SOUNDS

By Carl Matthews

D'ATRA HICKS
"D'Atra Hicks" (Capitol)

21-year-old D'Atra Hicks, who's currently on the charts with her single "Sweet Talk," has her first album out on Capitol titled "D'Atra Hicks."

Since the age of four, D'Atra has been singing in choirs in her grandfather's church in Harlem, New York. In her late teens she played the lead role of Doris Winter in one of the most popular non-Broadway black musicals, "Mama I Want To Sing."

D'Atra's debut album has a lot going it for it: well-known producers such as Narada Michael Walden, Nick Martinelli and Jellybean Benitez, all of whom work really well with D'Atra on such solid dance tunes as "Sweet Talk" and "Love And Happiness." And her duet with Peabo Bryson on "Palm Of Your Hand" is a sure Peabo-fan-pleaser.

Other cuts: "You Make Me Want To Give It Up," "Something About You," "Until Forever," "Heart Of Gold."

BEASTIE BOYS
"Paul's Boutique" (Capitol)

"Dare to be different." That is one piece of advice these fellows have obviously taken, and we can see where it's gotten them: a multi-platinum LP that was one of the fastest selling records in CBS Records' history ("Licensed To Ill"), not to mention critical acclaim and a reputation for being... how should I put it... for being willing to "fight for their right to party."

For those who don't know very much about The Beastie Boys, here's a bit of background info: The Beastie Boys odyssey began in 1981 when Mike Diamond (Mike D) and Adam Yauch (MCA) decided to start a band. Their first record was a 7-inch EP titled "Poly Wog Stew." In 1983, after the Beastie Boys released a joke hip-hop record called "Cookie Puss," their live shows became increasingly rap-oriented, and they hired Rick Rubin as DJ.

In 1986, the Beastie Boys unleashed their "Licensed To Ill," LP on the world. "Licensed To Ill," which included the heavy metal/rap hit "Fight For Your Right (To Party)," was on the top of the pop LP charts for seven weeks.

The Beastie Boys were one of the first artists to record for Def Jam Records, which was formed in 1984, but Def Jam and the Beastie Boys have since parted company, with a lawsuit over royalties still unresolved.

If you're a rap fan who loved the guys' last LP, you won't want to miss the latest adventures of King Ad-Rock, MCA and Mike D. And collectors had better get their copies of the vinyl LP now: it comes in a special 8-panel gatefold jacket! How many rap albums do you know have a jacket that's **four feet long** when fully unfolded?

And the music? It's undeniably Beastie. Listen as they take you on a unforgettable musical trip, with help from the bass line from Curtis Mayfield's "Superfly," and def-ly tell you the wildest Humpty Dumpty story since The Beatles' "I Am The Walrus" on their wild and witty track, "Egg Man."

And on the infectious new single, "Hey Ladies," we get lines like "I'm not James At 15 or Chachi in charge, I'm Adam, and I'm adamant about living large," as well as some slick "sampling" of tunes by such artists as The Commodores and James Brown.

All right, so much of this album is the same old tough-guy bravado and technical razzle-dazzle. But the Beastie Boys hit paydirt with their last LP, and I wouldn't be surprised if this one tops "Licensed To Ill."

ARROW
"O' La Soca" (Mango)

One of the best known performers of soca (the Caribbean pop form which combines soul and calypso) returns with eight more lively tracks on his latest Mango LP.

Arrow's single "Hot, Hot, Hot" became a worldwide soca anthem in 1983, reaching the top of the charts in four countries. His last album, "Knock Dem Dead," featured the song "Groovemaster," a hip-hop oriented tune which featured contributions from the rap duo Audio Two. The song also appeared in the films "Casual Sex" and "The Mighty Quinn."

Arrow's latest LP is another varied collection of party beats. Tracks such as "Crazy Mama" and the reggae flavored "A Little Extra" are pure fun. On side two of the LP, the aforementioned Audio Two teams up with Arrow on "Hey Rocky-A-Way."

Eddie Murphy releases new album

The name Eddie Murphy does, of course, instantly conjure up such accolades as: inimitable comedian; superstar movie actor; world box office champion; international film sensation. The name Eddie Murphy has become synonymous with all that defies success in the movie business.

There is also, however, the musical side of Eddie Murphy.

