

T W O

R A I N M A K E R S

MONTE



LIPMAN

CATCHER OF WHALES

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iven that **Monte Lipman's Republic Records** is one of the top-performing labels in the game—poised at the top of the food chain at **UMG**, the biggest music company in the world—it's easy to forget that it began in his apartment.

That Republic has become the behemoth it is, with top-selling and top-streaming records—including world-rocking releases from **Taylor Swift, Drake, Post Malone, Jonas Brothers, Lil Wayne, The Weeknd, Ariana Grande** and countless others—is largely a tribute to Lipman's signature qualities. His #1 asset is his likability; add killer promotion and marketing chops, unflagging energy, enthusiasm, *chutzpah* and the expert salesman's gift of gab—not to mention a few canny distribution deals that hit the jackpot—and you have his winning formula. It's no accident that Monte is the only former promotion exec to be at the top of the current label pyramid.

"Monte Lipman gives me the hardest negotiation every time," says **Scooter Braun**. "And that simply means to me... there is no one better."

"From the moment I met Monte," says **Weeknd manager Wassim "Sal" Slaiby**, "I loved that he ran his business, alongside his brother **Avery**, as a family, which is how we have always approached **XO**. We had a vision and he trusted in that from the beginning. He sees the bigger picture and has the power moves to make it all happen."

"We're in the superstar business," Monte told *Variety*, in a prime example of his trademark braggadocio. "I always say to artists contemplating signing with us: 'If you want to be the biggest act in the world, you're at the right place.'"

"Working with Monte is like a master class in leadership," offers **Taylor Swift**. "He knows how to motivate people, how to stay calm during a firestorm and to play chess when it seems like so many people are playing checkers."

Swift recently signed directly with Republic, further deepening an ongoing relationship between the label and the reigning Queen of Pop stretching back to the beginning of her career. Single "ME!" was Taylor's first release (in April 2019) under a deal as significant as any struck with a superstar in the modern-day music business.

Lipman and his partner/brother, **Avery**, self-described army brats (Monte was actually born in Fort Campbell, Ky.), spent much of their youth in Brooklyn with their mom and Malibu with their dad after their parents divorced. "In junior high, it was my job to book bands for the school dance," Monte told *Billboard*, "so that's where I got the bug."

Both brothers attended **SUNY Albany**, and Monte took his B.A. in communication and rhetoric in 1986. A year before graduating, he snagged an internship at **PolyGram**. He got his first paying job at **Arista** right out of college as a local marketing manager for the New York region.

"The very first place I had a proper job was working for **Clive Davis** [at **Arista**]," he told *WAG* magazine, "and we became very friendly over the years. It's always a lot of fun to sit with him for hours and just share different thoughts about the music industry and our passion."

But he credits **Daniel Glass** for his first big break in 1989, when the veteran exec brought him into the fold at **EMI**-distributed **SBK Records** to do local promotion out of Atlanta. "He was the first person to give me an opportunity to be successful in this business," Lipman recalled of Glass in a *HITS* interview. "Not only was I able to quit my bartending job in Hoboken, but it was Daniel who had more confidence in my abilities than I had in myself early in my career." He later became National Promo Director.

The lore of Lipman extends at least as far back as his days as a local for **SBK**, when the TV news magazine *48 Hours* followed him from one Miami radio station to another working **EMF's** soon-to-be-smash "Unbelievable." The show's correspondent watched Monte tell the PD at **Power 96** that the track was the best dance record of the year, and then saw him tell the programmer at **98 Rock** that it was the best rock record of the year. Both agreed and added it on the spot. "How can you tell one station it's dance and another that it's rock?" asked the incredulous interviewer. Quoth



Monte surprises Ariana with a plaque for her chart-topping 2013 single, “The Way.”

“WHAT ALWAYS IMPRESSES ME ABOUT MONTE IS THAT HE ACTUALLY LOVES MUSIC. YES, HE LOVES THE GAME OF BREAKING A RECORD; YES, HE IS A DIGITAL STRATEGIST; YES, HE CAN PICK A SINGLE; AND YES, HE IS A FIERCE COMPETITOR WHEN SIGNING ARTISTS. BUT AT HIS CORE, HE’S A MUSIC JUNKIE.” —ROB LIGHT

Monte, “Tell ’em what they wanna hear.”

There’s also the tale of how **Dave Morales** played **Vanilla Ice**’s “Ice Ice Baby” for Monte during the latter’s visit to **WOHT** in Jackson, Miss., and Monte, stunned, played it for label boss **Charles Koppelman** over the phone. Ice’s subsequent deal with **SBK** resulted in a worldwide smash; the tale underscores how

Monte exhibited A&R chops even at this embryonic point in his career.

