

THE JEFF'S 52 COUNTDOWN

February 19, 2023

#1 – "Can't Find My Way Home" by Blind Faith – The astute follower of the Jeff's Countdown might discount the validity of this song being in the top spot. One might suggest its lofty status is due only to my aversion for Billy Joel's record run with "Piano Man" being eclipsed. While there may be a sliver of truth to that, this song stands alone in my admiration for it, and it now owns a spot in the pantheon of Jeff's Countdown excellence. I dedicate this number one song to the number one person in my life, my wife Cindy Rogers. I dedicate this to her, not only because she is my #1, but also because Cindy was responsible for this song becoming one of my favorites. In the fall of 2016, Cindy began watching the television show, *This is Us*. At first, I didn't watch it with her. She recorded it and watched it when I wasn't around or when I was watching sports. A couple of years later, I started hearing good reviews, so I finally decided to start watching. Of course, given my desire for order, I had to start from the beginning of Season 1. The first few episodes of the premier season were incredibly well written, with both Episode 1 and Episode 2 ending in cliff hangers that trapped me into returning. Episode 2 also ending with the playing of this song, which is what made me fall in love with it. After binge watching the first season and a half or so I finally caught up to Cindy and we began watching it together. This song debuted in the Jeff's 48 Countdown the following year, and as I continued to watch to *This is Us*, I continued to love the song even more. Eventually the show ended, but the song did not lose momentum. After reaching #2 last year, it completes its run to the top this year, becoming the seventh song in the history of the Jeff's Countdown to reach the top spot. I celebrate this accomplishment with the video to my favorite version of the song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L82II1Njo>

#2 – "What Goes Around... Comes Around" by Justin Timberlake – Following a seven-year run at the top, this song drops one spot, failing to eclipse the record for most continuous years at #1. It will share that record with Billy Joel's "Piano Man" and Nickelback's "How You Remind Me." This song has made a long run at the top and I dedicate it to recently retired radio personality, Angelo Cataldi, who also made a long run at the top, and is now stepping down. Cataldi has been the morning man on Philadelphia's Sports Radio station 94 WIP since 1989. He is famous for organizing a group of Eagles fans including then-Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell and known as the Dirty 30, to travel to the NFL Draft in New York City where the Eagles had the #2 overall pick. The "Dirty 30" were told to cheer if the Eagles drafted running back Ricky Williams, but instead the team drafted quarterback Donovan McNabb, who was greeted with a chorus of boos when he appeared on stage. Cataldi was critical of McNabb throughout his tenure as Eagles quarterback. More recently, Cataldi has been critical of former Eagles' defensive coordinator, Jonathan Gannon. Despite the success of the Eagles defense this season, Cataldi continued to be critical of Gannon's passive game

plans. In the end, Gannon's style and inability to adjust in-game was the Eagles downfall in Super Bowl LVII. It was a tough ending to the Eagles' season and a tough end to Cataldi's career, who much rather would have wanted to retire following an Eagles Super Bowl win. Regardless, his last show was yesterday, bringing an end to a long run, much like this song's run at the top has also come to an end:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOrnUqxtwA>

#3 – "Counting Stars" by OneRepublic – After debuting at #31 in the Jeff's 44 Countdown, this song has steadily risen the countdown ranks. This year it moves up one spot, reaching the Top 3 for the first time. I saw OneRepublic in concert for the first time last summer, and really enjoyed it. They are quickly becoming one of my favorite artists which is helping give this song a lot of positive momentum. I dedicate it to Bryce Harper. When the Phillies signed Harper for 13 years and \$330 million in March of 2019, I thought they might one day regret that decision. But following the Phillies' improbable playoff run last fall, I think Harper may have already earned the entirety of that money. In 2021, he won the National League MVP Award, and last year, despite multiple injuries, he led the Phillies to their first playoff appearance in 11 years and won the League Championship Series MVP. During game 5 of the NLCS, Harper hit a go-ahead 2-run home run in the bottom of the 8th inning. It proved to be the game-winning hit, sending the Phillies to the 2022 World Series against the Houston Astros. In the end they fell to the Astros, the better team, but the playoff run was memorable, unexpected, and led by Harper. Phillies' players began reporting to spring training yesterday and their first exhibition game is only eight days away. Harper will miss the first half of the season as he rehabs from off-season Tommy John surgery. Fortunately, the Phillies signed another superstar in Trea Turner to help bridge the gap until Harper returns and hopefully put them over the top come playoff time. There is no doubt Phillies' fans will be "Counting Stars" this season and watching this video for additional hype:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT_nvWrelhg