Murphy's latest album on Columbia Records, "SO HAPPY," has been three years in the making. As Murphy puts it, "I'm serious about music, and this album should show that to everyone."

Enlisting the talents of Grammy Award-winning producers Narada Michael Walden, Nile Rodgers and Larry Blackmon, Murphy has recorded an album that incorporates musically aggressive, innovative tracks and riveting, sensual lyrics that are bound to make waves in the music world. Case in point: the album's first single to be released is the tune "Put Your Mouth On Me."

Recorded at various studios around the country and in Nassau, The Bahamas, the LP is a collaborative effort by Murphy and several acclaimed musicians and music professionals. Maintaining the same perfectionist qualities he exhibits while making movies, Murphy had a hand in practically every aspect of making the album.

"I'm serious about music and this album shows that to everyone."

Eddie Murphy

Murphy says, "On my first album I involved a lot of great people — Stevie Wonder, Rick James. Basically, I let them direct a lot of the project. On this album, though, I really wanted to take my time and be personally involved on every level to make sure the album really was an 'Eddie Murphy' album in every respect."

He wrote or co-wrote seven songs on the LP and also worked closely with his friend David Jones to co-produce five of the album's tunes.

And so, Murphy is again back on the music scene.

Even when Murphy first ventured into the musical world with the release of "How Could It Be?" in 1986, he shocked his fans and the music industry.

The album reached near-platinum status, and Murphy scored a major hit with the release of the single, "Party All The Time." The single was certified platinum and held the number seven position on Billboard's year-end pop chart.

Prior to the release of that album, Murphy had won a Grammy Award for his 1984 comedy album "Eddie Murphy: Comedian." His previous comedy LP, "Eddie Murphy," garnered Grammy nominations as Best Comedy Recording and Best R&B Instrumental Performance for the instrumental version of the hit single, "Boogie In Your Butt."

Eddie Murphy (left) jams with Johnny Gill (center), Narada Michael Walden (on drums) and background singers at the session for the video shot for his new single "Put Your Mouth On Me" released this week.

Murphy has also starred in the films, "Coming To America," "Raw," "Beverly Hills Cop II," "The Golden Child," "Beverly Hills Cop," "Trading Places," and "48 Hours." The worldwide gross of these movies totals more than $1 billion.

Murphy is currently filming "Harlem Nights," a movie that also stars Richard Pryor and Redd Fox, and marks Murphy's debut as a director and producer.

The many talented sides of Eddie Murphy: music, films, television, concerts. As an entertainer, Murphy seems to have no boundaries.

BALTIMORE
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At The Movies

with Frederick I. Douglass

Penn and Fox star in 'Casualties of War'

"Casualties of War" is not a movie about the battles that American soldiers fought with the Viet Cong. It is about the infighting and backbiting that occurs within all organizations, especially during times of crisis, hostility and trauma.

Based on a true story, "Casualties of War" chronicles the tale of a squad of American GI's who decided to release their tensions by abducting, torturing, raping, and ultimately, after four days of wanton brutality, killing a teenaged Vietnamese girl. Four of the young soldiers in the squad participated in the debauchery; the fifth one turned in his fellow soldiers to the military authorities.

The war horror story, which took place in 1967, was reported in the New Yorker magazine in 1969 by Daniel Lang and later became the topic of a book.

Now, "Casualties of War" is a $23 million movie directed by Brian dePalma whose best known adventures on the silver screen include "The Untouchables," "Carrie," "Body Double" and "The Fury." It opens in area theatres today and is predicted to be a major box office success.

"Casualties of War" boasts two of today's major young movie stars. Michael J. Fox, who gained national acclaim for his long term role on the television sitcom "Family Ties," and in the movies, "Teen Wolf" plus "Back to the Future," plays Eriksson, an untried soldier who is just being exposed to the cruel realities of war.

After being in Vietnam for a mere three weeks, he becomes trapped in a Viet Cong tunnel during a nighttime battle and is about to be killed by an enemy soldier when Meserve, an experienced and hard-nosed sargeant, comes to his rescue.

Meserve is played by Sean Penn, an actor who is best known for his stormy marriage to vocalist Madonna and his street brawls with photographers, but who has played impressive roles in movies like "Bad Boys," "Racing With the Wind," "Taps," "The Falcon and the Snowman" and "Colors."

