



a-ha

THE MOVIE



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THE MOVIE



When a-ha's breakthrough hit "Take on Me" shot to #1 on the Billboard charts in 1985, it turned its three young band members into global superstars overnight. While the iconic song and its groundbreaking music video remain ubiquitous to this day, the story of a-ha didn't end there. After 35 years, a deep catalog of 11 studio albums and 55 million units sold – despite controversies and disagreements – a-ha continues to record music and play to packed arenas around the world.

Following Mags, Morten and Pål over a period of four years, **a-ha: The Movie** provides unprecedented access to the inner workings of the band as well as a career-spanning look at one of the most enduring and beloved acts in pop music history.

a-ha

FACT SHEET



Band members:
Magne Furuholmen (keyboardist)
Morten Harket (lead vocalist)
Pål Waktar-Savoy (guitarist)

TAKE ON ME

- #1 on the Billboard Hot 100 U.S. singles chart in 1985
- Topped the charts in 36 countries
- 1.4 billion views on YouTube
- 1 billion streams on Spotify
- One of the top 5 most streamed songs of the 20th century
- Returned to the Top 10 when sampled for Pitbull & Christina Aguilera's 2013 hit "Feel This Moment"
(652 million YouTube views, 363 million Spotify streams)

THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS

Recorded the title-track theme song to the 1987 James Bond film

MORE INTERNATIONAL HITS

"The Sun Always Shines on TV"

(80 million YouTube views, 51 million Spotify streams)

"Hunting High and Low"

(51 million YouTube views, 51 million Spotify streams)

"Crying in the Rain"

(39 million YouTube views, 42 million Spotify streams)

- Formed in 1982 in Oslo, Norway. Celebrating their 40th anniversary in 2022.
- Released 16 albums (11 studio albums, 5 live albums) and 19 compilation/special editions. Sold more than 55 million units.
- Won 8 MTV Awards. Nominated for a GRAMMY and an American Music Award.
- The first Norwegian group to hit #1 in the U.S. They remain the most successful global pop music act from Norway.
- All 3 band members were appointed Knights of the 1st Class of the Royal Norwegian Order of St. Olav in 2012.
- Included in the Guinness Book of World Records for the biggest-paying rock concert attendance (2015 Rock in Rio festival).
- TikTok's #takeonmechallenge has gone viral with over 1.1 billion views and more than 250,000 unique user-generated videos.
- 2022 world tour includes their first U.S. concerts in ten years and first performance at NYC's Radio City Music Hall since 1985.
- Additional U.S. dates to follow and a new album coming in late 2022.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

It's 1985 and a-ha is number one on Billboard with Take On Me. It's the first time for a Norwegian band or artist. A childhood dream came true. Or did it?

A special friendship started when Pål Waaktaar-Savoy and Magne Furuholmen were only 12 years old and started playing music together, dreaming of international success.

When British bands like Soft Cell, Yazoo and Depeche Mode got successful in the early 80's, Pål and Magne – now teenagers – travelled to London with one-way tickets. In Norway at the beginning of the 70's this was not only naive, but impossible. No Norwegians had ever been international pop stars.

The boys' idol was Jimi Hendrix who had travelled from the USA to London to break through. Pål and Magne wanted to do the same.

The dream was not unique, but the will to achieve it was unlike anyone else's. Hours, days, weeks, months and years were spent without success. Every work hour was about ambition and every setback was soon forgotten. They simply never gave up.