#4 – "Collide" by Howie Day – Although this song has never reached the pinnacle of the Jeff's Countdown, it has made two distinct runs at the top spot, falling just short both times. The first run started with its debut at #20 in the Jeff's 35 Countdown. From there it began a steady ascension, but topped out at #3, holding that spot in both the Jeff's 40 Countdown and the Jeff's 41 Countdown. The following year it began a slide which took it all the way back to the #20 position, a spot it held for the Jeff's 46 Countdown. This song then began another run to the top. This time it went all the way to #2, a spot it held in the Jeff's 49 Countdown and the Jeff's 50 Countdown. Last year it dropped from that #2 spot to #5, but this year it moves up one into its current position. I dedicate this one to the late Gail Halvorsen. Known as "the candy bomber" Halvorsen was a senior officer and command pilot in the United States Air Force following World War II. He is best known for dropping candy to German children during the Berlin Airlift from 1948 to 1949. Lieutenant Halvorsen's role in the Berlin Airlift was to fly one of many C-54 cargo planes used to ferry supplies into the starving city. During that time, he founded "Operation Little Vittles", an effort to raise morale in Berlin by dropping candy via miniature parachute to the city's residents. Halvorsen began "Little Vittles" with no authorization from his superiors but over the next year became a national hero with

support from all over the United States. I read about Halvorsen's story shortly following his death, at age 101, on this day last year. I found his story inspiring, and over the last year I've tried to emulate Halvorsen's style by doing little things for my teammates at work, like having team building events and handing out small rewards, without necessarily asking for permission first. So far, it's worked out well, but hopefully my expense reports and overly thrifty enterprise accountants won't collide. Let's hope the collisions are limited to Howie Day and his love interest, like in the video for this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca9ub9rpNK4>

#5 – "Shape of You" by Ed Sheeran – Now in its sixth year, this song continues its consistent positive movement up the countdown ranks. It debuted at #21 in the Jeff's 47 Countdown and then advanced to #15 then to #10, #9, and #8 in subsequent years until reaching the Top 5 this year. I dedicate this one to Matt & Ross Duffer who were born on this day in 1984. Collectively known as the Duffers Brothers, this two-man team of writers, directors, and producers are responsible for creating the hit Netflix science fiction horror drama series, *Stranger Things*. I binge watched all four seasons of the show over the last year. The plot is great, the writing is great, the acting is very good, and for the most part the 80s pop culture references are fairly accurate. The only complaint I have is the use of the insult "mouth breather" which I'm pretty sure wasn't a thing in the 80s. Regardless, the show is too good for me to stop watching it just due to that one issue. It sounds like Season 5 of the show is still a long way off, so until it drops, I'll have to turn to music videos such as this one for entertainment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGwWNGJdvx8>

#6 – "Breakeven" by The Script – With a three-spot drop from last year, this song falls outside the Top 5 for the first time since the Jeff's 43 Countdown. During that eight-year Top 5 run, this song has reached #2 once and the #3 spot four times. In total, "Breakeven" has spent the last 13 consecutive years in the countdown. I dedicate this one to actor/singer Bruce Willis, who retired from acting last year after being diagnosed with aphasia, which affects language cognition. Willis has been one of my favorite actors dating back to his work on the 1980s comedy-drama series *Moonlighting*. In terms of his work in films, I especially enjoyed his characters in the *Die Hard* Series and in *Pulp Fiction*. My favorite Bruce Willis movie, and the #4 movie on my list of all-time favorite movies, is of course *The Sixth Sense*. That movie was more about the writing than the acting, but still, Bruce Willis turned in a very good performance. I sense the sixth song in the Jeff's 52 Countdown being played here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzCLLHscMOW>

#7 – "Wonderwall" by Oasis – Holding steady in the #7 position for a second consecutive year is this countdown favorite. This song is also the first song from the 1990s to reach one billion streams on Spotify. It first reached the countdown in 1997 when it debuted on #23 in the Jeff's 26 Countdown. It then went on an eight-year hiatus before resurfacing at #28 in the Jeff's 35 Countdown. After another eight years hanging out between #24 and #35, "Wonderwall" finally broke into the Top 20 when it reached #18 in the Jeff's 43 Countdown. Then, after yet another eight years in the teens, it finally broke through to the Top 10 last year. I dedicate this one to Dr. Ruth Gotian, who on this

day last year was a guest on episode #567 of the *Coaching for Leaders* podcast. Gotian's area of expertise is in identifying, leading, and retaining high performers which is a subject I've been interested in over the last year as I try to make sure the high performers I work with remain with my company. Dr. Gotian has provided many great insights which have helped me in my job which I greatly appreciate. I also appreciate the high performing Gallagher brothers and their video for this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx1Bh8ZvH84>

#8 – "Take Back The Night" by Justin Timberlake – After three years of retreat, this song regains some momentum this year with a two-spot improvement. It debuted at #27 in the Jeff's 44 Countdown and improved its position each year until reaching its peak position of #3 in the Jeff's 49 Countdown. From there it dropped to #6 and then to #10 last year. I dedicate this one to the late Olivia Newton-John who on this day in 1975 released her fifth album *Have You Never Been Mellow*. The singer/actress was a four-time Grammy winner and one of the most influential female recording artists of the 1970s and early 1980s. Although she never reached the Jeff's Countdown, her 1981 megahit "Physical" was certainly a favorite of 10-year-old Jeff. Newton-John, who battled breast cancer three times, was an advocate and sponsor for breast cancer research, and she also was an activist for environmental and animal rights causes. Her final battle with cancer ended on August 8, 2022, as she died at age 73. Although she has now passed away, the pop genre lives on with this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEzREJbln-o>

