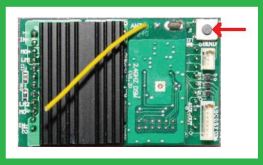
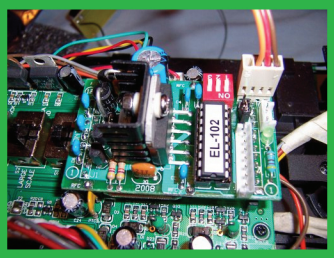
Garden Trains
From A to Z

R is for Remote Control





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Garden Trains - A to Z

What you will find in this document.

Discussion groups are a great way to share information. One thing that is unique to LSOL.com is our Tuesday Topic. Each week, for almost six years, we have discussed a specific group topic. It could be about bridges, or maybe you like steam vs. diesel engines. Many times it is about how people solved a problem, or what they think about a current issue or product. My favorite was several years ago. "If your railroad was a candy bar, what would it be." (Good and Plenty, Milk Dud, etc.) We have fun at LSOL.com as well as help each other with serious issues on our railroads.

Now with almost 300 different weekly discussions online we wanted to make it easier for you to use this vast knowledge base of topics. We are taking the time to edit the best answers on a specific Tuesday topic into PDF documents. We have also added photos as available so you can see just what was being talked about from each of the users.

This paper is different than one written by just one author on a topic. You are getting dozens and dozens of years of combined experience from some of the smartest people running Large Scale Trains today. Save this document and start building your own personal reference library on your computer today.

What is LSOL.com? (Large Scale Online)

Large Scale Online has been providing information for Large Scale Garden Train enthusiasts for almost 15 years. We are the oldest, largest, and most professional web site on the Internet that is exclusive to Large Scale Garden Trains.

LSOL.com provides information in many different ways. We have online articles, videos for you to watch and photos for you to see how it is done. We also have organized and secure online discussion groups. We are the only site that requires people to use their real name. No hiding behind your keyboard making anonymous posts. Join Us.

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Remote Control

What type of RC unit do you use for your large scale trains? I know there are many out there but what do you use and why? Do you use only one system or have you tried many and what system do you use or do you have a combination of RC units that you use. What was the first RC you purchased? Do you still use it, or have you switched?

KC Marshall - Aristo, changing to QSI/Gwire

As for me I started with the Aristo track power 27 MHz system, then went to the 27 MHz trail car with battery system, I also have two uses of the 75 MHz onboard system and have even used the HOTE system for small draws like the Delton railcar and the Bachmann rail truck.

I have since added the one AirWire/QSI/Gwire. Even though I have had issues with getting it installed in my NW-3 cow, it is very small considering other RC sound unit, which allows the Aristo Li-Ion 22.5 battery to be installed with it in small places.

I have

5-Aristo 27 MHz trackside trailcars, 1 with sierra sound in trailcar.

1- Aristo 27 MHz trackside in box for basic track control when I get around to it.

2 -Aristo 75 MHz systems in older C-16 engines that work fine.

2 -HOTE systems, one railtruck one Mack Doozie

2 -QSI/GWire with sound

Kenneth Allen - original TE system

I use the original TE system both trackside and onboard for battery power and I could only put one in, that's ok with this comment all will know that I use both. I like the way they operate and I see no need to change a good thing, been satisfied and happy with it since I started use the TE in 95.

James O'Connor - original TE system

I use the original TE for the indoor layout and Bridgeworks MAG 1000DL on the outdoor layout.

Dave Marecek - all Battery and RC

The Lone Firr runs all Battery and RC. What have I learned?

Lithium Ion are solid, though occasionally have QA problems from factory and need to be returned- never had any hassle from Aristo replacing. 75 MHz TE is fiddly and small and must be handled carefully, but operationally it works once installed and has good distance for control. Never had to open and reset anything in many years biggest issue I have had is combining sound cards to feed from the RC TX Motor output as I have found several incompatibilities between vendors.

Other issue is disconnecting all wiring to ensure I have isolated rails and no other circuitry between TX control and motor. I like to run on other people layouts who have powered rails, so rail isolation is key for me

David Clapper - haven't used any remote control systems

I haven't used any remote control systems . . . yet! The new Aristocraft system looks like something I would enjoy having. Since the new railroad isn't even under construction yet, I think I'll wait and see how everyone likes the Revolution RC and then jump in and buy it.

Jon D. Miller - started with the Aristo-Craft Train Engineer

I started with the Aristo-Craft Train Engineer 27Mhz trackside in June of 1994. Within a month or so several trackside units were installed in box cars along with batteries. One trackside TE was retained for track power.

In 1996 when the TE mini on-board receivers entered the market four of these were purchased to use along with the trackside units for on-board battery/RC control of trains. All of these original Train Engineers are still in service. Over the years one RX and one TX were returned to Aristo for repair. The 27 MHz units have countless hours of use. These have been excellent units. Well worth their cost over the long haul.

For power I've used gel-cells, Ni-Cad, Ni-Mh, and since first available Crest lithium batteries. The Crest lithium is now the battery of choice. These pack a lot of power in a small package. I must say that the Crest gel-cells gave great service at a reasonable price. The knock on the gel-cells was their size and weight. I still use the gel-cells on occasion.

A little over a year ago I added a RCS PnP that was installed in the Bachmann K-27. This RCS unit has proven to be easy to install, reliable, and has great range. Just recently another RCS PnP was installed in the new Bachmann Mallet. If these two RCS PnP systems continue to work as well as they do now future purchases of on-board battery RC will be the RCS units. I'll stick with the Train Engineer units as long as they continue to work. No reason to change when the first generation TE does everything I expect from a RC on-board unit.

