

A-HA

Title: How Can I Sleep with Your Voice in My Head      Label: WEA

Release Date: 2003      Medium: CD

Availability: Fair      Venue: Zurich, London, Paris, Amsterdam

Recording Date: September 5 – October 10, 2002

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

Set List: Forever Not Yours	The Swing Of Things
Minor Earth Major Sky	Lifelines
Manhattan Skyline	Stay on These Roads
I've Been Losing You	Hunting High and Low
Crying in the Rain	Take On Me
The Sun Always Shines on T.V.	The Living Daylights
Did Anyone Approach You	Summer Moved On

Bonus Tracks

Scoundrel Day	Dragonfly
Oranges on Appletrees	Time and Again
Cry Wolf	Sycamore Leaves

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 but were not a factor in the country after their initial run..

However, a-ha were superstars in Europe. All eleven of their studio albums have charted throughout Europe including England, where they also have placed 25 singles on the British pop singles chart. They have absolutely dominated the charts in Norway, with eight of their eleven studio albums reaching number one and the remaining three peaking at number two or number three. They have sold an estimated 100 million records worldwide. While they initially broke up in 2010, they reformed in 2015 and released their most recent album in 2022. As of June 2026, they are on hiatus due to the health of lead singer Morten Harket. .

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. Waaktaar knew how to play the drums and Furuholmen could play the piano so it was natural that they started to informally play music together. As they hit their teens, they formed a group called Spider Empire with some friends. By this point, Waaktaar 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 about any openings 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 a rich history of holding music 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, Waaktaar and Furuholmen 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, Waaktaar and Furuholmen 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 Furuholmen had to work in a pub while Waaktaar 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 Waaktaar's parents and began to record demos that were more British synth pop oriented. 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 on his 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 Waaktaar’s songbook, Harket stumbled upon an unfinished song called “A-ha” and suggested it to Waaktaar and Furuholmen. 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 executive 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 Furuholmen. 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 Waaktaar and Furuholmen 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 it was a surprisingly hard sell to buying public. 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 fifteen 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 so 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 action. 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 only Norway 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 Low* (#15-1985), was then released in Norway in June, 1985, where it immediately went to number one. Next was North America, where the album and single were released concurrently. The album made the American pop albums chart on July 20 and began to climb. 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. It reached 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 sold 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 in the country. They finally addressed that this time around. . At that point, they 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 1986 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 forty six more shows through October 24, 1986. Thirty seven more shows took place in Europe and the U.K. before the end of the year. They continued to tour until early 1987, playing twenty six more shows in January and February, 1987.

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 North America until 2022.

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 releases, 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 Evengelium* 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 in the mid-nineties. He also legally changed his name to Waaktaar-Savoy. The new band 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 twelve shows in Europe, London, Russia, and Belarus. In August, they headed to Brazil for five shows then returned to Europe for twenty one more. They returned to the U.K. for six additional concerts, then wrapped up the year with two 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 reached number 4 in Norway and number 8 in Germany but did not chart 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-Savoy focused on his other band, 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.. It was released throughout Europe and topped the Norwegian singles chart. For some reason, it was not released in England.

"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 during the last three months of 2005, playing twenty four shows throughout Europe and the U.K. They also 1 played twenty one shows in 2006, including a 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 mostly performed solo sets, sometimes ending the shows with a handful of a-ha songs while on the stage together. On July 28, Warner released a new live album, *Live at Vallhall – Sight & Sound* (2008). It had been filmed in March 2001 and did not chart.

In January, 2009, a-ha decided to record a new album. *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 in 2010. The farewell tour began on October 27, 2009 in Germany and included eighteen shows through the end of the year, not counting private events. The tour resumed on March 4, 2010 in Argentina and included nine shows in South America before they played seven shows in North America in May. From late May through December 4, the band played fifty seven more 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.

Like many of their contemporaries, the final tour language proved to be bogus. 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 thirty four shows before taking the rest of the year off. In June, 2017, they performed two special acoustic shows to record their new live acoustic album, *MTV Unplugged – Summer Solstice* (2017), which was released on October 6, 2017. It was recorded live in Ocean Sounds Recording studio in Oslo on June 22 and June 23, 2017, with the band performing 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 also 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 forty two shows through August 27. In late 2019, they went out on the road once again, playing fifteen shows in the U.K., Europe, and Russia. In February, 2020, they went out yet again, playing fourteen 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 managed to return home, where they rode out the pandemic. In fact, they would not play live again until March 2022, when they played a show in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

However, they did record a new album called *True North* in late October and early November, 2021 at Bodo Concert Hall in Norway. The album marked a significant change in direction for the band. Unlike their eighties driven synth-pop or their guitar driven alt rock in the 2000s, the new album was lush and more organic, with many prominent orchestral arrangements. Morten Harket’s signature falsetto was largely missing, replaced with a more mature vocal performance. All twelve tracks were written by band members, with Furuholmen writing six and Waaktaar-Savoy writing the other six.

Uniquely, the album was recorded ninety miles north of the Arctic Circle in Bodo, Norway. For two days, the band was accompanied by a thirty plus piece orchestra and the group recorded it with two drummers, Karl Oluf Wennerberg and Per Hillestad. The entire project was filmed live for a *True North* documentary film which was released with the album in October 2022.