#9 – "Kids" by OneRepublic – On the heels of having seen OneRepublic in concert last summer, this song is riding that momentum with a three-spot increase from last year. It's now in its sixth year in the countdown after debuting at #46 in the Jeff's 47 Countdown. It has improved its position in each subsequent appearance, reaching the Top 10 for the first time this year. I dedicate this song to one of my kids, Courtney Rogers. When I purchased the OneRepublic concert tickets a year or so ago, I bought one for all my kids figuring my college students, Courtney and her sister Allison would be home for the summer. As it turned out, both were working. Allison in Chicago and Courtney on-campus at North Carolina State. So my youngest daughter Danielle took a couple of friends to the concert in place of her sisters. Despite missing the concert in Camden, Courtney went to see OneRepublic when they appeared in Raleigh a few weeks later. Like me she enjoyed the concert and like me she enjoys this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y56lpXvXbs0>

#10 – "Regulate" by Warren G. featuring Nate Dogg – The Top 10 of the Jeff's 52 Countdown begins with this hip hop classic from the 1990s. This one made its countdown debut in the Jeff's 46 Countdown at #34. It steadily rose from there until it reached its peak position of #9 three years later. It dropped to #11 the following year and stayed there for a second year until regaining one spot this year. I dedicate this one to Preston and Allysa from Nashville, Tennessee. The duo, known as the matriculators, participated in the 2022 Adam Caplan Invitational Fantasy Football League. The prestigious league, hosted by the SiriusXM Fantasy Sports channel, requires a video submission for entry. Only the top 10ish videos are selected from hundreds of entrants. I've been submitting videos for about 5 years now and still haven't been able to crack the

Top 10 and earn admission into the league. The matriculators video, which samples “Regulate” was my favorite video from the 2022 submissions and was obviously of much higher quality than mine. Preston and Allysa deserved their spot in the ACI and their spot in the Jeff’s 52 Countdown. Here is the matriculators video:

<https://twitter.com/Matriculators/status/1560326286953906178?s=20&t=bbCEleKy3lmbYh9eoUQnbg> and here is the video to Regulate:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1pIPyJdXKIY>

#11 – “Blurry” by Puddle of Mudd – After 20 consecutive years inside the Top 10 of the countdown, this song drops outside of that exclusive register for the first time ever. Twenty years ago, it debuted inside the Top 10, at the lofty #8 spot, and in addition to its 20 consecutive years inside the Top 10, it also spent 15 consecutive years inside the Top 5, and two years at the countdown’s top spot. The two years this song spent at #1 were in the Jeff’s 43 and the Jeff’s 44 Countdowns. I dedicate this superstar song to NFL superstar, J.J. Watt. The defensive end who was drafted with the #11 pick of the 2011 NFL draft retired following the 2022 season following a stellar career in which he was NFL defensive player of the year three times. He was also named Sports Illustrated Sportsman of the Year in 2017 and is the Houston Texans’ all-time sack leader. Watt was not only a great player on the field, but he was also a humanitarian. Among his many philanthropic efforts, he raised \$37 million for the Houston area victims of Hurricane Harvey which included \$100,000 of his own money. Watt will likely enter the NFL Hall of Fame in 2028 in the same class as Tom Brady. While many fans love Tom Brady, nearly as many dislike him as well. Watt on the other hand is almost universally loved by NFL fans. Those lines are much less blurry. This song on the other hand, is quite blurry: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJJsoquu70o>

#12 – “Piano Man” by Billy Joel – Also known as “the granddaddy of all Jeff’s Countdown songs” this is the only song to appear in each edition of the Jeff’s Countdown. It occupied the #7 position in the inaugural Jeff’s 21 Countdown, and by the time the Jeff’s 24 Countdown rolled around, it had ascended to the top spot. It held that #1 position for seven consecutive years before taking a one-year hiatus from the top spot. It returned to the heights of the countdown in the Jeff’s 32 Countdown and remained there for another four years. It’s seven-year run at the top is tied for the best ever countdown run at #1, for now at least, and its eleven total years at the top is a clear record. It’s also the only countdown song with two separate runs at the #1 position. I dedicate this countdown classic superstar to a superstar in the sport of basketball, the late Bill Russell, who was born on this day in 1934. With eleven NBA championships and two NCAA championships on his resume, Russell is one of the winningest players in the history of sport. Russell was also regarded by most as the greatest defensive player in the history of basketball. Although I will always contend that Wilt Chamberlain was a better overall player, you can’t deny Russell’s greatness. Russell, who had a very tough childhood and was exposed to several malicious acts of racism growing up, was also a prominent advocate for the civil rights movement. In 2011, President Barack Obama awarded Russell the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his accomplishments on the court and in the civil rights movement. Bill Russell passed away in July of last year at the age of 88. His accomplishments in the sport of basketball will likely never be challenged,

and to-date, the greatest of this song in the Jeff's Countdown has yet to be challenged:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxEPV4kolz0>

#13 – "Flagpole Sitta" by Harvey Danger – At the start of the pandemic, when I was covid-free but obviously still strongly affected by the societal changes that came with it, this song became a bit of a theme song for me. I wasn't sick but I also wasn't well as this song so astutely articulates. After giving it much play during 2020, I made it the #29 song of the Jeff's 50 Countdown in 2021. It moved up to #20 last year and this year it makes another nice gain. I dedicate this one to Leo Gallagher, the legendary comedian who completed 13 television specials over the course of his career. Gallagher passed away last year at the age of 76. I was never a big fan of his humor, but we did have something in common in that we both earned a degree in chemical engineering. I think he put his degree to use better than I did, as he split a lot of atoms through the years, especially those inside of watermelons. I'm thinking he wasn't altogether well either, so perhaps he also liked this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYsMjEeEg4g>

