

LORRY MOUNTS

111 years ago the company that is now GSR started to take shape. One month ago, the modern company, together with SkyKing, delivered its 3000th powered access platform.

Tim Whiteman spoke to Luigi Silvestrini about the company's new plans

Today's GSR is a far cry from the company that was founded in 1890. However, the company is one of the few in the powered access business that really has been in the access equipment business for more than one hundred years. The product has evolved from the original ladders, through truck mounted retractable ladders on turntables, (the first of which were developed by modifying the base of a mobile anti-aircraft gun), to today's truck mounted powered access platforms. These are now sold throughout Europe, the Middle East and as far afield as the Far East.

GSR's origins date to 1976 when the current president, Vincenzo Gentili, and one of his brothers took over what had become Scalificio Riminese (this loosely translates as Rimini Ladders). Gentili Oleodinamica brought with it experience of mechanical hydraulics and had for some years been supplying specialist components to Scalificio Riminese. The take over also saw new investment and new facilities and quickly led to the development and construction of a range of powered access booms under the name GSR (Gentili Scalificio Riminese).

Regular customers

Regular customers at this time were Italy's state railways, power utilities and defence ministry and this gave a base from which the company went on to develop a healthy export market. Today the company exports 80 per cent of its production and is ready for the next step says Luigi Silvestrini, sales and financial manager. Current production is 400 to 450 platforms a year and a new plant will be ready shortly. But, GSR feels a

No. 3000

GSR has more than 100 hundred years of activity in the access industry



The 3000th unit to be built by GSR was recently handed over to Gordon Leicester of Facelift by GSR and SkyKing, exclusive UK partner

need to grow faster and quicker: "Our raw prices are constantly rising, but the end prices have remained stable – the only solution for us is to build large volumes in the future" says Silvestrini.

Easy to say, more difficult to do as he readily admits: "increasing our production by just 100 units a year would not be easy, but we are determined to do it". GSR is also actively looking for partners that will allow it to continue its development into a major international player.

"Companies that only produce a couple of hundred units a year will not survive long term" says Silvestrini. So far, however, he has found little reciprocal interest in the idea, despite a conviction that growth needs to happen now to

ensure a future in the evolving powered access market.

GSR has established rapid growth in the UK through its partnership with SkyKing. Mark Carrington, a director of the company, believes that since SkyKing was launched in 1995 it has become the UK's largest supplier of vehicle mounted access equipment. This year's SED saw SkyKing delivering its 500th vehicle mounted platform. The customer was Gordon Leicester of Facelift and Leicester was again on hand at this year's Saie exhibition in Bologna to take delivery from SkyKing of GSR's 3000th unit.

Looking to the future, Silvestrini says that GSR will shortly be certified as complying with the ISO 9001 quality assurance standard and that new models are coming on stream. Looking to the long term future, his company's eyes are firmly fixed on becoming a much larger and more international player with strong partnerships. ■

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Testing Times

The small end of the truck and van mount business has had a good year, but, like most sectors, no one can quite believe it will continue next year

Most companies supplying van mounted and lorry mounted aerial platforms readily admit they have had a good year. But, and it is an important but, most are also battenning down the hatches because they expect 2002 to be difficult. Blue Line Access, for example, has closed its Newark workshop despite reporting that it has never been in a stronger financial position.

Versalift, which invested heavily in a new workshop and test premises just over a year ago, also reports having had a good year and is diversifying into new products. Again, however, there is some concern about what the future will hold as customers are being cautious, despite the fact that they are still busy. A recent addition to the Versalift range is the Skyhigh product which Richard Tindale says is finding new applications.

"One of our customers has a couple of Multicars with the swap body system – it has recently fitted a Skyhigh 120 onto a body and now offers this as an option". The Multicar systems allows the driver to jack up the body, with the platform on it, and release the four connection points, and then drive the vehicle out from under the body. Another new customer for the Skyhigh range has been AVH rental which is better known for standard van, lorry and car hire. It has recently added three 4x4 pick-ups to the fleet which are fitted with a Skyhigh platform. Two models are available from Versalift, the 10.5 metre working height reverse articulating 1100 and the 12 metre 120. The 1100 can be fitted

on a 1 tonne vehicle while the 120 needs a 1.2 tonne unit.

One of Versalift's specialities is supplying insulated booms for use in the electricity industry. Tindale says that it is now supplying all the UK's Regional Electricity Companies and that the VST range is popular at the heavy end while the EST is favoured at the lighter end.

Wide range

Elsewhere in the UK Pagliero is represented by PJ Allan which also works with Niftylift to mount a variety of Nifty's products on vans and lorries. The part-



The Multicar swap body system allows different bodies to be swapped between chassis.

Versalift is developing a JCB mounted unit

nership has produced a number of specialist products. Pagliero is now one

of the largest producers of lorry mounted platforms and has products that range from small van mounts up to some of the largest lorry mounts. The producer of the world's largest platform, Ruthmann, also has a large range of smaller, standard lorry and van mounts as does fellow German manufacturer Wumag. Finland's Bronto builds some of the largest lorry mounted platforms and is represented in the UK by Blue Line Access.

Director Andy Northwood says that the year 2001 has been "very good for the company" but that many of his cus-

tomers are concerned about the coming year. Blue Line also represents Teupen and has just launched the Euro B range of platforms which are suitable for mounting on 3.5 tonne chassis. Two models are available, one with 16 metre working height and the other with 20 metre. Panther Platform Rentals has just taken delivery of Blue Line's first Teupen, a 20 metre Euro B20 on a Mercedes Benz 311D Sprinter.

Northwood has high hopes for the Teupen range, and expects demand for platforms on 3.5 tonne units will gradually increase as more and more end users with newer licences are not allowed to drive anything heavier.

It seems then that the next few months will be a "wait and see" period for the lighter end of the lorry mount market with no one quite sure whether the good times have come to an end. ■