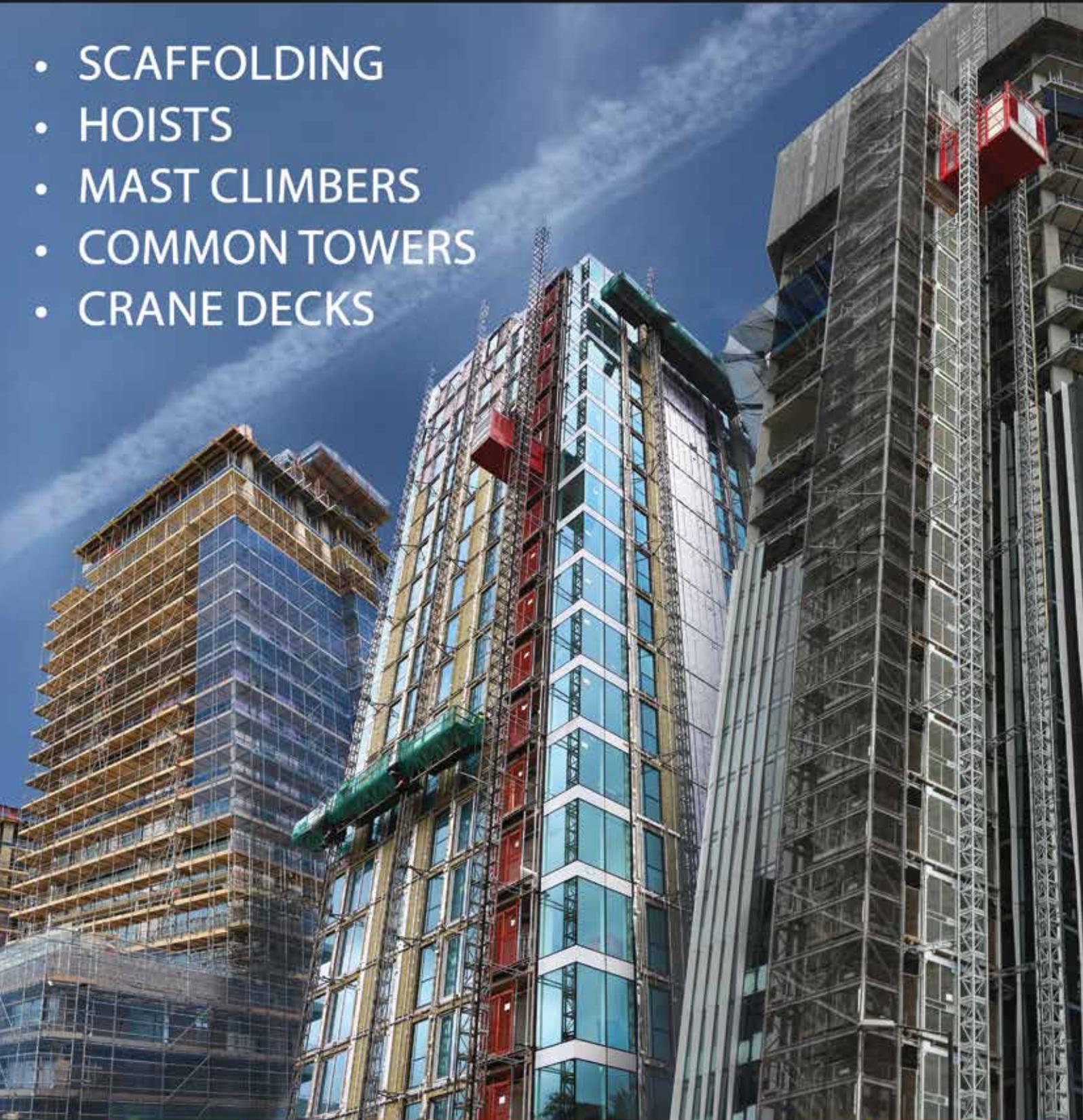


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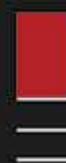
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Slow progress

The IPAF summit in Dublin 10 years ago saw a presentation extolling the virtues of mastclimbers, focussing on contractor benefits as well as profitability potential for rental companies and scaffold contractors. It was somewhat surprising given that the first mastclimbers had been introduced around 50 years earlier, and yet they had made little impact on becoming the façade access product of choice - despite being most convenient, safest and efficient access platform for the vast majority of the larger contracts.

