

Alta Sponsors Inaugural Leasing Life Awards Dinner



The Theatre at Le Plaza Hotel in Brussels was an impressive setting for the first Leasing Life Awards Dinner, sponsored by The Alta Group. Created in 1930 as a cinema, and later designated a historical building, the theatre's Hispano-Arabic and

Moorish style provided a magnificent ambience for a thoroughly enjoyable and social pan-European gathering. We hope that these awards will become a firm fixture in the European leasing industry's calendar.

Mid December 2007 saw about 100 senior management from the European leasing industry gather for the dinner and the next day's *Leasing Life Conference – Reinventing the Lease: the Challenges of Innovation and Change in Asset Finance*. The Awards Cocktail Party (sponsored by Key Equipment Finance) ensured that the industry was suitably “warmed up” for the dinner and the eagerly anticipated awards.

Regrettably, Derek Soper was indisposed and unable to introduce the nominations. This was extremely disappointing given Derek's long-held belief in the desirability of an awards ceremony and his enthusiasm and hard work with *Leasing Life* and industry colleagues before the event to ensure that the evening would be both memorable and a resounding success.

Alan Leesmith, standing in for Derek, explained that the awards, which were donated by Alta, were chosen by Derek and are replicas of the Armada dishes. Just like the originals, they are, of course, solid silver and a magnificent memento for the winners of this inaugural ceremony.

The judging panel's task had not been an easy one. As publicity for the awards increased, there were some excellent nominations for each of the four awards. Alan stressed that the awards were European and specifically for 2007, not for long-term achievement. Alan then introduced the nominees for each award and the rationale put forward in support of each nomination before handing over to Andrew Denton of CHP Consulting (Awards Categories sponsor) to reveal the results and present the awards.



Photos Courtesy of Leasing Life

Lindsay Town, Bank of Scotland (left), with Malcolm Ogle, The Alta Group



Javier de León Blanco, The Alta Group, with Regina Prehofer, UniCredit Leasing



Alta's Javier de León Blanco (left), Miguel Vara Luna (middle) and Alan Leesmith



Alta's Marc Tandler (left) and Malcolm Ogle (middle), with CHP's Andrew Denton

Equipment Financing Deal of the Year Nominees

- **RBS Structured Asset Finance** - For the first major UK cross-border deal under the terms of the Finance Act 2006. This saw the recent closure of a \$120 million financing of commuter trains and buses for use by New Jersey Transit in a deal with a five-year lease term.
- **UniCredit Leasing** – For Croatia’s first large-scale sale and leaseback deal, a €158 million lease of 79 state-of-the-art trams for the City of Zagreb. This is also believed to be the largest public sector leasing deal in the history of the CIS and the CEE. Furthermore, the operating lease was off-balance sheet for the lessee, a pioneering style of leasing in Croatia. Added to that were the technical complexities and a potential lessee based in a country which only 12 years ago was at war.
- **Raiffeisen Leasing Austria** - Many leasing companies boast green portfolios but few, if any, can claim the same degree of commitment to this new and important sector as Raiffeisen Leasing. It has leased wind turbines worth some €1 billion over the past year; financed the transfer of cars from petrol to biofuel, by providing fuel as an incentive; and in Austria’s Tyrol started the process of sourcing old buildings with clean and efficient energy sources. Its key transaction was a large scheme to lease wood-burning plants to provide cleaner energy in residential homes in three municipalities in Slovakia.

