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# Top three continue to dominate



For several years now the loader crane market has been dominated by three companies - Palfinger, Hiab and Fassi. Despite this domination, fortunes of each company have varied during this time. About 18 months ago we took an in-depth look at Hiab and its concerted effort to rebuild its image and market share following long-term declines. The company was optimistically focussing on re-taking its position as the number one producer, having slipped to second or third place. Having the generic name for the product but not being market leader may be galling but it did not make the task any easier.

18 months on and Hiab continues to gain market share as its ongoing efforts to rebuild the brand are clearly working as the benefits of its renewed operational independence really gather momentum. This follows the decision in 2012 of owner Cargotec to decentralise its separate businesses after an earlier centralisation strategy. The company has stepped up the pace of new product introductions along with a stronger focus on innovation.

It has not regained its number one position yet, primarily because

both Palfinger and Fassi have also been busy with organic growth and acquisitions as well as continuing to introduce innovative products and improve customer service and support.

However the progress back towards market leadership is impressive with financial performance improving at a steady pace. This is continuing into 2017 with Hiab's first quarter results hitting new records. Total sales were €270 million - 10 percent higher than in the same quarter 2016 - and order intake of €288 million, while operating profits jumped 23 percent to €39.5 million.

## New routes to market

Hiab is also undergoing a major review of its distribution strategies around the world, for example moving away from direct sales operations in some markets towards distributors such as the appointment last year of Multico to take over its sales and support in Singapore and Malaysia.

In the UK Hiab's relatively new UK and Ireland managing director Rogier van der Linde is developing Hiab's strategy to become a more customer-focused, competitive organisation through changes in its working methods to improve quality and efficiency and move closer to customers and business partners/dealers. A key area will include improving service by dividing the market into eight 'dealer pockets', either company owned outlets of independent dealers, each with a main hub type workshop supporting a larger number of authorised service centres.

"We also believe we can better support our customers by investing in direct services in key high-density areas including the Midlands and London and are looking at the best

way to serve these regions. As well as this new way of working we will be investing in infrastructure and implementing a service and fleet management tool," said van der Linde. "I believe that after-sales support is absolutely critical for our customers, so our future plans will focus on driving improvements in our footprint, as well increasing co-operation with our service partners to become the number one partner in the industry."

One recent change is the appointment of London-based loader crane repair and maintenance specialist Hydraulic Fleet Solutions which will provide both mobile and workshop crane maintenance and repairs and mobile emergency services to Hiab equipment located in the West London area and within the M25.

## Easier installation

Hiab has also launched two new initiatives to make crane installation and operation easier and more efficient - Hiab Frameworks and Crane Tip Control. The Frameworks programme offers pre-manufactured, ready to install modular sub-frames that match the truck selected by the customer. The installation package comes complete with pump, tanks and auxiliary stabilisers and the frames are bolted to the chassis with all stress calculations already carried out and tested. Initially the system will be available for several heavy cranes for Volvo, Renault, Scania and DAF chassis, but will be extended to other models in the future.

Hiab claims that using Frameworks is much easier to install and can reduce the installation time by up to 75 percent which means the crane is ready for use much faster which is of great benefit for installers, bodybuilders and end customers.

*Over the past few years Hiab has been rebuilding its brand*



*The X-HiPro 558 is the latest loader crane from Hiab*



The new Crane Tip Control (CTC) feature is available on Hiab's HiPro control system and is said to simplify loader crane operation. The crane operator is now able to control the specific movement of the crane tip/hook with three controllers - vertical, slew and horizontal - and the software then activates the individual boom functions such as first boom up or down, second boom up or down and telescope in or out, rather than the operator having to combine and synchronise multiple controllers to make the movement happen. The operator can activate or deactivate the feature by simply pressing a button on the controller. The system was developed because of customer demand to be able to move the crane tip along a perfectly vertical path without using a hoist - a function that normally demands a highly skilled operator to do efficiently. The software is almost certain to improve productivity and result in smoother operation.

### The new Hiab X-HiPro 558

The latest loader crane from Hiab is the X-HiPro 558 which it claims is the strongest crane that will fit on a three axle truck. The new 55 tonne/metre crane features a maximum capacity of 10.8 tonnes at 4.6 metres radius and maximum

tip height of 17 metres. Maximum horizontal reach is 14.5 metres at which it can handle 3.15 tonnes. The overall weight with outriggers is around 5,500kg depending on configuration, which says Hiab is up to 20 percent lighter than other cranes in this class. The X-HiPro 558 is designed for lifting heavy and bulky loads and provides 20 percent more lifting power than other cranes of equivalent size.