#14 – "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana – Quite possibly the most influential song from the grunge movement, this track helped define an entire new genre of music in the early 1990s. At the time I was more into Pearl Jam, Offspring, Weezer, and Soundgarden than I was Nirvana, but over time I've really grown to love this song and truly appreciate its greatness. It first appeared in the Jeff's 47 Countdown in the #28 spot. It has slowly progressed upward in the countdown, reaching the #16 spot two years ago. After a second consecutive year at #16 last year, it moves up two spots for this edition, reaching its peak position. I dedicate this one to Danielle Rogers, my teen daughter. Last week, Danielle passed her driver's test. All my children now have their driver's licenses, so it's becoming time for Dad's Taxi Service to cease operations. What a glorious time! So, I thank Danielle for being a good, trustworthy driver, and for passing her test on the first try. Keep that teen spirit in check though and be safe on the roads. Tune the radio to the Lithium channel and surely this song will be played at some point. If the wait is too long just follow this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTWKbfoikeg>

#15 – "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds – This song entered the countdown ranks in 2018 after I watched the movie *The Breakfast Club* for at least the tenth time, but for the first time in several years. Hearing this song while watching the movie reminded me how much I liked it, and that translated into a debut in the Jeff's 47 Countdown in the leadoff position. From there, it has steadily climbed the countdown ranks and this year moves into the Top 15 for the first time. Earlier on in the countdown, I dedicated the #25 song to former Philadelphia Eagles' wide receiver, Tommy MacDonald. This one I now dedicate to the Philadelphia sportswriter and analyst who politicked incessantly for MacDonald to be enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Ray Didinger. The Delaware County native, one of the greatest sports scribes Philadelphia has ever known, retired from the newspaper industry and his weekend show on talk radio at 94 WIP last year after 53 years in the business. During the pandemic, Didinger, and his radio co-host on WIP, Glen Macnow, created a long-form interview program called "Tell Me Your Story." The show featured Didinger and Macnow speaking with many of the sports legends they had covered in their decades-long careers.

The show quickly became a favorite of mine as I really enjoy hearing athletes talk about how they rose to prominence. With the Eagles in the midst of a Super Bowl run, Didinger has made frequent guest appearances on WIP, so it's almost like he hasn't retired. Whether Didinger continues with radio guest appearances or not, I will certainly not forget about him. And I won't forget about the video for this song either:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gLVqjIvokc>

#16 – "The Rain Song" by Led Zeppelin – Jumping up a big 20 spots in the countdown this year is this seven-minute classic from the songwriting duo of Jimmy Page and Robert Plant. In just its third year in the countdown, this one is already on the precipice of the Top 15. I dedicate it to the MVP of last weekend's NFC Conference Championship game, Haason Reddick. The first-year Philadelphia Eagle was second in the NFL in sacks during the 2022 regular season with 16. Between the Eagles' two playoff games this year he's posted another 3.5 sacks. He blew up the 49ers' chances at victory when he knocked their quarterback out of the game and caused a fumble recovered by the Eagles on the same play. A South Jersey native and former Temple Owl, Reddick gave the Eagles a "hometown discount" when he signed with them last offseason. Although \$15 million a year is still a quite a good haul, it pales in comparison to what the NFL's other top edge rushers make. Reddick and the Eagles will take on the Kansas Chiefs in Super Bowl LVII a week from tomorrow. Hopefully at the end of the games end, confetti will rain down in the colors of green and white. As we anxiously await the Super Bowl, we can listen to some great Led Zeppelin music rain down here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeDyID8dV7U>

#17 – "Hold Me Now" by Thompson Twins – After reaching its highest ever countdown position last year at #9, this song makes its first ever countdown retreat, a drop of 8 spots. This is its tenth year in the countdown. It's made the Top 30 in all ten of its appearances, and it's been in the Top 20 eight of those years. I dedicate this one to Mike Krzyzewski. The longtime Duke basketball coach retired last season following a record 1,202 wins as a head coach. Among his many records, perhaps the most impressive number to me is 17. Coach K lost 17 games in both his second and third seasons at Duke, yet the administration stuck with him. His Duke team reached the Final Four for the first time in his 7th season and he won his first of five National Titles in season #12. Krzyzewski will be remembered for the many records he holds and for how he ended his Duke career as opposed to how he started it. The story of this song is much the same, as it was not a hit right out of the box either but has grown on listeners like me over the years. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9694K85Xc8>

#18 – "How You Remind Me" by Nickelback – As of this writing, on February 2, 2023, no song has had a longer run of consecutive appearances in the Jeff's Countdown top spot than this tune from the Canadian quartet known as Nickelback. Billy Joel's "Piano Man" and Justin Timberlake's "What Goes Around... Comes Around" have similar 7-year streaks, but neither have eclipsed the record run. Of course Justin Timberlake's streak is current, and in 17 days we will know whether or not he can make it 8 years in row, but for now at least, Nickelback can lay claim to at least a share of the glory. On this day in 1925, one Gunnar Kaasen stole a bit of glory for himself when he

