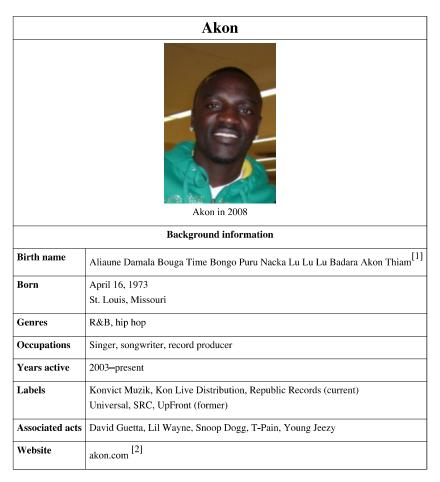






### Akon



Aliaune Damala Bouga Time Bongo Puru Nacka Lu Lu Badara Akon Thiam (born April 16, 1973), known as Akon (/ˈeɪkɒn/), is a Senegalese American R&B and hip hop recording artist, songwriter, and record producer. [3] He rose to prominence in 2004 following the release of "Locked Up", the first single from his debut album *Trouble*.

He has since founded two successful record labels, Konvict Muzik and Kon Live Distribution. His second album, *Konvicted* received three nominations for the Grammy Awards in two categories, Best Contemporary R&B Album for *Konvicted* album and Best Rap/Sung Collaboration for "Smack That" and "I Wanna Love You".

He is the first solo artist to hold both the number one and two spots simultaneously on the *Billboard* Hot 100 charts twice. <sup>[4]</sup> Akon has had four songs certified as 3x platinum, three songs certified as 2x platinum, more than ten songs certified as 1x platinum and more than ten songs certified as gold in digital sales. Akon has sung songs in other languages including Tamil, Hindi and Spanish. He was listed by the Guinness Book of World Records as the #1 selling artist for master ringtones in the world.

Akon often provides vocals as a featured artist and is currently credited with over 300 guest appearances and more than 35 *Billboard* Hot 100 songs. He has worked with numerous performers such as Michael Jackson, Eminem, Snoop Dogg, Whitney Houston, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, Gwen Stefani and many more artists. He has had five Grammy Awards nominations and has produced many hits for artists such as Lady Gaga, Colby O'Donis, Kardinal Offishall, Leona Lewis and T-Pain.

Forbes ranked Akon 80th (Power Rank) in Forbes Celebrity 100 in 2010 and 5th in 40 Most Powerful Celebrities in Africa list, in 2011. Billboard ranked Akon No. 6 on the list of Top Digital Songs Artists of the decade. <sup>[5]</sup>

#### Early life

Akon was born in St. Louis, and spent much of his childhood in the West African country Senegal, which he describes as his "hometown". The child of a dancer mother and a percussionist father, Mor Thiam, Akon learned to play five instruments, including drums, guitar and djembe. At age 7, he moved with his family to Union City, New Jersey, splitting his time between the United States and Senegal until settling in Newark, New Jersey. Growing up in New Jersey, Akon had difficulties getting along with other children. When he and his older brother reached high school, his parents left them on their own in Jersey City and moved the rest of the family to Atlanta, Georgia.

Akon has stated in interviews that his full name is Aliaune Damala Akon Thiam and that as a Muslim, he has never drunk alcohol or smoked. [8] although there is some ambiguity and debate about Akon's legal name and birth date. Akon is usually credited as Aliaune Thiam. [9][10] In addition to the longer form, Akon's full name has been reported both as Aliaune Badara Thiam and Aliaune Badara Thiam [11] and the former was used on an official document issues against the rapper by the county of Dutchess, New York. [12]

In regards to his birth date, Akon is very protective of it, which is the reason many media outlets have reported incorrect dates. However, legal documents released by The Smoking Gun list Akon's name as Aliaune Damala Thiam and his date of birth as April 16, 1973.

