

Mini-Cranes Maximize Vegas

Maeda's 405C mini-crane helps crews gain access for the Fontainebleau project in Nevada.



By Erin Whitehead

Look up next time you're standing on the famous Las Vegas Strip, and you're bound to see a number of cranes dotting the skyline. These massive machines mark the many construction projects that are going on in the party capital of Nevada. From the multi-use CityCenter project (see more details on page 10) to various hotel and condo construction sites, cranes are at work to get these massive structures up and running and ready for business. While the flat-top and luffing tower cranes and lattice-boom crawler cranes are easy to spot, a much smaller piece of equipment has recently been hard at work on the roof of the Fontainebleau development project: a Maeda 405C mini-crane.

The Fontainebleau Las Vegas is a 3,812-room, 68-floor hotel and casino development being built on the Strip just north of the Riviera Hotel, located on about 25 acres where the El Rancho and Algiers casinos once stood. With a 100,000-square-foot casino, 3,200-seat performing arts theater, condominium units, and hotel space, along with dozens of restaurants and lounges, the \$2.9 billion Fontainebleau

will be a modern multi-use development.

With the opening planned for fall 2009, construction crews are at work putting the finishing touches on the project. Turnberry West Construction, the Las Vegas, Nev.-based company formed specifically for the Fontainebleau project, rented the Maeda 405C mini-crane in November 2008 to work on the job. On the project through the end of April, the mini-crane has been hard at work recently on the roof of the tower portion of the project—a 3.5-million-square-foot building. As the project nears completion, the four tower cranes on the Fontainebleau project have begun to be dismantled. As the tower cranes come down, the contractor loses access to various areas of the jobsite, with the Maeda stepping in to fill the void.

"Every time I lose a [tower] crane, I can't access the entire roof," said Brian Mori, a project manager on the tower, shell, and core portion of the job. "When I lose crane one, for example, I can't access probably 20,000 square feet of that roof with a crane. So I got a crane that I can drive around on the roof and set glass and steel with."

The Maeda 405C mini-crane works alongside a Genie Z-34/22N boom lift to set steel support structures.

Mori and his crew have used the mini-crane to set secondary steel support structures in tandem with the luffing tower cranes, which place the primary structures. While the main application for the mini-crane is interior work, Mori has used the crane for setting the heavy interior pieces, as well as for gaining access to the portions of the roof that are difficult to reach. Using the crane for a maximum pick of about 3,000 pounds, the operators use the Maeda 405C mini-crane primarily for secondary steel or glass curtain wall panels, as well as a few other jobs like setting stairs.

The fact that the machine runs on tracks also allows Mori and his team additional access. "It runs on tracks so I don't worry about point loading; I don't worry about driving around obstacles on the deck and point loading the deck," Mori said. "Given that it runs on tracks, it can do a full 360° turn on its radius, which you can't do with [another crane]."

Compact advantage

The key factors in the selection of the mini-crane, which the company rents from Hampton, Ga.-based Cherokee Erecting, is the 54-foot boom length, 8,480-pound capacity and the remote control capabilities. With a maximum working radius of 52.4 feet and maximum lifting height of 55.1 feet, the 405C gives Turnberry's crew the capabilities it needs. Mori said that no other mini-crane comes close to the capabilities of the Maeda. "That machine is one of the best ones comparatively," he said. "It gives me the reach that I really needed to get up and past and over the parapet wall with glass, and that's why we ended up using the Maeda."

Cherokee Erecting has had two of the Maeda mini-cranes in its fleet for almost a year now. Not yet a common machine on many jobsites, Wayne Bylsma, Cherokee's president, sees potential for the crane, which is new to the United States. "I knew they'd sold 400 of them the year before in Europe and if there's that type of demand for them in Europe, it's a good niche crane to get it on the ground floor



The Maeda mini-crane helps crews access areas of the roof inaccessible to tower cranes.

for moving forward," he said. Each customer he calls on with the crane sees opportunities for it on various projects. "The more people get exposed to it, they see that it's something they could use," he said.

One benefit of the machine is that it's an electric or diesel machine so it can work inside without fumes—an advantage for a lot of jobs. The company just bid for a job in Atlanta,

Ga., where having the electric machine is an important factor for the project. The Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta also has spoken to Cherokee Erecting about the Maeda mini-crane for projects requiring moving fish at the site.

Bylsma also said the LMI system is a benefit of the mini-crane, as well as the adjustable outriggers. The outriggers allow operators to move into more restricted areas, expanding the opportunities for the machine. The niche machine is typically needed for specific purposes in tight areas. While a significant number of applications are interior jobs, the cranes are being used on roofs with limited access and by glaziers, such as on the Las Vegas job. Most of the mini-crane rentals are at least one to two months in duration.

Not only are more customers interested in trying it and seeing the possibilities, but everyone who has tried it gives it positive reviews, according to Bylsma. "Everybody likes it," Bylsma said. "We've not heard anything negative about it. Of course, nothing's ever cheap enough for anybody, but that's always the case!" ■

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