



Cafe2U's Ian Stewart, at the day job and collecting his prize

Cafe2U takes the top mobile award

For the second time, Cafe2U walked away with a Bev-E award as the top mobile operator. This was a difficult sector, confirmed the head judge... the entrants could not always be found!

"I did five of the mobile judgings," said Ranald Paterson. "We went up a lot of wrong streets, we made a lot of 'where the hell are you?' calls, so judging unannounced was a problem.

"But I was impressed by all the mobile operators. Personality plays a large part in this business – apart from one static site, all entrants were fairly similar, with the same kind of set-ups. All were very clean, all were covering about 12 calls between 7am and 2pm, all were very busy.

"I came away very impressed by the state of the mobile coffee trade, and yet, most of them had only been doing it for a year or so – it is clear that a great deal of good training has been going in. All the judges commented on the quality of beverages produced by the mobile traders in difficult situations – it's very difficult to get a good espresso in a paper cup!"

Cafe2U has recently had a remarkable response to a consumer survey – it had 3,000 responses to a simple entry-card contest on the theme of 'What does your Cafe2U mean to you?' The company's Alex Dawson told *Coffee House* that the findings fitted with what the judges had said. "We found out that our customers love our service, but most importantly the coffee – and that they love the franchisees themselves."

He agreed that the winning performance of his operators showed that coffee training had been a great success, but regretted that the way mobile franchisees live and work makes it difficult for them to go on to further glories – the chain has very much wanted to enter its best baristas into the national championships, but faces the problem that they are all self-employed people with very little free time for such things, and almost certainly nobody to cover their business. The compromise may be to introduce an informal barista jam to the next Cafe2U franchisees' conference.

Cafe2U now operates 42 custom-built coffee vans, and has doubled its turnover in the six months to August 2008.