



GREAT MOMENTS IN LIVE RECORDING


With The Metro Audio Van & Bill Skibbe



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In this issue of **PLAYBACK**, engineer and studio owner Bill Skibbe takes us to check out the Metro Audio mobile recording van he recently purchased. This piece of history sat in a vacant field in Ohio for over a decade before Bill brought it back to Detroit. Continue reading to find out more about the van, the gear inside, and the incredible legacy of records it had a hand in making.

A decorative graphic consisting of three horizontal stripes. The top stripe is yellow, the middle stripe is orange, and the bottom stripe is yellow.



Despite being from Boston, The J. Geils Band quickly amassed a rabid fan base in Detroit. Thus, the Motor City was the optimal spot for the band to record a live record. “‘Live’ Full House” would propel the band onto the national stage and set them up for a proper studio breakthrough with their next release, “Bloodshot.”



THE J. GEILS BAND | “Live” Full House

Venue: The Cinderella Ballroom | Detroit, MI

Recording Date: April 21 - 22, 1972

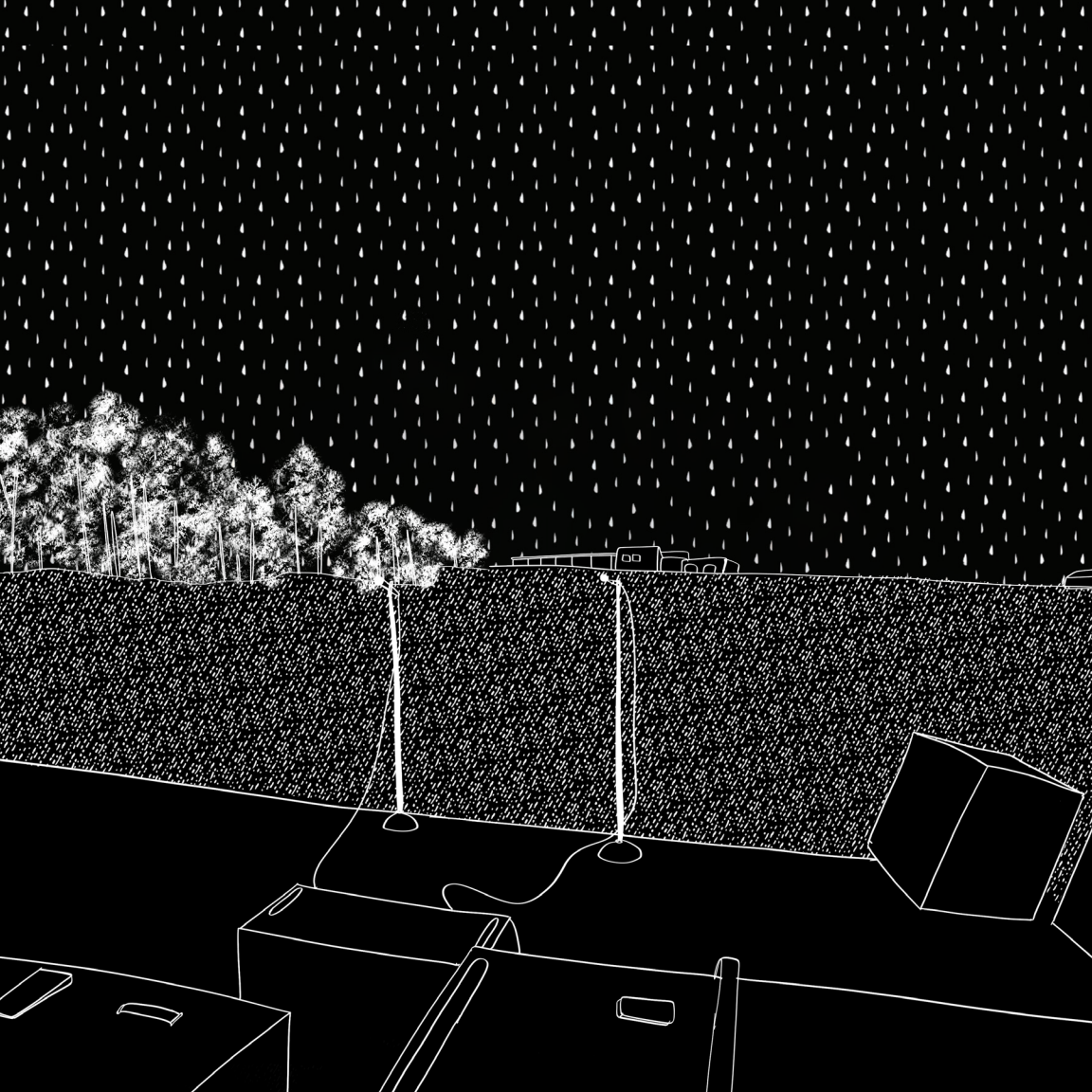
Released: September 26, 1972



Metro Audio Van
MADE IN DETROIT



"The van is a cool crossover between the music and automobile industry. It's all made in Detroit. It's a David and Goliath story where we've got this mobile studio, which a local 18-year-old kid built, and he's duking it out with the big trucks from New York and LA."



