

John Sipple

Sipple on Trains

Walthers UP Pullman Sleeper

Walthers has added an upgraded UP sleeper car to its HO line

As opposed to coming up with a different livery for each train, as was sometimes the practice with transition era railroads, Union Pacific chose to present a unified look for all its City trains. The following were the sources of most of the City train names: Portland, Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and St. Louis. All City-named trains ceased when Amtrak took over in 1971.

The standard Union Pacific paint scheme was Armour Yellow and Harbor Mist Gray with red detail stripes and lettering. In 1955 further upgrades added new dome cars to the already light-weight and streamlined cars. UP typically powered these trains with E-units, often resorting to as many as two A-locos and three B-locos to handle a single section with as many as 14 or 15 cars being pulled behind.

With four bedrooms, four compartments and two drawing rooms, the Pullman-Standard 4-4-2 Imperial series sleeper was a very exclusive place to spend the two or so days a passenger would ride on this train. Large windows allowed for easy viewing of trackside scenery. The interiors were fitted with luxurious appointments. It was like checking into a rolling hotel whisking passengers from one city to the next.

By creating a pool of cars for all its passenger trains, Union Pacific would make the cars largely interchangeable in terms of general appearance. The concept was so successful that the company neatly sidestepped the number of unused cars in their back-up pool. In that same fashion, the UP City series allows a customer to model any of the City trains without having to get one labeled with unique, one-of lettering.

Walthers City Trains Sleeper

The Walthers HO-scale UP Pullman sleeper is a well-done example of this period in railroading. The paintwork is exquisite, being smooth, even and sharply masked. But then, railroaders have come to expect this from Walthers rolling stock. The lettering is clear and correct, even if a bit general.

To get more specific, there is an included page of decals from which your customers can select a choice of car names. This sheet also contains names and numbers for other cars in the series. An information sheet included with the car indicates where a customer is to apply the chosen decals.

Things are starting to look up. Dealers and modelers have complained for a number of years about the handrails on Walthers' passenger cars. While they were included with the car, the new owner was required install them. This process required very precise work with a #80 drill bit (more likely several bits, as they break easily), and not every modeler was capable of completing this hour-long task with any success. Since competitors' cars come with railings in place, the Walthers products were swimming against the tide.

No more. Be sure to point out the installed handrails, grabs and rungs to your customers. It avoids that awkward moment when a salesman has to either point out the omission or wait until the customer brings a car back with broken drill bits sticking out of his purchase. Now you can point with pride and ring up the sale.

Some time back, Walthers made small but important improvements to its couplers. The result is a car that couples up and stays that way. These cars couple closely and, for added realism, their diaphragms touch. The couplers allow for more swing than the trucks, which have a minimum radius of 24 inches. Most of your customers have minimal layouts featuring 18-inch curves, but, really, 85-foot coaches are not for that sort of layout. If they were designed to travel on that curvature, they'd look pretty silly.

For customers who have a layout that can handle this type of car, you have a very sellable product. Also consider that the cars are all set up to take Walthers' lighting bar kits. To install a light bar, simply remove the roof, snap in the light bar and snap the roof back in place. While the roof is off, take a moment to appreciate the molded interior. I've had writers to Model Railroad News ask if Walthers would



include a paint scheme diagram of the interior. They could, but UP refurbished the interiors every two or three years, and the colors would change to some extent at that time. So unless a specific car from a certain period is being replicated, such a project would be iffy at best.

In testing the 85-foot sleeper, I railed up the car, tied it onto a diesel and then coupled that to a longish train just to see how it would like being on the bar. Apparently, it didn't mind at all. I had no derailments running at speed through switches, over crossovers and by all the rest that my railroad has to offer. It ran well on 24-inch or wider curves but didn't much care for anything less, something clearly warned about in the instruction manual.

Since this car is truly scale, it looked a trifle silly on 24-inch curves because it hung over quite a bit, but there was



The vestibule end of the car features wonderful detail including the roof access rungs and handles beside the doors. The GSC Type 42 trucks are very nicely detailed and the prototype's reason for such a smooth ride.

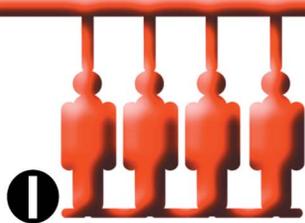
no quit in it. Walthers has endowed the sleeper with nicely detailed trucks that also handle track irregularities very well. When I got the car over onto 30-inch radius curves, it looked far better and worked just fine. I'd love to see this car with 14 others headed by a

herd of E-units. Walthers is building a UP E8 for use on the point of such a train, though I don't imagine you'll need two A units and three B units to pull a scale number of cars.

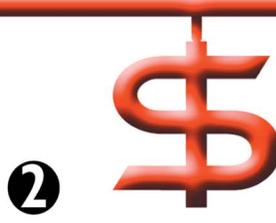
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