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CYRIL  
AOUIZERATE

# MOVEMENT OF THE MOB

CREATOR OF MAMA SHELTER IS BACK WITH  
A UNIQUE VISION THAT REFLECTS WHAT  
IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD NOW.

By **JEFF WEINSTEIN**, EDITOR IN CHIEF

Cyril Aouizerate's new Mob Hotel is neither a concept nor a brand – it's an ethical, cooperative movement, he says; a new hotel experience that focuses on individual and community wellbeing, as well as on human progress. Aouizerate, creator of the Mama Shelter brand and a former Le Sorbonne philosophy professor, says The Mob Hotel is an approach to hospitality whose time has come, where experiential hospitality takes on new meaning.

"For me to have a hotel it is more

something of a responsibility instead of just having a company," says the French-born, 47-year-old son of a typographer. "I feel more like I have a mission. I'm an entrepreneur, too, but I think we are in a world if you don't believe what you are going to do 1000%, you have no chance to succeed. I believe 1000% that we have this mission to create real moments to meet others, artists, and have music, song, light and show. The spirit of Mob Hotel is reflected in the identities of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch."



### CREATING BONDS

The Mob Hotel encompasses an open environment designed for continuous movement with its bar-restaurant, organic produce from cooperatives, food trucks and well-tended gardens, and even a well-equipped space to relax before check-in times and after check-out during the inevitable wait for departure flights.

Entertainment facilities include an outdoor cinema and a live stage. Activities from meditation to cookery, music to books and film to workshops aim to create lasting bonds between guests as well as to welcome locals. Each project will have a huge garden and a rooftop,

and preferably rooms with terraces, or Aouizerate says he will not proceed.

The rooms are designed to be warm and welcoming with beds worthy of a luxury hotel. Wi-Fi is free and rooms are surrounded by terraced gardens.

Imagine entering a hotel where the lobby is a market promoting a rotating selection of local and handmade goods. You are greeted by two artisans at hand-made pop-ups who describe their wares and offer you a small arrival gift, maybe a pen. Then you check in at a rotating table in the same space with a multi-tasking staff member who is allowed to be personal and maybe even offer a brief touch

on the arm to express a warm welcome.

To further enhance the Mob experience, management invites 10 or 15 young companies that benefit from a free working space at the hotel for one year with Internet, Wi-Fi, a printer, coffee and meeting space. In return, the invited entrepreneurs are asked to present to guests their concepts in an open exchange of ideas.

In addition, every week, two or three local organic fruit and vegetable producers build stalls to meet Mob Hotel guests and neighbors. Mob Hotel is committed to buying a percentage of organic products for the hotel kitchen as it encourages guests and neighbors to eat well, taste



Rendering of the outdoor terrace for the first Mob Hotel in Paris

and enjoy produce from organic sources as well as learn how to build their bento box of the day.

“This is more about investing in Cyril and his unbelievable assessment of people,” says Mob Hotel investor Glyn Aepfel, founder of Southport, Connecticut-based Glencove Capital and a former partner at Standard Hotels. “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.”

Aouizerate says it took five years and hundreds of written pages about the philosophy of true hospitality to try to “smell” what is going on in the world. “I had to try to understand about product, but not only for young people but others who want to have a different experience,” he explains. “It takes time, but it is the only way to create something that is not like a concept. People call me and ask me to explain the concept. This is a word of the ‘80s. Now you can’t create a concept because people know it is a marketing solution. When you want to create a movement it is because you smell something and you want to be a part of it.”

Aouizerate’s other inspirations came from his childhood and experiences he had in Brooklyn, New York, starting in his 20s. Growing up the son of a Jewish worker with Algerian roots, a typographer in the south of France, Aouizerate recalls fond memories of family gather-

ings, where space was very tight but song, drink and happiness abounded. “This vision of how we can be immensely happy is a real support for me to share that with others,” he says.

Later, in his 20s, Aouizerate had the opportunity to travel to Brooklyn, where he says the idea for “the movement” was born. “It was 1986 and you couldn’t get a cab from Brooklyn to Manhattan,” he recalls. “At this same time, the reality of the community emerged there to support schools, give access to books to learn about culture. It was so impressive to feel a sense of responsibility to create more within this community. It was the most important example to learn there.”