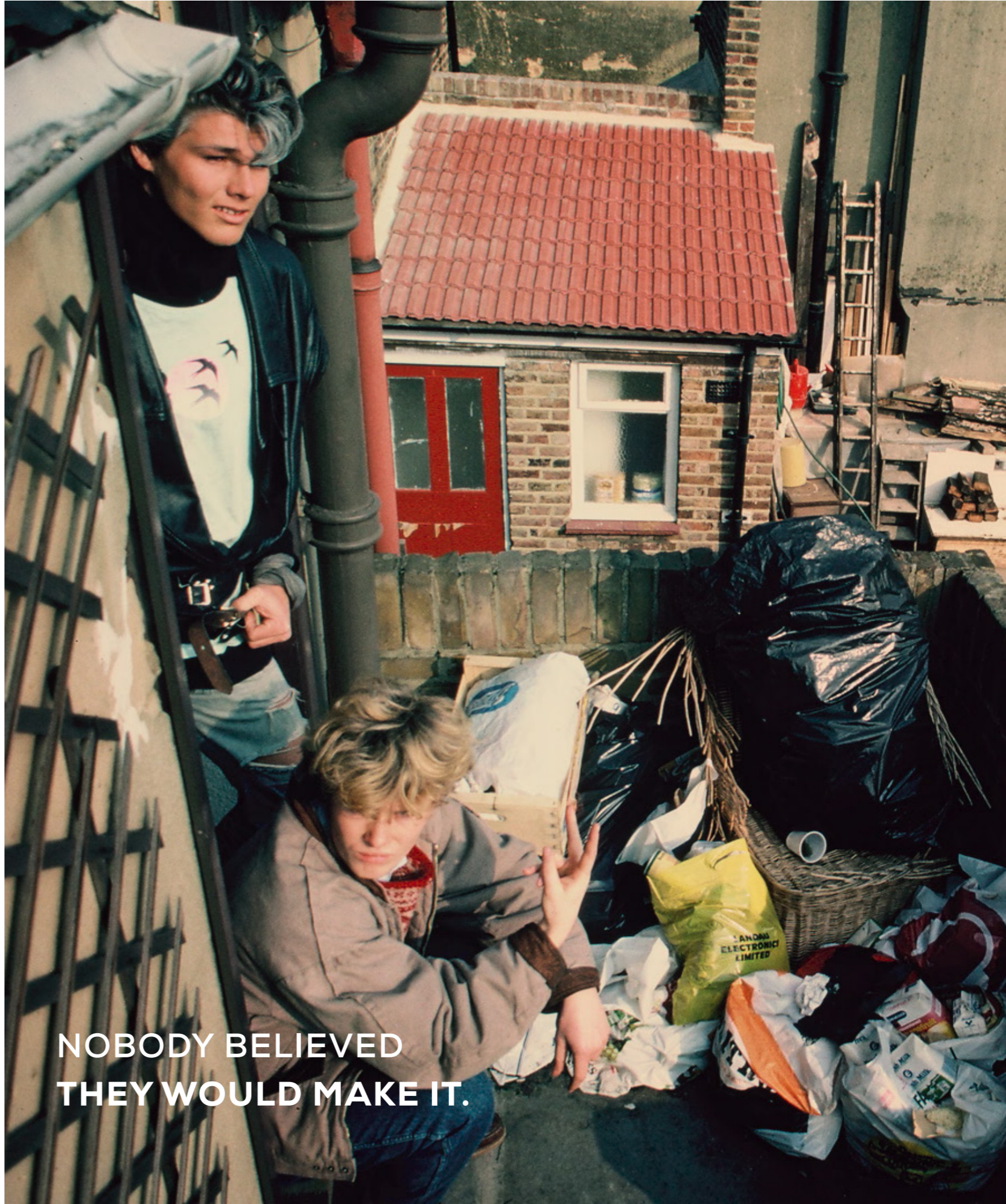


After months of not getting anywhere, and with no money left, they had to hitch-hike home. There they found what had been missing: The singer Morten Harket.

Three years later Take On Me was number 1 on Billboard and the success continued with a string of other hits.

But they never dreamt of screaming girls and being teen idols. Their plan was to have a hit and then do whatever they wanted. They had no idea that they would never get rid of Take On Me and the image that came with it in glossy magazines. Also, they weren't prepared for their singer Morten to get so much more attention than them.

Most of all, they did not expect their friendship to end because of fights over credits, money and honor.



