

MASTCLIMBERS

Ugly Duckling or Golden Swan?

Mike Pitt presents the case for a fresh look at mast climbing work platforms

In 1985 I was introduced to the world of mast climbing work platforms whilst working for a general access rental company, and immediately saw potential for such a product. Since then, over 17 years ago, the industry has experienced many changes as markets have matured in both the manufacture and rental sectors.

From the very early days, it seemed obvious that the principle of mast climbers would be a money saver for the refurbishment of tower blocks and offices. It was then that some very important foundation work was done in certain geographical areas, working with councils and main contractors to introduce the ideology and explain how a mast climbing work platform works vertically on a façade. Typical savings of 40% on fixed costs were possible, when com-



pared to traditional methods.

During the early 90's, mast climbing work platforms were being sold to every UK rental company looking for new, niche products, resulting in too many machines entering an under-developed market. Sales people were focused on the sale or rental of mast climbing work platforms, often to projects that required a degree of technical understanding beyond their capabilities or experience. This resulted in poor service to the market, resulting in poor utilisation, and poor returns.

Now, in the new millennium, we have seen mast climbing work platforms approaching maturity, and the product is quickly leaving that 'ugly duckling' image behind. Most manufacturers recognise that they must have a customer-base which has experienced success with the product, and show commitment and innovation to provide education and support (both technical and financial) in developing the markets they aspire to. This produces platforms that are ever easier to handle and build, and with increased flexibility, to meet the productivity demands of the specialist rental companies and their customers.

The rental companies are now dedicated professional contractors, providing vertical solutions, taking time to analyse what is required, utilising resources, and the latest designs available to them.

Mast climbing work platforms are coming of age. Consolidation of manufacturers, and hirers, is building knowledge bases of expertise around the world, adding to an ever more positive future. This continuing process has a way to go, but the signs are extremely positive. ■

What does a mast climbing work platform offer?

If you are working at height a mast climber can be the answer, whatever the application.

- Proven labour cost reduction of 30%.
- Integrated systems with work platform, goods hoist transport platform, and passenger hoists.
- Untied machines can work up to 20 metres without being fixed to the building. When tied, some projects reaching over 270 metres.
- High payloads, up to, and over, 5000 kilograms. Twin mass capacities of over 10,000 kilograms.
- Modular systems enable the machine to be built to suit the project.
- Most manufacturers use hot dip galvanising, giving extended life.
- Variable platform width: the front edge can be extended to contour the face of the building. Platform lengths can be variable from 2 metres up to 19.2 metres on a single mast.
- Self-propelled wheel chassis, giving the platform mobility around the site.
- Flexibility: Materials and other necessary equipment can be lifted on platform at the same time as the workers.
- Quick and easy erection and dismantling for more economical work.
- Safe and ergonomic, working at the optimum height, with material and tools within easy reach.
- Solid construction, economical to maintain and easy to service.
- Productivity: Long platforms speed up work on wide façades.
- Material handling solutions, ranging from a simple goods hoist, (lifting materials from ground level to unloading platform), to intricate panel handling devices.

News & Views

The recent 'SMOPYC Fair', at Zaragossa (Spain), had 14 different mast climbing work platform manufacturers from Italy, Sweden, Spain and Holland, all displaying their latest developments.

In the United States, at the recent 'World of Concrete Fair', in Las Vegas, there were in excess of a dozen different manufacturers represented, none of whom were represented at the SMOPYC Fair. Many of the platforms on show at 'World of Concrete' were of American origin, and were hydraulically operated as opposed to the rack and pinion method.

See the latest developments:

19-23 March – **Conexpo**,
Las Vegas, USA

12-14 September – **Apex 2002**,
Maastricht, Holland

16-20 October – **SAIE 2002**,
Bologna, Italy

