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# LARGE TRUCK MOUNTS BACK ON THE AGENDA?

The truck mounted lift market is wide ranging and varied extending from sub two tonne all electric chassis all the way up to Bronto's seven axle, 112 metre working height S112HLA weighing around 75 tonnes...and everything in between.

In recent years there has been strong development and growth in the popular 3.5 tonne sector - the heaviest vehicle that can be driven on a car type 'standard' Class B driving licence in most European countries. While the lower end of the market is hotly contested, product choice and demand drop off as the working height increases, with relatively few manufacturers or models to choose from over 75 metres. This decreases further when looking for a unit of more than 90 metres.

Until recently just two of manufacturers continued to offer 100 metre plus products - Bronto and Sogage. This changed in October when Ruthmann launched its 100 metre T1000 HF. Are manufacturers taking a fresh look at the top end of the truck mounted lift market, possibly driven by future demand to replace older models and to expand fleets to meet the likely growth in the wind turbine installation and maintenance market, as well as work on harbour cranes, overhead power lines and large, landmark buildings?

## RECENT HISTORY

Around 20 years ago the three major large truck mounted lift manufacturers were all based in Northern Europe - Bronto in Finland, Ruthmann in northern Germany and not quite so far north, Palfinger in Austria. They dominated the growing market and were constantly vying to introduce higher reaching platforms. Ruthmann was the first into the 100 metre platform sector in 2001 with its 100 metre TTS 1000. It was unusual in that it was mounted on a six axle articulated

trailer which probably led to its demise due to its size and weight.

Palfinger then launched its 103 metre WT 1000 in 2007 mounted on a Tadano Faun ATF 110 G-5 All Terrain crane chassis. It was renamed and updated in 2017 to become the P 1000 before production was ended altogether a few years ago when the chassis was no longer available. Palfinger's 90 metre P 900 is currently its largest platform. Bronto pushed the working height envelope unveiling its 104 metre HLA104 in 2009 and then showing the 112 metre S112 HLA at Bauma 2010 although it was several years before it was fully sorted and available for sale.

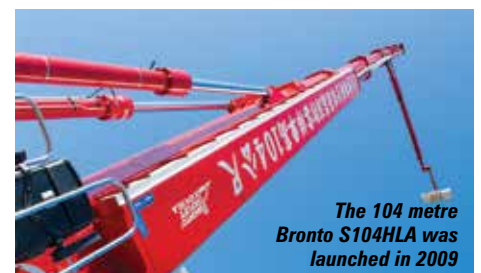
Despite being market leaders in the 3.5 tonne truck mounted sector, Italian manufacturers have not fared so well at the top end of the working height market. Perhaps this is related to perceived quality, reliability and resale values of the Northern European machines?

Currently there are three Italian manufacturers with sizeable truck mounts - Sogage, Multitel and Cela. Sogage has a wide range of truck mounts up to its 100 metre Forste 100TJJ. The model was first mooted in 2008 but due to the global financial crisis and lack of demand was not launched until 2021. Multitel's largest truck mount is the 77.5 metre working height MJ775 and Cela has the 60 metre DT Truck platform. In fact, over the past 15 years or so, market conditions have been against the growth of the big truck mounted platform but with the launch of the 100 metre Ruthmann there are signs that this might be set to change.



*Ruthmann recently launched its 100 metre T1000 HF*

*A Ruthmann TTS 1000 ready to head to the USA in 2010*



*The 104 metre Bronto S104HLA was launched in 2009*



*The Palfinger P 1000 on an updated Tadano five axle crane carrier*



## TRUCK MOUNTS

Unlike other construction equipment markets, Chinese manufacturers have not shown much interest in this sector internationally - yet. Perhaps because it tends to be regional due to the chassis and road regulation differentials, but it also might be the relatively low volume with each and every model built for a specific customer and therefore does not exactly lend itself to globalisation. Add to the fact that a handful of established players are already well entrenched, and it seems unlikely that the market will appeal enough to entice any new players.

### RUTHMANN T1000 HF

The biggest truck mounted launch of the past three years was Ruthmann's 100 metre T1000 HF in October. As already mentioned, the company has history in this market size with its 100 metre TTS1000 unveiled at Bauma 2001. A few machines were sold just after the launch, the first machine to Gardemann and the second to Gerken. Unfortunately, only a few were ever built although we believe they are all still operational with one certainly working in the USA. However, this is where the similarity with its new 100 metre truck mount ends. The TTS1000 was mounted on a six axle trailer, pulled along by a three axle tractor unit. The unit was capable of 40 metres of outreach at heights of up to 60 metres.

