

FIELD TEST



Spectra V3

Spec sheet

Operating Principal:	VLF - Multi frequency - 2.5kHz 7.5kHz & 22.5kHz
Standard Search coil:	10" Double D (DD)
Weight:	4.5lb
Battery type:	Onboard 12v Ni-Mh rechargeable
Warranty:	2 years
Price:	£1,399.00

The Spectra V3 (V3) is the latest machine to be released by one of the leading detector manufacturers Whites Electronics, who have been at the forefront of the hobby for nearly 60 years. The new V3 is an important milestone machine, as it brings colour for the first time to the display on a traditional handheld detector. Another innovation is the wireless headphones, supplied as standard.

I was pleased to note that the V3 still retained the robust metal constructed control box of White's previous models. The graphics printed on the control box give the



Figure 1

user all the important information for in-field use including adjustments and quick start instructions. These were very handy for my first day in the field, because in my eagerness to get started, I'd unpacked the new detector and rushed out to try without reading the 51- page instruction manual. Nevertheless, I'd recommend you to at least give the detailed manual a cursory glance before venturing out for the first time!

The machine is supplied with a NiMH rechargeable battery and charger (fig 1). To use, you simply remove the battery from the detector and drop it into the charger. When the battery is fully charged, the red charge light goes off leaving just the green power light on. The V3 is also supplied with a second battery pack, which is to be used with 8 x AA alkaline batteries.

Controls

Controls on the V3 are very minimalist (fig 2), with just an eight-button keypad, and a three-position finger trigger switch for finer adjustments. After switching on you will see the status screen, giving you the charge condition of the battery pack. Squeezing and releasing the trigger switches the detector into the search mode, and it's ready to detect metal.



Figure 2

To Ground Balance, squeeze and hold the trigger, then press and hold the ENTER button. Pump the coil over a clear piece of ground four of five times, then simply release once this has been achieved.

Menus

Once up and running, you can adjust the settings by means of one of the three menu systems.

On the control panel is a button marked 'menu'. If you click this once, you enter the first menu screen where you can choose between six categories. These categories allow you access to adjust the majority of settings associated with the search program currently being used. As well as adjusting the setting, there is a category called 'PROGRAMS' where you can load a different program, or restore settings to the default factory mode.

The second menu is probably the most useful, as it adjusts setting 'on the fly', avoiding the need to enter the main menu. These are called 'Live' controls, and are accessed using the arrow keys while in the normal search screen. Simply highlight the category you wish to adjust with the left/right arrows, and then use the up/down ones

to adjust the values of those settings. You can also expand this feature displaying all options thus making it simpler to find settings. Press and hold the 'ZOOM' button, then press the up arrow button to expand the Live control's view. To these, if you are unlikely to need to change them, hold the Zoom button and press the down arrow.

Another useful feature is the Help Balloons that can be activated after using the Zoom button while selecting a Live controls category. Once you make a selection you need help with, just push the trigger forward to display the snippet of helpful information.

The third menu screen is the 'EXPERT MENU', which is accessed by clicking the MENU button twice in quick succession and then scrolling to select expert menu. Once entered you can change program settings, rename them or even create new ones. This is also where you can access the wireless program share feature through the program share option. This makes it possible to share custom programs between friends 'in the field' with out the need to connect detectors together (or through a PC.) This is all done wirelessly!

Search Screens

When detecting you have three windows from which to choose. The first is the Spectrograph screen (fig 3), which has the Live controls menu control along the bottom of the display. This gives a rising block display for the Visual Discrimination Indication (VDI) for the values of each frequency. Clear signals from shallow targets give narrow responses, whereas deeper, fainter or targets lying with iron will give wider responses. Large shallow iron falsing can be easily identified as it is seen as a wide splatter of blocks (green and red).

