are differences. I will indicate which standard is applicable when needed.

Mark Veneman

'J-Module' project co-ordinator

e-mail: raicho@xs4all.nl