In 1995, Glass moved to the presidency of **Rising Tide**—**Doug Morris**’ JV with **Edgar Bronfman, Jr.**, under the **MCA** umbrella—and hired Monte as VP Pop Promotion. When **Al Teller** was fired as head of the **MCA Music Group**, Morris succeeded him in the post. **Rising Tide** later morphed into **Universal Records**.

By that time, Monte was hatching an entrepreneurial scheme with **Avery**, who re-called the humble origins of their baby to **Hitquarters**: “**Republic Records** started in our apartment at our kitchen table,” he noted, adding that Monte “was in between jobs, and we started putting records out as a hobby. We had a grass-roots approach to the business. The first record we put out happened to work really well. That was **The Bloodhound Gang**.”

Monte decided to put out the project on his own fledgling label. The prankster alternative troupe’s “**Fire Water Burn**,” released in 1996 on the **Republic** imprint via **Geffen**, took off.

1997 saw the **Lipmans** field another monster, this time the left-field smash “**Tub-thumping**” from **Chumbawamba**, which became an international phenomenon and ended up selling 10 million copies worldwide. This was followed in 1999 by another worldwide giant, “**Move Your Body**,” from Italian techno outfit **Eiffel 65**.

Republic was acquired outright by **Morris** and **Mel Lewinter** at **Universal** in 1999, a year after the music group’s acquisition of **PolyGram**. In 2000, after **Republic**’s rights were purchased by **UMG**, Monte was made President of **Universal Records** (as it was renamed for a time) and **Avery** made **COO**. **Republic** then went through a battery of configurations, becoming part of the **Universal Records Group**, being paired with **Sylvia Rhone**-led **Motown** and forming a piece of the uneasy “**Universal East**” axis with **Def Jam**, **Motown** and **Island**.

Monte and **Avery** had success with a number of rock acts in the early 2000s, including **Godsmack** and **Three Doors Down**. “It was almost like being out on a boat, reaching over and grabbing the fish,” Monte remembered to *Billboard* of the early years. “It felt easy and it was fun. Every day, you’d come in and think, ‘My goodness, I want to catch a whale today.’”



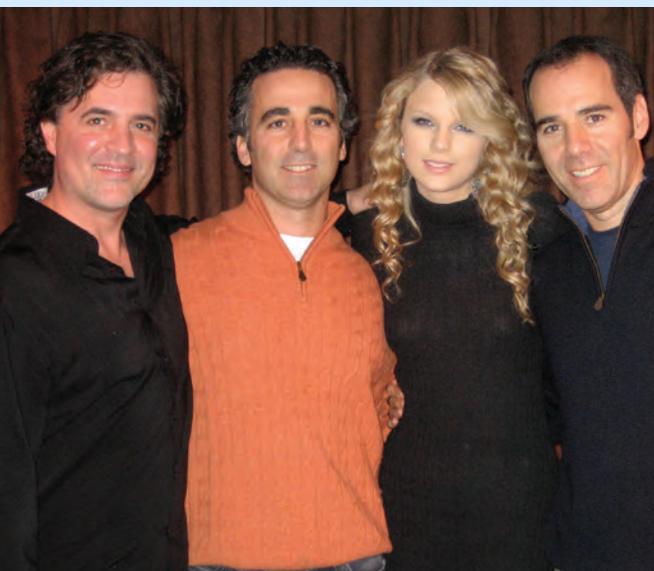
Top: Hooping with Daniel Glass, Jon Cohen, Rob Stone, Dave Reynolds and a bunch of ringers; bottom left: visiting KIIS-FM's Gwen Roberts, Bill Richards and Michael Martin with Wendy and Carnie Wilson; bottom right: making the radio rounds with Vanilla Ice

Universal Republic Records was relaunched in 2007. “In our expanding and highly competitive business,” goes a quote from Morris from that period, “Monte stands out as one of the most talented, aggressive and resourceful young executives.”

They had further chart-toppers with, among others, **Amy Winehouse**—whose untimely death in 2011 cut short what might have been a towering career—**Gotye**, **Enrique Iglesias**, **Florence + The Machine**, **Of Monsters & Men** and (via **Scotter Braun’s Schoolboy** imprint) **PSY’s** viral monster “Gangnam Style,”

which became a pop-cultural sensation.