and his team of Siberian huskies completed the 1925 serum run to Nome, Alaska (a.k.a the original Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race). The delivery of diphtheria antitoxin from Nenana, Alaska, to Nome saved the small town and the surrounding communities from a developing epidemic of diphtheria. Winter airflights in northern Alaska were considered unsafe at the time, and the port closest to Nome was frozen at this time of year, eliminating the chance for delivery by seacraft. Transportation via a relay of individual dog sled teams was the only viable way to deliver the needed serum. The Iditarod trail was used by dog sled teams to deliver the U.S. Mail, so the necessary resources were already in place to make the delivery. A total of 20 mushers and about 150 sled dogs crossed 674 miles during the heart of Alaskan winter in just five and a half days. The plan was for Kaasen to complete the penultimate leg of the journey. However, he completed his leg a few hours earlier than planned. When he arrived at outpost occupied by musher Ed Rohn, he noticed the lights were still out and assumed Rohn was still sleeping. According to Kaasen, he decided that waking Rohn and having him ready his dogs would take longer than if he just completed the final leg himself. So Kaasen finished the final leg himself, pulling into Nome at 5:30 in the morning to a hero's welcome, while Rohn was left out in the cold (both literally and figuratively). After reading this story, I'm firmly Team Rohn, believing that Kaasen purposely took the final leg to steal the glory. Many also believe that when the final sled team was photographed later in the day, Kaasen replaced his lead dog (named "Fox") with one of his other dogs (named Balto) because he thought Balto was a better name and a better-looking dog. Once again, I'm squarely on Team Rohn, as I could never support someone who demotes a hard-working dog named "Fox." I therefore dedicate this song to Ed Rohn, who should have been the hero of the 1925 serum run to Nome:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aiay8I5IPB8>

#19 – "You Make My Dreams" by Daryl Hall & John Oates – During the 1980s, there was a syndicated television show known as *Solid Gold*. The show featured the popular music of the day, and a team of dancers, known as the Solid Gold Dancers, performing choreographed gambols to the music. Where I grew up the show aired on Saturday Nights on WTAF-TV channel 29. I was a regular viewer of *Solid Gold*, as a pre-teen and teenager and for some unknown reason I distinctly remember watching the show one evening when this song was one of the featured hits. I'm not sure why I remember that so vividly, but fast forward 37 or so years and "You Make My Dreams" made its first appearance in the Jeff's Countdown when it debuted in the #40 spot in the Jeff's 47 Countdown. It moved up each subsequent year until it peaked at #14 last year. This year it falls back five spots but remains in the Top 20 for a third straight year. I dedicate this one to Lisa Marie Presley, who was born on this day in 1968 and passed away earlier this year. As the only (known) child of the legendary Elvis Presley, Lisa Marie was probably best known as being the daughter of Elvis and the wife of Michael Jackson. She did record 3 albums of her own, but never had success as a recording artist. Most of her life's work was dedicated to philanthropy, helping others less fortunate than her achieve their dreams. Hall & Oates also helped dreams come true and sang about their dreams coming true in the video for this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EErSKhC0CZs>

#20 – "25 or 6 to 4" by Chicago – With five years of countdown appearances on its record, this song continues to move up the ranks. It debuted at #47 in the Jeff's 48 Countdown and since then it's moved up to #37, then to #32, and then to #25 last year. Terry Kath was the guitarist on this track and the guitarist for Chicago from their inception in 1967 until his untimely death in 1978. Today would have been Kath's 77th birthday, and in his memory, I dedicate this song to him. Kath is an underrated guitarist who is rarely talked about in the conversation of guitar legends, but his guitar solo in this song is one of my all-time favorites. Give it a listen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uAUoz7jimg>

#21 – "The Man Who Can't Be Moved" by The Script – After five years without countdown advancement, this song regains some momentum this year with a five-spot increase. All told it's been a part of the countdown 13 times, peaking at the #8 position in the Jeff's 46 Countdown. I dedicate this song to the late Vin Scully who passed away last year at the age of 94. For 67 of his 94 years, Scully was the man who couldn't be moved from behind the microphone as broadcaster for the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team. When Scully began calling games for the Dodgers in 1950, the team was located in Brooklyn, New York. Scully, who was known for his impartiality when calling Dodgers games, was asked by the team to be more of a "homer" after the team moved to Los Angeles. He politely denied that request and continued to broadcast games as an impartial play-by-play voice as it should be. Scully called games nationally for television during the 1980s and I distinctly remember watching many of those games. I remember watching Dodgers game, including the famous Game 1 of the 1988 World Series, and having no idea he was a team announcer for the Dodgers. Game 1 of the 1988 series ended with the dramatic pinch hit home run from the injured Kirk Gibson, the first home run to be known as a "walk off" home run. Script lead singer Danny O'Donoghue has a long way to go to reach Scully's 67 years of non-movement, but you can watch him get started in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS9o1FAszdk>

#22 – "American Girl" by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers – This song has been featured in several Hollywood films, but its inclusion in the movie *The Silence of the Lambs* in 1991 made it a favorite of mine. Despite my longstanding admiration, the song didn't appear in the countdown until it debuted at #44 in the Jeff's 47 Countdown. It's remained in the countdown every year since, and this year it reaches its peak position. I dedicate this one to Art McNally, the Philadelphia native who was an official for both the NFL and the NBA. Over a 22-year period, McNally officiated over 3,000 football, baseball, and basketball games. Following a long career in on the court and field, McNally became the NFL's Director of Officiating where he coordinated and directed a staff of 112 game officials. In 2022, he became the first NFL game official to be enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He passed away earlier this month at the age of 97. He was the oldest living member of the Pro Football Hall of Fame at the time of his death. Petty, who died five years ago at the much younger age of 66, was also a Hall of Fame member, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. He was also the architect of this extraordinary song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2nbHpF7-qk>

