

THE AV INDUSTRY REGISTERS A NEW HIGH SCORE

CONNECTED MAGAZINE'S MOST POPULAR AWARDS ARE BACK (BY POPULAR DEMAND). JOIN US AS WE RUN THROUGH EVERY CATEGORY IN THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND AV AND CUSTOM INSTALLATION INDUSTRY FOR THE 2024 MOST POPULAR AWARDS.

The *Connected* office has a strong relationship with the simple word game of Scrabble. Editors, writers and salespeople at Lanella Media have all played Scrabble for eons.

With trade shows and events happening all around the calendar year, the word game we love is a go-to to pass that hour-long flight between Melbourne and Sydney or any trip away. Because of that love, we decided to make this year's Most Popular Awards Scrabble themed!

And with that, welcome to the 2024 edition of *Connected* magazine's Most Popular Awards. These awards, as always, are voted on by you, the AV and custom installation industry. We thank everyone who took part in making this the strongest cross-section of the industry out there and are proud to say we received 426 responses.

In the 2023 Most Popular Awards, we debuted a five-year snapshot for each award category, giving readers the ability to see how companies or brands have fared in the past few years. We have again included a five-year snapshot for every award, including industry awards like Commercial and Residential Distributor of the Year.

Speaking of the Distributor of the Year awards, congrats to Amber Technology for completing the *Connected* treble, taking the top spot in all three distributor categories: Residential, Commercial and New Zealand.

To read more about every winning



category, flick through to following pages to see who won.

And with every edition of the Most Popular Awards, *Connected* magazine has awarded its Most Influential Person award. This year, the winner is Michael

Henriksen from Blustream (and several other important stops along the way).

Flick to page 16 for a full profile piece with this year's recipient. The full conversation with can be found on *Connected, the AV integrator's podcast*.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE WINNERS AND EVERYONE WHO WAS NOMINATED FOR ONE OR MORE AWARDS. IF YOU WON, GOOD JOB, IF YOU WERE A RUNNER-UP, THERE'S ALWAYS NEXT YEAR!

MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON INDUSTRY AWARDS

WINNER
Michael Henriksen

BLUSTREAM

CONGRATULATIONS

A mogul in the Australian AV industry. Hold that, the international AV industry, Michael took his talents from Denmark in the 80s as he looked for greener pastures and found the little, cold town of Melbourne. It was here that he started his own audio business, Scan Audio, selling premium Scandinavian audio brands across the entire country.

From there, Michael launched QualiFi, a name synonymous with the Australian AV and integration industry. While at QualiFi, he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement award by CEDIA, one of the highest honours from the association.

In 2014, Michael and some colleagues saw a gap in the market for HDBaseT products and decided to launch their own brand, Blustream. The company has recently celebrated its tenth anniversary and while there will surely be candles blown in Melbourne, Blustream can proudly celebrate the achievement across most of the world.

To read a full write-up of *Connected* magazine's Most Influential Person for 2024, head to page 16 where Sean Carroll runs through Michael's journey to AV and beyond.



RESIDENTIAL DISTRIBUTORS INDUSTRY AWARDS

WINNER
Amber Technology

Amber TECHNOLOGY

32.33%

RUNNER UP
Snap One

26.72%

SECOND RUNNER UP
Canohm

15.52%

Amber Technology has been named the Residential Distributor of the Year for the 2024 Most Popular Awards.

This year was a huge year for Amber Technology as the company expanded its reach across the AV world.

One crucial addition was ABB, who entered into a strategic distribution agreement in mid-February of this year. Another was the exclusive partnership in Australia and New Zealand with Ochno AB, a leading-edge manufacturer in signal management and USB-C technology.

Moving into the live concert and event space, Amber Technology signed an exclusive agreement with Amadeus Acoustics in Australia and New Zealand.

MOST POPULAR MANUFACTURER INDUSTRY AWARDS

WINNER
Control4

Control4

CONGRATULATIONS

Control4 has been voted the Most Popular Manufacturer in *Connected* magazine's Most Popular Awards for 2024.

When you think smart homes, you think Control4. Australian AV integrators have been using Control4 solutions for years on years and this award is a representation of that strong brand identity.

In late 2023, Control4 released an update to the operating software on its app, giving integrators much greater flexibility when it comes to installing and managing its solutions. The OS 3.4 update comes with a range of user-friendly features including in-app notification event management, new user management applications and more.

Building on that, Control4 reimagined its user interface with Control4 X4, debuting at the 2024 CEDIA Expo. It aims to help end users fine-tune their smart home systems through continued use, taking the job of programming small updates out of the hands of integrators and making it simple and easy enough for homeowners to do it themselves.

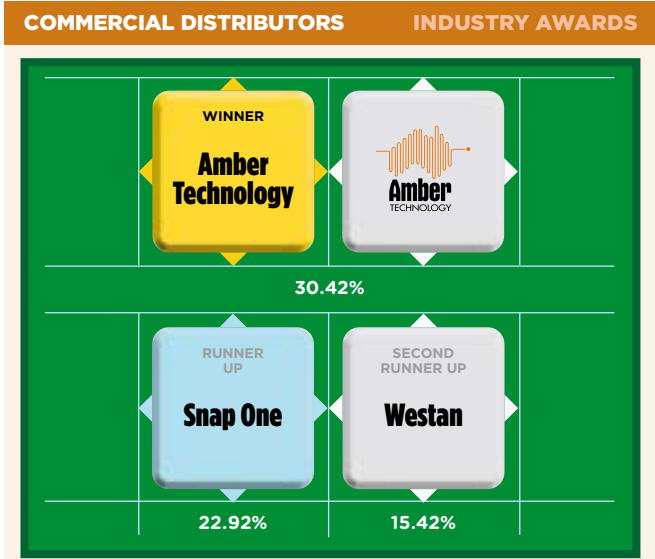
Congratulations to Control4 for being named the Most Popular Manufacturer for 2024 in *Connected*'s Most Popular Awards.



TRENDS

- 1 Amber Technology
- 2 Snap One
- 3 Canohm
- 4 AV Distributors
- 5 Ivory Egg
- Advance Audio
- Avation
- NAS Australia
- Qualifi
- Radio Parts
- Sound United
- Westan

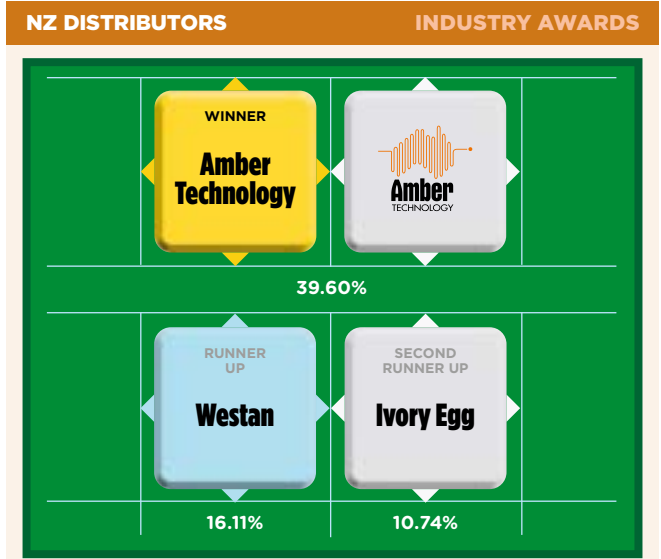
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Amber Technology	Amber Technology	Amber Technology	Amber Technology	Amber Technology
2	Snap One	Snap One	Canohm	Snap One	Snap One
3	Canohm	Avation	Canohm	Canohm	Amber Technology
4	Radio Parts	Amber Technology	Amber Technology	Amber Technology	Amber Technology
5	Avation	Amber Technology	Amber Technology	Amber Technology	Amber Technology
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024



Amber Technology continues a stellar run, making it five in a row for Commercial Distributor of the Year, collecting just over 30% of the popular vote, eclipsing its 23.11% from last year.

Snap One took a huge step into the Runner Up position after a strong year for new products and distributor news. Westan held on to the Second Runner Up spot for a second year in a row while Radio Parts, who came second in 2023, failed to make the top five in 2024.

As with the Residential Distributor of the Year award, Amber Technology made significant steps in expanding its technology footprint in the past 12 months with several key acquisitions and distribution agreements. Congratulations to the Amber Technology team for a successful year.



Amber Technology make it a clean sweep of the industry awards, taking home the *Connected* magazine treble after being named the New Zealand Distributor of the Year.

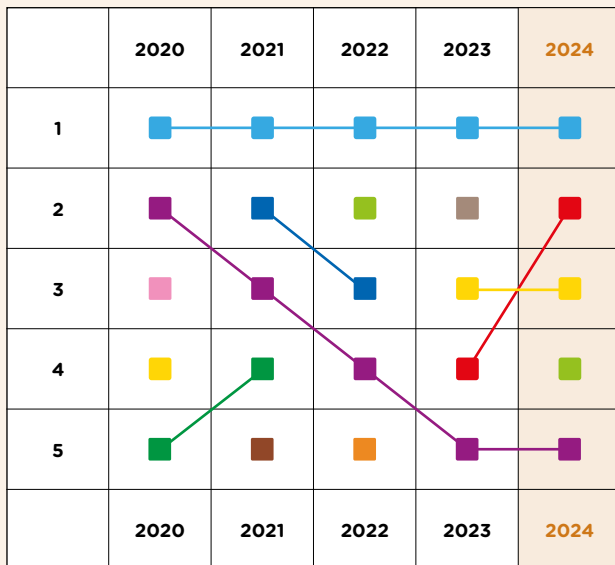
In 2023, Westan was able to break a streak of four wins by Amber Technology but a strong year by the latter has pushed them into the top spot. Ivory Egg, who finished sixth in the 2023 edition, rounded out the top three.

As with the previous two industry awards, Amber Technology's brand additions have clearly been well received by integrators across Australia and New Zealand.

Congratulations to all entrants and all the best for future editions of the Most Popular Awards.

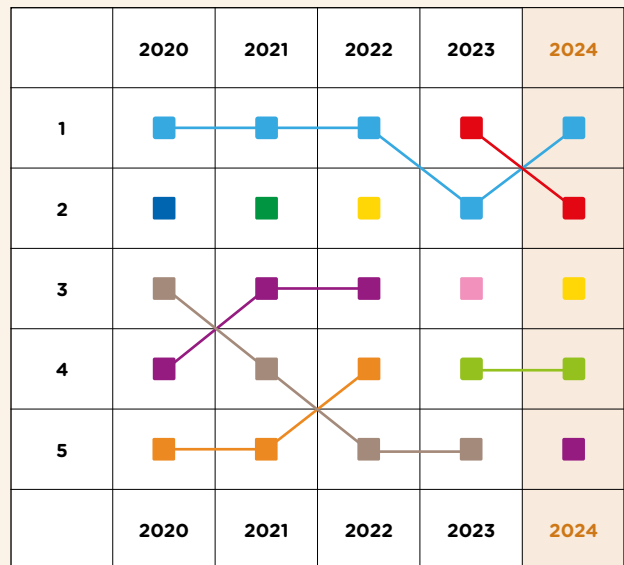
TRENDS

- 1 Amber Technology
- 2 Snap One
- 3 Westan
- 4 MadisonAV
- 5 AV Distributors
- Altronic
- Jands
- Midwich
- National Audio Systems
- Ness
- Radio Parts



TRENDS

- 1 Amber Technology
- 2 Westan
- 3 Ivory Egg
- 4 Mayo Group
- 5 Connected Media
- AV Supply Group
- Avation
- Mayo Group
- Midwich
- Pacific AV
- Sound Group Holdings



JEG HAR DET SOM BLOMMEN I ET ÆG

MICHAEL HENRIKSEN HAS SPENT A LOT OF TIME BUILDING UP THE AUSTRALIAN AV INDUSTRY ON BOTH THE COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL SIDES. SEAN CARROLL SPEAKS TO THE 2024 MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HIS STORIED CAREER.

Michael Henriksen wanted to steer clear of electronics. Just stick to loudspeakers, his bread and butter. When he had the opportunity to become the Marantz agent in Australia, all he could think about was issues with repairs, spare parts and warranties – too much of a headache.

Fast forward to the present day and I'm speaking with Michael about his decorated working life and the accomplishments that saw him named *Connected* magazine's Most Influential Person for 2024. He's receiving this award in no small part due to his decision to step away from just audio solutions and start manufacturing electronics with iconic HDMI distribution company Blustream.

EARLY DAYS

Growing up in Denmark, Michael Henriksen always loved audio technology. When he was a teenager, he got his first hi-fi system, and it was the start of a lifelong career for the young Dane.

"After I got my hands on that hi-fi system, I started building loudspeakers in my dad's garage," he says.

"I think I built about 50 pairs of loudspeakers and sold them to friends and family. It's safe to say, I don't have any of those speakers left."

Working in the plumbing industry at the time, Michael saw an advert in the newspaper where someone was looking for a sales representative to sell pick-up cartridges, car loudspeakers and headphones. Michael went to interview for the job, driving over to Copenhagen to have a chat with his future employer.

While interviewing for the role, Michael looked at some of the loudspeakers that they were going to sell and was blown away by the retail pricing. He could see the components used in the high-end Jamo loudspeakers and knew that he



A young Michael Henriksen proudly displays the Scan Audio sign out the front of his Melbourne office shortly after debuting the company.

couldn't even build speakers himself for such a competitive price.

"After I recognised the drivers and saw the cost, I knew the brand had huge potential. And that's how it all started, it was just an ad in the paper. Five years later, we were the biggest loudspeaker distributor in Denmark, and we had 27% of the market," he explains.

There's a Danish saying that goes something along the lines of: "Så er den ged barberet". It translates to: "The goat has been shaved" where the "goat" in this

instance is a 'job'. So: "getting the job done".

But if you're guessing my momentary Google of Danish phrases ends there, you're wrong. The title of this article, Jeg har det som blommen i et æg translates to "I feel like an egg yolk" which is used to say that you feel content.

Michael says that after a few years working in Denmark, he got itchy feet, wasn't content and wanted to start his own business elsewhere. He wanted to shave the goat elsewhere.

SELLING SOUND IN AUSTRALIA

"I took the cheapest flight I could from Copenhagen to Sydney which was with Air India. I remember it very clearly, we stopped at nearly every country on the way, and it took two days to travel across the globe," Michael explains.

"I did a one-month market survey up and down the East Coast, from Melbourne to Brisbane, went back to Denmark, presented it to the Jamo export department and said that I believe there's a market in Australia. They said: 'Alright, if you can get in, we'll get you the agency.'"

From there, Michael took a couple of months to get his permanent residency before packing his bags and touching down in Melbourne in August 1982.