### Loader crane innovation

Last year we reported on the loader crane sector saying it was the most innovative of all the equipment segments in terms of structural fabrications and electronics etc... But what makes the loader crane manufacturers so innovative? It is probably down to the long-term pressure to reduce weight while increasing performance and improving productivity, driven by large sophisticated customers that deliver and therefore load and unload thousands of products a day - all with operators whose primary job is driving the truck?

Both Hiab and Palfinger have organised digitalisation 'Hackathons' in Sweden and Austria respectively where participants spend several days developing innovative ideas.

*In March Palfinger organised Austria's largest Hackathon to date with more than 24 teams competing to further develop their ideas*



Hiab is hosting its event CargoHack3 in Hudiksvall, Sweden - in collaboration with Industryhack, a pioneer of industrial innovation challenges - at the end of summer. The goal of Hiab's 'Time for Elevation' is to explore new opportunities in digitalisation and connectivity to ensure easier and safer intelligent load handling.

"Open innovation is key for discovering new ideas and increasing the speed for developing new offerings," said Jan-Erik Lindfors, vice president of Hiab new business solutions. "The Hackathon is a step to collaborate with enthusiastic entrepreneurs and digital minds to shape the future of our industry. We want to see innovations that simplify the user experience, making the customers' life easier is most important."

Hiab organised two other internal Hackathons last year to innovate on augmented reality, safety and productivity, robotisation and new business modelling. It says that as a result of the two events it has seven patents pending.

### Palfinger Hackathon

In March Palfinger organised Austria's largest Hackathon to date with an open invitation accepted



*The Hackathon concentrated on topics such as automation, virtual and augmented reality and 3D printing.*

by more than 100 participants grouped into 24 teams competing to further develop their ideas. Many of the participants came from Austria but there were also a good number of international teams, including students from universities of technology, universities of economics and business and universities of applied sciences, as well as by young start-up companies. During the two-day event Palfinger challenged the participants to come up with ideas for various subject areas including virtual reality, augmented reality, mixed reality, semi-automated loading and unloading, digital assistance systems and Palfinger as a service.

Topics such as automation and sharing concepts as well as the necessary connectivity of products, data and ideas were discussed. Palfinger has been focusing on digitisation opportunities and changes for some time. In 2016, the company set up an internal unit to concentrate on these topics, with the first projects implemented in areas such as automation, virtual and augmented reality or 3D printing.

*Hiab is organising its CargoHack3 event in Hudiksvall, Sweden at the end of summer*



Palfinger chief executive Herbert Ortner said: "Our aim is to establish this open form of innovation using external talents, but also making use of internal resources to promote it and create the necessary structures." Palfinger plans to establish a branch in Vienna in 2017, engaged purely in the development of new ideas and partnerships.

### Record revenues at Palfinger

As we have already mentioned, the main reason why Hiab has not re-taken its historic market leadership spot is that Palfinger has also performed well over the same period. This year the group also posted a record first quarter and forecasts the trend to continue through the year. Total revenues were up 13.5 percent to €361.9 million with most of the growth coming from its dominant European loader crane business and Russia. Pre-tax profits for the quarter improved a more modest 7.6 percent to €29.2 million.

### Palfinger Sany JV

One area beginning to make a contribution is the Sany Palfinger SPV 50/50 joint venture which was agreed in 2012 which produces and sells Palfinger loader cranes for the Chinese market. Earlier this year the joint venture launched its new range of articulated and telescopic loader cranes in Malaysia which included four new models, one straight telescopic, the 17 tonne SPS 50000 and three knuckle booms, the SPK 36080 MH, SPK 42502 MH and SPK 8500.

The SPS 50000 weighs over 6,000kg and is designed for four axle trucks. It features a 21.6 metre five section boom and lifts 17 tonnes at three metres, or 800kg at 21 metres radius. At its full height of over 22 metres it can pick 3,150kg. The SPK 42502 has a maximum load moment of 42.3 tonne/metres giving it a maximum lift of 14.3 tonnes on the short boom model, while the longest, six section boom option provides up to 16.8 metres of reach. The SPK 36080 MH has a maximum load moment of 34.8 tonne/metres, providing a maximum capacity of 8.5 tonnes and a maximum reach of 12.1 metres. Finally, the lighter duty 7.6 tonne/metre SPK 8500 - designed for two axle trucks - can handle loads up to 3,300kg and a maximum reach of 9.6 metres and weighs 920kg.

### Palfinger completes Solid range

Palfinger has also launched six new models in its 'Solid' range with load moments of between five and 19 tonne/metres. The PK 13.501 SLD 1 and PK 13.501 SLD 3 have load moments of 13.1 tonne/metres. The PK 14.001 SLD 3 is 14 tonne/metres and the PK 14.501 SLD 5 offers 14.5 tonne/metres. The cranes are available with up to five hydraulic extensions for an outreach of 14.8 metres.



