



# Generating Good KARMA

## Tutorial Series for KARMA Triton/KARMA MW

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## Tutorial 1: KARMA Essentials

KARMA is one of the most exciting music technologies around. However, it's even more exciting when you know how to use it! In order to jump start you into the world of KARMA, this tutorial covers the essential KARMA topics you'll need to begin experimenting on your own. By the time you're done, you'll not only have a big grin on your face, but you'll know how to:

- browse Performance Banks & find a particular KARMA Performance, and
- jam with KARMA using the KARMA Real-time Controls.

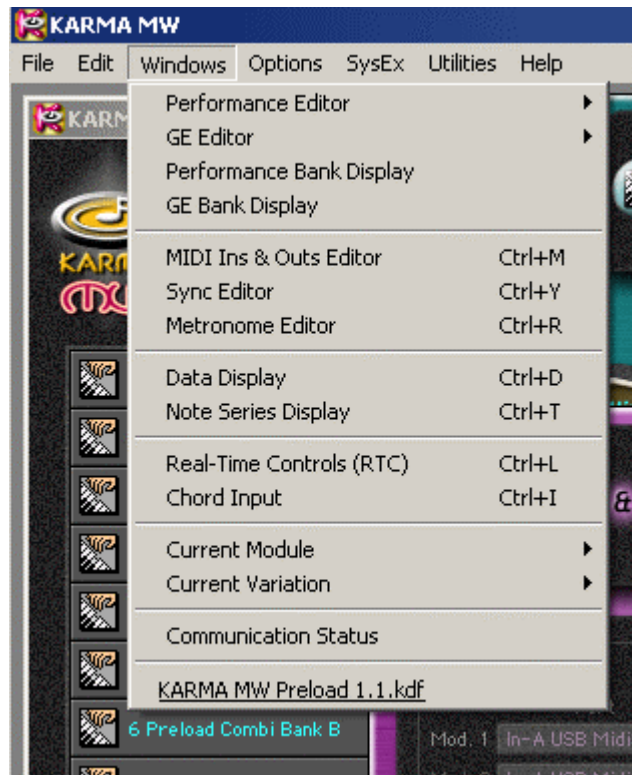
### Prerequisites

We know you're anxious to get started, but first:

1. *Be sure that you have successfully completed all the steps in the "MW Getting Started" document (for KARMA MW), or the "KT First Time Setup" or "KT Getting Started" documents (For KARMA Triton), including loading the proper PCG file.* These documents are installed along with the KARMA software, and can be found in the install folder (Mac) or the Start Menu/Desktop (Windows). They can also be downloaded at [www.karma-lab.com/support](http://www.karma-lab.com/support).
2. *Start the KARMA MW or KARMA Triton application and make sure the "Preload" KDF file is open.* By default, this file is opened when you first launch the KARMA application. In addition, this file will open whenever you launch KARMA *unless* you have explicitly opened a different KDF file or have created your own KDF file.

To verify that the preload KDF file is loaded, click on the Windows menu in the KARMA application's main menu. At the very bottom of the menu you should see "KARMA MW Preload 1.1.kdf" (MW users) or "KARMA Triton Preload 1.1.kdf." (KT users). Note that these names may be slightly different depending on the version of software.

If you need to open the preload KDF, use the File Menu > Open command. On Windows, the preload file is located in the "Karma Data" subfolder of your installation folder. On the Mac, it is located in the main install folder.



*Note: the pictures in these tutorials come from the Windows version of KARMA MW/KT, but the Macintosh version is virtually identical, with minor cosmetic differences. Also, these tutorials assume that you have at least version 1.2.1.19 of the software. If you do not, see [www.karma-lab.com/updates](http://www.karma-lab.com/updates).*

## **Background: A Brief Overview of the KARMA Software**

We highly recommend that you take a few minutes to read this quick overview of the essential KARMA concepts. However, if you're really itching to get started, you can skip directly to the next section.

