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READY OR NOT?

In spite of massive efforts from national and local governments and manufacturers, buyers of van and small truck mounted lifts are just not embracing the 'all-electric' message...apart from when they are left with no choice.

Most buyers say that they are put off by the high initial cost of the vehicle/chassis which still sells for a substantial premium over a standard diesel, and has, if anything, increased further in recent years for various reasons. Long lead times and ready availability of all-electric chassis has also not helped the cause.

The cost of an average all-electric van mounted lift is now typically €85,000 or if sterling is your currency £70,000. In the UK, the Government's decision to shift the vehicle Zero Emission target from 2030 to 2035, has also encouraged more buyers to kick the can down the road, given their five, six or seven year product life cycles, so are able to put off the decision to 'go electric' for a few more years.

The hybrid concept on the other hand is generally proving more popular, both across Europe and North America. Typically, the superstructure is powered by a lithium battery pack - not too heavy - which can be charged up from the chassis engine as the machine travels to or between jobs, as well as working when plugged in. In the USA and Europe, utilities are choosing them for their quiet operation, as well as fuel saving benefits.

In spite of their slower than anticipated sales growth, manufacturers continue to launch more all-electric models, as they try to tempt buyers away from diesel or hybrid alternatives. New models are appearing from the likes of Versalift,

Multitel, Terex Utilities, Ruthmann, CTE, Palfinger and Klubb and many others.

MULTITEL AXON

Multitel's latest model is the 16 metre MT 162 Axon mounted on a 3.5 tonne Iveco e-Daily 35S10 Full Electric chassis, offering a working height of 16.2 metres, a maximum outreach of 11.2 metres with 80kg or 7.4 metres with the maximum platform capacity of 250kg. It offers the same performance as the diesel but is powered by a lithium battery pack providing a range of 120km and is easily recharged from a domestic or industrial network. The superstructure has its own 5kWh lithium battery driving a 48V system and the platform goes into standby after a few minutes of non-use, helping cut energy consumption. The platform battery is recharged at the same time as the vehicle battery, without the need for other cables. Should the upper battery become fully discharged, the operator can continue working by taking energy from the vehicle battery.

As an alternative solution Multitel has also launched a new 16.9 metre MXE 170 articulated platform on a compact Piaggio Porter NP6 Long Range, chassis powered by propane gas (LPG) or petrol/gasoline. Maximum outreach is 8.67 metres over the rear at an up & over height of 5.5 metres or 7.5 metres over the side. Maximum platform capacity is 250kg/two people at an outreach of six metres. The lift has an overall



A Terex Utilities all-electric bucket truck



Versalift V135F with 8.4m outreach



Multitel's latest model is the 16 metre MT 162 Axon mounted on a 3.5 tonne Iveco e-Daily 35S10 Full Electric chassis

VAN & TRUCK MOUNTS



Multitel's 35 metre MZ 350 hybrid mounted on a 12 tonne, two axle Volvo FL 240 chassis

length of 5.85 metres, an overall chassis width of 1.8 metres with fixed inboard jacking and an overall height of 2.55 metres, while the overall weight is 2,800kg. The new machine has been designed for use in the narrow urban streets of historical town centres and other areas with limited space.

FIRST MZ350 HYBRID

Multitel Pagliero has also started shipping its 35 metre MZ 350 hybrid articulated truck mounted platform mounted on a 12 tonne, two axle Volvo FL 240 chassis. The MZ 350 features twin three section telescopic booms and an articulating jib giving a maximum working height of 35.3 metres and a maximum outreach of 20 metres with 80kg, while the outreach with the 360kg maximum platform capacity is just under 15 metres at an up & over height of 17 metres.

Power is from a 210Ah lithium battery pack feeding a 12kW electric motor which can run for a full working day on a single charge, while also being able to operate on the regular PTO.