#### Music career

#### 2003-05: Discovery and Trouble

Akon's alleged three years in jail saw him begin to recognize his music abilities and develop an appreciation for his musical background. Music mogul Devyne Stephens, president of Upfront Megatainment first heard about Akon when the rapper Lil' Zane brought him along to Stephens' rehearsal hall, a place that at the time saw talents such as Usher and TLC being developed. The relationship between Stephens and Akon began as a friendship and mentorship, with the young artist regularly stopping by to ask for advice, but when Akon lost his deal with Elektra Stephens signed him to his production company and began grooming him professionally. The songs Akon recorded with Stephens were brought to the attention of Universal's imprint SRC Records. In an interview with HitQuarters SRC A&R Jerome Foster said, "What caught my attention right away was "Lonely", and I said, 'this kid is official — this is a huge record." Foster and SRC CEO Steve Rifkind immediately boarded a private plane to Atlanta to meet the young artist. Akon knew of Foster's work as producer Knobody and so there was a mutual respect for one another and the pair hit it off.

Akon increased his exposure further by collaborating with overseas artists, including New Zealand's rapper Savage ("Moonshine" from album of the same name) and hip-hop producer P-Money ("Keep on Callin" from *Magic City*), performing choruses as a featured vocalist.

Akon's solo debut album, *Trouble* was released on June 29, 2004. It spawned the singles "Locked Up" and "Lonely", "Belly Dancer (Bananza)", "Pot Of Gold", and "Ghetto." "Locked Up" reached 8th position in the U.S. and 5th in the UK. "Ghetto" became a radio hit when it was remixed by DJ Green Lantern to include verses from rappers 2Pac and The Notorious B.I.G. The album is a hybrid of Akon's silky, West African-styled vocals mixed with East Coast and Southern beats. Most of Akon's songs begin with the sound of the clank of a jail cell's door with him uttering the word "Konvict".

In 2005, he released the single "Lonely" (which samples Bobby Vinton's "Mr. Lonely"). The song reached the top five on the *Billboard* Hot 100, and topped the charts in Australia, the UK and Germany. His album also climbed to number one in the UK in April 2005. When music channel The Box had a top ten weekly chart, which was calculated by the amount of video requests, Akon's "Lonely" became the longest running single on the top of the chart, spanning over fifteen weeks. Akon then released another single featuring with a New Zealand rapper, Savage with the single *Moonshine*, which had become a success in both New Zealand and Australia, becoming number one

in the New Zealand charts. In 2005, He made his first critically acclaimed guest appearance on Young Jeezy's debut album, *Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101*, with the song "Soul Survivor." In December the same year his manager, Robert Montanez was killed in a shooting after a dispute in New Jersey.

#### **2006–07:** *Konvicted*



Akon performing at the Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre in Charlotte, 2007.

Akon's second album, Konvicted was released on November 14, 2006. It included collaborations with Eminem, Snoop Dogg and Styles P. The first single "Smack That" featuring Eminem was released in August 2006 and peaked at number two on the Billboard Hot 100 for five consecutive weeks. "I Wanna Love You," (featuring Snoop Dogg) was the second single released in September, it would go on to earn Akon his first number-one single on the Billboard Hot 100, and Snoop's second. "I Wanna Love You" topped the U.S. charts for two consecutive weeks. In January 2007, a third single "Don't Matter" which earned him his first solo number one and second consecutive Hot 100 chart topper was released. "Mama Africa" was released as a European single in July 2007, making it the fourth overall single from the album reaching just 47 in the UK.

To coincide with the release of the Platinum (deluxe) edition of the album "Sorry, Blame It on Me" was the album's fifth single, debuted in August 2007 on the Hot 100 at number seven. The deluxe version was fully released on August 28, 2007. The final single was confirmed by Akon to be "Never Took the Time." [13] Konvicted debuted at number two on the Billboard 200, selling 286,000 copies in its first week.

After only six weeks, *Konvicted* sold more than one million records in the U.S. and more than 1.3 million worldwide. The album was certified platinum after seven weeks, and after sixteen weeks it was certified double platinum. It stayed in the top twenty of the *Billboard* 200 for 28 consecutive weeks and peaked at number two on four different occasions. On November 20, 2007, the RIAA certified the album 'triple platinum' with 3 million units sold in the US. It has sold more than 5 million copies worldwide. [citation needed] He has achieved gold and platinum certifications in twenty-three countries with the album.

