

**LOST TREASURE FIELD TEST**  
**WHITE'S ELECTRONICS SPECTRA VX<sup>3</sup>**  
**By Andy Sabisch**

White's Electronics has been building metal detectors for more than 50 years and over that time, has gained a loyal following of successful users worldwide that have benefited from the efforts put forth by the entire team of White's employees designing, building and servicing products that bear the company's name. In 2009 White's introduced the first model in the "V" or "Spectra" series with the V3 and many of the features it offered were revolutionary to say the least. Being the first detector with a full color display, built-in help screens, a wide range of adjustments to cover virtually any situation users could come across and wireless headphones caused the industry – both users and other manufacturers – to stop and take notice. The release of the V3i built on the original model and offered enhanced performance and options intended to increase the success of users worldwide. The latest addition to the White's line is the VX<sup>3</sup> which is built on the "V" platform and offers high performance yet with fewer adjustments than found on its bigger brother, the V3i.

**FEATURES**

The VX<sup>3</sup> shares many of the internal capabilities of the other "V" models thanks to its software and circuitry as well as the compact, light weight yet rugged metal control housing, easy-to-read color screen and drop-in battery pack. The most noticeable difference is the search coil – the VX<sup>3</sup> comes standard with the Eclipse 9.5" concentric coil versus the 10" Double-D coil that is standard on the V3 and V3i; however, the Eclipse coil is a proven performer and offers stable operation and accurate pinpointing under most conditions. Five optional coils are available from White's – including the 10" DD - that expand the versatility of the VX<sup>3</sup> come in both concentric as well as Double-D designs.

The Spectra VX<sup>3</sup> – as with the other "V" models - is unique in that it can operate on three separate frequencies simultaneously for optimal all-purpose hunting or on any one of the three frequencies when enhanced performance for specific applications is desired. The frequencies and the type of targets they are optimized for are: 2.5 kHz (copper & silver); 7.5 kHz (brass or simply general hunting) and 22.5 kHz (nickel, gold or small targets). In addition to the choice of single or multi-frequency operation, the VX<sup>3</sup> has an additional option (Salt Compensate) that addresses the challenge posed by salts such as found on ocean beaches and certain desert areas and provides instant compensation for these conditions.

The VX<sup>3</sup> is controlled with the 4 labeled and 4 directional arrow touchpads located beneath the large color screen. Pressing the ON/OFF touchpad powers up the unit and displays the start-up screen which shows the actual voltage of the battery pack. The VX<sup>3</sup>'s menu system is extremely easy to navigate through and the various options are quite intuitive when making any adjustments. The major sections found on the Main Menu are 1) Programs, 2) Discrimination, 3) Sensitivity, 4) Audio, 5) Frequency, 6) Ground Tracking and 7) Filter & Speed. Each of these sections has specific options beneath them which can be adjusted to suit personal preferences and address specific site conditions. All of the adjustments found on the Main Menu as well as the backlight level can also be accessed using the unique Live Control Bar which is discussed below.

An interesting tip for locating a specific function or understanding what a certain adjustment does when scrolling through the menu is provided via the VX<sup>3</sup>'s software and can be accessed by pushing the trigger to the forward position when in any of the Menu screens. Doing so will bring up additional information on what a sub-menu contains or what a specific adjustment is used for on

the right-hand side of the screen . . . sort of a built-in help function for quick reference in the field. Another innovative feature carried over from the other “V” models is the ZOOM function which provides for 4 levels of magnification of the menu options which is useful when making adjustments (especially when one has forgotten their glasses at home . . . of course, not that it happened to me) – simply press the ZOOM/VIEW touchpad to cycle through the settings.

One of the issues that users have commented on when using any of the new computerized detectors on the market which utilize menus rather than the conventional knobs and toggles for adjustments is that it can be cumbersome to exit the search mode, scroll through the menu, make an adjustment and then go back to the search mode to see what the effect of the change was and in many cases, repeat the process several times to find the optimal setting. Well, the engineers at White’s have addressed this issue with the addition of what is called the “Live Control Bar” which in essence simulates knobs and allows for “on-the-fly” adjustments of any of the features found on the VX<sup>3</sup>’s menu. The Live Control Bar can be enlarged to see each available adjustment or minimized to increase the SpectraGraph display in the center of the screen which provides invaluable target ID information with the press of a touchpad.

