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AVALON, BOSTON

Nominated for "Best Superclub" three years in a row, Avalon has to be doing something right. The club now has three branches — Boston, New York, and Hollywood, CA — and the flagship Beantown club is still home to the innovation that made the Avalon name. "I use Boston as my laboratory," said John Lyons, owner of the chain and co-developer of the EAW Avalon Series of speakers.

This year, he tested out a new speaker system in the club, slated for release in the first quarter of '05. "I believe that the best sound is like a hi-fi home system, and that's what I strive for," he said.

"Increased clarity and power, not just loud bass." The sound isn't the only thing undergoing constant upgrade at 15 Landsdowne: The front entry recently got renovated, and dancers are still marveling at the LED-loaded moving truss, installed early in the year. —DC

www.avalonboston.com

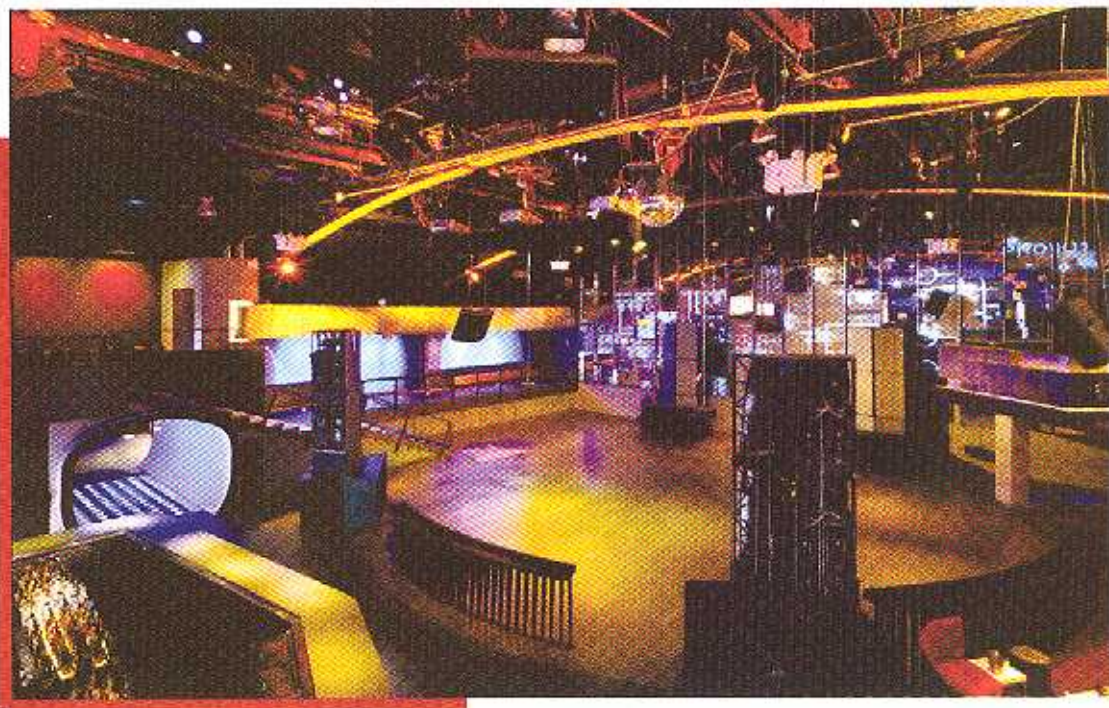
CROBAR, NEW YORK

Crobar's grand opening in December 2003 marked the beginning of New York's new era of big venue nightclubbing. At 25,000 square feet with six multi-tiered environments designed by BigTime and ICRAVE, crobar offsets the big box effect with superb sound and whimsically themed lounges for a non-intimidating and beautiful evening experience.

The cavernous, industrial main room holds a 2,500-square-foot dancefloor under 60-foot ceilings, wired for aerial performance and packed with sound by Phazon and a system of Martin Professional lights (designed by SJ Lighting). The LED-lined truss lowers from the ceiling at key moments, keeping the mezzanine VIP area, full of semi-secluded glass boxes for intimate parties of four or six, in the low light.

