

REVIEWS
hardware

kimber kable

KS 1136, KS1126, KS 1036, and KS 1026 Select Interconnects

as reviewed by Robert H. Levi



Stop the presses! Kimber Kable's brand new top of the line Kimber Select has just leap-frogged the competition and is now the best interconnect under \$4000 on the market! If the purest "black pearl" silver balanced KS 1136 and single-ended KS 1036 doesn't shake up the competition, I'll eat a steak at Sizzler! I was flabbergasted by their intensely musical performance, harmonious timbres, and innate neutrality. These interconnects are a kick butt value and the brand new price/performance leader in today's super high-end cable marketplace!

With newbie cable manufacturers springing up like weeds in an over fertilized rose garden, the biggest and most revered of them all, Kimber Kable, introduces their best work to the world of high-end audio. After more than 30 years of bringing audiophiles the finest interconnects at reasonable prices, Ray Kimber refuses to rest on his laurels and once again shocks the marketplace with blockbuster wire so neutral [and

comparatively affordable] that I had to listen to them on four systems to get a handle on what they were doing. With uncompromised great cable designs which have connected two generations of audiophile's systems, Ray has invested his very best efforts, incredible knowledge, and high taste levels earned from producing dozens of high-end recordings into these outstanding new Select interconnect designs.

I have met Ray at several audio confabs over the years, but really got to know what he was about when, as president, I had the honor of presenting him the Founder's Award of the Los Angeles and Orange County Audio Society. He is a generous man who insists on running an inclusive life of making friends and influencing people. He supports numerous charitable endeavors, cares about education, and cares intensely about excellence. His understated and most friendly demeanor rather obscures the fact that he is a genuine genius and superbly creative fellow. I got the impression in talking with Ray that he had turned his attention away from the cable chase to working with colleges and the like and exploring recording techniques. Was I wrong.

The KS 1136 is the hot new balanced version of the KS 1130. The KS 1036 is the single-ended model. There appears to be about 50% more "black pearl" solid core silver wire in the new models, similarly braided as their predecessors, with more lavish use of special insulation materials. Silver plated studio grade XLR connectors or WBT Nextgen silver RCA's are included. The KS 1136 costs \$2590 for one meter while the KS 1036 costs \$2490 for one meter.



The KS 1126 is the new silver/copper combo version in balanced form. The KS 1026 is the single-ended version. These are furnished with studio grade connectors or WBT Nextgen copper connectors. The 1126 has, like its all silver version, substantially more metal and ESD yarn in the new versions. In the single-ended version, the three copper leads are used in the ground while the three silver leads are used in positive. The KS 1126 costs \$1360 for one meter. The KS 1026 costs \$1320 for one meter. All of the connectors Kimber uses are wonderfully solid and offer assured connection time and time again without failure. All of the KS cables are built in the USA.

After reviewing cables almost non stop for the past six years, I have come to the conclusion that connectivity has fallen behind the technology utilized in top end electronics and speakers. Cables may have always been the weak link. Audiophiles have uncomplainingly used interconnects as tone controls for years. It's only been in the past two years that cables have reached the market that approach the ideal neutral, that allow the music to flow with a real sense of verisimilitude. The most neutral to date include the Jorma Design Origo and Kubala-Sosna Elation... not exactly names on the tip of the tongue of most audiophiles. In fact, it's hard to

recognize any of the current top manufacturers or even find where they are available to borrow a set to audition. Living in LA gives me a big advantage, but it's still a challenge. It's this attribute of neutrality or sonic invisibility combined with a harmonious truthfulness that we search for today. I want to listen to the gear and recordings, not the interconnects!

The new Kimber KS 1136 and KS 1036 offer dramatic improvements over the very good, but somewhat dated versions that have gone before. These new Selects have bigger dynamics, tight powerful bass, no telling signature or troublesome coloration, even sonics beautifully integrated from highest to lowest notes, and mountains of realistic definition. In the exalted \$2000 - 4000 per meter category, they out perform all others and cost less! Their ability to communicate ambience and hall size will bowl you over. Imaging is spot on solid. They may be in the system, but they do a Houdini-like disappearing act that is amazing. Plus, they draw you into the music which hugely enhances the high-end experience and the sense of real music in real space. You will have to spend at least double the dough to find cables that offer more than these.

I very much liked the KS 1126 and KS 1026. They communicate rich, delicious warmth with excellent definition. They have a character or signature that is very attractive and easy to listen to, though not invisible. The blend of silver and copper is very successful and most forgiving. The slightly slower, more rounded sound will compliment a giant range of solid state gear and some tube designs. These may be the perfect cables with electrostats or metal drivers. They offer a strong value and are most lovable overall.

Now back to the KS 1136 and KS 1036. I heard no real or imagined differences in the XLR or RCA versions in the one meter length. That said, I had the older balanced KS 1130 in stock to compare and I was surprised big time. Remember all that criticism about Hero having better bass than the Select. Forget about it. This new silver Select wire eats bass for breakfast. Remember that slightly light weight presentation of the original Select. Move on folks. This new silver Select is an Olympic weight lifter.