In an October 1982 edition of *EDA Circuit* magazine, a cheerful young Michael Henriksen poses in front of the Arts Centre Melbourne with a meaty loudspeaker. The article talks about his new company, Scan Audio and the two brands he's representing: Jamo and AM-KEMI, a manufacturer of record cleaning accessories, pick-up, tape decks and video recorders.

"We specialised in Scandinavian audio products, thus the name, Scan Audio. After ten years, we had pretty much all the Scandinavian brands represented, primarily loudspeakers, including Jamo, Dali, Dynaudio, Vifa, Peerless and Ortofon cartridges. I think the only brand we didn't have was Bang & Olufsen," he says.

In the mid-1990s, Michael sold the Scan Audio company but stayed on as managing director for just under three years. It wasn't long after he had officially left that the industry called him back and he returned to lead Scan Audio.

This time, Michael made a move for Marantz, diving into electronics and control solutions, despite his earlier trepidation. But Scan Audio wasn't just an audio company anymore and he had to change the name.

"We had an internal competition to come up with a new name, for a prize of \$500. It took a while but one day I remembered there was a



Jamo Professional was one of the biggest brands for Michael and the AV world in the early days.

company in Denmark called QualiFi and it represented what we were doing: quality hi-fi," Michael explains.

"Long story short, I won the \$500 and we registered the name in Australia."

QualiFi saw a lot of success distributing the Philips Pronto remote control. Looking back, it was rather simple technology but there was nothing else on the market that could do what it offered.

Philips eventually decided to sell the Pronto under its own brand name, so

QualiFi became the distributor for Marantz in 1999. On the stock list was the RC-5000, a similar remote that was hard to understand at first, but once the team understood its full potential, its sales grew to 16% of the overall Marantz turnover.

The range of solutions on offer led to QualiFi selling hugely successful speaker packages with AV receivers, DVD players and later, Blu-ray players.

In 2013, QualiFi had the opportunity to buy out its biggest competitor, Audio Products Group (APG).

The Sydney-based company, run by Ken Dwyer, were distributing Denon, NAD, PSB, Loewe Televisions, Tannoy and more. When the opportunity came, Michael says he struck fast and moved most of the APG solutions next door to QualiFi's Mount Waverly, Victoria office.

"We didn't know it at the time, but it was us buying out APG that started the idea of Blustream," he says.

ENTER, BLUSTREAM

Okay, so I wasn't completely honest earlier. QualiFi specifically bought APG's consumer electronics division, meaning APG was still operating its commercial and professional division, and one of the brands in that division was WyreStorm.

Currently distributed by Amber Technology in Australia, WyreStorm is a manufacturer that produces HD distribution and control solutions for AV signal distribution in professional, commercial, residential/custom install and retail markets.

"Suddenly, integrators and AV specialists were starting to ask me and Martyn Shirley, our custom installation sales manager in Australia, for HDBaseT products and we had to say we had nothing," Michael says.

"So, I said to Martyn, 'let's go find a brand that we can represent.' ▶



He got back to me a week or two later and said: 'Look, the brands we can get, I'm not interested in and the ones I'm interested in, we can't get.'

What do you do when you can't find a brand you want? Make your own of course.

A farfetched idea at the time, the two quickly came around to it. Martyn had experience on the manufacturing side before joining QualiFi and the two put together a business plan and had a long, hard think about it.

Michael says they went online and hosted a competition to come up with a name and a logo for the reward of \$1,000. Shortly after, the name Blustream was created, and the logo integrators came to know and love was born.

Well, integrators know Blustream. Only a couple of products were manufactured using Blustream with an 'e'. Shortly after debuting, one of the brands that Michael was trying to secure for QualiFi had decided to go with another distributor, but they had a product with a very similar name, so the company dropped the 'e' to differentiate between the brands.

Blustream officially debuted at the Integrate Expo at ICC Sydney ten years ago.

Before the first day of the show, an industry colleague from New Zealand approached Blustream and asked if they were working across the Tasman. Initially, the answer was no, but by the end of the show, Blustream had its first customers outside of Australia. Not a bad way to start a trade show.

"A few weeks after Blustream's first Integrate, we started getting inquiries from Singapore and other places. Shortly after that, two people from the United Kingdom, Phil Davis and Leon Tomasevic, heard about what we were doing on the internet, and said: 'If we can get this agency in the UK, we can make this a really big brand.'"

Initially, Blustream was only designed with Australia in mind but after the international attraction, it made sense to expand.

The Philips Pronto, in all its mid-90s aesthetic glory, was a unit that every integrator knew about.



During his time at QualiFi, Michael Henriksen was awarded the CEDIA Lifetime Achievement award for his service to the industry.

"We set up a fully-owned subsidiary called Blustream UK and those two are still managing it after ten years. Very successfully, by the way," he explains.

"And then in 2021, Brexit happened, and it became increasingly difficult to ship from the UK to Europe. So, our European sales manager set up another subsidiary in Madrid, Spain."

From there, Blustream has seen products shipped across the world, including to Africa and the Middle East, in true keeping with Michael's pioneering spirit and global experience.

MAKING THE JUMP TO COMMERCIAL

When the pandemic hit, several companies wondered what was going to happen with the economy stalling, workplaces changing and questions coming at every corner.

Michael says he remembers a conversation very early on in 2020 when the world was about to stop:

"Myself, Martyn and Toby Leader (Blustream chief technology officer) sat in a room and I was asked: 'Look, we're heading

through tough times with these lockdowns. We have about 50 projects in the pipeline. What should we drop and what should we keep?'

"We were all very concerned about where we were going and what was going to happen and it looked like we were going to have a global recession immediately. Regardless, I said we're going ahead with every single project."

It was at this time that Blustream started developing more products for the commercial and professional AV markets. Before then, Blustream was predominantly operating in the residential space, but Michael admits that this side of the AV industry has matured and, if anything, is declining slightly.

With smart TVs getting smarter and soundbar technology getting better every year, Michael says there's less of a need for residential AV compared to the bigger commercial market.

"Home theatre is a bit of an uphill battle these days. A lot of customers are saying that they're content with a smart TV and sound bar," he says.

"Additionally, the housing crisis is seeing people move into smaller homes with less room for a dedicated theatre space or the cost-of-living is hurting integrators' abilities to convince people to install a full-blown theatre with five, seven or nine speakers, a couple of subwoofers and an AV receiver."

Blustream isn't just a residential company anymore. Michael feels as though they offer all they can in this space, but it was the company's ambition and bravery in the face of a pandemic-led recession that saw them plant solid roots in the commercial world.

"Maintaining those projects during the pandemic was a huge decision for us. It helped us get into the commercial market and fulfil needs that we previously couldn't," he outlines.

"We also bought everything we could get our hands on and because of that, we weren't as impacted by the chip shortages that hurt the AV industry. Because of this, we were able to find ourselves in spaces we previously didn't have access to, and we've only solidified our position since then."

THE NEXT CHALLENGE

"I've had a lot of good friends come up to me and tell me that if we want to break into the US market, we'll be walking home with our tail between our legs in three years' time with a very thin wallet," Michael says with a laugh.

He appears supremely confident in Blustream's ability to crack the biggest market in the world. And why not? Blustream has a partnership with RTI which is well-established in the United States with distribution, both direct and business, and Michael is confident they can grab a decent market share. Blustream has only seen success when taking on a new challenge, so there's no reason it shouldn't make hay in the US market

I tried to poach the secret herbs and spices from Michael, but to no avail, so we'll just have to wait and see if the Australian-grown company can do it.

More personally, Michael says he and his wife are looking at spending more time in Denmark each year, hopefully dodging the freezing cold Melbourne winters for sunny Europe. It also allows him to spend more time with the European arm of his company.

"I'm very honoured and humbled to receive this award. I have to say, I don't like to take credit for the success we've had because it's due to the very talented staff that I've worked with and continue to work with today," he explains.

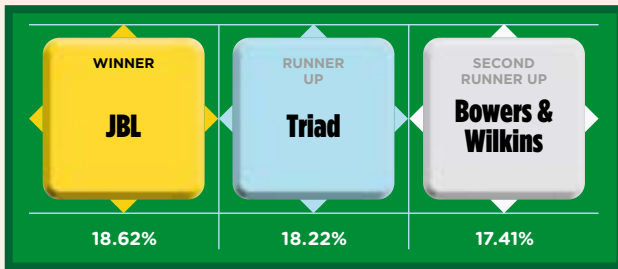
"Without my team now and colleagues across the years, I wouldn't be here accepting this award. I'm very thankful." ■



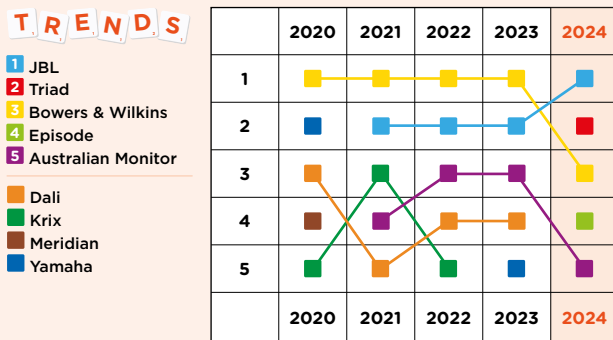
MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON HONOUR BOARD

2016	DAVID MOSELY	WAVETRAIN
2017	DAMIAN CAVANAGH	ELECTRONIC LIVING
2018	ALAN CHOW	CHOWMAIN SOFTWARE
2019	DAVID MEYER	CEDIA
2020	BRUCE COX & STEPHAN GOODHUE	LIQUID AUTOMATION
2021	ADAM MERLINO	SNAP ONE
2022	TONI MCALLISTER	WOMEN IN AV
2023	PAUL SKELTON	CEDIA
2024	MICHAEL HENRIKSEN	BLUSTREAM

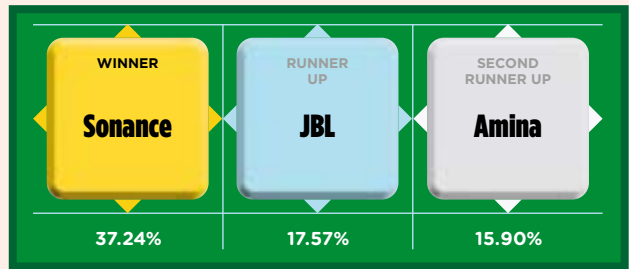
FREESTANDING LOUDSPEAKERS AUDIO



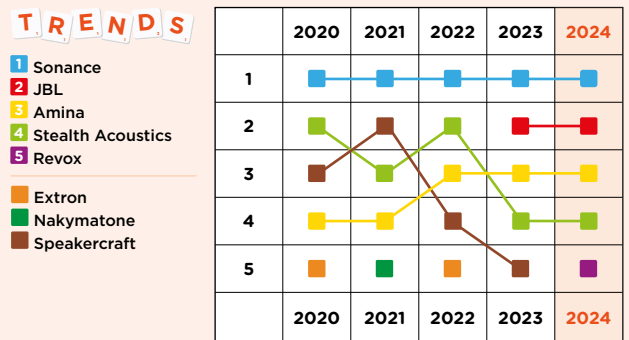
Bowers & Wilkins held the top spot in the Freestanding Loudspeakers category for seven straight years but were eclipsed by JBL for the first time after the company registered three-straight years as the Runner Up. The bread and butter of an audio installation, there aren't many votes separating the top three and it'll be exciting to track this one moving forward.



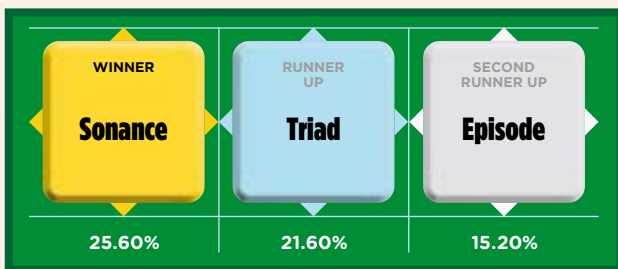
INVISIBLE LOUDSPEAKER AUDIO



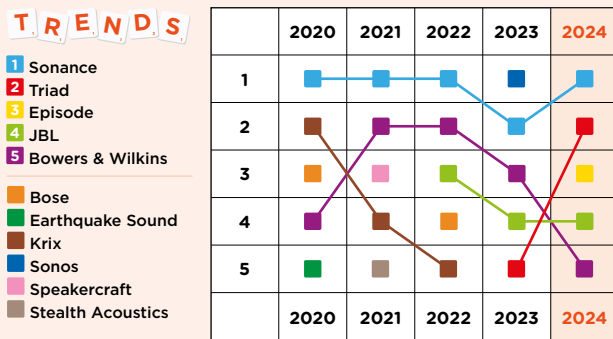
The Invisible Loudspeaker category should be re-branded as the Sonance category. For the 12th straight year, Sonance won the category and this year, the company won almost 20% more of the popular vote than the Runner Up. For what it's worth, in the 2023 Most Popular Award, Sonance received 39% of the popular vote, so maybe there's a chance another company could come knocking in the future.



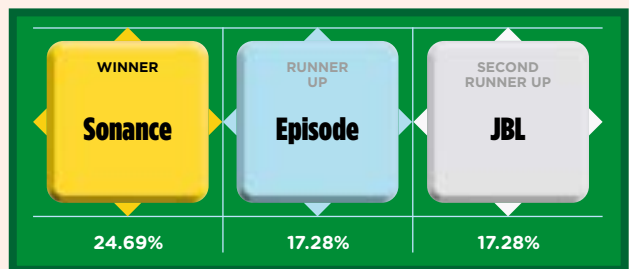
ARCHITECTURAL LOUDSPEAKER (RESIDENTIAL) AUDIO



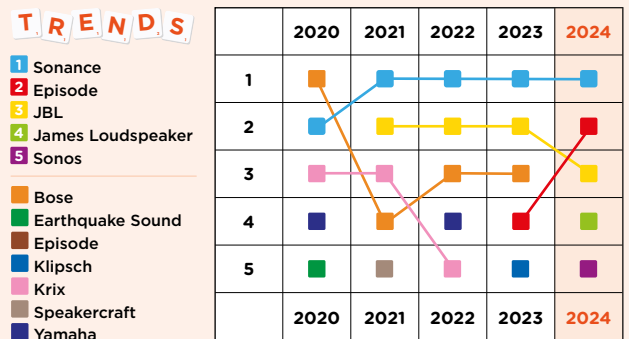
What an interesting category, Architectural Loudspeaker (Residential) was stolen by Sonos by just 1% of the popular vote in 2023 but Sonance has come back with a vengeance and Sonos is nowhere to be seen. Triad leap up to second place and Episode enters the competition for the first time in the five-year snapshot with a podium finish as Second Runner Up.



