

Photo Contest Rules
Lone Star Region
Of the National Model Railroad Association

A. General Contest Rules

1. Any member of the NMRA, in good standing, is eligible to compete except Professional Photographers. A Professional Photographer is any member that derives the majority (51% or more) of his income from photography.
2. Each entry must be accompanied by the official LSR (Board approved) entry form signed by the entrant along with the LSR (preferred) or NMRA Photo Judging form. Each entry by proxy must be authenticated with a valid NMRA membership number.
3. The entrant may submit up to ten (10) entries with a maximum of five (5) entries in one category. No entry fee shall be charged.
4. Prints **must be mounted** on flat, rigid board or matted with a similar material. No folders or frames or glass allowed. Photo and mount may not exceed 13" x 16" in size. Minimum mount size is 8" x 10" and a minimum print size is 5" x 7".
5. Photos will be displayed to permit maximum inspection based on space available.
6. Photos that have won First (1st) place at previous Regional or National NMRA contest are ineligible.
7. Prints **must have entrant's name or entry number on back of the mount**. The title of the photo may be on the front, but no photo will be accepted with the entrant's name on the front.
8. Exposure of the original and any adjustments or modifications of the image by Photoshop or any other means must have been made by the entrant.
9. The claim check from the LSR entry form must be presented to obtain the photo after the contest.
10. Reasonable care and protection will be provided for entries by the Host Contest Committee, the LSR Contest Chairman and the Judges.
11. Neither the LSR or the Host Convention Committee can assume any responsibility in the event of loss or damage to a Photo beyond the insurance carried by the NMRA and then no more than the dollar value that is shown on the LSR Entry form.
12. Judges for the photo contest will be selected by the Region Contest Chairman with the help of the Host Convention Chairman if necessary.
13. No entries will be accepted after 3PM on Friday (unless otherwise posted). This will allow the Region Contest Chairman and the Host Convention Committee time to ready the room for judging.

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14. The contest room will remain closed to viewing after 4PM Friday (unless otherwise posted) and while judging is in progress. The room will reopen Saturday during normal convention hours for viewing.

15. For the protection of the entries, no bags, purses, camera bags, or drinks will be allowed in the model/photo display area. You are welcome to take photos for your personal use.

B. Categories

1. Model - Black and White Print*
 2. Model - Color Print*
 3. Prototype – Black and White Print
 4. Prototype – Color Print
 5. Computer Enhanced – a photo that could not be taken directly, heavy use of Photoshop or another program to produce the print.
- *Adding smoke/steam to model photos is not considered computer enhanced.

C. Judging Procedures

The following judging system has been successfully used in competitive camera club settings for many years. No point scores will be given.

1. View all the entries in a category one at a time to get an overview of the field. There should be no commentary between judges at this point.
2. The entries should be viewed again and each judge should indicate if the entry should stay or be eliminated. During this run-through, a positive vote by any one judge will keep the entry in the running. Entries receiving no votes are set aside.
3. If a third (3rd) run-through is needed, two (2) positive responses are required to keep an entry. If the field is still very large, perform a fourth (4th) run-through. The purpose of this process is to narrow the field rather than pick the winner.
4. The judges should now have a reasonably small field to work with. At this point considerable discussion among the judges is needed and encouraged as they compare the entries. Photos may be moved about and arranged as the judges seek a consensus. First, Second and Third places will be awarded in each category. Judges may also recommend an Honorable mention award for any photo which they consider to be outstanding, but that did not place among the top three.

D. Judging Factors

Photos are more subjective than model contest. A prize winning photograph is often more a matter of art and luck than execution of technique. Certainly, the photographer is faced with more things that are beyond his control than the model builder, at least where the prototype categories are concerned. Notwithstanding the subjectivity, there are some judging factors that are brought to bear by experience judges.

1. IMPACT: Best explained by “I wish I’d taken that picture”. Given a choice action is preferable to static scene. In model photography, the choice of the model will contribute to the impact of the picture. Does the photograph reveal obvious, distracting flaws, or has the photographer taken pains to be sure all of the elements shown work together to produce pleasing results. When the environment is exceptional, or the viewpoint makes

the ordinary extraordinary, full credit should be given for the contribution the photographer's sensitivity brought to the subject.

