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A TIME OF OWNERSHIP CHANGES?

How much more tech can you add to a loader crane? With more acronyms and abbreviations for new 'wizzo' features than any other equipment sector, have loader crane manufacturers reached a technology plateau? It certainly seems like they are finally taking a breather. The past year or so has only seen a handful of new product launches, and most of these have been additions to existing ranges rather than new technical developments. Manufacturers are also focusing more on product lifetime (aftermarket) services rather than new hardware. And this at a time when ownership and financial structures are changing. We take a look at whats going on.

The combination of uncertainty and lack of stability in the global economy coupled with increasingly environmentally conscious customers and legislation - such as the EU's 'Right to Repair Directive' (R2RD) - are encouraging more crane owners to delay new investments and hold onto their equipment longer, which is having an effect on new product sales. Loader cranes are no exception, in fact they might even be a leading indicator. These facts have, without doubt, caused many manufacturers to focus on their forward strategies specifically at growing 'non machine sales'. This has also involved companies like Hiab, Palfinger and Fassi getting out on the acquisition trail to invest in dealers, crane service companies and truck body builders.

FASSI EXPANDS

At the end of July Italian loader crane manufacturer Fassi Gru acquired German truck body manufacturer Bavaria Fahrzeugbau, itself a merger of Albert Fahrzeugbau, Zanner Fahrzeugbau and Nüsslein Michael Fahrzeugaufbauten. The company employs around 130 people and produces a range of custom bodies for commercial and heavy

vehicles serving various sectors with everything from refrigerated vehicles to tipper trucks and loader cranes.

Last year its French subsidiary Fassi France acquired Forez-Bennes - a 50 year old French company with a plant in Champdieu in the Loire - that designs, manufactures and installs truck tipper beds. The addition expands Fassi France which already includes Marrel - which produces Ampliroll hook lifts - and the industrial body shops Miltra Paris Nord, Miltra Provence and Decauville. In 2016 it acquired a major stake in spider crane manufacturer Jekko with the resulting partnership leading to the JF range of track mounted loader cranes in 2018.

Fassi was established in 1965 by Franco Fassi and is now run by his son Giovanni Fassi. Today it is one of the top three loader crane manufacturers globally, manufacturing around 12,000 cranes a year with revenues of €470 million. Earlier this year London, UK based private equity firm Investindustrial Group acquired a 70 percent stake in the Fassi business. Investindustrial said that the primary objective of its investment is to 'garner fresh resources to bolster Fassi Gru's global standing'. The Fassi family still hold a 30 percent stake in



The Bavaria Fahrzeugbau employees during the visit from Fassi team members



Fassi's largest loader crane the 160 tonne/metre F2150

the business and continue to run it as before, but now need to report to the owners in the same way that Hiab and Palfinger report to shareholders each quarter.

TECHNO ADDITION

Fassi's latest new product launch is the 96 tonne/metre F1250R-HXP Techno, adding to the existing Techno range. It is its first crane to offer a version with nine hydraulic extensions for a 33.4 metre horizontal reach/radius with the L436 hydraulic extension installed, while the maximum



Fassi's latest product is the 96 tonne/metre F1250R-HXP Techno

powered tip height is 37 metres, but this can be increased to 43.5 metres with three manual extensions.

It also features the X-Design boom profile and is equipped with the FX990 digital control system, offering the latest generation of electronics and load stability management.

HIAB SPLITS

The Hiab name has been synonymous with loader cranes for seven decades or more and in several countries has been the generic term for an articulated loader crane. Some companies even advertise themselves as Hiab Hire, when they don't have a single Hiab built crane in their fleet. This came about as a result of it being the - or a - loader crane 'inventor' and certainly a pioneer of the concept, leading to its adoption as the generic name for loader crane, joining brands such as Hoover, Teflon, Scotch Tape, Sellotape and Post it Note.

Over the years attempts were made to drop the name since it was acquired in 1985 by Partek, which was then acquired by Kone in 2002 and then demerged as the Cargotec group three years later after several attempts to centralise in the Cargotec name - a disaster - and then decentralise as Hiab. By the end of this year, all being well, it will finally become an independent company again, after Cargotec shareholders agreed to demerge Kalmar and sell the MacGregor marine business the Cargotec name will be consigned to history just 20 years after it first saw the light of day. Hiab president Scott Phillips will become the chief executive of the new publicly quoted business.