For sound it would have to be the just released Phoenix PB9 system. The PB9 replaces their 2K2 system. The sound card is small and should fit your locomotives without taking up a lot of space. One sound system I cannot recommend is the Dallee Sound system.

Barry Harris - Locolinc and Aristo

The Laurel Creak and Western RR use all batteries with both Locolinc and Aristo TE 75 MHz on board in all 4 steam locomotives.

Wesley Drummond - 27 MHz in a battery trailing units

I use the 27 MHz in a battery trailing units for six of my locos; the 75 MHz in three of my switcher units.

I have the new Revolution on order and can hardly wait for its arrival. At present a transmitter/receiver and a 6-pack of receivers. It is my intention to go fully Revolution as soon as possible. In fact I put one of my new 27 transmitter / receivers and a second new receiver on eBay and sold them. I didn't want to build a 7th trailing unit with the new Revolution on the horizon.

I have used Aristo-Craft RC from day one. I choose not to go Air Wire for other reasons and am glad I made that choice in anticipation of a possible Aristo RC upgrade. My biggest frustration with the 75 MHz has been the "range" inadequacies of that unit. I expect that will be soon forgotten. I like the independence of MUing units easily. To be sure there will be the extra cost of adding receivers in each loco but that is a cost well worth the expense.

Paul Roberts - original TE and 10 Amp Crest power

Solidly track power with my original TE and 10 Amp Crest power. Works like a charm...great range. Why fix it if it ain't broken?

Dennis Paulson - controlled with a AC TE, over 10 years

Also still with track power, controlled with an AC TE, over 10 years now, works fine, last long time.

Donald Urquhart - MTH/DCS

First Choice, MTH/DCS. I have 15 Locomotives running with MTH/DCS control and sound, 10 MTH Railking and 5 Aristo-Craft with MTH DCS Upgrade Kits. Two other Locomotives are setup with the Aristo-Craft 75MHz TE Onboard control.

I use Track Power and both the DCS and TE Onboard can operate on the same track at the same time.

Mitch Erland - Track power and Locolink.

Track power and Locolink. This is what they sold me at St Aubins several years ago. Works fine.

Bert Lattan - currently using the Airwire/QSI/Gwire

I started with an RC/battery system, whose name I can't remember, in the late 80s or early 90s. It was a 12 VDC system. I used it for a short time. Later I used both the trackside and trail car TE. I am currently using the Airwire/QSI/Gwire combination. With a DCC decoder and sound system in one package, it is a good value in comparison with other decoder/receiver and sound system combinations. I expect to stick with it for now. I would like to see the Gwire improved so that the frequency can be changed electronically rather than mechanically. The Airwire throttle already has this capability.

Mark Douglas - planning to go Battery/RC

I am planning to go Battery/RC. I haven't made a vendor choice yet. It is my intention to control lighting and switching from the TX unit, in addition to the locomotives.

Ray Turner - My first unit was from Rara Avis

I started with RC in the early 90's. My first unit was from Rara Avis, which was a converted RC car system. Glitched like crazy - it was unusable. I tried Reed's after that - worked OK. Neither of these is in this business anymore. Then I tried Locolinc. Works OK, has good sound control, but range was poor, sometimes only 10'. Next I tried Aristo TE 75 onboard. Works very well, range up to 100' at times, but whistle control is poor. Currently I have 5 engines, 3 TE and 2 Locolinc. All have Sierra Soundtraxx. While I am pretty satisfied with these, I really want to try the Aristo Revolution when it comes out this summer. A friend has AirWire and it works very well for him. Although this is a bit more expensive, the fact that you can use less expensive DCC sound systems and it has better sound control makes up for the $$$.

BTW, I use NiCad and NiMH tool batteries. If I was starting over I would definitely use Lithium Ion.

The confusion over 72 vs. 75 MHz is common. 75 MHz is for "land use" (which includes model boats), and 72 MHz is reserved for "air" (model airplanes). Hopefully this minimizes the chance of model planes crashing into people.

Barbara Karkutt - powered by AirWire with DSX sound

I have 3 engines powered by AirWire with DSX sound and NiMh batteries. Since I am all steam the units are installed in the tenders. The AirWire units have a great range. If I found better sound that is as small as the DSX I might spend the money to change that.

I would love to find a very small RC unit for my switcher engine, Bachman Gandy Dancer and my eggliner (anyone?). Right now the eggliner and Gandy Dancer run on separate tracks with power. The switcher is display only right now.

I have no intention of changing out the AirWire...right now I just want to get the layout back together (I dismantled the town it so I could use the buildings at our Club's Christmas display in support of Second Harvest Food Bank)...snow keeps getting in the way (many of the buildings are back but the trees and figures are not).

Elaine Haggenbottom - started with a Lionel ZW

We always used track power and started with a Lionel ZW and a converter box. (The Lionel Conrail engine almost required the extra power). At the end of our running, we switched to the Aristo-Craft Train Engineer, still staying with track power. We never made the move to batteries.

Ralph Bounds - started adding MTH

I use two systems actually. Started with LGB digital so have one set of tracks that utilize this power and it's been very reliable over the years.

Later started adding MTH engines (on separate track systems) and really appreciate the features and capabilities that system provides. Much superior in that regard to LGB. The "realism" in utilizing a MTH digital over an LGB digital system is far superior. However, the MTH system is not as reliable as every once in a while one engine will start up and run "on its own" when power is first applied to the tracks. OUCH!

