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Ben Daugherty – Greiner Industries

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On the cover:

One of the new hi-tech scissor platform paint booths at Terex's facility in Coventry UK.



C&A contents

17

Industrial cranes



47

Telehandlers



55

Apex review



SUBSCRIPTIONS: Cranes & Access is published eight times a year and is available on payment of an annual subscription of £40.00. If you wish to subscribe, please send a crossed cheque made payable to The Vertical Press Ltd to: Subscriptions, The Vertical Press, PO Box 6998, Brackley, Northants NN13 5WY. Address changes should also be sent to this address. Please include the address label from a recent issue with all correspondence and allow 3 months for changes to be effective.

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Kran & Bühne: The Vertical Press also publishes a German magazine which deals with the same issues as Cranes & Access, but is written for German users and buyers. Details available on request.

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Comment 5

News 6



New telehandlers from Wacker Neuson, AFI invests in AJ, New Genie boom, Hiab cranes for Finnish defence, Grove dealership for Crowland, Six 185SJ booms for Riwal, ATN unveils Pfaf 66, Quick Shift furniture lift available, Couling to join IAPS, Ruthmann makes 48 metre, Euro Towers launches one man tower, NCCCO certifies 100,000th operator, More Leos for MyLift, Liebherr develops rescue crane plus financial results round-up.

Industrial cranes 17

When we talk industrial cranes we usually think of pick&carry cranes which have been making a comeback in recent years. However there is now a wide variety of lifting equipment for this sort of work. We highlight a range of different industrial lifting challenges and the solutions found.

Industrial
access 25

The correct selection and use of the latest access equipment can help make maintenance, upgrade and improvement work a great deal easier, more efficient as well as being safer. C&A investigates how in recent years the range of different powered access products has grown out of all proportion.



Interview -

Jeremy Fish 33

Mark Darwin interviews Nationwide Platform's new managing director Jeremy Fish to learn more about the man that leads the UK's largest powered access rental company, and what changes he is planning and implementing in order to make the Lavendon subsidiary more customer focussed.



Dealer Guide 37

Our annual dealer guide lists all crane, access, telehandler and ancillary equipment currently manufactured along with the contact details of the UK and Ireland distributors.

Telehandlers 47

We take a look at some of the latest developments in telehandlers, including what makes a rental series telehandler, the growth of large heavy duty models and speak with rapidly growing UK rental company Plant Hire UK.



APEX review 55

Now in its eighth year Apex opted for a new date and new venue for the show. Held at Amsterdam's RAI centre towards the end of June, the show attracted a good number of visitors in buoyant moods and many orders were placed.

regulars

ALLMI Focus 63

IPAF Focus 65

PASMA Focus 67

Training 69

Books and Models 70

CPA 71

Innovations 72

Letters 73

What's on 75

Online directory 80

In the next C&A

The next issue of Cranes & Access - scheduled for mid-September - will feature our annual Top 30 UK/Ireland rental guide. We will also have articles on spider cranes and special vehicle mounted lifts as well as a feature on access and lifting for arborists. If you have any contributions or suggestions, please contact our editorial team.

Discovery consists of seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought

Albert von Szent-György Hungarian biochemist 1893-1986

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The ups and downs of rental rates

I have lost count of the number of times I have asked about dire rental rates, and senior management have rolled their eyes and looked up to the sky as if to say 'what can we do about it?'

Well I'm sorry guys - you run the company and you are responsible for its performance - it's down to you. What is amazing is that so many rental companies are still in business

and more to the point, reinvesting in new equipment and even expanding their fleets.

Across the crane, access and telehandler sectors everyone will tell you that the rates are the same as they were 10, 15, 20 or even 25 years ago. But why?

The rental industry is awash with companies winning business, not by selling the latest equipment benefits or the quality of their backup and service. No the easiest way is to undercut the competition. I don't know about you but I have yet to find the best of anything that was also the cheapest.....

Even more amazing is that we are in a period of high growth and high utilisation. Certain machines - even tower cranes - are in short supply, and yet they are still going out way below levels that provide an acceptable return. If you can't make money at the moment just think what will happen when the next downturn hits - and it will.

Senior management appears to accept all this - they know the rates are low, they know labour, fuel and utility costs have risen considerably, not to mention equipment prices (manufacturers certainly aren't quite so shy about raising prices), they know that everyone is busy and that machines are highly utilisedyet there is still a reluctance to charge a fair price.

But maybe it is all a game - a front - and maybe I have it all wrong? Perhaps the rates are where they are because everyone is happy at these levels? I have rarely seen a senior rental manager in anything but a shiny new car - just look around the trade show car parks and ask if there is money in this industry or not.

But even if good money can be made at the current levels where is the logic in constant undercutting? The only winner is the client who has become used to underpaying for equipment as he demands more and more extras. If rates remain the same while costs rise, then either profit dips or cost savings must be found somewhere down the line - either in the office or machine related - neither of which is good news.

Sensible rates mean reinvestment, quality equipment, proper maintenance and training - all the things this industry needs..... Perhaps I should have gone into equipment rental.....

Mark Darwin

Comment and feedback is most welcome via post, email, fax or phone stating if we may publish them or not: editor@vertikal.net

Vertikal Press

MEMBERS OF:



ISSN: 1467-0852
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