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Tackling the rough

The Rough Terrain scissor lift is primarily a construction tool, widely used for cladding and roofing installation on large commercial construction projects as well as heavy finishing tasks such as sprinkler installation. Because of this it is usually in one of the worst hit sectors in an economic downturn, while smaller scissor lifts - with a far wider application base - fare considerably better. In the downturn of the early 1990's big RT scissor lifts could be rented for considerably less than 14 and 20ft electrics which cost less than a third to buy.

This time round it does not seem to be quite as bad for the big scissors. However very few rental companies that are adding to their fleets are looking at regular Rough Terrains - 40 and 50ft platform height units. In spite of this and fully aware of the challenges, UpRight has decided to press ahead with the delayed launch of its new range (see page 27).

Iteco was slightly earlier with its launch of its diesel or Bi-Energy power pack 15230D models late last year. Its 49ft/15m platform height lifts are exceptionally well specified, with 1,000 kg lift capacity, 7.1 metre dual extended deck, heavy duty levelling jacks and compact dimensions. But it was always going to be a struggle for Iteco to make an impact in a market dominated by Skyjack, Genie and JLG in spite of the products build quality and specification. The state of the market put the final nail in the coffin of its short term aspirations.

The Iteco is an exceptionally well specified machine with 1,000kg lift capacity.



Liftlux machines have been sold to CO-OP

In August the company's assets were sold to Imer Group, which is currently evaluating the business and its distribution network. The product is state of the art in a market where little has changed in recent years, and it could be argued fits in nicely between the regular 50ft RTs and the heavy duty products built by Holland Lift and Liftlux.

Niche is good

Meanwhile some big scissors are continuing to sell well. Holland Lift - the leader in mega scissor lifts with both massive 100ft platform, 4x4 machines and high narrow models -

continues to do well and has introduced new models, including a 26.5 metre 1.3 wide, 4x4 electric powered lift - the 265EL13 with levelling jacks for indoor and outdoor use. More recently it unveiled a new, 10 metre track-mounted scissor lift for glass house construction. At the same time PB Liftechnik is expanding its range of narrow aisle, heavy-duty electric 4x4 scissors with levelling jacks while JLG continues to offer and refine its Liftlux range and others such as Omega continue to find a good uptake for its highly specialised massive capacity, massive decked machines, built to order for particular applications (See box story).

On the other side of the Atlantic, MEC says that it has seen a surprising take up for its range of electric powered Rough Terrain scissors, with big battery packs and powerful driver motors. The range - led by the 4191ES, a 41ft/12.4m 91 inch/2.3m wide model - is simply a fully electric powered version of the regular 4x4 unit. With Lithium Ion battery packs shortly to make their debut in the aerial lift market and AC motors catching on fast perhaps this is the future for the RT scissor lift?

What of the future?

Another potential trend is the arrival of the big deck boom lift. A scissor-lift sized platform mounted on a stick - boom. This type of platform has been available for some time from companies such as Aichi, Tadano and Nagano, but has been way too costly for general applications and has sold in limited numbers, mainly in Japan. MEC is working on a unit that not only puts a scissor lift sized platform on a boom, but also claims that it will offer a big - very big - scissor lift capacity approaching 2,000 kg. The company says that the new offering will be part boom lift, part big scissor lift and part telehandler. Given that the use of integrated telehandler platforms is growing - some of which offer as much space as a big scissor lift -



Holland Lift's new 10 metre track mounted scissors

perhaps the days of the regular Rough Terrain scissor lift are numbered? Most aerial lifts have a broad customer base ranging from construction to industrial, to refurbishment, to utility and even entertainment work. The regular 30 to 50 ft Rough Terrain scissor lift has a fairly limited range of applications for which it is the machine of choice and most of those are involved with the cyclical commercial construction trade. So perhaps it is no surprise that other products are nibbling away at its market - whether it be trailer mounted mast climbers, narrow aisle or heavy duty 'Dutch type' scissor lifts, big platforms on a boom or telehandler or for that matter the compact RT scissor lift - they are all moving in on the traditional RT's domain.



Skyjack led the way with its big dual-decked scissors, and then compact models - what next?

Up beat Upright

UpRight has not had a range of full-sized Rough Terrain scissor lifts since the demise of its old LX scissor range in the pre-Tanfield era. Following the sneak preview of the range in the form of the X43RT last December, the company has gone back to the drawing board for a total re-design based on customer and dealer input and is now ready to launch its new three model XRT range. Mark Darwin travelled to Washington, Tyne and Wear, to talk to UpRight sales and marketing director Richard Tindale and preview the new platforms.

Last December I braved blizzard conditions to try out UpRight's pre-production Rough Terrain scissor, the X43RT. Even during my brief test carried out in about six inches of snow, it was obvious that UpRight themselves had already identified several areas that needed serious rethinking. This was reinforced when distributors were given the chance to critique the machine and a fundamental redesign was instigated.



UpRight sales and marketing director Richard Tindale.

decide to redesign a product that is ready to launch, but the new XRT range has been improved in every aspect over the original machine. Feedback on the new version has been very good and the result is a machine that we are proud to stand alongside the competition."

Upright could not afford to make mistakes with a new big scissor line, particularly because it was replacing the old LX scissors which sold in their thousands but developed a reputation that was far from glowing.

