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The SBB in HO (part 2)

The continuing saga of the Nitpicker
by John Jesson

Under the spotlight this time are two types of van which have only fairly recently become available as good models, the successors to the Gklm. These are the Gms (originally known as Gkkms), with its variants Gmr-v, H-v and Hh-v, and the similarly profiled, but rather longer Hk, Hhk, Hhkr-v and Hcks.

Gms, Gmr-v, H-v, Hh-v (type K3/J2)

Built over a 40-year period from 1910, about 4800 survived into the computer era, half lasting until the 1980's. Like the older vans, some were built with brakemen's cabins, some with a brake platform. Most were built with a 5m wheelbase, but there was also a 5.5m version with the same overall length. All had a 3-arc roof, although that of the longer-wheelbase vans was slightly different. There was even a 6m wheelbase version with end doors and electrically-wired, but only 20 of these were produced. They were classified Hcqs.

Hk, Hhk, Hhkr-v, Hcks (type J3)

All of these vans were built with a brakemen's cabin and 3-arc roof. The wheelbase is 7m. Building dates were from 1905 until 1931 for the first three classifications and 1932-33 for the Hcks, with another batch built as late as 1954. It

Above: Like the K2 vans, no K3's remain in revenue-earning service. Also like the K2's, many are in use as stores vans and the like, such as this example at Airolo in September 1994. The old inscriptions have been painted out on both the doors and body; otherwise the vehicle is unaltered, even to the retention of the doors of the brakemen's cabin.

is worth noting that two vehicles were built in 1933 with a high roof profile for the transport of elephants (classified Hck). The Hcks vans differ from the earlier types only in being fitted with end doors at the non platform end. There were not nearly so many of these vans, less than 500 listed as computer numbered, and just over 400 lasting into the 1980's.

The designations stand for:

- G - covered wagon of standard type.
- H - covered wagon of special type.
- m - load area less than 9m long.
- k - load weight less than 20 tons.
- s - authorised to travel at up to 100km/h.
- r - fitted with steam heating pipes.
- h - for fresh vegetables (fitted with supplementary ventilation).
- c - fitted with end doors.
- v - wired for 1000v train heat (therefore could be marshalled between an electric loco and passenger train).

Both vehicle types are available in HO. AKU make a Gms, while Märklin produce the Hhk. They make a fine pair of vehicles.



Above: This K3 is now a station stores van at Bülach. The doors of the brakemans cabin have been removed and the old inscriptions painted out on the body, but it retains the door slogan. The new inscriptions forbid the vehicle to leave Bülach station.

Taking the AKU van first, it is available in both made-up and kit form, with and without brakemans cabin. The version I have is a made-up model without cabin. Scale accuracy is very good and the quality of mouldings equally high. The platform handrails are moulded in plastic and look somewhat heavy, but the two grabrails mounted on the corners of the body adjacent to the platform are of brass wire and very fine. Ventilator covers are separate mouldings, as are the van doors, which carry nicely printed slogans, German one side, Italian the other. Photographs show some variations between individual vehicles, such as the axle-boxes, roof ribbing, door type, door handrails and ventilator cover lift bars at the left-hand end of each side. The AKU, under different catalogue numbers. Mine is 21 85 137 0 347-5, which is an incorrect computer check number (it should be -8). One inscription which is missing is the brake code, which should be on each corner post. The works location, Yverdon, is printed on each end. The chassis is plain, with only enough underside detail to make the model realistic when viewed normally. The brake shoes are separate mouldings, glued in position, and they do line up with the wheel treads.

Märklin introduced their model of the Hhk several years ago, and it remains the only model of the J3 on the market. Its scale accuracy is pretty good and, with one exception, it is a convincing model. The exception is the buffers, which are far too short. Unlike the older vans, the J3 has three louvred ventilators each side, plus one with a vent cover. This has been modelled in the open position. The large side doors can be opened, although there is no interior floor modelled. There are several concessions to the toy market which is, after all, the principal concern of Märklin. To enable the doors to open, the top runner is very much overscale, and the vent covers are moulded integral with the body, giving a flat appearance. The vertical side straps should extend about twice as far below the bodyside as they do. The bodyside ventilators should have 8 louvres, the model has 6, and they are too short. The louvres on the end, adjacent to the brakemans cabin, have 5 instead of 6 louvres. The platform handrails are moulded



plastic. There should also be a grabrail on the corner post of the body, by the steps, which is represented as part of the body moulding, but is only half as long as it should be. The inscriptions are very clear, but a little large on the bodysides. The corner post brake code is missing from the corners at the platform end. The number carried is 21 85 206 7 196-5, which is correct. Axleboxes are of the older, oil type, but detail is nicely moulded. Like the AKU model, the brake shoes line up with the wheeltreads. Despite the number of criticisms, the model remains convincing. Handrails are easily replaced and, at the sacrifice of opening doors, the overscale top runner can be replaced with one nearer the scale.

Above: Examples of J3 vans are much more difficult to find than the K2's and K3's. This one was run to earth at Glattbrugg in September 1994 and has been repainted in cream with a sky-blue stripe for the track maintenance firm of Müller Gleisbau AG. The doors of the brakemans cabin have been removed, although this is not obvious from the photograph. Also gone are two of the louvres at the platform end of the vehicle.

Table 1 Comparative sizes of models and prototype

	1:1	1:87	AKU	Märklin
Length over buffers	9830	113.0	113.1	
	12240	140.7		138.8
Length over headstocks	8590	98.7	99.3	
	11000	126.4		129.4
Length over body (AKU)	8130*	93.5	92.2	
	10460*	120.2		121.8
Width	2790*	32.1	33.4	
	2740*	31.5		32.1
Height	3922	45.1	45.5	
	3920	45.1		46.0**
Wheelbase	5000	57.5	57.6	
	7000	80.5		80.5
Wheel diameter	1040	12.0	11.0	10.7**
Buffer height	1060	12.2	12.5	12.2**

*Estimated from drawing

**after fitting GRS wheels