

A-ha

Title: Turn The Lights On, Berlin

Label: Live-Net

Release Date: 2003

Medium: CD

Availability: Good

Venue: Veolodrom, Berlin, Germany

Recording Date: September 28, 2002

Lineup: Magne Furuholmen - Keyboards, guitar, vocals	Pal Waaktaar-Savoy - Guitar, vocals
Morten Harket - Vocals, guitar	Sven Lindvall - Bass
Per Linvall - Drums	Christer Karlsson - Keyboards
Anneli Drecker - Vocals	

Set List: Forever Not Yours
Minor Earth Major Sky
There's A Reason For It
Manhattan Skyline
I've Been Losing You
The Blood That Moves The Body
Time And Again
Did Anyone Approach You
The Swing Of Things
Lifelines
Oranges On Appletrees

Turn the Lights Down
Stays On These Roads
Hunting High And Low
Dragonfly
Scoundrel Days
Take On Me
Living Daylights
Summer Moved On
The Sun Always Shine On T.V.
Locust

A-ha soared to the top of the U.S. pop singles chart with their number one hit, "Take On Me" (#1-1985), which featured a Roy Orbison like falsetto lead vocal that was gender defying. They were the first band from Norway to make the U.S. pop singles chart and did it in style, topping the chart. They wound up getting Grammy nominations for Best New Artist and Best Recording Package in 1986. In the United States, the band charted three albums, with one certified platinum. They also placed three singles on the U.S. pop singles chart. While these numbers are impressive in and of themselves, they were superstars in Europe. All ten of their studio albums charted in England along with 25 singles. They absolutely dominated the charts in Norway, with eight of their ten studio albums reaching number one and the remaining two peaking at number two. They have sold an estimated 55 million records worldwide. While they initially broke up in 2010, they reformed in 2015 and are still active.

The history of the band goes back to three musicians. Lead singer Morten Harket (born September 14, 1959 in Kongsberg, Norway) is the second oldest of five children born to Reidar and Henny Harket. His father was a medical doctor and his mom taught economics. He grew up in southern Norway listening to American and British rock artists like Uriah Heep, Jimi Hendrix, Queen, and David Bowie as well as singers Johnny Cash, Simon and Garfunkel, and James Brown. His father was a talented pianist and by the age of four, Morten could pound out songs on the piano. However, he never really devoted himself to the instrument and stopped playing as a child.

However, he loved to sing. Harket was blessed with an incredible angelic sounding voice that had incredible range and sustain. By the time he was in his late teens, he had a five octave range and could hold

notes for an incredible amount of time. He was in a series of local bands, including Mercy and Laelia Anceps, but was convinced that he would have to leave Norway if he wanted to have a full time career in music. He graduated from high school in 1977.

While Harket was growing up, two other boys were following a similar path in Oslo. Pal Gamse-Waaktaar was born on September 6, 1961 in Oslo, Norway. He has one sister. Magne Furuholmen was born a little over one year later on November 1, 1962. He has one full sister and two half-brothers. The two grew up in Manglerud, Oslo and met in fifth grade. Pal knew how to play the drums and Magne could play the piano so it was natural that they started to fool around playing music together. As they hit their teens, they formed a group called Spider Empire with some friends. By this point, Pal had switched to guitar and had discovered that he could sing. That evolved into a group called Bridges, which was formed in late 1976.

Bridges also included bassist Viggo Bondi and drummer Kerik Hagelien. In 1977, Hagelien was replaced by Oystein Jevanord and the band made their concert debut on May 27, 1977 in Oslo. In 1978, they played a show in Asker, Norway, which was where Harket had gone to school. He saw them and was impressed with their overall musicianship. In the end, Harket contacted Furuholmen but nothing came of it.

By 1980, Bridges had established themselves as one of the leading bands in Norway. The pop and rock scene was concentrated in Oslo, where listeners could dial in radio stations from England. The country had developed a history of holding festivals, some of which catered to young up and coming musicians. Bridges honed their act playing wherever they could but recording opportunities were extremely limited. Given that, they decided to self-finance their debut album, *Fakkeltog*, in 1980. The album was a combination of psychedelic and blues rock. Having to record, print, market, and distribute the album on their own, they could not afford to print more than 1000 copies, which only sold around Oslo.

The band also tried to break out via a Norwegian competition of new bands called NM of Rock. Unfortunately, they did not win. After recording a second self-financed album called *Poem* (1981) which they could not afford to release, Pal (now going by Paul) and Magne (now going by Mags) decided that they needed to move to England. Bondi and Jevanord did not want to move so the band broke up. The two musicians had stayed in touch with Harket and asked him if he wanted to move to England. At the time, the singer had just joined a soul/blues band called Souldier Blue in February and wanted to give the new band a chance.

So, Paul and Mags decided to move on their own and arrived in England in early 1982. They immediately advertised for new band members but had no luck finding anyone other than a harp player. Things got so bad financially that Mags had to work in a pub while Paul stayed in their apartment and wrote songs. After six months, they were flat broke and had to hitch hike their way back to Norway.