RUTHMANN AMPERO

Last year, Ruthmann unveiled the 26 metre Ampero TBR 260 E all-electric truck mount on the new Iveco eDaily battery powered 5.2 or 7.0 tonne chassis. The TBR 260E is much the same as the standard TBR 260, offering up to 17 metres of outreach over the rear with 100kg in the platform, or 14 metres over the side. The maximum platform capacity is 250kg with the 1.4 metre by 700mm platform, or 300kg with the optional 1.6 metre by 700mm platform, both of which are available at an outreach of between 11.5 and 13 metres. The new all-electric truck mounted lift is powered by a chassis mounted 74kWh battery pack, offering a combination of up to 150 kilometres of travel and 30 full working cycles on a single battery charge. The battery pack can be fully recharged from zero in an hour when using an 80kW fast charger, or four hours on a standard 22kW charger.

KLUBB XTENSO 4

At Intermat Klubb unveiled the Xtenso 4 all-electric truck mounted model, on an 18 tonne



CTE's latest truck mounted lift is the 24 metre articulated Zeta 24 J

Renault D18 ZE chassis. The lift has a claimed range of up to 180km and offers a working height of 21 metres and an outreach of up to 16.4 metres. Featuring a low voltage insulated basket, the lift is aimed at electrical network and telecommunication contractors.

CTE ZETA

CTE's latest truck mounted lift is the 24 metre articulated Zeta 24 J. The new model joins the Zeta 22 which was shown at Bauma in late 2022. As with the Z and Zed models of the past, the new machine employs the same dual sigma type riser, three section telescopic boom but utilises a two metre long articulating jib which attaches to the front of the basket for 24 metres working height, 10.5 metres outreach with 100kg at an up & over height of 10 metres. Maximum platform capacity is 250kg, available at just over eight metres outreach.

If the pace of development continues, then pure diesel machines will be phased out before the European deadline in 2035. This will be helped along if prices become more realistic as new developments in technology and greater production volumes make their impact.

TUNNEL MAINTENANCE LIFT

One of the growing specialised areas within the small truck and van mounted sector is tunnel maintenance lifts. An early manufacturer producing a specific machine was Italian company Sky Aces which was acquired by Palfinger in 2013 just two years after it was formed. More recently, Italian aerial lift and mastclimber manufacturer Safi has produced a 3.5 tonne truck mounted scissor lift for tunnel maintenance work.

The lift has an eight metre working height with a 400kg unrestricted platform capacity. The platform is 3.2 metres long by 2.2 metres wide and has a traversing deck with up to 500mm of lateral extension on either side of the chassis. The unit can be used with or without the four inboard levelling jacks.

The tunnel lift can work on grades of up to seven degrees and be driven at creep speeds from

the platform. Power comes from a regular PTO driven hydraulic pump on the chassis or an onboard battery pack for zero emissions and low noise levels.

The company says the concept can be customised to meet specific needs with working heights up to 10 metres and platform capacities up to three tonnes when mounted on larger trucks. The units delivered so far have been mounted on a Mercedes chassis, but can also be installed on Iveco, Maxus, Isuzu or VW trucks.

UNDERBRIDGE DEVELOPMENTS

Underbridge inspection is something that has to take off as the western world's infrastructure ages. While most underbridge inspection platforms are mounted on larger trucks, there are some niche models that have proved highly profitable for the few companies that added them to their rental fleets. Until now Barin was one of the few that offered a 3.5 tonne model, but a new addition was spotted at the Italian crane and access exhibition GIS in Piacenza last October. Displayed on the Oxley stand was the new Cela made? TB22-9 underbridge inspection platform on a 3.5 tonne truck mount. The unit features two telescopic booms topped by a special articulated jib and regular inspection platform. So far it has yet to be marketed as a standard machine. ■



On the Oxley stand at GIS, the TB22-9 underbridge inspection platform on a 3.5t chassis



Ruthmann Ampero TBR 260 E



Klubb's all-electric Xtenso 4 seen at Intermat



Safi's new truck mounted scissor lift

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Work height	21.38m	22.95m	28.70m	44m	50.6m
Platform Capacity	250/360kg	300/454kg	300/454kg	300/454kg	300/454kg
Range Extender	8kW	8kW	8kW	18.2kW	18.2kW
Hydraulic Tank Capacity	75L	75L	120L	245L	300L



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THE NEW NORM

Kettering, UK based CPL has transformed its operations since it was established in the Spring of 2011. Part of French international manufacturer Klubb since 2018, the company has developed and grown into a leading producer of vehicle mounted lifts as well as being the UK distributor for Klubb, Palfinger Platforms, Almacrawler, Dinolift, Isoli and now Palazzani. Mark Darwin spoke with commercial director Mark Sawyer following a company Open Day last month.