As with other loader crane manufacturers, Hiab has reported a slow start to the year, with Cargotec chief executive Casimir Lindholm saying "delayed decision making has had an impact on customers' ordering behaviour leading to lower order intake and a smaller order book.

But service sales continue to increase and represented 27 percent of Hiab's second quarter sales, helping profitability remain on a good level at 15.9 percent of sales."

NEW HYBRID CRANES

Hiab's latest loader crane product launch is a range of 'energy efficient' medium duty cranes dubbed the eX.Hipros - electric/hybrid loader cranes that can be powered by a battery driven ePTO it calls Hiab wspr, pronounced whisper, or if the battery is drained power from the chassis engine as usual. The design employs a duplicate system to the engine driven hydraulic pump with the battery powered electric motor running a second hydraulic pump to power the crane.



The electric/hybrid Hiab wspr crane

On most models the ePTO is mounted within the crane's base for easy mounting on the chassis, while the pack for the largest cranes is mounted on the side of the chassis.

The standard wspr pack covers most of the manufacturer's models and is capable of running the crane for up to two days in most applications with the same performance levels, but is more responsive due to its instant torque. And should the battery run low during operation, the operator can switch to the engine powered PTO to finish the job. The Light Duty version is tailored for smaller cranes used for simple load drop off duties, while the Heavy Duty model will run the crane for even longer or in more arduous applications. However the pack is too large to fit within the crane base, thus the chassis side mounting. Recharge time from empty is around four hours, but the cranes can also operate while plugged into a mains outlet.

Mattias Berglund of Hiab said: "The Hiab wspr solution, operated by electric power, is better for people and the planet as it is emission free and future proofs businesses for stricter regulations. By being emission free and near silent it also provides the flexibility to operate in low or no emission zones, or late at night, thereby increasing business opportunities. This is also providing a healthier working environment for operators and the communities they serve."

EFFICIENT NEW HIABS

Hiab has also launched a new efficient four model eX.Hipro series of medium duty loader cranes including the 3.9 tonne capacity/8.0 metres outreach eX.Hipro 142, the 4.45 tonne/8.2 metre eX.Hipro 162, the 5.6 tonne/12.8 metre eX.Hipro 192 and the 5.4 tonne/17.4 metre eX.Hipro 232.

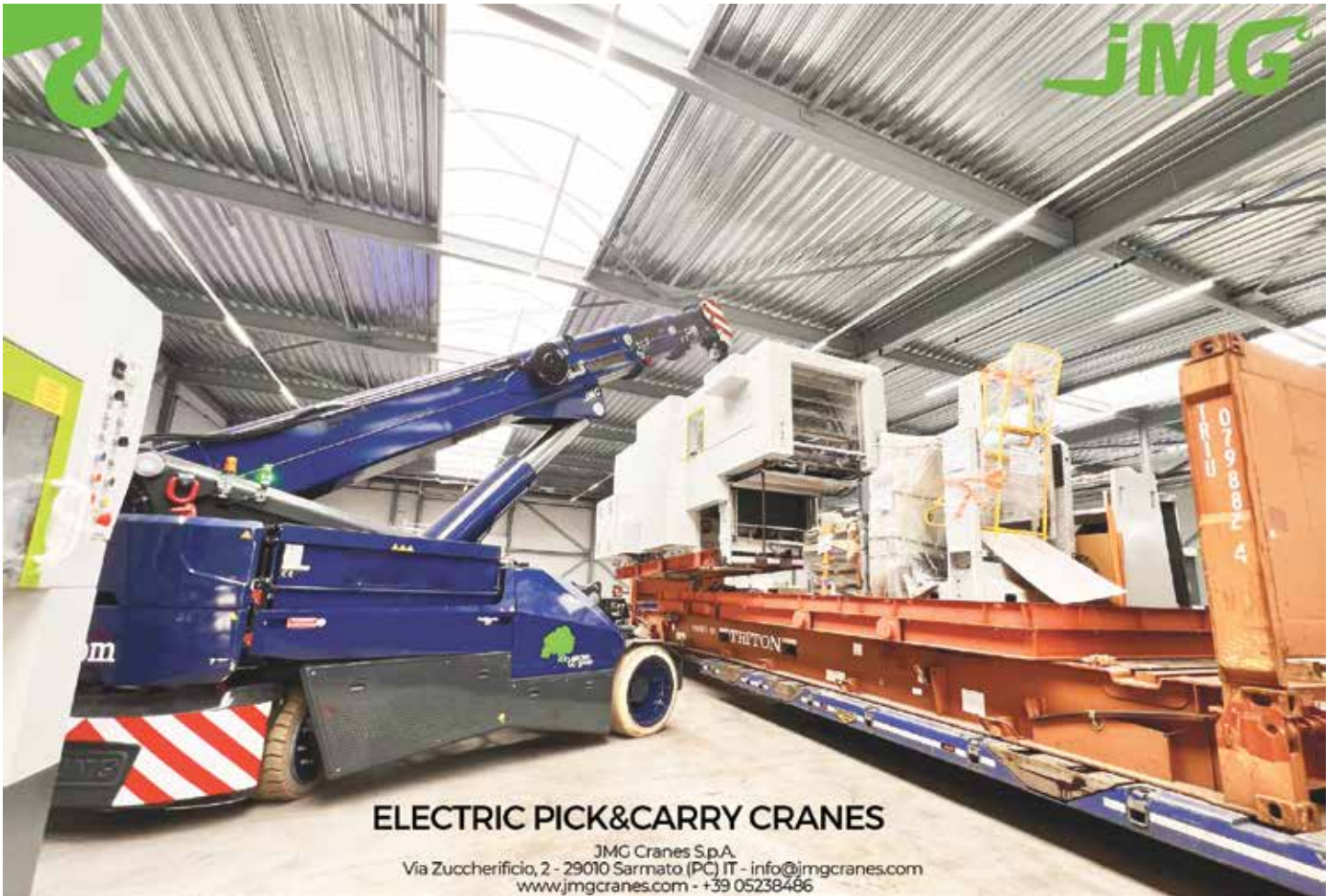
Hiab says that they have been designed for maximum energy efficiency, increased productivity and ease of use with minimal environmental impact. As such they are 'Electric Vehicle ready' and said to provide energy savings of up to 30 percent thanks to an all-new pressure compensated, load sensing hydraulic system, optimised for high oil flow, thus reducing fuel consumption and CO2 emissions. As a result, the new cranes are not only more efficient and environmentally friendly, but also quieter.

