

## Product Review

### The Micro KVM by Cables To Go

by Larry Mobbs

I came across this product while browsing the TigerDirect catalog. It does just one task and it does it beautifully. The Micro KVM is a cable splitter that allows one to connect two computers to a single keyboard, mouse, monitor and audio. At different times I've mounted more than one computer on a dedicated computer stand, usually mounting one keyboard on the pull out shelf with it's attached mouse and another keyboard/mouse combination on the desktop. That wasn't a terrible problem, but very few computer desks are suited for twin monitors.

Enter the KVM item. Essentially, one attaches the monitor, mouse, keyboard and sound/out to the switch. On it's other end there are two outgoing cable assemblies which go the ports on the two desktop computers. I don't like the design as it does spread a lot of wire around the switch. I'd rather have a box like the old printer switches that had all the connections on the back side. It would have to be heavy for the KVM switch as it holds a lot of wire.

For the user, there is nothing to do once the hardware is set up. Two blue lights indicate which computer is the connected item by either displaying one or both lights. Hitting the Scroll-Lock 2 then Scroll-Lock alone switches all the hardware to computer #2. Using the 1 key in that sequence returns to computer #1. The switch takes about 1 second to make the transition. There is no software involved and I've used the unit on Windows/Mac, Mac/Linux and Windows/Linux combinations without difficulty.

Another interesting issue is that only the keyboard has to be attached to the Micro KVM. By that I mean one could have two monitors in use, say watching a video on a computer which has the speakers directly attached rather than via the KVM. The user could be editing this document on the other machine, switching to the second computer only when needing to adjust it's playback.

I've got a Dell desktop mounted on a traditional cart with hutch and the monitor takes up about half the desktop. On the other half I've got a Mini Mac with just a 6" x 6" footprint. It sits beside an external DVD writer which both machines utilize via USB connection. For me this is the best of both worlds as I use the Mac the most for internet and video watching or CD listening. When I need to edit photos or use Quicken I'll switch to the Dell in a heartbeat.

I've had the KVM for about three months and just love the flexibility it offers. I've just ordered my second unit. They cost just \$34.99 with a few dollars shipping. My unit came in about 5 days from order. They can be purchased directly from [TigerDirect.com](http://TigerDirect.com)