**NOBODY BELIEVED
THEY WOULD MAKE IT.**



After five albums a-ha split in the early 90's and they all moved from London. Morten and Magne back to Oslo, Pål to New York with his wife Lauren.

Even when the band came back together in 2000 with new hits like Summer Moved On, Analogue and Foot of the Mountain, the friendship has never been fixed. They still tour the world, in separate cars and separate wardrobes. They only meet on stage, doing the one thing they all love.

This collective loneliness – within a mutual love affair with music – is fascinating to observe. And I hope the film will be able to communicate this paradox to its audience.



A-HA – THE INTERVIEW

DIRECTOR THOMAS ROBSAHM TALKS ABOUT IMPOSSIBLE DREAMS, HIS LOVE FOR MUSIC AND A-HA.



You're an established film producer, with Joachim Trier's new film coming up, and an award-winning documentary director. What can you not live without, film or music?

Music.

Your former project as a director was a series about Norwegian punk. Is this a film about your guilty pleasure from the 80s?

Things moved fast in those days, so I was into punk in 78, new wave in 79, ska in 80, synths in 81, and by the time I heard a-ha in 84, I was in a band which also was synth based with drum machines. Our music was darker, but bands like The Human League and Soft Cell inspired both my band and a-ha, so we were not that far from each other. At the time *Take On Me* came out the first time in 84, I was not 100% convinced, but when *The Sun Always Shines on TV* was released later there was no doubt: This is the best music ever made in Norwegian pop. And they are still the best, they are simply in their own league.

How did the project come about?

Ever since I saw *Let It Be* about The Beatles when I was 10, I've always wanted to make a film about a band making a record. I almost got a project like that started in the early 90's, but it didn't happen. After seeing *Some Kind of Monster* about Metallica, I started thinking about it again, and by that time I had had a premiere of a feature where both Morten and Magne attended. Then many years later, in 2009, Magne attended another premiere of a film I produced, and he complimented me sincerely about the film music I made for that film (we did not have any money left in postproduction, so I just had to do it myself). A few months later I asked him if I could film the recording of a-ha's new album. He was positive, but there was only one problem; they were gonna split up... Of course, they came back together after five years, and we started filming in 2016. But they still haven't recorded a new album, so the film is a bit different than I imagined

Do you remember when you first heard Take On Me? Did you instantly know it was a hit?

I heard it on the radio and recorded it. I did not think it would become a world hit, no... But I liked it.

Can you describe the Norwegian music scene in the early 80s when a-ha started?

Before punk I felt it was horrible. I did not listen to Norwegian music. It was mostly Eurovision Song Contest and cover versions of American and English songs. Now as a grown up I have discovered there were some good music before punk, but not much.

What has a-ha meant for Norwegian pop culture?

Everything.

What's so great with a-ha?

They make beautiful, melancholic music with great lyrics and the singer... Well, it's Morten Harket. For me they are one of the best bands ever in pop history and I'm saying that as half Italian.

What attracted you with making this film?

I like to make life difficult for myself. It's a habit.

Besides music, what's the film about?

It's about having big, impossible dreams together when you are young and when the dream actually comes true, all the problems start. So, you get the story of how the band got successful and how they handled it.

You have followed them for a long time, besides that what was your strategy as a filmmaker?

I tried my best to get them to record new music, because I know there's still so many great songs in them. →



MAGNE FURUHOLMEN



PÅL WAAKTAAR-SAVOY

You have stated that your ambition with the film was to have them make new songs again. Do you think they will ever record anything together again?

Yes, they are all making music all the time, so at one point they will get in the studio again. I only wish it had happened during the filming.

Almost everybody in the world knows Take On Me, and it's recently been used in everything from La la Land to Deadpool. What's the magic with that song?

The drum programming, the synth riff, the verses, the chorus, the middle eight, the music video... Even the lyrics with simple, nice lines like «Slowly learning that life is ok». It was also very courageous to be a Norwegian band and insist on releasing a song which has a title that is grammatically wrong. They were stubborn from the very beginning. →



MORTEN HARKET

Is there a question you didn't dare to ask them?
'Can I produce your next album?'

