



MANUFACTURERS

BERKHOF VDL Berkhof Heerenveen celebrated its centenary in December. The company was founded in 1907 under the name Rijtuig in Wagenmakerij Hainje. It began manufacturing buses in 1922 and became part of Berkhof in 1989.

DAIMLER After the recent sale of the Chrysler Group, DaimlerChrysler has changed its name to Daimler AG. Production plants throughout the world will generally be renamed Mercedes-Benz, except for the EvoBus plants. Individual product brands will all be retained, including Mercedes-Benz and Setra buses and coaches in Europe, Mitsubishi Fuso in Japan, and Orion transit buses, Setra motorcoaches and Dodge Sprinter shuttle buses in North America.

EL DETALLE This Argentinian bus builder has closed down and its assets were auctioned in November. As well as tools and equipment, the catalogue listed five completed buses, 159 bodies for OA 101, OA 105, OA 106 models, and 217 chassis. It is not known if the buses will be completed and placed in service.

GEMILANG Gemilang Coachworks is based in Johor, the southern most state in the Malaysian peninsula. The company was set up in 1989 and employs around 75 to 100 people producing an annual output of about 150 buses and coaches. The company has built a large number of transit buses using Volgren kits for Malaysian city bus operators, and is also authorised by BCI of Australia to build BCI designed coaches for domestic markets and for export to surrounding countries. A batch of 200 bodies is in course of delivery to SBS Transit in Singapore. These are supplied CKD and assembled on Scania chassis at ComfortDelgro Engineering's workshops at Defu.

HEULIEZ This Irisbus company has filled a gap in its model range with the launch of the GX427 articulated city bus. Heuliez has not had an articulated bus in its portfolio since it ceased building bodies on the Volvo B10L and B10LA underframes several years ago. The new GX427 is based on the Irisbus Citelis 18 underframe, and features glazed lower panels and centre roof section, and translucent seats, giving the interior a light and airy feeling. The Heuliez model range also comprises the GX127 midibus and GX327 city bus, and the plant also builds the Civis guided bus and Cristalis trolleybus.

IRIZAR Irizar plans to be the first coachbuilder to be present in all five continents by entering the Australian and New Zealand markets, where it hopes to sell about 140 units per year. The company already



The first 10 Gemilang-bodied Scania K230UB buses for SBS Transit have entered service on routes 100 and 174. Bodywork is supplied in CKD form and assembled by ComfortDelgro Engineering. (Lee IY)

has several orders from the two countries, which will begin delivery in early 2008. Irizar, which took time to plan its entry, has had to adapt its vehicles to meet local regulations, including the need for lighter weight. Several coaches manufactured in Brazil were shipped to Australia to obtain the relevant type approval.

MERCEDES-BENZ TURKEY Mercedes-Benz Türk has recently celebrated its 40th anniversary. Founded in Istanbul in 1967 under the name Otomarsan, the company started production of 0302 type buses in 1968 and commenced exports in 1970. Mercedes-Benz Türk produces city buses and coaches at the Hosdere Bus Plant in Istanbul, which was opened in 1995 and produces the Travego, Intouro and Turismo coaches and the Conecto bus. Light, medium and heavy duty trucks are built at the Aksaray Truck Plant in central Anatolia, which commenced production in 1986. In 2006, the company sold 26,900 buses and trucks, an increase of 350% in sales since 2001, and more than 64% of all buses in Turkey were produced by Mercedes-Benz Türk last year. The company exports buses to over 50 countries, mainly in Western Europe.

MILLENNIUM TRANSIT Despite major setbacks, including the loss in April of a \$94 million

contract to supply 289 buses to New Jersey Transit, officials at Millennium Transit say the bus factory should restart production soon to meet a contract to provide 16 buses to the city of Beaumont, Texas. In 2003, Millennium bought the former factory of Volvo subsidiary NovaBus, which once employed 850 people in its plant in Roswell, New Mexico. Millennium builds the RTS bus to the design originally created in the late 1970s by General Motors. The company has found a few buyers including El Paso and Pueblo, Colorado, where the two Millennium buses in the 16-vehicle RTS bus fleet have served very well since their delivery in late 2006.

SPECIALITY BUS MANUFACTURERS This company based in Ozark, Missouri, which launched the Tour Looper double-deck sightseeing coach in 2006 (see BVV147), is now marketing a double-deck commuter bus. There is little technical information on the company's web site <http://sbm-us.com>, but drawings indicate that the three-axle bus has a mid-mounted staircase ascending over the second axle, and a seating capacity of 76, of which 52 are on the upper deck.