The VX<sup>3</sup>’s screen is worth more than a few words here. The crisp graphics, vibrant color and backlighting are unique to the White’s “V” series of detectors and provides users with a wealth of information to aid in determining if a target is worth recovering. Along the top of the screen, a Visual Discrimination Indicator (VDI) value will appear when a target is detected which can be used to identify a target’s probable ID. Adjacent to the VDI value an icon will appear to further aid in target identification. The icon(s) that appear will depend on which of the 8 search modes has been selected as there are 3 separate “libraries” of possible icons built into the VX<sup>3</sup> including coins & jewelry, relics and prospecting. Which library is used will be driven by the specific search mode selected. The last piece of information displayed on the top of the screen is the target depth shown in inches and is helpful in pinpointing targets by observing when the indicated depth is the shallowest meaning the target is beneath the center of the coil. The center of the screen is SpectraGraph which shows the relative strength and VDI value for each of the frequencies in-use for a detected target. If the region in which the VDI value for the target is being accepted based on the current discrimination settings, the resulting bar(s) on the SpectraGraph will be green. If the region is rejected (or even partially rejected), the bar or portion of the bar being eliminated will appear in red. The specific audio response received will be based on the Audio option selected from the Main Menu or Live Control Bar. Pulling the trigger activates the Pinpoint mode and the SpectraGraph display will change to show bars that provide for extremely accurate pinpointing with any of the available coils. The 3 regions displayed on the screen in either any of the search modes or pinpoint will start with the 2.5kHz frequency response on the bottom and then depict the 7.5kHz frequency in the middle and finally the 22.5kHz on the top. It should be noted that if only one frequency has been selected, only one bar will be shown in either the search or pinpoint mode.

In addition to the adjustable level of backlighting on the screen, the touchpads located below the screen are also backlit allowing the VX<sup>3</sup> to be used under any lighting which is useful for those that want to search areas that might be crowded during the day such as beaches and parks or sites that are simply too hot such as open desert areas and is another feature that shows the engineers were thinking of the end-user in the design phase.

The VX<sup>3</sup> comes with a drop-in battery pack that holds 8 AA batteries which provides 8 to 10 hours of operation depending on the level of backlight selected. A rechargeable battery system is available as an option from White’s and if you already have some AA rechargeable batteries, they can be used as well with no adverse results.

An option that was introduced on the original V3 and carried over to the V3i and now the VX<sup>3</sup> is the ability to use the SpectraSound wireless headphones. If you have ever stepped on your headphone cord as you stood up after recovering a target or had them pulled from your head after the cord was snagged on a tree branch in the woods, this is an option that you will fall in love with the first time you use it! Conventional corded headphones with a ¼" plug as well as the built-in speaker can also be used.

## FIELD TEST

Having moved into my new house which I found out had an older structure on the property that dated back to the early 1900's, I had a ready location to start testing the VX<sup>3</sup> after checking the response to a number of targets I had put down in a test garden . . . which I hate to admit was put in-place before I even finished painting and unpacking moving boxes. After turning the detector on, I checked the ground balance before start to run through the test garden. Now before you get worried after reading that last sentence and seeing the "Ground Balance" reference, not to worry. The VX3 automatically tracks the ground and selects the optimal ground balance setting based on the sensed conditions and unless conditions change dramatically over a short stretch, no manual balancing will ever be required. However, one can force the circuitry to quickly ground balance at any time by pulling the trigger switch, pressing the ENTER touchpad and pumping the coil up and down for a few seconds until the threshold remains constant . . . release the touchpad, then the trigger and start hunting – simplicity at its finest!

Starting out in the factory preset COIN mode, I noticed that zinc pennies were rejected (they had a VDI value of 54 to 56 while the COIN mode rejected targets in the range of +27 to +59) and although zinc pennies are not targets most of us are looking for, it also meant that Indian Head cents would be rejected. Quickly scrolling over to the DISCRIMINATION segment of the Live Control Bar, the additional segments were easily accepted and the zinc pennies produced clear signals from then on. This is a good example of where a test garden can avoid a costly mistake in the field when getting a new detector. It should be noted that if any of the other factory preset search modes other than the DEMO mode are selected that this range would not be rejected. Through a quick adjustment to the discrimination points in any of the preset programs which will be retained when the detector is powered off, these or any other targets can easily be accepted or rejected as needed.

