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# REVIEW **HO** **Mighty Fine Stock Car**

**Westerfield's Rock Island  
Stock Car Kit**

*Review and Photos by Steve Lucas*

**Westerfield HO-scale  
Rock Island Stock Car Kit  
#12102, MSRP: \$37.00**

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**FULL DISCLOSURE:** ever since building my first Westerfield kit for a Fowler steel-frame boxcar almost three decades ago, I have been partial to Al Westerfield's products. I have built many of them, mostly of Canadian prototype cars. Most of what Westerfield Models offers has never been offered in fully assembled or kit form in either injection-molded plastic or even brass. With Al retiring, I was frankly curious as to how well his successor carries on Westerfield's tradition of producing comprehensive, easy-to-assemble, and very accurate freight car kits.

Rock Island covered a large agricultural area of the central and western United States. As such, this granger road had a large fleet of stock cars to carry cattle, hogs, and sheep from online loading ramps to meatpacking centers such as Chicago. Like many railroads, Rock Island rebuilt obsolete steel-frame boxcars into stock cars to extend the life of its freight car fleet. Not offered before, this HO-scale kit by Westerfield Models is based on a series of 300 stock cars rebuilt by Rock Island in 1949 and 1950.

Printed enclosures with the release consist of two sheets with comprehensive instructions, photos of models being built, plus include detail shots to help the modeler along the way. A third sheet has photos of completed models, as well as a breakdown of the five series of Rock Island B-2 stock cars that may

***This kit builds into a very nice model of an unusual car that is not available elsewhere.***

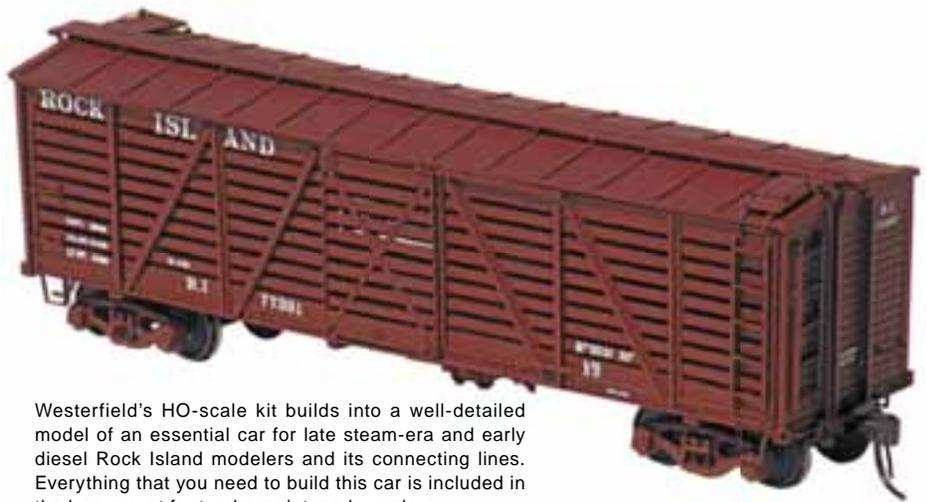
be modeled from Westerfield's two kits. I also downloaded and printed a photo of the finished model from the Westerfield website ([www.westerfield-models.com](http://www.westerfield-models.com)); this photo was very useful during construction to me as well. Some cars had a Hutchins Flexible All-Steel Roof as opposed to the Murphy roof modeled by this kit (Westerfield's kit #12101).

Inside the familiar brown Westerfield box are several sheets of flat gray resin castings for sides, ends, roof, floor, and many, many, detail parts. More than enough wire is provided to model full brake rigging, and the kit includes brake piping, as well as flexible plastic stirrups, wire eyebolts, a Tichy Train Group ([www.tichytrain-group.com](http://www.tichytrain-group.com)) AB-style brake set, a short length of fine chain, and a flat steel weight. Grab irons are also included

with extras should you lose one or two along the way.

Decals are included on a 1¼ x 2¼-inch sheet, which are so very easy to misplace. I had a fun time trying to find this sheet after it migrated from my computer desk to the floor. It's best to put these decals in a small bag and staple that bag to the "B-2 Stock Car Conversions" data sheet to make them easy to find after painting the model. Not included are trucks, screws, couplers, paint, or the commercial turnbuckles that I used on this kit.