As the Art Ensemble of Chicago dabbled in major label waters for the first time in 1972, the nation's premier avant-garde jazz troupe headed to Michigan for the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival. The Metro Audio van dutifully captured the five-piece in all of its fierce beauty, and the resulting album, "Bap-Tizum," came out in 1973. It remains one of the defining documents of the group's immense sound.

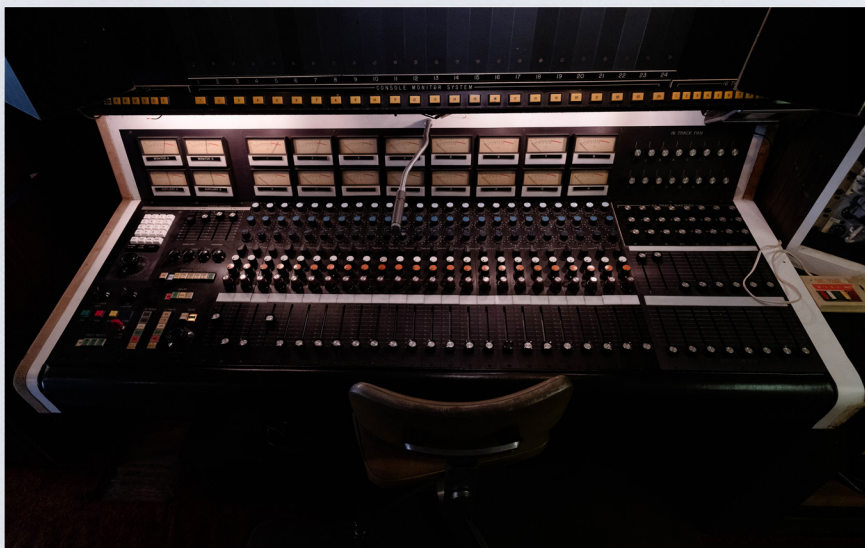


ART ENSEMBLE OF CHICAGO | "Bap-Tizum"

Venue: Otis Spann Memorial Field | Ann Arbor, MI

Recording Date: September 9, 1972

Released: 1973



ADM Console
MADE IN ROYAL OAK



"The van has an ADM console, which was made in Royal Oak, Michigan. They originally started out as a console manufacturer for studios, and then they got into broadcast later in the 70s. Early on, they were modular, easy-to-build desks like an American version of Neve consoles. They could build them in any configuration they wanted."



After falling flat with its first three releases, Kiss sought a way to capture the band's bombastic stage show on record. The solution was to record four live performances on the "Dressed To Kill" tour in cities like Detroit, where the band was already seeing some success. Dubbed "Alive!," the double LP would hit #9 on the Billboard 200 and chart for 110 weeks, becoming one of the most successful live albums ever.