### **KARMA Performances**

A KARMA **Performance** always corresponds to either a Program or Combi (in Korg speak). Therefore, in much the same way that you play your keyboard by first calling up either a Program or Combi, you “play” KARMA by first calling up a Performance. Once you select a Performance, the entire KARMA application is dedicated to playing (or editing) that Performance. In addition, only one Performance is active at any given time.

### **KARMA Data Files, or “KDF”**

The **KARMA Data File**, or **KDF file** (“**.kdf**” file) is the “main” data file type for KARMA. In much the same way that you interact with a word processor via a document file, you interact with KARMA via a KDF file. A KDF file stores Performances which are stored in **Performance Banks**. These banks are organized in much the same way that banks of Programs/Combis are organized on your keyboard. KDF's also contain other banks of data such as Generated Effects (GE's), Global Data, and more. You will learn more about these later in future tutorials.

### **The “Preload” KDF and associated PCG**

When you first launch the KARMA application, the “**Preload**” **KDF file** will automatically be opened. This file contains 768 Performances which exactly match the factory settings for the Korg Karma keyboard. The Performances are organized into banks of 128 Performances each and correspond to the matching banks of Combis/Programs on your keyboard. The Preload KDF file matches a corresponding **Korg PCG (Program, Combi, Global) File** that *must* be loaded into your Karma or TRITON in order to use the program. Instructions for locating and loading this file can be found in the previously mentioned “MW/KT Getting Started.pdf” document.

### **More About KARMA Performances**

Here's where the fun starts: a KARMA Performance stores a whole lot more than just a Program or Combi. In fact, it contains 4 KARMA **Modules**, each of which can be assigned to its own **Generated Effect (GE)**. And it's the GE's that are truly the “heart of the KARMA technology”. The GE's are responsible for producing the amazing arpeggios, drum beats, strumming patterns, pad effects, and bass lines, just to name a few. And since a Performance can “play” up to 4 GE's simultaneously, you can begin to understand the power of KARMA. In fact, you'll soon see and hear how KARMA gives you the ability to play an entire song using a single Performance!

### **Real-time Parameters & Controls**

Finally, no discussion on KARMA would be complete without a mention of its powerful real-time parameters and controls. But first, let's examine a simple, yet familiar, real-time pattern generator: an arpeggiator. In a typical scenario, an arpeggiator may have a few performance parameters such as note duration (gate time) and tempo. In addition, the arpeggiator will likely have real-time controls, such as a row of knobs that are assigned to these parameters. With KARMA, the concept is similar, only there are many more parameters to choose from and KARMA boasts 10 real-time controls—8 sliders & 2 switches.

When a sound designer creates a new Performance, s/he will only expose, via the KARMA real-time controls, those musical parameters that are most useful for that particular Performance. For example, a KARMA piano arpeggiator performance may allow you to control note duration, rhythm, and note range, in addition to advanced parameters such as velocity accents, note interval shifts, note voicing, panning, and time scale envelopes. A drum groove, on the other hand, may expose swing %, rhythm complexity, hi hats level, and other rhythmic parameters. Finally, a Performance with both an arpeggiator and drum groove may expose a mixture of the parameters mentioned above.

## Overview Summary

In future tutorials, we'll delve into the sound design aspects of the KARMA software including the 400+ GE parameters that are available, real-time parameter assignments, and other highly technical topics. For now, though, we'll keep it simple. Here's all you need to know:

- Performances are where you'll be interacting with KARMA
- Performances are stored in Performance Banks inside a KDF file
- Performances are designed to give you maximum real-time control over the groove, riff, effect or pattern that it generates

## Part 1: Finding the “Voice of KARMA”

We'll begin by opening one of the many Performance Banks that are included in the preload KDF file. To do so, let's first head over to the **KDF (KARMA Data File) Window** (shown here).

