

# European made

Skyjack has ambitious plans to become a major European manufacturer of access platforms within the next two years.

**Tim Whiteman** reports.

**F**loris van Dam is a man with a mission. His mission is for Skyjack to build nearly 1000 platforms in Europe by the end of next year and to more than double that by the end of 2003. To this end, Skyjack's Hungarian plant has just produced the first pre-production models, a 3220 and a 3226, and expects to be in "full production" from this January. Production for 2002 is targeted at about 850 units.

Ultimately van Dam expects to be building 11 of the current 18-model Skyjack range at the Hungarian factory. If customers want to purchase any of the seven remaining models, these will still be available, with CE mark, from North America.

## Excellent quality

The Hungarian factory is three hours from Budapest and is known as Mezogep RT. It is 60 per cent owned by Linamar, Skyjack's majority shareholder. Van Dam is, as you would expect, very enthusiastic about Mezogep – "we get excellent quality at a decent price, in fact in some specific areas we get better quality than on existing products". He expects the first units off the new production line to be almost identical to those built in North America but that the amount of European-built componentry will gradually increase. "We are looking at 'make or buy' decisions on virtually every component" he says, noting that the Mezogep factory already makes components for the car industry and has "plenty of room for expansion".



## R&D centre

Skyjack is re-organising its European network to reflect the increasing importance of its Hungarian manufacturing operation (see main story). The LB range, which was previously made in Germany at Loebau, will now be built in Mezogep, Hungary. Skyjack's German sales and service operation is now centred on Bochum while Loebau now becomes European research and development centre. "We will soon see some new prototypes being built and tested here" says Floris van Dam, managing director of Skyjack Europe

**These are the first Skyjack scissor lifts to be made at its new European factory in Hungary. They were completed at the beginning of November.**

very much back in business after his recent ill health".

Looking to the future, van Dam is optimistic about markets for platforms in Europe. He predicts that somewhere between 16,000 and 18,000 scissor lifts will be sold in Europe in 2002 and that Skyjack aims to supply 10 per cent of them. "After that we want 20 per cent then 25 per cent and so on – after all, our parent company has 30 or 35 per cent in North America".



**Floris van Dam has ambitious plans for Skyjack in Europe**

"2002 will be a year of transition for us and by 2003 we will have a fantastic cost base in Europe" predicts van Dam. He adds that Skyjack's European operations are being given an increasingly free hand to develop their own strategy.

In the UK this has seen Skyjack set up its own company after being represented by Russon for many years. Van Dam explains that there is now an agreement between Russon and Skyjack which resolves issues arising from the split. He adds "Charlie Patterson is doing a fantastic job for us and Martin Davies is