[Template:Distinguish](/wiki/Template:Distinguish" \o "Template:Distinguish) [Template:Pp-semi-blp](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi-blp) [Template:Infobox musical artist](/wiki/Template:Infobox_musical_artist) **Aliaume Damala Badara Akon Thiam** (born April 16, 1973),[[1]](#cite_note-1) better known as **Akon** (pronounced [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en)), is an American singer, rapper, [songwriter](/wiki/Songwriter), businessman, [record producer](/wiki/Record_producer) and [actor](/wiki/Actor).[[2]](#cite_note-2) He rose to prominence in 2004 following the release of "[Locked Up](/wiki/Locked_Up_(song))", the first single from his debut album [*Trouble*](/wiki/Trouble_(Akon_album)).

He has since founded two successful record labels, [Konvict Muzik](/wiki/Konvict_Muzik) and [Kon Live Distribution](/wiki/Kon_Live_Distribution). His second album, [*Konvicted*](/wiki/Konvicted) received three nominations for the Grammy Awards in two categories, [Best Contemporary R&B Album](/wiki/Best_Contemporary_R&B_Album) for [*Konvicted*](/wiki/Konvicted) album and [Best Rap/Sung Collaboration](/wiki/Best_Rap/Sung_Collaboration) for "[Smack That](/wiki/Smack_That)" and "[I Wanna Love You](/wiki/I_Wanna_Love_You_(Akon_song))".

He is the first solo artist to hold both the number one and two spots simultaneously on the *Billboard* Hot 100 charts twice.[[3]](#cite_note-3) Akon has had four songs certified as 3× platinum, three songs certified as 2× platinum, more than ten songs certified as 1× platinum and more than ten songs certified as gold in digital sales. Akon has sung songs in other languages including [Tamil](/wiki/Tamil_language), [Hindi](/wiki/Hindi), and [Spanish](/wiki/Spanish_language). 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](/wiki/Vocals) as a featured artist and is currently credited with over 300 guest appearances and more than 35 [*Billboard* Hot 100](/wiki/Billboard_Hot_100) songs. He has worked with numerous performers such as [Michael Jackson](/wiki/Michael_Jackson), [Eminem](/wiki/Eminem), [Snoop Dogg](/wiki/Snoop_Dogg), [Whitney Houston](/wiki/Whitney_Houston), [Bone Thugs-N-Harmony](/wiki/Bone_Thugs-N-Harmony), and [Gwen Stefani](/wiki/Gwen_Stefani). He has had five [Grammy Awards](/wiki/Grammy_Awards) nominations and has produced songs for artists such as [Lady Gaga](/wiki/Lady_Gaga), [Colby O'Donis](/wiki/Colby_O'Donis), [Kardinal Offishall](/wiki/Kardinal_Offishall), [Leona Lewis](/wiki/Leona_Lewis), and [T-Pain](/wiki/T-Pain).

*Forbes* ranked Akon 80th (Power Rank) in [Forbes Celebrity 100](/wiki/Forbes_Celebrity_100) in 2010[[4]](#cite_note-4) and 5th in 40 Most Powerful Celebrities in Africa list, in 2011.[[5]](#cite_note-5) *Billboard* ranked Akon No. 6 on the list of Top Digital Songs Artists of the decade.[[6]](#cite_note-6)

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## Early life[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

Akon was born in [St. Louis](/wiki/St._Louis), [Missouri](/wiki/Missouri), and spent much of his childhood in the West African country [Senegal](/wiki/Senegal), which he describes as his "hometown". The child of a dancer mother and a percussionist father, [Mor Thiam](/wiki/Mor_Thiam), Akon learned to play five instruments, including drums, guitar and [djembe](/wiki/Djembe).<ref name=VH1\_interview>Bottomley, C. ["Akon: Trouble No More](http://www.vh1.com/artists/interview/1501105/05022005/akon.jhtml)". [VH1](/wiki/VH1).com. May 2, 2005.</ref> At age 7, he moved with his family to [Union City, New Jersey](/wiki/Union_City,_New_Jersey),<ref name=Billboard11.4.06>["Deep Grooves"](https://books.google.com/books?id=Pg8EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA36). [*Billboard*](/wiki/Billboard_(magazine)) magazine. November 4, 2006. Page 36. Retrieved at [Google Books](/wiki/Google_Books), November 3, 2011.</ref> splitting his time between the United States and Senegal until settling in [Newark, New Jersey](/wiki/Newark,_New_Jersey).<ref name=VH1\_interview/> 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](/wiki/Jersey_City) and moved the rest of the family to [Atlanta](/wiki/Atlanta), Georgia.[[7]](#cite_note-7) 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](/wiki/The_Smoking_Gun) list his date of birth as April 16, 1973.[[8]](#cite_note-8)

