

BUYERS GUIDE

Scissor Lifts

A glance at the evolving scissor lift market, by
Rosie Gordon

The GSL oscillating axles provide true rough terrain capability

The JLG 4394RT

Scissor lifts are often dismissed as rather low tech, bulk-buy objects. But they are essential to most access fleets and a flurry of launches from manufacturers large and small are offering buyers a surprising amount of choice, and some very difficult decisions.

Genie has just announced its new rough terrain lift, the GS-338RT. With a chassis measuring 2.13 metres it can handle both rough terrain (50% gradeability) and tight spaces but is not suited to indoor use, as only diesel powered. The Deutz 36 horsepower engine promises swift work on site, plus automatic outriggers offer a self levelling capability, so safe lifts can be carried out on slopes. Window shoppers will find this new addition to the Genie range in the cranes and access village at SED. However, Genie does not make its scissors available to sale for end users – it does not want to compete with its main bread and butter, the rental companies.

Ward Bushell, founder and co-director of Genie, believes that the company's strong market presence is down to heavy investment between 1993 and 1999, a very healthy time in the industry. "We are still managing to present new machines in the current slump where most of the competition is struggling", he says. "Along with JLG we are riding the US recession and will come out of it with an even stronger hold on the market. It's down to continuous investment in people, products and processes."

Bushell predicts that America will enter the second quarter of 2003 before the market is more robust. "This year will be a

BUYERS GUIDE

plateau and we are not planning any more major product launches. However, we are moving into the Eastern European market and opening sales offices in Sweden and Spain.” Good news for buyers is that Genie is pretty hot on customer service, which, according to Bushell, is the key to paying a bit more money. “Some rental people only look at acquisition costs and forget financing services, maintenance, access to their representa-

...tive...” JLG made a splash with its stand at Conexpo and, like Genie, is evidently taking advantage of the American market slowdown to kick away any erstwhile challengers nipping at its ankles. It has been making scissors for 30 years and Claire Pearson, marketing manager, puts down much of the company’s rise to dominance in the industry (it claims to be the world leader) is the reputation of quality and reliability. JLG has invested \$14 million in research and development of its products and matching them to the market.

The 500RTS MegaDeck is the hot product from JLG, with a wider and longer deck to get operators 14 cm closer to the work face. Working height is 50 feet (15.24 metres). It proved so popular after its launch last year that 33 and 43 foot (10.06 and 13.11 metre) versions will be introduced to the market this summer. In electric models, Pearson says that JLG has managed to better its competitors’ duty cycles by 73 percent.

Tailormade

Away from the mass producers, Basket and GSL have the ability to provide customers with pretty much tailor-made deals. Basket (which also has a standard range from 8 to 16 metres) is able to produce machines in electric, diesel or dual power and varying work heights and widths.

Basket is presently reviewing its scissor range, so we are unlikely to hear any firm reports on new launches until later in the year, according to Shaun Day at UK agent Promax.

“Buyers should look out for build quality and the quality of the battery supplied”, says Day. “The majority of machines are not supplied with traction batteries and the machine should be uncomplicated, user friendly and have



The Skyjack SJ7135

standardised components.”

Another direct competitor to Basket, Alan Russon of dealer Russon Access claims that Liftlux is in pole position in the UK so far as larger units are concerned. Liftlux likes to focus on 40-foot (12.19 metre) and over scissor lifts. “We don’t have car-production style factories like Genie”, says Russon. “The smaller scissor lifts are very labour intensive and we can’t really compete with the bigger manufacturers price-wise.”

There will be four new models launched at SED, three of them electric and one diesel powered. The battery powered 210-12, one of only five such models in existence at the moment, has a 21 metre platform height and is 1.2 metres in width. Its capacity of 750 kilograms is more usually found in a rough terrain, diesel, big-deck machine. All of the rough terrain units have triple scissor mechanism to give the platform stiffness and lateral rigidity, Nivolux outriggers for automatic levelling, permanent 4 wheel drive and rear oscillating axle and a big single hydraulic extension deck.

“I am convinced that the market is changing at the moment”, says Russon. “We are finding that buildings are getting taller because land prices are so high. The 210-12 gives operators the height they now require, as well as 7.3 metres of platform length to work from and carry their equipment.”

On a par with these players is GSL, for which PJ Allan is the UK representative. GSL first started making scissor lifts about 11 years ago, for its own rental fleet. It was making ‘bespoke’ machines,

tailored to its own needs which could not be addressed by machines on the market. The designs and elements included in these were quite ahead of their time and people in Germany soon noticed and wanted the lifts.