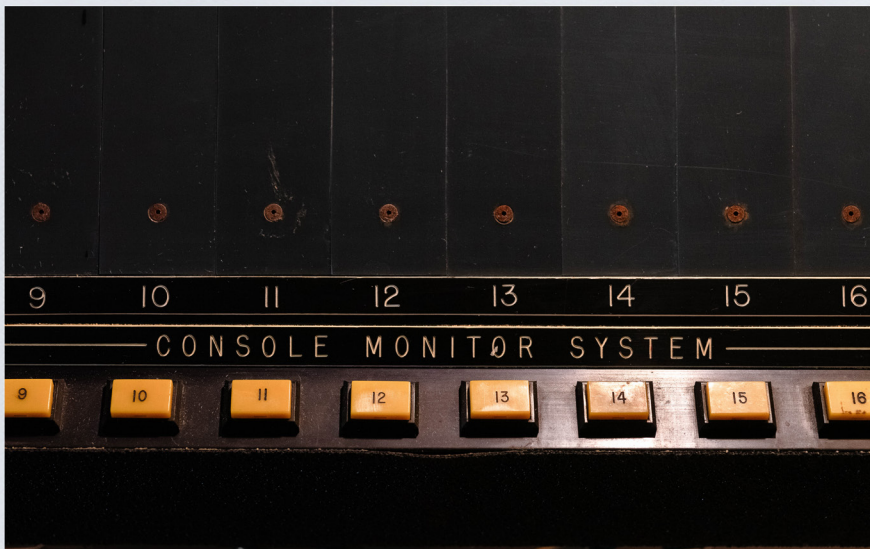


KISS | "Alive!"

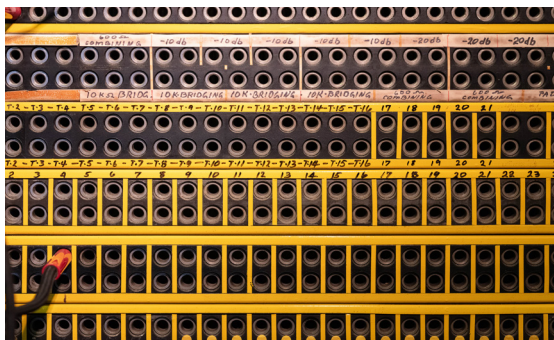
Venue: Cobo Arena | Detroit, MI (+ Additional Locations)