How would you describe Pål, Morten and Magne, as persons and artists?

I really like them all three. They are really nice people, and I know people in the film industry with bigger egos. But the band as a whole is quite difficult to deal with...

The wife of the guitarist Pål Waaktaar, Lauren Savoy, says in the film: 'They all need a shrink, both individually and as a band.' Was the film your way of having a therapy?

I tried. And failed.

Not many bands stick together for 40 years, what has kept them together?

The love of music, money and more success.

Are you surprised they still are such a popular live band all over the world?

Yes, because they are bigger than many bands you would think are bigger. Since a-ha are not British or from the US, they are very underrated in the music press. I mean, they are much, much better than Depeche Mode...

A lot of great contemporary bands, such as Coldplay and the artist The Weeknd, recognize a-ha as a big inspiration, or is obviously inspired, why do you think?

If you don't like music from the 80's you listened to the wrong artists... When you are a teenager and grow up with a certain music it naturally inspires you and a-ha were so big in the UK and had a massive hit in the US, so naturally many bands were inspired by them. Including U2, Oasis, Kanye West, Keane, Weezer and Echo & The Bunnymen. Ian McCulloch of the Bunnymen even said to me that they were better than The Smiths. That's pushing it, but still.

→

What's your personal favorite a-ha song?

I have to say three: Memorial Beach, Stay On These Roads and Hunting High And Low. But now I already regret not including Living A Boys Adventure Tale, Summer Moved On or The Sun Always Shines On TV. Tomorrow I would probably say I've Been Losing You, Manhattan Skyline and Lifelines... Oh, I almost forgot Take On Me.

Can pop music change the world?

Of course. Nelson Mandela would never have gotten out of prison without that song.

If you could be a pop star for a day, who would that be?

I've already been that. It's much more fun than being a hustler, which is what we need to be in the film industry.

What's your dream project as a film director?

To make a film about a-ha recording an album.



ABOUT THE BAND

a-ha was founded in Oslo in 1982 by Pål Waaktaar-Savoy (guitars, keyboards), Magne Furuholmen (keyboards, guitars), and Morten Harket (vocals).

a-ha achieved their biggest success with their debut album *Hunting High and Low* in 1985. The album peaked at number one in their native country Norway, number 2 in the UK, and number 1 on the US Billboard album chart; yielded three international number-one singles: Take On Me, The Sun Always Shines on T.V. and Hunting High and Low. The album earned the band a Grammy Award nomination for Best New Artist.

The video for Take On Me became one of the most instantly recognisable and most enduringly popular music videos in the world, and was nominated for eight awards at the third annual MTV Video Awards in 1986, winning six, including Best New Artist in a Video, Best Concept Video, Best Direction, Best Special Effects, and Viewer's Choice and Best Video of the Year. Their six MTV Award wins for that video gave them twice as many wins as Michael Jackson's *Thriller* and more than any artist in the three years of the awards combined.



The band released *Scoundrel Days* (1986), *Stay on These Roads* (1988) and *East of the Sun, West of the Moon* (1990) with hits like I've Been Losing You, Cry Wolf, Manhattan Skyline, The Living Daylights, Stay on These Roads, and Crying in the Rain. In 1994, after their fifth studio album, *Memorial Beach* (1993), failed to achieve the commercial success of their previous albums, the band went on hiatus.

Following a performance at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert in 1998, a-ha recorded their sixth album, 2000's *Minor Earth Major Sky*, which was another number-one album in Norway and Germany. This album was followed by *Lifelines* (2002); *Analogue* (2005), which was certified Silver in the UK;^[5] and *Foot of the Mountain* (2009), which was certified Silver in the UK and reached the top five in many European countries.

In 2009, the band announced they would split after the 2010 worldwide Ending on a High Note Tour. Thousands of fans from at least 40 countries on six continents congregated to see a-ha for the last leg of the tour.