### The KDF Window

A few, useful notes about the KDF Window:

- KDF files contain the data for the KARMA application – they are the files that you can create and edit. They correspond to a particular set of Programs & Combis that must be loaded into your Karma or TRITON.
- By default, the KDF Window is located near the top left corner of the KARMA workspace.
- There must always be one KDF file open at all times. (Don't worry. KARMA won't let you close the last open KDF Window).
- While there can be multiple KDF files open at any time, only one can be active at any time. You can tell that a KDF is active if the KARMA logo button in its corresponding KDF Window has a funky, yellow glow to it.



That's enough KDF theory for now. Let's open a Performance Bank. To do so, *double-click Bank 5, “Preload Combi Bank A”*, because it contains our first example, the one-and-only: **Combi A000: =Voice of KARMA=**.

### Performance Bank Display Window

As soon as you double-click the Bank, you should see the **Performance Bank Display Window** open (shown here below). Notice that **=Voice of KARMA=** is already selected since it's the very first Performance in the bank. If it weren't, you would simply left click the Performance to select it.

Performance Bank		
0 =Voice Of KARMA=	32 *HipTrip Split*	64 M
1 Ballad Layer EP	33 Cutting Clay -Y	65 Re
2 KARMA Orchestra	34 Hidden Energy	66 Si
3 from Satellite-Y	35 '70th with House	67 R
4 Vocoderhythm	36 Exchanging Water	68
5 Kaleidoscope+-XY	37 Cosmic Sweeper	69 D
6 Drumfest -Y	38 Alien Jungle Jam	70 D
7 The Guitarist	39 LH Chord/RH Adv1	71 M
8 Gospel Church	40 PipesSw&Knb&AT	72 J
9 Shogun	41 Gamelan Band	73 Be
10 Universal Orch.	42 SecretGroove Pad	74 Ur
11 BigJazzBand -Y	43 FunkyBrass -Y	75 R
12 GalacticBells+Y	44 Forget-Me-Not	76 "H
13 String Section	45 Violin Section	77 Sn
14 Magic Flute [JS]	46 GtrSolo -Y,SW2+Y	78 P
15 All Was Lost	47 Alpha Mega Synth	79 T
16 Earthy Groove	48 SweetBabyBlues	80 D
17 D&B Piano Pad	49 Synthetic EP's	81 La

## Making Some Sound

Now, just to show how easy it can be to generate some good KARMA, *hit the [F1] key (on the computer keyboard)*. Depending on which KARMA windows you've got visible, you may see KARMA's light show (in the Data Display Window). More importantly, however, you should hear **=Voice of KARMA=** complete with drums, a bass line, a talking synth, and an arpeggio—all courtesy of the KARMA technology.

**Note:** If your keyboard is not generating sound at this point, we suggest referring back to the "KT/MW Getting Started" document.

Just so you know, the **[F1]** key is the keyboard shortcut for KARMA Chord Trigger 1, while **[F2]~[F4]** activate the other three Chord Triggers. As it turns out, **=Voice of KARMA=** was designed so that the Chord Triggers "play" a set of notes on the keyboard which, in turn, trigger all the KARMA "action" for this Performance. If this is a little confusing, don't worry about it. We'll get back to Chord Triggers a little later.

## Stopping the Sound

One last thing we'll mention here is KARMA's ever-so-useful "Stop!" command. You'll be using this command often, so you'll probably want to remember its keyboard shortcut, the **Return** key. *Try hitting Return now* to tell KARMA to stop generating notes (and other MIDI data). This is similar to actually turning OFF the KARMA Function, except you don't have to turn anything back on to start again – simply play new notes on the keyboard or press **[F1]~[F4]**.