#23 – "Heathens" by Twenty One Pilots – As one of just three Rock acts to have two songs appear concurrently in the Top 5 of the Billboard Hot 100 Chart, an appearance in the Jeff's 52 Countdown probably doesn't move the needle much for the duo from Ohio known as Twenty One Pilots. After all, the other two Rock acts with two simultaneous Top 5 hits are Elvis Presley and The Beatles. But a seventh appearance in the Jeff's Countdown, a run which includes a year at #5 and another at #6, must mean something. I dedicate this one to Walter Arnold, who on this day in 1896 became the first person to receive a speeding ticket when he exceeded the speed limit of 2 mph in Kent, England. The rules of the day were written for horse drawn carriages and included the requirement that a man waving a red flag had to proceed the carriage. Eventually Kent and other municipalities around the world re-wrote their laws for motor carriages, but that didn't prevent Arnold from having to pay a schilling for his infraction. At least he didn't receive a prison sentence like the Twenty One Pilots' lead singer Tyler Joseph did in the video for this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UprepdwuwCg>

#24 – "Jane Says" by Jane's Addiction – Back for a second year in the countdown is this alternative favorite from the late 80s. It was originally recorded in 1987 but re-recorded in 1988 featuring kettle drums as the main percussion. I prefer the version with the kettle drums and honestly, I think that's what makes it a favorite of mine. It took a long time for it to reach the Jeff's Countdown, but now that it has it's moving up the ranks quickly. It debuted at #35 last year and this year it moves up 11 big spots. I dedicate this one to the late Allan McDonald. On this day in 1986, McDonald would not sign off on the NASA Challenger Mission scheduled to launch the following day. McDonald's team of engineers at Morton-Thiokol, a NASA subcontractor, were concerned that the O-rings associated with the shuttle's solid rocket boosters would fail at the low temperatures expected overnight. The leaders at NASA, who had already delayed the launch multiple times, were upset when McDonald wouldn't sign off on the plans to launch. NASA went over McDonald's head to a senior leader at Thiokol to obtain the necessary signature for launch. A day later the worst-case scenario was realized. The O-rings failed, the solid rocket boosters broke apart 73 seconds into flight and all seven astronauts on board were killed. Deeply affected by the loss of the Challenger astronauts, McDonald endeavored to reveal the truth about the pressures to stay on launch schedule that led to the tragedy. Thiokol and NASA executives failed to reveal the pre-launch concerns during the congressional inquisition following the disaster, so McDonald left his seat in the recesses of the rotunda and moved to the floor to tell the story of how his team had raised concerns the day prior to the launch. McDonald risked his career by telling the truth. Thiokol demoted him and made his life miserable at work. It took an unprecedented Congressional order for McDonald to get his job back, but he did and went on to not only continue work as an engineering leader at Thiokol, but he also co-authored a book on the topic of the Challenger disaster and became a leadership expert, speaking frequently on the topic of healthy challenge. McDonald passed away last year, but the courage he displayed to stand up for what was right lives on as a testament for what is correct and proper. It's not our right to challenge our leaders, it's our obligation... And it's your obligation (not really) to watch the video for this song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7Q_8q3XXrQ

#25 – "The Distance" by Cake – After this song debuted in the leadoff spot in the Jeff's 36 Countdown, it steadily climbed up the countdown ranks until it peaked at #2 in the Jeff's 41 Countdown. After dropping to #3 the following year, it returned to the #2 spot in the next installment of the countdown. After that it dropped out of the Top 3 and never returned but has remained in the Top 25. I dedicated this one to the late Tommy MacDonald. The former wide receiver for the Philadelphia Eagles, who wore #25, was selected to six Pro Bowls, led the NFL in touchdown receptions twice and led the league in receiving yards once. McDonald played for the Eagles between 1957 and 1963 before moving onto the Dallas Cowboys and three other NFL teams to close out his career. MacDonald has the distinction of being the last non-kicker to play in the NFL without a facemask. After a long wait, he was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1998. MacDonald went the distance 85 times during his professional football career, while Cake goes the distance once in the video for this song:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_HoMkkRHv8

#26 – "Plush" by Stone Temple Pilots – With 30 consecutive years of countdown inclusion, this song has earned the status of being the second most successful song in the history of the Jeff's Countdown. It debuted at #11 in the Jeff's 23 Countdown, moved up to #7 the following year which began a nine-year run in the Top 10 that included three years in the #2 position. Although it never reached the countdown's top spot it has a lot of countdown staying power. On his birthday, I dedicate this one to Robert Boyle who is #12 on my list of favorite scientists and inventors. The Irish chemist, physicist, inventor, and philosopher is largely regarded as the first modern chemist. He contributed to the development of the modern scientific experimental method and of course is best known for Boyle's Law which describes the inversely proportional relationship between the absolute pressure and volume of a gas at constant temperature in a closed system. As a student of chemical engineering in the 1990s, I used to love solving problems which required using Boyle's Law. Of late, not as much. These days I enjoy writing entries in the Jeff's Countdown blog and watching music videos on YouTube like this one:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5UOC0C0x8Q>

