

Coke bottle strikes again

Proof of technological advances in metal packaging – if ever it were needed – were obvious in this year's Cans of the Year Awards, presented during The Canmaker Summit held at Sitges, near Barcelona in Spain, last month.

Overall winner of the Can of the Year – in the opinion of the expert panel of judges – was the aluminium bottle for Coca-Cola's Blak coffee cola drink.

With the container made by Exal Corporation's Youngstown plant in Ohio and at its Boxal plant in France, Blak was launched at the beginning of the year, making it the first Coca-Cola branded product to use a metal bottle for a commercial product.

It followed the success last year of a similar bottle for Coca-Cola's Lovebeing promotion at clubs around the world. In 2005 that won the Bottle category, as Blak did this year, but although being pipped at the post for the overall prize it was the Delegates' Choice at The Canmaker Summit 2005.

This year there was no doubt. "The Blak bottle was the clear winner overall," said one of the judges, "it was the sexiest of the lot."

Michael Clark, sales manager of Exal Corporation, was thrilled at receiving the award. "The bottle has been a long time in development and it's not fully executed, but it is good to be creatively recognized," he said.

Clever easy-open ends, one of which reseals, were the highlight of the 2006 Cans of the Year awards backed by The Canmaker. But, as John Nutting reports, an aluminium bottle won the overall award for the first time in six years

The last time that a bottle won the Can of the Year was in 2000 when Japan's Daiwa grabbed the prize for its lightweight screw-top container with laminated coatings. Since then, billions of bottles have been used in Japan. And they are increasingly being adopted by beer and soft drinks manufacturers in the US and Europe.

The popularity of aluminium bottles is partly because manufacturers are enhancing their appearance through the use of high-speed shaping techniques. The Blak aluminium bottle – sold in France from the beginning of this year and soon to be launched in other European markets – combines both necking and expanding processes developed by Frattini, along with advanced decorating technology from Hinterkopf. But Boxal, its manufacturer, took an extra step with its Silver-award winning I-Cone design for Heineken, which wanted a new design to strengthen its brand identity and develop new markets. This was the Delegates' Choice at

the

Canmaker Summit. Said Marc Bettinger, sales manager at Boxal: "The code-breaking visual impact is extremely powerful and rein-



Left: Can of the Year – Coca-Cola's stylish aluminium bottle for Blak.

Right: Gold winners all – (left to right) Ball's aluminium can for Coke, Impress's aluminium luncheon meat can for Daesang in Korea, DS Containers' two-piece steel aerosol for Faultless Starch, Falco's three-piece welded bottle for olive oil, Daiwa's three-piece drinks can for Pokka and Petrox's prototype two-piece can for dangerous products



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forced by the sophisticated graphics using a brushed aluminium effect.

"This technical and industrial challenge was the result of close project work between the Boxal and Heineken teams starting at the very early design stages. The purity of the elongated shape is a technological breakthrough requiring the latest production and shaping processes."

But it wasn't just the bottle sector that hogged the limelight this year. Gold winning features introduced in the past year that caught the attention of the judges included:

- the use of co-extruded polymer-coated steels for aerosols
- a resealable beverage end from Japan that works
- a deep-drawn aluminium can with a peelable foil lid for luncheon meat
- a stylish welded can with a screw-top spout for olive oil
- cans using digitally-printed labels for short runs
- a draw-redraw two-piece can for hazardous chemicals
- a welded steel can with a ROPP screw-top closure
- a retortable sleek can for milk-based drinks
- wider use of high-definition graphics for drinks cans
- DWI beverage can technology with low environmental impact
- and emerging technologies from new markets.

In total Cans of the Year attracted 84 entries from 31 companies in 11 countries. Most successful company was Japan's Toyo Seikan Kaisha with five awards, followed by Exal, Impress and Petrox with three awards each, and Ball, Crown, Daiwa and Tubex each with two awards.

Although the shaping of impact extruded aluminium containers is being increasingly exploited in the aerosol can sector, it was another technology that won Gold in aerosols. The two-piece container made from Corus's co-extruded polymer-coated steel by DS Containers for The Faultless Starch Com-

Delegates' Choice: Boxal's smooth necked aluminium bottle for Heineken. Big winner: Independent Can's Eukanuba anniversary pail won gold in the decorative category. Limburg's Decocan was recognised for innovative use of digital printing



pany in Kansas City, Missouri, shows that there is demand in the US for more stylish-looking aerosol cans that are commonly used.

Another benefit is that the manufacturing process used by Illinois-based DSC is derived from that used by its holding company, Daiwa in Japan, for making metal drinks bottles and dispenses with solvent-based coating systems.

In contrast to the cans that have won Gold in the two-piece beverage can category in previous years, this year's winner was a model of simplicity.

The 33cl aluminium can produced for Coca-Cola by Ball Packaging Europe exploited a dramatic image of an eye by printing it in just black ink on a white base coat with the logo picked out in red. Ball calls the process High Definition and tries to set itself apart from the "familiar coloured cans which are the general norm".