Unfortunately a decade later and little has changed in terms of market penetration, although some progress has been made with the equipment more popular than ever before. The mastclimber however remains one of the best kept secrets in the work at height market.

In the UK the Grenfell Tower fire disaster in London in June 2017 has had a significant impact on the market, initially as building operators rushed to remove similar cladding, but it also triggered a total review of façade cladding, closely observed by authorities in other markets. The initial investigation into the disaster looked likely to result in the replacement of combustible cladding on hundreds or even thousands of buildings over four or five storeys - the perfect type of contact for mastclimbers and hoists. However as with all public enquiries in the UK it may take years before the findings are likely to be published and little has been done or decided following the initial flurry of a few towers that had existing cladding removed as a precaution. Sadly the same has been true of the London Fire Service, organising larger truck mounted platforms.

BFT acquired

Not long after the Grenfell incident private equity firm Equistone Partners Europe acquired a majority stake in UK-based mastclimber rental company/contractor BFT Mastclimbing. Founded in 1997 as a façade scaffold contractor under the name Boards, Fittings & Tubes, since 2005 the company has been moving increasingly moving its focus towards becoming a leading mastclimber supplier and now runs a fleet of around 650 heavy, medium and light duty mastclimbing work platforms - mostly from Spanish manufacturer Alba - with platform capacities of up to 5,000kg.

One of its latest additions is the lightweight BFT90 Mini Climber which can be used in confined work spaces where larger equipment may struggle to fit. The company says that it is ideal for applications such as painting and window replacements to brickwork and repairs and can be installed as a single or twin platform. The base unit measures just 900mm by one metre so can be moved easily down walkways and alleys, its lightweight components allow it to be loaded



The lightweight BFT90 Mini Climber which can be used in confined work spaces where larger equipment may struggle to fit



and delivered to site by a pick-up truck or light van, needing only a pallet truck to move the base into position.

In single mast form it has a 90 metre maximum height, platform lengths from 2.4 to 6.8 metres with widths of between 800mm and 1.8 metres, with a lift capacity of up to 1,000kg. The twin mast version has the same maximum height and width but offers platform lengths of up to 22.6 metres, with a maximum capacity of 2,100kg. BFT believes the Mini Climber offers something different for industrial construction, renovation and maintenance projects, being easier to transport and with much shorter erection and dismantling times, as well as being cost effective and with minimal visual impact to the building when erected and operating. The BFT90 is aimed at the 'small works' sector projects such as low-level apartment refurbishments, window

replacements, facia's and soffits etc. For this type of work it compares very favourably with traditional scaffold.

The company's largest mastclimber is the BFT150 which can reach maximum heights of up to 250 metres with platform lengths of up to 37.8 metres in twin mast format. With a five tonne maximum platform capacity it can handle heavy equipment or materials along with personnel. When working in single mast configuration, platform lengths of up to 13.65 metres are possible with platform capacity of 1,200kg.

Chief executive Robin Head said: "We are staunch believers in the benefits provided by our mastclimbing platforms on projects ranging from short duration maintenance work to complex, long term builds requiring 50 plus



The BFT150 has a platform length of up to 37.8 metres in twin mast format

machines. The investment from Equistone is providing a major boost to our scale and capacity to deliver a lower cost, safer and more flexible alternative to traditional scaffolding."

Yorkshire Hoist acquired

Shortly after Equistone moved into BFT, Huddersfield-based Yorkshire Hoist was acquired by Eric Jones, chairman and co-owner of UK based mastclimber and suspended platform specialist

Adastra Access, although the two business will remain as separate, unconnected businesses. Founded in 2002, Yorkshire Hoist rents transport platforms and hoists to the construction industry in the North of England. The company has invested in expanding its fleet to include conventional passenger/goods hoists and heavier duty transport platforms.