#27 – "Closer to Love" by Mat Kearney – After reaching the #2 spot in the Jeff's 46 Countdown, this song lost ground each subsequent year until it fell into its lowest ever position, at #29 last year. This year, it regains a bit of momentum, moving up two spots. In all, it's now spent 14 years in the countdown, five of those years in the Top 10. I dedicate this one to Wendy Fradenburg Cobain O'Connor. The mother of Kurt Cobain is famous for inadvertently creating the concept of the "27 Club." The 27 Club is an informal list of people consisting mostly of popular musicians, artists, actors, and other celebrities who died at age 27. In addition to the former Nirvana front man, members include Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix, and Janis Joplin. In an interview following her son's death, O'Connor said that "he's gone and joined that stupid club. I told him not to join that stupid club." Reporters assumed O'Connor was referencing the group which included Morrison and the others who died at age 27. But Cobain had two uncles and a great uncle who all died of suicide, the "club" O'Connor was most likely referencing. Regardless, the national media picked up on the concept of the 27 Club and just like that, it was a thing. Fortunately, Mat Kearney survived beyond the age of 27 because he was

30 when he filmed the video for this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMRXXBGotnw>

#28 – "Natural" by Imagine Dragons – The Imagine Dragons are one of my favorite contemporary artists and this song is my current favorite from their catalog. It debuted in the Jeff's 49 Countdown in the #40 spot, moved up to 34 the following year, and to number 31 last year. This year it moves up another three spots and cracks the Top 30 for the first time. I dedicate this one to the late Joan Joyce, a natural athlete who competed at the highest level in four different sports. Joyce competed in the women's National Pro Fastpitch Softball League, played on the LGPA Tour, competed on a USVBA club team, and played on the USA women's national basketball team. Following her playing career Joyce went on to coach the Florida Atlantic softball team for 28 years until her death last year. Joyce has a laundry list of accomplishments, most notably she is one of just three Americans to be inducted into the International Women's Sports Hall of Fame. With an athletic resume like she has, it was only natural to dedicate a countdown song to her.

This one is a natural fit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0I647GU3Jsc>

#29 – "Something About You" by Level 42 – I've always been a fan of 80s music, and this song was released at the very middle of the decade so it's no surprise this one makes another appearance in the countdown. It took a while for this song to reach the countdown, not appearing until it debuted at #42 in the Jeff's 43 Countdown. But since then, it has been included in every edition of the countdown. I dedicate this one to Sir Walter Raleigh, who was born on this day in 1522. Since my daughter, Courtney, enrolled at North Carolina State University, I've been spending a good amount of time in the city of Raleigh which is named in honor of Sir Walter. The campus of NC State resides in Raleigh which is the state capital of North Carolina. It's a great small city, home to my favorite barbeque joint, Clyde Cooper's. Sir Walter Raleigh was a soldier, writer, and explorer who in 1594 sailed to find the "City of Gold" in South America. Raleigh had many adventures in both the new world and the old world including settling colonies, searching for gold deposits, and even spending time in prison for his various transgressions. He led quite the extravagant life, which ended with him being beheaded. The countdown doesn't end here, it continues with the video for this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-zP66eSLto>

#30 – "Hurt" by Johnny Cash – In its third year in the countdown this song moves up four spots to kick off the Top 30. It debuted in The Jeff's 50 Countdown at #42 and then moved up eight spots the following year before moving up another four spots this year. I dedicate this one to Jalen Hurts, quarterback of the Philadelphia Eagles. Tonight, Hurts will lead the Eagles against the New York Football Giants in a battle for a spot in next week's NFC Championship Game. Regardless of the outcome of tonight's game, Hurts has had an incredible season. He started 15 games for the Eagles this year, winning all but one. He finished fourth in the league in passer rating and was tied for second in rushing touchdowns. That's not rushing touchdowns for a quarterback. That's rushing touchdowns for any player regardless of position. After entering the season with a tenuous hold on the Eagles' starting quarterback job, Hurts has clearly earned the right to have that title going forward. I absolutely love Hurts' commitment to winning, his drive

to be great, and the way he deflects praise onto his teammates. There is no doubt he has the leadership skills to go along with his athleticism. The only concern I have for Hurts is that his aggressive running style will lead to late season injuries much like how the Ravens' Lamar Jackson has been affected in recent seasons. The one thing I don't worry about is the need for a film study clause in Hurts' contract. We'll save such clauses in the contract for Kyler Murray and do some film study of this video from Johnny Cash: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AHCfZTRGiI>

#31 – "Stolen" by Dashboard Confessional – This long-term countdown song made its debut in the Jeff's 37 Countdown in the exact same #31 position. It ascended as high as the #5 position in the Jeff's 42 Countdown but was never able to supersede that. It exited the Top 10 two years later and hasn't returned. I dedicate this one to Nick Foles, who is celebrating his 34th birthday today. The day following his 29th birthday, Foles led the Philadelphia Eagles past the Minnesota Vikings in the NFC Championship Game, and two weeks after that he was the MVP of Super Bowl 52. The former Eagles quarterback had quite possibly the best ever two-game run for a Philadelphia quarterback as he led the Eagles to their first NFL Championship since 1960. Foles left the Eagles following the 2018 season to become a full-time starter, a gig which just never worked out for him despite several tries. After another failed start for the Indianapolis Colts this past season, Foles may no longer have a job as a backup quarterback either. Nonetheless, he was a Super Bowl MVP and will surely have his pick of whatever media job he wants in the city of Philadelphia, whenever he's ready to hang up his cleats. Before the gold and the glimmer have been replaced and another sun-soaked season fades away, here is the video for this song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q6FvTz0_kL0

