

Pull the other one! **c&a** trailer mounts

As the self propelled access platform market in the UK has become increasingly sophisticated, the more basic trailer mounted platform has increasingly become of a niche product, available more from tool hirers than the national powered access rental companies. Cranes & Access takes a look at recent market and product developments.

The UK market for trailer lifts has never been huge, perhaps because many see it as just a 'first step on the powered access ladder'? Traditionally, the 12 metre trailer lift has been the most popular although they go much higher with Denka claiming its DL30 - with a 30 metre working height - is the world's largest trailer mounted platform.

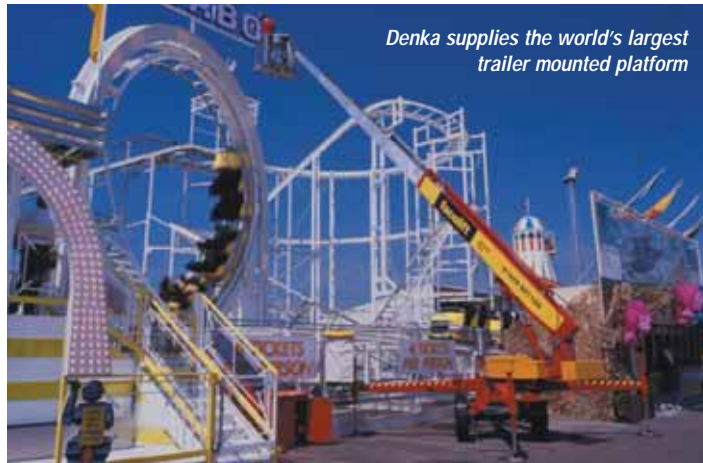


Market leader in the UK is Niftylift.

UK market leaders Niftylift - which has a six model range from 9.5 to 21 metres - the 21 metre 210 is currently undergoing an upgrade - has seen a general softening in demand over last year but still sees growth especially among rental companies specialising in the trailer lift market.

Trailer lifts have many advantages including giving the most metres -

height and outreach - for your money. Low weight and narrow transport dimensions mean they are easy to tow behind a car, van or 4x4 and they can be used on uneven and sloping ground. However these advantages are offset in many applications by



Denka supplies the world's largest trailer mounted platform

requiring time to set up, their inability to travel when elevated, the fact that they can be difficult to move on site - unless fitted with self propelled options - and with a large outrigger footprint can be tricky to set up in confined areas.

The popular 12 to 13 metre trailer lifts have in the past been fixed boom, articulated units - sometimes with jib - with manual fold-down or pull-out outriggers. The benefits of which are low purchase cost, excellent reliability and low cost of ownership due to their simplicity. However, while they are ideal on jobs in the four to eight metre height range or straight up, they struggle at lower heights where the outreach is often barely beyond the outrigger footprint.

In other markets manufacturers addressed this problem by introducing the straight, telescopic boom models. However the format created its own disadvantages in that the machines were very long and expensive - too expensive for most UK rental companies to consider given that they tended to rent by the metre of height rather than by extolling the benefits of

outreach at low heights. Low-level outreach on articulated models was improved, in the early 90's with the introduction of articulated jibs (fly booms) which also added another useful metre and a half or so to the platform height.

Another variation introduced by

UK trailer platform market leader Niftylift was to use a shorter lower boom/riser in conjunction with a telescopic top boom. The end result on its 120T is more outreach, less tailswing and a machine with an overall length about one and a half metres shorter. The company also included hydraulic outriggers as standard, a feature increasingly important even on smaller models.

So there we have it - four basic variations - articulated with and without jib, articulated with telescopic jib and telescopic - with more than 10 manufacturers offering products in the UK including: Dinolift, Denka, Teupen, Ommé, Niftylift, Matilsa, JLG, UpRight, Bil-Jax and Genie.

Recent developments however, centre not around new products but company acquisitions. Last summer Tanfield which already owned Aerial and UpRight purchased Snorkel.

The acquisition has had little or

Denka junior 12.



UpRight is planning to launch a new trailer mounted platform at the APEX show



no impact on the UK/Ireland trailer mounted platform sector as Snorkel rarely sold its products here. Just two UpRight models are currently available both of which have their origins with Aerial - Tanfield's first foray into the access market - the 13.2 metre working height TL37 and the 17 metre working height TL49K.

Genie is one of many manufacturers offering product in the UK



We have heard, however, that UpRight is working on new models (including trailer platforms?) saying that it intends to launch at least one new aerial work platform at APEX 2008, that trailer mounted platforms remain a successful part of its business and it looks to grow this going forward, both organically and by introducing new products.

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Reading between the lines, that probably means a new trailer platform and we have also learned that the company is planning to launch a new 12 metre trailer-mount along the lines of the existing TL series

company's Summit series of trailer lifts. One of the first UK companies to purchase one of its trailers is Castleford-based CAT Access Solutions with the 18.8 metre (55ft) Bil-Jax 5533A, an articulated model

"The Bil-Jax can go from site to site each night with the peace of mind they have the right machine to do the job. It also has an on-board generator to re-charge the batteries. It is very easy to tow and it even has boom travel locators so they can't move when it is being transported."

