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Glyn Aepfel makes big move with MOB

By [Jeff Weinstein](#) on 1/4/2017

With a CV that lists developing and building hotel brands, raising capital, asset managing and investing for the likes of Marriott International, Interstate Hotels, Le Meridien, Fairmont Hotels and Resorts, Loews Hotels and Andre Balazs Properties, it is fair to say Glyn Aepfel is well connected. Over the past six years the South African-born hotelier has been leveraging 30 years worth of relationships to grow Glencove Capital, a Southport, Connecticut-based hospitality investment and advisory firm focused on the lifestyle segment. After trying to buy the Standard brand from Balazs and Mama Shelter from Cyril Auizerate, she is taking the "if you can't be them joining them" approach and working with Auizerate and partners to develop the emerging MOB Hotel brand created by Auizerate, the Frenchman and former Sorbonne professor who developed Mama Shelter with the Trigano family before selling his share to AccorHotels.

MOB defines itself as affordable, approachable urban hotel movement with an edge; it has a focus on well-being and hospitality, "designed to be conducive to the emergence of new ideas and sharing of cultures." Aepfel likes to call it lifestyle with a soul. This appears to be no flash-in-the-pan development either with a list of partners that include Michel Reybier, creator of the La Reserve brand; designer Philippe Starck; and entrepreneur Steve Case, co-founder of AOL and founder/CEO of venture capital firm Revolution LLC. Through Glencove, MOB will continue to be scaled in primary and secondary markets in the United States and Europe. Current MOB projects include: Paris les Puces, March 2017 (100 rooms); Lyon Confluence, May 2017 (100 rooms); Pittsburgh Strip District, 2018 (120 rooms); Washington, D.C., Union Market, 2019 (150 rooms); and Los Angeles Chinatown, 2020 (150 rooms). Aepfel is focused on North American development and says she is working on several more deals, including Brooklyn and the Bronx in New York, Boston and newly developing markets and community undergoing a renaissance.

"This is more about investing in Cyril and his unbelievable assessment of people," Aepfel says. "It's sort of Marxist, and 'of the people' brand. He wants to serve the rich and poor, black and white, and the community of interesting people coming together in a forum, and the forum is the hotel, a vibrant and exciting environment."

Aepfel adds the partners want to do at least 10 MOB's for starters and grow from there. She estimate investment at approximately US\$200,000 per key in the U.S; lower in Europe. "The average needs to be affordable and we need to be careful not to notch up where we are competing with brand like Ace and Standard." Auizerate is setting up the management team in Paris.

While MOB will be Aepfel's main focus in the near term, as a professional who has sourced, closed and financed real estate investments of over US\$2 billion throughout the United States and Europe, she wants to use her platform to invest in two or three other hospitality entrepreneurs focused on next-generation lifestyle concepts. "I invest with my own capital and together with high net worth partners," she says. "I am currently talking to private equity companies and institutional investors as one potential investment is a much higher ticket."



Currently, in addition to the MOB

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collaboration, Glencove's independent investments include four hotels and two restaurants in partnership with local investors/developers. Among these are two irreplaceable, historic churches in uber-hot Silver Lake (Los Angeles) that will be developed into unique lifestyle hotels.

At the same time, while Aepfel says MOB is a long-term play and firm on its development plans, everyone should be more cautious and respectful of the cycle. She points to creeping interest rates and higher construction costs, while ADR growth is slowing. "Margins are tightening and we all must be cautious of the slow down," she says.