

■ **Verti-Crete, Sandy UT, 84091, USA**

## Standing the wall business on end

**Stone-like finishes in concrete have become increasingly common on one side of a wall, but to precast one with that look on both sides seemed an impossible task. Fortunately, Brent Baker and Dave Balls, the founders of Verti-Crete, got**

**gravity to work in their favor and came up with an innovative system that not only works for them, it's working for precasters all over the U.S., Europe and now Africa.**

After years in the business of sand/gravel and ready mix, Brent and Dave decided to branch out into precast concrete. Their first product was a mold for precast window wells. Unsure if the market would accept this new product they pressed forward calling the new company "O Well Precast" declaring their motto to be, "If you don't like our window wells, oh well!" From decorative window wells they expanded into wall panels. "Customers seemed to love the walls but kept asking us to put a pattern on the other side as well," said Dave. Using a liner and a steel bed was all it took to get a single-sided panel but doing something with the other side was the challenge. Rolling or stamping a pattern on the back was better than

nothing but it still couldn't produce a design as authentic as the molded side.

Brent, Dave and joined now by Dan Balls - Dave's brother who had since joined as a partner. They realized that the only way to get the same molded finish on both sides would be to stand the form up and pour it vertically. They set out to come up with an effective way to do just that.

They had to come up with a system that could not only handle the weight and pressure of 40,000 to 80,000 lbs. of concrete but also keep it watertight. They went through several iterations in research and development in order to get it right. They finally did. They came up with a full

size gang form they called a "Panel Stacker System" in which panels are stacked vertically, back to back and contained in a steel frame structure. Each wall is separated by a steel and polyurethane divider sheet that gives each wall an "A" quality molded stone pattern on both sides.

To go along with the new panel system the company developed a Post Stacker System on a similar premise. Pouring a precast post in a vertical mold would allow for a similar stone pattern on all sides of the post. The company, however, went one step further. They developed a proprietary method of wrapping the polyurethane liner all the way around the





corners, creating a column that looked and felt like real stone on all sides.

The new precast columns were installed on top of preformed footings and secured by rebar. Not only was the new method more stable and forgiving, it made the walls three times as fast to install. A crew of three people could now install over 350 lineal feet per day.

From this innovation and the desire of other precasters to be able to use O Well's new system, Verti-Crete was established in 2002. In 2004, Mike Sharp, joined the company as an investor and Vice President of Business Development. Mike revamped some of the business operations and marketing strategies, giving the company a new look and propelling it to a new level. Today Verti-Crete (who's name originates from "Vertical Concrete")

has become an international force that's turning the precast industry, and their wall panels, on end (literally!).

While the initial objective was to produce a double-sided wall, the System also reduced labor costs and saved a great deal of space. As Mike puts it, "What used to take a football field full of steel beds can now be produced in a 10' x 14' area." The space-savings alone can mean the difference in being competitive for many precasters around the world where production space is at a premium.

### **Verti-Crete's unique system**

The key to the system's efficiency lies in the System's unique design. Mike explains the process: "The form is self-supporting, with the strength coming from the heavy-duty steel frame around the perimeter.



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The steel and polyurethane divider sheets provide the molded stone pattern - the sides and bottom gaskets provide a water-tight seal. The panels are poured at the same time allowing the bulk of the force to be handled by the outside frame. This does away with any need for tie rods (common in foundation walls) that leave unsightly holes what would need to be patched afterwards. The double-sided pattern is what we really wanted, but it's the system's efficiency that knocks this one out of the park." The entire process takes about 30 minutes, and when it's over, there are 8-10 double-sided walls.

Today, Verti-Crete has one patent, and several other patents pending. The company is licensing its technology to various precasters who use the mold/form systems in their respective areas. There are currently 18 Verti-Crete licensed pro-

ducers around the world, most of whom are in the United States (including Puerto Rico). Last year, however, Verti-Crete welcomed two new licensees in Europe, Ruggiero in Potenza, Italy, and Carlow Precast Tanks in Carlow, Ireland. This year, Verti-Crete announced that it has expanded its international presence even further with the establishment of Magest Algeria as its first licensee in Africa.

### Algerian Project

Magest Algeria is a subsidiary of Magest Inc., a full-service, Canadian-based, consulting and contracting organization which provides a broad range of architectural, engineering, management and construction services all over the globe. Magest has completed several construction projects in Algeria but plans on expanding its presence there with the

addition of a production facility in the country. The facility will produce a variety of concrete products including Verti-Crete walls and columns.

