So, you consider yourself as a more discerning collector. You’ve got plenty of models in your collection, but you feel like that special something is missing from your display cabinet. What can you possibly buy, short of a custom painted model of your favourite car or a scaled down replica of your 1:1 machine sitting on your driveway? One answer that should certainly be towards the top of your list is a scale 1:18 trailer of some sort from MNtrailers. If you frequent the various online model forums and Facebook groups, you may very well have come across MNtrailers before. However, I don’t believe anyone has done a truly in-depth review of one of these bad boys before – that’s where The Model Car Critic steps in.

Before we get onto the trailer itself, let’s take a look at the man behind MNtrailers – Mihail Neagu, more affectionately known as “Mike”. So much so, I’ve found most people refer to his creations as one of ‘Mike’s trailers’. So what makes Mike tick and where does he get his inspiration from? I conducted a mini interview with him and found out the following:

1. **Can you provide a bit of background about yourself? How do you have the skills to design and build these trailers?**

I completed my Architectural studies in Lisbon for 1 year and then a further 5 years in Bucharest. Building trailers is my second job and is inspired by my passion for 1:18 scale models. In fact, I started building trailers during my University studies in order to give myself a bit of extra money to be able to buy more models for my collection. I like Computer Aided Design (CAD) and 3D design, both for building models and real buildings or interior design. Usually my trailers are designed in AutoCAD and 3ds Max.

2. **When did you first build a trailer and what prompted you to build one in the first place?**

I built the very first trailer during the holidays between my fifth and sixth years of
University in 2012. It took me around 2 months to build and get it exactly how I wanted it. Remember, I didn’t have a truck cab at that time and I just kept asking my local fellow collectors about different dimensions. The idea came from a DiecastXchange forum discussion about a trailer that was made for scale 1:16 models and I was amazed that people would love to have such an item in their collection!

3. How long does it usually take to go from initial design to build for a new trailer design?

It all depends on my level of inspiration and determination. It can take from 5 days to 1 year - sometimes the fight with fractions of millimetres increases the amount of mental fatigue very quickly.

4. What sort of materials do you use for your trailers and how are they produced?

I can tell you that for our trailers we use 1.5mm thick aluminum plate, steel plate either 0.8mm, 1mm or 1.5mm thick and stainless steel plate either 0.5mm or 0.8mm thick. The trailer elements are first designed using CAD software then they are laser cut at a local company. Once we get the pieces, we assemble them either by riveting to aluminum profiles or by firstly bending the metal pieces then riveting them together.

I think the most important aspect of these trailers is the fact that I am a hardcore collector too. I have an obsession for details and I put myself in the shoes of each collector receiving a MNtrailer.

Here you can see the 3D CAD model of our budget 6 car transporter. It is incredible to see just how much detail you can capture in this medium and how this translates into the finished trailer later in the review.
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Next we see the pieces go from CAD to what they look like after being laser cut and having been bent into shape.
Seven trailers in a row after being riveted together and being prepared for the powder coating stage. You can already see the amount of effort and detail that goes into these behemoths!

The team hard at work in the workshop – turning your ideas into an amazing looking custom built trailer!
5. *What is the weirdest and/or coolest trailer anyone has asked you to build?*

As long as clients order a trailer as custom or unique objects, weird or cool depends on the taste of each one. I can only tell you that from my point of view, white trailers are the most elegant looking and red trailers are the ones I love the most as they attract the most attention.

6. *I've seen your impressive collection posted online plenty of times. Why do you only collect Mercedes models?*

Long story short, my family used to have a Mercedes Benz W123 200D for about 20 years.
We were madly in love with that car and my father raised me with the mantra; “there 2 types of cars: a Benz and then the rest”.

Here you can see Mike’s incredible collection of 1:18 models in custom made display cabinets. It wouldn’t be complete without a few of his custom trailers on display! Surely this is the ultimate man cave!!??
You may have been wondering why I keep banding the word “budget” around – what makes this a budget trailer? Well, I noticed that every time Mike posts pictures of his latest creation on Facebook, he gets asked how much his trailers are. He’s a very patient man and is always happy to send you his price list and talk you through the different options, as I have experienced myself. The main issue is that his trailers are generally out of reach, financially, for the more average model collector. Let’s face it, not many people can afford to spend over €800 (plus shipping) on one of these, even if they are on CMC levels of quality. Until now, the cheapest trailer for cars has been this 6 car transporter for €630 (plus shipping). It looks lovely, but still too pricey for a lot of people, I feel.

