

Welcome...

...TO THE special Caravan Design and Lightweight Leisure Trailer Awards 2011 supplement, which reveals the podium finishers in this prestigious Club competition's 13 overall classes. Judging of the awards' 70 entrants – 41 for Caravan Design and 29 for the Lightweight Leisure Trailer Awards – took place in the halls of Birmingham's NEC at February's Boat & Caravan Show.

This respected industry competition, the only one of its kind, covers a vast array of vehicles – from big fifth wheelers and a variety of conventional tourers (two- to six-berthers), to folding caravans, folding campers and trailer tents of all shapes and sizes. Each and every model entered was rigorously assessed and examined, inside and out, by a panel of independent expert design judges and technical researchers.

For the caravan awards (now in its 16th year), each of the four design judges looked after one specific area – 'Beds, Seats and Personal Effect Storage'; 'Shower, Toilet and Fittings'; 'Kitchen Appliances and Services'; or 'Exterior'. In addition, each judge allocated marks for comfort and liveability, as well as innovation, workmanship, overall appeal and value for money.

This comprehensive process covers everything from the jockey wheel, 'A' frame and gas locker practicality, to heater ducting, seat comfort, kitchen switches and sockets, windows and ventilation, lighting and the

layout of working surfaces. That means each of the seven class winners had to offer quality and appeal in all aspects of design, and could rightfully claim to be fully deserving of success.

Again with six classes for 2011, the Lightweight Leisure Trailer Awards (celebrating its ninth year) saw all entrants assessed for everything from day time practicality and comfort of layout, ease of setting up on site and folding down for the road (where applicable), to internal storage, overall quality of materials and fittings, and the all-important value for money.

The purpose of these awards is threefold. Firstly, to recognise excellence in caravan and lightweight leisure design. Secondly, to provide Club members and caravanners in general with a fair and objective assessment of those models submitted for scrutiny – allowing them to be better informed when making their buying decisions. Finally, the unbiased judges' feedback allows the manufacturers to make improvements to their models if and where required.

Gary

Seven wonders

Judge **Mark Sutcliffe** reveals the winners in each of the Club's prestigious 2011 Caravan Design competition's seven classes

THIS YEAR'S Caravan Club Caravan Design Awards attracted a very healthy 41 entries, featuring a fascinating mixture of the innovative, the original and the retro-chic – so something for everyone.

The judging panel, comprising two technical experts and four experienced caravan journalists, each focused on a particular aspect of all the models entered – 'Beds, Seats and Personal Effects

Storage'; 'Shower, Toilet and Fittings'; 'Kitchen Appliances and Services'; 'Exterior'; and 'Technical'. In addition, each judge fed their overall impressions of each caravan in terms of 'Liveability' and 'Innovation/ Workmanship/Overall Appeal/Value for Money' into the marking scheme.

It's an extremely thorough process, so any caravan that took a class win most definitely deserved it.

Class 1

ANY CARAVAN
Under £12,000

Winner:

Bailey Orion 400-2
Price: £11,995

Bailey's best-selling Ranger was a fixture in the company's line-up for more than a decade, so replacing it was always going to

be a big step. Well, the innovative and distinctive new Orion looks to be a sure-fire winner at the budget end of the market.

Employing Bailey's robust Alu-Tech construction technique, the Orion 400-2 is jam-packed full of novel ideas and space-saving technology to offer a radically different proposition to its rivals. As well as representing a bold step in styling, that distinctive rounded body profile is more aerodynamic than a square-backed caravan, with claims it could reduce towing fuel consumption by as much as 10%.

The panels are fabricated from GRP which is more dent-resistant than aluminium, while the traditional front gas locker has been relocated over the axle, Avondale-style, to improve



weight distribution and free up valuable space inside. The interior feels anything but basic, with good-looking laminates and attractive fabrics that set new standards in a budget caravan, earning the Orion 400-2 a comfortable class



victory, with one judge summing it up succinctly: "Lightweight, innovative and brilliant value.