## Part 2: Jamming with the “Voice of KARMA”

**GET MP3 FILE!**

**Combi A000:  
=Voice of  
KARMA=**

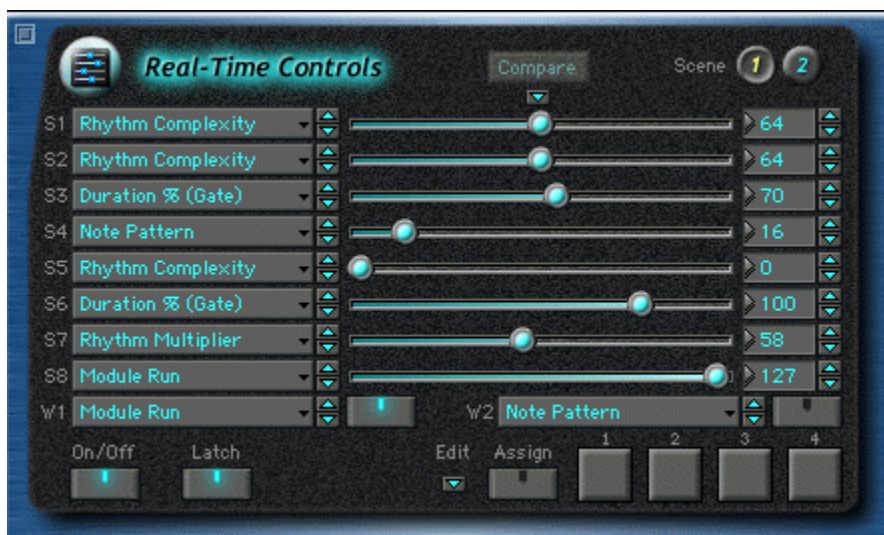
Before we continue, *please download & listen to the short MP3 demo that we’ve provided here* (click on the “Get MP3 File” button). It should sound almost identical to what you’re hearing at home. If it doesn’t, be certain that you’ve selected the **=Voice of KARMA=** Performance in Preload Combi Bank A. Also, make sure your Karma/TRITON has been properly configured with the factory preload data PCG file (see the “KT/MW Getting Started” pdf).

All right. Let’s start a little KARMA jam session.

### Real-Time Controls Editor

First thing we’ll do is bring up the **Real-Time Controls (RTC) Editor**. To do so, *go the KARMA main menu and select Windows, then choose Real-Time Controls (RTC)*. Alternatively, you can use the keyboard shortcut **Cmd+L (Mac)** or **Ctrl+L (Windows)**. You should now see a window that looks just like the one here.

*Note: this window is the software equivalent to the KARMA Realtime Controls section of the Korg Karma Music Workstation.*



Let’s quickly get familiar with the controls on this window.

### Chord Triggers

First of all, notice the 4 square buttons in the bottom right corner. These are the 4 Chord Trigger buttons. Go ahead and *click and hold the first button*, labeled “1”, in order to again trigger the **=Voice of KARMA=** Performance. Notice that the pad sound plays for as long as you hold down the mouse button. Now, *try experimenting with the other chord trigger buttons*.

Finally, you may want to memorize the keyboard shortcuts for the Chord Triggers as they often come in handy: **[F1]~[F4]** (Chord Trigger 1 thru Chord Trigger 4).

### Sliders

Let’s play with one of the 8 sliders. For this quick demo, we’ll play with Slider 3 [S3] which, in this Performance, is labeled “Duration % (Gate)”. Using your mouse, *move Duration % (Gate) [S3] to the far right*. The value of the slider should move from 70 to its max of 127. You should now hear the length of the notes in the arpeggio and bass line get longer. Now, *move [S3] to the far left*. Notice that the arpeggio and bass notes are more staccato (shorter). In addition, notice that the slider button has turned yellow because you have changed the value from its stored, or default, value. As an experiment, *type “70” in the number box to the right of the [S3]* to bring it back to its stored position. Notice that the slider “knob” returns to blue. Finally, *click the small down-arrow button at the top of the column of sliders* in order to set all sliders to their middle position, or 64.

## Switches

Directly underneath Slider 8 [S8], you'll find the 2 KARMA Switches, [W1] & [W2]. In this Performance, [W2] is labeled "Module Run" and is ON by default, while [S2] is labeled "Note Pattern" and is OFF by default. Using the mouse or your computer keyboard (**[F5]** for [W1], **[F6]** for [W2]), *toggle Switch 1 to the OFF position*. Notice that the arpeggio affect has been muted.

