



CAT® 259D3 COMPACT TRACK LOADER AND CAT® 246D3 SKID STEER



most of my career, the Cat 259D3 was my first choice to test. In the pool installation and landscaping game, this machine would be precisely what I would be looking to purchase if I was in the market right now. However, after spending the day in the 246D3 and 259D3, both machines have their distinct advantages, along with the common features and technologies that make them user-friendly, powerful and very well spec'd up machines.

ON BOARD THE CAT® 259D3 COMPACT TRACK LOADER

After closing the door behind me I felt instantly relaxed and comfortable as I settled into the seat. The entry was broader than usual and the wide positioning of the controls gave me an extra 75mm or so of width and legroom, which provided more room for comfort and positioning.

The Cat 259D3 is by no means a noisy machine to operate, but after closing the door of the industry-leading one-piece sealed and pressurised Cab it was apparent there have been advancements in this area. As the Brisbane temps pushed 35 degrees outside and the machine at times disappeared into plumes of dust, the 259D3's cab was a quieter experience than other machines I've operated, with a cleaner design and excellent visibility.

The air ride seat was a joy, with high back (lumber support) and adjustable joystick controls to ensure you have everything exactly where you need them to ensure optimum output and comfort over a day's work.

We had a few tests in place to investigate the ride quality of the 259D3. The first was a series of sleepers laid out on the ground that

Imagine a machine so advanced for its time that some 20 years on the majority of its well spec'd list of features still reside (albeit profoundly advanced and modified) in its 2020 version – welcome the Cat® 259 D3 Compact Track Loader and Cat® 246D3 Skid Steer. If that fact alone doesn't showcase Caterpillar's ability to innovate and pioneer as an industry leader, then I don't know what does.

When it comes to bringing innovations to the market that become widely used in machines and integrated into workflows within worksites around the globe, Caterpillar has clearly decided to innovate where many others have simply followed. Caterpillar was amongst the first manufacturers to use 100 per cent pilot hydraulic controls in the industry, to remove foot-pedal bucket controls by introducing the foot throttle (accelerator) control saving fuel and engine wear. Together with pilot hydraulic control, Caterpillar also introduced the now-common stick-steer system using left-hand joystick to drive and right-hand joystick to operate loader functions, and to introduce self-levelling on the loader

circuit and proportional hydraulic control for attachments. The more I think about it, the more impressive the last 20 years of Caterpillar innovation becomes with features including: Bucket Float Function, High Flow XPS, Independent Track Suspension, Creep Control – the list goes on. But rather than turning this into a history lesson, let's delve in and take a good look at the pinnacle of where this sector now stands with the Cat® 259 D3 Compact Track Loader and Cat® 246D3 Skid Steer. Looking at these two machines stand side by side is an impressive site with both sporting the new Cat styled logo branding. Being a 'compact track loader man' for





Left to right: Heath Thompson, operator; Tom Whetton, Sales Representative, New and Used Equipment, Hastings Deering Australia; Cameron Balzat, Caterpillar Asia Pacific Marketing Manager; and Jamie Gray, EEM.



I drove over the top of with a full bucket while increasing speed to test out the suspended undercarriage system, which provided superior traction, floatation, stability and speed in a wide range of options. Driving over sleepers at speed like this wouldn't be something I would do in my machine, but I was impressed with the results. I wouldn't call it a smooth experience, but I wasn't being thrown into the sides of the cab like I would have been in a competitor machine.

Over the day I used the 4 in 1 bucket and the slasher on the 259D3, which were both a joy to use. The machine's ground speed, comfort, precision controls, high-performance powertrain, high flow torque, and intelligent levelling systems all combined to produce an absolute workhorse. I would personally love to introduce the 259D3 to my landscaping and pool installation company because the benefits in production turnaround and efficiencies it would add would be huge.



FEATURES

- Industry leading sealed and pressurised cab
- Available high-back, heated, air ride seat with seat mounted adjustable joystick controls
- High performance powertrain
- High flow hydraulic system
- Cat C3.3B engine and high performance powertrain
- Cat 'Intelligent Levelling' system
- Standard fully independent torsion axle suspension
- Maximise machine capability and control
- Ground level access
- Broad range of performance matched Cat Work Tools



tool positioner, all of which further increase productivities and worked exceptionally well.

The D3 loaders bring refinements that will further improve quality, comfort and reliability, but later this year there will be even more substantial innovations, which will become the holy grail of work tool controllability with the introduction of **Smart Attachments**. Caterpillar are introducing three Smart Attachments available from the end of 2020, all of which will be plug and play and fully operational from the D3's controls. The backhoe, grader and dozer blade will be substantial and impressive additions to further add to the full range of opportunity that exists with the two machines.

The three new Smart Attachments are going to be a game changer that will have a positive effect on a huge number of operators out there.

Both the the Cat 259D3 and Cat 246D3 are top-shelf machines, which will be a welcomed addition into any outfit. The ground level servicing and maintenance



are standout features with access to the engine compartment at a perfect waist/chest height and a folding one-piece cab that only needs two bolts to be undone to access all hydraulic lines in minutes.

If you're in the market for a tracked loader or skid steer, call your local Cat dealer to arrange a demo – as impressive as the machines are on paper, it's sitting in the cab putting in the hours where they come to life.



RIPPING IN WITH THE CAT® 246D3 SKID STEER

Almost all of the features and intelligent systems I just mentioned in the 259D3 also carry over to the Cat 246D3 Skid Steer Loader. The main difference is the change from tracks to wheels and the changeover to a radial lift design, which delivers impressive mid-lift reach and excellent digging performance with outstanding drawbar power.

For our test I started again with a 4 in 1 bucket and then moved over to forks and carted around a pile of hardwood timbers. I decided to dial down the hydraulic flow and speed just a little, which was very quick and easy. The ability to customise almost all elements of the machine is an excellent set of features, which can be made in seconds.

When working with repetitive levels being used to dig and drop material into trucks etc., the Cat Intelligent Levelling system will enable you to set features like dual-direction self-level, work tool return to dig, and work