Willard Kohler - I'm using Airwire

I'm using Airwire with Phoenix P5 for sound. I don't (and won't) have a large loco roster, so I wanted to get it right the first time. After a lot of research and questions asked at train shows, I settled on the Airwire 9000 throttle and Airwire AW9D10SS receiver. I currently have 2 Bachmann Shays (36-ton) and I plan to add 1 ten-wheeler "Annie" eventually for the C&O way freights that served Cass, WV. Batteries are NiMH at 14.4 volts. The Phoenix P5 drives a 5-watt speaker for LOTS of sound!

Geoffrey Cullison - original TE 27 MHz trackside system

We have used an original TE 27 MHz trackside system on one loop since 1999 and recently added a bashed AirWire system on one loco that is run on battery power. Occasionally we even break out a Bachmann Big Hauler radio control system. We plan to look hard at the new Aristo Revolution RC unit. My goal (dream on in this economy) is to have sound and RC in every loco. Reality is more like sound in a few locos and two trailing RC-battery cars, maybe four. We doubt we'll ever run more than four trains at a time.

Bennie Shields - LocoLinc with Crest L-ion battery

My first two locos (Bachmann Ten Wheelers) were lead acid gel cell battery powered, controlled with LocoLinc. As my inventory of locos increased, I added Aristo 27MHz track powered radio control. The old have been retired and I now have an "Annie" Ten-Wheeler using LocoLinc with Crest L-ion battery. With the 21 volt battery, it's a good puller. It pulls the track cleaning caboose before the track powered start running. I plan to convert the Acucraft C&S 60 to LocoLinc this spring with a trailing car for the receiver and L-ion battery. The Texas heat in the summer makes the '60's metal tender too hot to house the receiver.

Carl Angdahl - still in the planning stages

My G-Gauge layout here in the desert of Yucca Valley, CA is still in the planning stages so I have the same questions. I have seen and tried the Airwire and was quite impressed, but I now see Aristo-Craft has a new battery system. I'll be following this forum.

Mike Evans - 27 MHz TE

27 MHz TE for on-board and track side powering of my trains and layout. Only problem with on board is keeping batteries ready to go (charged up) and installing conversion to battery only in older locomotives, especially isolating motor from track pickups on Bachmann geared locos.

Steve Seidensticker - I have looked closely at all the systems

I have looked closely at all the systems introduced since and all have some compromises that limit their usefulness and flexibility. What I really like is that I can control ANY LocoLinc locomotive with ANY LocoLinc controller at ANY time. It is very DCC-like (although it predates DCC). I do not have to change frequencies, crystals, or anything else on either the locos or the controllers. Everything works on the same frequency but there is no interference problem. I don't think that even the new system from Aristo can boast that capability. This is a major weakness of the AirWire system.

I host a monthly operating session with three crews. Locomotives are assigned arbitrarily. We don't have to worry about matching the controller with the locomotive.

P.S. I have no connection with LocoLinc other than being a happy customer. I think Behren Reeves, the developer and founder, got it right the first time. Now if he would just introduce a smaller controller.

Stephen Auslender - not yet decided what RC unit to use

I could not vote today because I have not yet decided what RC unit to use. Right now I am building the modules. When they are done I'll lay the track and then decide on what RC unit to use for the railroad.

I want to have more than one train running and I also want to operate the animations I intend to build. I'll concern myself with the RC system to choose when I get to that point.

Ray Jakabcin - RCS came to my rescue

I could almost write an article on my experiences on RC Battery outdoors. I was always involved with battery just never wanted to go track powered.

I started in 1996 with a system sold by Reed's Hobby Supply in San Diego---twin stick Futaba radio --great range I just had problems.

Needed something easier so RCS came to my rescue now I own 5 engines all RCS battery and "Phoenix" and love the system. It's easy and for me trouble free.

Roy Towne - using MTH DCS for about 5 years

I have been using MTH DCS for about 5 years now and like it very much. I have 8 engines, the oldest is a challenger and the latest is a narrow nose -8 with remote operating couplers. I can put them in my switch yard and fire them up as I "need" them and operate my switches with the same hand-held control. Plus I can place cars and uncouple them with my new -8. It's the most fun remote system I've seen or used.

Richard Pricco - I went to Locolinc

I bought my first large scale engine in 1984 and have had three indoor layouts since. In 1993 I bought equipment from "On Board" from Keller Engineering. A few years later he must have gone out of business because I tried to order some more receivers and sound units, but wasn't able to establish contact. So I went to Locolinc. The On Board was connected to the track, but if I understand correctly there was a way to use it radio controlled. I am pleased with Locolinc except it is limited to 18 volts. I talked with the company asking if there was any fudge factor and was told "no. It is 18 volts. More voltage will ruin it." But, even though I would like the trains to go a little faster, I don't mind it that much. I haven't tried any of their sound units and don't think I will.

Marcus Kollmann - track power with wireless DCC Massoth

I use track power with wireless DCC Massoth remotes. Works beautifully and is totally reliable!

Brian McMahon - Bridgewerks UR-15 remote control units

I currently use Bridgewerks UR-15 remote control units with MAG-15 power supplies. I have three sets 1) Eastbound Maintrack 2) Westbound Maintrack and 3) Yard Tracks. It's all analog; no DCC.

I use Bridgewerks products because they are the best on the market and they have great customer service. They back their product 100%.

It the past I have used Aristo's Train Engineer for both track and on board battery power.