You will need CA adhesive to assemble the kit. I used Bob Smith Industries' ([www.bsi-ince.com](http://www.bsi-ince.com)) medium viscosity Instacure glue. Tools used were a scale rule, scalpel (or hobby



Westerfield's HO-scale kit builds into a well-detailed model of an essential car for late steam-era and early diesel Rock Island modelers and its connecting lines. Everything that you need to build this car is included in the box except for trucks, paint, and couplers.

knife) with No. 11 blade, 2-56 tap and No. 50 tap drill, No. 78 and No. 79 drill bits, a pin vise, a small machinist's square, and small needle-nose pliers to form wire. I used various grades of sandpaper from 150- to 600-grit for finishing, and removing/thinning flash in the slots between boards in the car sides.

## **Construction**

The first step is to read the instructions. The second step is to read the instructions again. Clean the parts thoroughly. In keeping with the Westerfield tradition, these consist of sheets of parts held together by a thin casting film. The larger parts such as the sides and underframe castings are individual pieces. I cleaned all resin parts with an old toothbrush, water, and Comet, rinsing off the parts after washing. Comet does not have lanolin that other cleaners such as dish soap do include, and it is good for preparing parts of this variety. I rinsed the parts off over a pail to catch any small parts that might break loose from the sheets of castings. The parts were allowed to air dry overnight.

I laid some 150-grit sandpaper on a sheet of glass, and rubbed the back of the casting film between the slats. It doesn't take much effort to remove a lot of material, so be very careful here! I followed this with 220- and 400-grit sandpaper. The film will tend to push itself between the slats, so be careful that you don't sand the boards too thin in trying to sand off the film. The boards should be about 20-thousandths of an inch thick minimum when you're

done. I learned this the hard way with another Westerfield stock car kit that I sanded too vigorously. A fair bit of thin resin film will remain, rather than drop away from between the boards, but I have a solution for that.

Take the *back* of your hobby knife blade or scalpel and poke the tip of the blade through this film. Some of this film will fall out as soon as you poke the blade through. Gently scrape along each board of the car side with the *back* of the blade instead of the sharp edge. Let the sharp corner of the back of the blade do the work, rather than heavy pressure on the blade. This will not cut anything, but will remove the flash and square up the board edges as you go. In the areas where I could not do this, I used the tip of my scalpel to *very carefully* remove the flash. You may have to work from the inside of the car side to open up the slots between boards after removing most material from the outside. Do the outside first because you have the outline of the boards and steel frame to guide you in this work.

I cleaned up the ends and sides, assembling them per instructions after inserting the supplied grab irons through No. 78 drilled holes. Hole locations are marked by dimples in the castings. The two body (truck) mounting bolsters in the underframe casting were drilled through No. 50, and tapped with a 2-56 tap held in a pin vise. The weight was secured to the underframe using silicone rubber from a caulking gun and allowed to set. I find this optimal to hold a weight in place far longer than other products.

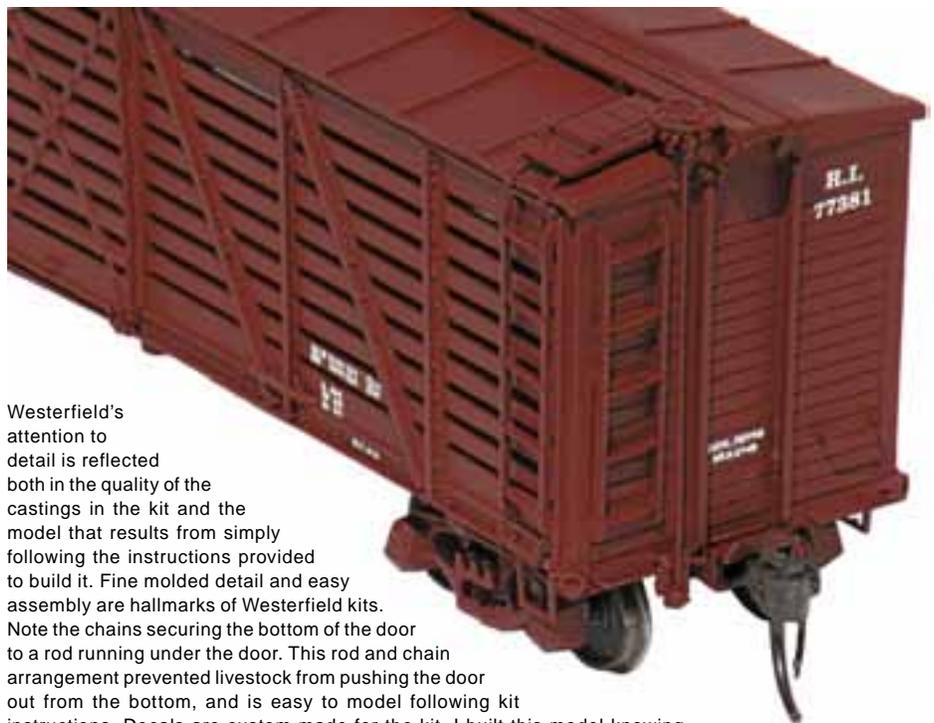
Sides and ends were assembled using CA, first using small drops of adhesive, followed by flowing CA into the joints once I was sure that everything was lined up as it should be. *Check the model photos in the instruction sheet for reference as you go.* I had a little problem. Somehow the weight did not lay flat on the floor, causing the floor to be a little bowed. I wound up removing the floor from the carbody, and removing the weight from the floor. The floor was re-installed in the sides, making sure that it sat properly against the sides and ends with room to add the cross bearers to it. After the CA set, the weight was laid into a bed of silicone caulking on the floor and left

