

Crystal Cable New Standard Certified 1.3B HDMI Cable

Crystal's Premium HDMI Cable for High End Home Theatre

Sugg. Retail: 2m/\$520CAD, 5m/\$690

www.crystalcable.com
www.audiobasics.com

Crystal Cable was founded in 2004 with the aim of building audio cables from a special balanced formula of gold-infused silver that increases conductivity because of its extraordinary purity, 99.9999999% conductive metal. The driving force behind **Crystal Cable** is Gabi van der Kleij, a trained concert pianist, who has assembled some very innovative engineers to develop and manufacture the cable materials and do final construction. All their cables are wound using special techniques that employ, as well as the proprietary gold/silver alloy, such materials as Kapton and Teflon for insulation purposes. All cables are hand-terminated and soldered, which partially explains their high prices.



The tight braiding process is similar to that employed by Kimber Kable, but done on a more miniature scale, with specially designed machines to ensure precision in this process. The HDMI cable can be had in various terminations, including those for particular projectors, such as DVI or other multi-pin types. Every time you turn around, there seems to be another version of HDMI, but maybe with 1.3b we've perhaps settled down for a while.

Crystal's first foray into this realm may seem pretty expensive to those who see cables as generic things that come with gear, but to anyone aware of this company, this one may seem pretty much in the budget world. Their interconnect and speaker cables can get into the thousands in quite a hurry. And, as noted above, this cable does not increase in price in relation to length as much as some others, so becomes more practical in high end systems where the HDMI run has to be several metres.

I used our review sample between a *Samsung BDR-1500* Blu-ray player (review forthcoming) and a *Sim2 Domino D80a* 1080p video projector (review also coming soon), which was certainly a good test, alternating it with a generic (though with gold-plated contacts) HDMI cable that came with my *OPPO DV-980H* DVD/SACD player. With a 92" pull-up *VuTec* screen, it was fairly easy to make comparisons between the cables, and I'm sure these would be more visible with a longer cable run like that necessitated by a ceiling-mounted projector. Here the run was 2 metres.



New test and demo discs for the Blu-ray format were also very helpful, especially one called *FPD Benchmark Software*, which has numerous test patterns and real-life video sequences, both still and in motion. In this case, the still sequences were very helpful for making comparisons. With HD video, even moreso than with NTSC, phase artifacts caused by longer cables can definitely become a factor in the resolution you perceive in the picture. For that reason, I wouldn't have minded having much longer review cables, say 10 metres, to make my comparisons, but that wasn't possible. And since we're here dealing with video frequencies way into the Megahertz, quality of cable transmission is a major factor, especially in terms of colour purity and overall resolution.

The differences were subtle, as you'd expect, but the ***Crystal HDMI***, consistently showed better colour values, and more detail right down to the pixel level. It also maintained the extraordinary picture balance and naturalness of the HD still and moving images. Motion artifacts, always a concern with fixed-pixel displays were less noticeable with the ***Crystal***, making for a subtly smoother picture quality, a little more film-like, perhaps, although film motion artifacts are quite different, as a rule, from video ones.

It seems that, as we push the level of video quality ever higher, what we use to transmit it becomes much more important. Generic cables will do the job, so to speak, but when it comes to getting that last level of pixelic precision through the system to the screen, a cable as good as the ***Crystal HDMI*** becomes an utter necessity, and increases your confidence that you're getting the whole HD picture.

Andrew Marshall