GENERAL

wild horses susan boyle chords

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Wild Horses Susan Boyle Chords: A Complete Guide for Guitarists

When you think of the phrase “Wild Horses,” your mind may drift to the classic Rolling Stones ballad, the stirring imagery of untamed freedom, or the haunting guitar riffs that have become iconic in rock history. But for many guitar enthusiasts, the phrase also conjures a fresh, emotive rendition by one of the most beloved voices of the 21st century—Susan Boyle. In this comprehensive guide, we’ll explore how to play the Susan Boyle version of “Wild Horses” on guitar, break down the chord progressions, provide strumming and fingerstyle patterns, and share practical tips to help you master the song with confidence.

Why the Susan /Boyle Version Stands Out

Susan Boyle’s interpretation of “Wild Horses” transforms the original’s gritty rock edge into a soulful, gospel infused ballad. Her vocal range, emotional depth, and subtle vocal embellishments bring a new layer of nuance to the lyrics. For guitarists, this means an opportunity to experiment with dynamics—moving from gentle, fingerpicked passages to powerful, strummed sections that mirror the emotional swell of Boyle’s delivery.

By learning the chords and techniques specific to this arrangement, you’ll not only replicate a beloved performance but also gain insight into how arrangement choices affect the overall feel of a song. Whether you’re a beginner looking to expand your repertoire or an intermediate player seeking fresh material, this guide will walk you through every step.

Song Background: From Rolling /Stones to Susan /Boyle

“Wild Horses” was originally written by Mick /Jagger and Keith /Richards and first appeared on The Rolling /Stones’ 1971 album *Sticky Fingers*. The track is a slow, blues inspired ballad that showcases the band’s raw emotional power. Over the decades, it has been covered by countless artists across genres—from Dolly Parton’s country take to Johnny /Clegg’s folk rendition.

In 2010, Susan /Boyle released a cover of “Wild Horses” as part of her album *Hold My Hand*. Her version retains the core chord structure but introduces a softer, gospel oriented arrangement. The song’s key shifts, vocal ornamentation, and subtle tempo changes make it a unique challenge for guitarists who wish to capture the essence of Boyle’s performance.

Chord Overview: The Building Blocks of the Song

The Susan Boyle arrangement stays true to the original chord progression but places a greater emphasis on open strings and suspended chords to create a resonant, airy sound. Below is a quick reference of the primary chords used throughout the track, written in the key of G major. If you’re more comfortable in another key, feel free to transpose using a capo or a chord transposition tool.

- G – G major (320003)
- D – D major (xx0232)
- Em – Em minor (022000)
- Am – Am minor (x02210)
- Bm – Bm minor (x24432)

- C – C major (x32010)
- F – F major (133211) or easier barre version (xx3211)
- Gadd9 – Gadd9 (320003 with an added 9th on the 2nd string)
- Csus2 – Csus2 (x30010)
- Csus4 – Csus4 (x30011)

Below is a full chord progression that follows the structure of the Susan /Boyle version:

1. Intro: G – D – Em – C
2. Verse 1: G – D – Em – C
3. Pre Chorus: Am – Bm – C – G
4. Chorus: G – D – Em – C
5. Bridge: Am – Bm – G – D
6. Outro: G – D – Em – C – G

Notice the repeated G–D–Em–C progression that forms the backbone of the song. By mastering these chords, you'll have the foundation for both the original and the Susan /Boyle cover.

How to Play: Step by Step Instructions

1. Finger Placement and Hand Positioning

While the chord shapes above are standard, the key to a smooth transition lies in your hand positioning. Keep your thumb behind the neck, centered between the 2nd and 3rd strings. Your fingers should be curved, allowing the pad of each finger to press down the string cleanly. When moving between chords, aim to keep the index finger close to the fretboard to reduce unnecessary hand movement.

