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Is the trailer lift market starting to stir?

Last year we provided a comprehensive roundup of the latest trailer lift developments - few as there were. The article also stressed the overwhelming benefits and how the product sector is being underestimated and underutilised in most countries. Since the last feature, things have started to stir, although perhaps it is too soon to say whether it is a result of a resurgence in popularity, a by-product of economic growth or simply some overdue replacement activity.

On the way out?

In recent years most aerial lift rental companies have focused on updating and expanding their boom and scissor lift fleets, while also flirting with spider lifts which are fast becoming a mainstream product sector. Our annual Top 30 UK and Ireland rental company survey certainly supports this - with the number of trailer lifts falling from 415 to 266 units over the past five years, while in comparison the population of spider lifts in major fleets has risen from 212 to 457 units. Alternatively, it might simply reveal that major rental companies are becoming less involved with trailer lifts, and that end users and smaller tool hire fleets now account for the majority of sales.

Either way, add in the growing popularity of low level lifts in the UK - which shows every sign of spreading to other parts of Europe and North

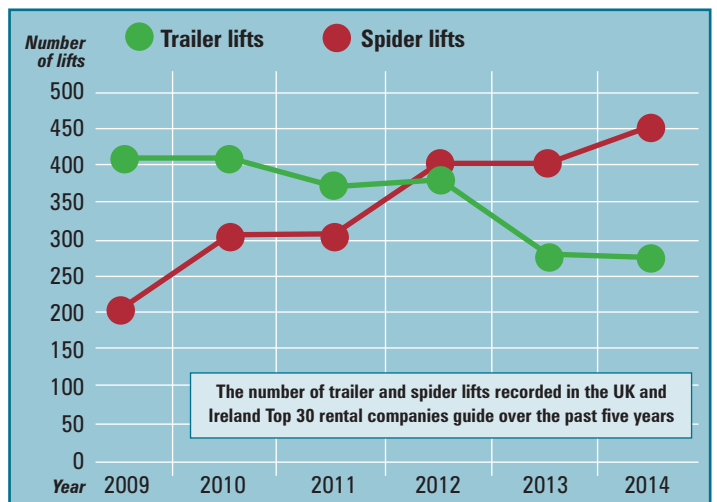
America - coupled with the steady growth of truck mounted lifts, and it is easy to see why trailer lifts and their self-propelled derivatives are struggling to retain their position in the market.

In spite of this however, there has been a fair bit of activity over the past year or so with Denka Lift making a strong comeback under the watchful eye of Manfred Rothlehner in Germany, and companies such as Dinolift doing very well, while looking to add new models and expand its geographical coverage. We also hear that Ommelift has plans to further develop its trailer lift range - something it is keen to keep tightly under wraps. Niftylift meanwhile continues to ship a dozen units a week, while Matilsa and others continue to offer a range of trailer lifts. In North America - once a trailer lift desert - JLG and Genie



continue to promote their two model trailer lift products, although they seem less keen to invest any development resources to expand the range. Snorkel, which inherited the UpRight TL range, and Haulotte are still significant

regional producers - but the French-based manufacturer is clearly no longer promoting trailer lifts or its self-propelled Bil-Jax machines in Europe. One interesting development is Palfinger's investment in Argentinean trailer



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Niftylift T120



Genie TZ-34/20

lift manufacturer Hidro-Grubert, however in this case it is likely that it is more interested in the company's truck mounted lifts and loader cranes than trailer lifts.

Niche or just misunderstood

Lightweight, uncomplicated and easy to transport, trailer lifts are ideal for users/contractors which are involved in maintenance/ decorating, window cleaning and arboriculture work. They also act as a great gateway product for the access industry as they are less intimidating for inexperienced users. Relatively cheap to purchase and simple to maintain, they are also ideal for tool hirers and general rental companies, providing a good return on investment and benefitting from excellent residual values. With so much working in its favour, it is perhaps a tad surprising that trailer lifts are not more popular... But they

certainly have their time and place.