The Bil-Jax is unusual because most of its trailer lifts are dual-purpose access platform and crane.

"The machine is proving very popular and in particular attracting the attention of local sign erection companies waiting to try out the crane application which can be used to lift the heavy signs into place," says Taylor.

So far nothing has been decided in terms of Haulotte/Bil-Jax strategy and distribution with Haulotte chief executive Alexandre Saubot saying that it will be 'working to maximise synergies and opportunities between the two companies'. The plan is to look at everything

Most Bil-Jax trailer lifts can also be used as cranes



machines with a simple rugged design and full pressure hydraulic controls and available at a very competitive price! Also look out for "an innovative trailer-mounted lift that UpRight believes has real untapped potential as a global product which will help it increase its penetration of smaller equipment rental and tool hire operations."

The other acquisition - at the end of July - is the take-over of Bil-Jax, the USA based manufacturer of trailer lifts, self-propelled booms and steel scaffold products by European self propelled market leader Haulotte. Bil-Jax last year had sales in the region of \$80 million with 90 percent in North America. However the company had been raising its profile in Europe with some notable success. The UK was looking very promising with good initial market penetration through trade shows and the appointment of dealer Promax which has already chalked up some notable orders for the

with over 10 metres of outreach and the largest in the Bil-Jax Summit range of machines, which starts with the 10.1 metre, 6.5 metre outreach 2622T.

According to Chris Taylor, owner of CAT Access, demand for the Bil-Jax machine has been excellent. "Its best feature is the drive and set," he explained. "You just unhitch from the tow vehicle and drive into position. It then takes less than 30 seconds to automatically set the four outriggers just by pressing one button."

Taylor says the machine is very easy to use with buttons instead of levers which his customers seem to prefer. And with an outreach of 10 metres at six metres height the Bil-Jax can reach over conservatories and extensions and still has a basket capacity of 227kg at full outreach. "The machine has a lot of bookings in November doing Christmas lights working both day and night," says Taylor.



Setting up the Niftylift trailer platform

to see how the combined businesses might gain from their different strengths.

Before taking on Bil-Jax, Promax was the dealer for Dinolift - the Finnish-based trailer and self propelled boom manufacturer.

However, in a change of distributorship, Dinolift is now being sold in the UK by The Spiderlift Company (previously Ranger Equipment) - which also sells the German-built Teupen trailer, spider and van mounted platforms. The re-branded company is also looking to distribute a third range of machines in the UK and Ireland.



Dinolift's circular basket on the 120T.

Sales of Dinolift trailers in the UK have historically been small primarily due to the strong domestic competition - Niftylift - and the UK preference for articulated lifts and an almost absence of market for the larger trailer lifts.

Promax will probably find Bil-Jax a better fit with its other product lines which include Platform Basket spider lifts and Cela truck mounts. Bil-Jax on the other hand has found a good UK partner which is essential if it is to generate any volume in what is a tough market, although how the Haulotte acquisition will affect this remains to be seen.

Steve Hadfield and the Spiderlift/Ranger team are geared up to handle larger, more expensive, more niche products and have a strong track record with the Teupen line of spider lifts. The Dinolift range will fit well alongside that of Teupen with very little overlap. Although the distributorship with Dino is still very recent and there is little news on sales, managing director Steve Hadfield says the company strategy is to represent a total of three manufacturers of equal standing. "The synergy would have to be in line with the values that Teupen builds into its equipment - high quality and performance, equating to lower life costs through reliability, longevity and higher residual values



Haulotte recently acquired Bil-Jax

trailer mounts

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of Teupen's build standards, the internally mounted

power track in the boom is also shared. This has proven to be popular, reliable and maintenance and damage free."

"Dino's product line is made up of trailer and all terrain models and all are interesting to us. The trailers are split into 'T' series (telescopic boom) and 'XT' series (articulated/telescopic boom)," he said. "XT type booms are commonplace and very popular in the UK for their up and over reach, so we can tap this market with a very high quality product, loaded with features and spec.

The T series gives us something different for the UK. We firmly believe that there is a gap in the market (a smaller niche) that we can fill with the telescopic booms."

"It is a given that Niftylift dominate the UK market for trailer models, which are all articulated/telescopic and we don't want to go head to head with them," says Hadfield, "so the innovative features of the

XT series, along with the telescopic T series gives us something different to offer. We firmly believe there is a place for the T series alongside the likes of Niftylift in the UK hire and end user fleets. The T series models bring benefits in low level outreach, speed and simplicity."

At Bauma last year, Dino launched the all-new 120T and Hadfield has chosen this to be his first demo model.

"The 120T has standard features that other manufacturers offer as options such as friction drive and hydraulic powered stabilisers," said Hadfield. "It is the only 12 metre trailer model in Europe to offer a three stage telescopic boom, keeping the length short at just 5.52 metres overall. The weight is also low, at just 1,275kg including the friction drive and hydraulic stabilizers. Having a telescopic boom instead of articulated creates outreach of 7.9 metres from floor level, so it is great for low level outreach. The machine is purposely designed as a one man machine (120kg capacity) and features a

unique circular basket, negating the costly rotating basket often missing on smaller trailer models anyhow. We have been asked to supply circular baskets to tree surgeons for years, for the ease of entering a tree canopy, so this will make a great feature for the smaller jobbing tree surgeon and parks & grounds care workers."

