

Sino-Italian sympatico

One of the more significant new product launches at Bauma China in November was the global unveiling of eight new European designed boom lifts by leading Chinese manufacturer Dingli.



Xu Sughen (L) with Riccardo Magni

Significant in that the Italian designer Riccardo Magni was given a free hand in both the machine concept and the specifications. The renowned telehandler engineer kicked off the project just 10 months earlier and started by looking at how boom lifts are actually used from a variety of aspects including transportation and maintenance.

He then began questioning every aspect of traditional boom lift designs. With no aerial lift baggage in his closet he wondered why most boom lifts have all their running gear in the superstructure rather than the chassis, and why hydraulic wheel motors and planetary reduction hubs are employed when rugged off-road axles are 'relatively inexpensive, durable and well proven'. He also could not understand why

manufacturers mount the engine in-line and then have to place them on swing-out trays for maintenance access. Magni has mounted the engines in his booms

transversely which allows access all around without the need for a swing out tray. Being in the chassis they are also much easier to reach, even when the machine is on a truck.

The result is a range of products that are generally more compact, lighter in weight with strong performance characteristics, easy access for service and maintenance and a very low centre of gravity. The new machines which range from a 45ft articulated boom to the 86ft straight boom stand out from the crowd due to their ultra slim superstructures and low slung 'moulded' counterweights. This gives them a visual appearance of having a lot of tail swing - not a desirable characteristic - when in fact it is no greater than most other products and better than some. The booms are all tested and approved for operation on slopes up to five degrees - this compares to the more usual 'firm level ground' on most existing boom lifts.

The most remarkable aspect of the launch though is not product related but the speed with which they were conceived, designed and high quality prototypes built and



The new Dingli Italian booms use telehandler drive axles



The machines feature a slim low profile superstructure



Platform controls have standard beam type secondary guarding

shipped to China in time for the show.

Even more significant than this is the remarkable relationship and working partnership that has developed between Dingli founder and major shareholder Xu Sughen and Magni founder and owner Riccardo Magni even more surprising given the fact Xu does not speak English or Italian and Magni speaks no Chinese. In spite of this the two men have developed a profound relationship of trust and respect that is particularly rare between two such diverse cultures and have no shared language. The remarkable relationship resulted in Dingli purchasing a 20 percent stake in Magni last year after only the briefest of discussions and negotiations.

Speaking to Cranes & Access in Shanghai, the two discussed how they only met for the first time at the CTT show in Moscow in June 2015. When asked about how they managed to 'hit it off' so quickly, Xu says that having known of him from his Manitou days and having seen the Magni products at the

show, he sought Riccardo Magni out, and that his face and body language clearly indicated that this was a man he could both trust and do business with - a kindred spirit if you like. Magni says that he had pretty much the same feeling, to the point that discussions about mutual distribution soon leap-frogged to an even closer and deeper working relationship.

Xu was more than willing to put his money where his gut instincts were, while Magni was equally willing to give up 20 percent of his business to a company he did not know, from a region where he had limited experience and which is renowned for being devious when it comes to business dealings.

Magni said: "I have worked with several manufacturers in my life and negotiated with some of the biggest such as JCB and Manitou. No one was ever willing to give me the level of funds that this man did purely on trust and belief in what I could do. He had complete faith in what I proposed. We found that we have a connection, with similar sized business similar ideas and



Riccardo Magni demonstrates the patented lower controls

Dingli booms

c&a



All models include four wheel drive and steer

aspirations - there was a spark and even our families get on extremely well."

The Dingli Italian machines will be built in China, and initially marketed and sold in more developed markets, while the current Dingli boom lift models will largely be sold in China and developing markets. Some of this is due to the sophistication and cost of the componentry that Magni has selected for his machines, sparing no expense to get the best components, from the fine grade steels to the variable displacement pumps and motors. There is some trade off benefits in that the use of a large single drive motor, coupled to a splitter box and Dana off road axles compares favourably with four large wheel motors and planetary

reduction hubs. This drivetrain, along with the latest load sensing technology also allows a smaller engine to be used, providing substantial cost savings and fuel efficiencies. All the new booms use the same running gear apart from the axles, with the larger machines requiring heavier axles.

Xu has sufficient faith in the partnership that he is currently working on a brand new 160,000 square metre state of the art boom lift production facility located on a 241,000 square metre plot. The total cost will be in the region of \$150 million and it will take two years to complete. If they have both got it right, this is a relationship that is likely to have a significant impact in the years ahead.



Engines are mounted transversely for easy access



Counterweights are sculpted and low slung



Dingli has already sold several Magni telehandlers in China, this heavy duty model to the Chinese army

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