SOFTWARE & TECH

The Only Exception Lyrics And Chords

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Unlocking the Heart of Paramore's Classic: The Only Exception Lyrics And Chords

Few songs capture the delicate tension between skepticism and hope as beautifully as Paramore's "The Only Exception." Released in 2009 on their album *Brand New Eyes*, this acoustic-driven ballad stands apart from the band's usual pop-punk energy. It tells a deeply personal story of learning to trust love again after witnessing it fail. For musicians and fans alike, studying **The Only Exception lyrics and chords**offers not only a chance to play a beloved track but also to understand the emotional architecture behind the music. Whether you are a beginner guitarist looking for your first fingerpicking piece or a seasoned performer seeking to capture the song's subtle dynamics, this guide will walk you through every chord, every lyric twist, and every nuance that makes this song a timeless anthem of reluctant romance.

The Story Behind the Song: Why the Lyrics Matter

Written by lead singer Hayley Williams alongside guitarist Josh Farro, "The Only Exception" is widely interpreted as Williams' reflection on her own parents' divorce and her subsequent fear of commitment. The opening lines immediately set a tone of quiet vulnerability: "When I was younger, I saw my daddy cry / And cursed at the wind." This imagery of a broken marriage shaped the narrator's worldview—love was something that always ended in pain. However, the song's journey is one of transformation. The arrival of a person who defies that broken pattern becomes "the only exception."

The power of the lyrics lies in their raw honesty. They don't pretend that love is easy or that past wounds vanish overnight. Instead, they acknowledge the risk of opening your heart again. When you explore **The Only Exception lyrics and chords**, you're not just learning notes—you're stepping into a narrative arc that moves from guardedness to cautious hope. The chorus, with the repeated line "You are the only exception," is both a declaration and a surrender. Musically, the chord progression mirrors this emotional shift, moving from darker, minor-inspired shapes to brighter, resolved harmonies.

Essential Chord Progression Overview

Before diving into specific fingerings, let's look at the overall harmonic structure. The song is played with a capo on the 3rd fret, which transposes the open chords into a key that suits Hayley Williams' vocal range. Without the capo, the song would be in G major, but with the capo, it sounds in Bb major. For this guide, we will reference the chord shapes as played with the capo—so the chords you see here are the *shapes*, not the absolute pitches. The primary chords are:

- Cadd9 – A warm, open chord that feels like a gentle question.
- G – The home chord, providing stability.
- D – Adds forward motion.
- Em7 – A touch of melancholy, perfect for the verses.
- Am7 – Often used in the pre-chorus to build tension.

The chord progression for the verses follows a pattern: Cadd9 – G – D – Em7. This sequence repeats with slight

variations in the bridge and chorus. When you first look at **The Only Exception lyrics and chords**online, you will see that many tabs use these five chord shapes. The beauty of this arrangement is that it remains accessible for beginners while still offering depth for more advanced players through fingerpicking patterns and dynamic control.

Verse Chord Progression in Detail

Let's break down the first verse. The lyrics begin: "When I was younger, I saw my daddy cry." With the capo on the 3rd fret, you play:

1. Cadd9 – (x32030) on the word "younger."
2. G – (320003) on "saw my daddy."
3. D – (xx0232) on "cry."
4. Em7 – (022030) on "cursed at the wind."

This four-chord loop continues through most of the verse. The transition between G and D should be smooth—keep your ring finger on the 3rd fret of the high E string for both chords if possible. Many guitarists find that using a simple fingerpicking pattern (thumb on the bass note, then index and middle fingers on the top three strings) captures the gentle feel of the original recording.

Chorus: Building to the Emotional Peak

The chorus introduces a slight change. The chords become:

- Cadd9 – for "And I'm on my way to believing it."
- G – for "You are the only."
- D – for "exception."
- Em7 – for "And I'm on my way to believing it."

Note that the chorus uses the same chords as the verse but with a different rhythmic emphasis. The strumming pattern here can become fuller—use downstrokes on the first beat of each chord, then gentle upstrokes. The emotional climax of the song comes on the line "You are the only exception," where the vocal melody swells. As a guitarist, you can match this by slightly increasing the force of your pick attack. When studying **The Only Exception lyrics and chords**, pay attention to these dynamics; they separate a robotic recitation from a moving performance.

