DOLMEN

GENERATIVE MIDI ENGINE

User guide

Written for version 1.11.2 · November 2026



WHAT DOLMEN IS FOR

And the one idea the rest of it is built around.

DOLMEN writes MIDI. You set a key, a scale and a genre, press Generate, and it gives you a pattern. That part is ordinary. What it is for is what happens next: you keep the steps that worked and roll the rest.

Lock four notes you like and press Generate again. Those four stay exactly where you put them. They stay through every roll, follow you when you change key, re-snap when you change scale, and save with the project. You build a bar one decision at a time, and each decision holds. That is the difference between a generator and a randomiser, and it is the reason DOLMEN exists.

It produces MIDI only. It never makes a sound of its own, and what comes out is an ordinary MIDI region you drag onto a track and edit like something you played.

Installing

1. Open the disk image and double-click **Install DOLMEN.pkg**.
2. Follow the prompts.
3. Restart your DAW. It will not appear until you do.

Two versions are installed: an Audio Unit for Logic Pro, and a VST®3 for Ableton Live and everything else.

Loading it in Logic Pro

1. Make a Software Instrument track and load any synth on it.
2. Click the **MIDI FX** slot, which sits above the instrument slot.
3. Choose **Audio Units › Takt Audio Labs › DOLMEN**.
4. Press play.

Loading it in Ableton Live

Live cannot take MIDI out of an Audio Unit, so this uses the VST®3 and routes its notes to the track you want to hear.

1. In Live's settings open **Plug-Ins**, turn on **Use VST3 Plug-In System Folders**, and click **Rescan**.
2. In the browser sidebar click **Plug-Ins**. Instruments holds only Live's own devices, so DOLMEN is not there. Drop DOLMEN on a MIDI track.
3. Make a second MIDI track and load your synth on that one.
4. On the second track set **MIDI From** to the DOLMEN track, and the chooser underneath it to **DOLMEN**.
5. Set that track's monitor to **In**.
6. Press play. DOLMEN generates, your synth plays it.

To keep what you hear, record-arm the second track and record the MIDI.

THE PANEL

Four rows, top to bottom.



The settings row, the knob row, the grid, and the drag strip. The moon at the top right switches to the light panel and remembers it.

The top bar

CONTROL	RANGE	WHAT IT DOES
GENERATE		Rolls a new pattern. Everything you have locked survives it. Your host can reach it as a parameter, so it can be MIDI-learned to a pad, automated to fire at a given bar, or put on a Smart Control. It fires on the press, so holding a pad down rolls once.
PRESETS		Opens the MIDI browser, covered on page 7.

The settings row

CONTROL	RANGE	WHAT IT DOES
SEED	0 to 9999	The pattern's identity. The same seed with the same settings always gives the same result, so a pattern you liked is a number you can write down. Generate moves it for you; the minus and plus buttons step through seeds one at a time.
GENRE	11 choices	Hypnotic Techno, Melodic Techno, Hard Groove Techno, Tech House, Trance, Acid 303, Hard / Industrial Techno, Peak Time Techno, Minimal / Deep Tech House, House, and Imported MIDI. Each was measured from real MIDI files, so its note lengths, velocities and the places it puts notes come from the records.
MODE	5 choices	What kind of part to write: Chords, Melody, Pluck / Arp, Bass or Stabs. Each mode has its own register and its own rhythm.
KEY	12 choices	The root note. Changing it transposes everything, locked notes included.
SCALE	8 choices	Minor, Dorian, Phrygian, Harmonic Minor, Minor Pentatonic, Major, Lydian, Mixolydian. Changing it re-snaps every note, locked ones included, to the nearest degree of the new scale.
C&R	Off, Both, Call, Response	Phrases come in pairs: the first bar asks something, the second answers it, and the two stay related. Both regenerates the pair. Call and Response hold one half and roll the other. Switching this on may move Length to an even number of bars, since a pair needs both halves.

THE KNOBS

Nine of them, left to right. Two grey out until they apply.

The ring around each knob lights from its centre position out to where it points, so a control at rest reads as at rest.

