



# And the winners are...

To ensure that you buy only the best, we're singling out the companies that deserve our praise with the Which? Awards



**'You deserve great service, quality products and value for money'**

**W**e believe that you deserve great service, quality products and value for money. That's why our teams of experts have spent the last 50 years campaigning for consumer rights, investigating companies and testing their products – to help you choose the best and avoid the worst.

To give recognition and to congratulate companies that have excelled throughout the last year, we're launching the Which? Awards. This will be an annual event where you will learn which companies provide the best products and services to consumers.

Our dedicated teams of researchers used the results of our tests and surveys, plus their own expertise, to recommend a short-list of winners for categories ranging from best car manufacturer to the best credit card provider. We also asked the public to nominate their favourite restaurant. Our panel of experts then selected the winners in each of the ten categories.

Only the very best can win a prestigious Which? Award, but the winners can't afford to rest on their laurels. We'll be keeping a close eye on them as we gather evidence for the 2008 awards – and competition will be fierce. We hope that consumers all over the UK will reap the benefits as companies strive to become the next Which? Award winners.

*Peter Vicary-Smith*

Peter Vicary-Smith  
Chief Executive of Which?

## 50 YEARS OF WHICH?

### Which? Heritage Award Panasonic

The Which? Heritage Award is a very special award that marks the occasion of our 50-year anniversary. It is presented to an outstanding company that has achieved the most Best Buys since *Which?* first rolled off the press in 1957.

Identifying the winner was no small task. We trawled through every single back issue of *Which?* – almost 600 magazines – recording almost 14,000 Best Buys that have been awarded

since we first published the magazine.

Panasonic outshone its competitors, scooping up an impressive 222 Best Buys in a wide range of categories, including personal stereo cassette players, printers, microwave ovens, CD players, TVs, DVD players, digital cameras and even ice-cream makers.

The company received its first Best Buy accolade back in March 1986 for its MC655U upright

vacuum cleaner. One of only three Best Buy uprights, it was praised by us as being 'good for performance and convenience'.

And just this year we gave Panasonic rave reviews for its range of LCD TVs, which have the best picture quality we've ever seen.

Panasonic products have proved time and again to be high quality and to really stand the test of time. Well done to Panasonic, a deserving winner of this award.



## THE GOOD FOOD GUIDE

# Best restaurant The Yorke Arms

In our search for the Which? Good Food Guide Restaurant of the Year we invited you to vote for your favourite local restaurant – and the response was overwhelming. We received 5,000 votes by text, phone and email, which were verified, counted and checked against our judges' criteria to give us a winner in each of the ten regions around the UK. From these ten, our judges from *The Good Food Guide* then chose an overall winner.

As well as tantalising your tastebuds, winning restaurants needed to be independently owned, with welcoming, efficient staff and a good-value menu. Our judges were also looking for restaurants offering home-made, regional dishes using

a high level of local produce – congratulations to each of the ten regional winners.

We are very pleased to announce that the winner of the Which? Good Food Guide Restaurant of the Year Award is the Yorke Arms in Ramsgill. Frances Atkins is one of the best female chefs in the country and her cooking is based on simple, traditional combinations brought to life with creative twists and original touches.

Ingredients are typically first class and dishes are presented imaginatively. The restaurant sources produce locally and dishes such as Nidderdale lamb pie, beetroot sorbet and a beignet of Yorkshire blue cheese tempt both locals and those from further afield to visit this culinary gem.

Anyone who nominated a restaurant was entered into a prize-draw competition to win dinner for two – congratulations to the winner, John Ramsay from Suffolk.



## Regional winners

**Wales** Tyddyn Llan, Llandrillo, 01490 440264  
**Scotland** Linen Room, Dumfries, 01387 255689  
**Northern Ireland** James Street South, Belfast, 028 9043 4310  
**Northwest** Ramsons, Ramsbottom, 01706 825070  
**Northeast** The Yorke Arms, Ramsgill, 01423 755243  
**Midlands** Perkins, Plumtree, 0115 937 3695  
**Southwest** Culinaria, Bristol, 0117 973 7999  
**Southeast** The Plough, Bolnhurst, 01234 376274  
**East** The Swan Inn, Monks Eleigh, 01449 741391  
**London** Canteen, Spitalfields, 0845 686 1122

## BROADBAND

# Best broadband provider Waitrose

If you're looking for a new broadband provider, we highly recommend hooking up with Waitrose. It offers a high-quality service that is consistently popular with our readers. Waitrose has scored highly in our surveys of internet service providers since our first survey in 2004 – which is why it deserves this award, despite tough competition from the two runners-up.