Steven Wright of Yorkshire Hoist said: "We are just starting to source some new hoists and the type



The Scanclimber Snake is a hinged platform system with each of its maximum of eight sections adjusted by more than 45 degrees

and number we buy will depend on customers' needs but we see the market requirements for larger transplant platforms and passenger goods hoists is growing."

European merger for Fraco

At the end of last year Canadian mastclimber manufacturer Fraco reached an agreement to merge its UK and French subsidiaries - Fraco UK and Fraco Sasu - with Spanish sales and rental company Turboiber Elevación - which operates from three locations in Spain - Madrid, Barcelona and Seville - in order to expand its sales and market penetration across Europe.

The combined Turboiber/Fraco fleet includes around 1,000 aerial work platforms available to rent from six locations across three European

countries.

Fraco has been operating in France and the UK for some time but has struggled in recent years to make further progress in other parts of Europe. While the merger is a step in the right direction, the larger business will have greater resources to expand in markets such as the Benelux region where it has two dealers, Germany where it has one regional dealer or the Nordic region and Italy where it has no presence at all.

And as we went to press Fraco acquired Spanish mastclimber and hoist manufacturer Saltec/Torgar.

The deal includes all products marketed under the Torgar brand, including construction hoists, mastclimbing work platforms and



Fraco has merged its UK and French subsidiaries with Spanish sales and rental company Turboiber Elevación and acquired Spanish mastclimber and hoist manufacturer Saltec/Torgar

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Alimak's new MC 650 mastclimber



transport platforms, along with its 10,000 square metre production facility in Zaragoza, Spain. Fraco says that the acquisition will allow it to increase production capacity and accelerate its planned manufacturing activities in Europe. Torgar was established in the 1950s to make wheelbarrows, pulleys and concrete mixers. Saltec turned its attention to hoists during the 1960's and 70's. Today, marketed under the Torgar brand, it supplies cable and pinion hoists, personnel elevators, transport platforms and work platforms as well as continuing to manufacture concrete mixers.

Tractel takes Scanclimber

More recently, temporary and permanent suspended access equipment provider Tractel acquired Finnish mastclimber manufacturer Scanclimber. In addition to acquiring Scanclimber's rack and pinion technology and mastclimber products, Tractel is looking to benefit from Scanclimber's Nordic customer/dealer base and a local management team. Strategically the move is interesting as it follows the massive move into the suspended platform and permanent platform installation market by mastclimber and hoist specialist Alimak at the end of 2016 with the acquisition of Façade Access and Avanti.

Tractel chief executive Philippe Gastineau said: "The transaction offers the opportunity for Tractel to grow in the attractive mastclimbing work platform and the rack and pinion hoist segments. It will also strongly increase the group's presence in the Nordics."

Scanclimber was originally a Polish company, established by the state in 1964 as Zreimb. In 1967 the company purchased a manufacturing license from Alimak for personal and material lifts. When the business was privatised it changed its name to Fada Gniezno and then in 1995 began manufacturing mastclimbing work platforms for Scaninter Nokia. Scaninter Nokia acquired a majority stake in Fada in 1999 and changed the name to Scanclimber. Scaninter Nokia acquired all of the shares in 2005 and in 2008 changed the group name to Scanclimber.

BrandSafway steps up mastclimber and hoist presence

Last month US suspended platform and scaffold company BrandSafway acquired Texas-based hoist sales and rental company Century Elevators - the Pega hoist and Böcker dealer. Based in Webster, Texas, it covers the oil & gas, petrochemical, mining and energy industry, as well as the more traditional commercial construction and infrastructure industries. The deal is aimed at increasing the Safway's powered access revenues as well as its presence on the Gulf Coast.

In the UK BrandSafway acquired Lyndon Scaffolding and its subsidiary Taylor's Hoists earlier this year. SGB is a significant player in the UK mastclimber market,

The new single or twin car Scando 650 FC-S features an increased payload, a larger car size, better ride comfort and more intelligence



A Torgar/Saltec mastclimber.



