

# REVIEW: Kimber Kable KS-1030 Cable

 [audioasylum.com/reviews/Cable/Kimber-Kable/KS-1030/cables/34812.html](http://audioasylum.com/reviews/Cable/Kimber-Kable/KS-1030/cables/34812.html)

**Model:** KS-1030

**Category:** Cable

**Suggested Retail Price:** \$1200

**Description:** silver braided around a core-IC

**Manufacturer URL:** [Kimber Kable](#)

**Model Picture:** [View](#)

Review by **Luminator** on November 10, 2001 at 16:11:20  
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When you try out products of the Kimber Select KS-1030's caliber, you need to take your time. Use them with a wide range of equipment. Bring them to other people's homes. Make sure everything is fully burned-in. And then compare them to other similarly-priced cables.

I started acquiring KS-1030s from the time they first hit the market. Nevertheless, I didn't get a firm handle on the KS-1030's sound, until I had them for nine months. They burned-in quite quickly, probably over a period of three weeks. But it wasn't until I followed my own advice in the paragraph above, that I determined the KS-1030's true sound.

Too many people rush to judgement, upon inserting the KS-1030 into their systems for the first time. Just chill. Stop assigning false values to the cables, until you know exactly what your equipment sounds like. And, with cables of the KS-1030's pedigree, you will be able to make such judgements.

Okay, I have to admit that when I first received the KS-1030, I burned it in and tried it out with a Sony Playstation. Before you shoot off your mouth about what a stupid mismatch that was, just listen. All of a sudden, video game sound wasn't as hashy. It didn't pound gamers over the head. Instead, marathon RPG sessions really sucked the players in. True, the game is on the screen. But the sound was enveloping, not off-putting.

That's when the light bulb went off in our heads. We realized that the Kimber KS-1030's lack of distortion made other cables sound horribly colored, slow, zippy, opaque, washed out, warped, compressed, gutted, bleached, grainy, bland, milky, you name it. Once you try out a neutral cable like the KS-1030, other cables sound absolutley unacceptable, hopelssly inadequate, and offensively infuriating.

When we took out the KS-1030, and put back the Kimber KCAG-0108, it was as if the Reaper did a slash job on the sound. Video game sound took on a hardness, with a fatiguing smearing across the board.

When I brought the KS-1030s to other audiophiles' homes, they (the other 'philes) kept saying that the KS-1030 sounded like this, sounded like that, all over the place. Little did they realize that the KS-1030 was simply getting out of the way, and letting the components speak for themselves.

If you already use Kimber products, you owe it to yourself to try out the KS-1030. It makes the KS-1020 and KS-1010 sound somewhat mushy and slow. But, the music remains intact, even if the rest of your system is wired up with PBJ. And if you have KS-1030 upstream, it makes an excellent -- no, make that superb -- match with Kimber's Bi-Focal XL. In fact, I'm willing to wager that if you already are using KS-3033 or Bi-Focal XL speaker cables, you don't know how good they really are, until you use KS-1030 upstream.

Several smart people use KS-1030 between a source component and a headphone amp. This is the application where you can discern interconnects' true sound. And this is where I began to realize where the KS-1030's weaknesses lie.

The KS-1030 ever so slightly adds a thin film of sweetness to the sound. You'll hear it directly in the mids, but it has repercussions elsewhere in the sonic spectrum. This sweetness is kind of like a proof half-dollar coin. The mirrored backgrounds are smooth and polished, but there is a frosting to the letters, JFK's bust, and the eagle's feathers. That may sound like a crude analogy. But if the KS-1030 is a proof half-dollar, then other cables are like a worn-out Buffalo nickel, where you can't even read the date.

In junior high, I used to have baseball practice in Golden Gate Park after school. There was some time to kill between the time school got out, and practice started. Often times, I'd hang out at teammates' homes. I remember hearing that unforgettable opening to Yes' "Owner Of A Lonely Heart." Listening to this song is quite moody in the afternoon, when you look north towards the Golden Gate Bridge. You have the fog rolling in on your left, and sunshine to your right. The guitar solo is squawky and all over the place. With the KS-1030 in the system, the slight sweetness makes it seem as though the fog has moved in over your head. That guitar solo is not as cutting and squawky as it should be.

Even on terrible-sounding recordings, like Dokken's "Tooth And Nail," the KS-1030's absence of typical wire distortions makes the music sound less grating. It is then that you realize that recordings may not be as bad as you thought. The sound most of us get from our systems is so warped and different from the original recording. Everything -- rooms, powerline quality, source components, cables, amplification, and speakers -- can only mess things up. They can't magically make the sound better. They do harm, and the less they do, the better. It is then that you realize that, while everything in a system is

important, the back end (speaker cables and speakers) matters least. If your front end and interconnects are lousy, not even the finest amps and speakers can replace what the front end destroyed.

