Quick Mount PV
Raising the Roof on Solar Energy
Produced by Gilbert Michaud & Written by Chelsea Cook

If any company represents making the best of a steep recession, it’s Quick Mount PV of Walnut Creek, Calif. The company – which manufactures innovative waterproof rooftop solar mounting systems – was founded in 2006 and has done nothing but grow since, despite the recession that quickly followed the company’s launch.

Quick Mount PV has grown at over 75 percent each year in both revenue and staff despite the economic hardships faced by so many other businesses. Quick Mount PV’s original 1,000-square foot shop in Emeryville, Calif., proved too small in little over a year, and in 2008 the company moved into a 5,000-square foot headquarters and fabrication facility in Concord, Calif. That space expanded to 20,000-plus feet before the company outgrew the Concord location in 2011.

In January 2012 Quick Mount PV moved into its third light-manufacturing facility in the San Francisco Bay Area, encompassing a two-building complex totaling 132,000 square feet in Walnut Creek, Calif., which it purchased in 2011 with the help of a Small Business Association loan (SBA 504). The company moved into the larger 89,000-square foot building, where virtually all operations are now housed. The 43,000-square foot building is being put up for lease.

Soon after the transition to the new facility was complete, Quick Mount PV made another key strategic move in March when it appointed a new president, Ken Lewis, to lead the company into its next stage of growth and development. Prior to joining Quick Mount PV, Lewis held executive positions with Magnex Scientific, Varian Inc., and, most recently, Agilent Technologies.

The company will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony and tour of the new plant in late June 2012 to celebrate the new facility, new leadership team and the Quick Mount PV staff, as they continue to bring industry-best mounting systems and roofing practices to the fast-growing solar industry.

Learning to “Respect the Roof”

Quick Mount PV manufactures rooftop mounting systems that secure a solar electricity or solar hot water system to a home or commercial building on a wide variety of roof types. Installing a typical home solar electric (photovoltaics, or PV) system requires 20 to 60 penetrations into the roof and rafters, and proper protection of the roof and building demands that each and every attachment to the roof be strong and absolutely watertight. These multiple mounts must install quickly and cost-effectively with minimal labor and maximum protection.
Accomplishing this critical task requires both high-quality flashed-mounting products and knowledge of roofing and waterproofing methods, neither of which existed in the about-to-explode solar marketplace of 2006. Quick Mount PV was established precisely to address this need. Quick Mount PV, led by Claudia and Stuart Wentworth, CEO and CTO, respectively, pioneered the use of roofing best practices in the solar industry. It did so by combining innovative designs, high-quality materials, expert workmanship, and extensive installation training to deliver what solar designers and installers were hungry for: completely code-compliant, waterproof, fast-installing mounting systems and the roofing knowledge to install them properly.

Quick Mount PV’s first products were designed for mounting solar systems on composition, tile and shake roofs. Made of all-aluminum, these full-sized flashings with stainless steel hardware installed faster than any other flashed mount and worked with all standard racking systems. They became an instant hit in the retrofit market. Since composition shingles comprise approximately 80 percent of rooftops in the USA, the Classic Composition Mount quickly became Quick Mount PV’s top-selling product.

“Providing training and education are just as essential to Quick Mount PV’s success as making quality products,” states Claudia Wentworth. “In a burgeoning marketplace these go hand in hand.” The company’s focus on training is evident, as its director of training, Johan Alfsen, has travelled throughout North America over the last five years teaching solar contractors and installers roofing industry best practices and providing hands-on product training.

The company now offers instructional videos on its website, quickmountpv.com, and also gives free webinars to hundreds of solar designers and installers, building engineers, architects, contractors, electricians, and roofers each month. Alfsen has authored several articles in leading trade journals on how to properly mount solar arrays on common roof types. Helping reinforce the company’s continuing education and networking opportunities are memberships and participation in the Solar Energy Industry Association (SEIA), the Solar Electric Power
Association (SEPA), the American Solar Energy Society (ASES), the Northern California Solar Energy Association (NorCal Solar), the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP), and most recently, the Center for Environmental Innovation in Roofing (CEIR).