On October 5, 2006, Akon broke a record on the Hot 100, as he achieved the largest climb in the chart's 48-year-history with "Smack That" jumping from number 95 to 7. The leap was fueled by its number six debut on Hot Digital Songs with 67,000 downloads. The record has since been broken several times. In December 2006, Akon's "Smack That" was nominated for Best Rap/Sung Collaboration at the 49th Annual Grammy Awards, but lost to Justin Timberlake and T.I.'s "My Love". [citation needed]

When asked by an interviewer on MSN.com in October 2007 what his fans could expect in the future, Akon responded, "Just expect the unexpected. The fans can definitely know that I'm gonna always come a whole new way of how they saw me last And that's always been my goal—to kind of surprise them and come from a blindside angle because that's how you keep the excitement going about you. You always want to do something they would never expect you to do, and then when you do it, you do it well." [14]

#### 2008-09: Freedom

Akon released his new album *Freedom* on December 2, which spawned four singles: "Right Now (Na Na Na)", "I'm So Paid" (featuring Lil Wayne and Young Jeezy), "Beautiful" (featuring Kardinal Offishall and Colby O'Donis) and "We Don't Care". "We Don't Care" has failed to chart significantly in many countries, only reaching 61 in the UK and 91 in Australia. *Freedom* was certified platinum in US and achieved gold and platinum certifications in many countries. [citation needed]

After the unexpected death of The King Of Pop Michael Jackson, who Akon was working with in Jackson's last years, Akon released a tribute song called "Cry Out Of Joy". Akon and Michael Jackson were close friends near the end of Jackson's life. Speaking of his relationship with Michael Jackson to noted UK R&B writer Pete Lewis of the award-winning 'Blues & Soul' in October 2008, Akon stated the following:

Mike is the King Of Pop, and I think that it's a dream come true for ANY major artist/songwriter/producer to be able to work



with the best in the business! You know, to work with someone like Mike — who's created opportunities, opened doors for so many people, and achieved so much in the music world, period — is just an experience which would be enough to take home for ANYONE! I mean, when I first flew up to Vegas and met him it was almost like we'd known each other for YEARS! LITERALLY! 'Cause musically we were on the same exact page! The chemistry was just INCREDIBLE! And, as a person, he was the most cool, humble dude I've ever met! I mean, we even actually got to go to the movies together — in broad daylight! Which was an experience in itself!

— Akon

David Guetta collaborated with Akon in "Sexy Bitch", the first house track by Akon, which was a "summer anthem" across the globe. Reaching No. 1 in more than 6 countries, and charting at 5 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, it is featured on Guetta's *One Love* album. It is Akon's 19th Top 20 hit worldwide. [citation needed]

#### 2010–present: Stadium

The album's first single, "Angel", was released to US radio stations on September 14, 2010, [15] and was released as a single on September 27, 2010. It was produced by French producer David Guetta. Akon performed the song during the 2010 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show. Akon travelled to Jamaica to work with Damian, Julian & Stephen Marley. The promotional single "Dirty Work" (feat. Wiz Khalifa) was released in February 2013 free of charge. The lead single from Stadium "So Blue" was released November 11th 2013 [16]

#### **Featured projects**

- In 2006, Akon started his new record label Kon Live
   Distribution under Interscope Records. His first signed artist was Ray Lavender.
- He was featured on Gwen Stefani's latest album, *The Sweet Escape*. He made an appearance on the title track and second single, "The Sweet Escape." Akon produced the song. On December 10, 2006, Akon and Stefani appeared as musical guests on Saturday Night Live, however they did not perform the song as Stefani had not yet learned the lyrics. He performed the song live, however, on American Idol on March 28, 2007 due to Gwen Stefani's appearance as a coach the night before. "The Sweet Escape" has reached No. 2 on the *Billboard* Hot 100.



Akon performing with Gwen Stefani on The Sweet Escape Tour.