## Scenes

Notice the two KARMA Scene buttons in the upper right corner of the RTC Editor. Each Scene stores a value for each of the 10 real-time controls. This feature lets the sound designer provide you with two completely different grooves using a single Performance. In addition, you can create interesting musical effects by flipping back and forth between the scenes as you perform in real-time.

Go ahead and *click the Scene 2 button* (or hit **[F8]** on your computer keyboard to toggle scenes), and notice that most of the controls jumped to new values and the groove has a noticeably different feel. Now, *toggle back to Scene 1* to return to your previous control values. Finally, notice that you are always working within the context of either Scene 1 or Scene 2. Therefore, whenever you move a control, you are effectively changing the scene as well. For example, *in Scene 1, try moving [S6] all the way to the left*. Now, *jump to Scene 2 and then back to Scene 1*. Notice that [S6] remains where you left it.

## Compare & Restore

The last section may have left you wondering if there's a way to restore the real-time controls to the original, or stored, values. The answer is yes. Once you've moved any of the controls from their original value, the Compare button at the top will be enabled for that particular Scene. *Click the Compare button*, and notice that the controls will be reset to their default values for that Performance which allows you to compare your changes. In addition, the Compare button is now labeled Restore. *Try clicking it again* and notice that you can toggle back to (restore) your previous settings.

## KARMA On/Off

The KARMA On/Off **[F7]** switch can be used to tell this Performance whether or not to have KARMA generate notes (and other MIDI data). Most of the time, you will want this switch to be ON. However, on some occasions, you may want to turn KARMA off so that you can play a Performance like a "standard" Combi. For example, try turning this switch off now and then playing your keyboard. Notice that KARMA is no longer generating any additional notes or MIDI data. However, you still get to take advantage of this Combi's layers and splits.

## Latch

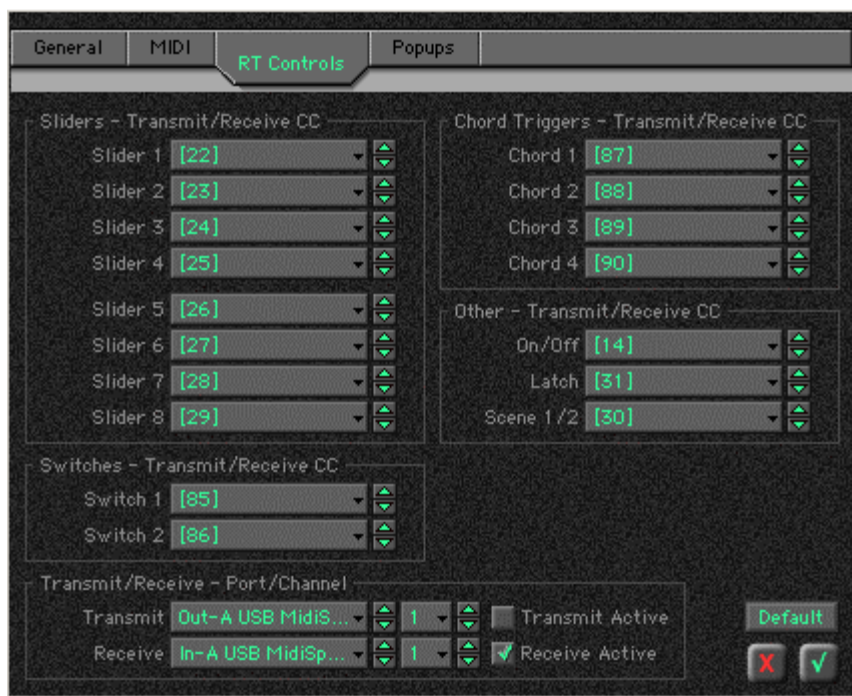
The Latch button **[F9]** gives you the ability to experiment with an alternate playing style using a single Performance. The best way to understand the Latch button is to play with it. First, *be sure the KARMA On/Off switch is turned back ON* so that KARMA is generating notes. Now, *click the Latch button* in order to turn it OFF. To trigger KARMA, again use Chord Trigger 1. Notice, however, that the **=Voice of KARMA=** groove only plays while you are holding down the Chord Trigger (or notes on your keyboard). This is a perfectly valid performance technique that can sometimes be quite useful. By contrast, turning the Latch back ON tells KARMA to continue generating notes even after the keys are released.

