

A more melodic tune is heard from Front Line Assembly

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Judging by the proliferation of bands, the war of techno-terrorism has been won. Front Line Assembly is already working on the peace treaty.

"Tactical Neural Implant," the Vancouver group's latest installment on Third Mind Records, is a radical departure for an outfit who has been previously known for its dark, chilling descents into the hardcore techno world.

This album is an olive branch by comparison, exploring the soothing realms of a style of music that creators Bill Leeb and Rhys Fulber previously used to bludgeon the senses into submission.

"I think we wanted to write songs," said Leeb in a telephone interview from New York. "We just didn't want to make another 'Caustic Grip' LP [Front Line's vaunted 1990 release]. We wanted to do something to challenge ourselves."

"It's got song structure, drones and stuff. I think they're the same

hard edged songs with 140 beats a minute."

In melding their sound to something more melodic, the band hasn't rendered their music sterile. The eight-song release throbs as Leeb and Fulber along with collaborator Greg Remy manage to create a mood of daunting introspection.

Leeb and Fulber spent the entire summer writing songs for "Tactical Neural Implant" in their Vancouver homes.

THE RELEASE is one of several in a rather prolific recording career for the pair. Front Line Assembly's debut was on Third Mind Records' compilation double album, "For Your Ears Only" in 1987.

Prior to the forming Front Line Assembly, Leeb was a member of techno-shock outfit Skinny Puppy for a brief stint and later released his own cassettes.

Front Line Assembly quickly strode into recognition in techno circles, churning out a string of albums: "The Initial Command," "State of Mind," and "Corrosion" in Europe

within a span of a year between '87 and '88.

"Cashed Series & Crossfire" in 1989 only furthered their standing in the techno community, but it was "Caustic Grip" released in 1990 that thrust the band into the international spotlight.

By then, the field was already crowded with bands such as Nine Inch Nails. Front 242 and Skinny Puppy at the forefront of the techno scene, Front Line Assembly acted accordingly on this album.

"I THINK the whole industrial scene is bigger than ever," Leeb said. "I think people have had to branch out. Bands like Nine Inch Nails have had to find their own vein and go with it."

From that end, Leeb and Rhys have been cornered in projects outside Front Line Assembly, including the making of an instrumental dance album "Intermix" under the name Intermix. They've also worked under the moniker of Deterium, releasing five albums on German-based Dossier Records.

Those outside projects have had an impact on the material on "Tactical Neural Implant." Undoubtedly, those enamored with Front Line As-



"Tactical Neural Implant" finds Front Line Assembly exploring the more melodic side of techno music.

sembly's hardcore ranting and raving in the past may find "Tactical Neural Implant" a bit pastoral. Leeb is rather sanguine about it, though.

"With each album, you're going to lose old fans," Leeb said, "but you're going to make new fans. I think we're going to make new fans with this album."

"Tactical Neural Implant" will

be released April 29 on Third Mind, Suite 407, New York, NY. Mind/Runner, 225 Lafayette 10012.

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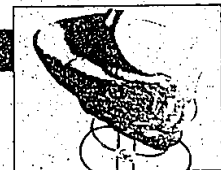
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