

# StereoTimes -- Kimber Select KS 3038 Speaker Cable

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Kimber Select KS 3038 Speaker Cable

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## Specifications

Pure Silver constrained matrix cables  
\$7,500.00/eight-foot pair

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It has now been nearly a year since my review about the **Kimber BiFocal XL cable** appeared. Having been very favorably impressed by the



performance of the BiFocal XLs, I had concluded my article as follows: "The Kimber BiFocal XL is truly a great speaker cable. I decided to buy and keep them in my system. Since the Bi-Focal XL is so devoid of any noticeable weakness, I wonder what the Select series of speaker cables will sound like. I really look forward to testing them one day."

Well my wish has come true. Several months ago Kimber sent me a review sample of the KS 3038 speaker cable that occupies the top position of the Kimber Select series. It's a 6 ft pair terminated with WBT-0680AG spades on the amplifier end and WBT-0600 bananas at the speaker end. Kimber does not normally terminate with spades at one end and bananas at the other, but it was

only my special request as I find this configuration more practical for my setup. Buyers are free to order any termination combination they like, with all terminations provided by WBT connectors.

From the moment I installed the KS 3038 cables in my system, they sounded so good, with no hint of edginess or hardness and - without the typical nastiness of "unbroken-in" cables, that I thought that Kimber might be breaking-in their review samples prior to sending them off for review. I thought that to be a wonderful idea, as I hate break-in periods. Alternatively, I wondered if perhaps they were only doing this for the Select series of cables.

Such thoughts were pure speculation and needed verification before sharing them with our readers. So I called Ray Kimber and asked him if my guess was correct. Well I was wrong, no such break-in is applied to any Kimber cable and my review sample was no exception. "So, why does it sounds so good and not act like any other unbroken-in cable?" I asked.

"Yes, we also noticed the same thing" Ray said, "This cable sounds good from the first day. It will of course benefit from some break-in, but not as much as other cables do." He went on to state that 150 hours would be a safe period to consider them completely broken in. I chose to prolong this period to 200 hours to be on the safe side. How would I know with such precision if I played them for 200 hours? My Nuance 845 SE Amplifiers have time counters on them and every time they are switched on they start to count. In any case, waiting 200 hours was not a torture this time. On the contrary, as they sounded consistently good during this normal break in period, I was getting great pleasure from my CD collection.

I always prefer to make comparative evaluations, and this time the Kimber BiFocal XL cables seemed like an ideal candidate. I have owned them for over a year, so I'm very familiar with their sound. But I did not want to stop there; I also wanted to test the cables in other system to see if their performance was system dependent. I took them with me on visits with three of my friends. I will tell you everything, but first let me give you some technical information about Kimber Select KS 3038 cables.

KS 3038 has approximately the same exterior diameter as the BiFocal XL and, if you exclude both ends, looks very similar to them, with the exception of their color. Because the entire Select series of speaker cables is single wired, they don't have any bi-wiring or tri-wiring options like BiFocal and TriFocal series. If you want to biwire, you will need to buy two pairs of the KS-3038. Though I never felt or had the need for it, some applications may still require biwiring. As I can't imagine coupling them with any other, and more likely lesser cable, this will make for a rather pricey solution!

All Kimber Select loudspeaker cables utilize their proprietary X38R core compound (also used on BiFocal XL series). Its role is mainly to provide acoustic damping. Conductors are applied to the surface of the core and are held in a constrained matrix. This matrix is applied simultaneously with the conductor, to help ensure a high level of precision. In conjunction with the core compound, the matrix is said to work electrostatically to help improve signal fidelity and shield against electromagnetic interferences such as RF.

Both cables sounded very neutral and offered little hint of any coloration and they were both very well extended on both extremes of the frequency spectrum. But I'm afraid that the similarities stop there. Although the BiFocal XL is a great cable by any standard, KS 3038 outclassed it in all other areas.

### Sound Stage

Probably the most obvious or striking characteristic of KS 3038 is that its sound stage is far bigger and deeper. You get a degree of openness you wouldn't imagine your system could possess, with an enormous sense of air between the instruments. You can hear each and every one of the instruments with great clarity and can easily pinpoint them in the space. They become more alive, real and palpable with extremely well defined contours.

### Timbre

KS 3038 is so transparent and neutral that it doesn't seem to have a tonal characteristic of its own, with the excellent BiFocal XL sounding somewhat darker in comparison.

### Resolution

The clarity and resolution of the KS 3038 is of the "jaw dropping" degree. In fact, this is exactly what happened to me the first time I heard them, it took me a while to get my lower jaw to rejoin the upper one. The low level detail, inner details, the definition of the contours and the overall detail is of exemplary level. In fact, I was able to hear the felt of the piano's hammer hitting the strings; I became conscious of the felt's presence in the recording.

### Bass Performance

The KS 3038's bass is much better defined than the BiFocal XL. It is crisper. The dominant double bass of the first track of Rickie Lee Jones' *It's Like This* [Artemis Records 751 054-2] became cleaner and stopped violating other frequencies territories. Its slam and control became more apparent while listening to Shostakovich's *Symphony 8*, Concertgebouw/Haitink [Decca 411 616-2]

### Treble Performance

KS 3038's high frequencies have more clarity and sparkle, yet they never become edgy, tiring or harsh. Instruments like cymbals and triangles sound very detailed and liquid with a slight degree of zesty silkiness, which is not at all coloration, but the inherent natural timber of those instruments.

In addition, I noticed that with KS 3038 I could increase the volume to higher levels than I used to. It gave me a feeling of a bigger dynamic range.

I took the KS 3038s with me and visited three of my audiophile friends. One has Genesis 200 speakers driven with ARC VT 200 amplification, another has Genesis 5 speakers driven with Pass Aleph 0 amps and the third one has Sonus Faber Amati speakers driven with Audio Aero Single Ended amps. All three of them have very reputable speaker cables, but I don't want to mention their brands or models, as this part of my listening session is not carried out

with as much diligence. Upon inserting the KS 30308s into all three systems, all my previous findings were unanimously confirmed. My friends have all added the Kimber KS 3038 to their respective wish lists.

The KS 3038 sounded remarkably good in all four systems, bringing the same qualities to each one of them and showing no hint of matching or synergy problems. As also mentioned by Martin Colloms in his article that appeared in the British Hi-Fi News magazine, this cable does not have a dominant character of its own. It allows the music through without subtracting information or adding coloration, which is not the case for most speaker cables. This is probably why it can be so easily matched with most systems without any problem. Don't expect to tweak your system with it, for this cable doesn't add warmth nor will it soften or harden your system's sound. I guess that's the reason most reviewers have called the KS 3038 "no cable" at all. For most readers, a statement such as "no cable" is not very explanatory, since no one has ever heard a system with "no cable." Although I don't necessarily approve of the use of such imaginary terms, having lived with and heard KS 3038 for a good while, I can appreciate what it was they were trying to explain.

The overall performance and the degree of resolution offered by the Kimber Select KS 3038 is such that you start to ask yourself questions. If this cable passes so much more information, we can deduce that most other cables are subtracting a hell of a lot. They act like big filters. Perhaps speaker cables ARE indeed the weakest links of a system? What is the use of changing your DAC if your speaker cable will filter most of the improvements of your upgrade?

I will be the first to admit that the KS 3038 is not inexpensive, but with such an exceptional level of performance, I believe it to be worth every penny of the asking price. Highly recommended!

