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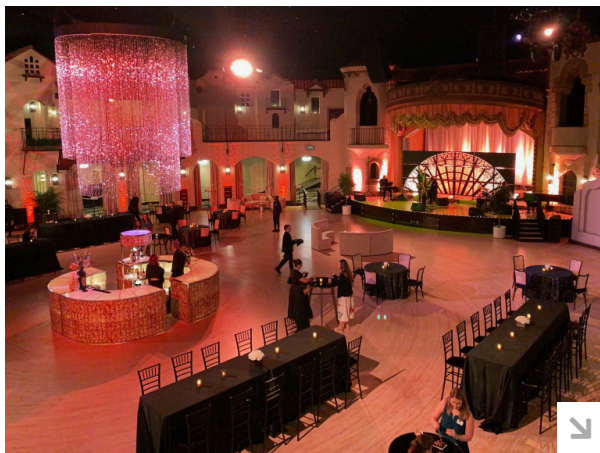
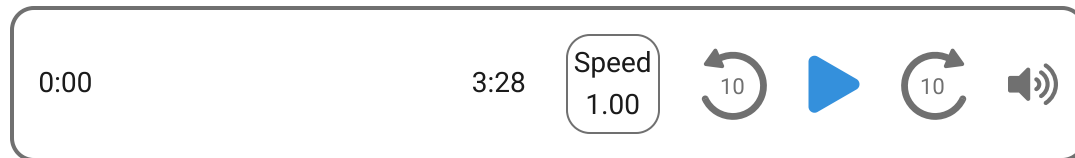
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Restored dance floor highlights \$3.5M Indiana Roof Ballroom revamp

August 14, 2025 | [Dave Lindquist](#)

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Installed in 1927, the Indiana Roof Ballroom's dance floor is made of curved strips of wood placed in concentric circles. (IBJ photo/Dave Lindquist)

When [Crystal Signature Events](#) planned renovations for the 98-year-old Indiana Roof Ballroom, it would have been easy to swap out the dance floor that debuted during Calvin Coolidge's presidency.

But Crystal co-founder Jack Bayt didn't discard a gem of Indianapolis history.

"It would have been 10 times cheaper just to put a new floor in," Bayt said Wednesday during an unveiling of the venue's latest makeover. "We wanted this particular floor because of the way it was made."

Curved wood, placed in concentric circles, gives the dance floor its distinctive appearance. One-inch-wide maple strips were dampened to do the job.

The 8,700-square-foot surface carried a price tag of more than \$100,000 when the ballroom opened above a new movie palace, the Indiana Theater, on Sept. 2, 1927.

As part of \$3.5 million in renovations at the Roof, spread out across this summer and last summer, Crystal restored the floor.

After all, those boards moved with the beat when Jack Pitzer's & Marion McKay's Kings of Tempo performed on opening night. (Admission was "75 cents for ladies and \$1 for gentlemen.")

Not to mention the ascent of the swing era, with Louis Armstrong playing the Roof in 1933, Cab Calloway in 1939 and Tommy Dorsey in 1940.

Kile Shaw, sales manager for the Indiana Roof Ballroom and Crystal Signature Events, said the dance floor is typically waxed about every two years. This time, the maintenance "got into the wood," Shaw said, to clean up a century's worth of nicks and scratches.

"It's in as pristine condition as it's really ever been," said Shaw, noting the floor is five or six shades lighter than what visitors saw before the renovation.

Brightening is a main theme of the Roof's renovation, which includes new lighting, carpet and chandeliers.


In the "promenade" area defined by a large bar and gathering space before attendees reach the dance floor, part of a wall

was removed to provide new views inside the venue. Floor-to-ceiling mirrors behind the bar enhance the effect.

Crystal Signature Events hired Commercial Team Construction as the project contractor and Dovetail Group as the designer.

In the mid-1970s, dances and events at the Roof fizzled out—around the same time that movies ceased downstairs.

Although the iconic building, 140 W. Washington St., was threatened by demolition in 1978, the city prevented such an outcome by buying the Spanish baroque structure devised by Preston Rubush and Edgar Hunter.

The  [Indiana Repertory Theatre](#) has been a tenant since 1980, and the new Indiana Roof Ballroom opened in November 1986 with a performance by Tony Bennett.

To get the distressed venue in shape, the city and Melvin Simon and Associates Inc. paid for \$5.5 million in renovations.

Today, the Roof hosts public dances about five times a year. Private events dominate the venue's calendar.

Looking ahead to the building's centennial, Crystal co-founder Bayt said he would like to collaborate with the Indiana Repertory Theatre for a celebration in September 2027.

"We'd like to have a series of open house events for people to come back and be a part of it," Bayt said. "People have had parties here over the years, weddings and been to the cinema."

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