“Open Days are interesting because they allow visitors to find out more about the equipment and whether we are the right partner for their needs,” says Sawyer. “We had a variety of people attend - from a small arb company with two employees right up to one of the major Utility companies which ordered an additional 65 units. There are still people out there that think CPL is just about 4x4 pickup lifts, almost operating out of a shed. They should visit us now and find out what we are really all about.”



Mark Sawyer

The company has opened a fifth facility - Site 5 - in the nearby village of Burton Latimer, and last year produced and sold over 650 CPL/Klubb vehicle mounted lifts and hopes to improve again this year, as well as selling more machines from Palfinger, Isoli and Almac.

“The wide product mix helps provide alternative solutions for working at height for our existing customers”, says Sawyer. The company plans to add the Isoli recovery trucks to its range this year, possibly along with refuelling tankers from Titan Aero, which Klubb acquired a few months ago.

HOW INVOLVED ARE YOU IN KLUBB GROUP OPERATIONS?

“I am employed by CPL but over the past 18 months I have become more involved in some group activities. I recently took over a major project - implementing a CRM system - that will be applied to all group companies aiming for a consistency in language, reporting metrics and Key Performance Indicators. While Klubb is made up of individual companies - Klubb in France, CPL in the UK, Isoli in Italy, Hematec in Germany and Mondia in Belgium etc - it is looking to become a fully connected and interlinked group. For example, CPL managing director Paul Murphy and finance director Michela Murphy have been working within Isoli since its acquisition just over a year ago. In areas where CPL has become particularly good, we are leveraging that to benefit the group as a whole.”

HOW INDEPENDENT IS CPL WITH REGARD TO THE KLUBB PRODUCTS IT OFFERS?

“We have absolute ownership on this - We evaluate which is the right product or suite of products for CPL,” he says. “There are companies in the group with equipment that is simply not best suited to the UK and sometimes we offer a choice, for example we sell a full range of 20+ metre truck mounted platforms from Palfinger as well as from Isoli, we also have the flexibility of products from Almac, Dinolift



CPL pickup mounted lift



Almac Jibbi 1570

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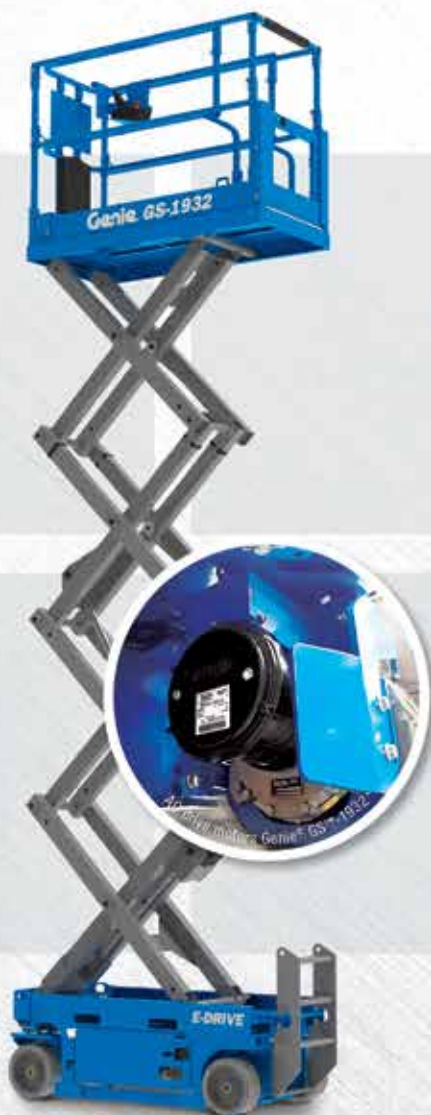
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Palazzani XTJ52



Palfinger P200

among companies to keep equipment longer, so users are more interested in the service and maintenance support. This is why we partner with the chassis manufacturers and push for full UK/EU approval, so they are fully supported by the manufacturer."