undisturbed until the caulking set. (Whew! That was close!). So, I highly recommend that you install the weight *after* the floor, ends, and sides have been assembled.

The underside of the floor was detailed per kit instructions. I chose to model only what piping and brake rigging could be seen on the car when placed on the track, leaving out the brake pipe between floor beams. Brake rigging was installed, starting with hangers for the brake levers. I modified Grandt Line ([www.grandtline.com](http://www.grandtline.com)) turnbuckles by cutting one end off to create clevises for ends of brake rods. While still on the runner, the turnbuckle ends were drilled No. 78, the supplied .012-inch thick wire dipped in CA, and carefully inserted into the closed end of the turnbuckles. After the CA set, the brake rod assemblies were cut from the Grandt Line runner. One end of the turnbuckle is left attached to the runner, with the cut off part forming the clevis. This also makes it easier to fit the rods to the brake levers — the clevises simply slide over the levers and are CA'ed in place. Photos of the underside of a completed unpainted model in the instructions show how to arrange and pipe the parts of the AB brake system. The instructions here are very straightforward. An

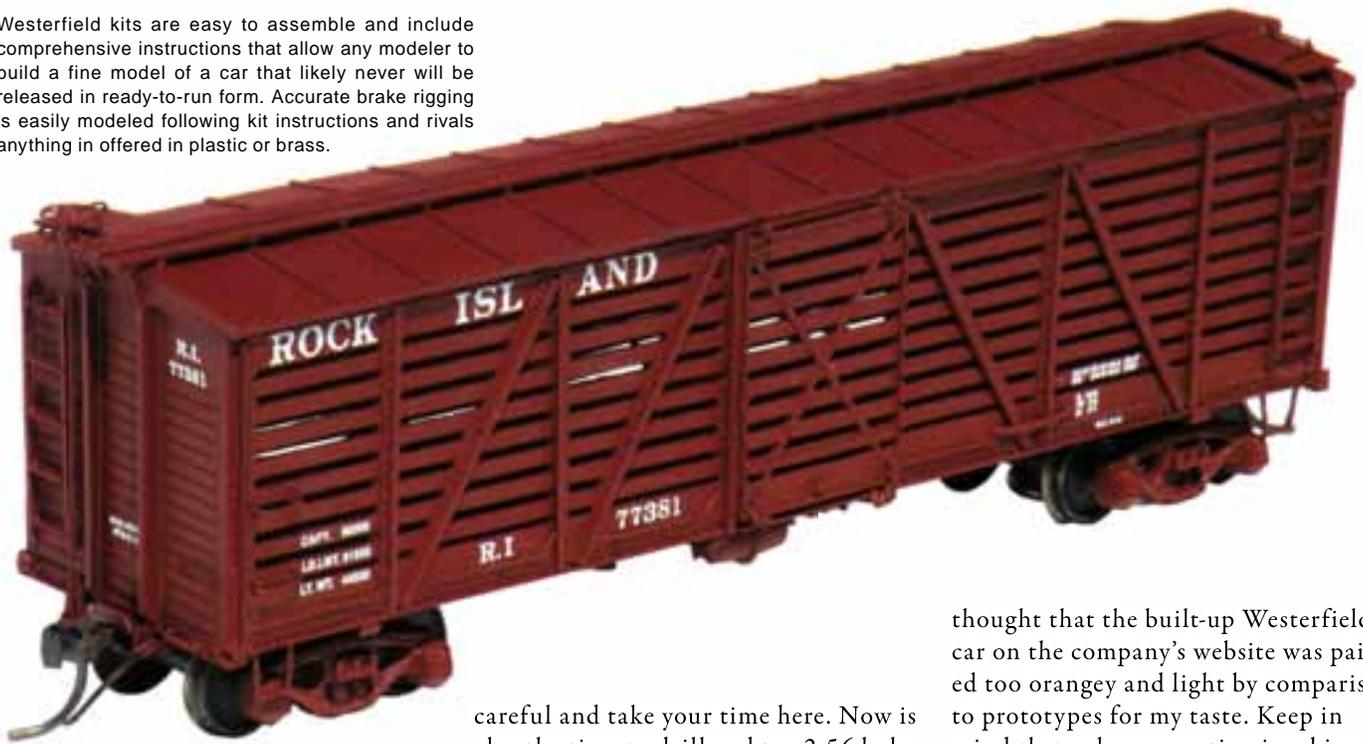
advantage of Westerfield kit instructions is that they are so comprehensive that one can assemble an accurate model knowing little (if anything) of the prototype. I painted the inside of the car a light tan.