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having incorporated Mastclimbers, a leading pioneer in the mastclimber market at the end of 2004. SGB and Lyndon has now merged to become Lyndon/SGB

New products

While there has been a fair bit of activity in the marketplace, we have seen few new products launched, although hopefully we will see some new developments at Bauma. Market leader Alimak has plans to launch several new models. The new products include an upgraded Alimak Scando 650 FC-S hoist and the new MC 650 mastclimber with a 19 metre platform in single mast configuration rising to more than 40 metres in twin mast configuration. Maximum platform capacities are 4,000kg and 7,100kg respectively. The mastclimber uses the same mast as the Alimak Scando 650 hoist and can be tailored for corners, curves and angles. The MC 650 work platform can be used on either a mobile chassis or base frame.

Alimak says the high capacity and versatility of the MC 650 makes it suitable for bricklaying, curtain walling, insulation and window installation and the handling of heavy or cumbersome materials, meeting the growing demand for mastclimbing work platforms with higher lifting capacities. It is also possible to combine the new MC 650 mastclimber components with existing Hek MCM modular platform components, allowing existing fleet owners to fully utilisation equipment across ranges.

Alimak hoist

The new single or twin car configuration Scando 650 FC-S features an increased payload, a larger car size, better ride comfort and more intelligence. The 650 FC-S upgrade has a capacity of 3,500kg per car an increase of

300kg. The hoist car height has also been raised by 500mm to 2.8 metres, increasing the total load space volume by 22 percent. It also has better ride comfort with lower operating noise and more intelligent operation, including the new landing call system AliCall which offers wireless communication between the hoist car and landings allowing the operator to view the designated landings on an LCD screen in the hoist requiring fewer manual operations by the hoist operator. Alimak says AliCall lowers the installation costs by up to 30 percent on a 250 metre hoist set up through quicker installation time and less hard wiring.

To achieve the capacity upgrade Alimak's engineers have redesigned the hoist concept having a five metre car length as standard. The load carrying car frame and floor have been reinforced and a new safety device has been developed to handle larger weight. New intelligence in the Alimak Overload Sensing System measures the weight of the hoists trailing cables, ensuring that the correct weight of the hoist is updated in real time no matter the vertical position of the hoist. Speeds of up to 100 metres a minute are available. A new smart Frequency Converter ensures maximum speed of the hoist independent of payload or any voltage drop. It has an improved power supply/torque limitation function, so the hoist does not stop but automatically adapts the speed in case of a voltage drop.

Alimak is also extending its transport platform range - suitable for both passengers and materials - with the addition of the single mast TPL 800, a five person hoist measuring 3.2 metres by one metre with a lifting height of 100 metres. Lift speed is 12 metres a minute in

The single mast TPL 800, is a five person hoist measuring 3.2 metres by one metre with a lifting height of 100 metres



passenger mode and double that for materials. One advantage is the possibility to open the 3.2 metre platform side with bi-folding doors for loading and unloading purposes. The enhanced mast design allows tie distances of up to 7.5 metres to be achieved, giving the ability to span three storeys of a building or scaffold. The tie pipes are fixed on the mast sections via a double frame arrangement giving greater rigidity to the masts whilst still being quick and simple to install.

The drive unit is designed to provide efficient operation with minimal wear and long service life. The TPL 800 is equipped with a proven safety device that comes into operation by stopping the power to the platform if the normal speed is exceeded. The platform also has a built in overload protection system.

Geda

German hoist manufacturer Geda is also planning a number of Bauma launches, but is keeping details until the show, they include a new and improved rack and pinion universal mast system for its hoists. It will also launch an all-new MultiLift passenger and goods hoist which it says will completely update the concept. The company is also focusing much of its Bauma efforts on new tower crane hoists, both internal and external.

New mast driven lift

For a lower level lift - up to four metres and 3,000kg capacity - in industrial applications, Sweden-based lift specialist Hymo has expanded its range of mast-driven lifts (MDLs) with the new 1,500kg capacity MDL 015350-1S with a 1.65 by 1.2 metre loading platform it has a lift height of up to 3.5 metres. Modular parts mean that no crane

or special vehicles are needed for transportation and installation can be completed by a two person team in a single day.

Hymo's new 3.5 metre mast driven lift.



