

The desert sun blazed down on Las Vegas for nearly five whole days. Conexpo was an intoxicating melting pot of construction equipment from around the world, well-known faces, extravagant hospitality, margaritas, relentless night life and industry rumour..

Conexpo is held in the convention centre of the Las Vegas Hilton. The open-air Gold lot was the lifting industry's home for the show, dominated by cranes from Liebherr, Demag, Tadano, Grove, Link-Belt, Terex, Kobelco, Manitowoc, Potain and even Linden-Comansa.

Stealing the show

The start of the exhibition was led by the announcement that Manitowoc had bought Grove. This news shot around the show ground with electrifying speed.

As to what the deal actually meant for Grove customers, there were very few details. All questions about Manlift, National Cranes, Delta, and the future of Grove's two crane factories (in the US and Germany) were met with the stock response that the two companies were 'a great match with complementary product lines and very little overlap'.

Privately, Grove staff were upbeat about the deal, with conjecture centring on some shared dealerships that might feature the Grove, Potain and Manitowoc cranes. On the access side there was also talk of a platform grouping bringing together the Liftflux, Delta, TDK and Manlift products to give a full range.

The deal also focussed a lot of reflected attention on Terex, which made no secret of the fact that it had looked at Grove but 'believed the price was too high'.

Easy control

Germany's PAT has teamed up with US-based Intuitive Control Systems to develop a single joy stick that will give full control of a typical aerial work platform.

The Boomstick is currently designed for use with straight boom telescopic platforms, but the addition of a few switches on the joystick/handle will apparently allow it to be used with articulating boom platforms.



Conexpo, the largest construction show in the Western Hemisphere



Terex's presence at the show was awesome. It had three large stands, showing an almost full range of construction equipment. That range now includes crawler cranes from the former American Crane factory, some of which are built in co-operation with IHI of Japan; tower cranes from Peiner, mobile cranes from PPM and, to many people's surprise, Terex aerial work platforms which are still built in the US. Coming soon from Terex is a new 100 tonne capacity mobile crane, the ATT 1000. Information released during the show revealed that Terex's Compact Truck crane project is continuing and that the first prototype is now almost ready for final testing.

One of the newest cranes at the show was the GMK 7450 from Grove (known as the GMK 7550 in the US). The 450 tonne capacity crane has seven axles, all of which can be steered, and a 60 metre boom which Grove says is the longest on-board boom on a crane above 300 tonnes. Also new from Grove was the RT 9130E which was described as AT boom technology, from the GMK 5120, on a rough terrain carrier and the TMS 700E truck crane which has air suspension and is capable of 65 miles per hour (105 km/h).

Brave words from Haulotte

One of the most distinctive stands was Haulotte's. A troupe of Parisian Can Can dancers caused something of a stir even among the jaded inhabitants of Las Vegas. Haulotte is still comparatively

Upbeat Conexpo

Tim Whiteman reports on a much heralded show that did not disappoint.



Grove's stand was one of the larger in the crane industry



JLG's 1350SJP

Intervect's concept

Intervect, the company responsible for Hek and Alimak mast climbing solutions, chose Conexpo to launch its new Service Plus package. This it describes as a partnership with companies looking for a cost effective solution to vertical transportation of people or materials. The focus on partnership reflects the conviction of Anders Nordwall, president and CEO of Intervect that his company is still "concept selling", as many people simply do not understand the potential savings offered by products such as mast climbing work platforms: "We are trying to replace extremely established construction technology, primarily scaffolding" he told *Cranes & Access*.

**'Riggers'
Quad 4
Lifter'**



CONEXPO

Riggers Manufacturing Company showed off its Quad 4 Lifter which is rated at 1,000 tons (907t) to 23' 8" (7.21m) and 450 tons (408t) to 38' 4" (11.68m). Each of the four legs contains four fully powered three-stage hydraulic cylinders joined together at the gland nuts by Load Restraint Frames.

Kobelco used Conexpo to launch its new CKE1800, the successor of the 7150. Two cranes were on the stand, the CKE900 and the brand new CKE1800. Both with self-assembly-system and with the new strong, extra wide winches with oil-cooled, maintenance free, low wear multi-disc brakes. The yellow booms were very prominent on the Las Vegas skyline.