## Music career[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

### 2003–05: Discovery and ''Trouble''[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

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](/wiki/Lil'_Zane) brought him along to Stephens' rehearsal hall, a place that at the time saw talents such as [Usher](/wiki/Usher_(entertainer)) and [TLC](/wiki/TLC_(band)) being developed. The relationship between Stephens and Akon began as a friendship and [mentorship](/wiki/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.[[9]](#cite_note-9) The songs Akon recorded with Stephens were brought to the attention of [Universal's](/wiki/Universal_Motown_Records_Group) imprint [SRC Records](/wiki/SRC_Records).[[9]](#cite_note-9) In an interview with [HitQuarters](/wiki/HitQuarters) SRC A&R [Jerome Foster](/wiki/Knobody) said, "What caught my attention right away was "Lonely", and I said, 'this kid is official – this is a huge record."[[9]](#cite_note-9) Foster and SRC CEO Steve Rifkind immediately boarded a private plane to Atlanta to meet the young artist.[[9]](#cite_note-9) Akon knew of Foster's work as producer [Knobody](/wiki/Knobody) and so there was a mutual respect for one another and the pair hit it off.[[9]](#cite_note-9) Akon increased his exposure further by collaborating with overseas artists, including [New Zealand's](/wiki/New_Zealand) [rapper](/wiki/Rapper) [Savage](/wiki/Savage_(rapper)) ("[Moonshine](/wiki/Moonshine_(Savage_song))" from [album of the same name](/wiki/Moonshine_(Savage_album))) and hip-hop producer [P-Money](/wiki/P-Money) ("Keep on Callin'" from [*Magic City*](/wiki/Magic_City_(P-Money_album))), performing choruses as a featured vocalist.

Akon's solo debut album, [*Trouble*](/wiki/Trouble_(Akon_album)) was released on June 29, 2004. It spawned the singles "[Locked Up](/wiki/Locked_Up_(song))" and "[Lonely](/wiki/Lonely_(Akon_song))", "[Belly Dancer (Bananza)](/wiki/Belly_Dancer_(Bananza))", "[Pot Of Gold](/wiki/Pot_of_Gold_(Akon_song))", and "[Ghetto](/wiki/Ghetto_(Akon_song))". "Locked Up" reached 8th position in the U.S. and 5th in the UK. "Ghetto" became a radio hit when it was [remixed](/wiki/Remix) by [DJ Green Lantern](/wiki/DJ_Green_Lantern) to include verses from rappers [2Pac](/wiki/Tupac_Shakur) and [The Notorious B.I.G](/wiki/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".[[10]](#cite_note-10) In 2005, he released the single "Lonely" (which samples [Bobby Vinton's](/wiki/Bobby_Vinton) "[Mr. Lonely](/wiki/Mr._Lonely)"). The song reached the top five on the [*Billboard* Hot 100](/wiki/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](/wiki/The_Box_(UK_TV_channel)) 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](/wiki/Savage_(rapper)) with the single [*Moonshine*](/wiki/Moonshine_(Savage_song)), 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](/wiki/Young_Jeezy) debut album, [*Let's Get It: Thug Motivation 101*](/wiki/Let's_Get_It:_Thug_Motivation_101), with the song "[Soul Survivor](/wiki/Soul_Survivor_(Young_Jeezy_song))". In December the same year his manager, Robert Montanez was killed in a shooting after a dispute in [New Jersey](/wiki/New_Jersey).

In 2006, Akon and Young Jeezy suggested plans for a collaborative album.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[[12]](#cite_note-12)

### 2006–08: ''Konvicted''[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[left|thumb|upright|Akon performing at the](/wiki/File:Akon.jpg) [Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre](/wiki/Verizon_Wireless_Amphitheatre_(Charlotte)) in [Charlotte](/wiki/Charlotte,_North_Carolina), 2007. Akon started his new record label [Kon Live Distribution](/wiki/Kon_Live_Distribution) under [Interscope Records](/wiki/Interscope_Records). His second album, [*Konvicted*](/wiki/Konvicted) was released in November 2006 and debuted at number two on the [*Billboard* 200](/wiki/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. 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.