CONTROL	RANGE	WHAT IT DOES, AND WHAT IT COSTS YOU
LENGTH	1 to 16 bars, in half bars	How long the pattern is. Half-bar steps let you make a pattern that drifts against a four-bar loop instead of landing with it every time. Adding length adds material; it never rewrites the bars you already have.
DENSITY	0 to 100 %	How busy the bar is. It picks a busier or sparser bar out of the genre's measured bank rather than deleting notes from one pattern, so every setting gives you a bar somebody actually played.
OCTAVE	−2 to +2	Moves the whole part up or down in octaves.
RANGE	1 to 3 oct	How far the part is allowed to travel from its root. At 1 it stays in one octave, which suits a bassline; a lead usually wants 2.
SHIFT	−64 to +64 ms	Nudges every note early or late against the grid. Small amounts are the point: this sits a part in front of or behind the kick, and is not a delay effect. The notes on the grid move with it (page 5).
SWING	0 to 100 %	Pushes the offbeat sixteenths later. Most of these genres are played straight, so this is often best left at zero. The offbeat notes on the grid move with it (page 5).
VEL VAR	0 to 100 %	How much the velocities move around the genre's measured curve. At 0 every note at a given position plays at the same strength, which reads as programmed. Default is 30.
ANSWER	0 to 100 %	How different the response is from the call. Low keeps the answer close to the question; high lets it depart. Greyed out until Call and Response is switched on.
MUTATE	0 to 100 %	Rewrites a loaded MIDI file into a variation that keeps the feel of the original. Greyed out until you load a file from the browser, because there is nothing to mutate until then.

THE GRID

Where you do the actual work.



The same pattern with Swing at 100 % and Shift at +40 ms. The step lines stay put, and the notes sit where they will sound.

The display is a piano roll: pitch down the side, time across, and each note drawn as a bar as wide as it is long, coloured by its velocity. Above the roll are the step numbers and an LED for each step; the lock row sits beneath them.

Seeing Swing and Shift

Swing and Shift move the notes on the roll as you turn the knobs. The step lines do not move, so the gap between a note and its line is how far it has been pushed. Swing moves the offbeat sixteenths. Shift moves every note, and in milliseconds, so the same setting looks larger at a faster tempo. A note pushed past the end of the loop wraps round to the start, which is what happens when it plays. Dragging a note's edge still lines up with where you see it.

Locking

The lock row holds the notes you want to keep. Click a step to lock it, and it survives Generate and every knob move. The **ALL** button at the left end locks or unlocks everything at once. A locked silence counts as a decision too, so you can carve out a gap and keep it while everything around it moves.

Switching steps off

Click the LED at the top of a step to switch it off or on. A step switched off keeps its note, silenced, so switching it back on restores what was there. An empty step switched on takes its note from the step before it.

> Both of these are fine-tunes on the pattern you are hearing now. Pressing Generate, or moving any knob, regenerates the pattern and replaces them. Lock what you want to keep first.

Editing notes by hand

- Drag a note up or down to move it within the scale. It cannot land out of key.
- Drag its right-hand edge to change its length.

Velocity

The triangle at the bottom left opens the velocity lane. Drag a bar to change that note's velocity. In Chords mode the lane splits, so every note of a voicing gets its own bar and dragging one moves only that note. Generate sets them from the bottom up: the lowest note holds its weight and the voices above it fall away unevenly, the way a hand plays a chord.

THE BUTTONS

Beside the knobs, and the one that turns the loop round.

CONTROL	RANGE	WHAT IT DOES
FOLLOW	On or off	With this on, the part follows the chord progression underneath it, moving as the harmony moves. Off, the part stays anchored to the root, which is what a one-chord vamp wants. On by default.
REVERSE	On or off	Mirrors the whole loop, so it plays backwards, and the button lights. It stays on through every knob, so you can keep turning things with the loop reversed. Generate, a change to C&R, or loading a file puts the loop back to normal and the button goes dark. Locks are mirrored with the notes, and what you drag out is the reversed loop. Press it twice and you are back where you started, exactly.
APPLY KEY	With a file loaded	Moves a loaded MIDI file into the key and scale you have chosen.
VARY	With a file loaded	Rolls another variation of the loaded file and keeps the file.
CLEAR	With a file loaded	Lets the file go and returns to the genre.

REVERSING THE LOOP

One button, and the whole pattern runs backwards.