- Akon collaborated with Chamillionaire on his mixtape, Mixtape Messiah 2, featuring on the track "Ridin'
  Overseas" which he also produced. The mixtape was available for download on Chamillionaire's website from
  December 24, 2006.
- In 2006, after their 2005 Akon-produced single, "Soul Survivor," the duo of Akon and Young Jeezy said that there is a lot more to expect from them in the future. The pair announced there are currently plans for a collaborative album. [17][18]
- Akon also appeared on Bone Thugs-n-Harmony's album *Strength and Loyalty* and Three 6 Mafia's eighth studio album, *Last 2 Walk*, *We The Best* by DJ Khaled, Fabolous's album, *From Nothin' to Somethin'*, with 50 Cent on some tracks for *Curtis*, <sup>[19]</sup> T.I.'s 5th album, *T.I. vs. T.I.P.*, <sup>[20]</sup> Mario's third solo album *Go!*, <sup>[21]</sup> and produced with Daddy Yankee" in the song called "Bring It On" on the album called *El Cartel: The Big Boss* which was released on June 5, 2007. <sup>[22]</sup>
- On July 7, 2007 Akon performed at the American leg of Live Earth.
- In November 2007, Akon recorded a remix of "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'" with Michael Jackson. In February 2008, the remix was released on the 25th anniversary rerelease of Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. Akon produced the track entitled "Echo" on Latin Boy band Menudo's latest album, released in the spring of 2008.
- 'Konvict Music' would be responsible for the re-release of Kat Deluna's debut album 9 Lives (album) which would feature Akon on the single "Am I Dreaming."
- In July 2008, a song called "Hold My Hand" circulated the internet. The song is an R&B duet/collaboration between Michael Jackson and Akon, composed by Claude Kelly. There also exists another version featuring only Akon. It was not included in the track list for *Freedom* as Akon previously stated. During an interview with Tavis Smiley, Akon said that Jackson had planned on a high-profile release including a music video until the track had leaked. This is Jackson's last known song before he died on June 25, 2009. RecentlyWikipedia:Manual of Style/Dates and numbers#Chronological items, Akon has finished work on the song and it will included on the upcoming posthumous album, *Michael*. The song itself was released as a single on November 15, 2010.
- Akon was also the executive producer of Kardinal Offishall's fourth solo album *Not 4 Sale*, released September 9, 2008. The promo single "Graveyard Shift" features Akon as does the first single "Dangerous", which peaked at No. 5 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, and won the award for Single of the Year at the 2009 Juno Awards.
- Akon co-wrote and recorded "Put It on My Tab" with New Kids on the Block for their 2008 reunion album The Block.
- Akon co-wrote and produced Leona Lewis' hit record Forgive Me, off her debut album Spirit.
- · He is currently working with X Factor 2008 winner Alexandra Burke on her upcoming debut album.

• Akon co-wrote Kon Live artist Lady Gaga's worldwide hit "Just Dance", which also featured Colby O'Donis, and which earned a Grammy nomination for Best Dance Recording at the 51st Grammy Awards.

- Flo Rida's new album *R.O.O.T.S.* features Akon on the track "Available".
- Akon has recorded a song with E-40 titled "Wake It Up" for E-40's album, *The Ball Street Journal*. Akon experiments with the auto-tune effect in the song.
- Rap singer Nelly confirmed that Akon, Pharrell, and T-Pain have talked about forming a rap supergroup in 2009.
- Akon and Konvict Muzik are also producing hip hop/rock group Flipsyde's 2009 release, *State of Survival*, which will be released via Kon Live Distribution and Cherrytree Records.
- Akon worked with Whitney Houston for her 2009 comeback album I Look to You. He appears on the track "Like I Never Left".
- IsThereSomethingICanDo.com, launched On March 25, 2009, The social action collaboration project between the artists Peter Buffett and Akon has partnered with DoSomething.org, to coincide with the release of "Blood Into Gold". The song focused on human trafficking and featured both artists.
- In May 2009, Akon collaborated with Taiwanese artist 潘瑋柏 (Wilber Pan) and released another version of the song, Be With You.
- Akon worked with bachata group Aventura and Reggaeton duo Wisin & Yandel on All Up 2 You the second single from Aventura's album The Last that dropped in June. The song received two nominations at the Premios Lo Nuestro 2010 for "Urban Song of the Year" and "Video Collaboration of the Year".
- Akon recentlyWikipedia:Manual of Style/Dates and numbers#Chronological items signed Jayko, a Hispanic R&B and Reggaeton artist, to his label and is working with him on his debut album titled "Marcando Territorio"
- Sexy Bitch was released in July 2009, a collaboration with French DJ David Guetta.
- In August 2009, Akon released another version of Beautiful featuring BoA, a popular and legendary Korean singer. However, this version was for the Japanese market.
- Akon also sang in a song with Colby O'Donis called "What You Got".
- In 2009, Akon collaborated with Pitbull on the single "Shut It Down" from the album "Rebelution".
- Akon worked to help Matisyahu remix his single "One Day" on his album Light.
- In 2010, Akon collaborated with up and coming pop singer JRandall on a song entitled *oo la la" which premiered on JustJared.com on October 6*.
- In 2010, he is one of over 70 artists singing on "We Are the World: 25 for Haiti", a charity single in aid of the 2010 Haiti earthquake.
- He also entered into the Indian market, working with composers Vishal-Shekhar on the soundtrack to the Bollywood action film *Ra.One*. The first song "Chammak Challo" has been released on YouTube where he sings in the Indian language Hindi. He also sang another song called "Criminal" for the film.
- Akon co-produced Natalia Kills' first single, "Mirrors", from her forthcoming debut album, Perfectionist.
- Akon, the internationally known R&B artist, recorded a song for No Labels which is now used as the
  organization's anthem.
- In 2010, Akon collaborated with Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg on "Kush", the intended first single from Dr. Dre's forthcoming album *Detox* however the album's release remains up for discussion and "Kush" and "I Need a Doctor" were removed from the album.
- In 2011, Akon signed singer/songwriter Jeffree Star & produced his first single, Prom Night!
- Akon collaborated with music director duo Vishal-Shekhar and sung a song "Chammak Challo" as a part of the soundtrack for the 2011 Bollywood film Ra.One. Akon received a nomination for Best Male Playback Singer at the 2012 Filmfare Awards for song "Chammak Challo".
- In 2012, Akon collaborated with Korean girl-group Wonder Girls on their English single Like Money and appeared in the song's official music video.
- Jeffree Star released his Mr. Diva EP under Akon's Kon Live Distribution label on October 2, 2012.

