

Underground miners

Steven Downes reviews Sandvik's latest scale model releases; the MT720 tunnelling roadheader and the TH550 underground hauler, both in 1:50th scale from Conrad.

1: In real life the flagship MT720 tunnelling roadheader weighs in at 135 tonnes and has been meticulously captured by Conrad, with a host of functioning parts. The undercarriage has linked plastic track pads which are tensioned to remain tight and yet rotate smoothly, coupled with the rear folding stabilisers and front gathering assembly which allow the tracks to lift off the ground. The stars rotate to gather the cut material and a simulated chain-driven conveyor traverses through the centre of the chassis.

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2: The main chassis has the various electric motors, electrical cabinets and engine mounted in the open along each side which are protected with clear plastic covers that can be removed, mimicking the full sized machine. Even the hinged maintenance platforms can be raised and held in position for total realism. The cab is located on top of the chassis giving a demanding view of the surroundings with simulated isolating mountings along with a front debris protection frame and rear mounted air conditioner. The decking has a diamond textured anti-slip finish and all the safety railings and access ladders need fitting to the model and these locate into the pre-drilled holes perfectly, all painted in the new fluorescent yellow colours.

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4: The cutter head has accurately captured the looks of the full sized machine, with a rotating cutter drum and telescopically extending arm. The main boom can swivel left to right with a very good range of up and down movement accurately capturing the movement of the full sized machine, capable of cutting a tunnel 6.6 metres high and 9.1 metres wide. Pivoting and sliding protective covers and optional boom safety railings all add to the realism.

5: Joining the MT720 is the TH550 underground hauler, capable of transporting 55 tonnes of materials. The rear skip has been accurately modelled with a very good tipping angle while the low-level articulating frame has working steering and simulated driveshaft detailing. The front and side radiator covers open to reveal the interior fan detailing with photo-etched protective screen above and a replicated cabin all adding to the realism. Two versions of the model have been produced, one with orange grab rails and one with fluorescent green grab rails and access steps.



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