And the Winner of Deal of the Year was...UniCredit Leasing

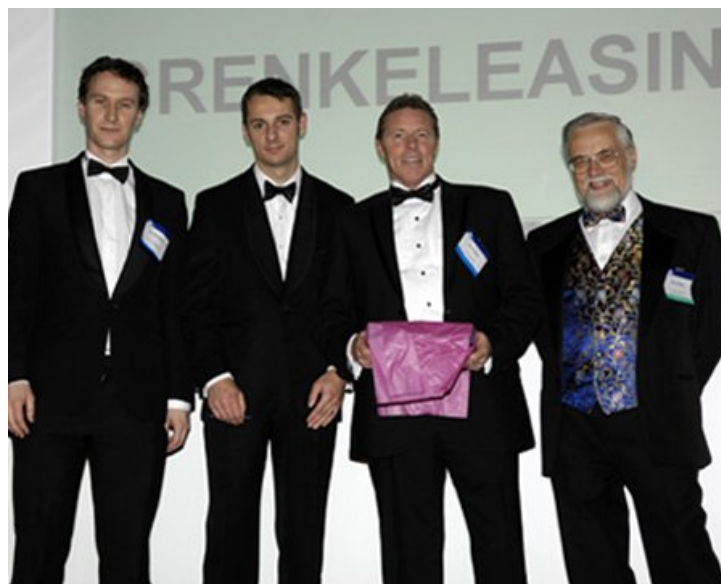


Pictured are (left to right): Brendan Malkin, Editor of Leasing Life; Andrew Denton, Director of CHP Consulting; Regina Prehofer, accepting the award as CEO of UniCredit Global Leasing; and Alan Leesmith, Principal of The Alta Group.

Vendor Leasing Company of the Year Nominees

- **SG Equipment Finance** – Under the long-term care of Jean-Marc Mignerey and driven by servicing its core vendor clients on a global basis, in the past decade SGEF has grown from having operations in five countries to 24 today, 17 of them in Europe. Expansion has gone hand in hand with concentrating on SGEF's key markets, with benefits also accruing from maximising the strength of its parent bank customer base. In the past 12 months, this vendor finance specialist not only entered the tough Russian, Ukrainian and Chinese markets, but also North America.
- **De Lage Landen** - Another company that has also been under the guidance of one man, Karel Schellens, for many years and now present in Russia, China and the Americas. DLL has operations in 25 countries, 16 of them in Europe. In the past year, DLL has successfully completed a restructuring of its business in line with its vendor clients' demands and is now organised along "global" lines; vertically on business ones. Recently, DLL has expanded its presence in Norway and is pushing its business in Poland and Ireland as a result of parent bank acquisitions.
- **Grenkeleasing** – A company different from the other nominees, by not having a strong parent company or bank behind it and, therefore, Grenkeleasing has to secure its funding on a standalone basis. Despite facing a year of economic pressure, Grenkeleasing has grown. As well as hitting a record €500 million in new business, establishing an invoice finance business in Germany and becoming a market leader in France, it also managed to achieve one of the best returns on capital in the entire German financial services sector. Grenke is one of the few micro ticket leasing companies in Europe recognised and appreciated as a huge success and is now present in 16 European countries.
- **GE Capital** – Numerous key achievements in 2007 which included: offering on-line, high-speed credit decisions in all major West European countries; winning and implementing the largest and most strategic region for a global computer manufacturer; integrating its deal origination system with a key partner's sales system; and developing an integrated equipment finance and distribution finance package for customers.

And the Winner of Vendor of the Year was...Grenkeleasing



Kevin Green, Commercial Director of Grenkeleasing UK (third from left), accepts the award on behalf of Grenkeleasing AG