In 2013, as the brothers Lipman renewed their deals with UMG, Monte got a title bump—to Chairman/CEO of Republic, which had shed the Universal prefix the previous year. “Monte and Avery have established themselves as one of the industry’s most formidable



Clockwise from top left: with Lucian Grainge and Taylor Swift; with Wendy Goldstein, Rob Stevenson, Avery, Ben Adelson, James Bay and manager Ryan Lofthouse; with Nancy Pelosi; with Nicki Minaj, Gee Roberson and Gary Spangler; with Scott Borchetta, Avery and Taylor

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creative teams,” proclaimed UMG top-per Lucian Grainge on that august occasion. “They are truly world-class music executives who have rewritten the rules for breaking new talent. We couldn’t be more delighted that they will continue building Republic as a home for truly

inventive artists.”

It was under Grainge that Republic’s chief exec truly became “Monte Lipman” as the industry now knows him. Many of the label’s biggest successes, until fairly recently, derived from its deals with feeder labels—essentially a

multifaceted A&R department—including Scott Borchetta’s Big Machine (then the home of Swift) and the short-lived Republic Nashville, Jason Flom’s Lava (which delivered Lorde) and Slim and Birdman Williams’ Cash Money (Drake, Lil Wayne, Nicki Minaj). Republic also

enjoyed the marketshare of Island’s artists (Fall Out Boy, Nick Jonas, Shawn Mendes, Demi Lovato), which Lipman’s team worked at radio. “By virtue of its business model,” wrote *HITS*’ I.B. Bad in 2015, “Republic has itself become a distribution center, but one armed with mighty promotion capabilities, in essence redefining the traditional structure and philosophy of the major label.”

But three acts signed directly to

Republic—Ariana Grande, Post Malone and XO’s The Weeknd—developed into massive stars just as streaming was becoming the dominant form of music consumption. All three flew to the top of the streaming charts—starting with Ariana’s “Problem” in 2013, followed by The Weeknd’s “The Hills” in 2014 and Post’s “rockstar” in 2017—and smashed all manner of records at Spotify and other DSPs. These triumphs mark

the timeframe when Republic’s ability to sign and develop major stars became part of the label’s current narrative.

“Monte Lipman is one of the brightest record executives in the world of music today,” says super-attorney Joel Katz. “His analytical abilities, his taste in music and his leadership have made Republic one of the flagship labels of the UMG music community. Monte knows the way to talk to his artists—and to

Clockwise from top left: making history with Amy Winehouse; on “The Cleaner” shoot in 2013 with Chazz Palminteri, Cash Money’s business manager/attorney Vernon Brown and Slim, and actor Robert Davi; Avery and Monte deliver the 2013 keynote at their alma mater, SUNY Albany.





“HE SEES THE BIGGER PICTURE AND HAS THE POWER MOVES TO MAKE IT ALL HAPPEN.”

**—WASSIM “SAL” SLAIBY
(MANAGER OF THE WEEKND)**



bring out the best music from them, and then his team will promote, market and sell the recordings in every manner possible on a global basis, and they certainly have had success these past few years.”

“Monte has been an incredible partner throughout the past five years,” says manager **Phil McIntyre**. “He truly is a mastermind in this industry, and it shows. When we were having early conversations about bringing the **Jonas Brothers** back together, I knew there was only one person I wanted to call to do this with, and it was him. He’s built an amazing team and he stays involved with the process, which is rare to see. At **Philymack**, our team has always felt like a family, and Monte and Republic have become an extension of that.”

The 2019 Jonas Brothers reunion has been a resounding success, starting with the smash single “Sucker,” which scored mondo streams and sales and hit #1 at Pop radio, followed by the release of *Happiness Begins*, which moved 405k units in its first week, making it the year’s biggest debut at presstime. A well-received **Amazon** documentary and a major tour kicking off in August are among the key drivers of the JoBros offensive.



Asked in a 2015 *HITS* interview if it was difficult to stay on top of the label’s numerous projects, Lipman replied, “The irony is, I don’t think we have enough.”

“I’m very sensitive about the word *priorities*,” he added, speaking specifically to the question of radio strategy. “It suggests that one artist is more important than another. I

Top-bottom: with Sal and the Weeknd; with Avery and Lorde; with wife Angelina, street artist Mr. Brainwash and UMG’s Boyd Muir



Clockwise from top left: with Garrett Michaels; brotherly love with Taylor; at KROQ with Gene Sandbloom, Tasmin Archer and Kevin Weatherly; with Doug Morris and Mel Lewinter; a visit to the HITS hovel in Sherman Oaks with Dave Morales

don't feel that way. The way I typically look at things is, who is ready for prime time? Who is ready to go on the starting rotation? Who's got fresh legs? Who's in the zone? I think in terms of athletes and that competitive spirit. But under no circumstances does it mean anyone else is less of a priority. It's really about timing."