A Hydro Mobile circular mastclimber



A Hydro Mobile circular mastclimber



A Geda Multilift P12 material and passenger hoist



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Carrying out annual maintenance on an 80 metre high tapered calciner tower at the Lafarge Canada Exshaw cement plant in Alberta requires a costly shutdown every year. Layers of thick scale builds up on the tower walls during the cement making process. These can be several inches thick, in pieces as large as cars weighing up to 70kg which can loosen and fall from great heights. Proper maintenance and descaling of the tower walls is therefore essential before safe entry from below is possible.

The company has previously used

a bosun chair to descale the tower, but it typically takes three people 168 hours to complete the job when working from the suspended chairs. This meant the plant has shut down for more than two weeks in order to complete the work to take place.

Having worked with AGF Access Group on a number of projects, Lafarge asked if it could provide a better, more efficient solution. Engineers at AGF's project consulting division - Special Projects Group - identified the need for a high capacity suspended platform to provide effective access to descale the interior of the tapering tower.

The group working in collaboration with the company's Winsafe division designed and delivered a suspended platform within three months, that had a transformable shape, that was square at the narrower top of the tower and could be altered modularly in mid air to form a circular platform to meet the walls of the widening tower on the way down.

The custom-designed Winsafe suspended platform is 2.74 metres square with a 1,800kg capacity and can be adjusted into a 4.27 to 4.88 metre circle with a 1,360kg capacity providing access to the different

sections of the calciner tower. The platform's motor meant it could travel 10.6 metres a minute up the 80 metre tower. The platform was designed to be 200mm from the tower wall at all times, while holding eight people, their materials and tools.

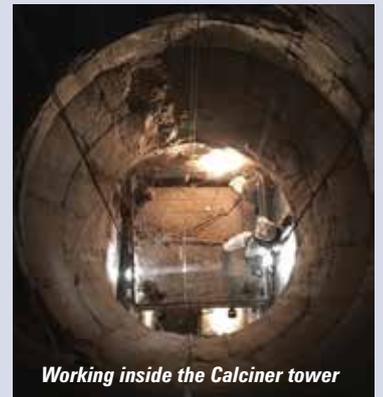
Andrew Fosshem, Lafarge production coordinator said: "The Winsafe suspended platform has given us a new, faster way to descale. It has cut the time for the job by 66 percent. We can get this same work done now in only four days which is a huge improvement."



The custom-designed Winsafe suspended platform is 2.74 metres square with a 1,800kg capacity and can be adjusted into a 4.27 to 4.88 metre circle



The circular suspended platform



Working inside the Calciner tower


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Quiet renovation in Frankfurt

Mitigating noise on construction sites is becoming an increasingly important issue. Activities such as drilling concrete has not been a major concern in the past, but that is changing. In Frankfurt, Germany the increasing need for residential buildings in the centre is resulting in the conversion of office blocks, such as the 19 storey Blue Horizon office block which is being developed into a 120 apartment tower. Located a stone's throw from the famous exhibition centre the remodelling involved several challenges, one of which was reducing the level noise generated during the conversion.

The conversion process involved removing the old, heavy precast concrete elements and transporting them on the platform to a storage area before drilling hundreds of holes to add structural elements and insulation. Finally new large windows were installed, and brick tiles placed onto the new façade.

Mastclimber manufacturer

Scanclimber played a major role in the redevelopment, supplying a total of 10 Scanclimber eight tonne capacity SC8000 and five tonne SC5000 mastclimbers. To minimise the number of anchor points on the façade, fixing points on the beams inside the buildings were accessed through the window openings, removing them as the windows were installed. To reduce the level of noise - particularly when drilling in the concrete - the mastclimbers were fitted with 2.8 metre high wooden panels - the height between each floor - lined with noise absorbing material.



The conversion process involved removing the old, heavy precast concrete elements, fitting larger windows and brick tiles



In Frankfurt, Germany, the 19 storey Blue Horizon office block which is being redeveloped into a 120 apartment tower



To reduce the level of construction noise the mastclimbers were fitted with 2.8 metre high wooden panels - the height between each floor - lined with noise absorbing material

See Page 52 for profile on specialist access supplier Brogan Group

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