So when Mike messaged me to say he was designing a new “budget” transporter I was immediately interested! I had been longing for the day when I could buy a transporter where the cost of the trailer didn’t outweigh the cost of all the models sitting on it – I just couldn’t justify spending that sort of money personally. He sent the pictures through of the first completed sample – I was itching to know how much he was selling them for! The price of this? A very reasonable €470 plus shipping, which in my case was €70 to the United Kingdom. €540 for the chance to finally own a legendary custom made MNtrailer? Yes, please! Some of you may be saying that it is still a high price, and you’re right – €470 is still
€470, no matter which way you look at it. But when you start to think about what you’re getting for your cash, you soon realise it is very much worth it! To keep the costs as low possible, this particular trailer can’t have any additional customisations – unless you want to bear the extra cost on top of the trailer itself. You can spec the colour of your choosing depending on what truck you have, be it an NZG or Eligor Mercedes Benz Actros or the Otto Renault Magnum, Mike will paint it to match!

Let’s get onto the review of the trailer itself. You’ve picked your colour, paid for it and now it’s winging it’s way from Romania to your house. I know I didn’t need to be, but I was definitely nervous about the ham-fisted UK couriers handling such a large and possibly delicate item. Be rest assured, Mike has your back on this - he packs his trailers so well and ensures they are protected in transit. He even messaged me to provide his personal guarantee to say, “if by any chance something bad happens in transport I will repair it, or send spare parts”. This really reassured me!

The trailer arrives in a rather large and heavy box – you definitely realise why it cost €70 to ship to the UK! Here is a picture of a 1:18 model sitting on top of the box to give you a rough idea of size.
Opening the outer box you wonder if this is some sort of Russian doll situation going on – there are some packing peanuts to provide some protection for another box inside.
Open the next box and you’re greeted with plenty of polystyrene sheeting and some extra soft protection at either end. Things are looking good, so far!

Remove the top layer of sheets and the trailer wrapped in thick black sheeting is ready and waiting to be lifted out. Polystyrene can be quite abrasive at times, so it is nice that Mike added the black sheeting to protect the paint finish in transit. I cannot stress just how big this box is.....
The trailer is carefully removed from the packaging and inspected, with not a single piece is damaged in transit – definitely due to the diligent packing by Mike, rather than Parcel Force being light handed for a change (did you notice the large hole in the box above??). I immediately brought down my 1:18 NZG Mercedes Benz Actros truck to hook it up. First impressions? WOW!!! This thing is huge! The dimensions of the trailer are: 80cm long, 15.5cm wide and 19.5cm high. Once you hook it up to the Actros, that length grows to a massive 1 metre in total! It needs to be seen in person to truly appreciate it...

Now it is time to drink in all the lovely little details Mike has poured into this transporter trailer. Just because it has “budget” in the name, doesn't mean that is the aim of the game
here! There is a ladder on each side of transporter – how else would a (scale) person get up to the top deck to drive the cars down? The precision is clear to see here, with perfectly round holes for the safety wire to thread through. This double layer of wire continues along both sides of the top deck. Just look at the way the two posts rise out of the side of the trailer – cut in a perfect and uniform manner and tapers nicely at the bottom, no doubt to provide extra strength to prevent them from bending. With his background in architecture, you can begin to see Mike’s thought processes behind the various elements of design. There are also some nice metal plates spread around the trailer. These are used to hide the various points where pieces are joined together, but certainly adds an additional visual element.

The wheels and tyres are quite nice. The tyres are made by a local rubber company and the rims made by a turner, also locally. If I had to be picky, I’d say the black centres and white
bolts could be finished a tad better, but I’m being overly critical here and probably just looking for something to complain about! The yellow chocks sitting above the wheels look pretty much the same as the ones that come attached to the NZG Actros. They are held in place by genuine leather loops. I do have a very slight issue with the placement of one of the chocks on mine, whereby when I drop the top deck it snags slightly on a chock and prevents the top deck sitting properly on the lower level. All I have to do is move the chock slightly and all is good again, but just a minor annoyance.

Two spare tyres are also provided under the rear slope of the lower level – these are glued in place and serve no functional purpose, merely an added level of detail to look at. Nice touch!
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Moving to the front of the trailer and we get a good view of the red and white safety tape that goes round the entire model. You will also notice the blue and white ‘TIR’ signs. TIR stands for ‘Transports Internationaux Routiers’ or ‘International Road Transports’ in English and is essentially an international customs transit system to facilitate the moving of goods between countries (bet you weren’t expecting to learn that when you woke up this morning). Looking at the top deck I feel this trailer is missing a much needed feature. To prevent any models potentially rolling forward and off the top of the trailer, there should really be a little lip only 4 or 5mm high at the very end. Perhaps an addition for the next iteration?

The ends of the safety wire are securely clamped at each end so they won’t unravel.
Flip the trailer on its side and you’ll be greeted with a large sticker bearing the MNtrailers logo, plus the production date of your trailer. On the more expensive trailers I have seen pictures of a plaque denoting who the trailer was actually made for and it’s number in a limited run (exclusivity comes at a price, after all!).