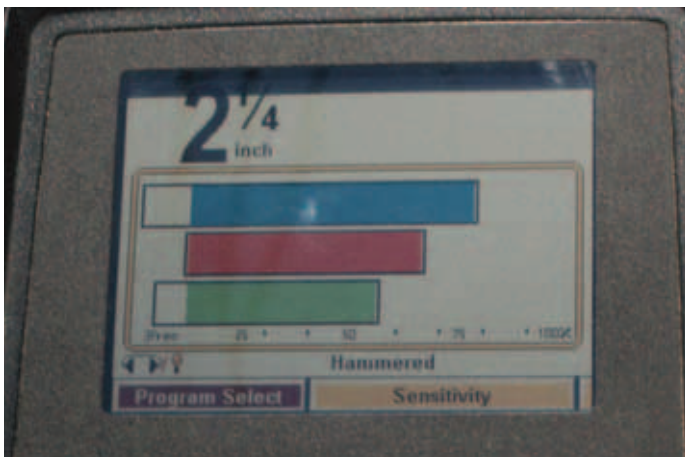


Figure 3

Above the Spectrograph window, to the left, is a VDI display giving a Conductivity scale of -95 to 0 for ferrous items, and 0 to +95 for non-ferrous targets. To the right of the VDI is the icon area where target icons are displayed for various targets, or this can be set up to display text like 'Iron' or 'Dig it!'. Finally in the top right-hand corner is a target depth indicator.

The second window is the analyse screen (fig 4) which is accessed when the trigger switch is pushed forward. Each frequency being



Figure 4

used is colour coded and gives a visual indication of each frequency response. Detected objects are seen as raised bumps above the baseline, the strongest frequency response raising the highest depending on the metal content of the target. You can also judge the width of the target using the black-line indicator below the frequency graph. All the other features of the Spectrograph screen, VDI, depth and live controls are the same using this analyse window.

The third window is the pinpoint screen, (fig 5) accessed when you squeeze the trigger switch. As you swing over the target, the frequency bar graph(s) move from left to right as you centre the target and a depth is displayed top left. It is also possible to lock-on the pinpoint mode by pressing 'ENTER' while squeezing the trigger, then releasing the trigger. To unlock, just press the 'ENTER' button again.

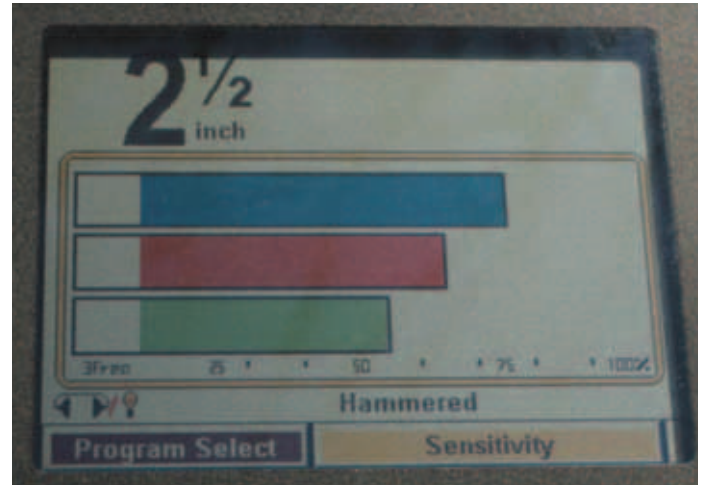


Figure 5

Programs

When you switch on the V3 for the first time, it will start-up using a general coin mode. This mode is ideal for searching parks for pre-decimal coinage, while discriminating modern junk like nails, foil and some pull-rings.

This is just one of many pre-loaded programs. A full list of programs is accessible via the MENU button, and choosing the top left icon marked programs. You can see what program you are using shown in the lower section of the Spectrograph display, above the Live controls. Once you change programs or settings they are remembered, even if you switch off the detector.

It is possible via the EXPERT menu to add new custom programs, that can be named whatever you choose.

It's also possible (and a lot quicker) to use an existing program as a base for a custom program. Select a program, which you are unlikely to ever use, and use one of the menus to adjust all the parameters to build your custom program. Once you have finished your adjustments, you can save those setting replacing the original default settings of the base program. To do this, first highlight 'programs' in the Live controls menu. Press and hold the ENTER button, then press the MENU button to bring up a box with options. Scroll to the option 'Save as defaults'. If at a later date you need to return the setting back to the factory defaults, you can do this using the NEW / COPY feature in the expert menu.

Of course it's not necessary to save the defaults of a program if you are going to use just one program, as the V3 will always retain its last settings, but for me it was very useful while testing several different custom programs. Once you have created a custom program, you can then edit the original name using the rename option in the Expert menu.

Wireless headphones

The detector is supplied with a high quality set of wireless headphones. These look very similar to the Koss headphones I've previously used, but the Whites phones are a lot snugger fitting. After three months use I love them and wouldn't use the V3 without

– although this wasn't the case when I first started using them!