In the summer of 1982, the two moved into a cabin belonging to Paul's parents and began to record demos that were more synth pop oriented a style of music they had heard while in England. The demos were promising so they contacted Harket once again. By this point, it was clear that Souldier Blue was not going anywhere so Harket joined them. He officially joined on his 23 birthday. Over the next few months, they recorded nine demos, including an early version of "Take On Me". By January, 1983, they felt that they had enough material to return to London but needed a name that could translate to any language. While looking through Paul's songbook, Harket stumbled upon an unfinished song called "A-ha" and suggested it to Paul and Mags. They all agreed that it would work and they set off for London.

Once again, London turned a cold shoulder to the new band. Decca turned them down and they wound up with a small label called Lionheart Records. That did not work out and they had to return to Norway to earn some money. Harket formed a new band with his former bandmate in Souldier Blue, Arild Fetveit, but it blew up after only one live show. Believing that they still had something as a trio, the three musicians saved enough money to return to London in late spring, 1983. They saw an advertisement for Rendezvous Studios, which was owned by John Ratcliff. They wound up recording a couple of new demos there and while they were never published, Ratcliff liked them. He introduced them to veteran music Terry Slater.

Slater was born and raised in London and was old enough to be the three young men's father. He had been a long time member of The Everly Brothers' backing band and knew the recording industry inside out. By the time A-ha met him, he had worked with EMI, signed publishing contracts with Kate Bush, Blondie, and the Sex Pistols, then as head of A&R and a Director of EMI, signed new artists like Duran Duran, Kajagoogoo, and Thomas Dolby.

In 1983, Slater was working independently and knew Ratcliff well, having helped him set up Rendezvous Studios. He was immediately struck with the trio, who had the talent, songs, looks, style, and mass appeal that he knew would succeed. He decided to go all in on the new band and formed a management company with Ratcliff called T.J. Management solely to work with A-ha. Ratcliff began to work with the band on new music and recording while Slater worked his considerable industry contacts to get them a recording deal with the UK subsidiary of Warner Brothers, who signed them in December, 1983.

The band was teamed with producers Tony Mansfield. They recorded their debut album in May and June, 1984 at Eel Pie Studios in London with Ratcliff guiding them every step of the way. "Take On Me" was released in England in mid-October as the lead single. The song dated back to the days of Bridges, when the main synth riff was composed by Mags. Since then, it had gone through several versions. It was first called "Panorama", then "Miss Eerie", but never seemed to get to a point where Paul and Mags were satisfied. Once Harket came on board, it evolved into "Lesson One", then "Take On Me".

Everyone involved with the group wisely decided to feature Harket's remarkable vocal range, which was a huge selling point, but not initially. The single initially could not even crack the top one hundred of the British pop singles chart. It did do well in Norway, reaching number 3 during a 15 week chart run, which generated a lot of home press for the band. It also helped convince Warners that there was something there if they could just unlock its potential.

The mechanism for doing began with Warner Brothers International's Vice President Andrew Wickham, who was also their A&R man for Warner Brothers UK. He loved the song, believing that the combination of Harket's movie star looks and his Roy Orbison quality voice was a can't miss proposition. He signed the band to Warner Brothers America and authorized a second recording of the song. No one was happy with the second recording so Slater suggested that producer Alan Tarney be given an opportunity to re-record the song a third time. Wickham agreed and the new version, which featured a much cleaner sound and a different coda section, was reissued a second time in England in March, 1985. Unfortunately, Warner Brothers UK had lost faith in the song and gave it little support, causing it to flop once again.

However, Wickham did not give up. He had earlier authorized the production of a state of the art video that employed a combination of animation and real life shots. It took six months to finish the video and once done, it was distributed to U.S. dance clubs and MTV in June, 1985. Through constant rotation on MTV, American audiences were ready for it once the single was released on July 9, 1985. It immediately entered the U.S. pop singles chart.

While all of this was going on, the band released a new single, "Love Is Reason" in Norway only in March, 1985. It reached number two, once again confirming that there was an audience for the group's music. Their debut album, *Hunting High And Love* (#15-1985), was then released in Norway in June, 1985, where it immediately went to number one. It was then released in North America, right around the same time as the single. The album made the American pop albums chart on July 20 and began to climb the chart. At the same time, the single was also climbing the U.S. pop singles chart.

In a perfect storm, both climbed to the top of their respective charts at nearly the same time. "Take On Me" cracked the U.S. pop singles top forty in late August when the album was sitting at number 62. In late August, the band was flown over to the U.S. for a promotional tour. The tour began with a series of radio performances followed by appearances on *Solid Gold*, *Soul Train*, *American Bandstand*, and the *MTV Video Awards* show. Needing a drummer to accompany the trio onstage, they hired Go-Go's drummer Gina Schock for the first three shows. By the end of September, the single cracked the top ten and the album was sitting at number 30.

