

Travis Barker

Remixing Soulja Boy's "Crank That"

Transcribed by Andy Ziker



Pop/punk drum hero Travis Barker recently posted a video on YouTube of himself recording a remix of hip-hop artist Soulja Boy's hit single "Crank That." This lo-fi homemade clip has created a frenzy on the Internet, racking up over thirteen million viewings.

The original version of "Crank That" features a sparse backing track consisting of a repetitive steel drum melody, cymbal rolls, synthesizer-horn parts, and finger-snap backbeats. Travis's remix contains live drumming, guitar, and bass. The remixed version is available through iTunes.

The YouTube video of Travis recording his drum part for the remix offers a rare view of a top drummer giving maximum effort in the studio. Barker plays with abandon, like a skateboarder from the X-Games. But he manages to lay it down flawlessly. Here's a brief style & analysis that points out several interesting choices in Travis's track.

Cymbal Rolls. Feeding off of the electronic cymbal rolls in the original, Travis layers on some of his own. Notice how he uses small wrist motions during the long roll in measures 3 and 4.

Two-Stick Crash Hits. Travis gives a little more attitude to

cymbal accents by hitting one crash with two sticks. He does this in each chorus and sometimes leading into the power-flam tribal section in the verses.

Accenting 16th Notes On The Crash/Ride And Hi-Hat.

Throughout each verse and chorus, Travis accents an 8th-note pulse in a stream of right-handed 16th notes. He also strikes the accents on the edge of the cymbal/hi-hat with the shank of the stick while tapping non-accented notes on the cymbal/hi-hat with the tip of the stick (or by "spanking" the stick against the bow of the cymbal).

Thematic Fills. Starting in measure 6 and continuing throughout each chorus, Travis uses short bursts of 32nd-note fills at the end of each two-measure phrase.

Unique Hi-Hat Technique. When Travis opens his hi-hat in the verses, he keeps his heel up and lifts his entire foot off the footboard of the pedal. This technique allows for a louder, more aggressive open hi-hat sound.

Crank What?

The following short interview with Travis reveals some of his intentions behind the Soulja Boy "Crank That" remix.

MD: What made you decide to do a remix of "Crank That"?

Travis: I did it for an iTunes release with Interscope Records. I thought the original song lent itself to be flipped because of its minimal instrumentation.

MD: Why did you post the video on YouTube?

Travis: The video shows me actually recording the drums. I thought it would be a good way of announcing that I have a new remix.

MD: Are you using a crash in the video, instead of a ride?

Travis: I often use a Zildjian 21" A Sweet Ride. You can crash/ride on that thing all day long!

MD: Did this remix require a number of takes?

Travis: I nailed it on the second take. I don't like punching in—I prefer nailing it.

MD: How do your unique techniques—crashing one cymbal with two sticks, lifting your entire

foot off the hi-hat pedal—play into the vibe of the track?

Travis: I don't think about any of those things; they just happen when I play.

MD: Any warnings for youngsters who are trying to emulate you? Hearing damage? Damage to sticks, cymbals, drumheads, etc.?

Travis: [laughs] Go hard. No rules.

MD: Why do you think this video has become such a phenomenon?

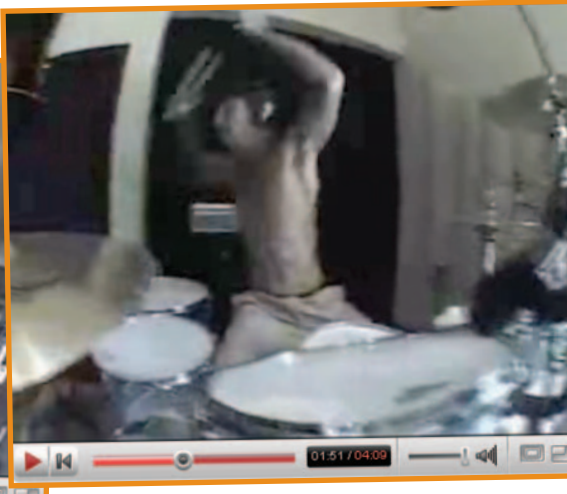
Travis: Hearing the song with guitars and drums creates a different dynamic and offers something new to the listener. Our generation is open to anything.