**GAME PLAN**

With financial backing from hotel owner and friend Michel Reybier of La Reserve in Switzerland and France; designer Philippe Starck; Steve Case, founder of AOL and Revolution LLC; and Aepfel, Aouizerate says the plan is to develop and manage eight hotels over five years in Europe and the United States. The first just opened in Paris by the Le Puces flea market and the second, in Lyon, France, is scheduled for May.

Hotels in the U.S. are under development in Pittsburgh’s Strip District (120 rooms in 2018), Washington, D.C.’s Union Market (150 rooms in 2019) and Los Angeles’ Chinatown (150 rooms in 2020). Another deal in Rome is pending.

The group does not yet have a location in New York City because the land is so expensive, including all the boroughs. “I



say stop, don’t be stupid, forget an obsession for New York,” Aouizerate says. “Let’s go to Washington, D.C., where the market is hot but not priced like New York.” In D.C., costs are US\$180,000 to US\$200,000 per key and rate will be US\$150 to US\$200.

An investment cost per key that includes land, construction, design, etc., is €140,000 (US\$148,000) per key at the first hotel in Paris. “The only way to provide security is with projected occupancies and rates. Again, in Paris, we have small rooms from €99 to €180 (US\$105-US\$191) for bigger rooms with the average at €130 (US\$138),” Aouizerate adds.

The investors plan to hold the original eight and thereafter, Aouizerate says, consider partners to spread “the movement” if they fit the philosophical beliefs of the founders, which is about creating ethical cooperatives conducive to the



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Budding entrepreneurs will be invited to set up their offices on site at Mob Hotel for up to six months, in return for presenting their concepts to hotel guests.

## **CYRIL ISMS**

“I’m too young and developers don’t need advice from me. But for the younger generation, don’t be a fast finger (sell too quickly). If you think like this it is because you don’t believe in your own project.”

“Creation and innovation are no longer illustrated via competitiveness, a quantitative and performance-based achievement. They find their meaning in the quality of the experience lived and felt by the client in the profound integration of passions, cultures and the philosophies inherent in The Mob.”

“If you give organic food it protects the farmer and takes care of the system that produced the food. At the same time you take care of the guest because what you give them is good. It’s a real reflection. I am not organic to be fun or seduce the people with tattoos and pierced noses. It is a true decision.”

emergence of new ideas, sharing cultures, and the desire to move forward together.

With room rates ranging from €89 to €200-plus (US\$94-US\$212) and staffing levels 35% less than traditional boutique hotels, turning a profit is possible. Even the restaurant menus make it easier to control costs with just a few starters and entrees, pizzas and a few desserts.

The investment group initially plans to own and operate every hotel to have complete control and make changes in the moment, if so desired. “When you want to create something very close to the people, you want to create a project that will have different lives,” Aouizerate says. “In two years, you may need a new concept in the restaurant or bar, so you need to have an obsession to change and have the capacity to do so.”

### **BETWEEN JEANS, PIZZA**

In his almost 500-page preface introducing Mob Hotel, Aouizerate writes that creation and innovation are no longer illustrated via competitiveness, a quantitative and performance-based achievement, but find their

meaning in the quality of the experience lived and felt by guests in the profound integration of passions, cultures and the philosophies inherent in Mob Hotel.

That view informs what makes Mob Hotel different from Mama Shelter, which Aouizerate says was his reflection at the end of the 1990s. “It was an answer to how to create a low-cost vision,” he says regarding Mama Shelter. “That was 16 years ago. Think about how the world now is so different and why Mob Hotel is a movement. We are creating gardens where people can eat under trees or watch films. There is a real library with 4,000 books; hand-made popup shops; food trucks on weekends; an organic market once a week in garden with three or four farmers selling apples, small cheese, etc. It is very different.

“For me the Mob Hotel vision is something between jeans and pizza. You can find jeans for a billionaire or for a worker, and there is no social affront. Pizza is the same: It is for before the football match or for the billionaire in Italy who wants something completely fantastic.”