In October, the single was released for the third time in England and immediately entered the British pop singles chart. It hit number one in the States in mid-October and would remain in the top forty for a total of 15 weeks. The single also peaked at number 2 in England and Canada, while reaching number one in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. The album peaked at number 15 during a 47 week chart run on the American pop albums chart. It also reached number 2 in England, number 12 in Canada, and number 15 in Australia. It would reach platinum sales in the U.S. in March, 1986.

The second single released from the album was "The Sun Always Shines on T.V." (#20-1985). It was released worldwide in December and immediately rose up the pop charts. It cracked the U.S. pop singles top forty in mid-January, 1986 and wound up peaking at number 20 during an eight week top forty chart run. It topped the British pop singles chart and reached number 19 in Australia, as well as cracking the top ten throughout nearly all of Europe. In the first few months of 1986, the band was nominated for a Grammy Award for Best New Artist. However, they lost to Sade and began a gradual but consistent decline in America.

While the band had made numerous promotional appearances on television and radio, they had yet to tour behind the album. In fact, they did not even have a backing band. However, they had plenty of singles that they could release from *Hunting High And Low* and did release some in early 1986. "Train Of Thought" (1986) hit the records stores in late March, 1986 and did well internationally. It peaked at number 8 in England and number 47 in Australia, while hitting number one in Norway. "Hunting High And Low" (1986) followed in early June. It reached number 5 in England, number 33 in Australia, and charted well throughout Europe.

During this same time period, the trio had recorded their second album, *Scoundrel Days* (#74-1986). The lead single, "I've Been Losing You" (#74-1986), was released in late September. It did not chart in the U.S. but was a worldwide hit elsewhere. It hit number 8 in England, number 21 in Australia, and cracked the top twenty throughout Europe. The album followed in October, 1986. It would only peak at number 74 on the American pop albums chart during a twenty week chart stay but considerably better elsewhere. It reached number 2 in England, number 31 in Canada, number 17 in Australia, and cracked the top ten throughout Europe.

The second single, “Cry Wolf” (#50-1986), followed in late November. It would be their last U.S. pop chart single, peaking at number 50. It also hit number 5 in England, number 45 in Australia, and cracked the top twenty throughout Europe. The rapid loss of their American audience was due in part to their decision not to tour until June, 1986. At that point, they had assembled a backup band that included Leif Karsten Johansen on bass, Michael Sturgis on drums, and Dag Kolsrud on keyboards. All three had studied at the Miami University of Music.

The tour began at the Concert Hall in Perth, Australia on June 4 and included 11 shows in that country. They followed with 17 shows in Japan, then played their first U.S. show on August 8 in Hawaii. They reached the mainland a week and later and played 46 more shows through October 24, 1986. Thirty seven more shows took place in Europe and the U.K. before the end of the year. Twenty six more shows followed in January and February, 1987, with the last leg taking place in Norway.

At the end of the tour, the band released a new single, “Manhattan Skyline” (1987) in late February. It peaked at number 13 in England and charted throughout Europe, but not in North American nor Australia. In 1987, the band was chosen to sing the title song of the next James Bond movie, *The Living Daylights*. It was released on June 22, 1987. “The Living Daylights” (1987) did not make the U.S. pop singles chart, somewhat of a rarity among Bond title songs. However, it was a hit elsewhere, reaching number 5 in England, number 35 in Canada, and number 29 in Australia. It was a top ten hit through nearly all of Europe.

After completing the twenty six shows in January and February, the trio toured extensively throughout the remainder of the year. They played twenty seven shows in Europe, did their second North American tour of twenty three shows between late August and mid-October, then finished the year with 17 shows in the U.K. and Europe. The U.S. tour was notable in that it would be their last full tour of the continent.

The band’s next studio album, *Stay On These Roads* (#148-1988), was released on May 3, 1988. To sweeten the package, “The Living Daylights” was included but it did not matter in the United States. The album barely made the American pop albums chart, peaking at number 148 during a six week chart run. It would be A-ha’s last chart record in the United States. However, consistent with their recent records, the album did very well outside of the States. It reached number 2 in England, number 55 in Canada, and number 52 in Australia. It also cracked the top five in several European countries.

The album yielded four more chart singles. “Stay On These Roads” (1988) was released a couple of months before the album and reached number 5 in England, number 15 in Canada, and number 56 in Australia. “The Blood That Moves The Body” (1988) followed in June and hit number 25 in England while also charting throughout Europe. “Touchy” (1988) was released in mid-August and reached number 10 in England. Finally, “You Are The One” (1988) followed by year end and hit number 13 in England.

