



Mix and batch

Today's self-propelled concrete mixers have come a long way since the cobbled-together open-top machines – 'transit mixers', as the Americans called them, which comprised an American-built flatbed often being used as the basic vehicle - used to build SSA's independence structures. Today's purpose-built sleek yellow machines, as supplied by local distributors like Pan Mixers SA, have spill-free loading buckets and rotating drums independently powered by sophisticated hydraulics, often driven in turn by a reliable Perkins or Yanmar diesel, incorporate four-wheel drive with servo-assisted steering on the front axle - and often include a high-pressure power washer, too.

Building with purpose-built facilities

These machines are designed to collect materials from a purpose-built central-mix batching plant – now widely found in Africa, but unheard of back in the 1960s – but can be securely loaded separately and mix en route when the need arises, as when working in an up-country location.

Old or new, the special advantage of one of today's self-loading machines is that the materials arrive on site in ready-to-pour state, which means that load deliveries can be accurately scheduled to keep up with the workforce and their plant on the ground. Special qualities to look for, when purchasing any purpose-built self-loading cement

or concrete mixing system of the type widely shown at this year's bauma exhibition, include:

- Full mixing ability, both in transit and while waiting on arrival, to ensure maximum concrete strength.
- Automatic closing mechanism to prevent loss of carefully-portioned cement, sand and aggregates.
- Fully moveable in both on and off-road conditions.
- Built-in loading bucket.
- Drum rotation by hydrostatic transmission.
- Guaranteed stability under all conditions of loading. This often involves front mounting of a large-capacity water tank and an automatic warning system.
- Digital mix-control displays, either in the cab or at the delivery chute, or both.
- A clean comfortable cab with reversible seat.
- High-capacity electrical and hydraulic systems matched to the output of the prime mover.
- 'Dump all round' ability from the chute, typically up to 2,400 from the direction of travel.
- Availability of a nationwide network of service workshops with 24/7 access to international spare parts supply.
- A trade-in arrangement. ■