

## **Big Bus Dream – “The Jesters of Xmas Town”**

(4th Ward Records)

*Big Bus Dream appears on 106.5 The End's “90 Minutes” at 8:30 p.m. Sunday. They play Summit Coffee House in Davidson on Nov. 8.*

Big Bus Dream's second album is at its heart folk music – but there's more to the thoughtful arrangements than acoustic guitar and vocals. Mike Shannon's voice is placed at the front of the mix, giving the lyrics a boost so that no part of the stories he tells is lost. He sings with a Mark Knopfler-style: gruff, hushed, matter-of-factness that works well with the low, driving acoustic guitar.

Musically, the tracks are populated with colorful synthesizers and inventive percussion that suggest a rocker taking a restrained and crisp folk approach. Like Talking Heads unplugged with a Bowie-esque bridge, “Money Trumps Everything,” for instance, recalls Shannon's CBGB roots.

These songs could've been jacked up with electric guitars and busy production, but that might've stripped them of their loveliness.