New from JLG was the huge 135 foot (51 metre) 1350SJP. This was the largest self-propelled boom at the show and drew interested crowds. JLG was also promoting its range of specialist application platforms with features such as large, circular electric saws fitted as standard.

Demag's stand featured the 350 tonne capacity AC 350 shown on this occasion with the capacity enhancing SSL

Optimistic Genie

"We are ready to come roaring out of the recession" says Ward Bushnell, co-founder and co-owner of Genie. Speaking to Cranes & Access during Conexpo Bushnell said that European markets remained strong except for France and Germany where things are 'slow'.

Genie has recently re-organised its European operations and feels that it is now supremely positioned to capitalise on any market opportunities. Its European operations are now managed by Jacques Catinot who is based at the Genie depot in France.

Genie has suffered problems during the downturn and has laid off some staff to give a total headcount worldwide of about 2200. But Bushnell believes that it has 'weathered the storm quite well', and says he remains confident that the rental business will be strong in the UK. Despite the lay offs, Bushnell is adamant that Genie is still first and foremost a people company; "they are absolutely our greatest asset and what gives us our market leading position".

(Sideways Superlift). Two city class cranes were also on show and caused a great deal of interest, as the concept is still considered unusual in the US. However, most interest focused on a crane that was not on the stand and has yet to be completed, the new 200 tonne capacity AC 200-1. This five-axle crane will feature an impressive seven section main boom.

As Conexpo ended under a clear blue sky the mood was upbeat, among exhibitors and visitors alike, that the USA has turned the corner and will soon be back to full strength. ■

unknown in the US but Pierre Saubot, president, announced that he expected to capture a full 20 percent of the US access market within two years.

"At first we thought that we were being over optimistic with this projection", said Saubot. "Because we manufacture in Europe and ship the machines to America, the currency difference means that we can offer a price reduction to American customers. This is why we are confident that we will achieve a 30% market share by 2005."

He added that Haulotte is on target to sell 1500 machines into the US by the end of this year and that the company built 30 per cent of Europe's access equipment in 2001.

Bär retires

Conexpo was Freddie Bär's last major crane show as he will be retiring from Liebherr Ehingen at the end of this year. He took the opportunity to introduce customers and US staff to his successor, Hans Georg Frey. Bär has become something of a legend in the industry, partly due to his relentless travel around the world in search of crane sales: "I think I have visited every country except New Zealand" said Bär, who also used Conexpo to announce a major contract from HoLift for a total of 13 cranes.

Significant others

Away from the big news and huge exhibits in the outdoor areas, UK-based Loadwise reported a high level of interest for its products from US customers 'looking for an alternative supplier of load moment indicators'. In Europe the company has had recent successes fitting its systems to Sennebogen crawler cranes belonging to Mowlem in the UK and a number of IHI crawler cranes.

Two sets of hydraulic jacking systems were on show in the Gold lot. Lift Systems is represented by Claxton International in the UK and Ireland. Roy Claxton was at the show and reported recent sales of Lift Systems equipment to companies in Ireland.



**John Wheeler, COO of Grove Cranes,
Rob Giebel, president of the
Manitowoc Crane Group and Jeffrey
Bust, president of Grove Worldwide**

Upright moves on

"We are now in the third and final stage of Chapter 11 and should be out by May" says Leigh Sparrow, president of Upright Europe. He explains that the restructuring plan, submitted to the court and now being considered by creditors, envisages a structure in which manufacturing operations are centred on about 250 people at the factory in Madeira, California, with a slightly lower figure at the factory in Ireland and a total of 450 employees worldwide.



"This will give us two brand new facilities and put us in a very strong position" says Sparrow, adding that Upright's European operation did about €30 million of business this year while the US did about €60 million.

A major change at the Madeira facility is that a former Upright executive, Jose Vallejo, has set up a separate company to provide steelwork and fabrication. This will be based in or alongside the factory, allowing Upright to focus on paint and assembly operations as in Ireland.