

# StereoTimes -- Kimber Select KS-1030

[stereotimes.com/cables022300.shtml](http://stereotimes.com/cables022300.shtml)



## Kimber Select KS-1030

Adnan Arduman

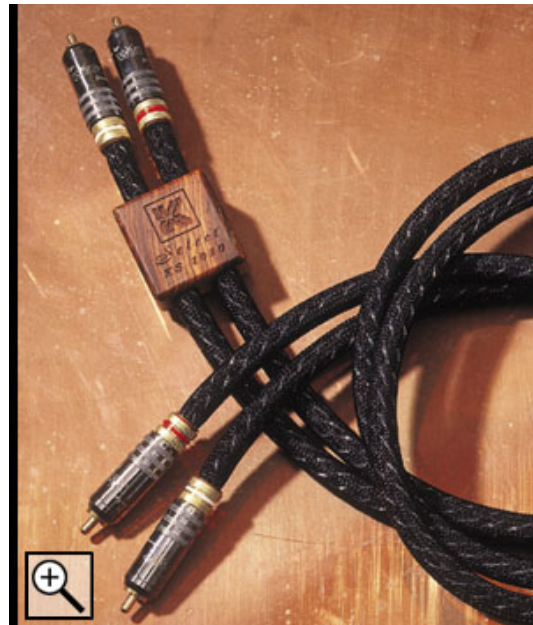
Single Ended Analog Interconnects

23 February 2000

### Specifications

Price: \$1,200./1-meter pair  
Manufacturer: KIMBER KABLE  
2752 South 1900 West, Ogden,  
Utah 84401  
Tel: (801) 621-5530 Fax: (801) 627-  
6980  
Web: [www.kimber.com](http://www.kimber.com)  
Support and technical questions:  
[support@kimber.com](mailto:support@kimber.com)  
Product literature requests:  
[info@kimber.com](mailto:info@kimber.com)

"The term "SELECT" designates the upper strata of the Kimber Kable line and KS-1030 is the top model of the single ended Select Series interconnects."



Kimber KCAG interconnects have served me well as my longtime reference cables. I have used them for more than ten years with my different systems.

Over the years, the electronics have changed but the KCAGs have remained. I've always used two pairs, one between the DAC and preamp and the second pair between pre and power amplifiers. Later on, while building my own DIY single ended tube power amplifier (Nuance 845 SE) and my tube preamplifier "with output transformer" (Fluence 5687 WOT), I used a single braid of KCAG for all internal signal paths. To my ears this cable sounds sweet yet detailed, has a full-bodied midrange and a very natural tonal balance combined with a 3-dimensional soundstage.

This was my brief love story with the KCAG cable. Why do I tell you all this? Well, when Ray Kimber sent me the two 1-meter pairs of Select KS-1030 cables for review, I immediately decided that my review should be a comparative one. The two different cables of the same brand present an ideal opportunity to show the evolution of the line, though it should be noted that the KS-1030s are about four times the price of the KCAG cables.

The term "SELECT" designates the upper strata of the Kimber Kable line and KS-1030 is the top model of the single ended Select Series interconnects. It employs Kimber's very special **Black Pearl\* silver** for both the signal carrying and ground conductors. The lower priced model, KS-1020, uses Black Pearl silver for the signal wires, but copper for the ground. The KS-1030s look and feel gorgeous! They are terminated as matched pairs with possibly the world's finest RCA type connectors, the WBT-0108. The WBT-0108 connectors are solder-free. Terminations are made by a mechanical crimping technique and further secured via setscrews on the RCA connector.

**\*Editor's Note:** we contacted Ray Kimber to gain additional insight regarding the **Black Pearl silver** process. We were delighted to receive the following description, directly from Ray Kimber:

"The Black Pearl conductor begins as a solid core silver of ultra high purity. The drawing process is special in that it results in a smoother than typical surface finish and with much less contamination than would be usual. Of particular interest is the application of the Teflon insulation. Most manufacturers use a sleeve extruding process, wherein the plastic is formed as a sleeve while the conductor is passing through the extrusion head. The sleeve naturally cones down onto the conductor. For the Black Pearl strand (and on our other higher end models) we use a pressure extrusion process, wherein the plastic is forced at high pressure against the conductor. This eliminates any intermediate air boundary between the insulation and the conductor."

There is also a small, enigmatic, Cocobola wood block holding the two cables together. Although the wooden block does not contain any electronic devices, static or otherwise, it still has a function, which goes beyond aesthetics. Since the cables are manufactured as matched pairs, it helps to keep things organized and allows the manufacturer to engrave the model and serial number, along with the signal-flow direction indicator. Wisely enough, the cables are not anchored to this block and they can easily slide if needed. This feature was necessary in my case. My preamp's connections are on both sides of its casing, the two monoblock power amps are on each side of the preamp, and therefore I needed to separate the two channels from each other. In order to slide one channel from the wooden block you have to remove the RCA termination first. The solder-free, screw connections were very handy at this point. If you need to do the same exercise, don't forget to mark the signal flow to the cable that you will remove from the block. I have very discretely placed a green (mint flavored) dental floss around the back of the RCA connector in such a way that only I can notice it when necessary. The second pair of interconnects was placed between my DAC and preamp with the wood blocks intact.