Now to add the model's roof. First, install the roof contour boards. The end boards are installed first. You will have to shorten the boards to fit between the car sides. With the two end contour boards fitted, cut the ridge pole to fit in the notches in their centers. CA the other three contour boards between the car sides, carefully checking that they support the ridge pole in a straight line. Check your work with a scale rule or straightedge as you go. This was followed by adding the roof casting — it's best that you score it down its center to help you break the casting to have it straddle the roof peak. Test fit the roof before gluing it to the carbody with your choice of CA or Walther's ([www.walthers.com](http://www.walthers.com)) Goo. Goo buys you time to shift the roof panel on the carbody to place it accurately, before the adhesive sets. You have to be quick and accurate the first time if using CA to attach the roof. It can be done easily if you break the roof casting into two halves and place the inside edge of one half accurately on the peak of the carbody end, and then



Westerfield's attention to detail is reflected both in the quality of the castings in the kit and the model that results from simply following the instructions provided to build it. Fine molded detail and easy assembly are hallmarks of Westerfield kits. Note the chains securing the bottom of the door to a rod running under the door. This rod and chain arrangement prevented livestock from pushing the door out from the bottom, and is easy to model following kit instructions. Decals are custom made for the kit. I built this model knowing nothing of Rock Island stock cars, but had enough printed material in the kit to allow me to feel confident my finished product was authentic in appearance.

Westerfield kits are easy to assemble and include comprehensive instructions that allow any modeler to build a fine model of a car that likely never will be released in ready-to-run form. Accurate brake rigging is easily modeled following kit instructions and rivals anything in offered in plastic or brass.



hinging it down to sit on the car sides.

The running board was attached using CA. Contrary to the kit instructions, I added the end walks after the stirrups. Door detail was added per instructions, with the chains at the bottom of the door tricky to install. I used a magnifier to help me see better as I threaded the door chains through the chain rod at the bottom of the doors. The top of the chains are attached to the door with homemade eyebolts of .008-inch thick wire installed into No. 80 drilled holes at the bottom of the doors. The eyebolts are closed up around the chain links after the chains are hung on them.

Next, I handled a few small details before painting the model. I drilled pilot holes for the stirrups in the side sills using a No. 79 drill bit, following up with a No. 75 drill. You don't have a lot of material to drill into, so be

careful and take your time here. Now is also the time to drill and tap 2-56 holes for a Kadee ([www.kadee.com](http://www.kadee.com)) coupler pocket, or suitable ones for your choice of coupler pocket. Stirrup steps were cut from the runner and CA'ed in place. End walks were added to the roof afterwards. Doing it this way kept the end walks from being damaged from the carbody being upside down to drill holes for and install the stirrups. Finally, install the running board end supports, ladders, and brake platform on the carbody for the same reason. I assembled the brake wheel and staff, setting it aside for now. Kadee No. 500 Bettendorf trucks were used for this model. The wheelsets were then removed; the trucks and carbody cleaned with Comet and allowed to air dry overnight before painting.

Living in Canada, I don't have ready access to the range of paints available in the U.S. Looking at online photos of Rock Island freight rolling stock, I

thought that the built-up Westerfield car on the company's website was painted too orange and light by comparison to prototypes for my taste. Keep in mind that color perception is subjective in the eyes of the viewer so your mileage may vary. I mixed up a concoction of commercial lacquer paints that I thought approximated Rock Island freight car color. This was airbrushed onto the carbody and trucks using my trusty Paasche ([www.paascheairbrush.com](http://www.paascheairbrush.com)) H external-mix airbrush. Coupler pockets and brake wheel/staff assembly were brush-painted, as was minimal touch-up painting. I have painted other Westerfield models using Modelflex ([www.modelflexpaint.com](http://www.modelflexpaint.com)) acrylic, and latex paints such as Tamiya ([www.tamiyausa.com](http://www.tamiyausa.com)), with no paint adhesion issues. The key is to make sure that the model is clean before painting—and keep it that way until you have painted it.

