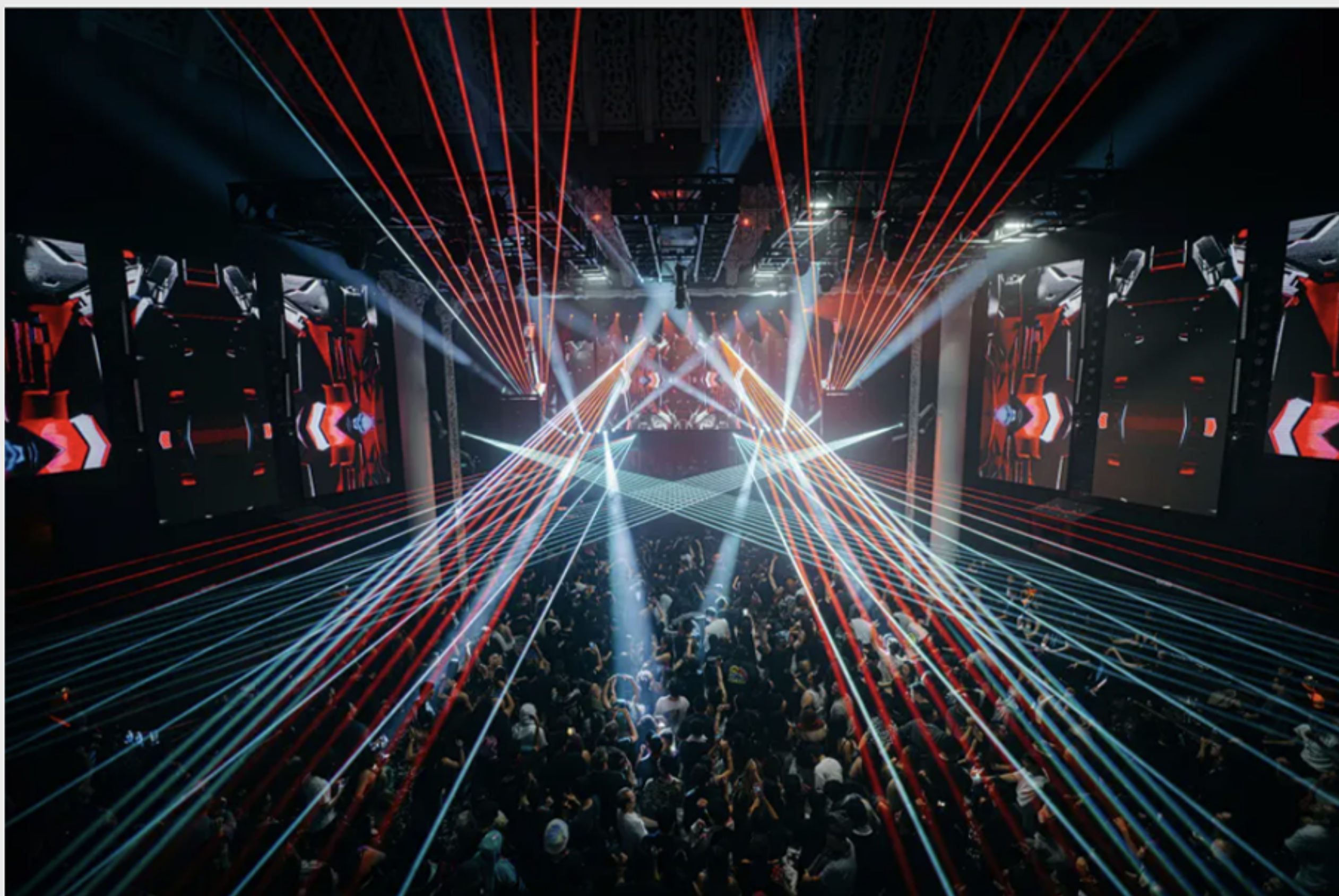


# INSIDE INSOMNIAC'S DEAL TO PRESERVE L.A.'S HISTORIC AVALON NIGHTCLUB: 'IT'S ALWAYS BEEN SACRED GROUND'

Pasquale Rotella and John Lyons explain the new partnership that ensures Avalon remains a music landmark — and opens the door to an era of creative reinvention.

By **Dave Brooks** ▾



Avalon

NAINOA ANDRADE

For nearly a century, the building on the corner of Hollywood and Vine in Los Angeles has been a home for entertainment — from vaudeville and network TV to the rise of electronic dance culture. Now, that legacy has been secured for decades to come. Earlier this year, Insomniac founder and CEO **Pasquale**



**Rotella** and Avalon owner **John Lyons** quietly completed a real estate deal that guarantees the storied venue's survival and sets the stage for new creative expansions.

"We didn't put out a press release or make a big announcement," Rotella says. "This wasn't about hype. It was about protecting Avalon as a music venue. It's such an iconic part of Los Angeles, and we wanted to make sure it stayed that way."