Once again, the band toured extensively in support. They played 87 shows throughout 1988 with legs in the United Kingdom, Europe, and Japan, where they had developed a large fan base. This tour featured a new backup band that included Ian Wherry on keyboards, Randy Hope-Taylor on bass Matthew Letley on drums and Rafael Gayol on percussion. With three albums, several hit singles, and three extensive world tours in the last three years, the trio essentially took most of 1989 off. However, they did play 5 live shows in March in Brazil, where *Stay On These Roads* had sold nearly 500,000 copies. They would maintain that fan base through their entire career.

The group spent nearly all of 1990 in the studio working on their next studio album, *East of the Sun, West of the Moon* (1990), which was released on October 27, 1990. The album sold well internationally, reaching number 12 in England, number 37 in Canada, and number 23 in Australia. The lead single, "Crying In The Rain" (1990) was released a few weeks before the album and also did well, hitting number 13 in England, number 34 in Canada, and cracking the top ten throughout Europe.

A second single, "I Call Your Name" (1990), was released in early December and reached number 44 in England. The final single, "Early Morning" (1991), hit number 78 in England. In 1991, the trio went back out on the road for the first time since March, 1989. With a new backing band consisting of bassist Jorun Bogeberg, drummer Per Hillestad, and saxophonist Sigurd Kohn, the trio played 60 shows throughout 1991 with legs in Europe, the U.K., and South America. On January 26, 1991, they drew 198,000 paying fans to the show that they headlined as part of the nine night Rock In Rio II Festival. That was the highest single night total of any of the nine nights, with the band drawing three times the numbers that the other headline acts drew.

When MTV refused to interview the band members, after interviewing practically everyone else, the trio was devastated. They had just drawn one of the largest paid crowds in the history of rock music and were being ignored in the United States. They did end the year on a high note when their first compilation, *Headlines and Deadlines: The Hits of A-ha* (1991) was released on November 4 and did very well. It reached number 12 in England and sold well throughout Europe. The set contained one new single, "Move To Memphis" (1991), which hit number 47 in England.

Once again, the trio decided to not tour in 1992 and worked on their next studio album. *Memorial Beach* (1993) was released on June 14, 1993 but was a major disappointment. Aside from hitting number 17 in England and Germany, the album did not sell like their previous releases. Worse yet, the three associated singles did not do well. "Dark Is The Night For All" (1993) was the most successful, reaching number 19 in England and charting in some European countries. However, "Angel In The Snow" (1993) only charted in England, where it peaked at number 41, and "Lie Down In Darkness" (1993) did not chart at all. The band only performed 11 live shows in support, with some of them done for invited audiences. One of their scheduled shows was even cancelled due to poor ticket sales.

In 1994, the band played three shows in Norway in connection with the Lillehammer Winter Olympics in February. Immediately after, they flew to South Africa to play five shows. Six more shows in Norway followed. On March 14, 1994, they released a new single called "Shapes That Go Together" (1994). The song reached number 27 in England. At the time, rumors were running rampant that this might be the last new recording from the trio, who were on the verge of breaking up.

After headlining an AIDS related benefit show in St. Petersburg, Russia on June 19, the band did not break up but went on an extended hiatus. They would not perform again as A-ha for five years with the exception of playing two songs at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert on December 11, 1998. One of them was a new song, "Summer Moved On" and the second was "The Sun Always Shines On T.V.". Once again, U.S. press ignored the appearance, with FOX omitting any mention of them during broadcast of the highlights of the multi artist concert. A British aired highlight program also failed to include any of their performance.

During the five year hiatus, the individual members focused on their solo careers. Harket had released his first solo album, *Poetenes Evengeliem* in 1993 and followed with two more during the hiatus. The first, *Wild Seed* (1995) made the lower end of the British pop albums chart, peaking at number 89. The second,

Vogts Villa (1996) did not do as well but was successful in Norway. Harket also collaborated with other artists on both live and recorded projects.

Waaktaar formed a new band, Savoy, with his wife Lauren, and drummer Frode Unneland. They released three albums during this period, including *Mary Is Coming* (1996), *Lackluster Me* (1997), and *Mountains Of Time* (1999). They also toured. Furuholmen teamed with Kjetil Bjerkestrand, then Swedish singer Freddie Wadling, to do a series of projects, some of which appeared on movie soundtracks.

While not happy with being snubbed by U.S. and British television after their 1998 Nobel Peace Prize concert performance, the band members decided to begin to write new material for a comeback album. That album, *Minor Earth Major Sky* (2000) was released on April 14, 2000. The album was not released in North America but did well elsewhere. It reached number 27 in England and hit number one in Germany and Norway. It was the band's sixth straight number one album in their home country. It also charted throughout Europe.

The album included "Summer Moved On", which was released as the lead single. It hit number 33 in England and number one in Norway. The band decided to tour in support and assembled a new backing band that included bassist Sven Lindvall, drummer Per Lindvall, and keyboardist Christer Karlsson. They played their first full live show together in over six years on November 8 in Japan. In total, they played 13 shows in Japan and Germany through the end of 2000. On March 24, 2001, the group broadcasted a live show from Oslo via the internet. They also did seven more festival dates through the remainder of the year.