2. Strumming Pattern for the Verse

The verse strumming pattern is gentle and syncopated, mirroring Boyle's understated vocal delivery. Use the following pattern:

- Down (D) – Down (D) – Up (U) – Up (U) – Down (D) – Up (U)

Feel the pulse on the first beat, then accent the "and" of the second beat with a light downstroke. This creates a flowing rhythm that supports the lyrical content.

3. Fingerstyle for the Bridge

In the bridge, Boyle's arrangement shifts to a more intimate, fingerpicked texture. Here's a simple pattern you can use:

1. Pluck the 6th string (E) with your thumb.
2. Pluck the 4th string (D) with your ring finger.
3. Pluck the 3rd string (G) with your middle finger.
4. Pluck the 2nd string (B) with your index finger.
5. Return to the 4th string with your ring finger.
6. End with a light tap on the 1st string (high E) with your thumb.

This pattern emphasizes the open strings and creates a gentle, resonant sound that complements the emotional peak of the bridge.

4. Transitioning Between Sections

To maintain a natural flow, practice the transitions between verse, pre chorus, chorus, and bridge at a slow tempo.

Once you’re comfortable, gradually increase the speed to the song’s original tempo. Pay particular attention to the pre chorus, where the chord changes become slightly more complex (Am to Bm to C to G). A smooth transition here will keep the song’s emotional arc intact.

Chord Chart for Quick Reference

Below is a concise chord chart that you can print or refer to while you practice. Each chord is shown with a standard notation and a visual diagram to help you see the finger placement at a glance.

Chord	Diagram
G	
D	
Em	
C	
Am	
Bm	
F	
Gadd9	
Csus2	
Csus4	

Practice Tips: From Beginner to Advanced

1. Slow Practice and Timing

Start by practicing each section of the song at a slower tempo—around 60 BPM. Use a metronome to keep time and focus on clean chord transitions. Gradually increase the speed once you're comfortable.

2. Record Yourself

Recording your practice sessions allows you to listen for timing issues, muting problems, or any dissonant notes. Use a simple smartphone app or a dedicated audio recorder. Review the playback and make adjustments accordingly.

3. Focus on Dynamics

One of the hallmarks of Susan Boyle's performance is her dynamic control—soft verses, building choruses, and a gentle bridge. Practice varying your strumming volume and fingerpicking intensity to mimic these dynamics. This will make your rendition more expressive and engaging.

4. Add Vocal Elements

If you plan to sing along, pay attention to the vocal phrasing. The chord changes often align with lyrical phrasing, so try to match the chord changes to the words. This will help you stay in sync with the original arrangement.

5. Master the Bridge's Fingerstyle

The bridge's fingerstyle section can be challenging for beginners. Break it down into smaller parts: first practice the thumb and ring finger pattern, then add the middle finger pluck, and finally incorporate the index finger and the final thumb tap. Repeating each sub pattern until muscle memory kicks in will make the full sequence feel natural.

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

- Over muting Strings: When switching chords quickly, you might unintentionally mute adjacent strings. Practice clean chord changes by focusing on finger placement before strumming.
- Ignoring Rhythm: A weak rhythm can make even a flawless chord progression sound flat. Use a metronome and count aloud to maintain steady timing.
- Skipping Dynamics: Playing every section at the same volume reduces emotional impact. Experiment with softer strums during verses and stronger strums during choruses.
- Not Listening to the Original: Familiarity with Susan /Boyle's rendition helps you capture the nuance. Listen to the track multiple times, noting the chord changes, vocal inflections, and dynamic shifts.

Performance Tips: Bringing the Song to Life

1. Use a Capo for Vocal Comfort

If you're singing along, a capo can help you match Susan Boyle's vocal range. Try placing the capo on the 2nd or 3rd fret to raise the key without changing chord shapes.

2. Add a Light Percussion Layer

In a live setting, a cajón or hand percussion can add depth. Keep the rhythm simple—just a steady kick on the 2nd beat and a soft snare on the 4th beat—to complement the guitar without overpowering it.

3. Embrace the Pause

Between

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