Some details of the new Ruthmann T1000 HF were announced in July 2023 with the unit taking three years to develop, even though it is based on the company's 90 metre T900 HF which the company says it has sold more than 60 units. The first of the new 100 metre platforms has been purchased by German rental company Gerken, back in the market after purchasing the original 100 metre Ruthmann 23 years ago.

### STRETCHED T900

The T1000 HF is essentially a stretched version of the T900 HF using the same five section lower boom, four section upper boom and HF articulating jib but with longer individual boom sections. Both however have a similar maximum outreach of 39 metres. As with the T900 HF, the T1000 HF is mounted on a standard five axle commercial truck chassis with a choice of Scania, MAN or Kenworth in North America. The average Gross Vehicle Weight is around 53 to 55 tonnes, but 10 tonne axle loads are possible. The overall length is 16.35 metres with an overall height of 3.95 metres.

### PERFORMANCE MODES

The new T1000 HF features two Performance operating modes - Sky and Height. In Sky Performance mode the lower boom elevation angle is restricted to between 80 and 88.5 degrees above horizontal - almost vertical - for some performance improvements. The 39 metre outreach for example can be achieved at a height of around 50 metres with 100kg capacity, while the outreach with maximum unrestricted capacity is limited to just over 30 metres.

However, in Height mode, there are no restrictions on the lower boom which gives a larger working envelope but can only achieve its 39 metres of outreach at a height of around



*The T1000 HF uses the same five section lower boom, four section upper boom and HF articulating jib of the T900 HF*



*The T1000 HF has a 3.82 metre by 970mm extended platform - seen here at the launch event*

15 metres. The T1000 HF has a 3.82 metre by 970mm extended platform which features several operator assistance systems including DRS range optimisation and RTC service & telematics.

Ruthmann says it hopes to sell at least 20 units by early 2026 and by next year will have the capacity to produce between 15 to 20 units of its 90 and 100 metre models a year. Orders for the T1000 HF appear to have started well with the second, third and fourth all going to French rental company Joly Location - the original launch customer. Further models have been ordered by German company Wörle and Galaksi Platform & Vinç in Turkey.

### LACKLUSTRE MARKET

For many years the UK and Ireland markets has been among the largest in Europe taking more than its fair share of 75 metre plus models, possibly to catch up with those countries that were early adopters of top end truck mounts. The market however has typically been supplied by just three companies - Palfinger, Bronto and Ruthmann. Palfinger Platforms in the UK is now distributed by CPL - part of the Klubb group - and since 2021 Ruthmann it has been part of the Time Versalift group and distributed by Versalift UK which also looks after the Versalift van mounts and smaller truck mounts. Bronto was acquired by Morita Holdings in 2016 - Japan's



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leading producer of firefighting equipment - and tends to have a more direct sale strategy, although it has sales and service partners to support the product.

The market across the UK and much of the rest of Europe has seen demand for large truck mounted platforms disappear recently, perhaps due to economic uncertainties given the investment costs for these big beasts. The UK has also been hit by a spate of rental rate discounting, rising prices and a lack of staff - especially skilled operators. Some rental companies have been resorting to rate cutting to keep the truck mounts out of the depot. With about six 90 metre platforms in the UK and very little work, rental rates have dropped from about £3k a day to less than £2k. Why buy a new machine when rentals are so cheap? With some rental companies having mainland European divisions it is more cost effective for them to bring in a large truck mount into the UK as and when required.

### SOCAGE SUCCESS

However, a recent sale of a 75 metre truck mount has been made by Socage's UK dealer, Independent Access Sales. The Socage Forste 75TJJ has been ordered by Kent based Orion Access and is the first Socage large truck mount ever to be sold into the UK. According to dealer Richard Martin the 75TJJ is replacing Orion's 61 metre Palfinger WT 610 and becomes the largest truck mount in its fleet which also includes a 45 metre Multitel MJ 450 and 57 metre Palfinger P 570. In total Socage says it has sold 16 units of its 75 metre 75TJJ truck mounts since its launch in March 2015.