On October 19, 1991, the band released a limited edition live DVD through their website called *Live At Vallhall – Homecoming*, that documented their live via internet show in Oslo. It sold well enough that they decided to release it outside of Norway in March, 2002 on DVD and CD. One month later, the band released a new studio album, *Lifelines* (2002) on April 24, 2002. It did very well, peaking at number 67 in England and topping the pop albums chart in Norway, Estonia, Germany, and Latvia. It also cracked the top ten throughout Europe and hit number 28 in Canada.

The album yielded two significant singles. "Forever Not Yours" (2002) topped the Norwegian pop singles chart and "Lifelines" (2002) hit number 78 in England. The group also went on a full tour in support, playing 46 shows in 2002. The tour began in June and included 12 shows in Europe, London, Russia, and Belarus. In August, they headed to Brazil for 5 shows then returned to Europe for 21 more. They returned to the U.K. for six additional concerts, then wrapped up the year with 2 more in Austria and Germany. The tour featured new backing vocalist Anneli Drecker.

The band documented the 2002 tour with their second live album, *How Can I Sleep With Your Voice In My Head* (2003), which was released on March 25, 2003. It charted throughout Europe but not in England. In late 2003, the band decided to do a limited tour of the former Soviet Union, playing 6 shows in Siberia, the Ukraine, and Russia. They finished 2003 with two more shows in Norway.

A-ha took another break in 2004 as Waaktaar focused on Savoy. They had released their fourth studio album, *Reasons To Stay Indoors* in 2001 and followed with *Savoy* in 2004. Meanwhile, Warners released a new compilation, *The Singles: 1984-2004* on November 29, 2004, in Norway and Europe. It reached number 4 in Norway and signaled the end of the group's relationship with the label. The only other band appearance during the year was a single live show from a floating platform in Bergen Harbour, Norway on June 4. On April 5, 2005, Warners released the British version of the recent compilation under a slightly

different title, *The Definitive Singles Collection 1984-2004*. It reached number 14 on the British pop albums chart.

The group signed a new recording contract with Polydor and returned to the studio in February, 2005 to begin work on a new studio album. They finished in July and celebrated with three significant appearances. On July 2, they participated in the Live 8 Concert event, playing a three song set in Berlin, Germany. They then held free concert in Oslo on August 27 that attracted 120,000 fans. On September 12, they followed with the first show in the U.S. in twenty years, performing before a sold out house at Irving Plaza in NYC.

They then released *Analogue* (2005) on November 4, 2005. Once again, it sold well within their established markets, reaching number 24 in England, number one in Norway, and charting throughout Europe. It yielded three chart singles. "Celice" (2005), which had been originally recorded for the movie *The Da Vinci Code* but ultimately not included, was the first single. It was released throughout Europe but not in England. It topped the singles chart in Norway.

"Analogue (All I Want)" (2006), was a radio friendly version of another song on the album. It was released in England and became a major hit, reaching number 10. Finally, "Cosy Prisons" (2006), hit number 39 in England. The band toured in support of the album in the last three months of 2005, playing 24 shows throughout Europe and the U.K. They also played 21 shows in 2006, including another run of concerts in the former Soviet Union.

In 2007, the band only played four concerts as A-ha, then did an unique series of shows in 2008 where the three musicians appeared in the same venues but did solo sets, sometimes ending the shows with a handful of A-ha songs while on the stage together. In January, 2009, they decided to record a new album in NYC, Norway, Germany, and England. *Foot Of The Mountain* (2009) was released on June 12, 2009 and was their first studio album not to reach number one in Norway, peaking at number two. However, it did very well in England, hitting number 5, while topping the pop albums chart in Germany. It also charted throughout Europe. The title track was the most significant single, reaching number 66 in England and number 3 in Germany. Two other tracks, "Nothing Is Keeping You Here" and "Shadowside", also charted in Germany, hitting numbers 65 and 22.

The trio decided to tour in support and once again assembled a new backing band. This one included drummer Karl-Oluf Wennerberg and keyboardist/bassist Erik Ljunggren. After playing a handful of shows in support through the first nine months of the year, the band announced that they would be breaking up after completing one last world tour through 2010. The farewell tour began on October 27 in Germany and included 18 shows through the end of the year, not counting private events. The tour resumed on March 4, 2010 in Argentina and included 9 shows in South America before they played 7 shows in North America in May. From late May through December 4, the band played 57 shows throughout Europe, Russia, and the United Kingdom.

As planned, the last three shows were at the Spektrum in Oslo, Norway on December 2, 3, and 4. The final show was recorded and released as a new live album, *Ending On A High Note Live – The Final Concert* (2011), which was released in April, 2011. It reached number 43 in England and number 3 in Norway. During the tour, the band also released a new compilation, *25* (2010) on July 19, 2010. It was a hit, peaking at number 10 in England, number 2 in Germany, and charting throughout Europe. It yielded one new single, "Butterfly, Butterfly (The Last Hurrah)" (2010), which reached number 98 in England, number 22 in Germany, and number 13 in Norway. It remains their last chart single in England.