"The LX machines did great business but were over developed from a heavy duty 31ft/medium duty 42ft single deck extension range into a 50ft, 4x4, 7.3 metre superdeck unit, while afterthought options ran the whole gamut from outriggers to Bi-Energy," said Tindale. "They were

stretched too far so we had to make sure that any new UpRight RT range was absolutely right."

Add this to supplier issues that were slow to be resolved and intermittent paint problems and it is easy to see why the LX was not retired in a blaze of glory.

The new three model range will include the 32ft/12m X32RT, 43ft/15m X43RT and 52ft/18m X52RT. The X52RT was available during my visit and is the largest machine ever built by UpRight. Its other large scissor - the X80ND is built in Holland by its partner Omega. Current compact scissors - the X27RT and X33RT - will continue unchanged as they have features aimed at a different sector of the market.

"The new RT platforms cover the volume sector of the RT scissor market so we do not anticipate any further expansion of the range," says Tindale. "We have not been able to compete in this market since the demise of the LX range, so we are getting everything ready for when the construction market picks up again."

The XRTs have twin deck extensions with a total length of 6.57 metres, 4x4 drive, 680kg capacity, are relatively compact at 4.88 x 2.27 metres

and offer 40 percent plus gradeability. Most popular models will probably be the 43 and 52 although the X32RT is expected to appeal to those who want a big deck but do not require more than 12 metres working height. All three machines share the same base with simple

The new X43RT has twin deck extensions with a total length of 6.57 metres and 680kg capacity.



Winter testing the original X43RT last December. There have been a lot of changes since then

"The new platforms are similar but totally different," explains Tindale. "Out went the two cylinder Deutz engine replaced by a more powerful 38kW Perkins, while platform capacity has been increased from 450kg to 680kg. It takes guts to



Showing off the gradeability of the largest machine - the X52RT.

scissor stack changes between models. UpRight has opted for a solid cushion tyre rather than the usual foam filled as they combine puncture-proof performance with a more cushioned ride. Levelling jacks are standard giving 12 degree side to side and seven degrees front to back levelling ability.

"Auto levelling is available as an option and we anticipate about 90 percent of customers will specify this on the machine," says Tindale. "We did debate making it standard but there is a price point for these machines so it remains as an option. The roll-out deck extensions are manually operated but very easy to use, there will be a hydraulic option later but I can't image why people would opt for it. The control system features a full set of onboard diagnostics, not overly complicated but something people like to see and it is the way UpRight is going on all controls in the future."

The platform has twin entry gates, one either side; a slide out engine tray and a full DC Auxiliary Power

Unit so you can raise and lower the deck in the case of engine failure. The lifts also have an oscillating front and a floating rear axle so wheel ground contact is very impressive.

"Typical applications for RT scissors are all construction related so we don't anticipate huge demand for a while but there is a pent up demand from our dealer network so there will be a reasonable start to our sales."

UpRight has identified that attachments such as pipe stands and sheet handlers are key in this sector and will be introducing its own range of seven or eight attachments in the near future. The new XRT machines will not be built at the company's Washington facility, but will be built by UpRight's production partner in China.

"We are a major manufacturer but not the biggest by far and we have to work smarter to compete, such as working with other people and being focussed," says Tindale. "The TM12 was the first platform built totally in China in 2008 and the XRT

line will be the second. Our new global director of sourcing is based in Singapore and currently spends all of his time in China so this is a trend that will continue in the future."

The first XRTs are coming off the production line now, with the first few units - X43RTs and X52RTs - heading for the rental fleet of UpRight's distributor in Belgium, Heli.

"In the current climate, we anticipate companies will evaluate these machines before buying, after all there are enough RT scissors sitting in rental yards and more in manufacturers' yards and pricing is very low at the moment.



We want to be all things to all men when it comes to scissor lifts - it is our territory," says Tindale. "We are interested in niche scissors - electric, compact, crawler mounted and bigger machines - although we already have the X80ND. One of the main priorities is full electric versions and these will be worked on once a new electric drive system has been developed."

Nursing home construction

UK rental company, Panther recently supplied 14, Genie GS5390RT Rough Terrain scissor lifts for the outside façade construction of new nursing accommodation at a large University Hospital. The lifts - which feature 7.32 metre long extended decks - were used for bricklaying, placing concrete panels and installing window frames. The contractor had previously used traditional scaffolding for the job and

was reportedly impressed with the additional efficiency as well as the lifts ability to move between areas and carry a full load of blocks to the work area.

Genie GS5390RT scissors were used on the facades of the new nursing accommodation block.



Anyone for polo?

Hickstead-based rental company, Facelift found an unusual application for Rough Terrain scissor lifts earlier this year, when Sky Sports needed some elevated camera platforms to film a polo match at the Hickstead showground in southern England.

The ground conditions caused a range of restrictions for the crew including height limitations, steep banks and uneven terrain. After a thorough examination of the arena and surrounding areas Facelift suggested the 33ft/10m platform height Haulotte Compact 12DX.

The dimensions of the 12DX allowed it to gain access to both the arena and manoeuvre outside of the arena, while still providing a good sized area for the crew. For some of the elevated shots the guardrails were folded down for a clear view. Due to the special nature of the job the crew all wore harnesses throughout.

The scissor lift's 4x4 rough terrain capability was truly tested as it moved up and down the banks that surround the famous course. Its self levelling jacks made it easy to set up on sloping ground and position itself in the ideal spot for the best camera shots.



The Haulotte DX12 compact scissor RT scissor lifts made ideal camera stands.





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