Using a Drill Press as a Milling Machine

By Evert Beekmann

I had some gondolas that rode too high on the track. Also the couplers were too high by about .020 inches. After some thought and in order to do a neat and accurate job, I placed the car upside down on my drill press. Then, with a sharp Dremel No. 115 cutter in the chuck, I lowered the spindle until the cutter just barely touched the bolster. I locked the spindle there.

I then slid the gondola to one side and placed a sheet of .010" styrene under it. I turned on the drill press and slowly passed the bolsters under the cutter. Then I repeated the process with a .020" sheet. This produced truly square surfaces at the correct height – much better than whittling by hand with an Xacto knife. When doing this operation yourself, be sure to take light .010" cuts, and hold the car firmly to keep the cutter from grabbing. The gondola laid flat on its top, but I have likewise machined other cars with proper blocking and thin padding to firmly hold them and not mar their details.