Break-in

Don't ever expect this cable (or any other cable) to sound decent right out of its packaging. This is easy to say but very hard to accept. The typical human reaction is the desire for immediate satisfaction, especially when you pay \$1,200. for each meter pair. They sound far from decent during the first

hours of use. I wished very much to go back to my trusty KCAGs and listen to some music. They sounded lean, edgy, without any bass extension, and bright in the treble. But from the first hours they gave me a distinct hint as to their potential, exhibiting a lot of detail, openness and depth. Their sonic character changed from day to day. Sometimes the bass was good, the sound became more bearable, and the next day it would disappear again. Kimber recommends that you simply run dynamic, complex music (big band, full orchestra, etc.) during break-in. They also claim that the majority of the break-in will take place within the first 72 hours, and that near full break-in should be realized after about 200 hours of play. In my case, the majority of the break-in did not take place within the first 72 hours. Unfortunately, it took place when I approached the 200-hour mark.

I find the break-in process (not only for cables but also for all high-end equipment) to be a form of modern day torture for audiophiles. We are the consumers and yet we have to suffer this aurally painful and time-consuming process. The worst part is that you are never sure of what the final sonic results will be. The product could be the best of its kind but it may not work synergistically with your system. If you were to play your system an average of 2 hours per day, every day, it would take 100 days (well over 3 months) to total 200 hours! Of course, you could turn off your power amplifiers and put a CD on infinite repeat while you are elsewhere. However I could only apply this practice during weekends for safety reasons--plus I still wanted to listen to music during the break-in period and this was not fun! I think that manufacturers and dealers should be obligated to provide broken-in samples for home trials or reviewing purposes. It would make our lives as audiophiles much easier.

## Listening

"On all CDs the Kimber Select KS-1030's holographic presentation, clarity, openness, airiness, resolution, high frequency and low frequency extension, and accuracy of timbre were consistently superior to that of Kimber KCAG."

After 200 hours of playing, I gradually felt that things were going in the right direction. The body was back on the mids—the tonality became very pleasant and natural, and the bass was present, extended and controlled. I started to like the sound very much and enjoyed listening to music again. Before tackling the serious evaluation process, I let the sound settle for 30 more hours. How do I know these accumulated hours so precisely? Well, my Nuance power amplifiers have LCD hour meters that start to count only when the amps are turned on. I had installed them to provide statistical information about tube life expectancies. OK, enough about break-in hours.

I always start my evaluations with a chamber music CD in order to appreciate the tonal accuracy before my ears' perceptions are tainted by louder, more complex music. In this case I chose a recent release: *Brahms, Frühling, Schumann Clarinet Trios* (RCA09026-63504-2) performed by Steven Isserlis (cello), Michael Collins (clarinet), and Stephen Hough on piano. This is an excellent recording and performance. It's a "must have" if you like chamber music! I listened to track 1, first with Select KS-1030, then with KCAG and then with Select one more time. The same A/B/A type evaluation process was used with all of my CDs.

The most obvious difference between the two cables was in the holographic presentation of the soundstage. Select KS-1030 presents the soundstage with more depth, width, and height. By comparison, the KCAG sounds very flat and 2-dimensional. The focus also seemed to be better with the Select cable. Timbral accuracy was high-class, exhibiting much more inner detail and bite than KCAG, especially on the sound of the cello. The sound of the piano was duller with the KCAG. It was kind of muted as if its top cover was in a more closed position. The clarinet's woody sound was portrayed with zest, accuracy, and body by the Select cable. With this chamber music CD, Kimber Select KS-1030 was the clear winner.

Next I listened to the first track of *Bye Bye Blackbird* (ECM 1467) by Keith Jarrett with Gary Peacock and Jack DeJohnette. Here the Select cable gave the cymbals the sparkle and inner detail that they deserve without becoming overly bright or harsh in any way. The KCAG sounded less detailed or slightly rolled-off and less vivid in comparison. Also, with Select cable, the bass was firmer and more extended, and the piano sounded much cleaner and immediate with all its harmonics preserved. There was considerably more "air" between the instruments.

It was time to move to some more complex orchestral music. Here my first choice was the fourth track of *Saint-Saens Symphony No.3* (Organ Symphony) played by Berlin PO conducted by James Levine (DG 419 617-2). On this CD, the airy sound of Select became even more apparent. Passages with massed instruments were very well resolved by Select cable where KCAG seemed slightly muddier. As always with Select cables, the stage depth, height and width were impressive, and the organ's low frequencies were more defined and extended. Select's reproduction of massed strings was more resolving and expressive, and had a silky quality.

*Bruckner Symphony No.5* performed by Berlin PO and Günter Wand (RCA 09026-68503-2) is an excellent live recording. Willing to double check my findings on orchestral music, I listened to track 1. In addition to all the differences cited above, this CD shed additional light on the excellent low-level resolving capabilities of the Select cable.

On all CDs the Kimber Select KS-1030's holographic presentation, clarity, openness, airiness, resolution, high frequency and low frequency extension, and accuracy of timbre were consistently superior to that of Kimber KCAG. It was as if I had lifted many veils between the music and myself. Fortunately, the resolving power of the Select KS-1030 was not accompanied by added edginess. I found them to be very natural and musical, but be warned--these cables are like daylight--they are ruthlessly revealing and they will expose all the imperfections of your system's weakest element(s)!

I still think that KCAG is a very good cable that will perform well in most systems. Being a conservative, I always thought that they would remain unbeatable. But Kimber Select KS-1030 is the real winner and I will not let them leave my system. Congratulations Mr. Kimber for your considerable achievement! Strongly recommended!