Captive Leasing Company of the Year Nominees

- **Pitney Bowes Financial Services International** - With a penetration rate of nearly 90 per cent, PBFS has achieved what few, if any other, captives have managed to do, whilst writing leases ranging from micro ticket to seven-figure sums. It has managed to do this, in part, by embedding a payment solutions culture within its sales operation. It has also assumed responsibility for collecting all receivables throughout the group. Moreover, while PBFS is mirroring other captives by providing a total client solution, it has taken this one step further by offering a credit card revolving facility – currently enjoying 75 per cent penetration - for all postage and after-market services. PBFS is a true service provision led captive lessor.
- **Daimler Financial Services** - Despite having been around as long as its parent, and irrespective of claims that it is the world's largest commercial vehicle lessor, DFS has recently ramped-up its contract hire business (Mercedes-Benz CharterWay) and radically improved global profits. It is now excellently placed to fulfil its next mission – to harmonise all its commercial vehicle products across Europe and spread the existence of products, such as insurance, across its countries of operation.
- **IBM Global Financing** - Significant skill is required to manage a business the size of IBMGF and the key strength is being able to do so while keeping the cost base at a minimum. It achieved exactly this when it placed its centre of European operations in low-cost Budapest and, thereby, managed to dramatically reduce overheads, improve reporting lines and achieve business efficiencies.
- **Caterpillar Financial Services** - On the back of massive growth in oil and gas transactions across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, CFS has seen its turnover grow by around 35 per cent in the last financial year with its portfolio now at some \$2.7 billion. It has also begun to make headway in Russia, from where it arranges cross-border leasing deals in Kazakhstan and other CIS states. In addition, CFS has expanded its network by launching a legal entity in Ukraine and has applied to the central bank in Turkey to start providing finance products.

And the Winner of Captive of the Year was... Pitney Bowes Financial Services International



Patrick Jelly, CEO of Pitney Bowes Financial Solutions Europe (third from left), accepts the award on behalf of Pitney Bowes.

Leasing Personality of the Year Nominees

As Alan emphasised to the audience, our industry is fortunate to have so many very good people who contribute for the overall benefit of us all and, therefore, the judges had a real challenge to select just one person when so many deserve an award. The list of nominees was eventually narrowed down to four.

- **Lindsay Town, Managing Director of Asset and Motor Finance at HBOS** - Following HBOS' acquisition of the remaining 50 per cent of Lex Vehicle Leasing, Lindsay is now integrating LVL with the other Bank of Scotland vehicle finance operations to create a business with a 250,000 fleet, making it the largest of its kind in the UK. In addition, HBOS has completed the company's biggest sale and leaseback, embarked on innovative cross-border deals and taken steps to place leasing firmly within the bank's culture. Following a massive restructuring, Lindsay has taken charge of one of Europe's largest lessors.
- **Alain Vervaeet, Chairman of ING Lease Holding** – Year on year, Alain has not only been an industry figurehead but has also been at the helm of a business that has seen almost continuous growth during his period in charge. In the past year, ING Lease has made headway in Eastern Europe by acquiring Citigroup's Hungarian leasing business and has grown its Polish business, which concentrates on real estate leasing, by almost 500 per cent. INGL has also signed big deals in Spain and agreed with a US financial services specialist to provide financing solutions to its new European business. Despite harsh trading conditions, its leasing and factoring business grew by over 7 per cent during the first three quarters of 2007.
- **Regina Prehofer, CEO of UniCredit Global Leasing S.p.A.** - Under the leadership of Regina, UCL has achieved what it set out to do when it started out some two years ago. Following its take over of an array of businesses across the CEE, UCL has merged a large number of leasing businesses in Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia, and is well on the way to doing the same in Russia and Poland. Most new businesses have been rebranded as UCL, a new management structure has been put in place and now the lessor is ready to launch in new territories. As well as overseeing these changes, Regina bolstered revenues and profits during 2007.
- **Jean-Marc Mignerey, former Chairman of Leaseurope and current CEO of SG Equipment Finance** - Jean-Marc led Leaseurope through a period of change, including the year in which the merger with ECATRA, representing the vehicle rental industries, became a reality, and was instrumental in stepping-up the association's lobbying efforts at the Commission. Jean-Marc has travelled extensively promoting the European finance industry not only around Europe, but internationally. He achieved this while in charge of one of Europe's most successful leasing companies and has taken SGEF not only across Europe, but globally to Asia Pacific, China and America.

And the Winner of Leasing Personality of the Year was . . .

Jean-Marc Mignerey

Jean-Marc was unable to attend the event but we extend our congratulations.

If you require more information about the Awards Dinner please contact dereksoper@thealtagroup.eu.com or alanleesmith@thealtagroup.eu.com