



**Chase scenes are among the most entertaining aspects of action movies, and movie makers work hard to get "one up" on each other and create spectacular chases that involve rapidly moving vehicles, stunning crashes and spectacular explosions. Such was the case with Hollywood's Terminator III: Rise of the Machines movie, which featured a chase scene involving a Demag mobile crane supplied by Champion Crane of Hollywood, CA**

## **Timely repair saves crane from termination**

In the *Terminator III* crane chase scene a robot character drives off in the 165 ton Demag AC 395 in an attempt to capture and destroy another robot, played by Arnold Schwarzenegger. The storyline goes that the first robot can hack into and control the computerised mechanisms of machines, allowing it to drive and operate the crane. In its wake the crane leaves crushed cars, downed electrical poles and demolished buildings.

This is not common duty for such a crane and the starring Demag almost lost its role due to damage it sustained during a practice run made by a stunt driver a few days before the spectacular chase scene was to be shot. Major repairs were needed after the crane was flipped and rolled over.

A decision had to be taken on whether to repair or replace the crane. Wheco technicians were dispatched to assess the damage and to see if they could fix it in time for the filming sequence. Firemen's Fund, the insurer of the machine, hoped for the best as the film maker contracts stipulated a stiff financial penalty if the machine was not available at a certain time for filming. The timeframe for getting a different machine, shipping it to Los Angeles, painting it and retrofitting it for the filming was not a cost effective option.

"After inspecting the crane, which had flipped twice, we determined it could be fixed," said Jack Huffsmith, general manager of Wheco's Los Angeles division. "The unique thing is that when it flipped, it bounced so high that the boom didn't even touch the ground." Despite that, one side of the crane was badly damaged, with the sheet metal, oil tanks and cabs badly crushed. Much of the carrier sheet metal was crunched too, Huffsmith said.

Wheco was given two weeks to get the crane to its shop, repair it and get it back to the movie set, which is an old Boeing aircraft manufacturing facility. "We did it in 11 days," said Huffsmith, who explained that to do it the team worked 18 hour days. Luckily the main "movie component" modifications were not badly damaged. For its role in the movie, the crane had been modified with roll cages in both cabs, and the addition of steel bumpers also helped.

Experience gained in the restoration of hundreds of cranes that have sustained similar damage by being rolled or flipped on construction sites helped the company to produce a suitably repaired and "camera ready" crane.

Dave Wood, Wheco president, commented that while no job is "routine," the "Terminator" project was certainly an interesting one. "This repair, while not typical in that it involved a crane with a starring role in a movie, demonstrates the necessity of our services." It shows that "insurers, contractors and even manufacturers are realising that the repair versus replacement question can be answered with 'repair.'" ■