The same pattern as on page 3, reversed. The REVERSE button is lit.

Press **REVERSE** and the loop is mirrored end to end, as if it were played from the last note to the first. Turn any knob and it stays reversed, so you can change key, density or swing and keep listening to the backwards version. Press Generate, change C&R or load a file and the loop goes back to normal. Press REVERSE again to turn it off by hand.

YOUR OWN MIDI

The browser, and building from files you already own.

Presets opens a browser. **Import Folder** points it at a folder of sample packs: it finds every MIDI file inside and sorts them by company, pack and instrument type.

Searching. Type in the search box and the browser narrows to what matches, all three columns at once: a label with nothing matching disappears rather than sitting there with an empty pack list behind it. The search looks at the file name, the pack and the label, so typing *303* finds files named for it and everything inside a pack named for it.

All MIDI sits at the top of the label column and holds every file you have scanned, from every label and pack at once. It is the section to use when you are searching rather than browsing: you do not have to know which folder a file is in to find it. Each row shows the pack it came from, the instrument headings work as they do everywhere else, and the type buttons still apply - so All MIDI with Acid selected is every acid line you own, in one list. The browser opens here while a search is in the box, and on the first label when it is not.

Loading a file keeps its original key until you press **Apply Key**. The Mutate knob then rewrites it into a variation that keeps the feel of the original, and **Vary** rolls another one. Generate leaves the file behind and goes back to generating from the genre, and so does **Clear**. Open the browser again to get the file back.

INTO YOUR PROJECT

Two ways out, and nothing holds onto it afterwards.

- Drag the strip along the bottom of the panel onto a track to drop the loop in as a MIDI region.
- Click the strip to save a .mid file instead.

Muted steps are left out of what you drag, so you export what you hear. A reversed loop is exported reversed, and Swing is written into the notes. Shift is not, because it is a timing nudge in milliseconds and a MIDI file has no tempo to hold it against; set it again on the track if you want it there. From the moment the region lands, it belongs to the project rather than to the plug-in. Edit it, quantise it, chop it, and open the session in five years on a machine that never had DOLMEN on it.

Worth knowing

- DOLMEN makes MIDI, never audio. Its audio output is silent by design.
- Generate and any knob move replace the pattern you are hearing. Lock what you want to keep before you roll.
- Step mutes and hand edits are fine-tunes on the current pattern, not permanent state.
- Live cannot take MIDI out of an Audio Unit, so in Live DOLMEN goes on a track of its own and you route its notes to your synth.

YOUR LICENCE

What activation does, and what it does not do.

The licence key email from Takt Audio Labs has your key. Paste it into DOLMEN once and it activates. That is the only moment it needs an internet connection. The licence does not expire.

Three machines

One purchase activates on up to three machines. If you sell a Mac or a drive dies, open the settings and press **Release this machine** to free the slot. You do not need to email anyone and there is nothing to wait for.

What leaves your computer

- Activating contacts the Takt server once, at the moment you paste your key in. That is the only time anything about your purchase is transmitted.
- Once a day DOLMEN asks taktaudiolabs.com whether a newer version exists. That is a request for a public file. It carries nothing about you or your machine, and if you are offline it does not ask.

There is no account, no cloud and no telemetry. Any network monitor will confirm it.

DETAILS

FORMATS	Audio Unit (MIDI effect), VST®3
SYSTEM	macOS 11 or later, Apple Silicon and Intel. Mac only for now; tell us if you need Windows.
LICENCE	One purchase, up to three machines, moveable
ACTIVATION	One time, with the key from the Takt Audio Labs email
UPDATES	Free within the current major version

Uninstalling

Release the licence first if you want the slot back, then delete these three:

```
/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/Components/DOLMEN.component
/Library/Audio/Plug-Ins/VST3/DOLMEN.vst3
~/Library/DOLMEN
```

When something is wrong

Write to **support@taktaudiolabs.com** and tell us your macOS version, your DAW, and what you did before it went wrong. The **Report a bug** link in the About panel fills in your version, format and DAW for you.

> This guide was written for DOLMEN 1.11.2. The version in your copy is shown in the settings panel, next to the licence. If it does not match, the current guide is on the download page at taktaudiolabs.com/dolmen/download/.

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