The first showing in Europe of the Palfinger Sany range was this 20 tonne metre SPS 20000 seen at Bauma last year

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The 14 tonne/metre Palfinger PK 14501 SLD 5.

The new cranes have been designed as simple, robust and reliable units with an eye towards the road maintenance and municipality market. Replacing the SLD series the new cranes have a higher lifting capacity with similar or lower overall weight. They are also equipped with High Speed Extension, boosting boom extension speed by up to 30 percent. The new cranes are all equipped with Single Link Plus for working close to the truck while providing articulation of up to 15 degrees above the horizontal. The crane fabrications are blast-hardened with cut wire pellets, electrostatically treated with a zinc phosphate Cathodic Dip Protection coating and finished with a two-pack paint.

**Fassi' 'Continuous Innovation' programme**

Fassi has also been working hard to keep ahead of the industry's heady pace of development. A look at all the acronyms available on its loader cranes provide some insight into this which include FSC - Fassi Stability Control, LLV - Load Limiting Verification, WL - Walvoil Distributor Bank, IMC Integral Machine Control, GAS Grab Automatic Shake and CPM Crane Positioning Monitor to name just a few of the many available.



For the North American market Fassi has introduced the SE range - F600SE.44 aimed at the dry wall installation.

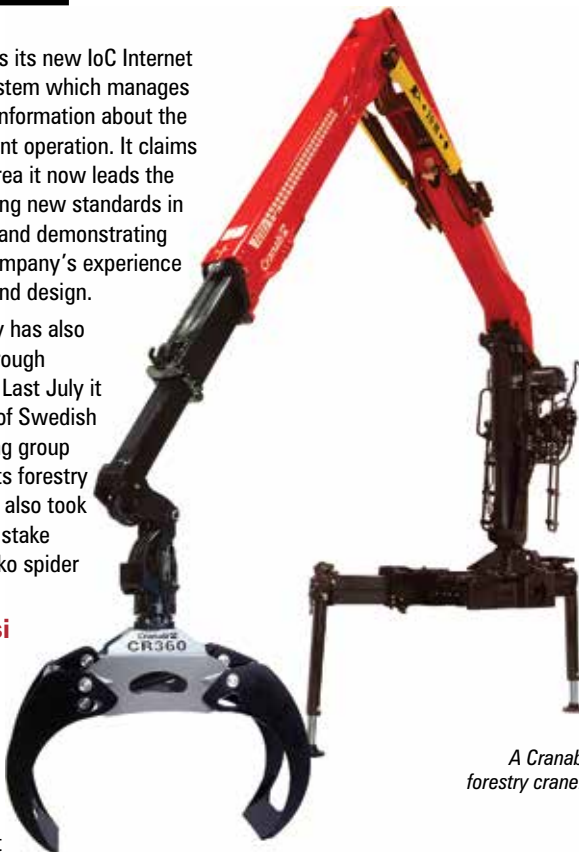
Fassi also has its new IoC Internet of Cranes system which manages all available information about the crane's current operation. It claims that in this area it now leads the market "setting new standards in technology" and demonstrating the Italian company's experience in research and design.

The company has also expanded through acquisitions. Last July it took control of Swedish manufacturing group Cranab and its forestry cranes and it also took a 33 percent stake in Italian Jekko spider cranes.

**New Fassi models**

Fassi has been busy, particularly at the larger end of the market where it has a long history among the big three of leadership. However its latest new products include smaller to mid-range models, including the 84 tonne metre F1150RA and the F600SE - principally for the North American market.

The F1150RA - from its XHE range - replaces one of its best sellers over the past 12 years, the F1100RA. The compact F1150RA - as with all XHE cranes - is fitted as standard with a seven inch colour touchscreen displaying a large amount of information including sensor readings, percentages or pressures caused by the load on the outrigger rams, oil temperature and stability. The crane is also fitted with



A Cranab forestry crane.

a version of Fassi's stability system FSC/SII which Fassi says 'exploits the improved efficiency of the innovative angle sensor combined with a moment limiter'.

The F1150RA.2.26 XHE-dynamic has six hydraulic extensions and a maximum hydraulic outreach of more than 16 metres. When combined with the L616 hydraulic extension, the crane provides the same lifting capacity but with an outreach of 27.5 metres which can be increased to more than 33 metres with manual extensions.

For the North American market Fassi has introduced another model to the SE range - the F600SE.44 - aimed at dry wall installation, designed to withstand severe working conditions with strong load charts. As with

other SE models it has extensions on the main boom as well as the jib resulting in working heights of up to 30.48 metres. To keep the crane compact, the jacks on the telescopic extensions are positioned inside of each arm.

