

## Smart Operators

Ian Rose claims he hasn't had a good look at the inside of Yilgarn Drill and Blast co-conspirator Wayne Pettingill's new Atlas Copco SmartRig ROC D9C drill rig, which is probably the way the latter wants to keep things.



Pettingill likes the new operator's cabin on the SmartRig he has working at Widgiemooltha, about an hour and fifteen minutes south of Kalgoorlie in Western Australia.

Rose has Yilgarn Drill and Blast's first ROC D9C drilling granite for Yarnell Contracting at Northam, east of Perth.

They are far enough apart, says Pettingill, so there is no mistaking whose machine is whose.

Yilgarn Drill and Blast has had the SmartRig at Northam for four months. It spent about eight months in iron ore country working for Rock on Ground, at Rio Tinto's Hope Downs mine in Pilbara, where according to Rose it performed exceptionally well. That performance hasn't dimmed at Northam, where it is involved in producing armour rock for transport to a Fremantle wharf construction project.

"It's just turned over 4500 engine hours and has drilled over 100,000 drill metres," said Rose.

"We've just had the rock drill in for its 2000-hour rebuild and it's still on its original piston and chuck driver. They're not supposed to go over 1000 hours so the rock drill is actually performing exceptionally well with the new drill control system which seems to be saving all the normal wear parts in it. We're seeing double the life out of the rock drill which is bloody fantastic. "Yeah, we've still got the old-style cab [on the first unit]," Rose said. "I wouldn't say it affects the performance of the rig. I've worked it out to ... it's done 2000 impact hours and 100,000 lineal metres, so it's averaged 50m an hour. That part of it is going really well. We're still up in the 90-95% availability range."

Pettingill said there was no jealousy from his business partner over the cabin upgrade.

"Not yet," he said.

"The rig with the older cabin was still the first [SmartRig ROC D9C]

of its kind in Australia so we were sort of a guinea pig there. But with fantastic support and back-up from Atlas Copco we are very happy with the new technology.”

Atlas Copco designed its new SmartRig cabin as the “next generation workplace” for operators, with the focus on cabin space and ergonomics. The design changes led to improved visibility, in turn boosting safety, and more free space around the operator. Some smart storage solutions were added, and the cabin door was moved forward to improve ease of access. “I find it heaps better,” Pettingill said. “With the old cabin you had to step into the cab from the side of the machine and ... you’d sit on the seat and swivel yourself into a driving position. With the new cab you still get into the side of the machine but the door’s been moved forward and you can actually walk into the machine and walk around the seat and then sit down. It’s a lot more user-friendly, particularly for the bigger drillers.

“To look at them [SmartRigs] they are different, but drilling-wise they’re exactly the same machine.

“With our other rig the wear on the drifters has just been impeccable but we haven’t got the hours on this one yet to have its first service and see how the pistons are working and those sorts of things, in the drifter. But on the first one we’ve just had it rebuilt again, sealed again, and we haven’t had a piston go yet and it’s got 4000 hours on it. Even the drive chuck inside the drifter ... we haven’t had a new one of them either and you normally get about 1500 hours out of them.

“The cabin is not so much about rig performance as operator piece of mind. You’ve got a bit more room to move around and the operator is a bit happier in the machine. It’s easier to get in and out of and all those sorts of things, so ... it makes the machine probably a little bit easier to operate.” Rose no doubt would have agreed with Pettingill’s final assertion that “it’s the person operating the machine who plays a big part in its performance”.



*The layout of the new SmartRig cabin.*

Visit

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