The album included collaborations with [Eminem](/wiki/Eminem), [Snoop Dogg](/wiki/Snoop_Dogg) and [Styles P](/wiki/Styles_P). The first single "[Smack That](/wiki/Smack_That)" (featuring Eminem) was released in August 2006 and peaked at number two on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for five consecutive weeks. 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](/wiki/Hot_Digital_Songs) with 67,000 downloads. The record has since been broken several times. "Smack That" was nominated for [Best Rap/Sung Collaboration](/wiki/Grammy_Award_for_Best_Rap/Sung_Collaboration) at the [49th Annual Grammy Awards](/wiki/49th_Annual_Grammy_Awards), but lost to [Justin Timberlake](/wiki/Justin_Timberlake) and [T.I.'s](/wiki/T.I.) "[My Love](/wiki/My_Love_(Justin_Timberlake_song))".[[13]](#cite_note-13) "[I Wanna Love You](/wiki/I_Wanna_Love_You_(Akon_song))", (featuring [Snoop Dogg](/wiki/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](/wiki/Don't_Matter)" which earned him his first solo number one and second consecutive Hot 100 chart topper was released. "[Mama Africa](/wiki/Mama_Africa_(song))" was released as a European single in July 2007, making it the fourth overall single from the album. To coincide with the release of the deluxe edition of the album "[Sorry, Blame It on Me](/wiki/Sorry,_Blame_It_on_Me)" debuted in August 2007 on the Hot 100 at number seven.

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.[[14]](#cite_note-14) [right|thumb|200px|Akon performing with Gwen Stefani on The Sweet Escape Tour.](/wiki/File:GwenStefaniAndAkon.jpg)

He produced and featured on [Gwen Stefani's](/wiki/Gwen_Stefani) "[The Sweet Escape](/wiki/The_Sweet_Escape_(song))" which has reached No. 2 on the [*Billboard* Hot 100](/wiki/Billboard_Hot_100). Akon performed at the [American leg](/wiki/Live_Earth_concert,_New_York_City) of [Live Earth](/wiki/Live_Earth). He later recorded a remix of "[Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'](/wiki/Wanna_Be_Startin'_Somethin')" by [Michael Jackson](/wiki/Michael_Jackson) for the [25th anniversary rerelease](/wiki/Thriller_25) of Jackson's [*Thriller*](/wiki/Thriller_(Michael_Jackson_album)). He also worked with bachata group [Aventura](/wiki/Aventura_(band)) and [Reggaeton](/wiki/Reggaeton) duo [Wisin & Yandel](/wiki/Wisin_&_Yandel) on [All Up 2 You](/wiki/All_Up_2_You). The song received two nominations at the Premios Lo Nuestro 2010 for "Urban Song of the Year" and "Video Collaboration of the Year". He signed Jayko, a Hispanic R&B and [Reggaeton](/wiki/Reggaeton) artist, to his label.

### 2008–09: ''Freedom''[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[thumb|right|upright|Akon at a](/wiki/File:Akon_arrives_in_Mumbai_for_Ra.One_recording.jpg) [Mumbai](/wiki/Mumbai) airport. Akon released his new album [*Freedom*](/wiki/Freedom_(Akon_album)) on December 2, which spawned four singles: "[Right Now (Na Na Na)](/wiki/Right_Now_(Na_Na_Na))", "[I'm So Paid](/wiki/I'm_So_Paid)" (featuring [Lil Wayne](/wiki/Lil_Wayne) and [Young Jeezy](/wiki/Young_Jeezy)), "[Beautiful](/wiki/Beautiful_(Akon_song))" (featuring [Colby O'Donis](/wiki/Colby_O'Donis) and [Kardinal Offishall](/wiki/Kardinal_Offishall)) and "[We Don't Care](/wiki/We_Don't_Care_(Akon_song))". *Freedom* was certified platinum in US. Rap singer Nelly suggested that Akon, [Pharrell](/wiki/Pharrell_Williams), and [T-Pain](/wiki/T-Pain) had talked about forming a rap supergroup in 2009.[[15]](#cite_note-15) Akon and [Konvict Muzik](/wiki/Konvict_Muzik) produced hip hop/rock group [Flipsyde's](/wiki/Flipsyde) 2009 release, *State of Survival*, released via [Kon Live Distribution](/wiki/Kon_Live_Distribution) and [Cherrytree Records](/wiki/Cherrytree_Records).[[16]](#cite_note-16) He was also the executive producer of Kardinal Offishall's fourth solo album [*Not 4 Sale*](/wiki/Not_4_Sale_(Kardinal_Offishall_album)). The first single "[Dangerous](/wiki/Dangerous_(Kardinal_Offishall_song))", which featured Akon peaked at No. 5 on the *Billboard* Hot 100. He co-wrote [Kon Live](/wiki/Kon_Live_Distribution) artist [Lady Gaga's](/wiki/Lady_Gaga) hit "[Just Dance](/wiki/Just_Dance_(song))", and which earned a Grammy nomination for Best Dance Recording at the [51st Grammy Awards](/wiki/51st_Grammy_Awards).