**A Passion for Doing Solar Right**

In the 20 years prior to starting Quick Mount PV, the Wentworths were working in the metal fabrication, green building and construction trades. When they started getting into solar installations in 2000, they saw too many rooftop installations that were courting disaster. Seeing this state of affairs as a threat to the future of solar power and to their own business, they developed the first Quick Mount PV products for their own needs.

“Not long ago, the typical solar installer just bolted the solar panel to the roof using a simple metal L-foot and some sealant,” explains Stuart Wentworth. “In fact, too many installers still use the ‘goop and a prayer’ method. As general contractors for more than 20 years, we were fully aware that this will
not only lead to a greater chance of failure over the long life of a solar system – 20 to 40 years – it voids roof warranties because these rudimentary attachment methods do not follow well-known roofing best practices.”

“Making Quick Mount PV products 100-percent code-compliant is one of the company’s core commitments,” states Ken Lewis.

“Achieving this as a standard has been no easy feat in the designing of the mounts,” adds Lewis, referring to the multiple relevant rules and guidelines issued by a myriad of associations, including the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA), the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors’ National Association (SMACNA), the Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association (ARMA), the Tile Roofing Institute (TRI), the International Code Council (ICC), as well as other entities that define the industry best practices. “Stuart and Claudia have been able to solidify their marketplace lead with utility and method patents both issued and pending on the different mounting products,” says Lewis.

**Letting the Sunshine In**

Another Quick Mount PV strength is that the company listens to its customers and partners in an ongoing effort to create solar mounting solutions for a growing number of roof types and special needs. In a January 2012 interview with SolarPro magazine, Stuart Wentworth described one of Quick Mount PV’s latest creations: the QBase mechanical mount. The QBase is a special mounting base with a gusseted pyramid-like shape designed to accommodate customer needs for taller heights on posts.

The QBase is ideal for mounting on a curved tile roof, for example, since the solar array typically sits well above the roof decking, requiring a tall, strong mount. These stronger mounts also result in fewer penetrations and an increased capacity to endure high winds. Quick Mount PV’s QBase is also used in two other new products, one designed for solar installations on low-slope commercial roofs, the other for PV installation when integrated into new composition roof construction. More products are in the pipeline for release.

January 2012 saw the premiere of the Gator Mount, a joint effort of Schletter Inc. and Quick Mount PV. The Gator Mount attaches to the roof with a single hanger bolt. This bolt goes through Quick Mount PV’s QBlock, an integrated all-aluminum flashed mounting block with an elevated water seal. This bolt also fastens the Schletter Gator Clamp to the solar mounting rails. This partnership enables Schletter solar rail systems to be used with the warrantied Quick Mount PV roof attachments.

**Proudly Made in the USA**

No matter what new products the company develops,
one thing that will remain constant is Quick Mount PV’s commitment to keeping manufacturing in the United States. Despite its rapid growth, the company continues to fulfill the requirements of the Buy American provision contained within the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA). “We get pressure to move the manufacturing overseas all the time, but we’re committed to helping strengthen the U.S. economy in whatever way we can,” says Lewis. “Everything is designed, engineered manufactured and shipped from our new location here in Walnut Creek.”

The majority of the company’s 50-plus distributors are in the U.S. “Between 80 and 90 percent of our sales are in the U.S.,” says Lewis. “California is still the biggest solar market in the U.S., so a good percentage of our business is within the state, but by no means all of it. New Jersey, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Oregon and others are all growing solar markets. Hawaii, with its abundant sunshine and high utility rates, is really taking off.”

Quick Mount PV is the recognized solar industry mounting standard for a reason. The company is well known and respected as the undisputed leading brand in its niche. Lewis thinks the company’s accelerated growth is a direct expression of its passion for creating quality solar mounting systems “that offer both installers and their customers peace of mind during stormy weather.” When challenges rain down, Quick Mount PV can draw on its history of innovation, its excellent executive team and its broader commitment to solar energy to keep the sunshine pouring in. •