"Finally, we see Dino's strong after-sales service as a key factor for the UK with high levels of service, technical support, competent field service and parts supply playing key roles in decision making. We have learned this with Teupen, and will replicate this with Dino. The parts system in Finland is excellent, from good parts catalogues, to next day

Matlisa's new assembly hall.



The new Dino 120T

- and they should also be innovators in their field," he said.

"Dinolift was chosen because of this synergy and we hope to announce the third product line very soon," said Hadfield. "The search for these two manufacturers has taken 18 months. All three build strong, stable platforms, with 10 year design life and one of our favorite



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Teupen has four Gepard models from 15-25 metres working height

delivery in the UK. An added benefit is that Dino actually manufactures a large proportion of its components, including cylinders and even lock valves."

The lightweight 12 metre telescopic could prove to be a hit over the next few years as more products become available. Omme Lift of Denmark launched its Mini 12 two years ago, but so far few have made it to these shores. Weighing just 1,200kg with all the 'bells and whistles' and less than six metres long, it has been designed to be towed behind a mid-size car or small van. It is less than

six metres long, retracts to under a metre wide and boasts eight metres of outreach. Although a one person unit, it is surprisingly rigid with fast function speeds.

Still looking for a UK distributor and to break into the market is Spanish trailer and self propelled boom manufacturer Matilsa. The company has recently completed its move into a new 4,500 square metre, €6.5 million production facility. The additional space gives the capability to build 2,000 units a year of its four model trailer range - the Parma 12, 12T, 15 and 17 - as well as its self propelled machines. Its range should be well suited to the UK market, being similar in specification to that of Niftylift, it even produces a 12 metre compact 'all singing all dancing' articulated telescopic model - the Parma 12T. The company is unusual in that it has a web-based product configurator allowing potential buyers to "spec-up" a product along the same lines as a Dell computer. The configurator also includes prices and will allow

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you to press the order button at the end. However most buyers will want to call and negotiate.

The push by the HSE along with increased awareness of employers and tradesmen to use equipment that offers the safest method of working at height is slowly making an impact. The main winners in the equipment market so far have been the arrival of low level, push-around lifts such as the Pop-Up and Power Tower, but there are a large number of jobs for an outside machine with outreach that is easy to deliver or

pick up - a lift equivalent to the mini excavator - for tasks such as gutter installation and replacement, house and office painting, antenna installation and even window cleaning. Some of this will be taken by small spider lifts and 3.5 tonne vehicle mounts, both of which have almost certainly have been taking business away from trailer lifts. However the low cost and easy towability of the trailer lift, along with greater outreach of telescopic models should translate into higher sales.



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Explosion proof trailers

When a company that maintains service station canopies and forecourts approached Pyroban for advice on reducing the risk of fire or explosion when working over the top or fuel pumps, the company recommended its Gascheka system, for what it calls a zone three protection level.



The control console includes a special key

Two 9.5 metre working height Nifty 90 trailer lifts were sent directly from the factory to Pyroban's facility in Shoreham for installation of the Gascheka equipment. Before the machine will operate it automatically carries out a gas test. If it detects gas it will not start and will sound a warning if there is a dangerous level of gas/fumes.

When the machine is operational it will give an audible and visual warning with a timed shutdown if it is ignored. The equipment is relatively easy to install and significantly less expensive than zone one or two systems, while



The largest components are the control panel, a the sensor which first on the outside of the platform and a propane bottle which sits inside



The Nifty 90 during conversion

providing significant protection. The trailers were chosen for the job due to low weight of under 600kg and compact dimensions while offering more than enough working height and outreach (3.5m).

The fact that they cost less than a 12 metre machine was probably also a factor as was the cost of towing around a lift more than twice the weight when the extra performance was not required.

Access for a King



Lindig Fördertechnik, recently supplied four UpRight TL series trailers to the film set of a new children's movie to rival Harry Potter.

The movie is based on the book: "De brief voor de Koning" ('The letter to the King') by Dutch author Tonke Dragt. It is about a young knight called Tiuri who

undertakes a dangerous job to deliver a secret letter to the Kingdom of Unauwen.

The stunning backdrop to this medieval movie was the world-famous Wartburg Castle in Eisenach which has been a seat of power in Germany since 1067 and was a place of refuge for the excommunicated Martin Luther.

Swift or Herkules

Every other month we receive a call from someone looking for spare parts for a Herkules or as it was known in the UK - Swiftlift trailer lift.

Although they have not been produced for many years there are a good number still in use and often appreciated for their lightweight and good outreach.

The most popular models were the TK16 and TK20 articulated boom trailer lifts and the T20/22 telescopes. Parts can still be sourced via Herkules Lift A/S, John Ravnskjaer, Denmark.

Telephone +45 73561610
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A Herkules TK20-11, the 20 metre articulated trailer lift.



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