The downsides

While the trailer lift has the advantage of price and weight, it does have a larger footprint - often twice as wide as a self-propelled - and is not so easy to move around on site. Towing can also be an issue. Southern Europe in particular has never been a strong market for trailer lifts, mainly due to road regulations relating to towing equipment behind cars, not to mention the challenges of type approvals. Certainly in Europe driver licensing regulations make it increasingly challenging, although this very much depends on how the rules are implemented or enforced locally. While getting a straight and clear answer on the question of how much weight can you tow can be elusive, what is generally clear is that if the combination of towing

vehicle and trailer weighs more than 3.5 tonnes, then a tachometer ought to be fitted to the towing vehicle - something that will put off an occasional user... With typical 4x4s weighing anywhere up to 2.5 tonnes, it doesn't leave much room for a trailer. To complicate matters, in some areas this tachograph rule is not applied, while in others a user is restricted to operate within a given radius - often up to 20 miles - of his base... which on reflection, might be enough for a local rental company servicing its local market.

Reducing the size of the problem

Another problem often stated by users is the length of trailer lifts. Compared with spider lifts for example, trailer lifts can be cumbersome and difficult to manoeuvre, especially if they need to work or pass through tight



Genie Z-33/18

Genie trailer vs boom comparison

	Z-33/18	TZ-34/20
Working height	12m	12.36m
Max capacity	200kg	200kg
Max outreach	5.57m	5.59m
Height stowed	1.98m	1.94m
O/a width	1.5m	1.45m
O/A length	4.17m	5.5m
Basket dimensions	1.16mx760mm	1.2mx680mm
Weight	3,665kg	1,438kg
Working dimensions	1.5mx4.17	3.59mx5.5m

When comparing Genie's TZ-34/20 trailer lift to the company's recently launched Z-33/18 boom lift, it is interesting to see how similar they are. Perhaps a slightly unfair comparison, however it does make a surprising point. The Z-33 and TZ-34 share an almost identical working height, outreach, platform capacity and overall dimensions, while the trailer lift is 2,227kg lighter. It is however, 1.3 metres longer at 5.5 metres and has to overcome a much larger footprint which ultimately impacts its performance.



Trailer lifts are not always as manoeuvrable as other aerial work platforms

spaces. That being said, there are a number of products on the market which have consciously tackled this problem head on.

One trailer lift in particular is the Co.Me.t XTrailer. Renowned for developing innovative booms, the Italian manufacturer teamed up with XTRUX last year to introduce a 12 metre trailer lift which has an overall length of just 3.1 metres. Offering 4.5 metres of outreach with a 200kg unrestricted platform capacity, the XTrailer also offers an up and over height of six metres due to its double sigma riser. Weighing 1,150kg, features include 180 degree platform rotation, built-in platform power options and engine start/stop function. It also has an auxiliary engine option to operate the platform. Another product worthy of a mention is the Denka Junior 12. Discussed later on in this article, the Junior 12 is only 750mm wide, so ideal for single doorways and only weighs 990kg!

Multiple power options

Another direction which the sector has been following is the conversion from diesel/petrol to batteries - or some form of simple hybrid bi-energy system. As well as allowing for indoor and outdoor use, without the need for trailing cables, it also provides clean and quiet operation. By no means a new concept, it appears to be the direction most

aerial work platforms are taking, and one that is likely to drip feed down to trailers.

Danish spider and trailer lift manufacturer Ommelift is no stranger to hybrid technology having produced its first bi-energy Omme 20000Z trailer lift in 1989 and its first diesel/battery trailer lift in 1994 with the 25 metre Ommelift 2500EBD.

Managing director Harry Lorentsen, said: "There was a clear market need for a true hybrid machine that combined the benefits of a diesel engine and a battery power pack. We wanted to move beyond the

standard bi-energy configuration by properly integrating the two power trains. We produced the Ommelift 2500EBD in 1994 and have continued to develop our true hybrid philosophy ever since."

Gerhard Piesker, owner of AVL Arbeitsbühnenvermietung, which purchased one of the first hybrid 2500EBDs, added: "One of the main advantages was the powerful battery drive, which enabled independent and environmentally friendly operation. This was especially appreciated in residential areas, particularly in Berlin, where they are a perfect substitute to the popular 3.5 tonne truck mount which cannot be used on pavements or in

courtyards etc. In the rural areas of Germany, Ommelifts are also liked by many contractors such as tree surgeons for their flexibility, high performance and ease of use."

Dinolift strives forward

Last month at Vertikal Days Dinolift launched its new 18.4 metre Dino 190XTE trailer lift. Offering an outreach of 9.3 metres and an impressive 250kg platform capacity, the lift also features a larger platform and a new easy-entry gate, which the company says will help improve productivity.