After the unexpected death of The King Of Pop [Michael Jackson](/wiki/Michael_Jackson), who Akon was working with, Akon released a tribute song called "Cry Out Of Joy". Akon claimed to be close friend with Jackson near the end of Jackson's life in an interview UK R&B writer Pete Lewis of the award-winning 'Blues & Soul' in October 2008[[17]](#cite_note-17) In July 2008, a song called "Hold My Hand", an R&B duet/collaboration between Michael Jackson and Akon, circulated the internet. It was not included in the track list for *Freedom* as Akon previously stated. During an interview with [Tavis Smiley](/wiki/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. Akon finished work on the song for Jackson's posthumous album, [*Michael*](/wiki/Michael_(album)) and it was released as a single in November 2010.

Akon co-wrote and recorded "Put It on My Tab" with [New Kids on the Block](/wiki/New_Kids_on_the_Block) for their 2008 reunion album [*The Block*](/wiki/The_Block_(album)).[[18]](#cite_note-18) He also co-wrote and produced [Leona Lewis'](/wiki/Leona_Lewis) [Forgive Me](/wiki/Forgive_Me_(Leona_Lewis_song)) and worked with [X Factor](/wiki/The_X_Factor_(UK)) 2008 winner [Alexandra Burke](/wiki/Alexandra_Burke) on her debut album. He later worked with [Whitney Houston](/wiki/Whitney_Houston) for her 2009 comeback album [*I Look to You*](/wiki/I_Look_to_You), appearing on the track "Like I Never Left".[[19]](#cite_note-19) Akon collaborated with [Pitbull](/wiki/Pitbull_(rapper)) on the single "[Shut It Down](/wiki/Shut_It_Down_(song))" from the album "[Rebelution](/wiki/Rebelution_(Pitbull_album))" and worked with [Matisyahu](/wiki/Matisyahu) to remix his single "[One Day](/wiki/One_Day_(Matisyahu_song))" on his album [Light](/wiki/Light_(Matisyahu_album)).[[20]](#cite_note-20) He also co-produced [Natalia Kills'](/wiki/Natalia_Kills) first single, "[Mirrors](/wiki/Mirrors_(Natalia_Kills_song))", from her forthcoming debut album, [*Perfectionist*](/wiki/Perfectionist_(Natalia_Kills_album)). IsThereSomethingICanDo.com, launched On March 25, 2009, The social action collaboration project between the artists [Peter Buffett](/wiki/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.[[21]](#cite_note-21) [David Guetta](/wiki/David_Guetta) collaborated with Akon in "[Sexy Bitch](/wiki/Sexy_Bitch)", the first [house](/wiki/House_music) track by Akon. The song reached number one in more than 6 countries, and charted at 5 on the [*Billboard* Hot 100](/wiki/Billboard_Hot_100). He produced and recorded “Oh Africa” for the 2010 World Cup with Pepsi.

According to [*Forbes*](/wiki/Forbes), Akon grossed $13 million in 2011, $21 million in 2010, $20 million in 2009 and $12 million in 2008.

### 2010–present: ''Stadium''[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

A single, "[Angel](/wiki/Angel_(Akon_song))", produced by French producer [David Guetta](/wiki/David_Guetta), was released in September 2010.[[22]](#cite_note-22) Akon performed the song during the 2010 [Victoria's Secret Fashion Show](/wiki/Victoria's_Secret_Fashion_Show).[[23]](#cite_note-23) Akon travelled to Jamaica to work with Damian, Julian & [Stephen Marley](/wiki/Stephen_Marley_(musician)).[[24]](#cite_note-24) Around the same time, Akon collaborated with [Dr. Dre](/wiki/Dr._Dre) and [Snoop Dogg](/wiki/Snoop_Dogg) on "[Kush](/wiki/Kush_(Dr._Dre_song))", the intended first single from Dr. Dre's forthcoming album [*Detox*](/wiki/Detox_(Dr._Dre_album)); however, it was removed from the final album tracklist. He also contributed "[We Are the World: 25 for Haiti](/wiki/We_Are_the_World:_25_for_Haiti)", a [charity single](/wiki/Charity_single) in aid of the [2010 Haiti earthquake](/wiki/2010_Haiti_earthquake). After a long hiatus, Akon put out the promotional single "Dirty Work" (featuring [Wiz Khalifa](/wiki/Wiz_Khalifa)), which was released in February 2013 for free.

On November 11 Akon released a standalone single titled "[So Blue](/wiki/So_Blue_(Akon_song))".[[25]](#cite_note-25) On January 1, 2015, Akon released five singles from *Stadium*. He also announced that the album would be a quintuple album, broken up into five different genres (Euro, Pop, Urban, Island & World).[[26]](#cite_note-26) In November 2015, Akon announced via his official website that was planning to release his fourth album *Stadium* in four versions: *Stadium- Island*, *Stadium- Urban*, *Stadium- World* and *Stadium- House*.[[27]](#cite_note-27)