I switched between the slightly modified COIN program and the factory-preset RELIC program to see the difference in target response they produced as well as the different icons that appeared in the two modes and was able to locate and recover targets in both modes with different audio and visual responses. A power transformer is located at one end of the property and the VX<sup>3</sup> began to chatter as I got close to it. A quick adjustment to the Frequency Offset value from the factory-preset value of "0" to "3" resulted in much smoother operation without the need to reduce the RX GAIN setting which was another option available if needed. While I did not happen to come across any Indian Head pennies in my yard, I was able to recover a pair of silver dimes and a few Wheat cents in addition to several clad coins from the 4"-to-5" range.

The next site I visited was a local school that would allow me to spend more time searching and less time driving in support of this report. Coins as well as items such as a keys, a wrist watch (still running), a silver ring and a few pieces of costume jewelry turned up as I spent a few days at these sites dodging the occasional rain storms that blew through. In areas where the trash was fairly concentrated such as along the bus pickup strip I found that the factory preset value for the Recovery Time of "80" tended to blend targets together making it difficult to separate good items from bad ones. However, through the use of the Live Control Bar, making an "on-the-fly"

adjustment as I swept across this area enabled me to find a Recovery Time setting – “55” - that provided good target separation without sacrificing target ID. The Live Control Bar function was an extremely easy way to adjust any of the VX<sup>3</sup>'s settings and as the engineers intended, made a menu-driven computerized detector as simple to set as one with just a few basic knobs.

I felt that some older homes in a town 40+ miles away would be a good test of the VX<sup>3</sup>'s capabilities in dealing with both deeper targets as well as areas with a fair amount of trash resulting from years of neglect that the properties had experienced. Sticking with the stock coil it became readily apparent that the amount of trash at the first location would have been better handled with the use of a smaller coil; however, by refining the Discrimination points to reject as many of the unwanted items as possible, decreasing the Recovery Time and slowing down the sweep speed allowed me to make a few good finds in the side yard. The front yard had less trash present and bumping up the RX Gain and Discrimination Sensitivity a tad let me reach the older coins I had hoped were present. Three Wheat cents, a worn Buffalo nickel and a 1944 Mercury dime along with a ring containing three keys and a small 1953 license plate turned up. Switching to the Deep Silver search mode, I re hunted a section of the front yard alongside the walkway and did manage to pull out another Mercury dime (1942) and a pair of Wheat cents before heading down the block to another vacant house. The deeper targets produced responses that were not as consistent as a coin on the surface would produce; however, by combining what the detector was telling me with some knowledge of where the older targets are typically found, I was able to ignore the shallow trash that produced inconsistent signals while focusing on deeper targets that had a SpectraGraph and VDI response that might otherwise have been overlooked. The instruction manual has several pages that discuss this phenomenon in detail and it is worth reading it several times before venturing out in search of the older targets we all hope to find.

The on-line version of this report contains additional field test results and discusses the specific settings that were used along with the basis for making the adjustments at various locations.

## SUMMARY

The VX<sup>3</sup> is a detector designed for users that want many of the features and most of the performance of the V3i without some of the “tweaking” offered on its bigger brother. The engineers at White’s listened to veteran users and defined the optimum settings for specific types of hunting and determined what adjustments found on the V3i, that while helpful to experienced hunters could in fact result in less performance if misadjusted, and designed a new detector that offered “V-platform” performance with a minimum of adjustments. The 8 preset factory programs will provide users with “performance-out-of-the-box” yet the ability to tweak each program for one’s personal preferences or conditions in a specific search area is available at the press of a touchpad or two through the easy to navigate menu system or the innovative “Live Control Bar” feature.

The VX<sup>3</sup> comes with the standard 2-year transferable warranty and lists for \$1,199.95. A full line of accessories including the wireless SpectraSound headphones and optional coils are available. Contact the factory at 1011 Pleasant Valley Road, Sweet Home, OR 97386; (800) 547-6911 or visit their website at [www.WhitesElectronics.com](http://www.WhitesElectronics.com) for more information and be sure to mention you read about the latest addition to the Whites line in *Lost Treasure Magazine*.