The whole idea behind kitbashing is to take commercially available kits and parts and use them to build a different model. When the goal is to duplicate something exactly, the process can become quite involved. At other times, a modeler may use more flexible personal guidelines to produce a credible that generally follows prototype practices. Maintenance-of-way equipment is a good subject for this later approach, since it is typically built or rebuilt for a specific task by the railroads in their own shops. The freedom to create within a reasonable framework can thus provide a number of interesting models.

The equipment constructed by Gerard Dombroski from Taylor, Pennsylvania, falls within this category and led to his winning the December RMC/Dremel Kitbashing Award. Examples of his work are described below.

**Work caboose/crew car**

Down-graded passenger equipment was often cut down or drastically modified for work service. Cars such as this work caboose were found serving as crane tenders, wheel cars or wreck-train cars. In addition to being able to carry some of the hardware needed out on the line, there was room for a number of riders. The raw material for the car is a Model Die Casting short old-time combine, a sides door caboose and a short flatcar kit. Gerard started the project by cutting the combine under frame just inside the bolster at the baggage door end. This was spliced to a 2 9/16-inch long piece of the flat car; two narrow strips of Plastruct ABS sheet were used to strengthen the joint. While this was drying, he cut a notch in the upper portion of the roof to accept the cupola. The lower portion was left intact and the bottom of the cupola was trimmed to match it. Filler strips covered the gaps at the edges of the cupola.

With most of the major cutting and fitting complete, the details from the kits were added next. The truss rods had to be installed so that they remained symmetrical on the car; the original position was used on the combine end of the car and a similar location was marked on the flat car frame. Air brakes, railings, steps and other small details were salvaged from the caboose and combine kits. After these were in place, the body was cemented to the frame, and the car was painted and lettered.

**Snowplow**

Many roads converted extra tenders into various types of MofW equipment. This kitbash required a Model Die Casting Vanderbilt tender, an MDC 26-foot tank car, a caboose cupola and some Plastruct sheet stock. The tender was cut at the rear of the bunker, retaining it’s rear wall; this became the back portion of the plow which is supposedly filled with ballast. The lower portion of the deck from the from the front of the tender was used to provide a firm surface for cementing a plastic base to support the plow. This piece was made 1 ½ inches wide by 3 ½ inches long. The last half inch at the front was tapered to a width of 1 ¼ inches. To allow clearance for the cupola, a small tongue was formed by notching the other end of this piece. The base was cemented between the wall of the bunker and the front of the tender deck to give a solid sloping surface. Angled cuts were made through the tank car kit to provide two curved sections for the plow blade; these were cemented to triangular pieces of plastic to fill the space between the plow base and the tank car pieces. A “roof” and the lower area of the cab sides were also fabricated from plastic. The latter simply matches the width of the cupola. After the addition of handrails, brake gear and a few toolboxes, and the liberal application of body putty to fill some gaps, the plow was painted and ready for use.

**Ice breaker**

With winter fast approaching, Gerard decided that an ice breaker car for clearing icicles from tunnels would be a useful tool. RMC/Dremel Kitbashing Award…

![Image](https://example.com/snowplow)

AT LEAST $25 and a Dremel Moto-Flex tool are awarded to competition winners. To be eligible, entries must consist of two or more 8x10 glossy black-and-white photos (original color transparencies may also be submitted with the B&W prints) of a kitbashed railroad model utilizing currently available commercial parts for over 50% of its construction. Entries not judged potential winners may be used in Boomer Trail. Include return envelope and change for postage.

Photography: Dick Appel
Snowplow

A triangular part from the side of an MDC ballast car was simply glued to the center sides of a standard ore car. He cut the pieces to keep the rivet and flange details intact. The height is set by the top of the clearance diagram for HO; NMRA Standard S-7 gives a three-inch height for this clearance. The only important thing is to avoid exceeding this. Plastruct I-beam and angle stock forms the interior support posts and breaker bar assembly. The length of the bar should not be longer than the dimension set by S-7; the actual length depends on the height at which it is set, (It's maximum must not exceed two inches.) The car should be used on all lines over which hi-cubes and tri-level auto racks are run. If they are susceptible to icicle build-ups, this car will knock them down and avoid car or shipment damage.

Side-dump ballast car

The side-dump ballast car represents a homebuilt version of the kind of car that is still being manufactured for track maintenance. The underframe is a left-over tank car center still with the tank mountings and bolster ends removed. A two-watt resistor simulates the large air tank, and two half-watt resistors are used for the air-actuated pistons to tip the body. MDC flat car sides (from kit No. 1450) were cut to form the ends, sides and bottom of the dump body. The width at the top of the car is one inch plus the thickness of the sides; the ends are tapered slightly inward towards the bottom. To simulate the framing of the car’s body and to provide a latching system for the sides, Plastruct I-beams were cemented to the tops of the sides and ends; lengths of Plastruct T-section serve as cross ties. The dump body rests on pieces of Plastruct angle which represent the framing and hinged parts. Arch-bar trucks were used on the car not only because they are appropriate (the car is restricted to on-line service), but also because they were on hand.

Icicle breaker

Steam-operated pillar crane

Steam-operated pillar crane cars were not uncommon in the “old days”. Basically, they were flat cars with a small boiler and steam hoist engine. A standard truss rod flat car or an old underframe of almost any type can be used for a model. Stake pockets and decking would be needed on the latter. The pillar crane is an extended and modified part from an Athearn derrick car; the mast base, mast and boom, plus Evergreen and Plastruct strips and shapes, were combined in what seemed to be a reasonable manner. The winch and donkey engine were rescued from the scrapbox; scratchbuilt or commercial parts could have been used. Either chain or cable rigging is appropriate. A small coal box would be a nice touch, although fuel for the boiler could be carried on a separate car. The work caboose/crew car would make an ideal tender for this crane.

Pile driver

After a few kit-bashing projects, one always has quite a collection of odds and ends – parts of car sides, bits of wire and plastic and various things that look something
like machinery. This is the stuff that pile drivers are, or at least can be, made of. The end of an old-time caboose or half of a boxcar makes a great cab for the pile driver.

Plastruct ABS angle and Evergreen styrene strips, plus some sheet stock, were used to extend the floor and build up a frame for the swiveling body of the model. Scribed siding closes off the car end to protect the machinery, and also hides the fact that it is only suggested and not completely modeled. The guides for the hammer and the pulleys are plastic pieces detailed with plastic nut-bolt-washers. When the superstructure was complete, it was simply mounted on the flat car. A disk of plastic represents the swivel mounting. A smokestack on the cab roof and outriggers to stabilize the unit when it is in use would be appropriate additional details: these may be constructed from scrap plastic. A companion car to carry a coal bunker and tools would look good coupled to the pile driver. This would not only provide another reason to kitbash a new car, but would also help to further empty the scrapbox.