

CHRIS WALSH

The DJ and producer talks about his partnership with Jeremy Coutre and their recent success

words: Clare Curley



After five years of working together, the sweat that production team Chris Walsh and Jeremy Coutre have put into their music business seems to be paying off. The progressive house duo recently released their second track, "Murders of Sin," on Swiss label Sog Records. And their hypnotic tunes are being played by some of the world's best DJs, including Tiesto, Armin Van Buuren and Paul Van Dyk, who told *DJ Mag* that "Done With Love" (Sog) is one of his top tunes of 2006.

While Walsh & Coutre—as they're collectively known—have yet to acquire the name recognition they crave, a niche fan base has been e-mailing them accolades from places as far away as Japan and Russia. "A lot more people know who we are now," Walsh says.

And the music industry's about being known, which is why it helped when Van Dyk licensed "Burn" for his 2005 mix *The Politics of Dancing 2* and why the duo is starting to showcase their music at live gigs. Yet the pressure never lets up, and with each paycheck comes a pang of uncertainty about the future. In today's digital climate, the profits are more elusive than ever.

"The way you make money in our industry nowadays is by getting your music on a mix CD like Paul Van Dyk's," says Walsh, who taught himself to DJ on turntables borrowed from DJ/producer Mark Picchiotti a little more than 10 years ago.

In that time, what he still enjoys most hasn't changed—playing records in front of throbbing crowds. With (receding) brown hair and pale blue eyes, Walsh has the kind of cherubic face that one doesn't expect to find working the turntables at Chicago's busiest nightclubs. These days he can be heard at Vision, Sound Bar and Spy Bar (though lately he's been spinning more often in places like Milwaukee, Boston, New York, Mexico and overseas) and via his podcast DJ mixes, which are available once or twice a month and sometimes

feature sets from his live gigs. Walsh & Coutre also host the Sangamon Sessions on WNUR 89.3 (wnur.org) every other Tuesday night from 12:30 to 2 a.m. featuring appearances by top-notch DJs such as John Digweed.

"It's hard to be creative all the time," Walsh admits. He and Coutre spend most of their time in the recently rebuilt Sangamon Studios, which is conveniently located in Walsh's home. Writing music means experimenting for hours on end with the help of sophisticated equipment, starting with a drum loop, then cutting and pasting different sounds, and sometimes adding live guitar or vocals to the mix.

Coutre, who provides engineering skills, lounges in his socks before a large computer screen, adjusting sound levels while Walsh calls out suggestions. Dubbed the "techie guy," Coutre provides a much-needed balance, along with an understanding of sound frequencies. "I let Chris do the worrying," he says.

In addition to his work with Coutre, Walsh has played Nike and Apple events; and his tunes have found their way into outlets such as the video game *Grand Theft Auto 3*, an episode of *Six Feet Under* and an Iams cat food commercial (remember the one with the cats walking down a runway?). Walsh & Coutre also occasionally do remixes under the moniker Seven Sisters, as well as collaborate with Dave Ralph as High Class Hookers, who are currently working on a fourth release.

"We're getting to the point where we're happy with what we're doing," says Walsh, who dreams of scoring a movie someday. "We're on the right track."

Chris Walsh spins at Vision (640 N. Dearborn, 312/266-1944) January 19 and at Sound Bar (226 W. Ontario, 312/787-4480) February 9