ARCHITECTURAL LOUDSPEAKER (COMMERCIAL) AUDIO

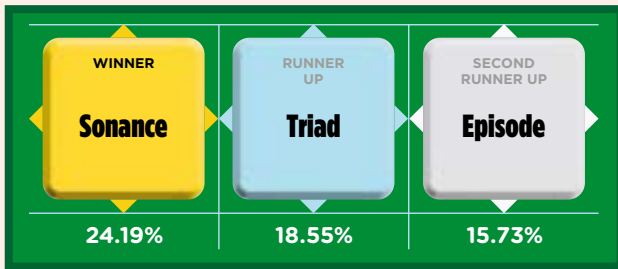


Commercial audio is another big award in the Most Popular Awards and we're starting to see a trend for the 2024 voting with Sonance taking the top spot and Episode and JBL polling very favourably. These awards are also the first full year with Bose Professional on the market, separated from the Bose brand, and the brand didn't crack the top five in voting.



OUTDOOR LOUDSPEAKER

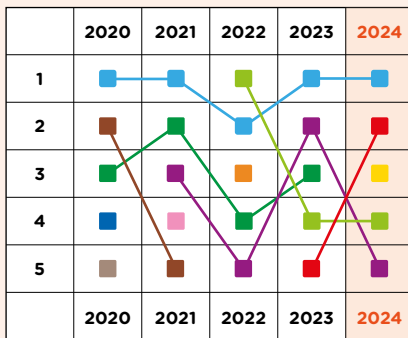
AUDIO



Say it with me everyone: "Sonance takes the first place in an audio category." They've done it again and with one more first-place finish coming up (spoilers), the brand is celebrating a haul of five top spots, an excellent achievement. In other news, Australian Monitor falls from second to fifth with Triad and Episode rounding out the top three while JBL remains steady at fourth.

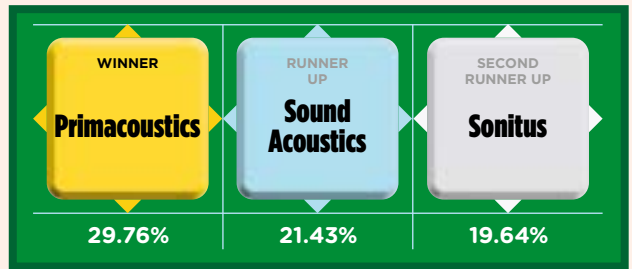
TRENDS

- 1 Sonance
 - 2 Triad
 - 3 Episode
 - 4 JBL
 - 5 Australian Monitor
- Bose
 - Bowers & Wilkins
 - Krix
 - Origin Acoustics
 - Speakercraft
 - Yamaha



ACOUSTIC TREATMENT

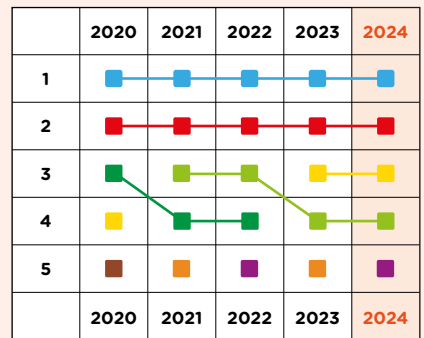
AUDIO



The Acoustic Treatment category is a very consistent award every year and the 2024 results aren't much of a deviation. Primacoustics wins for the sixth year in a row. Sonitus maintained its Second Runner Up position for another year, polling well and improving its percentage of the popular vote from 15% in 2024. As I said with this award last year, you can almost set your watch to it. Almost!

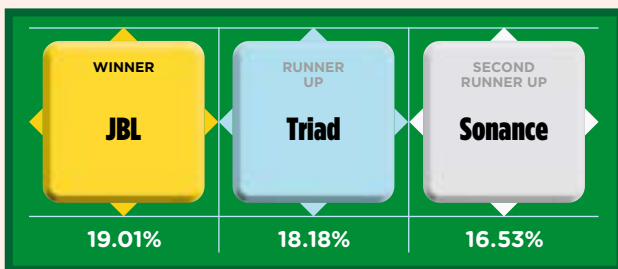
TRENDS

- 1 Primacoustics
 - 2 Sound Acoustics
 - 3 Sonitus
 - 4 Artnovion
 - 5 Wave Panels
- Cinema Works
 - Vicoustic
 - Yamaha



SUBWOOFERS

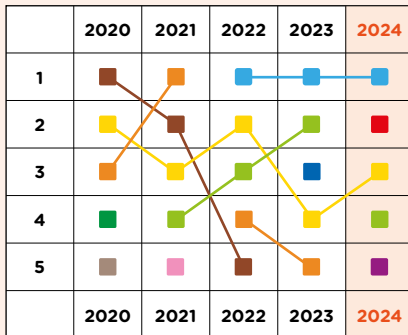
AUDIO



The Subwoofer category is another hotly-contested race that's always one to keep an eye on. JBL brings home the victory for the third year in a row, but Triad makes a splash, coming second. Sonance finishes on the podium for the first time in two years and Australian Monitor and Episode round out the top five. It'll be interesting to see how JBL performs next year following some recent high-profile releases.

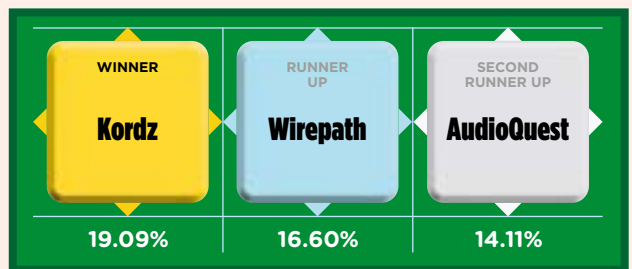
TRENDS

- 1 JBL
 - 2 Triad
 - 3 Sonance
 - 4 Australian Monitor
 - 5 Episode
- Bowers & Wilkins
 - Earthquake Sound
 - Krix
 - Sonos
 - Sunfire
 - Yamaha



SPEAKER CABLING/INTERCONNECT

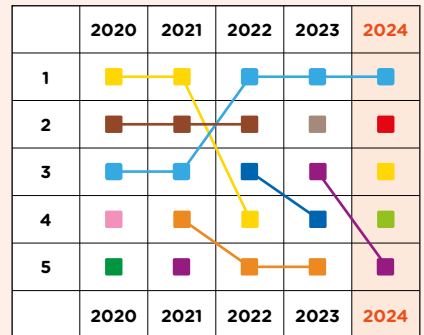
AUDIO

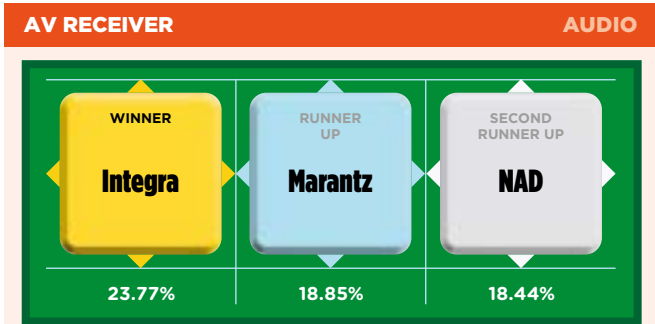


Well, it's all fine and good to give out awards for the best audio solutions, but how are they going to play music? Everyone needs speaker cabling, making this award one of the biggest in the Most Popular Awards. Kordz make it three straight this year while the following four all shuffle around with Wirepath being awarded the first Runner Up and AudioQuest behind them.

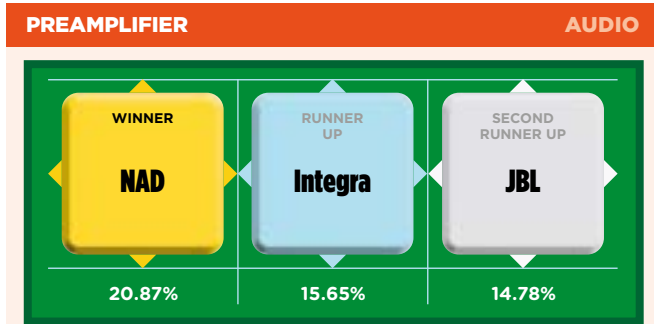
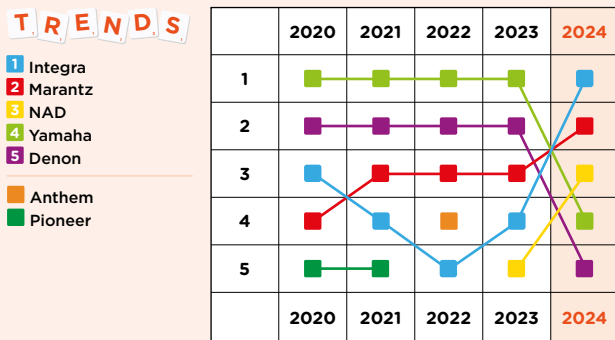
TRENDS

- 1 Kordz
 - 2 Wirepath
 - 3 AudioQuest
 - 4 Binary
 - 5 Canare
- Australian Monitor
 - Belden
 - Blustream
 - Ice Cables
 - Kramer
 - WireWorld

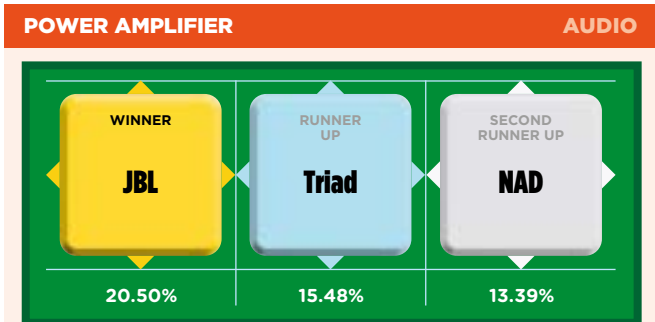
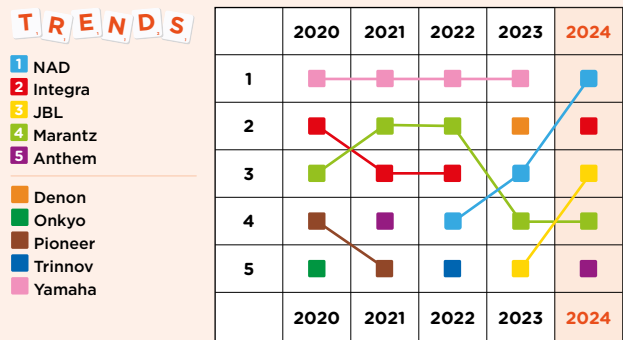




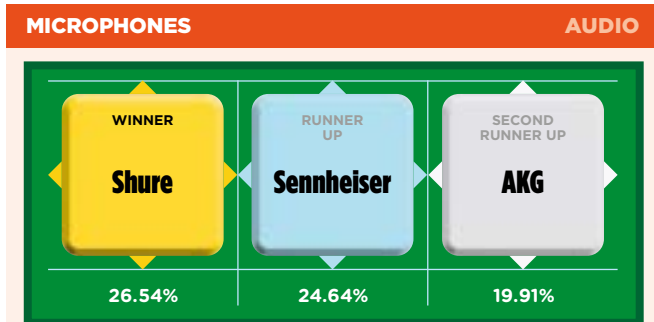
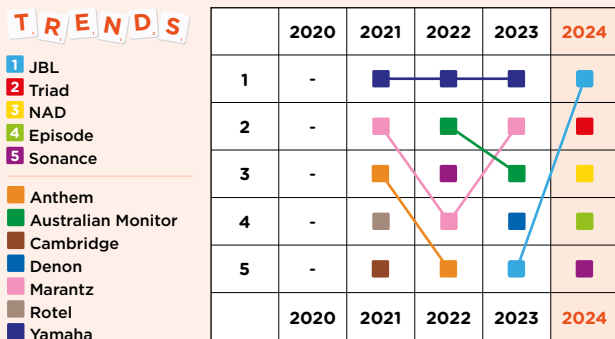
What a busy little category! The AV Receiver category in the Most Popular Awards has been very steady for the past few years with Yamaha and Denon taking first and second place respectively. This year, Integra has stolen the first-place spot by quite a large margin and you have to assume it's off the back of some impressive product releases for late 2023 and the 2024 calendar year.



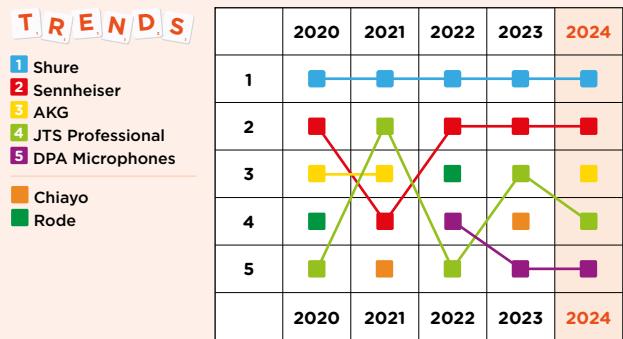
Yamaha shockingly went from six straight top-place spots in the Preamp category to off the board in this year's Most Popular Awards. NAD Electronics parlayed a podium finish in last year's Awards into a top spot this year, likely due to the success of the NAD M66 preamplifier and new Classic Series integrated amplifier/DAC which was announced in mid-2024.

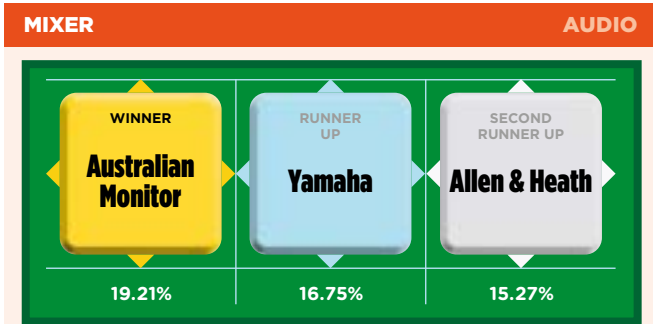


One of the younger categories in the Awards, JBL took the top spot for the first time in the Power Amplifier category. It was a busy year for JBL by HARMAN and it's no wonder they took home the top spot in the category with a strong suite of products at trade shows across the year. Yamaha fell out of the top spot altogether after three years of winning this category.