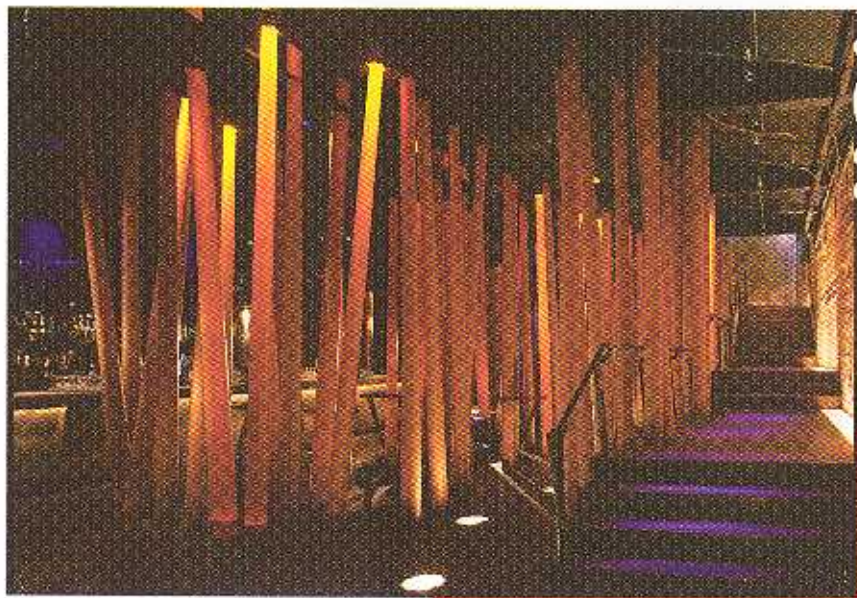
Everyone talks about the Reed Room, the long, narrow front bar with floor-to-ceiling stalks that make one feel like a bird in the thrush. The VIP Prop Room features tear-shaped wall cutouts and a small, raised dancefloor for mostly old school hip-hop and pop remixes. —DC

www.crobar.com



BLUSH BURLINGAME, FUN DISPLAY/ MR. IMPORTANT

The club designs of Mr. Important (formerly FUN Display) head Charles Doell are legendary for their playful, rich narratives and incredible detailing. Blush follows the lines of Sno-Drift and Red Room in its brush of the sleek and silly, with steel, concrete and walnut against bright, solid wool upholstery; and funky vintage chandeliers floating in '60s Plex tabletops. Doell's two-story stack of 1,000 sand-blown martini glasses turned up art sculpture is Blush's signature. It runs from the downstairs dance area to the upstairs lounges, and glows with help from the 45 High End Systems color changers buried in the ground below. Other inventive touches include a mirror ball chandelier and staircase made from formed, laminated plastics. The design's mod-psychedelia plays out best in the restrooms: The women's features bevel-carved mirrors, clear Deco vanities and a skid-proof mirrored floor; while the men's mirrors uses dichroic filters to cast spooky 3D silhouettes of the viewer. —DC
www.fundisplay.com



CROBAR NEW YORK, BIGTIME DESIGN & ICRAVE DESIGN STUDIO

Crobar's 10,000 square-foot main room — with its 60-foot ceilings, 32' x 100' video wall, and mezzanine level with bungalow seating — is the end of a path, carefully rendered by the joined force of ICRAVE Design Studio and crobar co-owner Callin Fortis' BigTime Design. "We tried to set it up such that you stumble upon it, by creating a 'walking through the forest' kind of feeling, and the tunnel," says Lionel Ohayon of iCRAVE. "And you never expect that big of a space to be there from the street."

The figurative "forest" is the Reed Room, a 250-cap nook separated from the main walkway by 12-foot floor-to-ceiling light-up "reeds." The tunnel is an intentionally claustro, 10-foot-wide space, flooded with white noise ("speakers blasting channel 206," says Ohayon) to clean the palate for the main room's big reveal. But despite the separations — including the 500-cap VIP area, the Prop Room — the team's overall goal was unity. "All of us hoped that we could recreate this environment in New York where gay people and straight people and funky people could all find one venue to be at, and move around in," says Ohayon. "That was the dream: To rebuild an NY nightlife scene that we didn't feel existed anymore." —KLM

www.icravedesign.com





Kristina Calovic

CROBAR NEW YORK, SJ LIGHTING

For all its other eye candy – the bird's nest DJ booth, mammoth JBL speakers, elegant wide staircase – the most striking thing about crobar New York's high-ceilinged main room is its lighting. The system, designed by SJ Lighting head Steve Lieberman, is as nifty when it's off and still as when it's on and moving: At its core are eight octagonal pods, each three feet in diameter, flown from chain motors and lined with Color Kinetics iCoves. Each bears a moving light (a Martin Professional MAC 2000 Profile or MAC 600), a par and a strobe. When the pods come alive, their LED strips glowing, the effect is, according to Lieberman, "very *Close Encounters*." Other ancillary fixtures (additional MAC 600's and MAC 250 Kryptons) add beamage, and aid in giving the clubbers emerging from the entry tunnel that you're-really-in-for-it-now tummy-flip. —KLM
www.sjlighting.net