You can also see the axles and rudimentary suspension system here. I really would have liked to have seen proper springs used to ensure the trailer sits completely flat over the wheels and on uneven surfaces, but it is good enough I guess. I also found it difficult to roll the trailer along on the axles – as it is so heavy, especially when loaded up with 6 models that you don’t want it moving about, it was very difficult to move into position when taking photographs for this review as the wheels do not roll comfortably. Perhaps another improvement for the future?
To securely hitch the trailer to your truck, you need to slot the screw into the fifth wheel on the rear of the truck. This can be a bit fiddly at times, but most people won’t be moving their setup around too much, I should imagine. However, one issue I encountered was that this screw scratched the fifth wheel on my Actros as it was a bit difficult to judge where to place it once or twice. I think some sort of rubber protector over this screw would be a worthy addition.
The landing gear is fully adjustable simply by turning the Philips screws on each side. This make it perfect if you don’t have a truck yet and you just want to display some cars on the trailer itself. Even when mine is hooked up to the Actros, I still have the landing gear down far enough so that all the weight isn’t resting on the truck itself.
A removable fully metal board (for want of a better word) slots in nicely at the very end of the lower level. I found this very useful to stop models rolling off the back of the trailer. Mike very kindly added my logo to this board to personalise it just a little bit to me – a small but really welcome touch!

Also present are some Long Vehicle stickers and speed limit signs. These are very much European and it would have been nice to have the option to specify a UK number plate and speed limit signs. Alas that is not to be as it would have incurred additional customisation costs which would negate the very nature of this budget trailer. A nice set of tail lights can be seen at the bottom.
To lower the top deck, you firstly need to pivot it upwards. This exposes the bar running along the back as shown below. This bar is what the top deck rests on. You simply maneuver the bar out and lower the top deck to load up cars.
The trailer comes with two mobile ramps. They serve two purposes: firstly, to allow cars to actually drive up onto the trailer. Secondly, to allow one car to fit over the fifth wheel on the lower deck. I believe Mike can supply an additional set of ramps for around €20 should anyone wish. The ramps are very solid and attach to the outer set of holes on the edge of the lower deck, as shown below. I did have a slight issue with one of mine, because one of the pins which stick out to sit in the holes was slightly bent, but I just put it back in place myself. You will also notice these pins have been left unpainted – I suspect this is to prevent the eventual flaking off when they rub against the holes, so best just not paint them at all rather than risk compromising the finish months or years down the line.

You will also notice additional holes about two thirds up the rear sloped section of the lower deck and some white pins sticking out of the ramps themselves. As you will shortly see, the ramps can be stored on the trailer itself, so the pins fit into those holes on the sloped section
and stop the ramps from moving around.

Here you can see how the trailer looks with the top deck lowered – if you look at the left hand side, you will notice it doesn’t sit flat on the lower deck. As explained before, one of the yellow chocks was in the way slightly.
Below you can see the second application of the set of ramps. Again, the pins of the ramps slot nicely into the holes to allow a car to drive up to the very front. You can also make out some of the unobtrusive rivets on the inside of the lips that goes around the lower deck. As I mentioned above, a similar sort of lip would have been very welcome on the top deck to stop cars rolling off the front!
The inner set of holes on the end of the trailer allow you to store the ramps when the trailer is “in transit”, once all the cars are loaded up and it’s ready for its trip across the country to a local supercar dealership. As stated earlier, the extra white pins on the ramps fit into the holes on the rear sloped section of the trailer to stop the ramps from moving around unnecessarily.
Here are just a couple of shots showing the nice view from the back...
So you’ve read the review, but you I bet you’ve been thinking what does this look like in action? Well here you go! I must admit it was really fun taking these pictures in the lovely sunshine. My lightbox is simply too small to photograph this monster in, but the outdoors definitely adds some sense of realism a lightbox cannot provide. I’ve taken the pictures in the order that the cars would drive onto the trailer in real life. Enjoy!
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So now that I’ve finally bought one of these trailers what do I think? Is it worth the money? Is it too “budget” that it has lost some of the typical MNtrailers charm? In short, no. From my point of view, this is absolutely worth the money. Nothing else comes close to having this much shelf presence! I think the price is quite reasonable, especially when you compare it to the recently announced 1:18 trailer and container setup from NZG. Rumoured pricing on that setup is €470 – to me that is way too overpriced for what is essentially a large metal box sitting on a trailer platform. If you compare the level of detail and craftsmanship MNtrailer offer, then there is only one clear winner for me!

Otto displayed a 6 car transporter at a hobby show a couple of years ago that was curiously similar to one of Mike’s trailers, but at a supposedly much lower cost. There were rumours Mike worked alongside them on this project, but he would never confirm that to me. However, we are a couple of years passed the showing of this trailer and it is still nowhere to be seen. So for the moment there is only one name making quality trailers, some of which can be highly personalised – that name is MNtrailers! Keep up the good work, Mike.

If you’re curious as to what other types of trailers MNtrailers can make for you, here is but a small selection of what has been produced over the years – I’ll let the pictures do the talking. If you would like to order one, please contact MNtrailers via their Facebook page here. You will also find plenty of photo albums of their work, you could waste a lot of time...
on there!