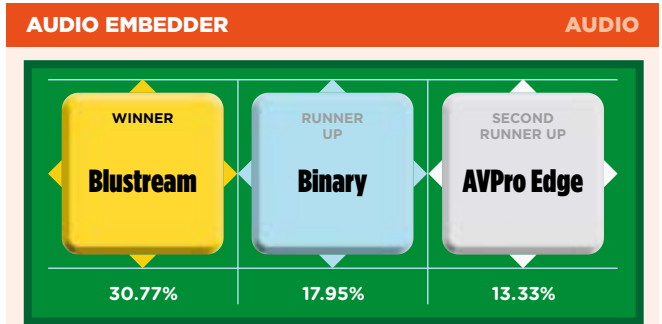
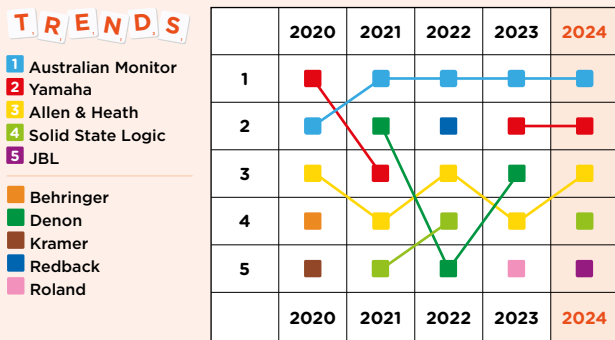


Microphones is always a hardly fought award category in the Most Popular Awards and Sennheiser clawed back some votes, bridging the gap to just under 2% after falling behind by nearly 9% last year. The latest solution impacting the first-place award was the Shure MWX neXt 2, an all-in-one conferencing and collaboration microphone (with a product review in the previous edition of *Connected*).

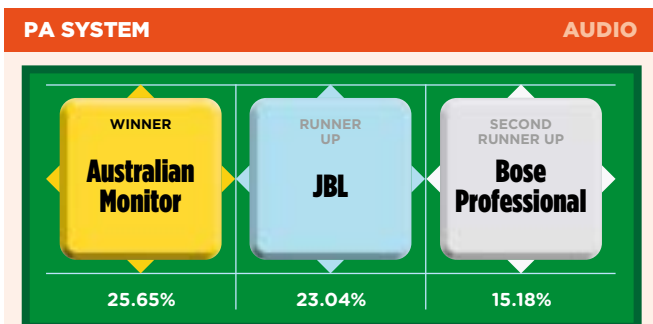
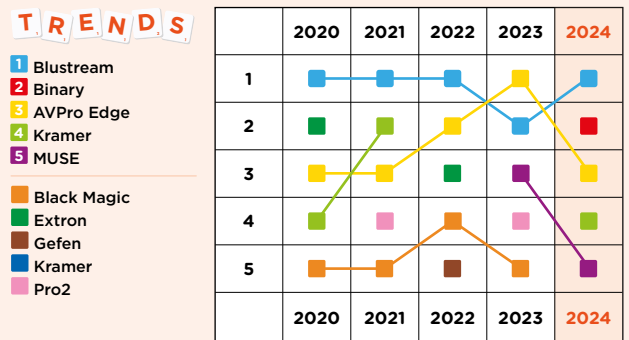




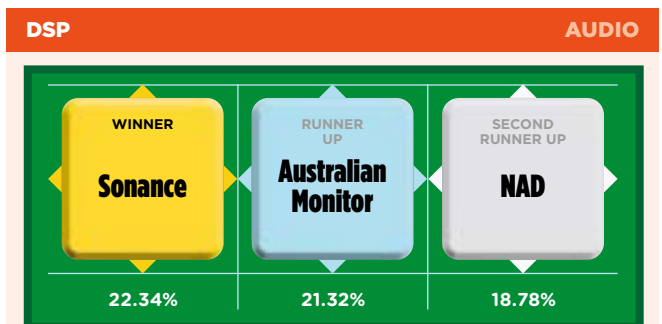
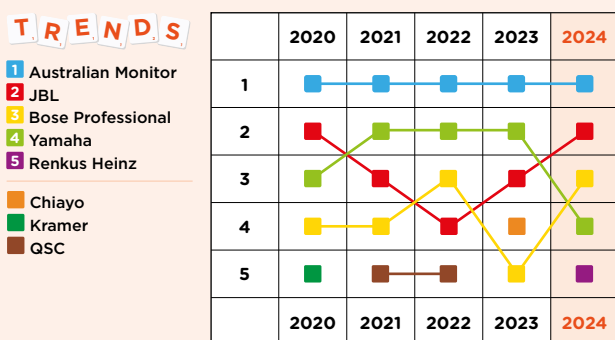
Australian Monitor take another winner in the Mixer category by a considerable margin while Yamaha just beats out Allen & Heath for the second year. While the winner here is entering next year's awards with a chance of a five-peat, Australian Monitor lost a portion of the popular vote, falling from the 24% of the total vote last year to just over 19% this year. Yamaha also lost a portion of its 2023 vote.



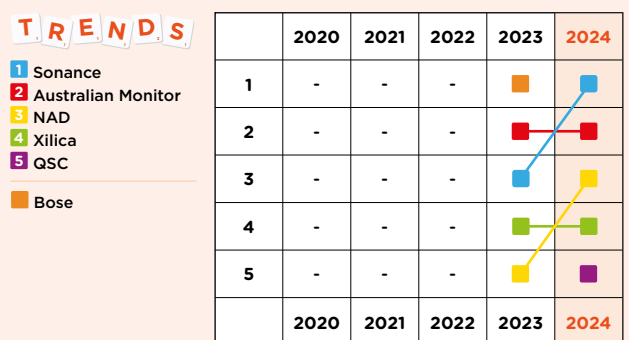
This time last year, I wrote that a shockwave rippled through the *Connected* offices as Blustream was knocked off its perch atop the Audio Embedded category. It also fell from a record-high 38.8% of the popular vote in 2022 as Binary overtook it. Well, Blustream had another strong year with integrators and grabbed back a large portion of the popular vote and first place.

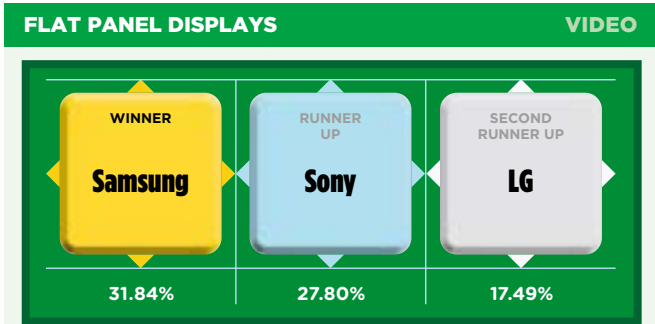


Australian Monitor has a strong grip on the popular vote in the PA System category, extending its lead. Bose Professional, operating as a separate entity for the first full calendar year, has leapt up into the podium positions again. Bose Professional launched the Bose S1 Pro+ in early 2024 to critical acclaim. Yamaha fell out of second position while JBL stepped up into Runner Up.

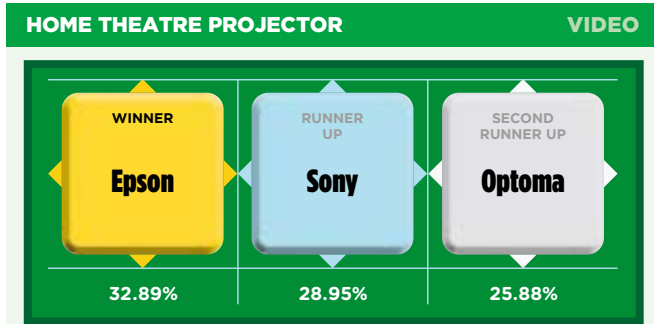
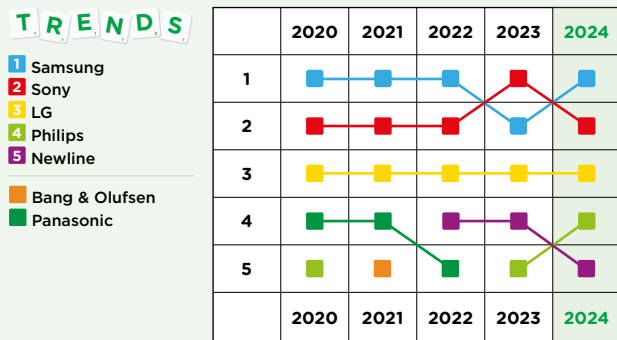


The Digital Signal Processors (DSP) category is one of the youngest in the Most Popular Awards and Bose has fallen out of the top spot in a very close race. Sonance takes the top spot but is just a hair over one percentage point ahead of Australian Monitor. In last year's Awards, Bose collected over 31% of the popular vote and the 2024 spread looks more even and it'll be an interesting race to watch moving forward.

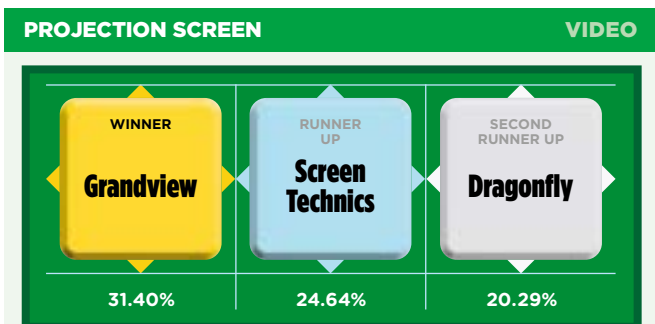
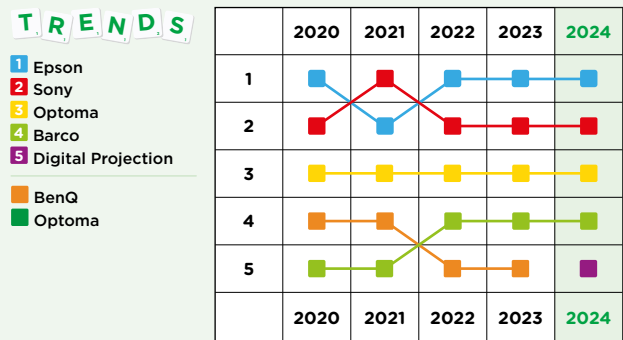




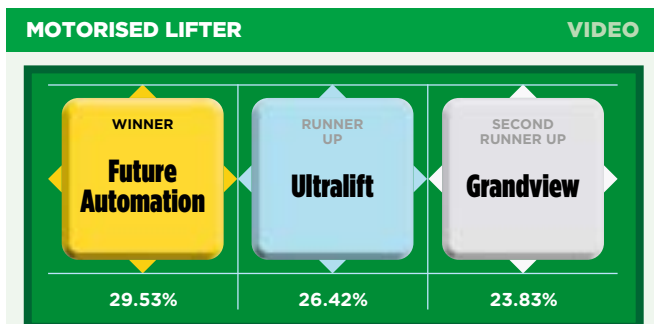
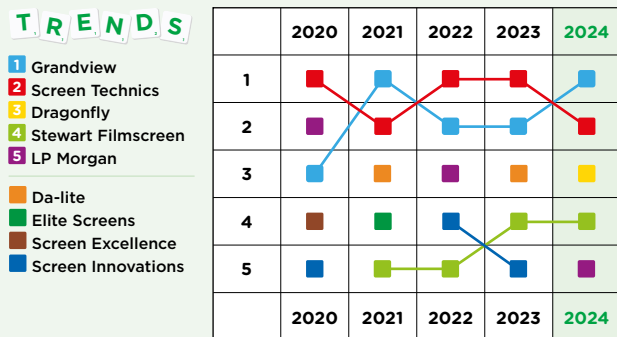
Kicking off the Video section of the Most Popular Awards, the Flat Panel Display category is a race between some huge players in the market. Traditionally, Samsung has dominated in this race, winning 11 straight popular votes before being dethroned by Sony. This year, Samsung has reclaimed its top spot with Sony dropping from 33.86% of the vote in 2023 to 27.8% in 2024.



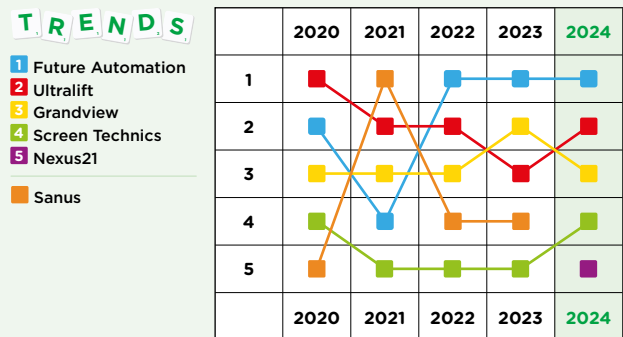
The Home Theatre Projector category doesn't have as many entrants as others but it's a battle between the big hitters. Epson takes home the cake again, but its popular vote fell from 34.16% in 2023 to 32.89% as Sony and Optoma both saw their figures rise. Barco has held on to its fourth position for the third year in a row and Digital Projection breaks into the top five for the first time in voting history.



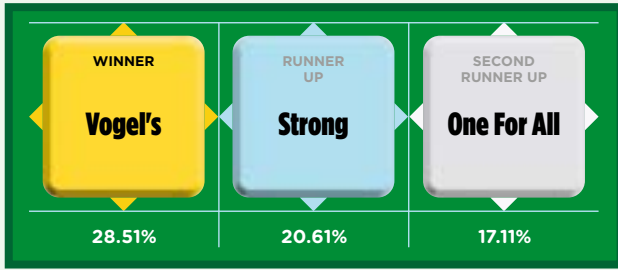
The Projection Screen category has been dominated by two companies, Grandview and Screen Technics, for four years now and the two continue to tussle out for first. Grandview takes the top spot this year and saw a huge leap in the popular vote among integrators with its 31.4% vote rising from 20.38% the year prior. Also of note is Dragonfly who jumped to Second Runner Up (previously unranked).



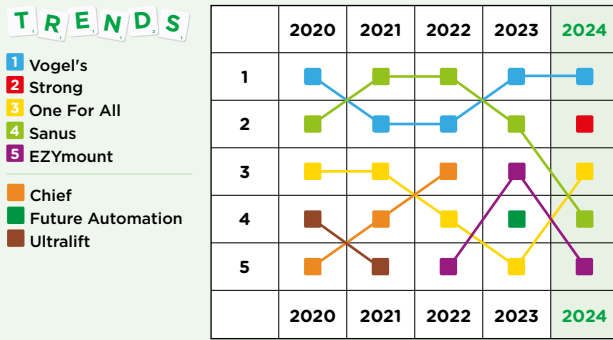
Future Automation has completed the threepeat of the Motorised Lifter category, gathering nearly 30% of the popular vote in 2024 to edge out Ultralift and Grandview. Nexus21 makes its debut on this list as Sanus finds itself out of the top five for the first time in the five-year snapshot. All three leaders saw their popular vote stay within one percentage point of their 2023 results.