Recording Date: May - July 1975

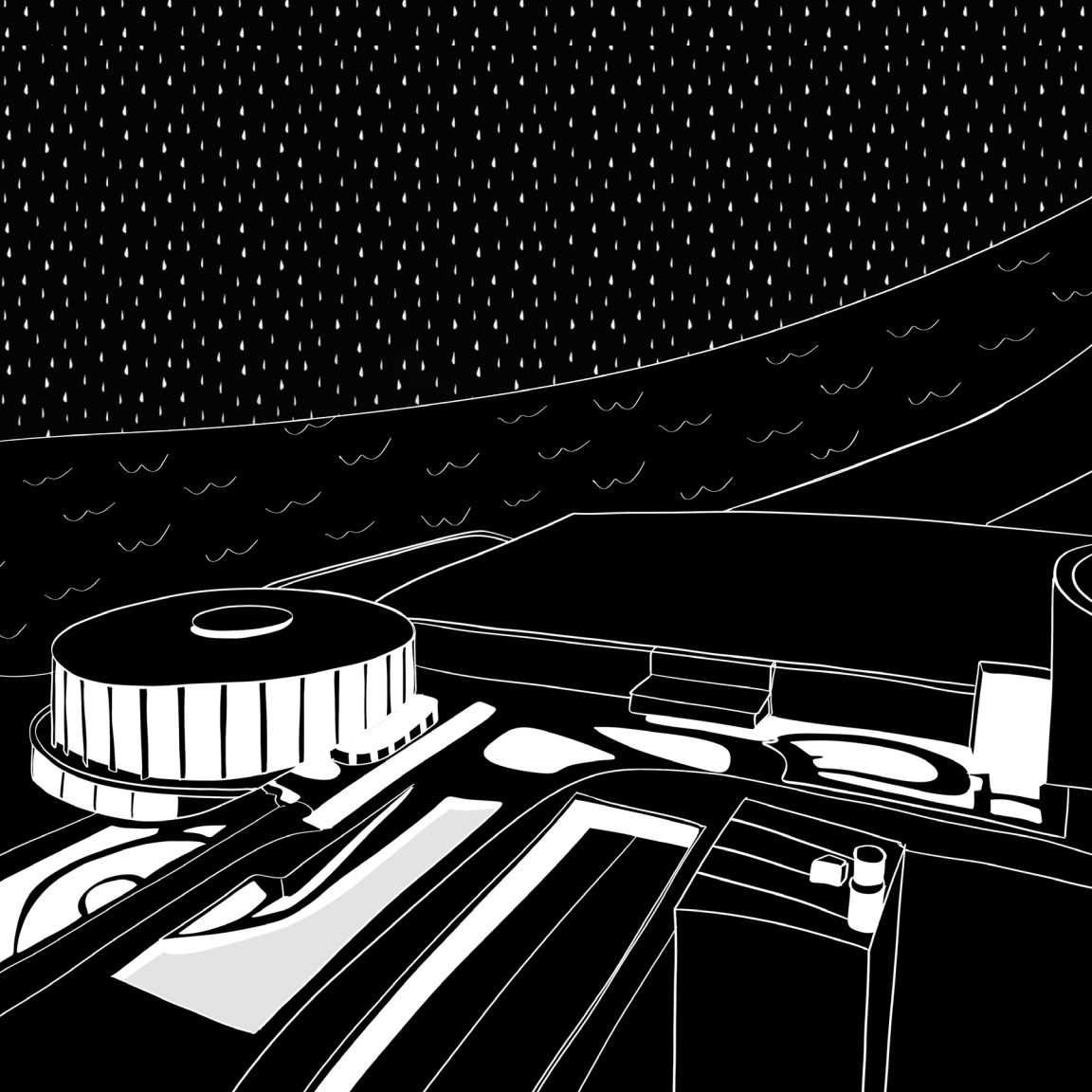
Released: September 10, 1975



Console Monitor System



"The console's preamps sound great, and they have a super simple EQ. It's pretty rudimentary, but they have this really crazy discrete topology. It also has an Audex routing system like my old Flickinger or the United Sound Flickinger, where you can move things around and program what's on each channel through the matrix."



Bob Seger came to national prominence, thanks in part to “Night Moves” and “Live Bullet,” but let’s take a second to look at the latter’s historical context. “Live Bullet” is a defining piece of Michigan history. It finds one of the state’s most gifted songwriters being captured at one of its historic venues by a van built in Detroit with a locally made console. To quote the state’s tourism board, that’s “Pure Michigan.”



BOB SEGER | “Live Bullet”

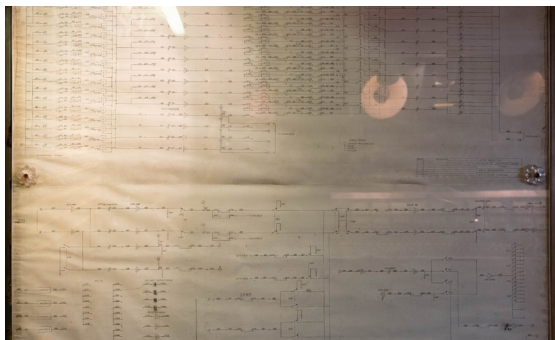
Venue: Cobo Arena | Detroit, MI

Recording Date: September 4-5, 1975

Released: April 12, 1976



Inside the Metro Audio Van



"Everything works, the phase meter works, the speakers work, the tiny fan to keep the engineer cool works. I mean, this thing was sitting in a field with mice running around for years. It's pretty crazy that thing has even survived."



The discography of the Metro Audio van shows how a live record could break a band nationally. Southern rockers Lynyrd Skynyrd were able to use the mobile studio for a mid-career resurgence. Amid disappointing sales for their fourth studio album, "Gimme Back My Bullets," the band went to Atlanta, Georgia to record a live double LP that would take them back to the top of the charts.



LYNYRD SKYNYRD | "One More from the Road"


Venue: Fox Theatre | Atlanta, GA

Recording Date: Date: July 7-9, 1976

Released: September 13, 1976

Bill Skibbe is the owner and operator of Key Club Recording Co. and Skibbe Electronics, as well as the mastering engineer at Third Man Records. He has produced, engineered, and mastered records by The Kills, Franz Ferdinand, Dead Weather, Jack White, Raconteurs, The Black Keys, and countless others.



 @skibbeelectronics

