



Roll out the channel's red carpet

As the channel gears up for the biggest night in its social calendar, **Simon Meredith** dusts off his tuxedo and takes a look at who will be vying for glory at the prestigious Channel Awards 2004

THIS WEEK'S CHANNEL AWARDS ceremony in London's Battersea Park will be the biggest ever. About 1,300 people will attend the event, which has become the undisputed party of the year for the UK IT industry.

There will be more prizes than ever awarded at the 2004 ceremony, with a total

of 25 being presented during the evening by CRN editor Sara Driscoll and senior figures from main sponsor AMD. Representatives from Sony, Micro Peripherals and Hewlett-Packard will also hand out awards.

But the ceremony itself is just one part of the experience. The evening's entertainment will be nothing short of spectacular. Having arrived at the champagne reception, guests will enjoy an evening of good food, live music, dancing and lots of fun and games.

The awards ceremony will be hosted by a well-known personality. In keeping with tradition, the identity of our celebrity MC will remain a closely-guarded secret until the moment they appear on stage.



After the awards there will be a charity casino with some great prizes, including a Sony Home Entertainment kit and items of sporting memorabilia, such as signed shirts from famous football and rugby stars of such as George Best and Ben Cohen.

There will also be dancing, games, racing and a live band will play into the night. A fleet of coaches will arrive at 1.30am, ready to take revellers back to their hotels, or to the Pacha nightclub in Victoria until 4.30am.

But who will be celebrating on the night? Will the big guns claim the main awards again, or are we in for some surprises? We will know soon enough: readers' votes will have decided the main

Outstanding Achievement Award winners, and the judges have already made their final decisions on who will walk away with the sector-specific prizes.

The short lists for most of the awards were published some time ago, and there has already been much speculation as to who will win. But it's the main Outstanding Achievement and Editor's Choice Awards that will generate the most gossip and conjecture on the night.

In previous years Hewlett-Packard (HP) and Computer 2000 have dominated the vendor and distributor categories. As the biggest players in their respective parts of the business, they must surely be expecting to be in the running again.

Strong competition is certain to come from the likes of Microsoft, Fujitsu

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And the nominees are...

Vendor awards

Data Networking

3Com
Avaya
BTIC
D-Link

Security

Check Point Software
McAfee
Sophos
Symantec
 Websense

Services

Hewlett-Packard
McAfee
Microsoft

Specialist

Appsense
Citrix Systems
Hauppauge Digital
Kingston Technology
VMware

Storage

Adaptec
Computer Associates
EMC
Hewlett-Packard

Voice and Data

3Com
Avaya
BT Indirect Channels

Voice Networking

3Com
Avaya
BT Indirect Channels

Distributor awards

Audiovisual

Maverick
Midwich
Steljes Trade

Data Networking

Azlan/Computer 2000
Crane Telecommunications
Enta Technologies
Ingram Micro Networking

Security

Azlan
Equip
Ingram Micro UK
Unipalm

Services

Azlan
Bell Microproducts

e92 Plus

Ingram Micro UK

Specialist

CMS Peripherals
e92 Plus
Hammer Distribution
Steljes Trade

Storage

Actebis Distribution
Bell Microproducts
Hammer Distribution
Ingram Micro UK
InTechnology

Voice and Data

Azlan
Crane Telecommunications
Ingram Micro

Voice Networking

Azlan
Crane Telecommunications
DMSL

Reseller awards

Corporate Reseller

Azzurri Communications
Bytes Technology Group
Elcom Information Technology

Equanet

IT Partnerships

SME Reseller

Parity Computers ICT
Prior Analytics
RAMSAC
WStore UK

Innovator of the Year - Public Sector

Telindus / Skynet Systems
Assurix
Maintel

Innovator of the Year - Private Sector

Blue Chip Systems
IT Partnerships
Triangle

Outstanding Achievement Awards

Outstanding Achievement - Vendor
Outstanding Achievement - Distributor
(both voted for by *CRN* readers)
Outstanding Achievement - Reseller
(voted for by readers of *Computing*)
Outstanding Product of the Year
(decided by editorial panel)

Editor's Choice Awards

Channel Personality
Editor's Choice



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Siemens and Ingram Micro, as well as Teksys, Bytes Technology and Azzurri. However, the inside line on the vendor, distributor and reseller Outstanding Achievement Awards – the only three decided by a straight vote – is that the competition has been very strong and come from some unexpected quarters. There could well be some surprises in store.

The other voted for award is the Outstanding Product. Tipped as possible contenders for this award are Sony's X5 sub-notebook, BT's Openzone in a Box, D-Link's G6O4T wireless broadband router, the RIM BlackBerry, the HP iPAQ and Microsoft's CRM. Both Intel and AMD have also kept their product lines moving impressively this year.

The Editor's Choice and Channel Personality awards are chosen by CRN editor Sara Driscoll and, as such, are very open. Every company that has done a good job in supporting the channel this year will feel that they are in contention.

Last year's Channel Personality was David Atherton of dabs.com, and this year any number of names will have been considered. From the vendor community, there are Ian Snadden of Fujitsu Siemens and Paul Cook of Acer for example. In distribution there are Paul Sangster, manag-

ing director of storage distributor Hammer, Bell Microproduct's ubiquitous credit director, Eddie Pacey, or Gordon McDowell, managing director of Micro Peripherals. From the reseller community are Des Lekerman, managing director of Eurodata, Gordon Davies, managing director of Compusys, Paul Barlow, managing director of Equanet and Shaun Frohlich, executive chairman of Teksys, who could all very well be in the frame.

When asked what they're most looking forward to on the night, senior executives from short-listed companies have two stock responses: they're hoping to walk away with a prize, or are looking forward to what's become known as by far the best party of the year in the channel.

For example, Balvinder Phull, marketing manager UK and Ireland for D-Link, which is short-listed for the Data Networking Vendor Partner of the Year Award, said: "D-Link is on a roll, and we've been beating some stiff competition, so I am hopeful we will win the award."

But Tony Martin, UK country manager at Computer Associates, was perhaps being more honest than most when he said what he is looking forward to is "faking a smile as someone else picks up the award".

Those who are short-listed are always disappointed not to pick up an award and are eager to do even better the following year.



Ann Keefe, Kingston Technology

According to Ann Keefe, sales director at Kingston Technology, the night is great for both the entertainment and the prospect of walking away as a winner. "The party is always great fun. We really look forward to meeting up with our friends, channel partners and other vendors on the night and hopefully celebrating," she said.

Once the award presentations are over, win or lose, the industry lets its hair down and focuses on the business of partying. This year, with all the entertainment on offer, there will be no excuses for anyone not to have a good time.

"The night is always spectacular," said Frank Salmon, managing director of distributor CMS Peripherals.

"CMS knows how to party so this makes the awards doubly enjoyable. We get to share in the friendly atmosphere with both customers and vendors. No matter if it's congratulations or commiserations, CMS always treats the awards as a channel celebration."

And that's clearly what the Channel Awards have become: a collective celebration of the achievements and sense of community that abounds in the UK channel, which is all brought together in one fantastic evening. Whether you win or not, it's a night you never want to miss.

A word about our sponsors

The Channel Awards would not be possible without the support of the sponsors who demonstrate their commitment by putting their names to the event. AMD is the main sponsor once again this year. Angie Vorley, marketing manager at AMD, will be handing out the distributor awards. Sony, meanwhile, is sponsoring the vendor categories, while Micro Peripherals is sponsor of the four reseller awards. Hewlett-Packard is the table sponsor, so guests can expect a branded gift or giveaway on their table when they arrive.

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