Clifton MunzPhelps - TE with battery power

I have seen the new TE 2.4 GHz hand held and receiver in person. Both are great looking. The Receiver is very small and would fit in my rail truck no problem. I have been kit bashing the rail truck and now don't have the room as the "old" OEM model had, so the fact it would fit is great. I just hope Aristo comes out with a 1 amp receiver because I don't need all the power the new one will have. Thus, I am going with the new TE with battery power.

Daniel List - Airwire with lithium batteries

I had used track power with Aristo Train Engineer wireless controllers, and could never get the range or dependability. And to top it all off, ants would inhabit the remote receivers! I now use Airwire with lithium batteries and am totally happy with the system. I have recently powered a Heartland railtruck with Airwire and one Black & Decker 7.2V lithium battery and everything works perfectly - even the Soundtrax DSX sound unit! And just the right top speed. What I like best about Airwire is the positive control and the great range 300'. When I used the Train engineer, I would push the speed button and I could never tell if it had sent a message to the locomotive. The Airwire has a speed control knob and gives instant response to whatever command I send.

By the way, the B & D 7.2V lithium batteries are just right for Airwire usage. If you want higher voltage you can use them in series. They are nice also because you can plug them into the B & D charger and charge them in short time and also use them in the B & D tools they neatly plug into. A charge will last over 3 hours running on the rail truck. They are inexpensive too - I ordered mine from my friendly Ace hardware and they cost $20 each. If anyone needs more details, I'll be glad to fill in the gaps.

Ron Brantner - Digitrax with track power

I use Digitrax with track power. It's a complete DCC networked system that includes wireless and other network components. I started with Digitrax loco decoders, but now, all but two locos have been converted to QSI sound decoders. I'm very happy with how the Digitrax system performs. I get a good 300 feet coverage from the 1 wireless component. If I need more air coverage, all I have to do is add another wireless component to the network at another location. I can be in the house and still operate trains. I decided to stay with tack power due to the fact I had to run copper for remote switching and train detection anyway.

Dusty Suit - looking forward to new Aristo 2.4GHz

I started with the unit from Reed's hobby which used a modified Futaba air R/C control. It still works. Since then, I have used all versions of the Aristo TE, a LocoLink, MTH DCS, NCS DCC (provided by a visitor), Airwire, G-wire, and the QSI decoder/sound unit.

Of these, I like the combination of the basic AirWire RF1300 Throttle with the G-wire/QSI decoder. The QSI decoder can use track power or battery power and has excellent range (over 100 ft.). It is also compatible with track DCC if desired though this requires clean track.... a rare event on my layout.

The MTH DCS proved very unreliable on my outdoor layout, with the control range being very limited, even after a thorough track cleaning was done, whereas an NCS DCC system worked flawlessly on the same track.

I am looking forward to trying out the new Aristo 2.4GHz system. It looks like a winner.

John Damkier - RCS

All of my R/C engines are RCS. I picked them many years ago because the TX is small enough to fit in my shirt pocket. Long range and lots extras are not important to me. In fact, I like the simplicity. It's kind of like sound systems. If you like lots of features to fiddle with, then Bose is not for you. I like it because it sounds pretty good and you don't have to fiddle with it.

Jon D. Miller - will continue with the TE system

One year later and still using the Aristo-Craft (Crest) Train Engineer system. It's worked for me, both track control and primarily battery power with on-board receivers. The TE system has been in use since 1994. Still well satisfied with the system from an operational and cost effective stand point. For now and into the foreseeable future the CD&StL RY will continue with the TE system.

John Caughey - going to RC w/ bats

I too am going to RC w/ bats and maybe sound. There are two simplified systems that I'm considering and in conversations with 2 reps I got the message to pick a sound card and send that info with the order.

I run small steam, 4-4-0, 2-8-0 and wonder what sound card others might recommend. I'm installing a loose battery pack on board, so size is important too as well as cost. The truck just had a frontal lobotomy! $$$ etc...

Previously when on my own I found the type of battery system that dummies down to my needs. According to the gents that developed it, previous concerns have been addressed. It's a track and battery system that uses battery power to supplement track power voltage drops and recharges from the track. It will go full battery on non powered sections and is rectified protected when re-entering powered sections so polarity is taken care of internally instead of in the track.

I like this instead of replacing batteries because my fat fingers break details all by themselves. The fewer opportunities they have, the better. As a car mechanic I always had parts left over, who am I to tempt fate?

I'm tailoring my set up for my grand nephews 2 - 5 yrs, simplicity is my MO so a 2 stick 'toy' controller seems better, hence I'm leaning towards Del's G Scale Graphics Railboss. I wanted the enhanced version until I read about Small Scale Railway Co and their sound modules. They are optically controlled, using pre-recorded sounds of an actual loco and programmed for realistic timing. Entirely hands off! A plus for 'my' boys.

I wrote to SSRy.Co last night and got a reply this am. Gregg was very helpful and offered custom alterations at minimum cost; for a buck from 9 volt battery to 18 volt track power, an offer to omit the "All Aboard" if my 4-4-0 was going to be used for freight, no charge! Also with or without air compressor, his suggestion, again n/c! They have a list of loco recordings you can choose from. While no C-16 recording, I picked a small 2-8-2 for the driver size.

I know you big boys want to control everything, but I want my little ones to have fun and run trains. I'm also content to run trains while I work on scenery, daydreaming my next creation inspired by sounds of railroading.... hands free!

Pete Null - probably use Aristo-Craft

I am not far enough along with my layout to run trains, let alone remote. But when I do I will probably use Aristo-Craft since my Pacific Engine is that make. I also have a Bachman Set my wife bought me for Christmas. I guess I can use an Aristo battery and remote on that engine too. I really do not know. I do not want to have the same problem as with the TV & VCR, half a dozen remotes for every TV & VCR.

