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From left to right: Russ Smith (Modern Machinery), Ron Hait (Nicholson), "Lucky" Lawrence, operator (Rice Logging), Bob Rice (Rick Logging), Matt Pappin, Brand Manager (Modern Machinery), Doug Rice (Rick Logging), Rich Dupois (Modern Machinery).

Back in Action

First Madill 3800 in Three Years Delivered to Rice Logging

By Bob Bruce

At 8 a.m. it was still a little chilly at the 3,000-foot elevation on the coastal foothills outside of Eugene, Ore., but for Russ Smith of Modern Machinery it could be a raging blizzard and he'd still be a happy guy. Formerly an employee of Madill (before they went bankrupt) but now working for Modern Machinery, Russ was milling around a patch of Weyerhaeuser tree farm property, along with a half dozen or so other folks, to welcome the arrival of the first Madill 3800C to be manufactured and sold in three years.

It had been a long road getting to that point, according to Russ. "In the beginning, Madill bought Thunderbird. Then three years ago on April Fool's Day, Madill shut their company down. Shortly thereafter Modern Machinery

bought what was left of Madill. Earlier this year, Modern Machinery of Missoula, Mont., sold Madill to Nicholson Manufacturing out of Sidney, BC. Then this April, three years later to the day that the original Madill shut their doors, the first new 3800C rolled off the assembly line.”

A Workhorse for Rice Logging

Taking delivery of the new 3800C was Doug Rice of Rice Logging, Sweet Home, Ore. Rice Logging is a family-run business started by Doug’s father Bob Rice and his wife Rose. Today it encompasses the entire family, including the children Chris, Jeannette, Dan and Doug.

“The Vice President of the company is my brother Chris,” says Doug. “And both Chris and Dan are very much involved in day to day decisions while I’m out running some of the equipment.”

Madill equipment has always had a strong following in the logging community, but the Rice boys have a real thing for Madill iron. “We have six Madill 3800C’s including this one,” says Doug. “Our operators really like the Madill. We do a lot of shovel logging and as far as moving logs it does the best job. It’s got really good tractor power for climbing up the hills, and it has really good visibility.”

Not only that, but the Madill is pretty much a no-frills workhorse and Doug appreciates that. “The only computer on it is on the engine, other than that it’s basically all manual so there’s not much to break down, and most of the things that do break we can take care of.”

“Also, it runs a lot of oil so if you want to run an attachment on it, it’s got plenty of oil for it. It’s also got the highest swing to it of any machine in the industry.”

The high oil reserve capacity of the Madill, combined with its reliability in the brush, is especially useful for the way Rice runs their equipment. “One of our 3800’s has over 20,000 hours on it, still with the original pumps. We’ve only changed the pumps on one of our 3800’s and that was one we bought at an auction so you don’t know its history. Because the pumps have such a large output, after we’re done using this one as a yoder we’ll take off the grapple and put on a processor.”



When it comes to processors, Doug’s favorite iron to team up with his Madills is a Waratah. “So far we’ve been running Waratah dangle heads on our Madills so we’ll probably stick with a 624 because of the weight.”

Rice Logging runs four tower sides and two shovel sides. Most of their work is on contract for Weyerhaeuser, which means most of their jobs are either north of their Springfield home base, up in the Dallas/Falls City area, or south around the Cottage Grove area.

Keeping it Alive

Of course there wouldn’t be a brand new 3800C for the guys to marvel at if Modern Machinery hadn’t stepped up to the plate a few years ago and purchased Madill’s assets rather than let the company fade away into nothingness. Lamont Cantrell, VP of Sales for Modern Machinery remembers those discussions, and, it was really just a matter of wanting to look out for their customers.

“Being a distributor in a part of North America that has a large logging economy, and with Madill being a very respected name and the fact that we had so many customers who already owned Madill equipment, we saw an opportunity to enhance our relationship with our customers,” he says. “Also, we felt that the Madill still had a future but it had just been a victim of the economy.”

So Modern Machinery didn't just buy the existing inventory of repair parts, for example. They purchased the whole shooting match: the name, inventory, engineering drawing, intellectual property, etc. They even kept all of the key Madill employees on board.

Today Modern Machinery is a distributor, not a manufacturer, and Lamont is clear that there were never really any serious plans for Modern to suddenly enter the manufacturing business. "The market was so bad at the time we purchased Madill that we wouldn't have wanted to bring the product back into manufacturing anyway. Our initial goals were to support the existing base and then maybe when the market got better or an opportunity came along, we would think about how we might bring it back."

Bringing it to Life

While a number of equipment manufacturers approached Modern with proposals to build the Madill line under license, the company with the most sensible plan was Nicholson who wanted to buy the company from Modern and bring the product line back into full manufacturing.

Nicholson has been around since 1948 and is a respected manufacturer of debarking equipment used worldwide in the logging industry. It also happens that they are located in Sidney, BC — not all that far from the Madill facilities in Nanaimo, also on Vancouver Island.

Ron Hait is the North American Capital Sales Manager for Nicholson. He was also present at the delivery and unveiling of the new 3800C and as he sees it adding loaders and bunchers to their line of debarkers makes a lot of sense.

"They're all just different parts of the forest products industry," he says. "Both require heavy manufacturing and that's what we do. It gives us the opportunity to put more gear through our manufacturing facility."

"We saw some real value in bring the brand back. Madill was a strong brand, it worked, and they made great gear. So why reinvent the wheel? We have a lot of other interest and we're looking to bring back the whole line in a logical sequence. The next one will be another loader, the 2850. Eventually we will be building loaders, feller bunchers, and yarders."

The 3800C was the first iron to come off the assembly line primarily because that was the machine that had the most demand says Ron, and Lamont agrees. "The 3800 was the most sought-after product by the customer base that we've been talking to for the last several years. If they had ten on the ground right now we could sell several of them today and they could sell another five or six in Canada. The 3800 is a really popular machine both here in the Pacific Northwest as well as British Columbia."