V₂O LONG BEACH, AKROZ PROFESSIONAL

The many lights of V₂O can do things other lights can't, like disappear. The system, designed by Akroz's Tony Mirador, hangs on a fully customizable and addressable tracking system. When the club is open, everything stays up; but during the week when the space acts as a corporate venue, the lighting accoutrements of a hot Saturday night can be tucked away.



Tony Mirador

"The ability to move the elements and fixtures around keeps the venue fresh all the time," says Mirador. "It allows us to easily transform the space." Relying mainly on multi-faceted components from Robe Show Lighting, the system comprises 24 Robe MS Zoom 250 XT1 moveable heads, along with a dozen Martin Atomic 3000 DMX strobes to fire up the dancefloor and bar areas in four separate and fully-controllable zones. There are also four Robe Wash 250 XT spots, three Robe Color Mix 150 AT profiles and a pair each of Antari's HX-400 hazers and Z-1500 fog machines. Add an OmniSistem Q-Beam laser projection set-up, and there's virtually no end to the different palettes and moods the system can create. —JH



CROBAR NEW YORK, ARTFAG & V SQUARED LABS

Crobar took a decidedly different route when it called in Artfag to design the centerpiece video installation unit for its New York location. Rather than sticking with a tired presentation of screens, projectors and backdrops, they opted for a completely custom-designed "DNA video wall," carved like a modern sculpture into the venue's front outside wall.

The Artfag team developed a girder system and industrial rebar to hold 44 separate television screens, all rerouted and rewired in Plexiglas boxes. Vello Virkhaus of V Squared Labs designed and manufactured the customized 16 x 64-channel Knox Chameleon router and ChamSwitch 1.0 software, which keeps the serious amount of video information in check. Coupled with Virkhaus' four-DVD set of custom video material, the system blurs the line between the highest of tech and the organic feel of industrial art.

The team also created a two-way mirrored Plexiglas projection surface along the rear wall of the club's main room. —RH

www.artfag.tv
www.vsquaredlabs.com

TEATRO LAS VEGAS, REALISATIONS & TIHANY DESIGN

Teatro is an imposing yet ethereal milky white dome docked in the MGM Grand lobby, seemingly awaiting a blast-off countdown. But inside, the alien vibe goes vampire, with blood red furniture, lush textures and a voyeuristic video wall that redefines the peep show. Created by Montreal-based Realisations in partnership with interior designer Adam Tihany, the 15' x 40' red steel wall has 120 individual glass bottles built in, each with a CRT screen behind it displaying six possible video tracks. WATCHOUT software controls the reels, which feature evocative angles on the female form and other palate-whetting imagery. To "add contextual content" (or more pics of hot chicks), the Realisations team also used seven projectors (three Christie LX45's and four NED LT260K's) on the surface of the wall itself. The resulting effect? Think a Merchant Ivory production — of a Van Halen video. —KLM

www.realisations.net



Tony Mirador

V.O. LONG BEACH, AKROZ PROFESSIONAL

With four High End Systems DL-1 video projectors as its core, V.O.'s video installation, designed and installed by Akroz's Tony Mirador, brings new meaning to integrated visuals. Each Digital Eye-equipped projector functions like an intelligent light, producing an infinite amount of colors and gobos. But the projectors can also beam or splice any number of digital video signals, and swap them via a custom-controlled router located in the VJ booth. Plus, they're mounted on pneumatic elevators that allow for total coverage of any plane in the venue, including the two Draper Clarion M2500 front projection surfaces.

"Those projectors aid tremendously in the visual experience for dancers in the club," Mirador said. "Rather than the static elements of traditional video, the DL-1 moves so much that many people can't tell where it's coming from." Controlling the entire package are High End's Catalyst video server, plus Edirol's DV-7PR digital video presenter and V-4 video mixer. V.O. also includes traditional video fare, like a Sanyo PLV-70 PolySi LCD projector beamed onto a Draper Clarion Cineflex rear projection surface. —RH

Nicholas Fiesel