Chris Wolcott - RC on most of my Live Steam

I use RC on most of my Live Steam. None of my electrics are RC'd

Kevin Kohler - 10 channel TE

I got a killer deal on 10 channel TE on an on line auction site. That's why TE. Among those using TE, how many are 27MHz and how many are 75MHz? RC Track or on board? I've got both but all my new projects are on board. 27MHz on board receivers are hard to find!

TE and battery is certainly possible for the Bachman 10 wheeler. It's just a question of what to put where. If you put the battery and receiver in the tender, you'll probably want to RC the lights separately and maybe the smoke too. That means at least two or maybe three extra wires between tender and loco assuming that you'll keep the stock sound connection. Put the RC in the loco and battery in the tender and you're set!

Gary Siegel - CVP's Easy DCC

I will be using CVP's Easy DCC new "Air Wire" system. It is a wireless controlled, battery powered system with an onboard receiver and decoder. They already have a wireless track power DCC system that I am using on my indoor railroad. I should be getting a beta test system in about 6 weeks and I will keep you informed.

Wentworth Comes II - Aristo TE 27 MHz

I use Aristo TE 27 MHz with power from the tracks. I think it's the greatest thing since sliced bread. Run all brands of motive power without a problem. Keep it simple I say.

Bill Swindell - Locolinc

So far, I am using Locolinc. As soon as the CVP AirWire system is available, I plan on switching.

Scott Suleski - Locolinc

I also am using LocoLinc. If anyone has any questions on it that I can answer I'd be glad to. I really enjoy battery power and remote control for running at any time.

Keith Slye - thinking about using battery power

I am thinking about using battery power and remote control. Which is better TE or Locolinc and why? I only want to spend the money once!

Peter Eaton - Aristo's TE 27

I use Aristo's TE 27 as I was already using it on my HO layout and loved it.

Jim Margerum - TE 10 and a MRC20 for power

I am presently using TE 10 and a MRC20 for power. I am still in the construction and test stage of a large indoor layout and this system allows me to walk with the train as I check new installations. The emergency button is just a click away. I still think of using the EPL system of automatic run control for display purposes and have considered the MTS from LGB to have complete control. I hesitate to commit to any new system for fear of another new and improved system to outshine the last. I guess it's just like computers, hot setup today and yawn tomorrow.

Stephen Auslender - haven't decided yet

I haven't decided yet about RC or direct electric via rails. I'll start laying track as soon as the ground thaws. I have a large transformer, rectifier, etc. lots of track accumulated and plenty of cars and locos. Now to get going.

I've decided to lay the track and electrify it in the traditional manner. Then, if I want to experiment with radio control I'll be able to do it without having to make a final commitment. Some of my engines are remote control, some use electricity from the track. If I set it up for traditional power and then experiment with RC I'll be free to take advantage of the latest developments as they appear on the market.

Not only will I be able to run all the different systems but I'll be able to invite friends over to run their engines, irrespective of what type of controls they use.

I choose flexibility.

Lawrence Ramstad - using the A/C remote control

I am currently using the A/C remote control but I am hooking up the CTI computer system that runs everything or allows you to still use the remote. The system is supplied current thru the A/C remote control into a computer controlled circuit. If something goes wrong you can hit the stop button and the train will stop or hit the emergency stop on the computer.

Bud Steinhoff - either Aristo 27 MHz or 75 MHz

I have either Aristo 27 MHz or 75 MHz on-board receivers on all my locos and all switches on remote with the same system. I have had very few problems, makes it fun to run and with the new plug in on-boards easy to install. Great system and works well on all brands.

Cyril (Cy) Svobodny - good old fashion track power

For me both my large scale and HO operations are done with good old fashion track power and multi cab (power pack) control. Two main line cabs and each town or yard has another cab of its own, controlled by a rotary switch. The only exception is a Bachmann big hauler radio control 4-6-0. But, I also belong to The Newport Club (HO in Newport, MN) and it is DCC. It is great when you have a large track plan (about 400+ feet of main line and 13 stations). It is not failsafe, if you are careless cornfield meets and rear-enders are possible.

Daniel Cheek - I plan to try battery power

I am just getting started, running track power, but I plan to try battery power with RC soon. I'm interested in finding out more about the tradeoffs with Locolinc, Train Engineer, RCS, before I buy.

Scott Suleski - I bought LocoLinc

I can tell you about the reasons I bought LocoLinc.

One Controller (Transmitter) for multiple engines. You get to program in the engine codes from the receiver so if you have a KT-16 that controls 16 engines and you get up to 18 or 20 you can switch the programming back and forth to control which ever engines you feel like running. You can also program someone else's codes in and run their engine with your controller. There is a MU function so you can run up to four units together. Since I run diesels I felt that was important.

Since I let my kids run trains also it is good that I have three transmitters. My engine codes are in each one. So I can slow an engine down, or stop it even when a kid won't let go of a transmitter. The emergency stop button sends out the stop signal to every engine in the transmitter so you don't have to worry about grabbing different transmitters to stop all your engines.

There are good things about every system you just have to decide what's right for you.

Dennis Cherry - I use computer control

I use computer control. Got a new system and it looks like a winner for Large Scale. Will report on this after some more experience with the system. Easy to use and has great versatility for

Lee Carlson - Instant R/C from Reed's Hobbies

I've been using Instant R/C from Reed's Hobbies for more than a dozen years. I've installed TE 75 MHz on 2 units in the past year. The IRC seems to have a much greater range.