You want transparency? You've got it big time! I truly thought this kind of see-through sound was only available over \$5000 per meter. Not any more. Vocals come alive. Listen to Nicki Parrott, *Black Coffee*, Venus Records, VHCD-1041 available from Eastwind Import. She sings while playing a bass fiddle. WOW! Take a listen to Fever. This is great stuff indeed and alive, alive, alive.

Dialoghi, from Yarlung Records, CD 78876 is killer. The piano has bell-like, ethereal sound and the cello is in the room gorgeous. The strings sing while the cello's cabinet echoes. Marvelous! You want speed and snap? The new KS 1136 and KS 1036 are faster than a speeding bullet, but know when to stop. I put 50 hours on these in the cable cooker and another 50 in my system to assure break in. They actually sounded really good ice cold right out of the case. These are first class reference cables for sure.

Quibbles?

With the KS 1136 and KS 1036, be sure to order the silver plated WBT and XLR connectors. They are sweet. I really found nothing to criticize. Maybe I'll find something in a year or two. We shall see. Price wise, they are comparatively quite a good deal. Nice to get more and pay less for a change!

In Conclusion

Master designer and resident engineering genius Ray Kimber and the designers at Kimber Cable strike again and this time take no prisoners! Their hot new, tip top Kimber Select balanced KS 1136 and single-ended KS 1036 offer the best overall performance and transparency in their price category. With every subtle weakness of their earlier designs solidly fixed, the new more robust "black pearl" solid core silver cables just disappear in your system. These are reference quality cables. They involve the listener in the music like interconnects costing double and triple the Selects. They are truly price performance winners. End of story.

The KS 1126 and KS 1026, blends of silver and copper, are most beautiful performers and more forgiving than their all silver brothers. A very good value, they will be an excellent match in systems that need a bit of smoothing to come to life.

If you have the money and consider yourself a no holds barred audiophile connoisseur, don't hesitate to select the Kimber Select KS 1136 or KS 1036 for your cost is no object system and save some dough for software. Even listening with the Marten Bird's perfect diamond tweeters and speedy ceramic drivers, the new Selects brought CDs and LPs to life and left virtually nothing to be desired! Ray Kimber has done it again! My highest recommendation! **Robert H. Levi**

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Revised interconnect rankings to include the new Kimber Select Interconnects from the latest listening sessions with cables ranked by reviewer preference within price categories as follows:

Over \$4000 per meter

TIE: Jorma Origo (single-ended and balanced); **Kubala-Sosna Elation [balanced and single-ended] State of the Art Category.**

Jorma Prime (balanced and single-ended)

Nordost Odin (balanced and single-ended)

Tara Labs The Zero (single-ended)

Acrolink 7N-DA6100 (single-ended)

\$2000 - 4000 per meter

Kimber Select KS 1136 and KS 1036 [balanced and single-ended]

Kubala-Sosna Emotion (balanced and single-ended)

Jorma #1 (balanced and single-ended) Bybees on board.

Clarison Teresonic Gold (single-ended)

Nordost Valhalla (balanced and single-ended)

Wireworld Platinum Eclipse (balanced and single-ended)

Acrolink 7N-A2500 Mexcel (single-ended)

Silversmith Palladium (balanced and single-ended)

Harmonic Technology Photon Interconnects [fiber optic] with Power Pack 4 (balanced and single-ended)

\$1000 - 2000 per meter

CRL Silver Interconnects (balanced and single-ended)

Stereovox 600-SEIii (balanced and single-ended)

Kimber Select KS 1126 and KS 1026 [balanced and single-ended]

Kubala-Sosna Expression (balanced and single-ended)

Jorma #2 (single-ended)

XLO Signature 3 Interconnect [balanced and single-ended]

Acoustic Zen Silver Reference II (balanced and single-ended)

\$450 - 1000 per meter

Audience AU24e [Balanced and single-ended]

Harmonic Technology Magic II (Balanced and single-ended)

Kimber Select KS 1011 (balanced and single-ended)

Nordost Heimdall (Balanced and single-ended)

CRL Copper Series Interconnects (Single-ended tested)

Harmonic Technology Pro Sil-way III+ (balanced and single-ended)

\$250 - 450 per meter

Dynasty by Dynastrand [available again soon]

Mythos by Argentum Acoustics (balanced and single-ended)

Dynamic Design New Generation Lotus SE

Soundstring Octaphase Alpha Series (single-ended Unshielded Interconnect)

Soundstring Octaphase Omega Pro Line (single-ended/Balanced Shielded Interconnect)

Under \$250 per meter

Kimber Hero (balanced and single-ended)

Kimber Timbre (single-ended)

Retail prices:

The KS 1136 costs \$2590 for one meter while the KS 1036 costs \$2490 for one meter.

The KS 1126 costs \$1360 for one meter. The KS 1026 costs \$1320 for one meter.