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# Upbeat truck mounts?

While new developments in the self propelled lift market appear to have stagnated, the truck mounted platform is undergoing a renaissance and even in the current climate, there is still good business being done particularly in the medium and larger sized platforms. In the following pages we have focused on - the market above the 3.5 tonne chassis, and profile Gateshead-based manufacturer Ascendant on page 27.

Of all the products at the APEX show this September, the exhibits that created the most 'buzz' were the truck mounted platforms. Exciting new products, deals being done and seemingly eager potential buyers really gave a lift to the whole show and perhaps highlighted one area of the access market that looks set to do well over the next year or so.

The major established players at the larger end of the sector includes Bronto, Pagliero/Multitel, Palfinger-Wumag and Ruthmann, although several Italian manufacturers such as Socage, Oil&Steel, Barin, and CTE Bizzocchi are also pushing hard into the larger platform market. In fact Socage is currently designing a 100 metre plus machine for an Italian client working in the wind farm business. With a maximum possible working height of 105 metres on the proposed chassis, it may well be the world's largest - topping Bronto's new 104 metre model currently in build.

## A major player

Palfinger new to the truck mounted lift market just four years ago has become a major player having snapped up Wumag for €17.45 million earlier this year. Wumag had been in Palfinger's sights for several years. The combination of a family-owned business with no natural successor meant that when it did come up for sale, Palfinger wasted no time in completing the deal. And while it gave Palfinger instant access to much larger platforms, there is considerable product overlap in the

mid-range machines that still needs rationalising.

"Wumag has a good reputation with large platforms and has concentrated its R&D in this area over the last few years," Palfinger's managing director Herbert Ortner told C&A. "Bison's largest platform is 61 metres but we have concentrated



*The first Wumag WT1000 in the UK has recently been delivered to McNally in Ireland and a second is on order*

our development work on the 3.5 tonne TA platform. We think that Wumag's products in this sector - the WT22 for example - are not as competitive. However with the Wumag and Bison brands so strong, we will keep both but there will be some model rationalisation. The two brands will not be integrated in the short term and will be run as separate business units."

Wumag generated revenues of €28.2 million over the first nine months, with a net profit of €735,000. Bison was Palfinger's first acquisition in



*A large Barin truckmount*

the truck mounted sector in October 2004 and over that time has more than trebled its revenues to more than €30 million.

Skyking now the UK Wumag/Palfinger dealer announced its largest ever single order worth more than £5 million at APEX. The order includes six units ranging from 40 metres to a WT1000, currently the world's tallest platform with a working height of 102.5 metres and the first unit to be delivered in the UK. The platforms will be delivered to the still undisclosed buyer for wind farm maintenance work over the next 18 months. SkyKing has just delivered its first WT1000 to McNally in Ireland, although damage at the dock during delivery meant that

it was out of action when we visited.

This latest order takes Skyking's order intake over the past 12 months to £10 million and helping establish the UK as the largest market for Wumag outside of Germany.

## Ruthmann easing out

German manufacturer Ruthmann has also made significant inroads into the UK market with several recent sales of its mid-range platforms to companies such as Nationwide SkyLift which purchased six, 27.3 metre working height, 21 metre outreach T275 on 7.5 tonne chassis and AA Access with a 58 metre working height, 40 metre outreach T580 on a three axle truck. The company currently appears to have the right range of products and



*(L-R) Ted Williams, Martin Cowley and Mark Carrington of SkyKing with Herbert Ortner and Stephan Kulawik of Palfinger and Richard Bryant from SkyKing.*





Orders are currently being taken for the new 47 metre Ruthmann T470 for delivery next Spring.

specifications for UK customers. Its latest machine is the 47 metre working height T470 - a replacement for the T450 - mounted on a two axle, 18 tonne GVW chassis which will make its debut at Intermat in Paris next year.