Although Waitrose offers only one broadband package, its monthly 5GB cap – enough to

download well over a thousand music tracks – should be plenty for most people. With this package you also get zippy download speeds of up to 8Mbps for a reasonable £19 a month, with no set-up fees and a free router.

In our latest broadband survey Waitrose excelled in connection speed, customer service and both online and telephone support.

One feature that really makes Waitrose stand out is its free technical helpline, which we

think is great for consumers.

Customers do have to sign up to a 12-month contract but Waitrose's cancellation fees are

reasonable when compared with much of the market – costing from £25. And as a final bonus, Waitrose is one of the few internet

providers in the UK that donates all of its profits to charity.

## Runners-up

- Global
- Zen Internet

Waitrose has scored highly in our satisfaction surveys since 2004



## CAR MANUFACTURER

# Best car manufacturer **Toyota**

The race for this award was very close, but Toyota just beat BMW across the line to finish in first place. Both manufacturers produce top-quality cars but our

experts agree that Toyota deserves to win this award thanks to a combination of its innovative thinking and excellent value for money.



The car in front of you is a Toyota Prius

You can't go far wrong when buying Toyota. Its models usually do everything well and always score highly in every area of our tests, as well as in our annual car owners' survey (see *Which? Car 2007*).

It manufactures a wide range of cars and this year has Best Buys in three categories – the Prius (large cars), Verso (MPVs) and the Yaris (superminis). The Avensis and Auris are both classified as worth considering, with the Auris missing out on a Best Buy award only because we don't yet have enough data on its reliability.

Toyota consistently scores well in safety. The new Auris, for example, has raised the game

for medium cars this year by including knee airbags as standard. A pioneer of hybrid technology, it deserves congratulations for the innovative and increasingly popular Prius.

Toyota also has an outstanding record for reliability. It's the second-best brand in our latest owners' survey, and four out of five Toyota owners would definitely recommend their car to a friend. This year, the car in front is definitely a Toyota.

### Runners-up

- Audi
- BMW
- Honda
- Lexus
- Mazda

## AUDIOVISUAL

# Best audiovisual **Panasonic**

Panasonic has pipped Sony at the post to pick up this year's award for best audiovisual brand. Although Sony offers an excellent array of products and regularly features in our Best Buys – and Canon printers produce excellent-quality

prints and are cheap to run – Panasonic products have managed to impress us consistently this year.

Panasonic had a massive 15 Best Buys this year across seven categories. It also has high reliability ratings in three product categories and our members give it

high 'recommend to a friend' scores. If you're looking to invest your hard-earned cash in a television, DVD recorder or camcorder that you know will be reliable, you can't really go wrong by choosing Panasonic.

It's also an innovative company and is always among the forerunners with new technology. Panasonic was the first to produce a combined PVR and DVD recorder and recently came up trumps with its range of LCD and plasma televisions, which have the best-quality pictures we have ever seen. The £900 TX-32LXD70 is the best LCD TV (see *Which?*, April 2007, p38) we have ever

tested and the £1,400 TH-42PX600B (*Which?*, October 2006, p46) is one of the best plasma televisions.

Panasonic products aren't cheap but are often among the best and most reliable, and so they offer good value for money.

### Runners-up

- Canon
- Sony





## CREDIT CARD



## Best credit card M&S &More

Marks & Spencer proves that it's famous for more than just its range of underwear with this impressive &More card that offers some unique features and is an excellent all-rounder.

offering a cool 0 per cent on new purchases until the end of January 2008, which compares favourably with other cards and is one of the longest periods available.

When it comes to paying off your balance, the card gives you a generous 55 day interest-free period with 25 days to pay. This is the second best of all the credit cards on the market.

An added bonus is that you earn points each time you spend on the card – equivalent to 0.5 per cent cashback for purchases outside M&S and 1 per cent for purchases in a branch of the store or online.

The &More card sets no minimum income criteria for applicants and it's a MasterCard, which means it's widely accepted both home and abroad.

### Runners-up

- Amex Blue
- Egg Money MasterCard
- Bank of Ireland (UK) Moneyback MasterCard



Its standard APR is slightly above average at 17.9 per cent, but its great terms and low rates mean you are likely to end up paying less than with other cards in the long run.

