



5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

WHATMOUGH
MAGNUM3

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The Magnum is a long-running and successful home theatre package from Australian speaker manufacturer Whatmough, currently in its third generation as the Magnum3. Not ones to rest on their laurels, however, the good folk at Whatmough have seen fit to conduct some fine-tuning to the design of this package, in keeping with new developments at the company; these are in addition to the third-generation changes which saw the departure of a side-mounted 10-inch bass driver from the previous generation (Magnum2), which had helped to keep the speakers elegantly narrow, but also presented some room-placement challenges to the set-and-forget end-user.

So on the Magnum3 (with the main front speaker design called the M3F), there is a twin team of 6.5-inch front-firing bass units; these still allow for a relatively slim-line design at 220 x 990

x 380mm (whd), while Whatmough has used additional bracing to strengthen the larger box. In the latest changes the M3F's front baffle has been flattened to avoid the previous junction point where there was a step between upper and lower sections. This presents a much cleaner speaker to the listeners; where once two separate grilles were used, now a single top-to-bottom grille provides much cleaner lines. The same is true if you choose to listen grilles off — a single flat baffle rather than a two-segment speaker.

The slightly larger internal volume over the MkII design may have helped to wring the specified extra 1Hz from its frequency response of 47Hz to 40kHz (± 3 dB). Impedance is eight ohms

and the M3F is 90dB efficient at 1W into eight ohms. Whatmough has designed the M3Fs to be suitable for use in either home cinema systems or a high-quality stereo configurations.

The third front channel of a surround signal is handled by the M205 centre-channel speaker, which is similarly revised in the latest edition, but still configured in the ubiquitous horizontal MTM arrangement. Frequency response for the M205 is quoted as 78Hz to 40kHz, again within the ± 3 dB window.

Bringing up the rear is the now even-more-diminutive M210, a standmount or wall-mount that looks like the M3F after major surgery a third of the way down. Again the baffle has been

simplified, its former angled grille now replaced by a cleaner rectangular cover. Once again, the drivers are shared with the M205 centre channel.

The solid deep-bass platform for this home theatre system to build upon is provided by the Tornado2 subwoofer — mind you, the M3Fs are no slouches in this area. And solid is indeed what is potentially available from this sub. The Tornado2 sports a long-throw 250mm (or 10-inch in old-school language) cellulose-fibre cone with large 50mm voice coil and usable bass extension below 20Hz, with a -3dB point at an impressive 23Hz. The sealed-box subwoofer is a compact unit featuring an onboard 240-watt Class A/B amplifier, auto on/off switch, speaker-level inputs on good quality binding posts, line-level inputs and outputs and continuously variable volume, phase and crossover frequency via rotary knob.

With the Tornado 2 subwoofer, as tested, Whatmough calls this the ‘Magnum3 Small’ system. You can instead choose the ‘Magnum3 Large’, which substitutes the larger and heavier Tempest 3 subwoofer that applies a still larger 76mm voice coil to what the company calls an “extreme throw” driver. This adds only \$400 to the package price, so if the larger dimensions of the Tempest 3 (430 x 380 x 500mm) can be accommodated, it could be well worth considering the upgrade.

Consistent with our past experience with Whatmough speakers, the Magnum3 package's fit and finish, driver and connector quality is top-notch for the price point. The range is available in a choice of either black or dark cherry finishes.

PERFORMANCE

We've had the Tornado2 subwoofer in at our labs for long-term testing and we've found it to be an outstanding performer. Bass-rich soundtracks from 'Iron Man' to 'The Day the Earth Stood Still' confirm the necessity of a great sub even when the mains are no bass slouches themselves. The Tornado2 delves the depths of the lowest frequencies with picture-rattling power while retaining total control of the resultant excesses in bass driver excursion.

Having said that, the new M3F speakers are one of the best bass fiends in our experience. The new twin 6.5-inch bass drivers punch with a power and bass quality that can compete with far more expensive designs. This is especially evident when used in music listening mode.

Of course such prowess spells good news for stereo users, but equally, home theatre aficionados can revel in the fact that the Tornado2's job is made a little easier. Such is the bass quality of the main speakers that the subwoofer can be crossed-over to at a lower point, reaping benefits in mains/sub integration.

Compared with the previous generation, the new mains have been subtly improved throughout the midrange and top-end, the M3Fs seeming to have a smoother, easier way about them when compared to the already very competent predecessor. The lower treble is a little recessed; a characteristic that will help when listening to over-bright soundtracks and will also better integrate with the electronics the M3Fs may be mated to in some budget systems. But make no mistake; the M3Fs are good enough to couple with components at far higher price points, where their warm tonality will make for a harmonically-rich reproduction.

The centre and rear channels are fine performers, too. Whatmough's use of almost identical drivers throughout the range ‘coheres’ the soundfield into a full-immersion experience. What's more, the centre-channel's speech intelligibility is outstanding, meaning movie dialogue is easily understood. The speaker package also has a dynamic ease, meaning action movies — with the requisite explosions and crashes — are reproduced realistically and sometimes can be almost, well, scary.

CONCLUSION

The tweaked design M3F main speakers over the previous edition elevate the significant sonic qualities of the Magnum package, while the simplified design should make it even more decor-friendly. The new system has an overall better bass performance, especially in stereo, and a slightly smoother tonal balance. Given the outstanding

performance, the high standards of fit and finish, and the back-up from a well-established Australian company, the Whatmough Magnum3 speaker package represents superb value for money. It's a true ‘Best Buy’. ■

Whatmough Magnum3 5.1 speaker package

- Exciting and accurate home cinema package
- Remarkable bass quality
- Spatial and tonal coherence

- Nothing

Price: \$3999
(\$4399 with Tempest 3 subwoofer, see copy)

M3F FLOORSTANDERS

Drivers: 2 x 155mm woofers, 125mm mid-range driver, 35mm dual-concentric tweeter.
Nominal impedance: 6 ohms
Frequency response: 48Hz-40kHz ± 3 dB
Dimensions (whd): 220 x 990 x 390mm
Weight: 27kg each

M3C CENTRE

Drivers: 2 x 125mm mid/bass drivers, 35mm dual-concentric tweeter.
Nominal impedance: 6 ohms
Frequency response: 78Hz-40kHz ± 3 dB
Dimensions (whd): 460 x 190 x 380mm
Weight: 12kg each

MAGNUM F3R STANDMOUNTS

Nominal impedance: 8 ohms
Frequency response: 78Hz-40kHz ± 3 dB
Dimensions (whd): 210 x 360 x 180mm
Weight: 4.5kg each

MAGNUM 3 SUBWOOFER

Driver: 250mm long-throw driver
Power: 240W
Dimensions: 300 x 330 x 380mm
Weight: 35kg
Warranty: Five years (two years on subwoofer electronics)

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