• In 2012, Akon collaborated with Latin singer, Pitbull on his seventh studio album Global Warming for the song titled Everybody Fucks, which also includes American rapper David Rush.

#### Other ventures

#### Television and film

Akon has confirmed that a reality television show is in the works. It will be called "My Brother's Keeper" and the point is that Akon's two nearly identical brothers will go around in Atlanta posing as him fooling people into thinking that it is in fact Akon. They will try to get VIP treatment, girls and free things. Akon has claimed that people have mistaken his brothers for him many times in Atlanta which is what the show is based on. [23]

Akon is planning to work on a full-length movie titled *Illegal Alien*. The film is based on some of the events of his life and actor Mekhi Phifer is set to play him. Besides Akon confirmed in August 2007, in the interview with Polish website INTERIA.PL, that he works on a movie "Cocaine Cowboys," which tells the story of Jon Roberts, the main pilot of Medellin Cartel (Colombian drug traffickers).<sup>[24]</sup> He was also featured on a Verizon Wireless commercial and singing Snitch along with Obie Trice on a CSI: Crime Scene Investigation episode named "Poppin' Tags."

On November 30, 2007, Akon entered the Big Brother house in *Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Edition 2* as a guest so the housemates can meet him for only 100 seconds. He also appeared on November 17, 2008 edition of WWE Raw, with Santino Marella citing him in his speech. Because of Santino's Italian Stereotyping, he mispronounced Akon's name to "Akorn".

On April 27, 2008, Akon appeared with Colby O'Donis in Dance on Sunset. On January 27, 2010, Akon performed on the Brazilian reality show Big Brother Brasil. [25]

Pepsi chose him to produce and record "Oh Africa" for the 2010 World Cup.

Now, Akon is working on an action movie American Heist, [26] directed by Sarik Andreasyan, set to release in 2014.

#### **Fashion**

In February 2007, Akon launched his clothing line, *Konvict Clothing*. It features urban streetwear including denim jeans, hoodies, t-shirts and hats. *Aliaune* is the upscale version, or high-end line, for males and females, which includes blazers, denim jeans and other items. Timothy Hodge appeared on MTV's Direct Effect alongside Akon while promotioning the Konvict clothing line.<sup>[27]</sup>

#### **Forbes**

According to *Forbes*, Akon grossed \$13 million in 2011, \$21 million in 2010, \$20 million in 2009 and \$12 million in 2008.

#### Personal life

Akon claims that he has six children with three different women in an interview with *Blender*, [28] all of whom he has great relationships with. He says he wishes to keep his family protected from the public eye. Akon is also a Muslim.