Modelers now need simply to purchase a bottle of Tru-Color No. TCP-197 1930–1960s Rock Island Freight Car Brown from their local hobby



The underframe is easy to build and has a high standard of detail with minimal effort on the part of the modeler. The high quality standard of the final product with minimal efforts invested is why I have always felt that Westerfield kits are *the gold standard* for resin kits.

shop for the right car color. If I were to build this model again, I would use this Tru-Color paint ([www.trucolorpaint.com](http://www.trucolorpaint.com)), but it wasn't available yet when I commenced this project.

InterMountain Railway ([www.intermountain-railway.com](http://www.intermountain-railway.com)) No. 40052 semi-scale 33-inch wheelsets were painted a rust color on the inside wheel faces and axles, and a grimy black on the outside faces. These were installed in the Kadee trucks, lubricated on the axle tips and inside the journal boxes using P-B-L ([www.p-b-l.com](http://www.p-b-l.com)) Neolube. Kadee No. 78 couplers were painted a rust color on the exposed parts. The coupler shanks were polished, dipped in Neolube, and installed in the coupler pockets. The coupler assemblies were secured to the carbody with 2-56 screws. The trucks were screwed into the bolsters using 2-56 screws.

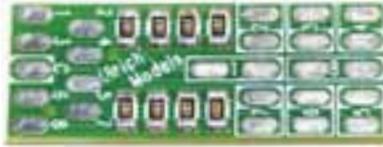
The decals are a delicate little bit of work. Carefully cut out the individual pieces from the sheet—one at a time — and place them on the model following the data sheet in the kit and the online Westerfield photo of the built-up model. I used Microscale's ([www.microscale.com](http://www.microscale.com)) fishing system of MI-1 MicroSol brushed onto the surface before decaling, followed by MI-2 Microset to set the decal to the surface. Areas that needed more solvent received a *very sparing* brush application of Walthers' No. 904-470 Solvaset to settle the decals into the surface after the MicroSol had completely dried.

After the decals had set, Hi-Tech Details ([www.hitechdetails.com](http://www.hitechdetails.com)) No. 6036 rubber airbrake hoses were added next to the coupler pockets. The brake staff/wheel assembly was installed, completing this model.

This kit builds into a very nice model of an unusual car that is not available elsewhere, and probably never will be. Those modeling a steam-era Rock Island Line will need a few. Even modelers of connecting roads may need one.

Al Westerfield started an exhaustive line of HO model rolling stock kits 30 years ago that even then was comparable in quality with brass imports. I think that what we are seeing in kits such as the Rock Island stock car surpasses much of what is offered even today in brass.

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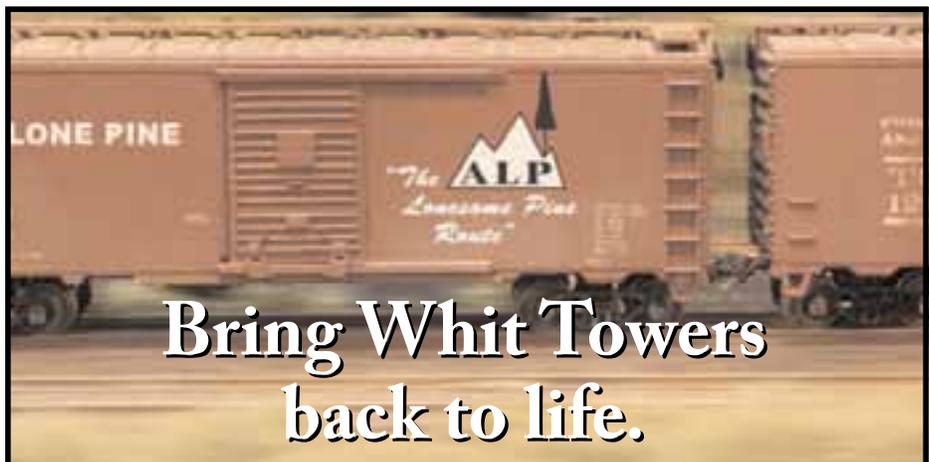
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