Detailed Chord Diagrams and Finger Placement

To make this guide practical, here are the exact fingerings for every chord shape used with a capo on the 3rd fret. These are open chords, so ensure your capo is tight enough to avoid buzzing but not so tight that it throws the tuning out.

Cadd9 (x32030)

- Index finger: 2nd fret of the D string (4th string).
- Middle finger: 3rd fret of the A string (5th string).
- Ring finger: 3rd fret of the B string (2nd string).
- Little finger (optional): 3rd fret of the high E string (1st string) – many players omit this and still get a nice Cadd9 sound.
- Strum from the A string downward, avoiding the low E.

G Major (320003)

- Index finger: 2nd fret of the A string.
- Middle finger: 3rd fret of the low E string.

- Ring finger: 3rd fret of the B string.
- Little finger: 3rd fret of the high E string.
- Strum all six strings.

D Major (xx0232)

- Index finger: 2nd fret of the G string (3rd string).
- Middle finger: 2nd fret of the high E string.
- Ring finger: 3rd fret of the B string.
- Do not strum the low E or A strings.

Em7 (022030)

- Index finger: 2nd fret of the A string.
- Middle finger: 2nd fret of the D string.
- Ring finger: 3rd fret of the B string.
- Strum from the A string down. This chord often sounds best with a light touch.

Some transcriptions also include an **Am7**(x02010) in the pre-chorus, but the official recording keeps the progression simple. If you are playing along with the track, listen for the bass notes—the root movement is what defines the harmony. The consistency of these shapes means that you can focus on the vocals and emotional delivery rather than complex left-hand movements.

Strumming and Fingerpicking Patterns

The original recording features a mix of fingerpicked verses and strummed choruses. Here are two patterns to practice.

Fingerpicking Pattern (Verses)

1. Thumb (p) plucks the bass note of the chord (e.g., A string for Cadd9, low E for G).
2. Index (i) plucks the G string (3rd string).
3. Middle (m) plucks the B string (2nd string).
4. Ring (a) plucks the high E string (1st string).

Repeat this pattern for each chord. On G, the bass note is the low E string. On D, the bass note is the D string (4th string). On Em7, the bass note is the A string. This pattern gives the song its gentle lullaby quality. If you are new to fingerpicking, start slowly and ensure each note rings clearly before speeding up.

Strumming Pattern (Chorus)

Use a simple down-up-down-up pattern, but with accents on the first beat of each chord change. The rhythm in the chorus feels like: **down, down-up, up-down-up**. Practice this by counting: 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and. On beat 1, play a strong downstroke. On the “and” of beat 1, an upstroke. Then on beat 2, a downstroke followed by up-down-up for beats 3 and 4. This pattern creates a driving yet tender feel. When you combine these patterns with **The Only Exception lyrics and chords**, you’ll capture the song’s dynamic range.

Lyrical Analysis and Emotional Interpretation

Beyond the chords, the lyrics deserve close attention. The song’s bridge (“I’ve got a tight grip on reality / But I can’t let go of what’s in front of me here”) is a pivotal moment. The chord progression here shifts to a sustained Am7 or stays on Em7 longer, creating a sense of breathlessness. When performing, let your voice soften on these lines. The final chorus repeats with more intensity—the narrator has moved from skepticism to acceptance.

To truly internalize **The Only Exception lyrics and chords**, try to sing while playing. Start with just the chords on a gentle strum, then add the fingerpicking pattern once the chord changes feel automatic. The song is in 4/4 time, and the tempo is around 80 beats per minute. Use a metronome to keep a steady pulse, but allow for a slight rubato (flexibility in timing) on the final words of each phrase, such as “wind” or “head.”

Alternative Versions: Piano and Capo Variations

While the guitar version with capo on 3rd fret is the most common, the song can also be played on piano using the same chord shapes (C, G, D, Em). Many fans also choose to play it without a capo using barre chords—for example, using Bb major (x13331) instead of the open G shape. However, this makes the chord transitions harder for beginners. If you have a friend who sings, consider playing the guitar part with the capo on the 5th fret for a higher, more delicate key. Experiment to find what suits your voice. The beauty of **The Only Exception lyrics and chords** is their adaptability.

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

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