The Forste 75TJJ has a maximum working height of 74.5 metres and a maximum outreach of 39.5 metres - which is slightly more than Ruthmann's new 100 metre T1000 HF - with 100kg in the platform. Its maximum platform capacity of 600kg is available at up to 28 metres of outreach, while 37 metres is possible with 300kg in the platform. When operating with inboard jacking the outreach is still a healthy 25 metres with 300kg and just over 15 metres with 600kg.

"Orion's machine is mounted on a UK spec, four axle Scania chassis and has been supplied with the 2.3 metre to 3.6 metre telescopic platform with 360 degrees rotation - 180 degrees either side of centre - a 300kg capacity jib winch and material handling frame for items such as glass panels. The UK market for big trucks is stagnant at the moment but the competitively priced Forste 75TJJ with UK spec Scania chassis with three year warranty ticked all the boxes for Orion," said Martin.

### 100M FROM ITALY

The 75 metre Forste 75TJJ is however not the largest truck mount in the Socage lineup. The company announced it was working on a '100 metre or more' truck mount way back in 2008. Rumours suggested that the company was looking at using a five axle Scania chassis to produce a platform with a working height of up to 105 metres, which at that time would have made it the world's highest platform.

Two large Socage truck mounted platforms - the Forste 75TJJ and the Forste 54TJJ



However, it was a further 13 years in the making - a casualty of the economic crisis and lack of demand - and it finally appeared in 2021 as the 100 metre Forste 100TJJ, mounted on a five axle Scania chassis with an all up weight of 53 tonnes.

The platform has a five section lower boom/telescopic riser, which can elevate to almost 90 degrees, topped by a four section upper boom, and as with other TJJ models it features a jointed articulated jib. The result is an up & over height of up to 68 metres with an outreach

at this height of almost 33 metres. At an up & over height of 58 metres - four sections of the lower boom extended - the outreach is slightly increased. Maximum outreach is 43 metres at an up & over height of 14 metres with a capacity of 350kg.

A useful feature is its below ground reach of 26 metres at a 12.5 metre outreach. Maximum capacity in the 2.3 to 3.6 metre by 900mm telescopic platform is 600kg with a six person rating, which is also available at the maximum working height of 99.5 metres. 700 degrees of slew is standard.



Socage launched its Forste 100TJJ in 2021



## TRUCK MOUNTS

*The Socage TJJ100 has an up & over height of up to 68 metres with an outreach at this height of almost 33 metres*



The overall length on the road is 15 metres, with a height of just less than four metres. The outrigger set up is variable with the company's Multi-Zone system that allows the operator to set them to match the available space, with the automatic selection of a corresponding working envelope. Standard platform rotation is 180 degrees, but a manually rotating top jib can extend this to 360 degrees.

The platform controls are equipped with a seven inch LCD display that allows the operator to monitor a wide range of information including the actual and available working envelope and outrigger set up etc. A remote controller is also available and is used for emergency descents.

### FIRST MULTITEL 70 METRE HYBRID

Multitel's largest truck mount - the MJ775 - offers a 77.5 metre working height and a maximum outreach of 38 metres with 120kg, 35.8 metres with 280kg and 33 metres with 400kg in the platform. It is mounted on a 44 tonne, five axle chassis, however its latest development is what it describes as the world's largest 'green' platform - the 70 metre MJ700 Hybrid truck mount.

The first unit has been delivered to Dutch crane and aerial lift rental company Boer. Mounted on a five axle Volvo FM500 chassis the new hybrid power pack includes two 80V/210Ah lithium batteries with a total of around 33KWh of power, driving an 80V/20KW electric motor, coupled to a hydraulic pump. The machine has enough battery power to fully extend the boom from its stowed position to full height at least four times. When connected to a 400V network, a full recharge takes four hours, or five hours when using the on-board diesel generator. The unit can also be operated while plugged in or can operate as a normal diesel machine. A hybrid system diagnostic screen can be used to check the battery charge, the current usage in real time, the operating temperature of the batteries and inverter and other parameters.

