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Traditional Trains Vie With Highway Vehicles

Young railroaders can have new twin-rail track with simulated wooden ties that are hard to tell from the real thing. Miniature trains riding the rails range from the chugging, smoke-puffing locomotives to modern diesels, and even a self-propelled rocket sled that ejects its pilot by remote control.

Looking behind the engine, youngsters will see the full range of automated railroading. A touch of a button will send a mine car flying apart in a simulated explosion, or a missile roaring off into space from its launching car. There are even work cars that spew forth little railroad ties and hay bales automatically.

ON miniature highways, there's more excitement than ever. A new Autorama "which lane?" chicane race has an oval roadway with two small go-karts that change lanes at random, adding unpredictability to the fun of

racing. And a new over and under "speedway 88" allows as many as four youngsters to compete with brightly-colored stock cars, each one under individual throttle control.

A more elaborate superhighway features all the action and realism of a modern turnpike. Young drivers can turn off into side streets, back up, or follow another car in the same lane. The little cars can now do nearly everything a real car does, except get a ticket.

SO THE question is, which to buy your youngster — trains or cars? Both are exciting fun, but the makeup of your youngster's personality may be the best clue.

Kids who like to make up games by themselves, and who have active imaginations, may prefer trains. This gives them the opportunity to build up a whole action story about the travels of their trains, where it's going and the goods it carries in the little freight cars. Younger children are apt to prefer this, say the toymakers.

For older boys, 9-14, who are more outgoing and competitive, the highway race games are likely to get a good reception. They give a child the opportunity to compete with his friends, in a really exciting situation that consumes his abundant energy. All the noise in these toys comes with the boy.

If you're still in a dilemma, here's a hint: one of the new train sets has a flat car that carries a car to go on the raceway. And if experience is any teacher, say the people at American Flyer, just ask Daddy what he likes best.