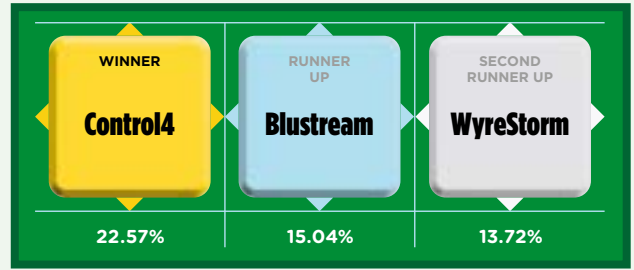
TV MOUNT VIDEO



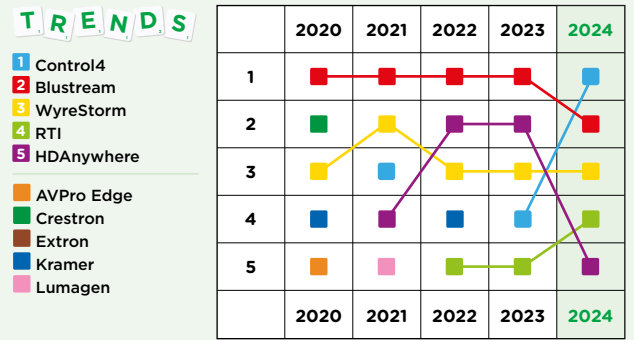
Vogel's takes home the top spot in the TV Mount category for the second year in a row and its direct competitor from previous Most Popular Award editions, Sanus, dips to fourth. Strong debuts on the list at second while One For All rounds out the top three. Vogel's saw a huge growth in popular vote, registering 28.51% this year, building on its 21.14% in 2023.



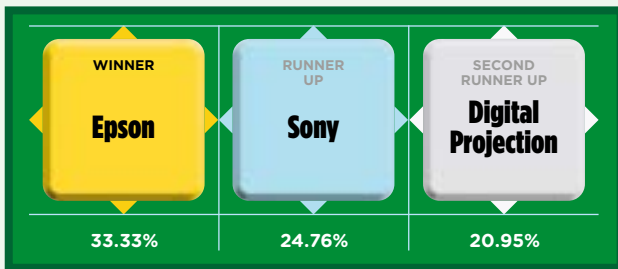
VIDEO PROCESSOR VIDEO



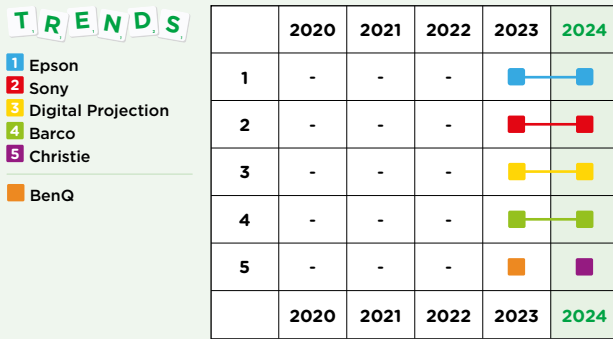
Blustream fell from the top spot for the first time since 2019 as Control4 won the Video Processor category. HDAnywhere, who were on a roll in the 2023 edition of the Most Popular Awards, lost a lot of their popular vote, falling from just over 16% of the popular vote to fifth position.



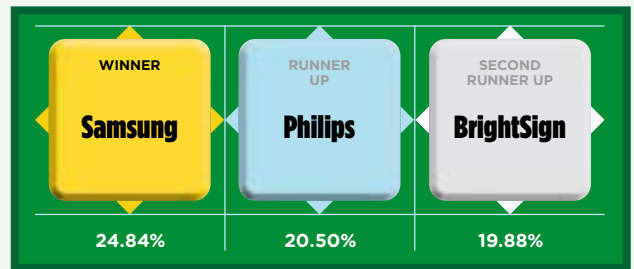
COMMERCIAL PROJECTOR VIDEO



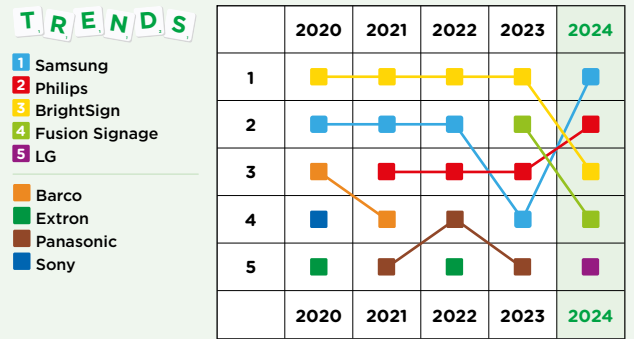
One of the newest categories in the Most Popular Awards, Commercial Projectors is another one of those 'battleground categories' to borrow a term from US politics. Epson, who took home the top spot, saw its popular vote fall from around 35% to 33.33% this year while Sony and Digital Projection gained some traction. Still in its infancy, it'll be very exciting to watch this category moving forward.



DIGITAL SIGNAGE CMS VIDEO

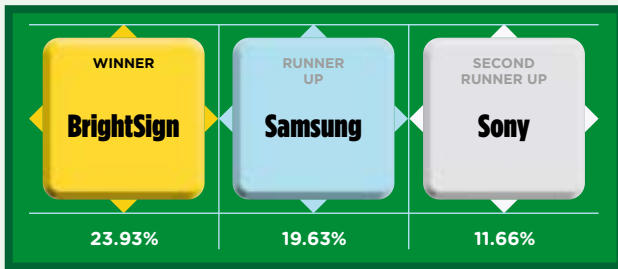


What a jump for Samsung in the Digital Signage CMS category, pushing last year's top three down to take the top spot. In 2023, BrightSign saw its popular vote fall from 39% the year to 26% and then this year the company had another slip in the category. Digital signage is one of the biggest beneficiaries of recent AI technology so expect a lot of movement in future years in this category.

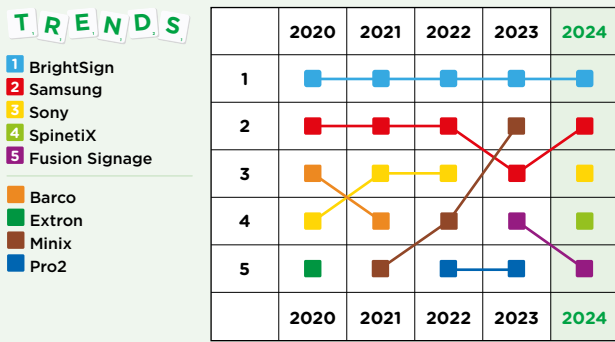


DIGITAL SIGNAGE PLAYER

VIDEO

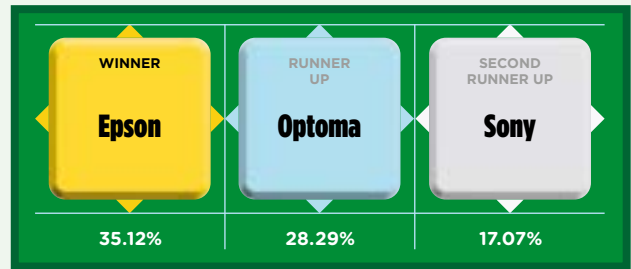


While BrightSign lost some traction in Digital Signage CMS, it keeps a strong grip on the Digital Signage Player category, etching its name into the theoretical trophy for the eighth year in a row. It even gained a few percentage points on its win last year. Further down the board, Samsung jumps up to second place and Minix, who leapt into second place last year, falls out of the top five altogether.

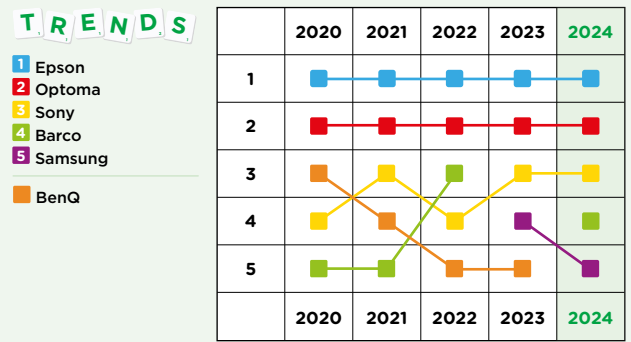


SHORT THROW PROJECTOR

VIDEO

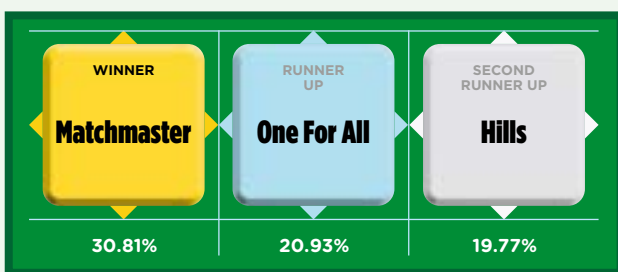


These top three are certainly establishing themselves atop the Short Throw Projectors category. Despite taking the top spot, Optoma closed the gap between one and two in this year's awards, but Epson still dominates in this field. Barco re-take a top five spot while Samsung falls to fifth spot.

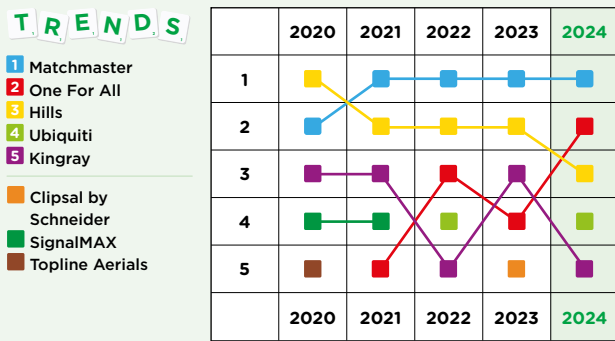


ANTENNA

VIDEO

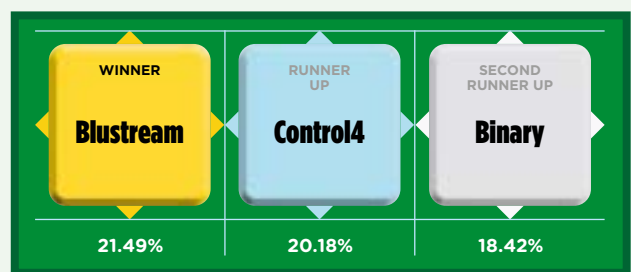


Matchmaster is settling in nicely atop the Antenna category in Connected's Most Popular Awards but their percentage of popular vote fell from 36.22% in 2023 to just a hair over 30% this year. Despite the fall in votes, the brand is comfortably ahead of its competitors and is primed to make it five from five next year. One For All continues an upward trajectory, taking the Runner Up position.

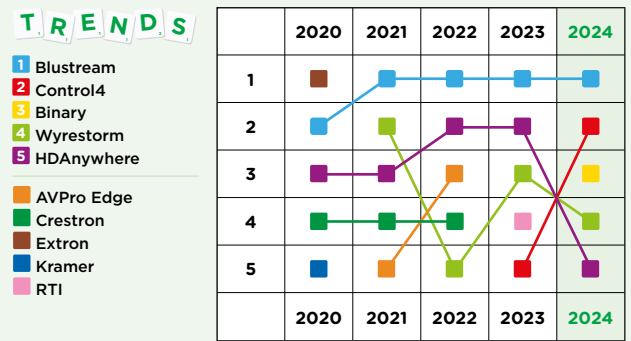


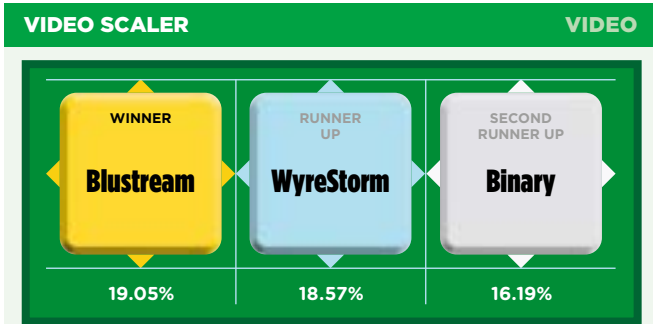
4K VIDEO EXTENDER

VIDEO

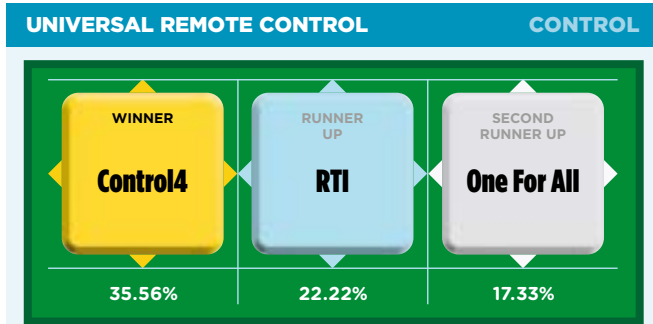
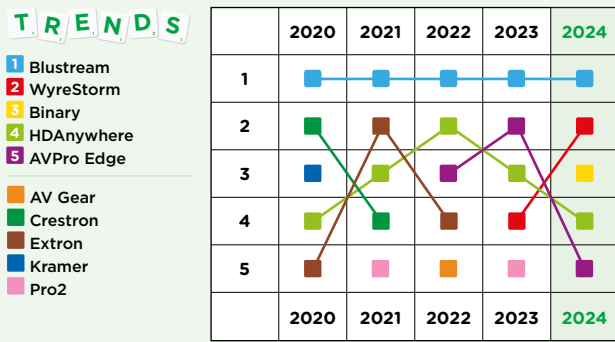


While this award is Blustream's bread and butter, taking home a fourth consecutive win in the 4K Video Extender category, the company's margin of victory has been shrunk. In the 2023 edition of the awards, Blustream was over 10% ahead of its competitors in popular vote but a strong polling year from Control4 saw its lead cut to just under one percentage point.

