

REVIEW *HO, S, & O* Matysik Display Shelf is a real show-off

Review and Photos by Pete Birdsong,
MMR

Six-Foot O/S combination display
shelf, MSRP: \$35.00
Six-Foot O, S or On30 display shelves,
MSRP: \$30.00
Six-Foot HO display shelf, MSRP:
\$22.00

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WE WERE pleased to have an opportunity to review Matysik Displays' ShelfTrax model train display shelves, particularly since these products cross a broad range of model railroad scales, and represent something a little off the beaten path of our normal product reviews.

These nicely finished wood shelves are grooved to take the wheels of model railroad equipment in various scales and gauges, and put them on display. They are easily installed, and represent a very modest investment.

The Company

Matysik Displays is the company of Mike Matysik, a professional woodworker and a model train enthusiast from Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The shelving is produced on a large molding machine in a professional cabinet shop, using four specially designed knives, which cut the grooves in a single pass. I found Mike to be very responsive to questions and willing to work creatively on product design.

The Product

ShelfTrax consists of finely grained, low moisture content, rough-sawn red oak lumber, milled to serve as shelving for model railroad locomotives and rolling stock. Three different stock sizes are offered: O/S combination, O/S/On30, and HO. All come in a six-foot length, with a natural finish, but Mike does custom lengths and finishes as well. In fact, the On30 shelf I received for review



This sample of HO ShelfTrax shows the grooves on the upper surface into which the model's wheels fit, and the v-groove on the bottom, for the mounting screws.

was a custom job, milling HO grooves in the stock normally used for O scale shelves. I also received short samples of the HO and O products. The On30 shelf measured 0.754 inches thick by 3.527 inches wide (nominal 1x4). The O shelf is 0.755 by 3.519, (nominal 1x4) and the HO .511 by 1.98. (one-half by two, four quarter stock)

The milling produces grooves on the upper and lower surfaces of the shelf: on the upper surface, two scale-gauge grooves, into which the wheels of your rolling stock fit, run the length of the shelf. On the bottom surface, a v-groove also runs the length of the shelf, and has been pre-drilled on 16-inch centers, for screwing to the studs in the wall on which the shelf is to be mounted.

Each end of the shelf is pre-drilled to accept small pegs which serve as end stops, to keep models from rolling off

the end. The pegs are provided with the product, as are self-drilling mounting screws.

For putting together longer shelving units, metal mending plates are offered at \$3.00 each. These screw to the bottoms of the two shelves to be joined.

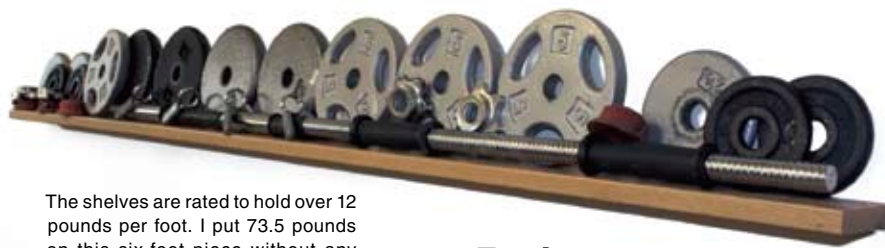
The ShelfTrax product is shipped securely padded with foam on each end and in intermediate locations, and completely sealed in a plastic wrapper, and packed inside a cardboard carton with a glossy marketing brochure and a letter with mounting instructions. It arrived without any damage. No warranty information is included in the materials shipped, but a warranty statement is on the web site in the Frequently Asked Questions page.

Mounting the Shelf

The company web site provides a video



A closeup indicates how easy it is to mount equipment on the shelf. The rear wheels are in the groove, the front ones out. To move them into the grooves, just slide them over until they fall in: much easier than railing stock on track, since you don't have to lift the wheels over the rails.



The shelves are rated to hold over 12 pounds per foot. I put 73.5 pounds on this six-foot piece without any problems (but it was scary!)

which runs about two and one-half minutes, providing detailed instructions for drilling additional holes in the v-groove, for those cases in which wall studs are not on sixteen-inch centers. Otherwise, if using the pre-drilled holes, the only tools needed are a #2 square bit to drive the self-drilling square-drive mounting screws, a level, and someone to help hold the shelf up while you drive the screws.



The shelves come with mounting holes pre-drilled every 16 inches for square-drive, self-drilling mounting screws, provided. The screws are to be driven into studs behind the wallboard, which usually are on 16-inch centers also.

A measuring tape and pencil may also come in handy, and an awl is useful for making starter holes for the screws in the sheetrock.

I selected the height I wanted, and with a helper holding the shelf in position, put in a screw at one end; then, with the helper positioning the shelf with a level, put a screw in the other end. The remaining screws can be driven without any help. Inserting the end stops completed the installation.



The ends of the shelves come pre-drilled for end-stop pegs, also provided, to keep equipment from rolling off the end. The holes can be seen here, prior to pushing in the pegs as the final step in installation.

Testing

The product is rated to support over twelve pounds per foot, according to the information I received from the owner. After mounting the shelf, I stacked 73.5 pounds of dumbbell weights on it, exceeding the rating by 1.5 pounds, with no sagging or other adverse affects, and this shelf was short one of the mounting screws, for which I had no stud.

Measured with an NMRA Mark IVb HO track gauge, and with a micrometer, the grooves checked as in gauge. I filled the shelf with several On30 locomotives and cars from my layout, and found the cars all rolled easily in the grooves, and everything presented a very nice appearance. The HO sample's grooves also were in correct gauge.

I didn't have an NMRA O-scale track gauge, but measured with a micrometer, the grooves in the O sample were 1.232 inches wide, slightly narrower than the NMRA standard minimum of 1.250 inches. Responding to my question about the gauge discrepancy, Mike Matysik indicated that his original molding knives for O standard were in gauge, but were too wide for some three-rail equipment, so his new molding knives are a compromise to fit the most rolling stock. Since the shelves are not going to be used for operating equipment, that seems like a good choice. And a scale O standard gauge car I tested fit in the grooves of the sample and rolled easily.

Summary

At \$30.00 milled, pre-drilled, finished, and with all mounting hardware, I'd say the ShelfTrax product is a bargain.

Beautiful in its simplicity, easy to install, and with the unmistakable look of quality, this is a product on which you'll be proud to display your best, contest-quality models. 