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The venue now known as Avalon first opened in 1927 and has operated continuously ever since — a streak nearly unheard of in Hollywood nightlife. Over the decades, it's been home to everything from Ken Murray's vaudeville-era "Blackouts" to the ABC variety series *The Hollywood Palace*, on which **The Beatles**, **The Jackson 5**, and **The Mamas & the Papas** all performed.

"It's been an entertainment venue since the day it was built," Lyons explains. "It never shut down, so it never lost any of its entitlements. That's part of what makes it so special — it has this uninterrupted cultural history that's been evolving for almost a hundred years."

Lyons, a pioneering sound designer and club operator, took over the building in 2002, transforming it from the faded Palace Theatre into a high-tech dance destination. He already had a track record, having operated a club called Avalon in Boston for two decades and worked with the House of Blues team during its expansion years, opening its West Hollywood location.

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“When I first came to L.A., people told me large nightclubs don’t work here,” Lyons recalls. “But I believed if you did everything right — sound, lighting, cleanliness, hospitality — and gave people something that felt world-class, there was no reason it couldn’t succeed.”

Two decades later, Avalon remains one of the longest-running and most respected venues in the city, hosting everyone from **Paul Oakenfold** to **The Chainsmokers** while doubling as a site for private events, film shoots and awards shows.



Avalon  
TROY ACEVEDO

The recent agreement with Insomniac wasn’t about rescuing Avalon from closure but about securing its future. Lyons had a 25-year lease that was approaching its final years when the building’s longtime owner passed away, placing the property in an estate with no emotional ties to it.

“The family that inherited it saw it as an asset to sell,” Lyons says. “I’d always wanted to buy the building, but it had never been for sale. Once it became available, I knew we needed to act — or risk it ending up in someone else’s hands.”



That's when he approached Rotella, whose Insomniac Events has grown from underground rave roots into one of the world's leading dance music companies, producing dozens of festivals, including Electric Daisy Carnival, and owning a growing portfolio of venues that includes Academy LA, Exchange LA and Echostage in Washington, D.C.

"John came to me and said, 'If someone else buys this building, who knows what happens next?'" Rotella recalls. "We knew we had to protect it. It's right across from Capitol Records — a place that's meant so much to music in L.A."

The purchase, completed earlier this year, was strictly a real estate transaction — Insomniac and Lyons had already partnered on operations in 2023. But owning the property gives them something priceless: permanence.

"The biggest change is the runway," Rotella says. "Now the lease isn't ending in four years. It's indefinite. That means we can plan five, 10 years ahead — we can invest, create community-driven events, and really think long-term."



Avalon  
TROY ACEVEDO



Lyons and Rotella share a rare combination of creative obsession and operational experience. Lyons is as famous for his acoustical engineering as for his clubs, having designed sound and lighting systems for hundreds of venues worldwide — including two professional speaker lines for EAW and Fulcrum.

“I’ve always treated Avalon like a laboratory,” he says. “If something doesn’t exist on the market that does what I want, I build it myself. That’s how the Avalon Series speakers came about — to reproduce dance music with the clarity and power it deserves.”

Rotella, meanwhile, says he’d admired Lyons’ work long before they met. “He doesn’t like when I say this, but he’s a legend,” Rotella says. “What he built in Boston, and then here in Hollywood, set the standard for what a nightclub could be. I grew up going to Avalon, even before Insomniac was what it is today. To me, it’s always been sacred ground.”

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The two men officially partnered in 2023, combining Lyons’ venue mastery with Insomniac’s global network and production power. The arrangement allows Avalon to remain independently operated while benefiting from Insomniac’s talent relationships, marketing reach and creative infrastructure.

With the real estate secured, the partners are turning their focus to creative reinvention.

“For years, I’ve had big ideas for the building that I had to hold back on,” Lyons says. “I’d think, ‘It’s not our building, will I ever see a return on that investment?’ Now those handcuffs are off. We can reimagine the space with no ceiling on what’s possible.”



Rotella hints at plans for a series of new community-driven events, including a Sunday residency concept that blends curation, art and social experience.

“L.A. doesn’t really have that kind of special weekly event right now,” Rotella says. “We’re nerding out over every detail — the invite, the first visual moment when people walk in, the story behind it. It’s about creating something people trust, even if they don’t know who’s playing. It’s not just a hard-ticket show; it’s a community.”

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DAVE BROOKS

Beyond that, they plan to expand Avalon’s role as a creative hub — hosting everything from art-forward showcases to film shoots and immersive events that leverage new technology. “There’s so much you can do now to excite people,” Lyons says. “It’s not just entertainment — it’s about giving people that hair-raising, goosebump feeling when everything hits just right.”

Both men say the deal represents something bigger than business: a promise to keep one of Los Angeles’ oldest entertainment spaces alive and evolving.

“I’ve seen too many legendary venues disappear,” Rotella says. “The Limelight, other clubs across the country — they become condos or retail spaces. We weren’t going to let that happen here.”

For Lyons, it’s the culmination of a 20-year labor of love. “Avalon has become an institution,” he says. “I talk to people who tell me their parents met here. That’s the kind of legacy you can’t buy — you have to protect it.”

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