Class 2

FAMILY CARAVAN
£12,000-£16,000

Runner-up:

Bailey Olympus 504
Price: £15,170

One of the most desirable attributes of a family caravan – especially where older children are concerned – is the flexibility afforded by having separate areas for grown-ups and children. Allocated with their own clearly-defined space, youngsters appreciate the privacy to play their video games undisturbed and tend to settle down more easily come bedtime.

The 504 is a well-packaged caravan which makes intelligent use of space on what is a quite compact footprint.



The Olympus 504's rear dinette serves as a 'den' where children can be left to their own devices during the day and settle down at night – with direct access to the rear washroom, while mum and dad kick back in front of the telly or enjoy a relaxed meal in the roomy front lounge.

"A workable four-berth with excellent separate lounge and dining areas," was how one judge summed it up.

Class 3

2-BERTH CARAVAN
£12,000-£16,000

Winner:

Bailey Pegasus Genoa

Price: £15,395

The new Orion line-up wasn't the only debutante on the Bailey stand at the NEC, as the pioneering Pegasus range – which was first to

feature Alu-Tech construction – received a modest makeover. Applying lessons learned in the development of the new flagship Unicorn, Bailey has tweaked the Pegasus to give the interior a more welcoming feel while lowering the standard spec and reducing prices by £1,500 to create more room in the line-up for its more upmarket sibling.

The Genoa is a classic two-berther with a roomy lounge that converts to a large double bed plus a well-equipped kitchen and a luxurious washroom. It will appeal to the serious rallying fraternity owing to its huge washroom and roomy interior, while the standard spec remains generous. The gas locker has been reworked to a more traditional design and the battery box is now located at a higher



level right over the axle which, as well as improving weight distribution, also makes hooking up to the mains a little easier.

A lower price tag is still higher than most of its class rivals but,

in spite of this, the Genoa was still the clear-cut winner.

Class 4

CARAVAN WITH
DEDICATED BED(S)
£12,000-£16,000

Runner-up:

Bailey Olympus 534
Price: £15,170

There's barely the width of an awning channel between the Charisma and Bailey's Olympus 534. Indeed, the judges' scores indicated they were divided over which should be the winner.

There's virtually nothing between them in price – although the Olympus has Al-Ko's ATC anti-snaking system included as

standard – and they are pretty evenly matched in the weight stakes, too. The Bailey is marginally narrower than the Swift but a few inches longer and, of course, the Olympus benefits from the 10-year warranty that comes as standard with its Alu-Tech construction.

So it all rests on the interior styling – with those who like a more traditional feel plumping for the Charisma, and those who prefer a more contemporary (and perhaps more functional) one, opting for the Olympus.



Class 5

ANY CARAVAN
£16,000-£19,000

Runner-up:

Bailey Unicorn Madrid
Price: £18,685

Is there a more comprehensively-specified caravan than Bailey's new Unicorn Madrid for less than £20,000? The list of standard equipment in this stylish vehicle simply goes on and on, and includes Alde wet central heating, Al-Ko ATC, audio-visual

equipment and anti-theft devices. In Madrid configuration, it's also a flexible layout that works for two or four, making it the complete tourer at an eye-catching price.

Like the Challenger 480, it sports a superb washroom and a well-equipped kitchen. But, with so much standard equipment, it's a little on the heavy side by Bailey standards and, while the interior is classy and contemporary, it's perhaps not quite as opulent as some of its rivals.



Class 6

CARAVANS
Between 751kg and
1,100kg

Winner:

Bailey Orion 400-2
Price: £11,995

Sometimes a caravan comes along that rewrites the design



book, and the Orion 400-2 is just that model. Bailey has produced a brilliantly thought-out, compact two-berth that also scooped top prize in the 'Any Caravan Under £12,000' class in the Caravan

Design Awards. Across the rear, a large washroom houses a spacious shower compartment and toilet, finished off with chrome fittings. The kitchen has an air of sophistication normally



reserved for more expensive caravans, boasting a microwave as part of its standard inventory.

Although compact, the living area somehow feels roomy... and the surprises just keep on coming. This baby Bailey comes with an extended warranty and is priced at under £12,000.