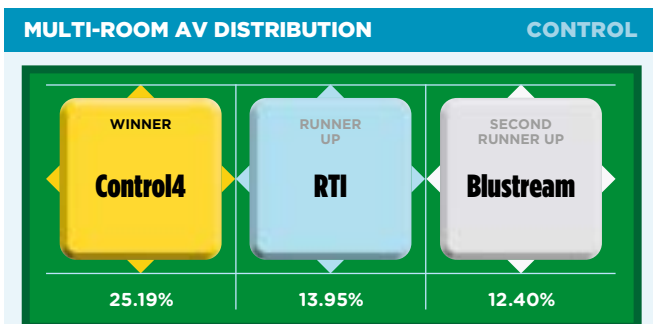
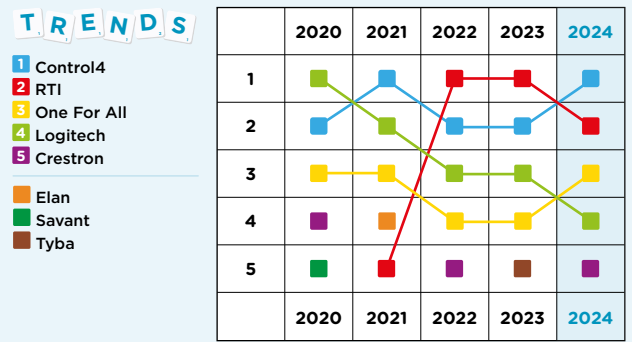




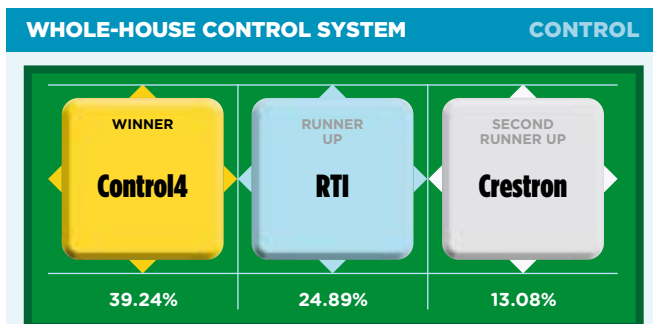
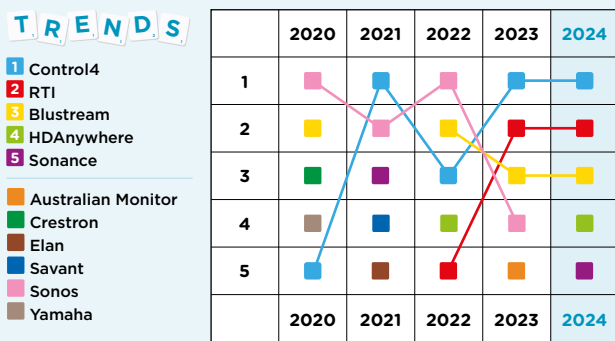
Another cabling category dominated by Blustream. While I've got you, I'm sure you flipped past the Most Influential Person profile piece on your way to these awards, but if you haven't already, check out the profile piece on Blustream's Michael Henriksen. He's truly one of Australia's most influential AV members and has worked across the board, starting in audio and now with Blustream.



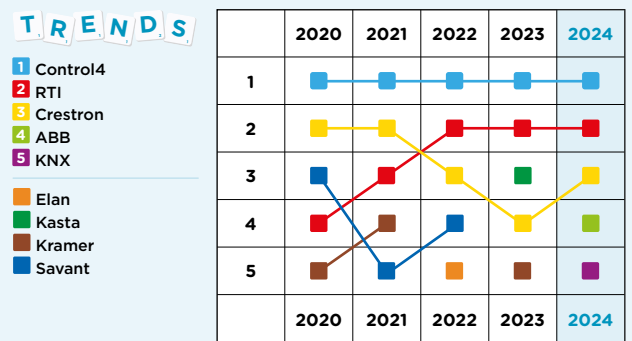
Last year, RTI made it two in a row in the Universal Remote Control category, eclipsing Control4 by less than half a percentage point. In 2024, Control4 took back the top spot for the first time since 2021 and ran away with the popular vote. One For All makes another strong showing, kicking Logitech out of the top five for the first time since we started tracking five-year snapshots.

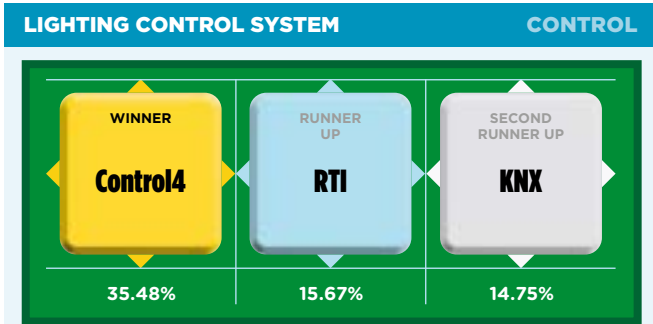


Every integrator is familiar with the Multi-Room AV Distribution category and Control4 dominated this year's awards, taking home over a quarter of the total vote, expanding on the company's 20.33% in 2023. Both RTI and Blustream saw their percentage of popular vote fall in this year's awards but maintained a top three standing. HDAnywhere and Sonance round out the five after not placing last year.

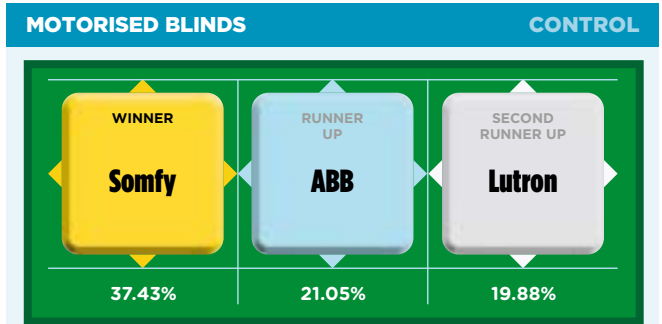
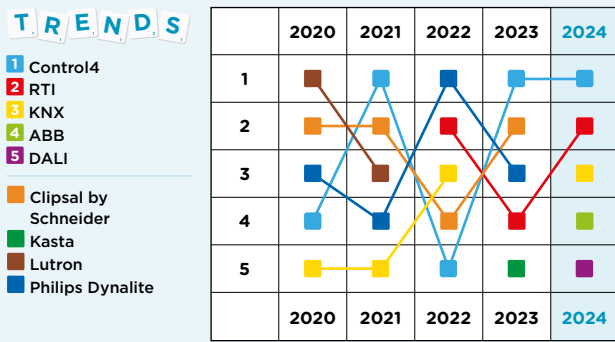


Control4 makes it nine wins in a row for the Whole-House Control System category in the Most Popular Awards with a humongous 39.24% of the popular vote. RTI maintains its Runner Up title for the third year in a row and Crestron jumps back up to the top three. ABB is a surprise entrant in this space, showing that the brand's control solutions are well received by the integrator community.





Traditionally, there has been a lot of movement in the Lighting Control System category and this year is no exception. Control4 maintains the top spot, but RTI and KNX make for a different top three for the fifth year running. ABB, again, is making a splash as it enters into the integration world and DALI enters the conversation for the first time since we've been tracking five-year trends.



Somfy extended its lead on the pack, growing its popular vote from 32.14% to 37.43% on last year's results. ABB enters the leaderboard for the first time, taking Lutron's second place. Despite falling in position, Lutron's percentage of the popular vote actually grew from 17.86% in 2023, one of the rare times a brand grows in popularity but unfortunately falls a spot.

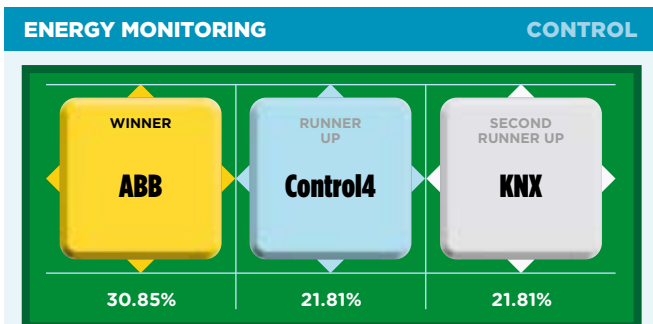
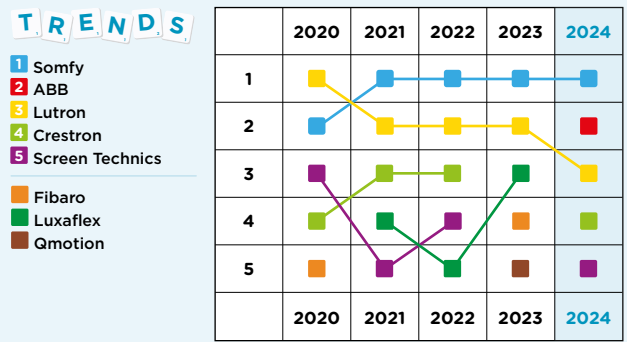
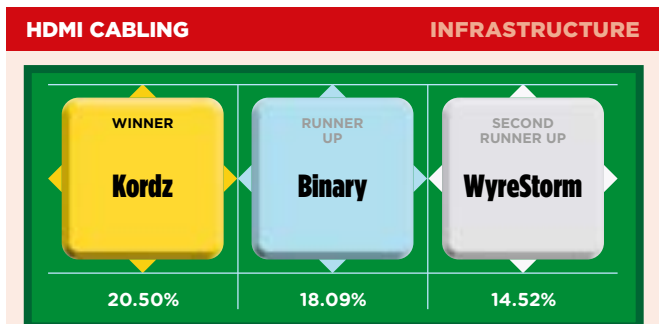
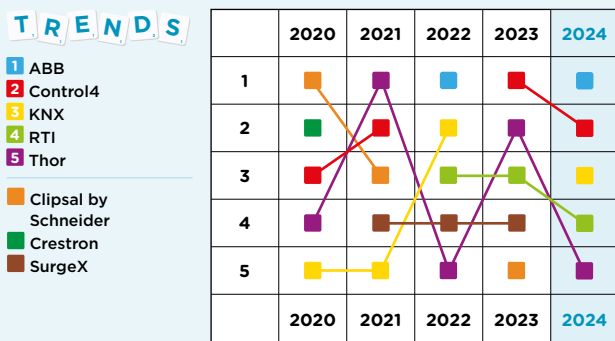
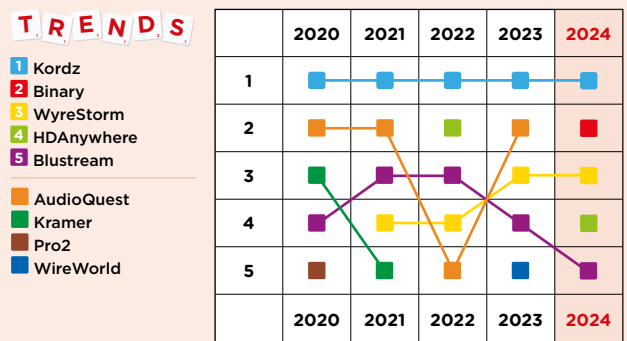
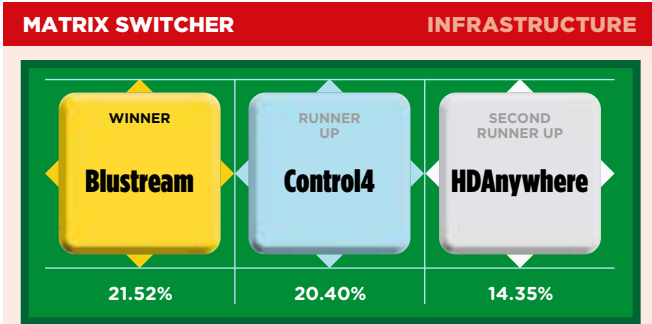


ABB takes the cake in the Energy Monitoring category, jumping in from outside the top five in 2023. Control4 fell to second place and, in those rare occurrences, actually increased its popular vote from last year's tally. KNX, after missing the top five in 2023, returned with the third spot.

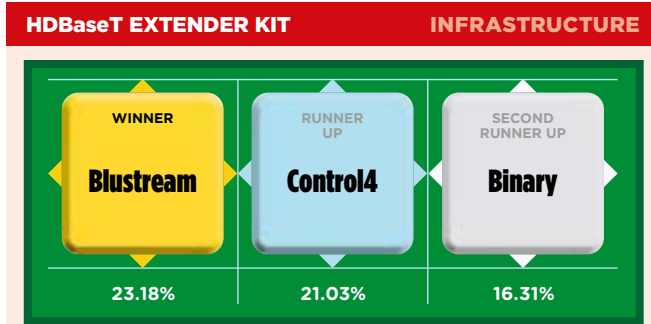
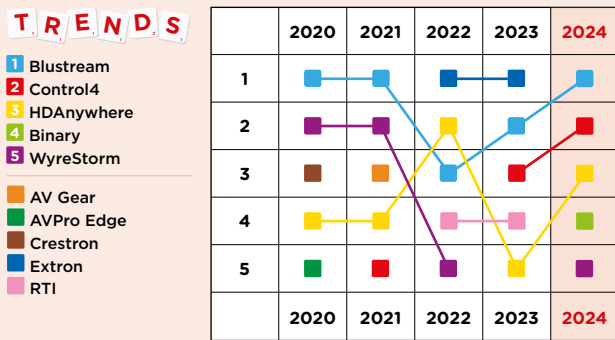


The veins of every AV installation, Kordz continues its clean sweep of the HDMI Cabling category, coming first in every edition of the Most Popular Awards since *Connected* magazine started. Behind them, Binary made its debut in this category with an impressive 18.09% and a second-place finish while WyreStorm, HDAnywhere and Blustream rounded out a very tight top five.

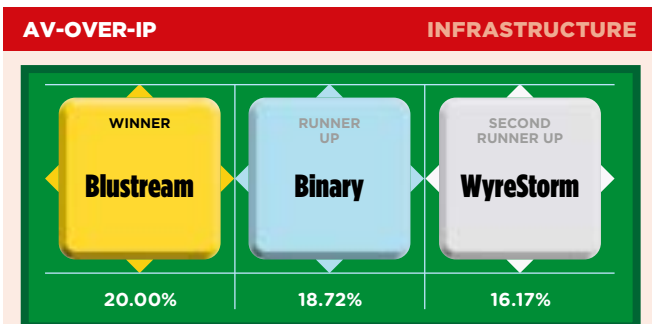
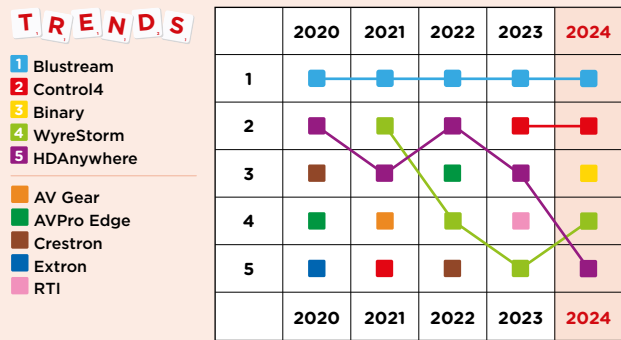




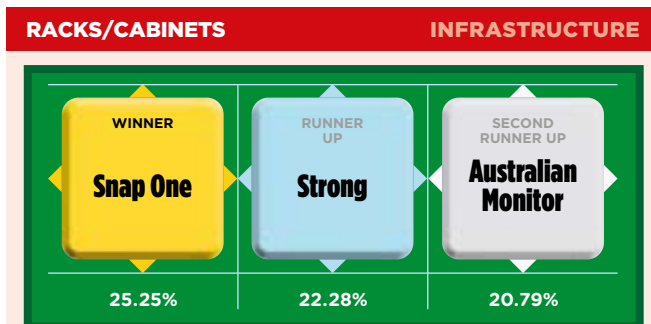
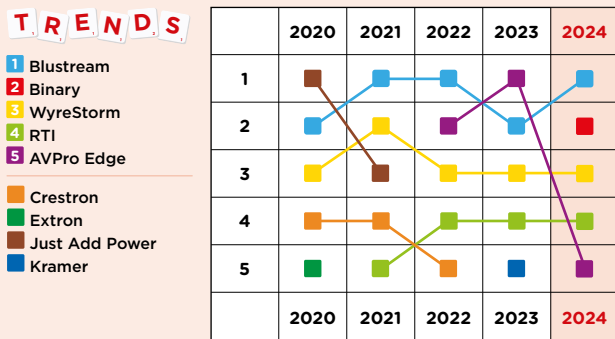
The Matrix Switcher category is a very crowded and competitive one for the Most Popular Awards. Blustream only just took first place, beating Control4 by a hair over one percentage point. HDAnywhere finishes as the Second Runner Up while Binary finds itself in the points for another category. WyreStorm returns to the top five after missing out in 2023.