The unit - available to order now for delivery after its launch - can also be specified on a three axle chassis should more payload be required. Its maximum capacity of 500kg drops to 100kg at its full 32 metre outreach. Features of other machines in the T series are included such as a 500 degree boom rotation, 180 degree jib rotation, a platform which extends to 3.6 metres and short overall length. The T470 also features Ruthmann's new Orbital-Boom system which creates more space in the boom for maintenance and repair and does away with the need of special tools. Orders have already been placed from companies in Germany - its main market - and further afield.

With all the talk about the 100 metre plus models from Wumag, Bronto and possibly Socage, it should not be forgotten that Ruthmann also has a 100 metre platform. The TTS 1000, a semi-trailer mounted, introduced in 2001 has not sold well with only two units in operation. The unit offers the most outreach of any 100 metre unit at 40 metres with a four metre wide platform and 500kg capacity.

Ruthmann says that while it is still available, it is concentrating on lifts up to a maximum of 84 metres.

Over the past five years Ruthmann - under the control of Heinrich Winkelmann and Heinz-Jürgen Buss - has doubled its revenues to €55 million about €20 million lower than Palfinger Bison/Wumag, but less than half that of Bronto.



Heinz-Jürgen Buss (left) and Heinrich Winkelmann (right) have managed the company since 2003 doubling turnover to €55 million.

"The demand for precision-made aerial platforms and special transport vehicles will always remain strong," says Winkelmann. "Our goal is to enhance the existing market here in Germany and to make further market advances abroad."

Already a big user of Bronto platforms, Facelift Access is scheduled to take delivery of a 90 metre S90HLA early next year



Even though orders for the bigger platforms are increasing, more than half of Bronto's production is in fire fighting appliances

The company says it plans to employ the same formula for success it has used for the past several years and will also consider 'strategic acquisitions and joint-venture possibilities' in the future.

### The mighty Finn

Finnish-based Bronto, claims to be the worldwide market leader and in terms of revenues it almost certainly is. Several companies have it beat when the measurement is in unit volume, with Pagliero almost certainly holding that crown and possibly also being the closest in terms of revenues?

Bronto looks set to retake the 'tallest platform' title with the introduction of the 104 metre S 104 HLA with the first of three orders to be delivered next Spring. The Bronto range currently extends from 38 to 101 metres - with three ranges the eXtra Duty Telescopic XDT from 38 to 78 metres - the world's highest telescopic - the High Level Articulated HLA from 69 to 101 metres and the SI insulated platforms from 38 to 60 metres. Although sales of these insulated platforms have predominantly been to North America, Bronto says that there has been some interest from European utilities including the UK's National Grid. It says that orders for the bigger platforms are also increasing - with Spain a surprisingly active market - although more than half of its production is in fire fighting appliances.

Already a big user of Bronto platforms, Facelift Access is scheduled to take a 90 metre S90HLA early in the new year, the second unit in the UK. Zenith Aerial Platforms, the company owned jointly by Mark Butler and Andy Ainsworth purchased the first in 2007.

### The Italians are coming

So currently it is the 'usual' suspects that dominate the very top end of the larger truck mounted market. But are things about to change?

During the summer, Italian platform manufacturer Socage confirmed plans to produce a 100 metre plus model based on its new 70 metre

TJJ 70 for introduction by the end of next year.

According to Angelo Pansera, Socage managing director, the unit will use a five axle Scania truck chassis and could be as high as 105 metres. It will incorporate a main telescopic boom, two articulated telescopic jibs and the same short final jib as the TJJ70.

The first unit is being built for an Italian customer for wind turbine work and a further two orders have also been received.

The new 70 metre model is mounted on a four axle 32 tonne chassis with a main telescopic boom, 22 metre telescopic jib and a short final articulated jib. An optional 900kg lifting capacity winch will also be available for handling loads. Socage's largest lift is currently the 74.8 metres working height Sioux TTJ75 which has a 36.3 metre outreach.

Barin a company best known for its underbridge inspection platforms has a five model range truck mounted range with working heights from 44 to 90 metres. Its 90 metre AP90/34 J2 platform is based on a five axle chassis with a 280kg maximum capacity and basket width of 3.6 metres.