2. **COMPOSITION:** The arrangement of the forms within the photo should be pleasing to the eye. How well did the photographer use the available space within his format? Did he or she follow the guidelines taught in art and photography classes? If the rules are broken, did the results justify that decision.

3. **ARTISTIC APPROACH:** This subjective area is where a strongly graphic or symbolic composition may tend to appeal to one judge and a "typical calendar shot" may appeal to another. One tends to evaluate artistic and aesthetic qualities based on one's own experience. What moves us and to the degree we are impressed will change as we are exposed to more and better images. A judge should not start out looking for a special kind of artistry, to do so would be imposing personal values, sensibilities, or preconceptions without giving the entries a chance to speak for themselves.

4. **LIGHTING:** In photography "Light is law". It is the only thing that makes it possible to make the exposure. Skillfully handled, the result can be a work of art; badly handled, the result is a total failure or a snapshot at best. The photographer should be given full credit for use of multiple flashes, supplemental reflectors, or well developed room lighting, depending on the quality of the execution. The best execution of any lighting system in model photography is one that produces a realistic, natural appearance, without multiple shadows (there can only be one sun!), with accurate color, and without excessively harsh contrast and black holes devoid of details.

5. **EXPOSURE:** If a print appears washed out, or shadow details are obliterated, it is obvious it was improperly exposed. The judge may decide however, that the unusual exposure was skillfully handled to achieve a desired mood or dramatic effect.

6. **FOCUS:** Model photographers strive to maximize the appearance of sharpness throughout the photo to achieve realistic results. Generally "selective focus" is not desirable in model or prototype photos, since it produces fuzzy areas that are distracting; but there are always exceptions. The judges must determine whether or not the photographer achieved his or her goal.

7. **DIFFICULTY:** In prototype shots this relates to motion, lighting conditions (including weather), selection of appropriate viewpoint, inherent danger and the knowledge of special techniques and equipment. Model photography involves a different set of technical skills for the close-up work while maintaining adequate depth-of-field. Lighting models adequately can be difficult and complex as well. Since a model may be photographed many times with different settings, there is a little reason to see a poorly lit photo of model scenes. A prototype may be available only once.

8. **SPECIAL EFFECTS:** This would apply to deliberate blurring or panning to accentuate motion, long exposure at night create light streaks, multiple exposures, shooting through fog or smoke, using filters, print toning, or any other special effects limited only by the photographer's imagination. In model photos, special effects include smoke and steam simulation, fog, harsh weather conditions and more. The final evaluation should be, as always, a response to how well the effect achieved the desired result: did it work, and is the result pleasing or evocative enough to have made the effort worthwhile.

9. **TECHNIQUE:** Is the color pleasing, correct or believable? Color saturation should also be evaluated. To some extent this is influenced by the quality of processing: however, whether the result is acceptable or not is a judgment for which the photographer is responsible. An unsatisfactory processing job may be redone. Black and white is more often controlled by photographer, because more of them process their own. With digital all of this is changing. Good blacks and mid-tones, clean whites, and careful contrast control are essential to all contest-quality black and white prints.

10. **FINISH:** Consider the impact of the presentation of the entry. Prints should not be blemished or streaked and should be bonded correctly to the mount, with carefully measured borders. Mounts and mats should be clean and neatly cut. Lie flat, and show excess mounting tissue or adhesive around the edges. If a print is not suitable for publication reproduction, it should be considered for an award.

E. Awards

Plaques and ribbons will be given for all First (1st) place finishers in the photo contest. Second (2nd) and Third (3rd) place finishers shall receive ribbons. Honorable Mention ribbons are presented as recommended by the judges for any photo which they consider to be outstanding, but did not place among the top three. The decision may be influenced by the size and quality of the field.

Most Popular – Popular vote. It will be awarded to the photo receiving the most votes from the convention attendees. The Host Division shall insert ballots into all registrants' packets. Whether you enter a photo in the contest or not, come and vote for your favorite.

Best In Show – Will be chosen by the judges from the First (1st) place photos in all categories.