The beverage can category had the largest entry in the awards. Silver went to Rexam's aluminium 11oz sleek can with a 204 diameter for retortable Starbucks coffee while the Bronze was another Ball success, for its Fresh Can, in which on opening a widget dispenses additives to a drink made by Brain Twist in the US.

The three-piece drinks can category has suddenly come alive with some great ideas from Japan. The winner was a remarkable 10cl welded can with a 38mm screw top closure made by Daiwa Can Company for two types of RTD Kirin coffee. Silver went to a stunning 10cl 202 can made by Toyo Seikan Kaisha that features a peel-off resealable opening called Z-end. The can was just as delightful for its clever label in which a range of designs featuring a panda toy

printed with both glass and matt varnishes made it stand out more effectively.

The Z-end also won Gold in the Ends, Caps & Closures category because it was for the time – as far as the judges were aware – a peel-off closure that really was capable of resealing the can. After the upper part of the tab is pulled away, a lower plug can be used to seal the aperture. And it works, effectively closing the can even when it's inverted and shaken.

Emerging Indian canmaker Petrox picked up one of its three awards with Silver for a deep-drawn lid aimed at hazardous chemical producers. The lid uses a plastics pilfer-proof closure with a wire handle so there's no weld spots on the lid that need repair.

This can be applied to the draw-redraw two-piece container that won Gold for Petrox in the prototype category.

In the Bottle category, the Coca-Cola Blak impact-extruded Bottle made by Exal was the clear choice of the judges ahead of Boxal's I-cone bottle for Heineken. Bronze was won by a 38mm diameter aluminium DWI container with all-round decoration, made by Toyo Seikan for a beauty drink being sold in Japan by House Foods and featuring a peel-off Maxi-Cap closure specially developed by Japan Crown Cork. In June 2006 this container introduced metal into a sector in Japan that is dominated by sales of 4 billion glass bottles a year, said Toyo Seikan.

Two confectionery dispensers made by Hoffmann Neopac in Switzerland won Gold in the decorative can category. Using a combination of decorated tinplate and plastics, the rectangular Snap Top gum dispenser for the Turkish-made brand First properly exploited the best features of metal while ▶

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the round version for XX Enerzone coffee capsules made by Intact in Germany impressed the judges for its crisp functioning. "Just like a Swiss watch," said one judge.

Two-piece food cans are another exciting sector with convenience features and striking decoration being used, mostly for fish and meat canning. Impress won both Gold and Bronze awards for a luncheon meat can and fish can respectively. The luncheon meat can is deep drawn in aluminium with a special internal meat release coating, very similar to the cans made for Spam by Silgan and Crown in the US that won the Can of the Year in 1999. What makes it special is that, made for Korean customer Daesang, it now comes with a foil membrane Easy Peel decorated end. Impress's Bronze award was for its aluminium Hansa can with an embossed lid for Appel herrings and tomatoes.

Silver went to Daiwa Can for an aluminium 25cl DWI container for chocolates.



At last: a resealable lid for cans that works. Toyo Seikan's brilliant Z-end. Touch of class: Hoffmann Neopac's confectionery tins use metal and plastics effectively

This also featured a double-safe full-aperture lid to protect consumers.

Italian canmaker Falco originally entered its striking three-piece decorated cans with pour spouts for olive oil producers in the Bottle category. But it was also entered in the Three-piece Food can category, in which it won Gold easily. The cans are used in a sector in which glass bottles are dominant but cans offer better decoration and performance because they stop light affecting the high-quality product. Silver went to Crown's clever 'wasted' food can for Crosse & Blackwell's range of Waistline products.



Digital printing on cans made its debut in the Cans of the Year with Blechwarenfabrik Limburg's Decocan. This claims to match conventional litho with digitally-printed labels that are suitable for short, but still economic runs, and was recognised with the Gold award in the General Line category.

In the Promotional category Independent Can's pet food pail celebrating The Iams Company 60th anniversary won Gold, knocking Riverside Technology International's clever but unsealable Talking Can into Silver.

Toyo Seikan won the fifth of its awards in the prototype category with Bronze for its polymer-coated DWI steel sTULC beverage cans. Developed from the already commercial aluminium DWI versions, they enable a canmaking process with much lower environmental impact, reducing VOCs and waste water. Germany's Tubex, which won Silver in the Aerosol Cans category, also won another silver award for its striking debossing process for aluminium impact-extruded cans.

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Category awards

CAN OF THE YEAR

Exal Corporation (USA). Aluminium 25cl impact-extruded and shaped bottle with crown closure for Coca-Cola Blak coffee cola drink.

DELEGATES' CHOICE

Aluminium impact-extruded and shaped I-Cone bottle for Heineken.

AEROSOL CANS

Gold: DS Containers (USA). Two-piece DWI steel 18oz aerosol container for The Faultless Starch Company using co-extruded polyester coatings.