The F600SE.44 is part of Fassi's own patented Internet of Cranes (IoC) system - which manages all available information about the crane's current operation, providing the crane's operator (or service centre) the same advantages of a car equipped with smart software to remotely manage its efficiency. Features include 360 degree continuous slew, the innovative FX901 control system with seven inch touchscreen colour display that allows the operator to view detailed information about the outrigger set-up and the crane work, digital RCH/RCS remote control and the new V7 radio control units as standard and Automatic Dynamic Control (ADC), which verifies all the crane's functions and maximises the speed of movement in accordance with the load.



The F1150RA replaces one of Fassi's best sellers over the past 12 years, the F1100RA.



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# Modified Fassi for Advanté

UK temporary office and welfare accommodation supplier Advanté has added a new specially modified loader crane to its fleet - a 78.5 tonne/metre Fassi F820 mounted on a 32 tonne Scania with a payload of 7.5 tonnes. The unit features twin front stabilisers allowing the lifting of the accommodation units - each weighing up to seven tonnes - through 360 degrees. The crane has a maximum reach of 30.45 metres with an eight section boom and two manual extensions and was ordered with a winch.

Advanté, Fassi dealer Walker Crane Services, Fassi UK and Scania were all involved in devising the front stabiliser solution which involved attaching a military-style NATO beam to the front of the chassis behind the front bumper onto which the extra pair of stabilisers are mounted. The ability to lift safely over the front of the vehicle, as well as over the side and rear, is expected to make deliveries quicker and easier, particularly in London, where space is often limited.



The specially modified 78.5 tonne/metre Fassi F820

## New Atlas crane

German loader crane manufacturer Atlas has unveiled a new 4.6 tonne/22 metre loader crane, the 290.2E. The crane boasts eight hydraulic extensions and can lift up to 4.6 tonnes or 620kg at its longest reach of 20.74 metres.

The 290.2E has a total weight of 5.3 tonnes and offers a slewing range of 410 degrees. The first company to take delivery of the new crane on a four axle truck is Luxembourg-based Delvaux from Atlas dealer Carrosserie Comes.

## Martin Williams for Effer UK

Sole Effer distributor in the UK - Martin Williams (Hull) - which took over from Atlas UK at the beginning of last year - has added to its facilities and is hiring additional staff to cope with the high level of enquiries. The company has extended one of its buildings and added a 50 metre crane bay and has taken on a further 10 to 15 specialist staff specifically for the Effer products.

Martin Williams was established in 1990 by Martin Williams carrying out accident repairs and resprays for

cars and vans before expanding into commercial vehicles and bodywork and then the loader crane business.

Today it employs around 110 and operates from a sevenacre site at Burstwick, in Holderness to the east of Hull.

Martin Williams sold the first Effer 955 8S +6S with a combination of the manufacturer's CroSStab outriggers on the rear and V Stab behind the cab, providing the full load chart though 360 degrees slew. The crane has a maximum hook

height of 37 metres with telescopic jib, and can handle up to 24 tonnes, with the jib removed.

Effer 955 8S +6S with a combination of the manufacturer's CroSStab outriggers on the rear and V Stab behind the cab



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# Knuckle pile driver

German foundation and sheet piling contractor Göllnitz Umwelttechnik has taken delivery of an Atlas AK300.2V knuckle boom loader crane for piling work. The crane - mounted to a Mercedes-Benz Actros chassis - can lift a maximum of 4.5 tonnes and has a maximum radius of 20.5 metres. It has been specially equipped with a pile driver and pulling attachment to lift beams of up to 12 metres in length and drive or retract them as required.

Göllnitz Umwelttechnik managing director Alf Göllnitz said: "Although it is unusual to use a loader crane for driving piles but we have been successful in doing so with Atlas loader cranes for 20 years. One of the main advantages is that we can get to any working site very quickly."



*The AK 300.2V shown pulling double-T-beams from a foundation pit in Hamburg, Germany*



*The Mercedes-Benz Actros chassis features a 17 metre Versalift VDT-170-F platform with a 9.4 tonne/metre Palfinger PK 10002-SH loader crane*

## Belgian crane platform combination

Belgian transport service provider Publilux has taken delivery of a custom-made combination truck with loader crane work platform.

The two axle 19 tonne Mercedes-Benz Actros chassis features a 17 metre Versalift VDT-170-F platform with a maximum outreach of 11 metres and maximum platform capacity of 230kg, with a 9.4 tonne/metre Palfinger PK 10002-SH loader crane, which has a maximum outreach of 14 metres and can lift from 450kg to 2,050kg. The combination unit was designed by Time International in Farsø, northern Denmark and delivered by Belgian Versalift dealer HDW Belux to the customer in north east Belgium.



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