

Take-off time for self-erectors

Contractors find that the payback time of owning one is surprisingly short. **Greg Keane reports**

AFTER being ignored in Australia as a lifting option on building sites, self-erecting cranes have now carved out a niche for themselves, particularly in the Sydney market.

A key catalyst behind this has been Lasco Cranes, which took on the Potain range of self-erecting cranes last year. Company principal Ron Laczko, who has a strong background in rigging in the Sydney market, spent considerable time promoting the benefits of self-erecting cranes to the market, and this struck a note with many builders who have since purchased machines.

The benefits include low operating costs, ease of operation, versatility, small footprint area required for erection, good capacity at long radius and quietness.

Lasco Cranes has a two-pronged approach to placing self-erecting cranes in the market, offering a choice of purchase or hire. Company gm John Walters says the hire operation in Sydney will be strengthened with an increase in the number of machines available, and hire operations will soon commence in Queensland, initially servicing Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Eventually these machines will be available for hire nationally. Stock will also be held for immediate delivery to buyers.

Machines currently working in Australia service the low- to medium-rise commercial market, and range from the HD 14 C (18m height, 1.2t @ 10.9m, 0.6t @ 22m) and to the HDT 70 (34m height, 6t @ 12.9m, 1t @ 45m). According to Walters the HD 40 A (23m height, 4t @ 14m, 1t @ 35m) will probably have the greatest appeal to builders, as it has the capacity to cover lifting requirements on most building sites.

Builders are finding that when the sums are done on the cost of owning a self-erecting crane compared to the costs of hiring traditional 50t mobile cranes, the payback period of the self-erecting crane is surprisingly short. In addition, the crane is theoretically

self-erecting cranes to do the placement work which would otherwise tie up the larger cranes.

Lasco Cranes sees similar changes occurring on domestic building sites, and has recently imported some Potain HDM 2 cranes which it believes are perfectly suited to this work, and will find a place in the fleets of companies which hire to the building industry.

The HDM 2 has a height under hook of 13m, and will lift 150kg at 12m radius. It is imported as a skid unit that can be mounted on a trailer or light truck, and Lasco Cranes will be building dollies locally to allow them to be towed by 4x4's or light trucks. They are simple to operate, and have sufficient capacity to lift roof trusses that have previously been lifted by truck-mounted cranes.

The HDM 2 was developed for the Japanese market, where over 150 are in operation, but Walters believes that changes in lifting requirements under OH&S guidelines now made the HDM 2 ideal for the local market, which demands robust, low maintenance, easy-to-operate equipment. However, for the builder, Walters sees the HD 10 A as the machine with greatest appeal.

The HD 10 A will lift 600kg at 16.2m, with a 15m under hook height using a flat boom, or 500kg at 15.5m with 19m under hook when the boom is luffed. This gives the crane the reach and capacity to service multiple sites on a housing development, without making the crane so bulky and expensive that it is put beyond the means of the project builder.

Lasco Cranes will devote considerable energy to developing the market for cranes in the domestic building industry over the next year, targeting builders and hire companies servicing the building industry.

While self-erecting cranes have been an important part of the activities of Lasco Cranes, this has not been at the expense of further development of the company's own Lasco Lift design.

The portable crane has now been modified to accept rubber tracks and become mobile, and tests have shown its lifting capacity to be beyond even the expectations of the designer Ron Laczko.

An important aspect of this crane's design is its capacity of 3t at 3m radius (on level ground) is impressive for a crane of such compact dimensions. The crane can lift 700kg at 7.3m radius without using outriggers, and has excellent capacity lifting over the side of the tracks. The tracks can each be attached to the crane frame via two quick-connect couplings, and give a travel speed of 5kph, with very smooth control to allow inching.

The first unit is being used by Lend Lease on its high profile Macquarie Apartments project in central Sydney to lift glass panels from the ground, walk them around the slab and place them in the structural steel roof frames. The crane has attracted considerable interest on this project, with orders resulting.

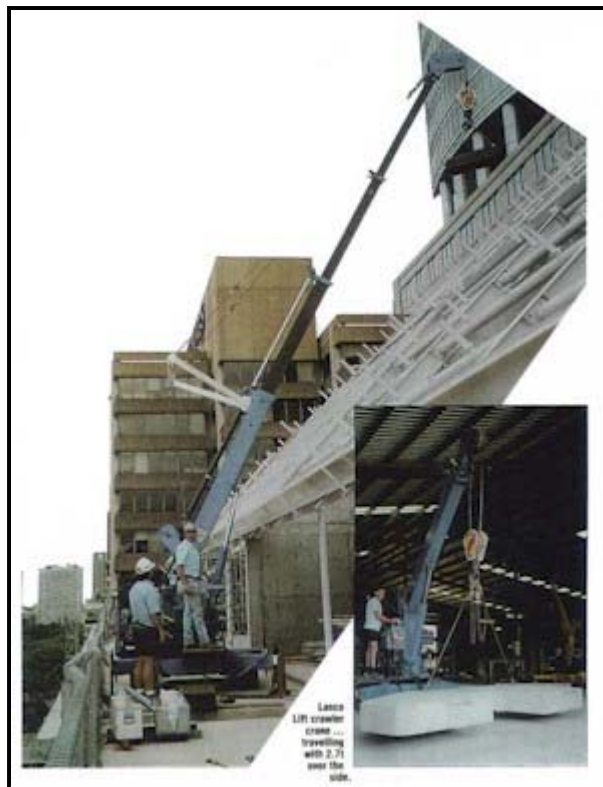
The versatility of this crane, coupled with its excellent capacity in multiple configurations (free on tracks, with outriggers, and with tracks removed), will be welcomed by many sectors of the building industry, and the standard Lasco Lift is now being built with lugs to allow tracks to be retrofitted.

This crane's capacity as a compact crawler crane should lead many people to consider it as an alternative to mini crawler cranes currently on the market, not just in the building industry but on construction projects, docks, barges and the like.

available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, so that craneage is available whenever a need arises, without delays and the cost of travel time.

Walters believes that self-erecting cranes are now selling themselves, with a number of orders placed largely as a result of builders observing these machines operating on other sites. The cranes work well with building systems such as Rapidwall and Ultrafloor and on one site in Sydney two self-erecting cranes are being used on the job, and lifted from floor to floor to continue operation.

The cranes also team well with larger cranes, which can lift materials such as windows, cladding, panels and roofing materials in bulk, allowing the



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