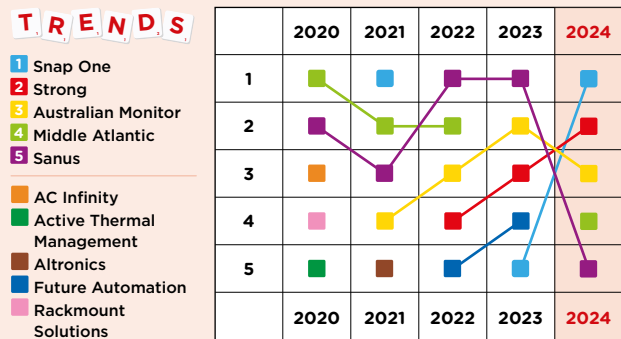
Blustream was created ten years ago to fill a gap in the industry of HDBaseT solutions for the AV industry. Since then, Australian integrators have supported the brand tremendously and this year is no exception, Blustream is taking home its ninth-straight win in the HDBaseT Extender Kit category. Control4 takes second spot for another year and Binary, again, debuts in a podium finish.

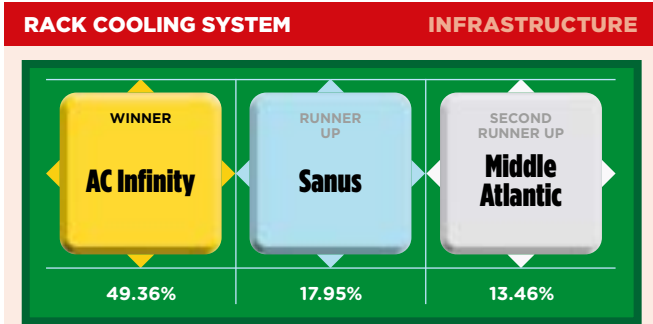


AVPro Edge saw a huge dip in voting this year, falling from 29.28% of the popular vote last year to fifth place while Blustream, Binary and WyreStorm finish in the podium positions. But there's no time to rest with this category as there aren't many votes separating the top three this year and one has to assume that AVPro Edge will be back in the podium spots next year.

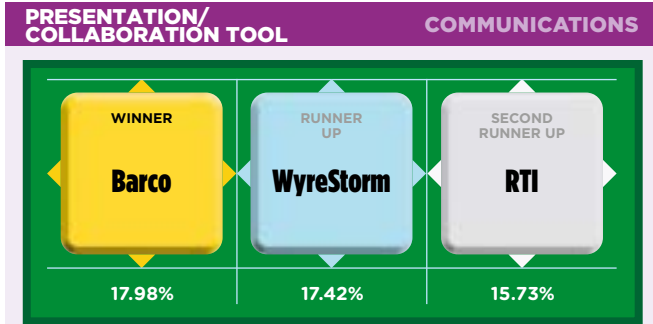
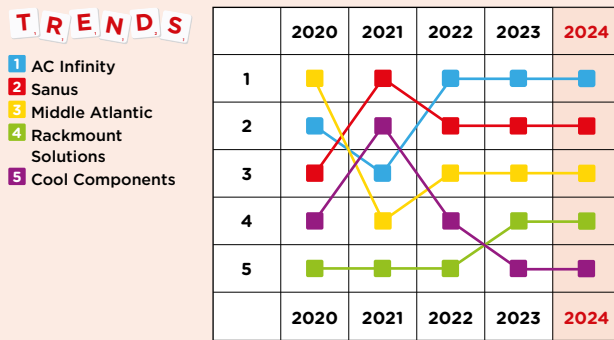


What's an AV installation without a rack or cabinet? Every integrator knows their way around a cabinet and it's one of the biggest categories in the Most Popular Awards. This year, Snap One leapt from fifth to first while Sanus made the opposite swing. Australian Monitor dipped to third and Strong continues its upward trajectory, finishing in the Runner Up position.

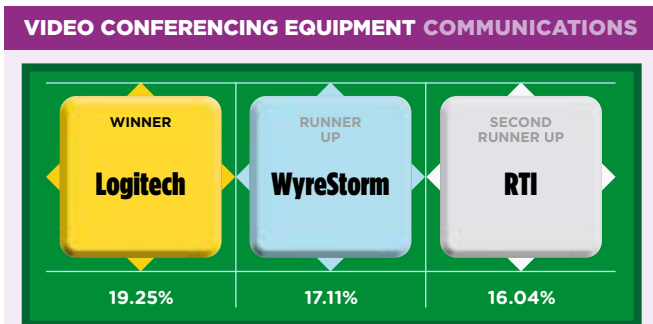
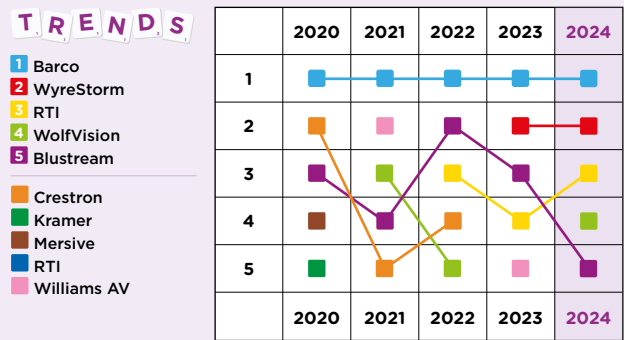




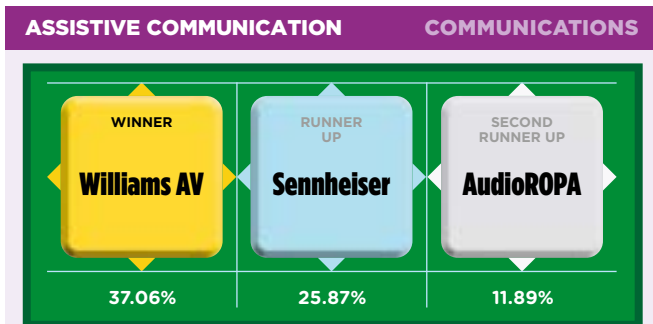
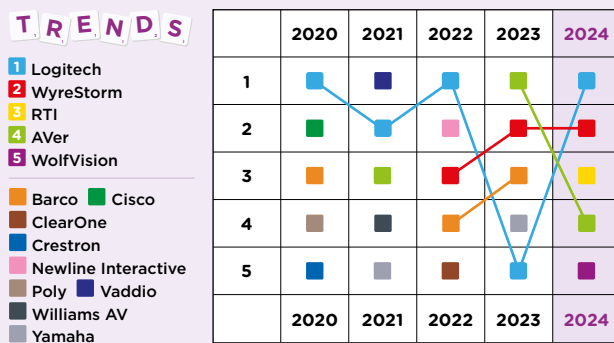
If I'm saying that every integrator knows their way around a cabinet, I'd be remiss not to say that every integrator should know their way around cooling. AC Infinity has blown the competition away in this year's Most Popular Awards, receiving votes from nearly half of all respondents, building on last year's first-place finish and 36.42% in the exact same category.



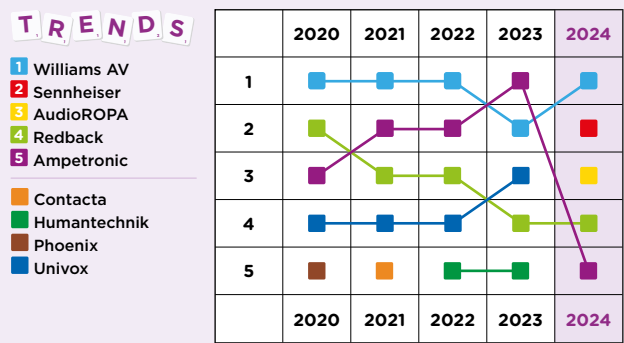
Communication and collaboration is one of the largest growth areas in the AV world with several competitors vying for the top spot. Barco has, again, pulled away as the industry's favourite option but by less than one percentage point. WyreStorm expanded on the 15.12% of votes last year and is now within sniffing distance of first place. Elsewhere, Blustream saw a decline in voting while RTI took third.



Video conferencing is everywhere and boy oh boy, the technology that powers meetings across Australia and the world is incredible. The Video Conferencing Equipment category in the Most Popular Awards is an important one for the AV industry and Logitech won this year's top honours after falling to fifth last year. WyreStorm holds steady with Runner Up and RTI enters the awards at Second Runner Up.

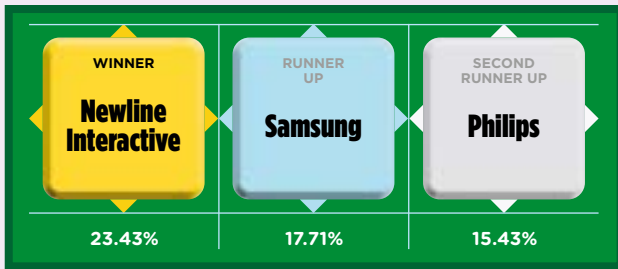


Assistive Communication (previously Hearing Loop) is a huge growth area for the AV industry, especially in Australia, following the availability of Bluetooth Auracast. Williams AV returns to the top spot after a year in second while Sennheiser debuts on this list at second with its range of assistive communication solutions with a high focus on security.



INTERACTIVE DISPLAYS

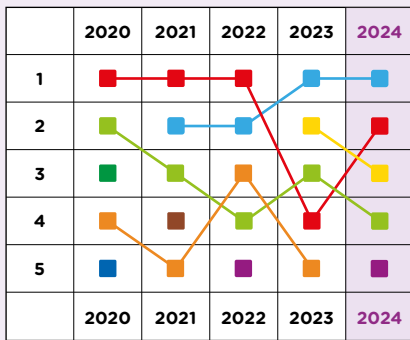
COMMUNICATIONS



Newline Interactive extends its lead in the Interactive Displays category, gaining around 4% more of the popular vote than in 2023. Samsung steps into the Runner Up position while Philips loses around 2% of its popular vote to fall to third. LG, who didn't appear in last year's top five, returned to the snapshot to fifth place.

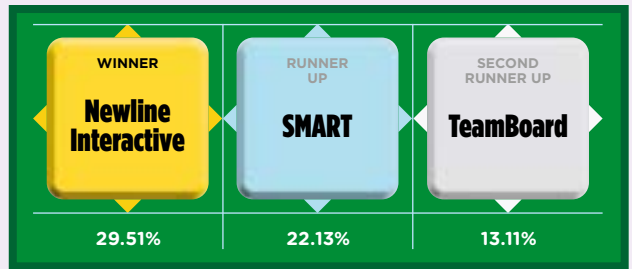
TRENDS

- 1 Newline Interactive
 - 2 Samsung
 - 3 Philips
 - 4 Epson
 - 5 LG
- BenQ
 - Hitachi
 - Microsoft
 - Panasonic



ELECTRONIC WHITEBOARDS

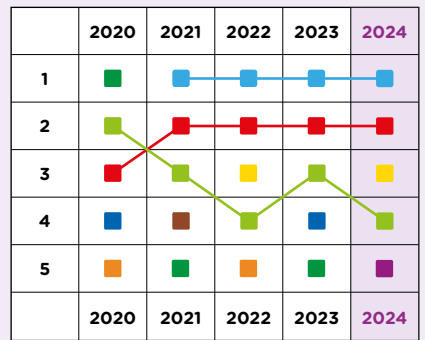
COMMUNICATIONS



Similarly for the Electronic Whiteboards category, Newline Interactive won but this year, they increased their percentage of the popular vote, growing to 29.51% from last year's 25.74% share. SMART takes strides of its own, going from 14.71% to 22.13% and TeamBoard finds itself in the podium positions for the first time since 2023. With the leaders extending their votes, this category is looking hard to crack.

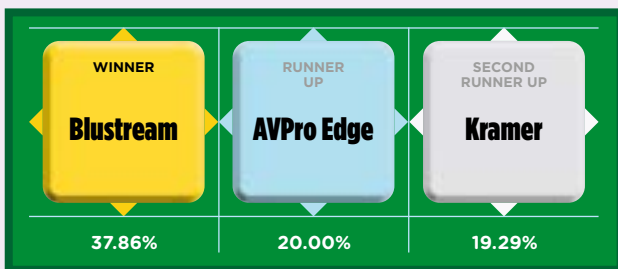
TRENDS

- 1 Newline Interactive
 - 2 SMART
 - 3 TeamBoard
 - 4 Sharp
 - 5 Vivitek
- Canon
 - Hitachi
 - Learning Glass
 - Ricoh



KVM

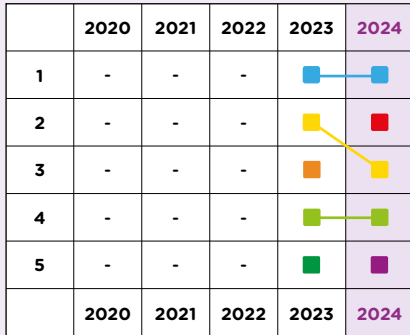
COMMUNICATIONS



The KVM category debuted in 2023 with over half of all respondents voting for Blustream. While this year's figures aren't breaking records, Blustream maintains its strong lead in the category while AVPro Edge debuts in the Runner Up position. Kramer falls to third but only a fraction of a percentage point while ATEN and Matrox fall out of the top five in 2024.