The new 70 metre Socage TJJ 70 is mounted on a four axle, 32 tonne chassis with an optional 900kg lifting capacity





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## truck mounts

C&a



Barin has a range of truck mounted platforms from 44 to 90 metres. This is the 60 metre AP60.

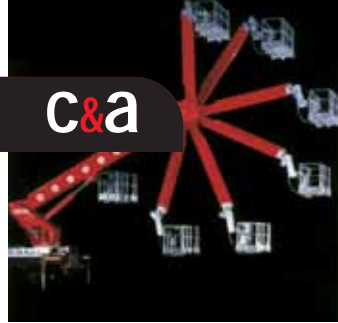
Oil&Steel's 12 model Eagle range of truck mounted lifts runs from 26 metres up to 62 metres with plans to extend it upwards slightly, but there is no intention of venturing beyond the 75 metre level.



Oil&Steel is another Italian manufacturer with a large range of truck mounted platforms which includes the Eagle range.

### The quiet leader

Multitel Pagliero probably produces more truck mounted lifts than any other European manufacturer and tends to follow a slightly different line to most other producers. From its highly popular MX low profile dual boom range, its penchant for aluminium booms, to its larger models which use heavy duty gear boxes to rotate upper booms and jibs, rather than hydraulic cylinders.



The advantage is a far greater range of articulation with 300 degrees on the upper boom and 270 degrees on the jib. Its largest machine is currently the J2 365 TA with a 65 metre working height mounted on a four axle chassis with 33 metres of outreach.

### Mid range dual boom workhorses

In fact a mid-range machine with good outreach will most probably be able to carry out the vast majority of day-to-day access work in many regions. Because of this, manufacturers



One of several new Italian platforms mounted on a six tonne chassis - the CTE 26J has a 14 metre outreach

Multitel Pagliero probably produces more truck mounted platforms than any other European manufacturer.

are seeing strong sales of truck mounted lifts with working heights of between 25 and 35 metres.

"Over the past year, our 29 metre double articulated model has been a good seller and we generally have a good order book for this size of platform," said GSR director Stefan Weber. Italian manufacturers have been particularly strong in this market sector. At SAIE in November, several new models were launched on six tonne chassis - the cut-off point for self-drive truck mounted platforms - including the 26.5 metre working height, 13.5 metre outreach GSR E270PX; the Socage Cheyenne DA26 - offering 25.6 metres up and 13.4 metres out - and the CTE 26J - 26 metres up and 14 metres outreach with basket capacities of 220, 200 and 230kg respectively. In most cases the same units can be mounted on a 7.5 tonne chassis with more compact outrigger bases.



Launched at SAIE, the GSR E270PX has a working height of 26.5 metres and a 13.5 metre outreach.

Not as well known outside of Italy, Isoli launched its PNT280J on a 7.5 tonne chassis. The unit has a 27.8 metre working height and



13.7 metre outreach with 200kg in the basket.

Multitel first showed its 27 metre MX270 mounted on a 7.5 tonne Mitsubishi Canter chassis at SAIE last year and again at Vertikal Days in June. The company has recently delivered its first three units in the UK to Rapid Platforms, Event Group and Warren Access in the North East. (see separate story below). The company also offers this model on a six tonne chassis with a larger footprint.

Also in the North East is UK manufacturer Ascendant Access. The company is continuing to expand and is now looking towards this sector of the market. It already has 17 and 22 metre truck mounted platforms and is starting design work on a 30 metre machine but with an outreach of about 26 metres. (See Made in Britain on page 27).

So while the number of larger platforms in the UK and Ireland is increasing, the potential for significant growth at the slightly smaller end is good news for the access market.

## Warren Access takes first MX270

Based in Brunswick Village near Gateshead in the North East, Warren Access specialises in truck and van mounted access equipment. Formed 15 years ago by Derek Warren, the company has expanded into a family affair, with son Graham and wife Michelle joining in 2005 to take over with Derek approaching retirement.