Its six section main boom and long three section top boom/jib are topped by an articulating jib giving a maximum working height of 70.2 metres and up to 28.5 metres of outreach with the maximum platform capacity of 600kg. The outreach can be increased to 36 metres with 120kg in the platform, while 280kg is possible at 33.5 metres and 400kg at 31.3 metres. Around

*Multitel's 70 metre MJ700 Hybrid truck mount*



29 metres of outreach can be achieved at an up & over height of 48 metres. The unit also features variable outrigger set up and monitoring making it well suited to working in confined spaces, albeit with a reduced working envelope.

### MID RANGE MOVEMENTS

As well as the recent developments in the large truck mounted sector, there are new mid range models on the market. Ruthmann previewed its new 38 metre T380 XS at Platformers' Days in Germany and will exhibit it for the first time at Bauma next April. Ruthmann says the new platform is 'a combination of compactness and performance' - of course!

The 'XS' in the model designation stands for 'Xtra Short', as it is mounted on a two axle chassis with an overall length of just 8.35 metres.

Compared to its T380, the new model offers 1.2 metres more reach but is 1.4 metres shorter.

Of course, there has to be a compromise - the platform capacity of the T380 XS is 500kg - 100kg less than the T380. However, thanks to the DRS - Dynamic Reach System - the new model has a maximum reach with the boom horizontal of a whopping 32.1 metres which Ruthmann claims is up to eight meters more than comparable models and the only machine in this class that can be loaded close to the ground.



*The Ruthmann T380 has 100kg more capacity than the T380 XS but less outreach*

A hybrid version using a 23kW lithium-ion battery is said to have enough power for a day's work is also available as an option. The standard 2.1 metre by 860mm platform can be insulated to 1,000 Volts and includes a mount for the manufacturer's winch attachment. Two other



*Mounted on a five axle Volvo FM500 chassis the new hybrid power pack includes two 80V/210Ah lithium batteries with a total of around 33KWh of power*



*Ruthmann previewed its new 38 metre T380 XS at Platformers' Days in Germany*



*Cela claims the 60 metre working height on the 18 tonne chassis is a new record*



platform options are available - a slightly smaller GRP and one for tree work measuring just 710mm square.

**CELA 60 METRE**

Italian manufacturer Cela has added a large truck mounted platform to its range. Mounted on an 18 tonne chassis, the 'Double Telescopic' Cela DT Truck 60 follows in the footsteps of its record breaking sibling - the 40 metre DT Truck 40 mounted on a 7.49 tonne chassis - by pushing the maximum working height from the size of chassis.

Cela claims the 60 metre working height on the 18 tonne chassis is a new record, it can also be supplied on an 18 tonne all-wheel drive chassis. The DT Truck 60 has a 30 metre outreach at an up & over height of 30 metres. By way of a quick comparison Ruthmann's 57 metre T570 HF and Palfinger's P 570 are mounted on 26 tonne chassis, Socage mounts its Forste 54TJJ on a

26 or 32 tonne chassis and Multitel's 60 metre MJ 600 is on a 32 tonne truck.

Cela also has another new model, the 28 metre DT Truck 28FE, mounted on a 3.5 tonne Iveco Daily chassis which can be driven on a Class B driver's licence. It has a maximum capacity of 250kg and a maximum outreach of 13.5 metres with 100kg in the platform.

Paolo Troni, of Cela said: "Our vision was to develop a lightweight and revolutionary aerial platform that would be perfect for rental companies looking for a reliable and cost effective solution without the need for a Class C driver's license. It was a two year challenge



*Cela's 28 metre DT Truck 28FE mounted on a 3.5 tonne Iveco Daily chassis*



*Cela DT Truck 60*

to develop a work platform that combines a working height of over 28 metres, a reach of 14 metres and a capacity of 250kg, while still complying with the Class B driver's licence." ■







# PALFINGER'S BATTERY POWERED 64 METRE TRUCK MOUNT

A 64 metre Palfinger P 640 truck mount owned by Munich-based rental company Roggermaier has been modified with a battery electric drive superstructure and is being used to inspect the inside of the radar dome in Raisting, in the Upper Bavarian district of Weilheim-Schongau.

**The 49 metre strutless air dome dates back to 1963 and houses a 25 metre diameter parabolic antenna which until 1985 was part of the Raisting earth station for intercontinental radio communications - telephone and television - via news satellites.**

The platform's 40.5 metre outreach, jib and 360 degree rotating basket is ideal for carrying out maintenance and inspection work on the radar dome's supporting air envelope. The 'white balloon' like dome is continually exposed to the varied weather elements and in early 2020 fell victim to a storm when the shell came crashing down. Water seeped into the operating rooms and destroyed the electrics resulting in a new shell being installed the following year.