The new XTE, like the rest of the Dino range includes 360 degree continuous slew, self-propelled friction wheel drive, 180 degrees hydraulic platform rotation, while it can also level on slopes of up to eight degrees. A lifting point fitted below the platform also allows for



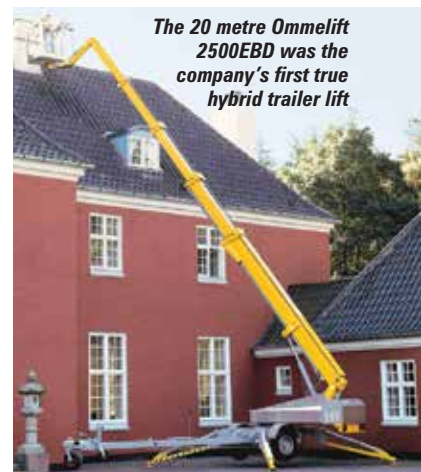
Co.Me.t's 12 metre XTrailer only measures 3.1 metre in length



Denka's Junior 12 is only 750mm wide



The Co.Me.t X Trailer



The 20 metre Ommelift 2500EBD was the company's first true hybrid trailer lift



Harry Lorentsen showcasing an Ommelift hybrid drive train



Last year Dinolift celebrated its 40th anniversary

How the Co.Me.t and Denka competes with other 12 metre lifts:

Make & model	Co.Me.t XTrailer	Denka 12 Junior	Niftylift Nifty 120T	Dinolift Dino 120T	Ommelift 1250 E	Snorkel TL34	Genie TZ-34/20
Working height	12m	12m	12.2m	12m	12.5m	12.1m	12.36m
Max capacity	200kg	120kg	200kg	120kg	200kg	215kg	200kg
Max outreach	4.5m	6.7m	6.1m	7.9m	8.5m	4.3m	5.59m
Height stowed	2.1m	1.84m	1.9m	1.96m	1.97m	2.2m	1.94m
O/A width	1.8m	750mm	1.5m	1.72m	1.6m	1.59m	1.45m
O/A length	3.1m	5.05m	4.5m	5.52m	7.1m	5.2m	5.5m
Basket dimensions	1000mmx700mm	-	1.1mx650mm	850mm round	1.25mx 800mm	1.2mx800mm	1.2mx680mm
Weight	1,150kg	990kg	1,400kg	1,285kg	1,600kg	1,320kg	1,438kg

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materials weighing up to 250kg. Dinolift's Karin Nars, said: "Continuously improving our trailer-mounted range is a strategic decision. Why? We believe that the main advantages of trailers are equally, if not increasingly important in the future. Trailers are cost efficient, low weight and easy to move on the road. But also, more and more importantly, the resale value of a well-built trailer lift is very good, because of the vast second hand market available. Infrastructure is improving in large parts of the developing world giving better opportunities for people to tow equipment. But in order to compete with other types of work platforms, trailers need to be up to the job, being easy to set up and operate, comfortable and of course safe to use. And they need to constantly develop according to the needs of the market and the users."

Last year Dinolift also introduced a renewed version of its popular XT range - the XT II. Improvements include hydraulic platform rotation along with greater outreach and levelling capabilities. It is also in the

process of expanding its geographic coverage with the appointment last year of Reachmaster in North America, and its decision to sell direct in the UK with product support from Central Platform Services. Reachmaster launched the three model Dino RXT range of semi self-propelled boom lifts (essentially and over simplistically a trailer lift with 4x4 drive-train and no tow bar) to the American market and now plans to promote its trailer lift range. The Dinolift RXT models compete with the Bil-Jax/Haulotte SLT and Niftylift SD ranges, which are appreciated by golf courses and tree companies for their light weight and higher travel speeds, but are clearly under appreciated by rental



Ebbe Christensen of Reachmaster and Karin Nars from Dinolift.



Dinolift's latest 18.4 metre DINO 190XTE features a 250kg capacity lifting point underneath its platform.

companies. In the USA a third player is likely to increase awareness and expand uptake, as well as offering a replacement for the Scanlift/Kesla models that were sold in earlier years.