The new Multitel MX270 is the third truck mount in the fleet which also includes 18 van mounts. Warren's 13.5 metre and 17 metre trucks are fitted to 6.5 and 7.5 tonne chassis and are continually out on hire with local councils, CCTV installation and maintenance, street lighting and security.

"We went to a few equipment shows looking for a new lift with up to 26 metres working height, which would cope with all the types of jobs we do



(L-R) Derek, Graham and Michelle Warren with Melvin Else of Multitel in the basket

and stop us having to cross-hire bigger machines," says Graham Warren. "There were a few possibilities and we looked seriously at CTE, but we thought the Multitel was better in all aspects. The MX270 gives us an additional 10 metres height and about four metres more outreach than our 17 metre lift. We also liked the fact that it sets up low off the ground, has auto teleback before the main boom retracts, 90 degree basket rotation both ways and enough cage capacity for two operators and tools."



The MX270 shows off its outreach

"There are not too many competitors in the North East and this new platform will give us the capability to carry out work on many more projects."



# Made in Britain

The UK has very few powered access manufacturers and even fewer making truck mounted lifts. In fact the only one of any size is Ascendant Access in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear. Mark Darwin went north to find out more.

Apart from coinciding with the first heavy snowfall of the winter, my visit to Ascendant Access just happened to coincide with its move into new premises. Still in Gateshead, the new, 10,000 sq ft, ex-plant hire maintenance facility was company managing director, Steve Dean's dream facility. Christmas had come early!

"Over the past four years since we started, we have been operating out of premises that were far from ideal," said Dean. "This new facility has everything we need including



Steve Dean

for the first time, two overhead cranes and lots of three-phase electric outlets, and it suits us down



Ascendant maximises outreach rather than platform height



This 22 metre platform on a tractor is another Ascendant project

**c&a** truck mounts

to the ground. From here we can push on to greater things."

Like many small companies, Dean has to do a multitude of jobs. With 17 years under his belt at Aerial Access as chief engineer and then general manager he has a wide range of design and management experience. Dean parted company with Aerial Access after it was purchased by SEV. Although out of the industry, he was formulating a new design for a 22 metre truck mounted lift in his mind, managing to build a prototype unit with the help of Andy Northwood of Blue Line Access - which later became the UK dealer for Ascendant products until its demise earlier this year. Dean now sells his products direct.

Dean started the business in 2004, working from home and sub-contracted everything. At the end of the first year, he had moved into an industrial unit and employed three staff. Further expansion meant another move during the third year and the staff doubling to six.

"We are still only a small manufacturing company producing about four machines per month so it is difficult for me combining the design of the machines with overseeing production as well," said Dean. "The companies growth has allowed us to move into these new premises but equally important we have been able to employ Jackie Dunn who was with us for 10 years at Aerial Access". She will take on



One of the first 22 metre platforms with Facelift Access

One of the first buyers of the Ascendant 22 was Facelift Access Hire. Its managing director, Gordon Leicester, came up with an idea for a smaller 17 metre model and the Ascendant 17 was duly designed and produced. Since then Dean has been working on further expansions to the product line including the recently launched 12.5 metre van mounted platform and a specialist 21 metre machine which has just been delivered to a customer in Norway.

more of the day-to-day production responsibility allowing me to concentrate on new designs and products such as our Z boom which should be launched at the end of February next year."

Dean, it would appear, has a slightly different design philosophy to the major truck mounted manufacturers. "Other producers, I guess, are driven by maximising the platform height of the truck," said Dean. "We design the whole machine around maximising the outreach



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for a given configuration and the platform height is then whatever this allows."

His first Ascendant design, the 22 metre telescopic boom with fly jib mounted on a 7.5 GVW truck has an impressive outreach of 17 metres and platform capacity of 280kg. Another key feature of the machine is its variable jacking facility offering a choice of outrigger spreads of 4.1 metres and 3.2 metres on one side only, or a 2.2 metre narrow option providing the ability to work in confined spaces.