&More provides a competitively low 4.9 per cent interest rate on balance transfers until the debt is paid off in full and, unlike many of its competitors' cards, doesn't charge a balance transfer fee. It's currently

## DOMESTIC APPLIANCES

## Best domestic appliances Miele

In our tests this year Miele outshone its competitors, offering outstanding quality across a wide range of products for the home.

Miele successfully managed to rack up an unrivalled 18 Best Buys across seven categories – twice as many as any of its competitors. And its products were voted best on test in a record-breaking four categories – dishwashers, vacuum cleaners, washer-dryers and washing machines.

And the reason Miele does so well? It's simple – we like Miele appliances because not only are they easy to use but they also produce excellent results. In March 2007 Miele dishwashers were the two best on test – the G1230 SC at £730 and the G1220 SC at £530.

And in April 2007 its vacuum cleaners – the S4211, great value at £120, and Cat and Dog TT 5000, £189 – passed our tests with flying colours to tie for top place.

Our annual survey shows that the brand has superb ratings for 'recommend to a friend' and reliability. So although Miele prices might sometimes be higher than those of other brands, the company's products definitely give you long-term value for money. We hope that Miele keeps up the good work.

### Runners-up

- AEG-Electrolux
- Bosch
- Panasonic
- Siemens
- Zanussi-Electrolux



For a quality product that's easy to use, you can't go far wrong with Miele

## RETAILER

## Best retailer John Lewis

This year's award for best retailer goes to John Lewis for providing excellent customer service and a wide range of quality products.

It beat 49 well-known chains to the top spot with its high levels of customer satisfaction. Other than Waitrose (its

sister company), no other retailer came close to challenging it.

Our members rated John Lewis as providing the best shopping experience – with products that were easy to find, tidy stores and well-managed queuing. They also rated it highly for customer service and product quality and availability, for which it came second only to Waitrose.

It didn't score so highly for price and convenience, but although other stores may offer cheaper prices, John Lewis products are usually great quality – meaning that you still get good value for money.

And when it comes to

electrical products, John Lewis is streets ahead of all the other retailers. Some of its own-brand products, such as ovens and tumble dryers, have recently featured in the magazine as Best Buys.

At the moment John Lewis has only 26 stores nationwide, which means that it's not convenient for everyone, but the company has announced plans to expand by opening a further ten stores by 2015.

## Runners-up

- Aldi
- Marks & Spencer
- Waitrose



## CURRENT ACCOUNT PROVIDER

## Best current account Smile

This current account is guaranteed to put a smile on your face. It has achieved Best Buy status for an amazing seven years in a row and is a great all-rounder. But what makes it a true winner is its outstanding customer service.

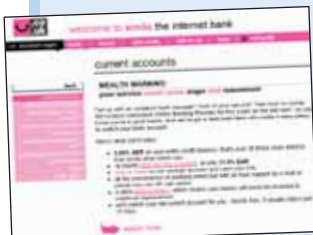
they were 'very satisfied' overall with their account. Smile also doesn't charge an arrangement fee for agreeing an overdraft.

Smile's in-credit interest rate is 3.04 per cent – not a market leader but 30 times better than the 0.1 per cent offered by the big banks. And for an added incentive to switch, Smile is part of the Co-operative family and has a sound ethical policy.

We believe in giving credit where credit is due, so congratulations to Smile and keep up the good work.

## Runners up

- Cahoot
- First Direct



Smile received top marks in our latest survey of satisfaction with current accounts, with 82 per cent of customers saying



## CONSUMER CHAMPION

## Consumer champion James Purnell

We are delighted to announce that the Which? Consumer Champion Award 2007 goes to Pensions Minister James Purnell MP for his unfaltering commitment to consumer interests during the last year.

In an effort to help 10 million people who have not saved enough for their pensions, the Minister led government proposals for a national pensions saving scheme called personal accounts, which is to be introduced in 2012.

This scheme is in line with our own campaign, which calls for the

introduction of a low-cost, independent national pension scheme for low to medium earners who don't have access to a good pension from their

employer. James Purnell deserves this award, as his actions will have a positive, life-changing impact on many people's futures.

The Minister told us: 'I am very pleased to receive this award. Which? has played an important role in developing personal accounts policies, while representing the

interests of consumers and members. The government believes that consumers should be absolutely at the heart of personal accounts and we look forward to continued engagement with Which? as the reforms are put into practice.'



See p84 to read our interview with James Purnell MP