MD: What would you like to tell all of the up-and-coming drummers out there?

Travis: Express yourself, speak through your instrument, and take it to another level. Kill all boundaries and limitations.



Alex Soloca



Power Flams. Many times, Travis lifts his sticks to the same height (at, above, or beyond his head). But when he strikes the drums, the right stick hits before the left. Travis plays power flams on the snare and between the middle and floor toms in the tribal part of the verses.

Cymbal Chokes. Travis chokes his cymbals at the end of the first two verses. He hits the cymbal with his right stick and chokes it with the left.

Big Breakdown. Travis creates a breakdown in measures 47 and 48. He changes the tone of this section by playing less open hi-hat notes.

Snare Drum Crescendos. In measure 52 and 68, Travis plays snare drum crescendos to add momentum and build intensity in the song.

Body Language. Travis uses his body to keep time and to help create the right funk feel. Watch how his left foot bounces during the choruses. He also bobs his head along with the accent pattern in his right hand, and his back sometimes bends to the pulse of the quarter note.

MUSIC KEY

open	crash/	two-handed
H.H.	ride	C.C.
T.T.	crash	crash
S.D.		
F.T.		
B.D.		
H.H.		
w/foot		

Add 1
 T.T.

♩ = 70

1

Chorus

5

7

9

11

Verse

15

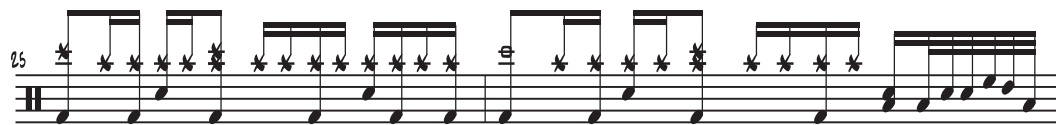
TRAVIS BARKER

17 

Chorus

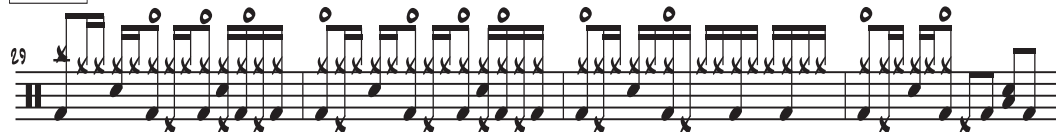
21 

25 

29 

33 

Verse

37 

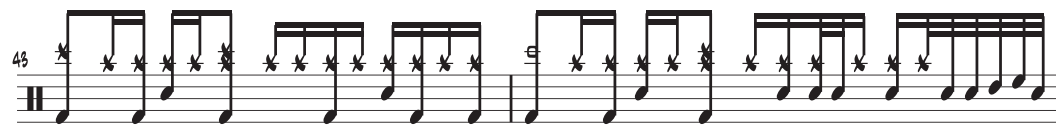
41 

Chorus

45 

49 

53 

57 

Verse Breakdown

45

Verse

49

Chorus

55

55

57

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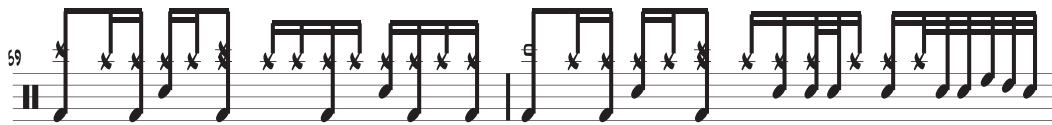
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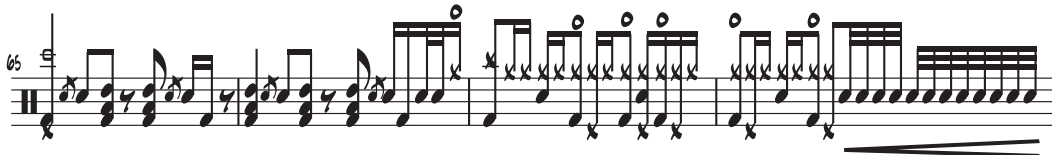
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Verse/Outro



Andy Ziker performs and teaches in and around Phoenix, Arizona. His book, *Drumscapes*, is available at www.andyziker.com.



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