"What prompted our decision to sign on with Verti-Crete was a project we're working on for Groupe Mehri," said Gary Martin, President of Magest Inc. "We simply showed our client Verti-Crete's walls and he knew it was the right match for their project." Groupe Mehri is owned by the Mehri family, one of the most influential industrialist families in Algeria. Under the direction of Djamel Mehri, the company's Chief Operating Officer, Groupe Mehri has grown both in revenue and diversity. The family's broad range of investments includes soft drink bottling plants, breweries, consumer goods manufacturing, hotels, real estate, agriculture, transportation and travel related services.



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The first project for which Magest will be producing and installing Verti-Crete walls is a 110,000 square foot shopping center in Algiers. This will be the first of three such mega shopping centers the Mehri Family plans to build in the near future with the next two being in Oran and Constantine.

Additional projects, still in the works, include a 750,000 square foot multi-use mega-complex. The complex will sit on 50 acres of land and include a shopping center, a sports complex a 90,000 sf indoor

water park and an office building for those not easily distracted by all the entertainment around them.

These initial projects will serve as an outstanding introduction for Verti-Crete's walls in Algeria, but Magest will not stop there. They already have plans to expand into Morocco and Tunisia and Libya.

Much success has come out of the once-struggling sand and gravel pit near Salt Lake City, Utah. Verti-Crete is proof that

solutions to small problems can become big business opportunities. ■

Further information:



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# New coupler has interlocked joint according to DIN 1045-1 firmly in its grasp

**Prefabricated couplers are used to simplify the construction process. The coupler boxes usually found on the market are designed in such a way that after stripping from the mould the reinforcement joint is released by bending the legs. The cri-**

**tical advantage of the Comax reinforcement joint that is presented here is reduced assembly and stripping time compared to conventional reinforcement. Furthermore the formwork does not have to be drilled for further reinforcement.**

With conventional joints, the ability to transmit shearing forces was often neglected to a great extent. Only in the revised version of the regulations in DIN 1045-1 was there a clear classification of the force absorption into transverse and longitudinal directions, with a subdivision into smooth, rough and interlocked. As one of the market leading suppliers of shuttering accessories, this was reason enough for Betomax to upgrade the Comax coupler.

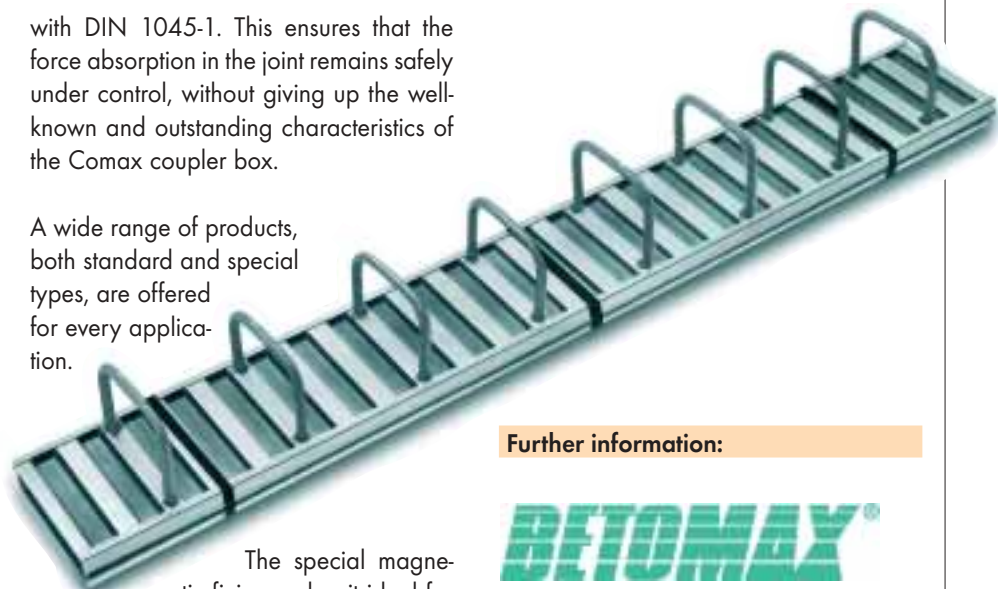
with DIN 1045-1. This ensures that the force absorption in the joint remains safely under control, without giving up the well-known and outstanding characteristics of the Comax coupler box.

A wide range of products, both standard and special types, are offered for every application.

By deliberately changing the profile in both the longitudinal and transverse direction, the new couplers, designated Comax Q-Q and Comax Q-L, are positioned as the coupler that offers optimum force transmission in each direction.

Comax Q-Q is particularly suitable for transverse loads at right angles to the joint and Comax Q-L for transverse loads along the joint. Both versions attain the "interlocked" classification in accordance

The special magnetic fixing makes it ideal for use with steel formworks. Not only that, but the stable cover means short stripping times. ■



Further information:



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