While the eX.Hipro cranes are readily compatible with electric vehicles, when they are installed on a diesel chassis they include engine controls with Dynamic RPM and Automatic Start/Stop

The Hiab name has been synonymous with loader cranes for more seven decades or more



The Hiab eX.Hipro



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LOADER CRANES

functionality for further energy savings. The cranes also include Hiab's SpaceEvo intelligent control system, combined with an Olsbergs V200 valve for smooth simultaneous multi-function operation with reduced pressure drops and heat generation. And thanks to heavy duty construction and the quality of componentry there is a two year standard warranty, with five years on the structural elements.

MYHIAB APP

Hiab has also launched MyHiab, a mobile app which it says will improve operator safety and productivity. The app allows operators to access tools to plan their working day and troubleshoot when there are issues. Features include an error code identifier, finding the nearest service agent, reminders of equipment servicing and warranty validity, daily equipment checks while sharing records of the equipment's condition digitally and accessing training videos. The app can be downloaded in Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the US with plans to make it available in more locations throughout the year.

NEW RECYCLING CRANE



The home screen of the MyHiab app

Finally, Hiab has also launched a new recycling crane - the 18 to 19 tonne/metre Jonsered iZ.18R HD - available with a choice of three total extension lengths 8.6, 9.0 and 10 metres with a rising articulated link topped by a three section telescopic boom. Maximum capacities range from 5,300kg at three metres on the short boom model to 3,950kg on the 10 metre boom, while at full reach they can manage 1,900kg at 8.3 metres and 1,400kg at 9.7 metres respectively.

The cranes are equipped with Hiab's SPACEevo control system, which should offer improved productivity and safer operation, along with a new hydraulics system, sensors and cables that will provide long term durability given that many recycling cranes work a minimum of an eight hour day.

Hiab has launched the new Jonsered iZ.18R HD



The eX.Hipro 162

All models are available with high seat, side seat - left or right - platform or cab configurations.

The first model to go into production will be the high seat configurations middle or side, while the platform and cab versions will be introduced at a later date. The control stations come with a wide range of options such as mechanical steering (2+2), remote controls and the latest electric joysticks are fully weatherproof without the need for a protective cover. All control functions including stabilisers are controlled from the joysticks.

PALFINGER UPGRADES TECS

Palfinger has introduced upgraded/new versions of two of its heavy duty cranes, the 30 tonne capacity PK 1350 TEC and 32 tonne PK 1650 TEC.