The lift has sold well, particularly to Facelift Access which placed an initial order for 10 machines as well

chassis. Ten of the machines have been ordered by Facelift and a further eight from a lighting company.

Local truck mounted rental specialist ES Access is another company that has a significant fleet of Ascendant's. The company has also produced a 22 metre platform mounted on a John Deere tractor specifically for ES Access which has now been in service for over 2 years.

"I have tried to make all Ascendant machines easy to operate and maintain and simple in design. We have virtually no breakdowns and if there is a problem, the concise



as the evaluation unit. The most recent 22 metre delivery was earlier this month to Wilson Access - its first Ascendant.

"Currently in the workshop we have the first of four, 22 metre units going to A4 Access," said Dean. "The design is simple, with full hydraulic controls, no PCB boards, and by bringing all the switch wiring to a central point it is easy to fault-find. The machine has a very good reputation in the UK and to date about 75 units have been sold."

The Facelift connection continued with the Ascendant 17 which was the brain-child of Gordon Leicester. Based on the same basic principals as the 22 metre machine, the Ascendant 17 uses a 3.5 GVW chassis and has a 12.2 metre outreach which equates to a 17 metre working height. One-sided jacking is standard and the maximum capacity in the basket is 230kg. More than 20 units have now been delivered. We also fit the same boom on a 5 tonne Iveco chassis, one of which EPL has just taken delivery."

The latest Ascendant is the 12.5 metre van mount on a Transit

operator's manual usually explains in an easy to understand way, how it operates and therefore is relatively simple to fix."

The improved facilities and additional staff should allow the company to increase production from the current four units a month to its target of six units a month.

"The new Z boom will be launched next February and this will give 20 metre platform height and 9.7 metre outreach when mounted on a 3.5 tonne chassis," said Dean.

From a production point of view, all fabrication and powder-coat painting work is carried out locally in the Gateshead area before being transported to Ascendant for assembly. "We did look at having fabrications produced in Slovakia, but when all things were considered - including the lack of quality control - it was much better to have them made locally by two key fabricators."

### Design challenges

Being both designer and general manager, Dean has little time to devote to new projects. However he is always up for a challenge!

When a Norwegian street lighting



The first 21 metre machine to Norway being made ready to deliver

contractor asked for a platform that could work without jacks up to 16 metres over the back of the machine, Dean created the Ascendant 21. Mounted on a Scania P270 chassis, the fully galvanised unit has a straight boom capable of a maximum platform height of 21 metres. The unit has substantial vertical jacks which can self level on a slope of 12 degrees.

"The project - our first export machine - has taken a lot of man-hours, but is now complete and should be the beginning of a substantial order. But being the only designer, it does place a strain on development work."

To help with design, Dean has formed a good relationship with Newcastle University, working closely with three post graduate students on specific projects. Hopefully he plans to be able to employ one of them next year to work full-time on design.

### And the next big project?

"I hope to start work on a 26 metre outreach, 30 metre platform height machine mounted on an 18 tonne chassis - something along the lines of a Bronto 34 metre unit. Although full hydraulic controls is not a feasible feature much above

22 metres the 30 metre will incorporate a well proven, hard wired, electro-hydraulic proportional system. Definitely no computers!"

"We make simple, reliable truck mounted platforms that are gaining an enviable reputation for performance and reliability," said Dean. "Sales are increasing and we are achieving repeat sales from existing customers and sales from customers which previously hired a machine - always a good sign that we are doing it right."

"We are not unique, but different. We aim to offer a competitive product and be a significant producer in the UK. Overseas sales are important to us and we will be concentrating our efforts in this direction now we have a reasonable product range. The new facility has the capacity for up to 12 machines per month but if demand grew even further, we can easily out-source some sub-assembly."

The company has been growing at 25 percent per year and I see that this will continue next year. We don't compete with the likes of Bronto and Wumag, but we do see there is enormous potential in the area's we are targeting and there is a void that we aim to fill!"