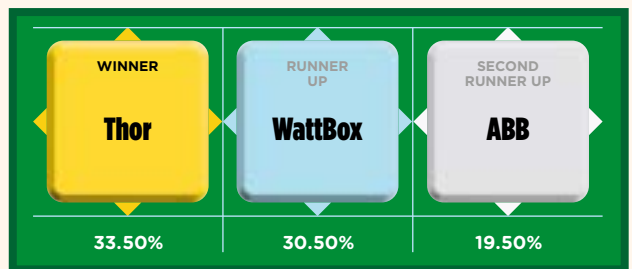
TRENDS

- 1 Blustream
 - 2 AVPro Edge
 - 3 Kramer
 - 4 Dynalink
 - 5 Aten
- ATEN
 - Matrox



SURGE PROTECTION

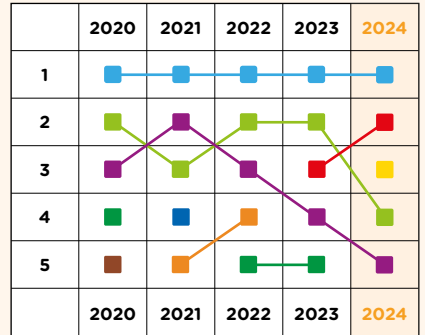
ELECTRICAL

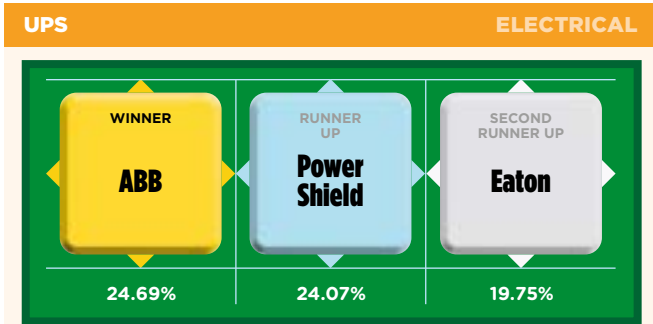


Surge Protection is potentially the most important category given the amount of power going into some of these AV systems. For the 13th year in a row (not a typo), Thor has taken home the gold medal and its percentage of popular vote has increased from 27.35% in 2023. WattBox was the biggest riser in 2024, going from third and 18.39% in 2023 to Runner Up and 30.5% this year.

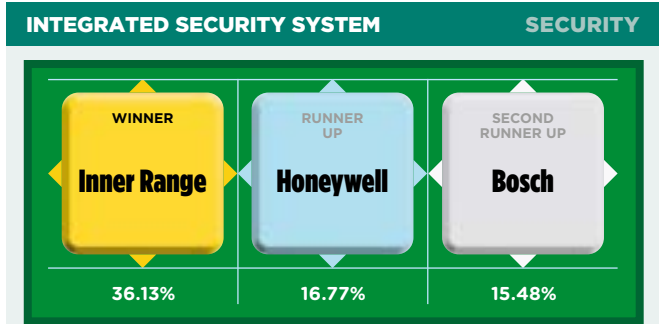
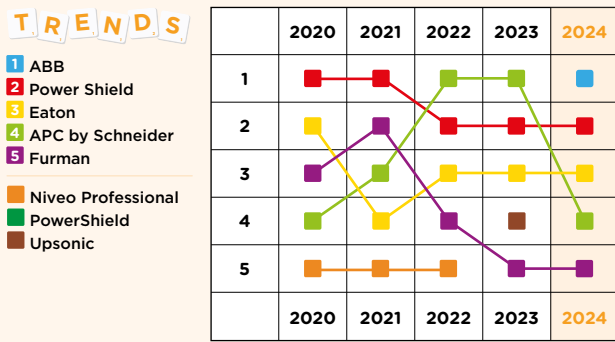
TRENDS

- 1 Thor
 - 2 WattBox
 - 3 ABB
 - 4 SurgeX
 - 5 Furman
- APC by Schneider
 - Belkin
 - Clipsal by Schneider
 - PowerShield

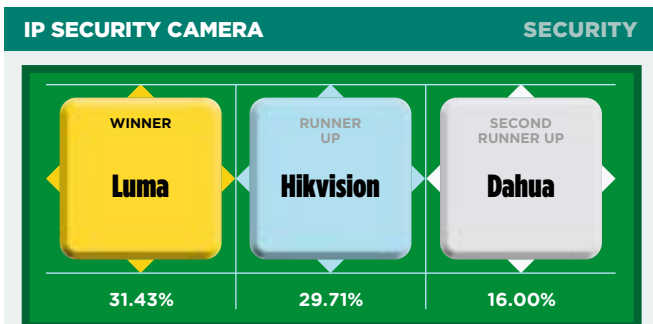
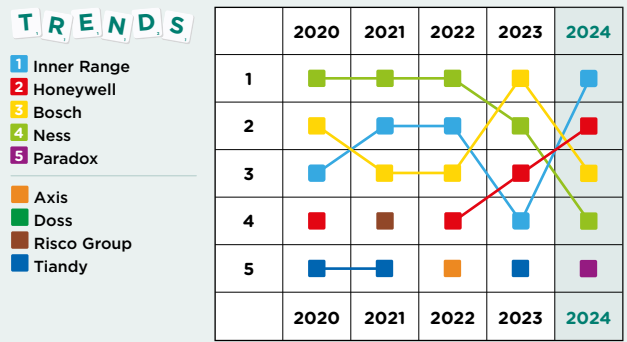




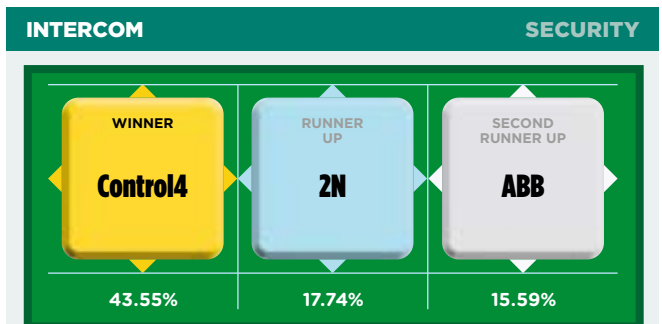
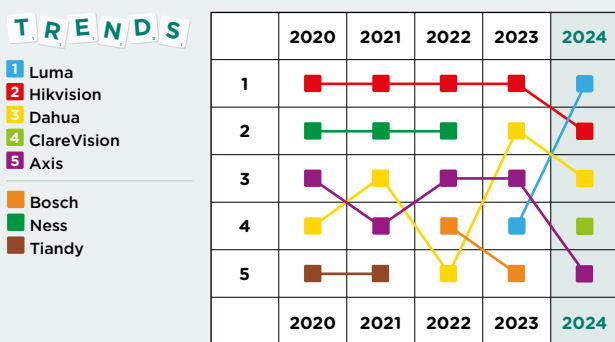
And here's another category where ABB has debuted at or near the top, the Uninterruptable Power Supply category. APC by Schneider Electric has been dominating this area for two years now, registering over a quarter of the popular vote, but fell to fourth this year. Power Shield continues a strong showing and grew by about five percentage points in this Most Popular Awards.



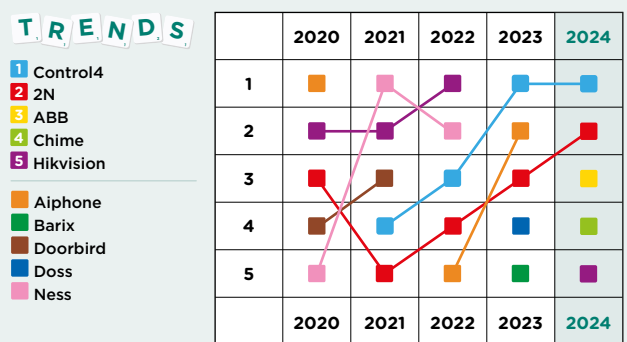
After holding on to first position for years on end, Ness lost around 13% of its voting share last year, slipping to Runner Up, and this year, it fell even lower. Inner Range took the top spot this year with an outstanding 36.13% of the popular vote while Honeywell continued an upward trajectory and Bosch slipped from 31.79% of the vote last year and first to Second Runner Up in 2024.



In early 2024, Snap One upgraded the Luma Surveillance range of security solutions and it looks like it was well received by the market as the industry knocked off the long-standing Hikvision in the IP Security Camera category. Combining for over 60% of the total popular vote, the top two are clear favourites to battle this category out for years to come.

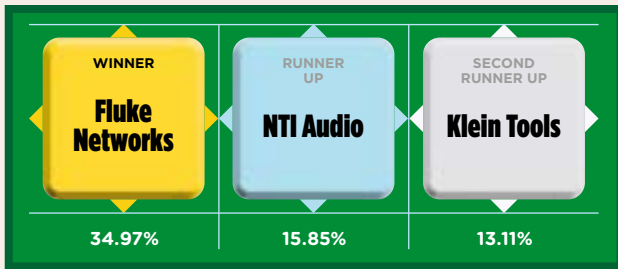


Control4 ran away with the Intercom category for the second year in a row. Last year, its 28.06% of the popular vote was enough to lead by ten percentage points but it saw huge growth in this year's Most Popular Awards. 2N continues an upward trend in the category while, say it with me, ABB debuts on the five-year snapshot with a podium finish, as has been the trend for this year's awards.



TEST AND MEASUREMENT

TOOLS



And now to the tools section, the best friend of every integrator. Fluke Networks' share of the popular vote fell but it wasn't nearly enough for long-standing Runner Up, NTI Audio, to take the crown. Klein Tools debuted in this award category as Second Runner Up ahead of Murideo (also a newcomer) and AVPro Edge.

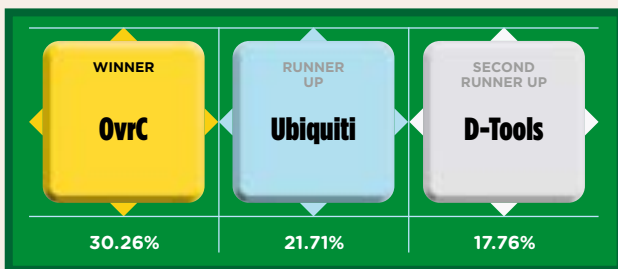
TRENDS

- 1 Fluke Networks
 - 2 NTI Audio
 - 3 Klein Tools
 - 4 Murideo
 - 5 AVPro Edge
- Doss
 - Kramer
 - Platinum Tools

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	Fluke Networks	Fluke Networks	Fluke Networks	Fluke Networks	Fluke Networks
2	NTI Audio	NTI Audio	NTI Audio	NTI Audio	NTI Audio
3	Klein Tools	Klein Tools	Klein Tools	Klein Tools	Klein Tools
4	Murideo	Murideo	Murideo	Murideo	Murideo
5	AVPro Edge	AVPro Edge	AVPro Edge	AVPro Edge	AVPro Edge
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024

SOFTWARE

TOOLS

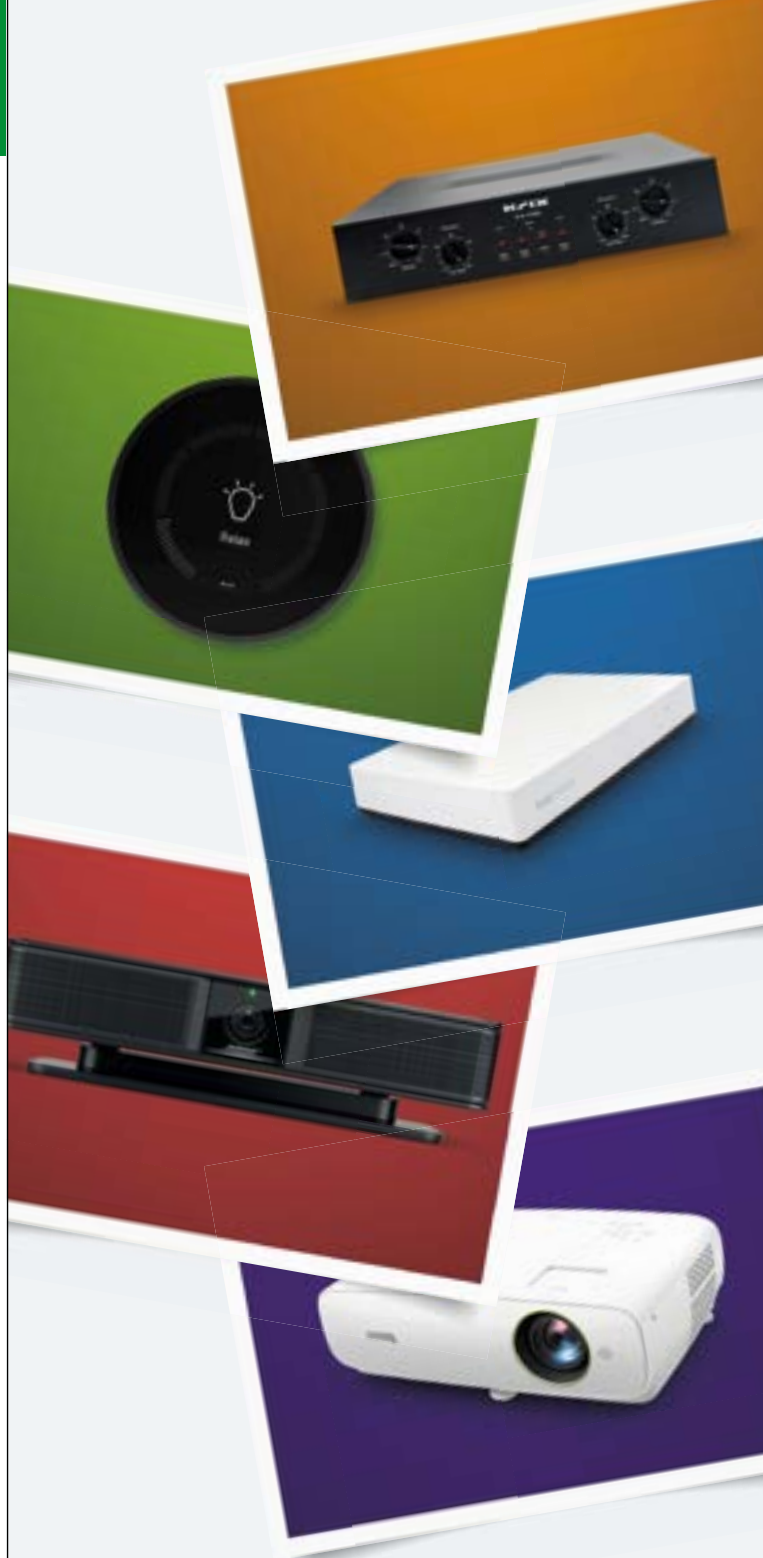


The Software category is a huge one for integrators, but it can sometimes be forgotten for the flashy hardware in our industry. Ubiquiti held a comfortable first place for three years, but Snap One's OvrC has taken the top spot in 2024 with an impressive 30.26% of the popular vote. Last year's Runner Up, TP-Link, struggled to stay in the snapshot for this year.

TRENDS

- 1 OvrC
 - 2 Ubiquiti
 - 3 D-Tools
 - 4 BlueBeam
 - 5 Crestron
- Kramer AV
 - Neets
 - Simpro
 - TP-Link
 - Utology

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	OvrC	OvrC	OvrC	OvrC	OvrC
2	Ubiquiti	Ubiquiti	Ubiquiti	Ubiquiti	Ubiquiti
3	D-Tools	D-Tools	D-Tools	D-Tools	D-Tools
4	BlueBeam	BlueBeam	BlueBeam	BlueBeam	BlueBeam
5	Crestron	Crestron	Crestron	Crestron	Crestron
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024



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