If you are going to re-wire your entire system, the KS-1030 is a contender. But if you are going to spend this kind of money, you should try other expensive cables. XLO's Limited Edition and Tara Labs' The 2 are close, if more expensive, rivals to the KS-1030.

The XLO LE lacks the KS-1030's added midrange sweetness. Instrumental texture and nuance are not only more in evidence with LE, but they are more finely integrated with the whole. The edge definition on Chris Isaak's "Somebody's Crying" is slightly rounded and rubbery with the KS-1030. With the XLO LE, the instruments snap tightly in focus, not just image-wise, but time-wise. There is a precision to the stop, flow, and decay of sounds with the LE that some characterize as "articulate," but I simply think of as naturally accurate. And the ethereal keyboards in the background whistle and shimmer more texturally with LE. With the KS-1030, a small teaspoon of pure sugar has been sprinkled on the musical arrangement.

I have written before that Tara Labs' The 2 adds a bit of sweetness, especially compared to the top-notch The One. Similarly, The 2 without a full-sized Analog Floating Ground Station sounds remarkably identical to Kimber's KS-1030. That means that products of this nature are converging in sound-quality. That is good news for the consumer, since cable colorations and distortions are becoming things of the past.

The 2 by itself sounds a bit stilted, compared to KS-1030. The KS-1030 sounds more liquid and finely nuanced, compared to the stock The 2. Check out the drums on Dream Theater's "6:00" and "The Mirror." When Mike Portnoy hits the snare, the stock The 2 makes it sound as if Portnoy isn't lifting his stick fast enough. The KS-1030 makes it sound as if Portnoy isn't as snappy on the initial drumstroke, but at least it accurately captures Portnoy pulling the stick away.

So all in all, the stock The 2 and KS-1030 are pretty much equals. It's when you add the full-sized AFGS to The 2, that things go up in smoke. With the AFGS, The 2 allows the soundstage to stretch out. Background noise is stripped away, so transparency takes hold. The distinction between music and background space is brought into clear contrast. This is quite apparent on Don Henley's "You Can't Make Love" and "All She Wants To Do Is Dance." On the latter, you feel like you are actually at the dusty third-world airport, when Henley's plane "taxi down the runway."

The KS-1030's slight sweetness prevents it from winning the "recreate the soundstage" contests. That artificial sweetness masks the music's tiny little elegant nuances. That sweetness ever so slightly robs the music of its volume, speed, air, and size. The images are blurred just a little, so it's like looking through your glasses, as they have slipped down your nose just a tad.

If you do not compare KS-1030 to other super-performance cables, you may never hear its minor imperfections. But even on the Sony Playstation, cable differences, even if they are at the threshold of human hearing, show up. You probably will have a jolly good time with KS-1030 in your video game system. But put in cables which are superior to the KS-1030, and it's like getting to attack first in an RPG.

Really, if you intend to use Kimber products throughout your system, no matter how modest or exorbitant it may be, you can't go wrong with the amazing KS-1030. It will make even Kimber's otherwise excellent KCAG-0108 sound like a hatchet job. So if the KS-1030's freedom from ubiquitous and gross cable distortions allows the Sony Playstation to shine, imagine what this interconnect can do for your high-end audio components.

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<b>Product Weakness:</b>	1.) Very very slight added sweetness makes it fall short of the competition's best interconnects. 2) Well, no one can call the KS-1030 "affordable."
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<b>Product Strengths:</b>	1) Makes 90% of the other cables on the market sound woefully inadequate. 2) Good flexibility. 3) Voiced to sound acceptable with a wide range of equipment. 4) Comes in a Pelican case.
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#### Associated Equipment for this Review:

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<b>Amplifier:</b>	AudioPrism Debut II
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<b>Preamplifier (or None if Integrated):</b>	Mark Levinson No. 380
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<b>Sources (CDP/Turntable):</b>	Theta Jade and Mark Levinson No. 360; Rega Planar 3 and Grado Platinum; Fanfare FM FT-1
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<b>Speakers:</b>	ProAc Response One SC
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<b>Cables/Interconnects:</b>	(see text)
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<b>Music Used (Genre/Selections):</b>	Rock, pop, oldies, metal, Hawaiian, electronica
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<b>Room Size (LxWxH):</b>	16 x 15 x 8
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<b>Room Comments/Treatments:</b>	ASC TubeTraps
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<b>Time Period/Length of Audition:</b>	3.5 years
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<b>Other (Power Conditioner etc.):</b>	MIT Z-Center and Iso-Duo; Tara Labs AD/6C
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<b>Type of Audition/Review:</b>	Product Owner
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Interconnects, speaker wire, power cords. Ask the Cable Guys.

The Cable Cooker