Chris Blackwell is the founder of Island Records, the wildly innovative, legendary music label now regarded among the most admired of all time. Likewise, Chris is the founder of Island Outpost—the collection of Jamaica-based luxury resorts known for their intensely original sensibility and unfussy vibe. Soulful, singular, and transformative, both businesses reflect Chris’s love of creativity, culture, and style.

Born in London, in 1937, Chris’ parents brought him home to Jamaica at the age of six months. Blanche Lindo, Chris’ mother, grew up on the island. Descended from prominent Spanish merchants, the Lindos ran numerous businesses in Jamaica since their 16th-Century arrival, among them Jamaica’s most celebrated rum distillery. They were notable social figures; visiting dignitaries and local politicians were regulars at Lindo dinners, with Noel Coward, Errol Flynn, and Ian Fleming adding their special mix of hijinks and high culture to Jamaica's tropical milieu during Chris' formative years.

In 1959, Lance Hayward, the blind pianist, had a gig singing at Half Moon Hotel in Montego Bay. Chris, working as a waterski instructor, heard him and knew he had to make a recording. Island Records was born. Soon, Chris signed additional acts to Island. Then, he rented an office in Kingston. Not long after, Island had a string of local hits. And in 1962, Chris moved Island Records to London, following the migration of its biggest and most enthusiastic audience – the Caribbean people who, themselves, were immigrating to England. In 1964, everything jelled when Chris produced Millie Small singing, "My Boy Lollipop." The record sold 7 million copies worldwide and 15-year-old Millie became the first Jamaican ever to have an international hit.

Chris’ influence on popular music owes to his Jamaican roots. It’s what gave him the ears, so to speak, to hear artists with world-changing potential, like the great Bob Marley, who Chris signed to Island in 1973. Through Island Records, Chris introduced the world to the sounds of Toots and the Maytals, Burning Spear, Third World and Black Uhuru. It was thanks to Chris' love of the African sound that musicians like King Sunny Ade, Angelique Kidjo and Baaba Maal now have fans the world over.

Of course, Island Records was also known for finding exquisite talent everywhere. Chris introduced the most daring and definitive music of our era – acts like Cat Stevens, Roxy Music, Steve Winwood, Robert Palmer, Nick Drake, Melissa Etheridge, Tom Waits, Grace Jones and Marianne Faithful... and the list goes on.
Throughout the years, Chris has never hemmed in his vision; rather, he's pushed out across other mediums – including film, The Harder They Come, starring singer Jimmy Cliff; Kiss of the Spiderwoman, and The Trip to Bountiful among others – and then, into immersive spaces and properties, as in the 1990s, when Chris took on Miami Beach.

From his perch as hotelier-in-chief at the Marlin Hotel and The Tides, The Kent, The Leslie and The Cavalier, Chris executed a vision for a restored South Beach, restoring run-down buildings and infusing old glamour in new. Friends – many of them the artists who loved working with Chris on assorted music and film projects – followed. First to Miami, then to the Bahamas, to hotels like Pink Sands and Compass Point (with its famed recording studio) and then, of course, to Jamaica Strawberry Hill, in Kingston’s Blue Mountains; The Caves, on the dramatic cliffs in Negril; and, the jewel in the crown: GoldenEye.

GoldenEye, where Ian Fleming created the James Bond character and returned each year to write every James Bond thriller, remains a deep well of creativity. Today, it’s where Chris gets his best ideas – like, the idea for the GoldenEye Foundation, committed to improving the lives of the local community through a variety of initiatives, specifically in the areas of health, environment, education, sports and entrepreneurship. Or, the idea for Blackwell Rum, a nod to a business connected to Chris and Jamaica's legacy. If you want to dig deeper into Chris' past and the stories that continue to shape our present, then The Islander, My Life in Music and Beyond, is the book for you. Published in 2022, its pages are filled with stories that speak to the kind of creativity, imagination and inspiration that are wholly unique to Chris – but that provide the soundtrack to all of our lives.