The album was a hit throughout Europe. It peaked at number 3 in Norway, number 4 in Germany, number 12 in England, number 5 in Switzerland, number 8 in Austria, and number 8 in Belgium. However, it did not chart in North America, which was the norm since the eighties. That 2022 leg of the supporting tour included over forty shows in South America, North America, and Europe. The first ten shows took place in South, Latin, and North America in March and April. The European leg included twenty five shows from April through July. The band ended the tour with six shows in Brazil in July. They then went on hiatus for the next two years.

In June 2025, the band announced that Harket had Parkinson's disease. By the end of the year, Harket's voice had recovered enough for him to contemplate singing again but it is unlikely that he will sing again as part of the band. As of June 2026, the band is now on permanent hiatus. They recently released a 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *Analogue* that includes twenty one tracks, fifteen of which were not previously released.

Between 2010 and 2026, Warners has released yet more compilations and expanded editions of previous studio albums. *Hunting High And Low Super Deluxe 30<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

To date, they have 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, becoming 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 several compilations but stick with these. 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. Warner's 2010 release, *25*, includes 39 tracks. Finally, Rhino's 2016 release, *Time and Again: The Ultimate a-ha*, contains 35 tracks, including 16 remixes.

The band had also released four live recordings. Warner Brothers' 2001 set, *A-ha Live At Vallhall – Homecoming 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 is *How Can I Sleep with Your Voice in My Head*, which was recorded during four shows as part of their 2002 in support of *Lifelines*. By this point, a-ha had released the majority of their hit albums and singles. As such, the set list is hit filled. Eleven British pop chart singles are included on the set, as well their three U.S. chart singles. In total, the band plays three songs from *Hunting High And Low*, five songs from *Scoundrel Days*, two songs from *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*, one song from *Stay On These Roads*, two songs from *Minor Earth Major Sky*, one song from the soundtrack to *The Living Daylights*, and six tracks from *Lifelines*. Recording quality is excellent.

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-Savoy 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 all three of their three U.S. chart singles, "Take On Me", "The Sun Always Shines On T.V.", and "Cry Wolf". These are keyboard driven, featuring Furuholmen and second keyboardist/guitarist Christer Karlsson.

The set gets off to a solid set with "Forever Not Yours", "Minor Earth Major Sky For It", "Manhattan Skyline", and "I've Been Losing You". 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-Savoy unleashes his guitar during the rock influenced "Minor Earth Major Sky", pulling off a pretty nasty guitar solo that sounds great. "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-Savoy's atmospheric guitar work sounds like The Edge. "Crying In The Rain" dates back to 1961 when The Everly Brothers had a top ten hit with it on the U.S. pop singles chart. This version is powerful and played at a ballad pace. The downbeat from the Lindvall brothers is rock solid and loud. The guitar solo is minimal but effective, with more Edge like atmospherics.

"The Sun Always Shines on T.V. is anthemic like with changes in tempo and eventually, lightning fast synth and drum rhythms. "Did Anyone Approach You" borders on garage rock with distorted synths and sharp guitar work. "The Swing Of Things" is very moody and synth based with a goth like vibe. And, "Lifelines" also has an anthem feel. Harket steals the show with a soaring falsetto note in the chorus and the song is one of a few to also feature Anneli Drecker on secondary vocals.

The last five tracks of the original fourteen track CD begins with "Stay On These Roads", which is power ballad. "Hunting High And Low" gives the audience an opportunity to sing along to Waaktaar-Savoy's acoustic guitar. It is the perfect lead-in to a joyous version of "Take On Me" which is slightly faster than the original, which results in more energy and a fresh approach.

This version of their Bond movie theme, "The Living Daylights" features a blistering guitar solo from Waaktaar-Savoy along with more crowd participation moments, which leads into the set closer, "Summer Moved On". It seems like everyone at this particular show is hoping that Harket can hit that twenty second continuous note and guess what, he pulls it off perfectly to the raucous applause of the audience.

The six bonus tracks offer a little of everything. “Scoundrel Days” from the album of the same name replaces the original synths with an aggressive guitar based wall of sound. The Lindvall brothers rhythm section stands out once again and Waaktaar-Savoy handles lead vocals with Harket providing the soaring vocals in the chorus. The song has a goth like feel. “Oranges On Appletrees” is quirky and dominated by the synths while “Cry Wolf” is funky stadium pop. Once again, the original cheesy keyboard/synth production is beefed up considerably by Waaktaar-Savoy’s guitar work and the powerhouse rhythm section.

“Dragonfly” is moody and intimate and features Furuholmen on lead vocals. While there is no way that Magne can duplicate the pristine quality of Harket’s voice, his delivery is so fragile it is endearing. “Time and Again” continues the somber mood and “Sycamore Leaves” has a blues rock edge. It features Waaktaar-Savoy on lead vocals and his guitar work is a precursor of his alt rock based rock for the band’s recordings in the 2000s. It is also one of a handful of tracks to feature singer Anneli Drecker.

All in all, this set showcases the transition the band was making in 2002 from a synth driven dance pop machine to a more mature alt rock sounds that would still highlight Harket’s God given voice with more aggressive instrumental elements. I love it but it is getting increasingly harder to find. If you want a copy, I would act now.

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, percussion Pal Waaktaar-Savoy - 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 as this one would prove to be, 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 it 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 in 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 place 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. This set is now on iTunes and is still in print.