“GSL scissor lifts respond to a niche market”, says Phil Allan. “Compared to the high volume of machines in the mid range being churned out by American manufacturers, we cannot compete on a ‘market share’ basis. However, above that, for bespoke or large lifts, we have already developed, tried and tested features that they are only just coming around to. For example, the 4WDN range has oscillating axles – a concept we developed about seven years ago, yet is only now being adopted by other manufacturers. It is truly all terrain, unlike some other, newer models.”

The largest scissor GSL produces is the S238D24, with a working height of 26 metres, deck of 23.8 metres, width of 2.4 metres and 50 percent gradeability. With this height it is unusual that outriggers are not required.

GSL uses a large number of common components and can assemble 30-40 models out of its modular range. They are the only scissor lift manufacturer to use a Volkswagen engine – the advantage being that if something does go wrong, any VW garage nearby will be able to sort it out.

Manitou’s Edward Ugolini says that the French company’s scissor lifts also



The triple scissor mechanism from Liftlux



The Upright X26 Ultra-N

◀ aim for minimum maintenance worries. Most are single scissors with self lubricating axles. Manitou started to manufacture scissors after buying the rights to the designs of MEC last year, but it is still a company mostly associated with booms and telehandlers, although sales in scissors are picking up. Since the high profile and ambitious scissor lift announcement, Manitou has focused upon reinforcing its contacts with rental companies and, reinforcing its UK team, has taken on a new product manager, David Foulkes, who comes from an access rental background. It looks like Manitou is still seriously investing in its bid to secure 10 percent of the scissor market in Europe by next year, but time (or lack of it) will tell.

In the Manitou range are 12 models – compact electrics from 6.47 metres to 8.10 metres working height and up to 340 kg capacity, high capacity electrics from 8.10 metres to 11.75 metres working height and up to 560kg capacity and the diesel range, with 9.62 metres to 14.50 metres working height and a capacity on the lowest of 795 kg.

Back with the old hands, Skyjack started making its scissor range 30 years ago. Martin Davis describes major competitor Genie as relative newcomers “The innovations they are coming up with now are just bringing them to a level of development Skyjack has been at for years”, he says.

But the present market situation in the USA has hit Skyjack slightly harder than the likes of Genie and JLG. Although the new SJ71-35 (71 inch (1.8 metre) wide chassis and 35 foot (10.66 metre) platform height) is out on a ‘launch tour’, country-by-country taking on Europe, unfortunately visitors to SED will not be able to see it due to a cost cutting exercise which means less shows for Skyjack.

The most popular machines from Skyjack are its SJ92-50 and SJ88-41 rough terrain diesels, but the new SJ71-35 is obviously impressing a few people on its travels as orders are coming in already. Skyjack is also just coming on stream with its European built scissor lifts (see report in this issue).

Launches

It’s a bewildering time for anyone purchasing scissors, with the amount of launches going on and new products to consider. At Hirex, UpRight launched the X26 Ultra-N, a rough terrain scissor with rigid stack and Supercharger[®]. This new feature, which

BUYERS GUIDE

is a fully automatic and waterproof battery charging system, is being added to all five of UpRight's X-Series scissor lifts. The system is able to charge from dead, replenishes power to 98% and has 90 to 230 volt auto-seek. Another now common feature of UpRight and Sigma scissor lifts is the 'Whisper Drive' motor control for a quieter and smoother operation.

Other selling points for the X26 Ultra-N are a foot pedal release roll out deck giving an additional 91.5 centimetres and its quick retract, stowable handrail. At 82.5 centimetres in width the scissor can pass through single doorways, yet has the capability for a 10 metre working height and a platform capacity of 350kg.

More launches – Pinguely Haulotte is number three in the world ranking of aerial platform manufacturers. Its range goes from 8 to 18 metres and can offer electric, diesel or dual power and it has just entered the compact sector of the market with its new 19 foot (59 metre) electric Optimum 8, with the Compact 4 wheel drive diesel series. Machines come in 8, 10 and 12 metre working heights, as well as the Optimum 6, with a 15 foot (45.7 metre) working height. All are launched this month.

A trip to SED will probably provide some clarity to anyone considering expanding their fleet. As long as you have a very clear idea of what customers are asking for and what the most common applications are for your scissors, you should be able to find something to exactly fit the bill. ■

New Genie at Safeway



Alan Drew Ltd of Watford recently purchased seventeen Genie scissor lifts, four of which are GS-2632 electric units new to the UK.

One of the GS-2632 units has just helped out a refurbishment of a Safeway supermarket in Reigate, Kent. It's working height of 9.92 metres and width of 81.3 centimetres, with zero turning radius and low noise level made it the ideal solution to the cramped, late night work.