At the end of 2014, a-ha officially announced its participation at Rock in Rio 2015, which celebrated 30 years for both the band and the event. In 2015, it was announced that a-ha would reunite; their tenth studio album, *Cast in Steel*, was released on in september, and the band toured in support of the album.

a-ha has released ten studio albums, several compilations and four live albums. The band were listed in the Guinness World Records Book for having the biggest-paying rock concert attendance; they drew an audience of 198,000 at Maracanã Stadium during the Rock in Rio festival. Their exact sales figures are somewhat controversial; according to their label, Rhino Entertainment, they have sold 55 million records, but other sources assert that they have sold more than 100 million units, albums and singles combined.





Aslaug Holm

Director of Photography/
Co-director

Thomas Robsahm

Director/producer

Yngve Sæther

Producer

ABOUT THE TEAM

Director and Producer **Thomas Robsahm** has worked in film his whole life. Besides directing his own feature films and documentaries, he's produced films for directors such as Joachim Trier, Maria Sødahl and Margreth Olin. Joachim Trier's *Louder Than Bombs* was selected for the main competition in Cannes in 2015, as the first Norwegian film since 1979. It also won Nordic Councils Film Award. Trier's latest film *Thelma* was sold to around 100 countries. *Hope* by Maria Sødahl, starring Andrea Bræin Hovig and Stellan Skarsgård, was shortlisted for the Oscars and nominated twice at the European Film Awards.

In 2015, Robsahm made the documentary series *Punx* about Norwegian punk from 1977 until today. He has also directed political documentaries such as *Modern Slavery* (2009). He is currently about to release the new film by Joachim Trier, *The Worst Person in the World*.

Aslaug Holm is Director of Photography and Co-Director and one of Norway's most influential documentary filmmakers. Her latest film *Brothers* won the main award at HotDocs International Film Festival in Toronto. She was also awarded Amanda (Norwegian Oscar) for Best Director with *Brothers*, first time to a documentary filmmaker in Amanda's history. She was co-director, editor and director of photography on the prizewinning documentary *Cool & Crazy* by Knut Erik Jensen. Her latest feature *Generation Utøya*, co-produced with Motlys, will premiere at HotDocs in 2021.

Producer **Yngve Sæther** is one of Norway's most experienced and award-winning producers and has produced around twenty features in as many years. He has won Amanda (Norwegian Oscar) for Best Film three times, with *The Man Who Loved Yngve* (2008), *I Belong* (2012) and *Beware of Children* (2020). Five of his films have been Norway's candidate for the Nordic Council Film Prize. Several of his films have been represented at the main international film festivals, Joachim Trier's *Oslo, August 31st* and Ruben Östlund's *Force Majeure* (co-producer) in Cannes as the most high-profiled. He's been executive producer on the NRK-series *Home Ground*, season 1 and 2, as well as this year's Norwegian Oscar shortlisted *Hope*. He is currently about to release the feature *Ninjababy* (Berlinale/SXSW).

Editor **Hilde Bjørnstad** has edited films like Aslaug Holm's award-winning *Brothers* (2015), Thomas Robsahm's Tv-series *Punx* (2015) and short documentary *Neighbours* (2018) directed by Trond Kvig Andreassen. She was editor's assistant on Margreth Olin's *The Angel* (2009) and Anne Sewitsky's *Jørgen + Anne = Sant* (2011).



a-ha

THE MOVIE

Directed by: Thomas Robsahm

Director of Photography and Co-director:
Aslaug Holm

Editor: Hilde Bjørnstad

Produced by: Yngve Sæther and Thomas
Robsahm (Motlys)

Co-produced by: Tore Buvarp (Fenris
Film), Matthias Greving (Kinescope Film),
Clementina Hegewisch (Neue Impuls)

Genre: Music documentary

Format: 108 min

**LIGHTYEAR**

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<FENRIS>
film

1 FIRST
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