He also has his own charity for underprivileged children in Africa called Konfidence Foundation. Akon owns a diamond mine in South Africa and denies the existence of blood diamonds (also known as "conflict diamonds") saying, "I don't believe in conflict diamonds. That's just a movie. Think about it. Nobody thought or cared about conflict diamonds until 'Blood Diamond' was released." [29] However, he has since stated that he does accept that blood diamonds exist, and that he is partial-owner of an African mine that is dedicated to avoiding use of blood diamonds while also donating profits to local communities.

Akon appeared on the ITV2 show *The Hot Desk*. He stated on the show that he is a fan of English Premier League club Chelsea F.C.

#### Legal difficulties

Akon has stated that he was part of an auto-theft ring and spent three years in prison from 1999 to 2002. However, in April 2008, The Smoking Gun website challenged his claim with court records and interviews with detectives involved in Akon's case, concluding that he was not convicted of any crime and did not serve time in prison. [30] Akon responded to the report by saying that he never spent 3 years in prison consecutively, but had many shorter sentences that add up to three years.

In April 2007, Akon drew criticism for an onstage act which included simulated sex with a 15-year-old girl, at a club in Trinidad and Tobago, as part of a fake contest, despite the club's claim to have a 21 years and over age requirement. The incident was filmed by Akon's crew and later uploaded to the Internet. On April 20, 2007 local media, channel TV6, aired the video clip publicly. Amid criticism on the radio, television, and from the blogosphere, Verizon Wireless removed ringtones featuring Akon's songs. Verizon also decided not to sponsor The Sweet Escape Tour where Akon was to be the opening act for Gwen Stefani. However, Universal Music Group did not take action against Akon, but rather simply ordered the video clip be removed from video-sharing site YouTube due to copyright infringement. Conservative commentator and Parents Television Council founder Brent Bozell called this "corporate irresponsibility." [34]

Political commentators Michelle Malkin, Laura Ingraham, and Bill O'Reilly criticized Akon for "degrading women." [35][36] Malkin uploaded commentary about Akon to YouTube, using footage from music videos and the Trinidad concert, and Universal Music Group then forced its removal by issuing a DMCA takedown notice. [37] The Electronic Frontier Foundation joined Malkin in contesting the removal as a misuse of copyright law, citing fair use. [38] In May 2007, UMG rescinded its claim to the video, and the video returned to YouTube.

On June 3, 2007, at WSPK's *KFEST* concert at the Dutchess Stadium in Fishkill, New York, a concert attendee threw an object towards Akon on stage. Akon asked the crowd to identify who threw the object and that he be brought on stage. Security staff grabbed the young man and took him up to the stage. Akon then pulled him up from the crowd and hoisted him across his shoulders. The singer then tossed the attendee back into the crowd from his shoulders. Video of the incident was reviewed by Fishkill police. [39] Akon has claimed that the incident was staged and that he in fact used the act to set up for the next record. Charges of endangering the welfare of a minor, a misdemeanor, and second-degree harassment, a violation, were filed, according to police Chief Donald F. Williams, and Akon was arraigned on the two charges on December 3, 2007 in the town of Fishkill Court. [40]

In 2010, Buddhist groups in Sri Lanka vehemently protested a planned concert by Akon, claiming his music video for *Sexy Chick* insulted Buddhism because of the Buddha statue that can be seen several times in the background. Considering the allegations against Akon, the Sri Lankan Government decided not to issue him a visa to enter into Sri Lanka. [41]

#### **Discography**

- *Trouble* (2004)
- Konvicted (2006)
- Freedom (2008)
- Stadium (2013)

#### **Tours**

- Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania One-off Concert (2006). [42]
- Konvicted Tour (July to September 2007, then additional dates in 2008)
- The Sweet Escape Tour with Gwen Stefani (April to July 2007)
- Good Girl Gone Bad Tour with Rihanna (Canadian-leg only, September December 2008)
- Konvict Muzik Tour with T-Pain (Australia only, October 26–27, 2009)
- Brazilian Mini-Tour, (Brazil, January 2010)
- OMG Tour with Usher (North America Second Leg, April June 2011)

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#### **External links**

- Official website (http://akon.com)
- Akon (http://www.allmusic.com/artist/p535592) at AllMusic
- YouTube Vevo channel (http://www.youtube.com/user/AkonVEVO)

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