If there is anything less permanent in the rock world, it is a band breakup. Within a year, the trio reunited to sing one song at a Norway benefit show. And, by early 2015, they were back together again. They recorded a new studio album, *Cast In Steel* (2015), which was released on September 4, 2015. It reached number 8 in England, number 2 in Norway, and number 4 in Germany. The supporting tour began with a September 24 show in Argentina, followed by their appearance at Rock In Rio 2015 on September 27. Seven more shows in Brazil followed and they ended 2015 with an appearance at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in Oslo on December 11. They performed five songs at the show.

The tour resumed in Russian on March 6, 2016. By mid-May, they had performed 34 shows before taking the rest of the year off. In June, 2017, they performed two special acoustic shows to record their new acoustic album, *MTV Unplugged – Summer Solstice* (2017), which was released on October 6, 2017. It had been recorded live in Ocean Sounds Recording studio in Oslo on June 22 and June 23, 2017. The band played in front of 250 invited guests at each show. The album did very well on the charts, peaking at number 6 in England, number 3 in Germany, and number 14 in Norway. It featured a number of guest vocalists, including Alison Moyet, Ian McCulloch, Lissie, and Ingrid Helene Havik.

The supporting tour began on January 23, 2018 in Germany and included 42 shows through August 27. In late 2019, they went out on the road once again, playing 15 shows in the U.K., Europe, and Russia. In February, 2020, they went out again, playing 14 shows in Norway, Dubai, South Africa, and Oceania. After a March 7 show in Auckland, New Zealand, their next show in Tokyo was cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic and they did not tour again for the remainder of the year. As of November, 2020, they are planning on resuming touring as soon as conditions allow.

Between 2010 and 2016, Warners has released yet more compilations and expanded editions of previous studio albums. *Hunting High And Low Super Deluxe 30th Anniversary Edition* (2015) and *Time And Again: The Ultimate a-ha* (2016) charted in England, peaking at numbers 83 and 75. In November, 2012, all three members were appointed Knights of the 1st Class of the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav for their contribution to Norwegian music. They were inducted into the Norwegian Music Hall Of Fame in 2011. They won eight MTV video music awards for their videos for “Take On Me” and “The Sun Always Shines On T.V.” In 2020, the “Take On Me” video passed one billion views on YouTube, the fifth video ever to reach that level, along with “Sweet Child Of Mine” and “November Rain” by Guns N’ Roses, “Smells Like Teen Spirit” by Nirvana, and “Bohemian Rhapsody” by Queen.

The band has won nine Spellemannprisen Awards, which is the Norwegian equivalent of a Grammy. They have also won two World Music Awards (International), three Golden Europa Awards (Germany), a Nordic Music Award (Norway), three BMI Awards (International), a Peer Gynt Prize (Norway), a Grammleng Award (Norway), four Bravo Otto Awards (Germany), on Japan Gold Disc Award, one Australian Pop Music Award, one Smash Hits Poll Winners Award (England), and 13 other European individual awards. These include awards from Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, England, .

A-ha is featured on three compilations. Warner Brothers’ 1991 set, *Headlines and Deadlines: The Hits Of A-ha*, includes 18 tracks on CD and DVD. The same label’s 2005 release, *The Definitive Singles Collection 1984-2004*, contains 18 tracks. Finally, Rhino’s 2016 set, *Time and Again: The Ultimate A-ha*, includes 35 tracks, including 16 remixes.

The band had also released four live recordings. Warner Brothers’ 2001 set, *A-ha Live At Vallhall – Homcoming Grimstad Benefit Concert*, includes 19 or 25 tracks, depending on the version. It was recorded at a single show on March 24, 2001. The same show was repackaged by Warners in 2008 as *A-ha Live At*

Vallhall – Sight & Sounds Series, which included both a CD and a DVD. Warner Brothers' 2003 release, *How Can I Sleep With Your Voice In My Head*, contains 14 or 21 tracks, again depending on the version. It was recorded in the fall of 2002. Universal's 2011, set, *Ending On A High Note – The Final Concert*, includes 20 tracks recorded on December 4, 2010. Finally, Polydor's 2017 release, *MTV Unplugged – Summer Solstice*, contains 21 acoustic tracks recorded on June 22 and 23, 2017.

My first live recording of A-ha comes from the same 2002 stand of shows that resulted in *How Can I Sleep With Your Voice In My Head*. This particular set was recorded on a single night on September 28 at a show in Berlin, Germany. While the official set has either 14 or 20 tracks, my recording captures the entire 21 song show. Recording quality is very good, with some audience chatter from patrons sitting near the recording equipment. It is only noticeable during the breaks between the songs.