Bill Ewing - will probably try the Aristo system

I have been a model railroader for many years. Up until this year it has been all HO but now I have decided to allow my hobby to grow a little and am buying some large scale. I just LOVE my new Aristo SD-45! I have used DCC on my HO since it came out and generally I am pleased with its performance. I will probably try the Aristo system after I get some track on the ground this spring. The sound system on my DCC added tremendously to my enjoyment of running trains. I am looking forward to the same fun with my new large scale.

Tim Hytrek - experience with R/C for live steam?

Does anyone have experience with R/C for live steam? I put R/C on my Accucraft Shay #5 and I am having glitch problems due to the Metal nature of the locomotive. Seems to work O.K. when the engine is sitting still, but when the cylinders get to moving and all other associated moving parts the servos start going haywire. It is a 4 channel FM system from Hitech called the Laser 4.

Joe Fotschky - Aristo-Craft Train Engineer system

I have the Aristo-Craft Train Engineer system for my layout. I have been involved with this hobby for more than 15 years and it is amazing to look back through the old Garden Railways magazines and see what was offered and see what did not survive. Most people in our club that started out back then have changed their choice of power controls.

I have always thought about having one engine battery powered and radio controlled so I can take it places and run on other track without a problem but that project is not high on the list right now. My live steam Mikado will come with radio control already installed so no need to find a system that will work for that engine when it comes in.

Elaine Haggenbottom - Aristocraft's remote system (TE)

The Christmas layout was once again powered by the Aristocraft's remote system (TE) and it continued to work great... The yard has never grown larger, so range has never been an issue.

And since it is "track power" the LGB Mogul as well as the Aristocraft Ladybug OR Hershey Critter all responded the same

Donald Urquhart - I wish I had DCS in all my engines

I entered "G" scale about 5 years ago after 30 years collecting Lionel Trains. I knew the beauty of the computer control systems by MTH and Lionel for "O" gauge. As I built "G" outdoors I found, with a mix of LGB and Aristo power, the Aristo TE analog control system fit my need. It gave me a "walk around" remote and I could run any locomotive on DC track power.

Last summer MTH/Railking entered the market with "DCS" installed in each locomotive. I bought 1, then 2,3,4 locomotives they ran just fine on the Aristo TE, BUT, then I bought the "DCS Remote Control and Track Interface (TIU)(powered by the Aristo Elite DC power supply). Forget about it being the best sound in "G"; DCS control is just as great as in "O" gauge. I wish I had DCS in all my engines.

Geran Miller - Hitec R/C for my live steam engines

I use Hitec R/C for my live steam engines. For my electrics I have track power with a TE receiver and 3battery cars with TE receivers in them that I can hook to whatever I want that day. When I run electric I like to run 2 or 3 trains at the same time. TE will control my stuff at the far end of my layout, about 120', if I use the transmitter that has the antenna that extends. It would be nice to have an all stop as it can get exciting when I have a derailment. I have found that with more than 15 cars if you push panic stop you will almost always derail some of the cars on that train.

John Damkier - still using RCS

I'm still using RCS for most of my engines. I originally chose RCS for ease of operation and the TX fits in my shirt pocket. My latest is Remote which is very small and very low cost. Still has some bugs in it which should be worked out soon. I'll update when I get mine replaced.

I still like the RCS as it is very simple and operating is silky smooth. The Airwire system looks very interesting and appears to have superior range.

E. Paul Austin - There is only one, RCS

You mean there are other systems for remote control!?! There is only one, RCS. Its small, fits in the palm of your hand. There are no codes to remember. No big long antenna to get in the way or get into the landscaping! And it is not hard to install, if you can deal with electronics. And think about this: NO TRACK CLEANING!! No electrical problems. And you can use Aluminum Track (costs less!).

Tom Edgett - A/C 75 MHz onboard TE

I have three engines equipped with A/C 75 HZ onboard TE receivers. They work very well. I'd like to equip my new Dash 9 and the SOO Club Car locomotive with the same receivers but I understand that they are not currently available. Hope this is a short-term problem as I'd sure hate to change to something else at this point.

Todd Brody - My three TE's still function well

My three TE's still function well and I see no need to change. My RCS track system is nice and has better range than the TE's, but it's an older unit and has a higher voltage loss than the TE's. (I've added some additional capacitance and that helped the voltage loss a little.)

Mitch Erland - LocoLinc

I use LocoLinc and am happy with it so far.

Wayne Lamb - I have procrastinated on power and control

I have been waiting for this topic. Like a few others I have yet to lay rail....but in my study I have stainless track galore (got a great deal), Hillman clamps and expansion clamps (for Northern Utah), a rail bender and I have locomotives that are DCC ready, rolling stock, lots of people from Christmas sales, have two Big Sound's ready to install in my locomotives...but lo....I have procrastinated on power and control...wondering through two QE 2 conventions and numerous other regional and state conventions and club meetings...and I would like to lay the backbone of my Phase 1 track layout...now that my water feature is completed...so this discussion will be invaluable to me...anyone had any experience with NCE as a control?...or even better yet....anyone have any experience with control with Bit-Switch products. Also, the great articles in LSOL are setting in folders and are also invaluable for decisions. I know, Wayne, it is a journey, not a destination. It is a Garden Railroad...in that order, my chief operating officer continues to tell me.

Geoffrey Worstell - installed a couple of different systems

I've installed a couple of different systems, the most important feature to add to them all would be compatibility. If they can do it with DCC, they can do it with R/C. As it sits, you are locked in to a given system once you choose it for whatever reasons seemed best at the time. None of the manufacturers wants to give up his own patents to allow others to manufacture his stuff, so we won't see compatibility for a while. How about getting the MRRIA/NMRA interested in compatibility, like they did with DCC? That should spark a boom in R/C.