Silver: Tubex GmbH (Germany). Shaped 15cl aluminium monobloc aerosol can for Nivea hair care product.

Bronze: USC Europe (UK). Three-piece welded steel aerosol can with pre-applied digitally-printed label.

BEVERAGE CANS, TWO-PIECE

Gold: Ball Packaging Europe (Germany). Aluminium 33cl can for Coca-Cola using high-definition graphical effects.

Silver: Rexam Beverage Can Americas (USA). Aluminium 11oz sleek can in 204 diameter for Starbucks Ice Coffee.

Bronze: Ball Packaging Europe (Germany). Aluminium 50cl can with floating 'wedge' that adds ingredients on opening for Brain Twist's Defense brand.

BEVERAGE CANS, THREE-PIECE

Gold: Daiwa Can Company (Japan). Steel 10cl can with screw cap fitted on manufacturing line for Pokka Aromax and Espresso coffee drinks.

Silver: Toyo Seikan Kaisha (Japan). Steel 10cl can with resealable lid for Kirin Namacha Gyokuro100% brand.

Bronze: No award

BOTTLES

Gold: Exal Corporation (USA). Aluminium 25cl impact-extruded and shaped bottle with crown closure for Coca-Cola Blak coffee cola drink.

Silver: Boxal SA (France). Aluminium 33cl impact-extruded and shaped I-Cone bottle for Heineken.

Bronze: Toyo Seikan Kaisha and Japan Crown Cork (Japan). 10cl DWI aluminium bottle with Maxi-Cap closure for Uruoi-Biritsu wellness drink made by House Foods Corporation.

DECORATIVE CANS

Gold: Hoffmann Neopac AG (Switzerland). Joint award for Snap Top pocket packs for confectionery: one for First gum produced by Gida Sanayi ve Tikaret, Turkey, and one for XX Enerzone made by Intact GmbH, Germany.

Silver: Klann Verpackungen GmbH & Co KG (Germany). Three-piece embossed secondary container for White & Mackay Scotch Whisky.

Bronze: Toyo Seikan Kaisha (Japan). Beaded 15cl TULC can with gravure-printed polyester film labels for Roots coffee drinks made by Japan Tobacco Inc.

ENDS, CAPS AND CLOSURES

Gold: Toyo Seikan Kaisha (Japan). Resealable Z-end lid used on Kirin Namacha Gyokuro100% drinks brand.

Silver: Petrox Containers (India). One-piece drawn steel lid for hazardous chemicals using plastics threaded neck and pilfer-proof cap with wire handle.

Bronze: Brasilita (Brazil). Ploc-off vacuum closure system that uses metal and a plastic lid

FOOD CANS, TWO-PIECE

Gold: Impress Holdings (France). Club luncheon meat can with drawn rectangular aluminium body and Easy Peel foil membrane closure for Daesang, South Korea.

Silver: Daiwa Can Company (Japan). Aluminium DWI can with full-aperture easy-open double-safe lid and plastics cover for Gilco Gaba chocolates.

Bronze: Impress Holdings (France). Drawn Hansa can with embossed easy-open end for Appel 200g herring and tomato snack.

FOOD CANS, THREE-PIECE

Gold: Falco (Italy). Decorated 75cl container with bottle spout

and screw top for La Comunita extra virgin olive oil.

Silver: Crown Food Europe (UK). Shaped 375g food can with easy-open end and shrink label for Crosse & Blackwell's Waist-line range of low-calorie soups and baked beans.

Bronze: Brasilita SA (Brazil). Vacuum-packed tinplate container with Ploc-off plastics lid for 368g Toleno coffee pack.

GENERAL LINE CANS

Gold: Blechwarenfabrik Limburg (Germany). Decocan digital-printed label system that augments conventional decoration for economic short batches.

Silver: Petrox Containers (India). Three-piece 25cl rectangular can for Gulf brake fluid that uses an integrated pilfer-proof closure and internal plastics liner.

Bronze: Müller & Bauer GmbH & Co KG (Germany). Welded tinplate container with full-aperture easy-open lid that is UN approved for dangerous solids and fluids.

PROMOTIONAL CANS

Gold: Independent Can Company (USA). Three-piece tapered decorated drum for Eukanuba pet foods' 60th anniversary.

Silver: Riverside Technologies International (USA). 'Talking' promotional can for Miller beer.

Bronze: Crown Aerosols Europe (UK). Shaped 195g aerosol cans for Gillette shaving cream World Cup promotion.

PROTOTYPES

Gold: Petrox Containers (India). Two-piece tinplate draw-redraw can with end featuring inbuilt neck and screw top for hazardous chemicals.

Silver: Tubex GmbH (Germany). Impact extruded aluminium aerosol can with debossed logo.

Bronze: Toyo Seikan Kaisha (Japan). Steel beverage cans with co-extruded polyester coatings enabling dry DWI production process with low environmental impact.

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