



Bouncing Souls
Hopeless Romantic
(Epitaph)

Since way back in the day, when 7 Seconds put out their awesome live cover of Nena's "99 Red Balloons," punk bands have made their love of '80s pop no secret. NYC's Bouncing Souls, however, are among the few who've had the chutzpah to claim it as their raison d'être; the group has baked up another batch of catchy nostalgia on its fourth full-length album, *Hopeless Romantic*.

Chock-full of infectious sing-alongs such as "Bullying the Jukebox" and "¡Ole!" and laugh-out-louds like "You're So Rad," the album may not warrant a deep reading, but don't write it off—it's that much fun! " '87" pulls no punches with a Townshend "Let My Love Open the Door" refrain rip-off, and "Fight to Live" vaguely resembles the Ramones' "Gimme Gimme Shock Treatment." What's disappointing this time around, though, is how much the Souls downplay their '80s fetishism. Nothing on *Hopeless Romantic* compares to the overt tributes "Single Successful Guy" and "These Are the Quotes from Our Favorite 80's Movies" of previous releases. The '80s vibe is still there, mind you; it's just poorly executed at times. The band's first attempt at a duet, the painfully unfunny "Wish Me Well (You Can Go to Hell)," tries to mimic the Human League's

"Don't You Want Me." Unfortunately, it's the weakest tune on the album. This isn't to say that the band trades solely in kitsch. "Kid" and "Night on Earth" touch on "real" subjects, like not growing up too fast and reminiscing about better days. "Undeniable" is lyrically legit, and the groove is undeniable. But really, nothing can be more self-destructive to a fun-lovin' band than taking itself too seriously. So take *Hopeless Romantic* for what it's worth and have a blast.

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