Dwight Morgan - LGB-MTS

I am using LGB-MTS and I love it. I only control Locomotives at this point but I am thinking. (My wife hates to hear that 'cause it always ends up costing money. I have a lot of wire in the ground for control of switches, lighting, etc. but I can parallel all those controls with decoders and have them all protected and using the same wire. I just upgraded my control station and remotes to parallel from serial. I am not sure it did anything for my immediate situation but it should help on future purchases.

The wireless range is something I am experimenting with, but I think it is ok for my situation.

Lee Carlson - Northwest RCS

Since my posting a year ago, I've added a Bachmann 45-ton switcher with R/C by Northwest RCS and Sierra sound. I love it! And the transmitter fits in a shirt pocket.

I've tried 75 MHz TE and Locolinc (5 amps). I fully agree with the recent TE test on this site. It is worthless when high amp draws and long ranges are desired, and the instructions are a joke. The Locolinc 18 volt cut off severely limits its usefulness for many applications. Someday I'll drop some more bucks on something different, when my current bad investments are a distant memory.

Wayne Walton - Lionel's command base

I have just installed Lionel's command base, cab 1 system to my layout. Train America studios board with sound in a U.S.A.GP 38-2. Very impressive. Easy to use, easy to wire reverse loops and with AC power you don't need to have a bunch of feeder wires. You can have 300ft of track with 18 volts everywhere on a single feed point. Try that with DC. Plus it cost less than a DC power pack Wayne Kenai AK.

John B Pedersen - TE and track power

I use the TE and track power. I use a computer power supply for the track power. I keep a train in a covered shed all the time, so when the wind is blowing and the snow is falling, I can plow from the comfort of inside the house. It doesn't get better than that! I don't need to follow a cord or get it tangled in the flora during the summer.

Robert Johnson - use trackside TE

I set up to use trackside TE, or flip a switch and use onboard TE; ain't too thrilled with either one. Haven't heard much from anybody to convince me to go in any other direction! Was really thinking about tearing down & out and just going with power pack control, but then you lose control of sound functions.

Rick Henderson - comes down to what you can afford to use

The remote control questions & answers have become as confusing and as opinionated as the scale & gauge issue. What you are seeing for the most part is the opinion of the individuals with the system they have used and are happy with.

Few, if any, people have purchased, installed and operated every system available, so getting an unbiased answer from someone that is truly knowledgeable with all of the systems may be impossible.

It all comes down to what you can afford to use and the costs of converting to that system which often may be more expensive that the locomotive you are trying to operate.

Jon D. Miller - Each of us has our favorite

Rick is right on the money. As he says, I doubt there is anyone that has personally owned and operated all the various control systems that are available. Each of us has our favorite.

Take Jon's advice and check the library to gain more information on the various systems. The system you end up with will have to be one that meets your intended operational needs and fits your pocketbook. If possible make contact with large scale operators in your area to find out what they are using. Visit these folks to get firsthand knowledge of their control systems.

I'm biased in favor of the Crest Train Engineer system. Have had it in use since 1994. The TE meets my requirements and the majority of members in our club that use an RC system. That sure doesn't mean it will meet everyone's needs and expectations. One word though. You can "over study" this aspect of LS railroading just as any other aspect. At some point it's time to "pull your socks up" and get on with it.

Good Luck in your search for the ultimate train control system!

John Damkier

Tim....go to www.remotecontrolthrottles.com for RCS information. I've bought three systems from Don and two of them he installed for me

Doug Cannon - Track Power on the 'all-weather' RBR

The only positive to likely being unable to attend a LSTS this year (first in five yrs to miss) is I won't be tempted to buy at least one unit of the new AirWire system. I don't know why but even though it would be my first attempt at R/C w/Batteries (Track Power on the 'all-weather' RBR) this new system has peeked my interest in the technology. Again a positive, due to being a purchase deferral till next year, it will give the pros at R/C a chance to get their hands on this sys to use it and debug it for the masses.

Via the GR review I did like to hear about the intensive manual that comes with it albeit a shortcut sheet would have been nice. My only concern was did the AirWire include any instruction on how much chopping out you have to do of the factory installed wiring, etc. for us newbie's to R/C. Or do you study the recent series of GR articles to attain those help tips although that I would think is a generic requirement maybe already addressed in the LSOL topic library !?

Bud Steinhoff - Still using 27 and 75 MHz Aristo

Still using 27 and 75 MHz Aristo on-boards in 20 locos. With the additional draw of the new larger locos, especially the Mallet, it is a must that you put fans in them to keep them from overheating. But they still work great for me with 100 ft + reception.

I have added DCS for my MTH locos and mix and run them with the others with no problem.

Robert Kubasko - I like to try it all

Well I like to try it all, currently have (2) older TE's *converted 1 with a RadioShack antenna, can be 300' away and control! Will be relaying original loops of mainline/branchline this summer. Also have MTH DCS with the J1a; waiting for ECLSTS to look at what else is currently available from Mike's; have considered the Lionel TM as well as LGB MTS.... you know the manufacturer game, everyone is different so they have their system. Draws us in unexpectedly and before you know it, you have an investment and mismatch. What I'm planning for is the Rail Driver for the diesels so I can sit in my rocking chair! Waiting patiently for the software developers.... U know, patiently! Debate & review will continue....