Republic's promotion crew has consistently been the most effective in the business, powering hit after hit and regularly ruling the roost in chart share. In the final 2018 *Mediabase* standings, the House of Lipman was #1 overall with a 16.3 chart share and led at the

two biggest formats, Top 40 (22.1) and Rhythmic (21.2); the label's streak continued into 2019.

"Show me the hottest company," Monte noted in 2014, "and I'll show you a promotion staff that's knocking the cover off the ball. There are certain applications in this business that haven't changed in over 50 years, and this is one of 'em."

Lipman's promotional juggernaut, led by **Gary Spangler**, has unquestionably become the most dominant promo machine of the modern era. But you can't be that successful without great records. No one—not even Monte with

his Midas touch—can turn chicken shit into chicken salad.

Meanwhile EVP/GM **Jim Roppo** has assumed an expanded role in label operations after the exit of **Charlie Walk** in the wake of highly publicized alleged sexual-misconduct press reports.

Monte was an early data pioneer, having been set on that path by mentor Morris—and spent no small amount of time, early in his career, calling retailers to measure the impact of radio play. His

fixation on figures ultimately manifested in the creation of the number-crunching tool known as **The Whale Report**. “That’s something I created as a hobby, because I love the analysis of records and watching their performances,” he said. “This is a business of anomaly when you really think about it. Based on the percentages, failure rates and so forth, the hits are really the anomalies. We refer to it as The Whale Report because when you go fishing every morning, you want to catch a whale... But there is an art form to that. Just because there’s all this data

that’s available and you can put all these ingredients into a pot doesn’t make the stew taste good.”
 “I’m very bullish on the future; I’m very enthusiastic,” he declared shortly before streaming fully exploded. “We’re on the verge of a renaissance period in this industry that we haven’t seen in 15 years. I believe we’re going to reach scale, and I believe it’ll make an incredible difference just in terms of the way people respond. Why wouldn’t they respond to music, because that hasn’t changed in 60 years?”
 “What always impresses me about

Monte is that he actually *loves* music,” says CAA’s **Rob Light**. “Yes, he loves the game of breaking a record; yes, he is a digital strategist; yes, he can pick a single; and yes, he is a fierce competitor when signing artists. But at his core, he’s a music junkie. I see him at so many shows, in the audience (not hanging backstage), engaged as a true fan would be—and as a music lover myself, I find I gravitate to people who are fans first, executives second.”
 In late 2018, it was announced that Swift, having inked a big new deal with



Clockwise from top left: With Post Malone; with Joel Katz and Avery; with Michele Anthony, Greta Van Fleet, Sir Lucian Grainge, Jason Flom and Avery Lipman



Two sets of brothers meet up on the JoBros' 2019 reunion tour

“IT WAS ALMOST LIKE BEING OUT ON A BOAT, REACHING OVER AND GRABBING THE FISH,” MONTE REMEMBERED OF THE EARLY YEARS. “IT FELT EASY AND IT WAS FUN. EVERY DAY, YOU’D COME IN AND THINK, ‘MY GOODNESS, I WANT TO CATCH A WHALE TODAY.’”

UMG, would put out future recordings directly via Republic—giving Team Lipman’s roster full possession of yet another of the biggest acts in the biz.

“There is no music executive running a company today that compares to Monte Lipman,” declares **Tommy Mottola**, who is undeniably an expert on the subject. “He always has a smarter, better angle to come at a situation or problem. He has experienced every facet of the business, especially the two most important—A&R and Promotion. Also, most importantly, everyone loves and

respects Monte. I am happy to call him my good friend, and if I were starting a company today—which I may—he would be the only one that I would want to run it.”

It can fairly be said that Monte’s twin obsessions are marketshare and golf. In one of these pursuits he is a champion; in the other he is the owner of a set of clubs.

Monte’s charitable work includes sitting on the **Amy Winehouse Foundation**, the **T.J. Martell Foundation**, which honored him as Humanitarian of the Year in 2010 and 2014, the **UJA**, which

named him 2015’s Music Visionary of the Year, and **DKMS** (Delete Blood Cancer). Due to their continuing support of the latter organization, Monte and his wife **Angelina** were honored at the 10th Annual DKMS Gala in 2016. Among many other honors, they received the Spirit of Hope Award at the 2017 **MMRF Fall Gala**. The 2018 **Angel Ball** also honored Monte for his commitment to finding a cure for blood cancer.

Monte and Angelina, who married in 2004, have three children: **Remy**, **Juliet** and **Cameron**. ■