## Using MIDI to Control KARMA

In addition to using the mouse or keyboard to tweak KARMA's real-time controls, you can use an external MIDI controller. If you are running KARMA MW, you will likely want to use your Karma's knobs and switches to manipulate the KARMA software, in tandem. If you are running KARMA Triton, you may want to use a dedicated controller such as the Korg microKONTROL. In either case, you'll need to setup your controls in the KARMA Preferences dialog shown here. Or, if you'd rather configure this later and continue using the mouse/keyboard to control KARMA, *you can skip this section and return to it later.*

Bring up KARMA's Preferences dialog (shown here) by choosing **Edit > Preferences...** from the KARMA main menu. Then, click on the "RT Controls" tab as shown here.

To assign the default MIDI CC values to the KARMA real-time controls, simply click the Default button on the bottom right side of the dialog. If you are using a Karma keyboard, your keyboard may need to be configured with the same CC values since they are off by default. To do so, go to **Global (6.1-1) [KARMA1]**, choose "Reset KARMA Ctrl's Assign" from the UTILITY button, select "Default Setting" and answer OK. If you are using another MIDI controller, you may want to select different CC values here to match those on your controller.



Finally, be sure to set the **Receive Port/Channel** at the bottom of the dialog and then check the **Receive Active** checkbox. You should set the port and channel to the device that you are using for controller messages. For example, if you are using your Karma, simply set these to the MIDI port and channel for your Karma.

Now, if you go back to the Real-Time Controls Editor, moving the knobs on your Karma (or the knobs/sliders on your external controller) will activate and move the corresponding sliders and switches of the RTC Editor.

## Part 3: Wrapping it Up

### Experiment!

Before moving on, *take a few minutes now to really experiment with the =Voice of KARMA= and the RTC Editor*. See how many different “feels” you can come up with by playing with different arrangements of the sliders and switches. Try working in both scenes and toggling back and forth for unique breaks and changes.

If you haven’t already, this is a good time to *try triggering and playing the performance directly from your keyboard instead of using the Chord Triggers*. Notice that the keyboard is split so that the KARMA groove is triggered on the lower octaves of the keyboard while the lead is played on the upper octaves.

As you continue to experiment with KARMA, you’ll notice that each performance is truly its own instrument, with its own timbres, effects, triggering, zones, splits, and real-time control assignments. And just as it takes time to master any instrument, it takes time to learn how to master each KARMA performance.

### Saving Your Changes

None of the changes that you make to the real-time controls are permanent. In fact, if you go back to the Performance Bank Display Window, switch to another Performance, and then return to **=Voice of KARMA=**, you’ll notice that the controls are back to their stored, or default, values. In addition, if you exit the KARMA application and restart, you’ll also notice that the Performance loads with its default control values.

For now, this behavior is exactly what we want as we’re concerned with jamming with as opposed to editing Performances. However, if you discover that you’d really like to save your real-time control settings so that they become the default, you can do so. The quickest way, for now, is to use **File > Save All (Update)** or **Cmd+U (Mac)** or **Ctrl+U (Windows)**. In later tutorials, we’ll get into the finer details of editing and saving Performances.

### Congratulations!

If you’ve successfully completed this tutorial, you are now ready to begin experimenting with any one of the 768 Performances in the Preload KDF. To help you along in this process, head over to [Tutorial 2: “Jammin’ With KARMA”](#) for a sonic tour of seven of our favorite performances.