I should explain that nowadays detector field tests are rarely done on 'out of the box' brand new detectors. So I wasn't surprised to see a well-used test unit arrive for this field test. The detector itself was in very good condition, but the headphones were showing some signs of distress. I first had to refit the hard rubber battery compartment grip, and remove and refit the On/Off rubber button so it could activate the switch beneath it. These were minor niggles compared to the stress of trying to get them to connect to the V3 wirelessly. After countless attempts, reading and rereading the instructions, and watching Whites instructional videos on the internet, I surrendered, popped out the blanking plug in the rear of the detector, and plugged in my trusty wired headphones!

Once Whites realised that I was planning on testing the V3 without their wireless phones, they sent me a 'new' set. These worked perfectly first time, making me realise the abuse that was evident cosmetically on the first set, was probably what had caused them to fail. I have used them for the past three months, and they have worked perfectly, never once dropping the signal. I am now of the opinion that these are the finest headphones ever to be marketed for metal detecting.



Finds

In the field

I first used the V3 over my established test bed, using the default coin program. This program hit all the pre-decimal coins, locking-on to them giving solid responses at all depths. The Sensitivity of this program to small hammered coins wasn't as good, so I loaded the custom 'Hammered' program Whites had included on my test V3. This program transformed the audio responses, and I had soon found all but the tiniest hammered coins in my test-bed. After fine-tuning, I was eventually able to hit all my test bed targets, giving me the confidence to take these setting out onto my fields.

The first site I tried was a field rolling down to the Great Ouse. This field always produced interesting finds every time it was ploughed. This year however, the field hadn't been deep ploughed, the farmer instead opting to scatter Rapeseed from the combine harvester. So, although I didn't expect to find much, I was pleasantly surprised when digging my second signal, to be rewarded with an Edward hammered penny. I continued searching with my modified hammered program for several hours, but nothing else remarkable was found. Over the following few weeks this program found lots of small targets, including a Saxon sceat and finding two cut-half pennies.

I was just beginning to think I had cracked the V3 with this program, when a detecting trip to a new field was to shake my confidence. As soon as I switched on the V3 and pulled back the trigger, I heard a repeating high pitch 'beep' that sounded just like a target. It was electrical interference from the battery chicken

sheds, which were about 50 yards away. I have had problems like this using other metal detectors, usually due to the close proximity of an electric fence, and in the past I have had to give up and move onto a different field. So I found myself out of my comfort zone, desperately trying to make the adjustments to cure the problem. With help from the info printed on the base of the control box, I changed the frequencies from three to just one - 22.5kHz. Instantly stability returned to normal (and so did my blood pressure.) Then the finds started flowing from this new land, and by the time the daylight started fading, I had a full finds pouch, including 20+ Roman coins.

This experience really opened my eyes to the versatility of the V3 and kick-started my V3 tinkering phase. Over the next month I developed several custom programs, each honed to work on specific sites I had been detecting for years. Some of these programs worked completely differently to others, so much so, that it was sometimes like using a totally different detector when switching programs. Some of my worked out sites came alive, producing large targets at considerable depths that I hadn't dreamed were still there to be found.

Conclusion

In this report I have very briefly gone through the menus telling you about the features I felt to be important. However there is a lot more that I haven't covered in this short field test. Never before have I seen a detector where so much can be adjusted. Not only can detector control parameters be tweaked, you can edit just about anything you want. I have used this detector for over three months and I'm still learning more every time I switch it on. But don't let this put you off, because if you don't like messing with a detectors settings, then the V3 is still a great switch on and go machine. Just choose one of the many preset program and a way you go.

The V3 is equipped with some industry firsts. The colour display is amazing and has made me realise how restrictive non-colour displays are (and how unfortunate it must be to be colour blind.) The information seems easier to understand. Greens and reds are instantly recognisable as good and bad targets. The V3 has set the standard for all future visual display metal detectors, black and white just won't cut it from now on!

The second innovation is that this detector is supplied 'as standard' with a quality wireless headphone system. Other manufacturers have included the wireless technology within their machines, but to use it requires purchasing accessory headphones. Whites should be applauded for supplying theirs 'as standard'.

In the field, the V3 is a very versatile machine. In fact, it's the most versatile machine I've ever used. While playing with the settings constructing custom programs, I was amazed how differently the V3 could perform. Most detectors with limited settings will have an optimum setup, but the V3 has several. Whether you use the V3 as a multi frequency detector, or just in a single frequency, you will be able to get great results on any land or conditions.

The White's Spectra V3 is a true all-round metal detector.

Test Results – (Scores out of ten based on price category)	
Ergonomics (weight/balance)	9
Simplicity/user friendliness	8
Build quality	10
Weather resistance	8
Performance	9
Value for money (£1,399.00)	9
SEARCHER RATING	