

Focal Trio11 BE

Grammy-winning engineer **ALAN BRANCH** gives Focal's new flagship a listen



The Trio11 BE is a mid-sized enclosure featuring a rather neat trick: a built-in switchable sub. This enables the monitors to convert quickly to nearfield operation, so one monitor becomes two without compromising the positioning. Building on their success with the Trio6 BE, Focal apparently asked users for feedback — which was a request for more of the same sound but with extra power — and this new release (£2,999 inc) is their answer.

The Trio11 BE cabinet has red burr-ash veneer sides and a black satin-looking finish, incorporating a 5" mid-range/woofer and a 1" pure beryllium inverted dome tweeter, mounted in an inset aluminium baffle with a slightly textured finish that rotates 360° in 90° increments, depending on the listening orientation you prefer. This is what Focal calls the 'Focus' or nearfield monitor part of the Trio11 BE, the 90Hz-20kHz 2-way mode. Two small green/red LEDs indicate power, clipping and Focus mode. The lower half of the cabinet houses a 10" woofer complemented by a large laminar port, extending the frequency response down to 30Hz. Powered by tri-amped class G and class AB (for HF), the Trio11 BE can pump out 118dB SPL. The rear panel incorporates XLR inputs, switchable +4dB/-10dB and a 3-way EQ to control LF, HF and low-Mid frequencies as well as the Focus footswitch I/O.

The science bit...

Focal have included an improvement in the stability of the magnetic coils using something called NIC (Neutral Inductance Circuit). This patented technology helps reduce modulation of the magnetic circuit; by optimising a well-positioned Faraday ring, the magnetic field is less influenced by its physical movement, the current passing through it or the frequency of the current. Focal have a TMD (Tuned Mass Damper) by way of two circular beads in the surround which form a harmonic damper, which reportedly helps linearize the frequency response. Focal claims the combination of these and a few other sound isolation fitments help improve the midrange speaker transient response in the 2kHz region, whilst in the woofer, harmonic and intermodulation distortion is reduced.

I tested the Trio11 BE in both vertical and horizontal positions. I often see speakers positioned far too wide for use as a mixer, so with the aid of Sonarworks Reference 4 speaker calibration software, I recorded various frequency response tests and listened for the best position, with and without the Focus mode switched in. My Sonarworks plots give an idea of the difference between modes [this is not an objective measurement, but an indication of the effect of the mode switch in my room only].

Results: Your speaker frequency response curve

This is how your speakers sound. For neutral studio sound, the curve should be flat.



/ Trio11 BE in 3-way mode

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/ Trio11 BE in Focus mode

For me, speaker choice is more personal than most other studio gear, they are also the answer to the question, 'What's the second most important thing in the studio?' (first being your ears). Monitors are how we judge everything through the entire production process — from the snare sound, vocal, reverb — and finally the mix. Evaluating speakers by

listening to a bunch of CDs or hi-res audio is ok, but speakers have to be good to actually work with. I took time getting the Trios in the position I liked, preferring the vertical orientation, and by tweaking Sonarworks to the performance I like. I personally preferred a close listening distance as I am used to working from my own nearfields, I was comfortable when switching to the smaller 5" nearfield Focus mode, which I did by using a simple jack-to-jack footswitch.

Using the Trio11 BE's during pre-production for a new album, and during mixing, I found them extremely nice to work with. The sound was uniform, smooth and extends very low. A separate sub can be a little off-putting, but having it 'built in' to a switchable cabinet is great when working on the bottom end of material like drums.

Two monitors in one box

Impressive in size and sound, the Focal Trio11 BE is a mighty set of versatile speakers, my first impressions was the speakers were a little 'biting' in the upper mids, but not overly bright. That fits my style of speakers as a mixer, as I rely on a sound that is non-fatiguing, however the EQ and orientation options are easy to adjust and should help fine-tune the Trio11 BE to fit any studio. Switching speakers is important when mixing but often difficult to adjust to, not only due to the frequency response change but the speaker position. Switching the Trio 11BE into 'Focus' mode removes all that low sub, but the upper mids and HF remain consistent, and having the speaker position not change when switching from large to small speakers is not just a great idea but an innovative and interesting concept that works well.

With an excellent stereo image, crisp mids, super low end with minimal distortion and high SPL the Trio11 BE can create a huge sound. There is the 'fun' performance side of having a set of large monitors to blast out a track to a band or A&R people, but still retain the ability of fine EQ work when doing day to day productions; you just have to have the room to position them! **T**

resolution/VERDICT

PROS Impressive sound, lovely finish, switchable 'Focus' mode for nearfield operation from the same speaker.

CONS They are large speakers (635 x 345 x 450mm, 37.3kg); planning will be important.

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