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR OTHER PRODUCTS?

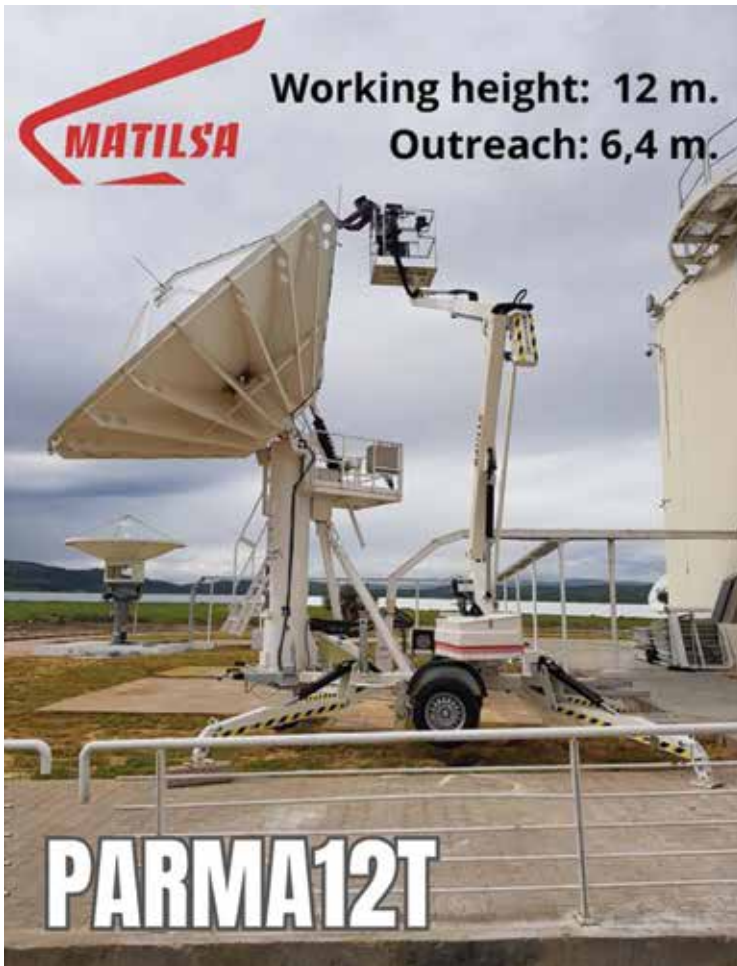
"We are not looking right now as we need to concentrate on the partnerships that we already have. There is also uncertainty over the number of Chinese entrants coming into the market and a lot of interest in the EU anti-dumping case. As a group we are looking further afield such as exploring India, Vietnam and South America where there are plenty of opportunities. In the UK we took on Dinolift last year and recently added Palazzani spider lifts, while we are only just starting to get traction with Almac scissor lifts after two years. This year we need to get Palazzani up and running and then look at the Isoli recovery equipment."

and Palazzani to ensure the customer gets the machine that is right for their business need rather than what we have to sell. It's a total solution approach."

"International sales are a group function, I therefore need to offer a portfolio of products that will help CPL solve any working at height challenge, whether the customer wants it for roofing, cladding, trees, utilities, substations, wind turbines or city centre window cleaning. We not only sell the equipment but can manage the whole product lifecycle. This is very much the

CPL/Klubb message - it is not about selling metal it is about building relationships and offering the right solution to safely work at height."