Bill Wilcox - the LocoLinc is a user-friendly

I "second" the comments by Scott - the LocoLinc is a user-friendly system with room for all the expansion one would reasonably expect. My only "problem" so far has been voltage. I use 3 Aristo 6 volt batteries in a trailing car and when they are fully charged, they put out approx 20.5 volts, in excess of the 18 volt limit for LocoLinc. I have employed some previous suggestions from other LSOL members and am currently using a series of diodes to reduce the voltage to 18 volts; as the voltage does drop from running time, I use a cut-out switch arrangement to bypass the diodes and regain the 2 volts, once again near the 18 volts. I am considering another option I found sold by MTH that reduces any dc voltage by 4 volts, maybe once again using a couple of switches inserted to step the volts back to 18 and maintain optimum power. Just a thought at this point. But, the bottom line is that LocoLinc is a good system and they stand behind their products.

Thure Gustafson - just installed NCE DCC

I've just installed NCE DCC on my layout with the radio remote. It all went a lot easier than I expected. I was up and running without any major problems, although I did cross the speaker wires of a soundtraxx sound decoder and had to send it in--free repair no questions asked. I have a temporary layout around my pool with about 75 feet of track which I threw down. Some of it is stainless some of it is brass that was outside for years then stored. (I didn't put in the screws in the joiners nor did I clean it I was so anxious to give it a try. Works like a charm. Full control of motor and sounds and smoke and lights etc. Nice easy startups and slow downs, can run two (or more but I only have two converted) with one remote controller and the possibilities for expansion is mind numbing. The radio range is around 100' which is about enough for my layout, but repeater antennas are soon to be available. There has been so much negative said about DCC in the garden that I was afraid to take the plunge, but, at least for the time being, I'm really glad I did.

Brad Bennett - Aristocraft TE system

We use the Aristocraft TE system, as we operate locomotives from four different manufacturers. It has the flexibility we need to run anything we want without expensive on-board electronic additions.

William Parthe - I have the 75 MHz TE

I have the 75 MHz TE, but no track laid down as yet-just some in my dining area (unfortunately I live in a mobile home park and not much area to set up yet). I like the RC with track power, but it seems the RC people are like the early computer operating systems (remember Commodore and others, including Apple), they wanted their own OS and some eventually went out of business (at least in the US). Proprietary systems can be their own undoing and it's a shame that suppliers of equipment can't join forces on basics and add their own little tweaks to appeal to individual users. Maybe it'll happen, but doubtful. The confusing thing today with the proliferation of control systems. I find it hard to sort out what much of the systems really do and don't do.

John Perez - Locolinc and have been happy

I also have the Locolinc and have been happy with it. The only thing I lack is the knowledge to put one of these together. Scott did you do your Locolinc. Also I see that you want to switch to the Airwire system. What benefits are you finding from the Airwire over the Locolinc? How does your sound system work with the Airwire also? I could ask a million questions but I do not know what to do in the end. Scott I could end up like you and change to the Airwire in the future but I still would like to just salvage what I have. I would also like to have my Locolinc work with some of the LGB MTS system features in engines.

Al Ankus - TE w/ 27 MHz Aristo w/ track power

I currently use the TE w/ 27 MHz Aristo w/ track power.

I also have a Roundhouse Argyll live steam w/ 2 channel radio and love the fact that I can 'lead or follow' the Locomotive round the GRR. I also have a Marklin BR-01 which has ALL the whistles n' bells...unfortunately, I cannot use them due to no GARDEN (OUTDOOR) DCC system... I have researched the new Airwire system for eventual battery power, but I also would like to retain DCC capabilities... SO what to do??? Do not want to purchase a high priced 'proprietary' system, like Marklin'Delta Digital.' Would prefer to grow with the system. Heard that NCE is beginning to provide 'G' scale products i.e., 10 Amp boosters etc. Do not want to; as some on this thread have done...buy into a system that will lock me in and not grow with my GRR...

Donald Urquhart - MTH/DCS

The beauty of MTH/DCS is it uses a Binary Encoder on the motor in the locomotive. The "on board" computer translates this into Scale Miles per Hour; you dial up on the Handheld Remote's screen the speed you want the engine to run. You can use the "Lashup" command to run 2, 3, or more engines with speed, lights, and sound in all locomotives controlled together by the Remote.

Thure Gustafson - NCE

The NCE system has had the 10 amp system for a while. One of the things that moved me toward DCC, besides its standards, is that converting my stable of engines to remote control will be much less expensive this way than any other. I spend $55 for a 5amp DCC motor decoder and $99 for the sound decoder. And that is it unless I need a speaker for the engine.

Kenneth Allen - 75 MHz TE track control

I have the 75 MHz TE track control for control of all my engines and I have never had any trouble with it. I have two receivers one for each set of the double track I have and one controller. I have never had any trouble about out of range with it, so I always wonder what they had got, a lemon of a receiver, maybe it is where you have the receiver located. May change one day when my lottery comes in.

Mike Evans - I prefer the Aristo TE system

I prefer the Aristo TE system over others I've seen in use. On-board with battery power is the ultimate way to go, no problems with track power. However, the Bachman locomotives are very difficult (except 10 wheeler) to rewire to separate the wheel pickup system from the motor. I wish they would imitate Aristo's switch system that lets you go from battery power to track power easily. For those using the older 27 MHz Aristo, I've found that adding the longer telescoping antenna to the transmitter works wonders in improving range and responsiveness. We are able to control trains from over 100' away very reliably.

New Nimh battery packs are now available at an affordable price. They are lighter in weight than gel cells. Two 9.5 volt packs in series will give your on-board TE plenty of power to operate for a long running time.