

Crookers

The hot fuss surrounding Crookers is about to reach fever pitch. Already the hippest act in dance circles they will soon unleash their debut album on the world and things are expected to go mad for the two men from Milan. Their remix of Kid Cudi's Day 'n' Night reached number two in the UK earlier this year and is now riding high on the US Airplay charts. This, and their already huge body of work, has attracted the attention of Kanye West and Will I Am who have become fans and collaborators. Dolce & Gabbana recently used their U2 remix for the catwalk and their MySpace page is getting more traffic than Coldplay. Like we said, Crookers are about to go boom!

Crookers started in 2003 when two DJ's, nick-named Phra and Bot, met and paired up over a shared love of hip hop, house and the emerging skewed, bass heavy sounds pioneered by Switch in the UK and Diplo in the States. "We decided to call ourselves Crookers to describe what we do. To make beats and tracks that are not straight up, that are twisted or crooked." Though they both grew up listening to a lot of hip hop; Beastie Boys, Tribe Called Quest, Madlib and J Dilla it was when Bot bought second-hand turntables that they first got into house music. "I bought decks and the guy threw in some house records. At first we didn't like it, we wanted to scratch and be hip hop DJ's. But then we got into more quality house like Moodymann and Theo Parrish and then we started to love it." It's from these combined influences that Crookers derive their hybrid sound. Being based in Milan, away from London where the bassline scene initially thrived, meant they could hone their own musical identity.

Their first release End 2 End, was released in 2006. But it was with Love To Edit in 2007 and Knobbers, for their current label Southern Fried, when they really made an impact with peers and a burgeoning fan-base. There's footage on YouTube of their appearance at I Love Techno last year captures 10,000 people singing the riff to Knobbers. Phra recalls it as the pinnacle of their DJ gigs so far, "It felt like nothing else, because people were there for us and knew all our tracks so it was very personal." Their rising status was confirmed with over two dozen remixes including club smashes for Dusty Kid (The Cat) and Kid Cudi (Day and Night) and their services have also been called on for A-list stars to crook out The Chemical Brothers, U2 and Moby.

After remixing such huge names in pop and rock Crookers have now gone direct to some of their favourite artists to work alongside on their debut album. Aptly titled Tons Of Friends the roll call of pals involved is jaw dropping. It includes, Kelis, Soulwax, Major lazer, RadioClit, Spank Rock, Pitbull, Tim Burgess, Kardinal official and Roisin Murphy. The tracks have been worked on in various studios around Europe or ideas have been developed through i-chat and e-mail. "Will I am was great to work with, he's constantly searching for new sounds. He was full of energy in the studio, bouncing ideas around all the time." "Roisin was amazing, she wrote to a beat in the studio and recorded her song in one day. So

did Spank Rock, just heard the beat and then wrote and recorded that same night"

In Ibiza last year they met Chas Smash of Madness, an unlikely alliance seeing as the group are so quintessentially English. "When we realised he was 'the heavy, heavy monster sound' guy, we wanted to work on an updated version of this track we loved (One Step Beyond)." Also expect feisty performances from Kelis and Roisin Murphy, "Kelis is about making the party blow up and Roisin is singing about not being taken for a sucker." There's also a collaboration between the daddies of this scene as Crookers hook up with Diplo and Switch for a track called Jump Up. All ears will be on that one from the three heavyweight pioneers of bastard basslines.

So watch out this summer as Crookers retain their status as dons of the dancefloor but further their audience with their mutant take on R&B and pop. They already have tons of friends but by the end of the year they'll have a whole load more.