By 2002, A-ha had released the majority of their hit albums and singles. They were touring in support of their seventh studio album, *Lifelines*, when this show was taped. As such, the set list contains eight of the 15 songs that appeared on that album. The group also plays three songs from *Hunting High And Low*, four songs from *Scoundrel Days*, three songs from *Stay On These Roads*, one song from *Memorial Beach*, and two songs from *Minor Earth Major Sky*. While the focus on new material is a limitation, the fact that it was recorded on a single night is a plus for collectors of live music like me.

At their heart, A-ha was a synth pop band that had some leanings to alternative rock. The first few tracks on this set reflect that, with more of a focus on the guitar work of Waaktaar and some strong bottom end work from the Lindvall brothers on bass and drums. The band also had a romantic ballad based side, which features the often pristine vocals of Harket. On this set, he performs a trio of songs in a duet manner with backup singer Anneli Drecker. Then, there are the synth pop songs, including two of their three U.S. chart singles, "Take On Me" and "The Sun Always Shines On T.V." These are keyboard driven, featuring Furuholmen and second keyboardist/guitarist Christer Karlsson.

The band had released 21 British chart singles by the time this show was recorded. Ten of them are performed on the set, leaving some room for album tracks like "Scoundrel Days", "The Swing Of Things", "Locust", and "Minor Earth Major Sky". Of the eight tracks played from *Lifelines*, only the title track charted in England. Yet, they prove to be some of the strongest tracks on the album.

The set gets off to a solid set with "Forever Not Yours", "Minor Earth Major Sky", "There's A Reason For It", and "Manhattan Skyline". The ensemble vocals of the three members are tight and the songs have a more alt rock than synth pop feel. Of course, Harket stands out, with a clear beautiful voice that is simply divine. Waaktaar unleashes his guitar during the rock influenced "Minor Earth Major Sky", pulling off a pretty nasty guitar solo that sounds great. "There's A Reason For It" has a vague U2 and Simple Minds feel, with a snake like guitar riff. And, "Manhattan Skyline" takes the alt rock feel to the maximum, with crunchy dual guitar work, varied rhythms, and loads of keyboards.

The rocking U2/Simple Minds feel is strong on "I've Been Losing You" from *Scoundrel Days*. It has more strong ensemble vocals and the perfect integration of keyboards and guitars. Waaktaar's atmospheric guitar work sounds like The Edge. "The Blood That Moves The Body" from *Stay On These Roads* continues in the same vein. Both Harket and Waaktaar are featured on lead vocals and Furuholmen pulls off some Tony Banks like keyboard riffs.

The band then goes in a much softer direction with "Time And Again", which features the higher range of Harket's voice. In and of itself, it is a good performance with Anneli Drecker featured on secondary lead

and background vocals. The song features another solid guitar solo from Waaktaar. “Did Anyone Approach You” has an experimental feel, with a weird little keyboard riff, rap like vocals, and intermittent strong drum work. Waaktaar also pulls off some nice guitar work, especially during his solo which is augmented by the guitar work of Harket. “The Swing Of Things” from *Scoundrel Days* returns to the alt rock style and features the best ensemble vocal work on the album.

Drecker is featured once again on “Lifelines”, which has a dreamy atmospheric feel. “Oranges On Appletrees” is more rock oriented, with a moderately more driving beat and tight ensemble vocals. After a mid-concert break, the band starts the second part of the show with three straight slow, nearly unplugged style songs. “Turn The Lights Down” from *Lifelines* features co-lead vocals from Drecker and minimal musical backing. The quiet reflective mood continues with “Stay On These Roads”, which is more of the same. Once again, Drecker is featured. “Hunting High And Low” is the third straight song of this nature. The audience makes themselves heard for the first time, singing the entire verse with Harket. The band finally kicks in midway through the song, bringing it to a dramatic close.

“Dragonfly” is the last song played from *Lifelines*. It finds a similar pattern as the others, with a U2/Simple Minds feel, a nice organ solo, and moderate pacing. It is remarkable how much Harket sounds like Bono during some of these songs. The band then launches into the title track from *Scoundrel Days*. Interestingly, the song was never released as a single but has been part of their live sets since the time the album was released. Waaktaar is featured on lead vocals, with Harket providing the soaring notes in the chorus. The song is new wave based, with a nice guitar solo, atmospheric keyboards, and driving sections. It is very strong, with some of the best ensemble vocals on the set. Harket actually struggles to hit some of the high notes.

“Take On Me” is synth pop at its best. Everything about the song, from the Orbison like chorus, to the main synth riff, to the keyboard flourishes, to the driving beat, is perfect. This is a very strong performance from start to finish. The entire band, and Harket in particular, know that they have to nail this song each and every time they play it and do not let us down. They extend the closing coda with Waaktaar bringing out his punk rock guitar persona and driving the group to a big finish. The group then pulls off a seven minute plus version of their James Bond theme song, “The Living Daylights”. The song is better than you remember and should have been a U.S. hit, but it didn’t even chart. The dual keyboards accurately recreate the orchestral swells of the studio recording and the ensemble vocals are very strong.