"Customers invest a lot of money in the equipment - a van mount that used to cost £45-50k a few years ago is now £65-70k - so we want to make sure it is the right machine for the job and can perform over three, four or five years. We also want to keep that asset running because we recognise the risk customers' take with financing and the need to show a return on investment. We are seeing a trend





Dino 220XTCII



Dino lift machines on display at the Open Day

"Having said that, we have had approaches from seven other manufacturers already this year, we look into each one, so we are not saying no, but are not actively looking. From a CPL and group perspective building our own equipment is the most profitable. Buying and selling another manufacturer's equipment is fine and helps iron out the wrinkles and gives us the flexibility to help companies with a range of equipment from eight to 100 metres working height. In the larger truck mounted lift sector dominated by Palfinger, Ruthmann and Bronto, there are fewer than 100 units a year sold in the UK, Palfinger's market share is around 25 percent which feels about right."

"Similarly, with Almac, there are plenty of companies making competitive products for the height, but none with the unique bi-levelling system. But it will take some time for that technology to be adopted. We are starting to see Tier 1 companies adopt it which will then cascade down to other contractors and rental companies."

"Looking at our three to five year sales strategy, I see a saturation point coming, so we may start to see the market stabilise to a new 'normal'. With elections in the UK and US, the continuing conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East etc, the world could be in a very different place in 2025. Even though we are planning for a slight plateau, the market over the next three to five years for van and pick up mounted lifts looks good. Come 2026 we will be in the renewal phase of orders placed in the mental Covid and Brexit years!"

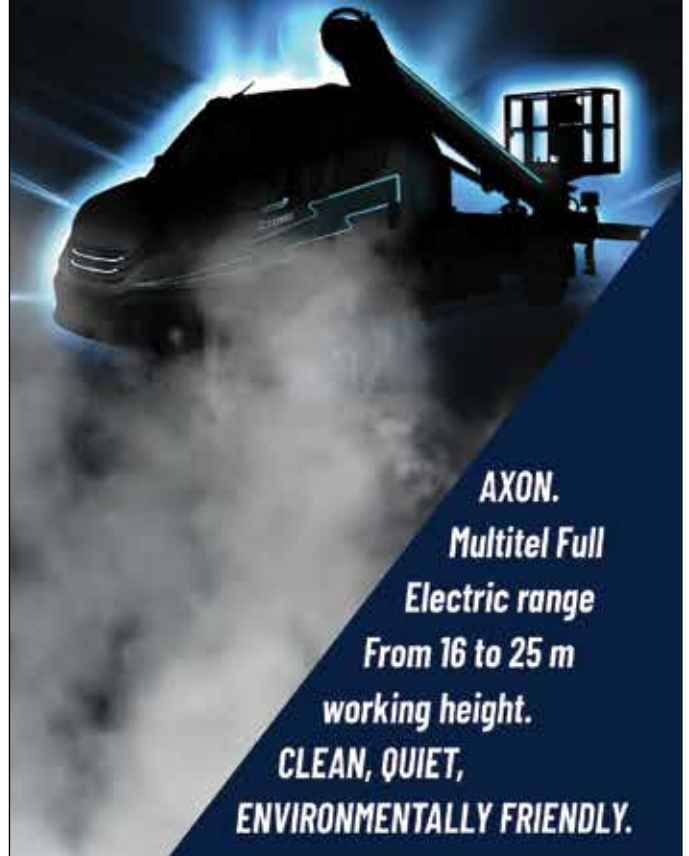
HOW HAS BREXIT AFFECTED THE COMPANY?

"Post Brexit there are challenges, the systems and processes are more complicated but if you can get those right, it becomes a bit more normal. After Brexit we had Covid and then faced microchip shortages and chassis delays. As a result, customers figured out the need to be more prepared and plan ahead. We saw a massive leap in orders with customers pre-booking build slots a year to two in advance."

"Prices have now calmed down and while they are still very high, the volatility is not there - and prices for steel, aluminium, electronics and rubber are not going up and down like a yo-yo. This has allowed people to ease back and relax a little, as a result we are starting to see the market calming following a period of accelerated, almost false growth."