The PK 1350 TEC can handle its 30 tonne maximum capacity at a radius of just over three metres or take 23 tonnes to just over 4.4 metres and lift 500kg to its maximum tip height of almost 42 metres or radius of 48.8 metres. The 10 section 21.9 metre boom can be extended with a 20 metre, nine section jib, which can elevate to 25 degrees above the horizontal main

boom. The overall weight is 10,170kg and the maximum outrigger spread 10 metres.

The larger 32 tonne PK 1650 TEC has similar boom and reach characteristics but can handle 750kg at its maximum 37.7 metre radius or at full height. The new models are equipped with Paltronic 180 control electronics, the LX-6 control valve for smooth sensitive function control, along with high tech operator aids such as the Levelling Assistant for setting up, Memory Position and Smart Control. Following the launch of the PK 1350 TEC and the PK 1650 TEC, Palfinger's TEC range comprises 11 models.

While the two cranes are based on the original models launched in 2016 and 2017, Palfinger says that it has "completely redesigned the crane by combining its proven strengths with new, intelligent technologies. All TEC models can be equipped with Smart Control, the intelligent boom tip control system. It combines the crane movements in the background to achieve the exact position desired. The Memory Position system stores up to four crane positions while the Levelling Assistant can save time by up to 80 percent while adjusting the setup." ■



The new PK 1650 TEC



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A TRICKY BUT RAPID GANTRY CRANE REPLACEMENT

Dismantling and replacing a 30 year old gantry crane at a factory in Gresten, Lower Austria, had to be carried out as quickly as possible so as not to disrupt Wesel Profile's production. The company has been based in the Mostviertel region for 350 years and is a world leader in the manufacture of special steel and stainless steel profiles. However, when the ageing crane had to be replaced, the company stressed that the production process could not be disrupted or delayed any longer than was absolutely necessary.

Local lifting and transport company Kran-Mitterhauser based in nearby Zell an der Pram was called in to carry out the lifting work required to install the new replacement crane - a 15 tonne Demag. It selected its 125 tonne/metre Palfinger PK 165.002 TEC 7 crane which is mounted on a Scania 8x4 chassis. The crane was designed to be optimised for the 32 tonne chassis, complete with all of its equipment on board, including jib and winch.

The PK 165.002 TEC 7 has a maximum tip height of 42 metres thanks to two additional manual sections, on top of the nine section main boom and eight section jib. It has a maximum capacity of 8.2 tonnes on the jib and a useful 1.12 tonnes at 36 metre radius, while the jib luffs to 25 degrees above the horizontal main boom.

Franz Josef Loibl, a long serving employee of Wesel Profile and head of maintenance said: "Our production facilities are quite cramped with very little free space for a crane to move around. The set up and the height also caused difficulties



Palfinger operator Stefan Haas with the PK 78.002-SH

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so finding the right crane for the task has clearly been difficult."

The operation was spread over two days. On the first day the old crane was fully dismantled so that by the morning of day two the new crane could be erected and assembled. The crane operator entrusted with the job was Palfinger operator Stefan Haas who has worked for Mitterhauser for 13 years.

He says that he is a big fan of his previous crane - a Palfinger PK 78.002-SH - however he acknowledges that it could not compete with the TEC 7 crane in terms of control and precision, not to mention its many convenient functions.

"The P-Fold function is one of the most practical

features - the semi-automatic folding and unfolding of the crane with only one lever via the radio control, is fantastic," says Haas. "Also, the RTC - Rope Tension Control - is one of the best inventions, as with the jobs I carry out, the winch is usually in use all day long. It can remain in position with this function, and it communicates perfectly with P-Fold system. Both functions really help with setting up the crane as well as closing up after the job is done. It really helps with the daily work routines. Also setting up and levelling the crane with the remote control makes working much easier."

Manoeuvring the loader crane into its lifting positions was tricky due to space limitations, but once set up the PK 165.002 TEC 7 was more than

able to carry out the lifts efficiently. The main component of the new crane weighed around five tonnes, which the PK was able to handle with plenty in reserve.

"The TEC 7 crane is particularly suitable for special operations such as the assembly of indoor gantry/suspension cranes, where there is little space to manoeuvre and the contract period is short. On the previous job I used it to lift in a power station located on the side of a mountain," said Haas.

The assembly of the new indoor crane was completed successfully within four hours on day two allowing production to restart on schedule. ■



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