The extended treatment of the song gives the band members a chance to show off. The audience even gets into the action, with a loud long sing along of the chorus, accompanied partway by a reggae keyboard riff by Furuholmen. Waaktaar even quotes the signature James Bond theme on guitar during the song. The group’s first encore is a nice version of “Summer Moved On”, which they wrote for their first Nobel Peace Prize performance. It is medium paced and brooding, with plenty of keyboard flourishes and more of Harket’s gender defying high notes. At one point, he extends a note for nearly twenty seconds with no apparent difficulty. It leads into a solid version of their lone British number one single, “The Sun Always Shines On T.V.”. It begins with Harket’s pleading vocals, then launches into a full-fledged synth mode, with a driving rhythm, loud distorted guitar work, and plenty of great synth riffs. It sounds great.

The group winds up coming out for a second encore and uncorks a rarity, playing “Locust” from their relatively poor selling 1993 album, *Memorial Beach*. While the album contained three British chart singles, they decide to play a fairly obscure track, “Locust”, which clearly is important to Waaktaar, who wrote the song and reused some of the lyrics on a 2004 Savoy single called “Whalebone”. It is a complete

change of direction, with a Parisian like café feel. It is slow and atmospheric and works surprisingly well as a concert closer, sending the audience home in a mellow, satisfied mood.

While this set was not officially released, it has a questionable provenance, so you should opt for one of the official sets. *How Can I Sleep With Your Voice In My Head* reportedly contains some songs recorded from this very concert. It contains 13 of the tracks on this album and the 8 that are not include 5 from *Lifelines*, which is overly which is overly represented on this album. The other three include “Scoundrel”, “Locust”, and “The Blood That Moves the Body”, which are not essential in A-ha’s catalog. That makes a *How Can I Sleep With Your Voice In My Head* more than good substitute. However, if you insist on finding this set, try the excellent Canadian dealer, Rockin’CD.

Title: Ending On A High Note – the Final Concert

Label: Universal

Release Date: 2011

Medium: CD

Availability: Good

Venue: Spektrum, Oslo, Norway

Recording Date: December 4, 2011

Lineup: Morten Harket - Vocals, guitar, percussion
Paul Waaktaar - Guitar, vocals
Erik Ljunggren - Bass, keyboards

Magne Furuholmen - Keyboards, guitar, vocals
Karl-Oluf Wennerberg – Drums

Set List: The Sun Always Shines On T.V.
Move To Memphis
The Blood That Moves The Body
Scoundrel Days
The Swing Of Things
Forever Not Yours
Stay On These Roads
Manhattan Skyline
Hunting High And Low
We’re Looking for the Whales

Butterfly, Butterfly (The Last Hurrah)
Crying In The Rain
Minor Earth Major Sky
Summer Moved On
I’ve Been Losing You
Foot Of The Mountain
Cry Wolf
Analogue (All I Want)
The Living Daylights
Take On Me

When this concert took place on December 4, 2010, it was billed as the final performance of A-ha, who were breaking up to pursue solo projects. It came at the end of a long tour that had taken them across the world for over a year. Unlike the 2002 Berlin set, this was truly a greatest hits tour with no strong focus on any one album. There are three tracks from *Hunting High and Low*, six songs from *Scoundrel Days*, three tracks from *Stay On These Roads*, one track from *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*, two songs from *Minor Earth Major Sky*, one track from *Lifelines*, one track from *Analogue*, one track from *Foot Of The Mountain*, one track from the compilation *Headlines & Deadlines*, and one track from the compilation 25. Fifteen of the twenty songs were British chart singles and all three U.S. pop chart singles are played. Recording quality is excellent.

While farewell tours are almost always bogus, they do produce great live recordings. Bands are compelled to address their entire recording legacy and A-ha does not disappoint. There is at least one song from nine of their ten studio albums, with only *Memorial Beach* left out. Knowing that they were recording this performance, it is remarkable to me how good this performance is from start to finish. The opening

synth riffs and a great version of their only U.K. number one single, “The Sun Always Shines On T.V.” is a fantastic way to open any concert, instantly drawing the audience, and by extension, the band, into the show. It does not let up from there.

Since I don’t want to repeat the information from above about each individual song, suffice it to say that you will enjoy everything about this recording. The performances are excellent, the trio only uses two backup musicians which places the focus almost entirely on them, and they carefully and skillfully walk you through their entire career. They end the set the Harket’s signature high note on “Take On Me”, which they use to close the concert. It is fitting that the one single note that launched their career was chosen to be the one to end it, at least at the time.

Of course, A-ha reunited a few years later but that does not diminish from the intensity of this show. All the emotions that you would expect the band, and their audience, to have at such a momentous event are captured here. In the end, that makes this A-ha’s signature live recording and an absolute necessity in any live collection. Oddly, this set is not on iTunes but can be found on the secondary market easily, at least for now. Pick it up as soon as you can.