"The sales numbers are still there, last week I took an order for 200 units, but they are for delivery next year, whereas we still have a few build slots available in June. Until recently we were booked solidly for 18 months however, I think the new order book norm for us is four to six months which means you are agile enough to go with demand but not so hamstrung to not know prices or when components might turn up."

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Palfinger P280



Klubb KL26 Renault Master Cutaway

WHAT IS YOUR USP?

“How have we gone from a start up to number one in the UK against competitors that have been around for 30 years or more? We are working hard to identify why companies buy from us and why have we been as successful as we have.”

“Being honest is a part of it - our machine can do this, and these are its limitations, this is when we can build it, and this is how much it costs - and we will stand on those promises. Have we been late for some customers? Yes of course we have, but we have been in exceptional times recently and we all have challenges where the vehicle doesn't turn up or components arrive late etc... but generally speaking the vast majority of customers buy from us because they trust us, and we position our product at a fair price. We are not the cheapest and never will be, but we can support the product through its life and are open and happy to show people around the facilities and learn from them. We also have the spread of products providing a range of solutions.”

“Many customers think they should buy a particular size of machine because that is what is popular, such as a 20 metre truck mount, while a metre or two less might work just fine for them, providing a substantial reduction in price. Value is also an issue - there are some machines on the market that will only last five to seven years whilst a Palfinger may initially seem expensive but will last 10 to 15 years.”

“We are actively spending more time finding out what customers really need, for example councils that bought van mounts seven to 10 years ago are coming back and expecting the new 3.5 tonner to have the same 600kg of payload and are horrified to find that 200 to 300kg is now the norm. Technology has changed. Buying a vehicle mount in 2024 means it will likely be resold in 2031, so the discussions are very much on how to be compliant with the changing rules.”

IS THE SALES PROCESS CHANGING?

“The days of the door-to-door salesman is diminishing. We still need a sales professional, however, as technology has advanced, we have seen the people that started companies 15 to 20 years ago coming to retirement age, with a new generation of decision makers/buyers coming through. 57 percent of the purchase decision is now done presale with internet research long before a company wants to engage with

a salesperson and the expected trend over the coming years will see that rise to 80 percent. We are gearing up to utilise new technologies to assist in that. We have three salespeople plus myself and Paul Murphy, all active each day, and we do a lot of research and data mining enabling us to have more accurate data points so we can tailor our message.”

“No one yet has ever purchased online without any contact - but it is coming. If you look at other industries - Mercedes cars in the UK for example - it does not want you walking into a dealership, it wants you to buy online where you can spec it, pick a colour and arrange to collect.”

GROWING WITHIN THE GROUP

“We are gaining a bigger voice within the group on alternative ways to look at things. I am looking at two, five and 10 years in the future, investing in processes and systems so that we are future proof and ready, and customers come to us because they want the whole experience. Other companies are having similar thoughts, and some are possibly further advanced than us and even engaged in AI already, that is the logical next step.”

ARE YOU TECHY?

“I like to stay abreast of new technologies and explore the 'what if' but I am not an expert - I couldn't tell you how it works, but I can tell you why it would work for us or for you as a customer. There are still manufacturers talking



“CPL has a spread of products providing alternative solutions”



CPL 20m lift

about this new thing called 'telematics' which has been on machines for at least 15 years. Developments such as AI is moving technology on so quickly - remote surveys and operator-less platforms are all possible now but will take time to refine and be accepted. I find all this future technology exciting.”

SIZE MATTERS

“Our growth is a result of asking the customer what they really need. For example Telecoms companies have hundreds of 15 metre, five tonne van mounted lifts, however 99.9 percent of their poles are only 12 metres long, two metres of which is below ground, so a 10-12 metre lift would be fine. This is why we have built lots of 12.5 metre van mounts, which gives them a one tonne payload. It also knocked around £20k off the price of each unit.”

“I love this job but there is so much to do,” he says. “We are flat out which is great, but I do wish there were 48 hours in a day, not because we are understaffed or under resourced but because there is so much going on and we have to take advantage of it while we can. It's what gets me out of bed each day and I think 'today is going to be epic and it is full of good things'.” ■

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