TATA Tata Motors is to build a new manufacturing plant in southern India, possible locations being



The new Heuliez GX427 at the GART exhibition in Clermont-Ferrand, with an interior view (below) showing the glazed panels (Thierry Garel)

(Above)
An inside view of the GX427 showing the translucent seats.
(Thierry Garel)



The Temsa Safari HD will be used as the base for the 35-foot TS35 coach to be sold in the USA (Temsa)

Karnataka or Goa. This project is part of the expansion strategy which includes the acquisition of 21% of Spanish bodybuilder Hispano, and agreements with Marcopolo of Brazil. Thanks to these business alliances last year Tata Motors sold 28,000 vehicles worldwide.

TEMSA Frequently cited in these pages, Temsa is based in Ardana in Turkey and is part of the Sabanci group, which comprises over 60 companies including AK Bank, one of the largest independent banks in the country. The company was established in 1984 as an importer of Mitsubishi commercial vehicles and Kamatsu construction equipment. Coach production commenced in 1987 with the Marathon coach body on a Mitsubishi chassis, and Mitsubishi minibuses built under license. In 2000, the company entered the European market, exhibiting the Safir touring coach and Prestij midicoach at the IAA in Frankfurt. By 2008 the company had expanded its range to seven basic models from midicoaches to intercity and high-floor touring coaches, and was nominated Bus Builder of the Year at the Busworld Kortrijk show. Temsa exports around 80% of its large coaches and 30% of its smaller midi-coach models. Having launched its first joint venture in Egypt (see BWW147), Temsa is now looking further afield, having recently exhibited its products at Busworld in Shanghai, and is now to

offer a product in the US. The TS35 is a 38-40 seat 35ft coach based on the Safari model, with a 350 hp Caterpillar C9 engine, Allison B500 gearbox and ZF axles, and will be distributed through Trident Industries of Atlanta. Recent investments have seen the opening of a new research and development facility employing 100 engineers and technicians, as well as a new after-sales centre and parts warehouse.

VOLVO A jury of leading industry journalists from 17 European countries have awarded the Volvo 9700 the title Coach of the Year 2008. Other coaches participating in the three-day test included the Irisbus Magelys, Mercedes-Benz Turismo, Neoplan Cityliner, Noge Titanium and VDL Jonckheere. The 9700 family includes two and three-axle coaches between 10.4 and 15 metres in length, with optional heights of 3.4, 3.6 and 3.8 metres. Both underframe and body are stainless steel, to ensure a long life. The test coach was built in Finland but other members of the 9700 family are built in Wroclaw in Poland.

WRIGHTBUS This company based at Ballymena in Northern Ireland is currently building the first of its order for 50 diesel-electric hybrid Streetcar RTVs for Las Vegas. The 18.6 metre (61 foot) articulated buses have series hybrid drive with an 8.7 litre Cummins ISL engine and Siemens ELFA traction components. The engine is mounted transversely at the extreme rear;

but the electric motors drive the second axle in the front section of the bus, which it is claimed will give better ride characteristics than a "pusher" artic in which the rearmost axle in the trailer section is driven. Inside the three-door bus there are 38 seats and an upright bicycle rack just aft of the articulation. The chassis is produced to Wright's design by Hess, the Swiss trolleybus manufacturer.

YUTONG A new entry to the Bus Rapid Transit market is the "Golden Bullet" from Chinese manufacturer Yutong. The 25-metre Yutong BRT ZK6251G has a streamlined front end which bears a resemblance to the Wrightbus Streetcar. The three-section articulated bus has four doors and a capacity of up to 300 passengers, and the company claims fuel economy savings of 5% to 10%.

TECHNOLOGY

FUEL CELLS Hydrogen and fuel cells have no role as replacements for petrol or diesel in the immediate future, according to James Woolsey, former CIA chief and now chairman of the US Advisory Board of the Clean Fuels Foundation. Speaking at the annual dinner of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, Woolsey backed hybrid electric vehicles as a better technology, but warned against looking to a single solution or decision by governments, concluding that there should be a portfolio of ideas.

BIOFUEL Volkswagen and Daimler have each taken a minority shareholding in Chloren Industries, which is currently building the world's first commercial industrial scale BTL (biomass to liquid) plant at Freiberg in Germany. BTL fuels are synthetic fuels which can be made from straw and waste wood as well as crops specially grown for biomass, and can be used in any Daimler diesel engine without major problems. Mercedes-Benz is also researching NExBTL, which is enriched with hydrogen to give quality and performance characteristics more closely akin to standard diesel fuel.



A three-axle Volvo 9700 in at the IAA exhibition in Hannover in 2006 (Geoff Stephenson)

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