Following Eriksson's initial encounter with the enemy, the squad's radio man, who only has a few remaining weeks of active duty, is killed by a sniper in what appears to be a quiet village. His untimely death angers the soldiers who are already undergoing considerable anguish about fighting in a war they don't believe in or understand.

Eriksson (Michael J. Fox, left) has as much fear from Meserve (Sean Penn, right) and Clark (Don Harvey, center) who are in his squad, as he does from the enemy in "Casualties Of War," a drama set during the Vietnam War and opening today (August 18).

Venting his personal frustrations, Meserve announces to his men that they will be taking along "portable R&R" when they go on a dangerous reconnaissance mission. I think they call what he has in mind "wilding" in New York City.

Subsequently, Eriksson finds himself an unwilling participant in the kidnapping of a young Vietnamese girl whom Meserve has decided to take along on the mission for the pleasure of his troops.

It is at this point that Eriksson becomes entangled in a classic existential dilemma: whether to go along with Meserve's program (who saved his life) and become a sadistic rapist/torturer, or to try and stop his fellow soldiers from harming the girl. He decides to fight the inevitable while the other squad members bow to Meserve's will.

Having chosen to go against the collective will of the group, Eriksson makes himself an outcast and finds that he must now count his comrades among the enemy in the jungles of Vietnam.

"Casualties of War" is a fascinating story about intense peer pressure, about what happens to people who refuse to go along with the collective program of the squad, gang or any other kind of group.

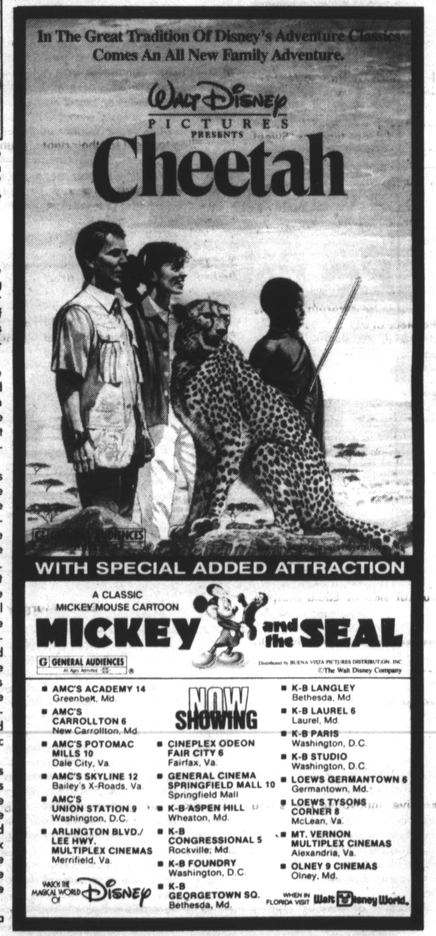
It explores what happens when a psychopathic person, whose mental disorders are further warped by the gruelling hardships of war or other pressures, is placed in charge of a group of pliable individuals who can be ordered to do his bidding "in the line of duty."

There are unmistakable parallels between the "squad rape" that took place in "Casualties of War" and the "gang rape" that took place not so long ago in New York's Central Park.

The perpetrators of the crimes in both of these incidents are psychological casualties of the 20th century, but that does absolve them of guilt for the physical and psychological abuse they wreaked upon their victims.

The dramatic tension that crackles and pops from the screen as Sean Penn and Micheal J. Fox develop their respective roles as antagonist and protagonist is both electrifying and surprising: electrifying because both men play their roles brilliantly and surprising because their past roles have not indicated that either of them could achieve this level of dramatic character portrayal.

Discussing the act ng prowess of his stars, Brian dePalma says "Sean was able to show the humanity of Meserve before he went over to the dark side, and he showed how this complex character tried to deal with the incomprehensible realities he was facing when he picked the wrong path.

"He didn't make Meserve a one-dimensional heavy but instead gave him a humanity and an interior voice that let the audience identify — even in his darkest moments — with the dilemma Meserve is going through."

Describing Fox, dePalma states "Michael brings a strength and conviction and emotional depth to the character of Erikkson. It was a terribly difficult role because the character is under extreme psychological and emotional pressures throughout the movie, and Michael had a tremendous sense of integrity in everything he did."