Since that incident, René Jakob, managing director of Radom Raisting, has focused on more frequent inspections. The outer shell is inspected by industrial climbers whereas the internal joints and seams are checked using an aerial work platform. And because it is an enclosed hall, a diesel powered platform cannot be used and an emission-friendly electric drive is required.

Thanks to the electric drive, Roggermaier's P 640E truck mount can be operated completely emission-free. The company has continuously invested in the latest environmentally friendly technologies over its 40 year history. Horst Bröcker, product manager at Roggermaier, said: "We opted for electric drives early because of their advantages. Access platforms with battery drive are as powerful in operation as conventional diesel machines, but at the same time enable low noise emissions and complete freedom from exhaust fumes."

"However, the green fleet was only available for

small machines for a long time. The Palfinger P 640E was intended to extend the range of applications of the Greenline fleet upwards. Palfinger supported our vision and equipped the P 640 with battery drive. The P 640E now has sufficient payload and the weight of the batteries also provides greater performance data."

The battery electric truck mount now enables the machine to operate in emission free zones such as city centres.

"Even night operations and working in nature reserves are now no longer an obstacle, this was previously unthinkable with truck-mounted

platforms in this class," he said. "The machine is also sustainable: 2.64kg of CO<sub>2</sub> is generated per litre of diesel. The alternative drive burns around 10 litres less diesel per hour and therefore emits 26kg less CO<sub>2</sub> per hour. This means that it can be used in enclosed spaces, such as in a radome without any further measures. Thanks to the electric motor, the work platform, which is mounted on a four axle MAN TGS 35.470 8x4H-6 BL CH, is ultimately emission and CO<sub>2</sub>-free and running costs for fuel as well as downtimes for burning out the particulate filter and the resulting costs can be saved."







# 90M FOR WIND FARM MAINTENANCE

Nationwide Platforms recently provided a 90 metre truck mounted platform to DH Renewables' Mid Hill Wind Farm in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, to help with maintenance work on the 80 metre high turbine spoke hubs. The farm includes 33 wind turbines at heights of up to 90 metres which will generate 75.9 megawatts of energy a year - enough to power 31,000 households annually.

The majority of energy produced by the farm is generated between March and October which meant maintenance work had to be carried out in the winter off-season. With the challenging winter weather in Aberdeen, work had to be completed within a specific time slot and in the presence of potentially difficult environmental conditions. As expected, strong winds teamed up with rain and heavy snow throughout the project. However the toughest challenge proved to be the dense fog that settled over the area and persisted for days at a time, significantly reducing visibility, especially higher up where the work was being carried out.

Nationwide started with a detailed survey of the Mid Hill site, examining the terrain and access roads, analysing the weather forecasts and taking measurements for the actual height of the hubs, as well as the distances between each turbine to calculate exactly how long the maintenance work would take.

The company then selected a machine capable of working safely at a height of 80 metres during intense weather and could navigate tricky often snow covered logging roads that wound through the highlands leading towards the site.

Given the height of the turbine hubs, Nationwide chose the largest machine in its Specialist Vehicle Fleet - a 90 metre Bronto T90B - operated by its highest level (Tier 4) operators, all of whom have racked up hundreds of hours' experience on a variety of machines in all kinds of weather conditions.

The tight three week schedule coupled with its remote location in the Fetteresso Forest of Stonehaven, meant that for maximum efficiency, operators would arrive on site the day before and would stay overnight to start work early the following morning. To ensure the operators could work as safely as possible Nationwide introduced a tightly scheduled rota, with the work alternating between operators so that no single operator worked long hours.

The project also used Nationwide Platforms' Harness ON operator safety device. The system connects a worker's lanyard carabiner directly into a machine's control panel, preventing the machine from working until the operator is securely fastened in.

DH Renewables' chief executive Dan Hall said: "It's vital that we get our maintenance work done during the off-season, but of course this means we're facing the harsh Aberdeen weather. Nationwide Platforms' combination of fleet expertise, and careful, planned approach is something that stood out to us, and gave us confidence that the work would be done efficiently and safely."



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