

LASCO DEBUTS ON WORLD STAGE



by GREG KEANE

The Lasco crane has existed to challenge conventional thinking in lifting on high rise projects for a number of years - as well as a the persistence of inventor Ron Laczko, who has over the years resisted pressure to take the easy dollars and walk away from his crane.

However, a series of events over the last few months have resulted in a deal being forged which will see this crane proudly wearing the colours of France's Potain in all markets except Australia, NZ and Papua New Guinea.

Further, Lasco cranes has gained distribution rights to Potain self-erecting cranes for the Australian market, and Laczko sees these, the Lasco Crane and someother products for which he has gained Australian rights as forming the nucleus of a hire business he will be assembling to provide innovative, cost-effective handling solutions to the building industry.

Laczko believes that these self-erecting cranes have the potential to replace hired 50t

truck cranes on many low- and medium-rise building sites, where they can be set up in half a day and remain on site during the lifting phase of construction.

Lasco Cranes and Potain have an agreement for marketing and distribution, and the cranes will continue to be manufactured in Australia and exported from here. Laczko is currently upgrading the tooling at his factory to ensure that the demands for quantity and quality will be met.

Laczko is gearing up to produce two cranes a month, with the ability to readily increase this to four. The first machine has already been delivered and the second is under construction.

The meeting of the two parties owed much to chance. Lasco was contacted by Italian manufacturer Officini Piccini in September last year, with a request to have a Lasco crane delivered to Italy painted as a Lasco Piccini, for display at a fair three weeks later in bologna.

Piccini was interested in obtaining manufacturing rights for the crane, if interest was sufficient. Despite the tight schedule, the crane arrived in Italy nearly a week before deadline. It generated considerable interest at the fair.

A European agent for Piccini was also the agent for Potain. When he saw the Lasco crane on display, he drew it to the attention of the Italian Potain manger and of marketing director Pierre Yves Le Daeron, who is responsible for new products for Potain. They were clearly interested.

When Piccini found that it was not in a position to go forward with its manufacturing proposal on the original schedule, this left the

opportunity open for Potain and Laczko to begin negotiations which were quickly and amicably consummated.

The significance of Laczko's agreement with Potain should not be underestimated. Australia has produced many innovative crane designs, but these have largely been successful only on their domestic market.

Similarly, Australia has had a number of crane designers who have been recognised internationally for their expertise, but they have not reached similar agreements with a major recognised international manufacturer. Potain lays claim to being the largest maker of construction cranes in the world, and until now has not gone outside its own organisation for a crane design.

However, Laczko reports that he was well received by marketing and design staff at Potain, and after many frustrating attempts to gain a wider market for the Lasco crane through overseas alliances, the negotiations with Potain were quick, honest and fair. In addition to the distribution agreement, the deal leaves Laczko with the opportunity to further develop the crane and other lifting products.

Currently a crawler-mounted Lasco crane is being completed for use in the hire operation. The tracks can be detached from the crane and used with a fork mast to provide transport to move materials around on the slab.

An agreement is also being negotiated with another company to jointly develop a means of attaching a Lasco crane to a high-rise material loading platform.