Europelift

Another 18 metre trailer lift to hit the market recently is Europelift's TM18GT, which was launched last October. Developed by the Hungarian trailer and truck mounted lift manufacturer the new lift offers a



Europelift's 18 metre TM18GT

10 metre outreach, 200kg platform capacity, 90 degree platform rotation and a wheel drive assist system.

Denka back in the game

German rental company Rothlehner purchased its first Denka trailer lift in 1983 and was appointed a distributor in 1987. After the Danish trailer manufacturer filed for bankruptcy in 2012, it did not take too long for Rothlehner to acquire the design rights and replacement parts business. At the time Rothlehner chief executive Manfred Rothlehner said: "We want to finish the turbulent times of Denka and bring the brand back to a strong position. Before first deliveries of new machines will happen, some challenges have to be solved."

More recently he added: "We have now received orders from 35 countries as customers appreciate having a reliable partner for the Denka products again. As a result

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Denka has made a strong comeback under the watchful eye of Manfred Rothlehner.

the number of requests for new machines is growing. In sales we still have to be careful to keep our promises. As a long-term distributor we know very well what is expected from a manufacturer."

After ensuring the continuity - or rather massive improvement - of replacement parts supply and support, Rothlehner began manufacturing new Denka lifts in Germany. Over the past 18 months it has gradually increased output to four units a month and plans to double this by the start of next year. Currently its most popular models are the 12 and 18 metre trailer lifts, with the Denka 12 Junior being particularly popular - even though the model initially struggled when launched, possibly due to its high price at the time. The articulated telescopic lift offers 6.7 metres outreach, a 1.84 metre stowed height, 750mm overall width and a total weight of 990kg.



Allan Jensen of City Lift taking delivery of a Denka Junior 12 from Manfred Rothlehner



Matilsa's Parma 7

Back to the past

Other products of interest, although not necessarily new, is Matilsa's 7.5 metre Parma 7, similar in design to Go Industries' Hop-Up plus. Measuring just under two metres in length, the Parma 7 offers an outreach of 4.3 metres while only weighing 450kg.

Platform Basket ends trailer development

In 2010, Italian manufacturer Platform Basket decided to take a look at the trailer lift market, and announced plans for a three-model range - in spite of the fact Italy has never been a market for trailer lifts, preferring small truck mounted lifts instead. A prototype was shown at Bauma 2010 - the 17.7 metre TR 18.90 - featuring bi-energy power, articulated jib, platform rotation etc... and it was one of the lightest in its class at 1,800kg and the shortest at just 5.76 metres. It was shortly followed by the 15 metre TR 15.80, but a planned 13 metre model never materialised as the company realised that the trailer lift market is simply too tough for a new entrant, especially if you do not have a home market to build upon. As a result Platform Basket has dropped its trailer lift plans and decided to focus on what it does best - spider lifts and specialised self-propelled boom lifts.



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Platform Basket has dropped any plans to develop its proposed 12 metre trailer lift

Nifty expands

When it comes to trailer lifts the two major players are probably Niftylift and Dinolift. Niftylift has been building trailer lifts for 30 years and offers a range of models from nine to 21 metres. It currently builds around 12 units a week, which it sells all over Europe and North America. The company now builds far more self-propelled booms than trailer lifts, but it remains an important part of its business, with little development time required in what it sees as a relatively mature market. The company has now moved production into its impressive new 28,000 square metre facility in Milton Keynes

and plans to increase production in order to keep up with demand and reduce lead times. It is clear from a tour of the new facility that its best seller by far is the relatively compact highly specified 12 metre 120T. Although it still offers and sells a decent number of the non-telescopic 120 and even the diminutive 95 which weighs just 750kg fully equipped.

The demand for new models is relatively stable,

although it is currently seeing a bit of an upturn with a number of multiple orders. What is surprisingly is demand for used Niftylift trailers, which fetch good money when offered for sale. Normally this spurs on higher sales of new models, as rental companies realise that they can update for a small cash outlay, however this market phenomenon does not seem to apply as much to the modern day trailer lift market. Perhaps this is because rental companies are reluctant to invest in what they might see as a dying market? Or maybe due to the fact that older ones are so simple and reliable - and with no new technology to outdate the old there is no need?



Niftylift has opened its new UK production facility in Shenley Wood, Milton Keynes



Niftylift currently builds around 12 trailer lifts a week