#32 – "Lose Yourself" by Eminem – In its 12th year in the countdown, this song drops out of the Top 30 for the first time. Perhaps the drop was due to what I considered a rather mediocre performance from Eminem at last year's Super Bowl Halftime Show. That's a bit ironic because the reason this song entered the countdown 12 years ago was from its inclusion in a Chrysler commercial played during the Super Bowl the previous year. Now it's a Super Bowl performance that has caused its current recession. Since there seems to be a football theme with this song, I dedicate it to one of the greatest American Football players of all-time, the late Franco Harris. The running back who wore #32 for the Pittsburgh Steelers passed away late last year, just 3 days prior to the 50th Anniversary of "The Immaculate Reception." Most NFL historians consider "The Immaculate Reception" as the single greatest play in the history of the NFL, and Harris was at the heart of that play, making a shoestring catch and running into the end zone for the game winning score. A few seasons later, Pittsburgh began a streak of four Super Bowl wins in six seasons and Harris was the lifeblood of those teams. When Harris retired in 1984, he was third on the NFL's All-Time Rushing list. He was inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame in 1990 and remains a favorite among Steelers' fans. Even a Steelers hater like me can appreciate his greatness, just like I can appreciate the greatness of this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yhyp-hX2s>

#33 – "Superheroes" by The Script – After seven straight years inside the countdown's Top 30, this song falls outside of the Top 30 for the first time since the Jeff's 44 Countdown when it debuted in the #43 spot. I dedicate this one to Ross Tucker, the former NFL offensive lineman who played for five different NFL teams over the course of a seven-year career. Since retiring in 2007 the journeyman guard joined the media, announcing games for CBS Sports, Westwood One, and the Philadelphia Eagles. Tucker also hosts his own podcast and appears quite frequently on several radio programs, including a few of the football related radio shows I often listen to while driving in my truck or while walking my dog. Last week Tucker appeared on the 94 WIP morning show and was talking about his high school days at Wyomissing High School. Tucker talked about the pressure of playing Division I football and how playing in the NFL was a grind. He said playing in the NFL was his dream, but he never enjoyed playing the game more than when he played in high school. What Tucker said really struck a chord with me as I played high school basketball before going on to play at the small college level. I always dreamed about being able to play at a higher level than that but given the challenge of working toward an engineering degree in a cooperative education program, I just couldn't ever realize that dream. Hearing Tucker talk about how his high school playing days were his best playing days and how he and his teammates were the "superheroes" of their school made me feel much better about not pursuing my basketball dream any further than I did. I certainly enjoyed playing basketball in high school and I certainly enjoy the video for this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIm1GgfRz6M>

#34 – "Psycho" by Puddle of Mudd – Appearing in the Jeff's Countdown for a 15th consecutive year is this song which first debuted in the Jeff's 38 Countdown in the #24 position. From there it climbed the countdown ranks until it reached #8 in the Jeff's 43 Countdown. That was a great year for Puddle of Mudd as another one of their songs, "Blurry," occupied the countdown's top spot that year. "Blurry" spent another year at #1, but "Psycho" began to descend, and this year it falls into its lowest ever countdown position. I dedicate this one to Betsy Andreu. On the 10-year anniversary of Lance Armstrong's admission of doping on an airing of Oprah's Next Chapter, Andreu can celebrate 10 years of personal vindication. Betsy Andreu is the wife of former professional cyclist Frankie Andreu. During her husband's cycling days, she was privy to the drug use of both Armstrong and her husband. She testified against Armstrong in 2005 stating that Armstrong told cancer doctors in her presence in 1996 he had doped with EPO (erythropoietin), growth hormone, and steroids. This took place after Frankie Andreu began using performance-enhancing drugs himself in 1995. In the years following that testimony, Armstrong vehemently denied the accusations, and began a defamation campaign against the Andreu's. Armstrong famously called Betsy Andreu "fat" and threatened to break a baseball bat across her head. In the end the truth came out and the Andreu's were vindicated, while Armstrong saw his Tour de France titles stripped. Lance Armstrong will go down in history as one of the best endurance athletes ever, but one whose arrogance got the better of him, and one who may have been a bit "psycho." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDdeOncpD5E>

#35 – "Champaign Supernova" by Oasis – The album "(What's the Story) Morning Glory" is one of those albums where I love every song and can easily listen to the album in its entirety and thoroughly enjoy each track. Two of those tracks have reached the Jeff's Countdown, including this one which made its debut way back in the Jeff's 26 Countdown. It held the #15 spot that year before falling to #19 the following year. After that second appearance, this song went on a 23-year hiatus before resurfacing again last year. This year it moves up four spots. I dedicate this one to Caesar Augustus, also known as Gaius Octavius, who on this day in 27 B.C. was given the title Augustus by the Roman Senate, marking the beginning of the Roman Empire. After spending time in Italy and France last summer, I've started to learn more about the Roman Empire and the many parallels between it and the American Empire. Caesar Augustus ruled for 41 years and oversaw the prolific expansion of Roman territory. There were many good and bad aspects to his tenure as leader, but I respect him because historians point out that despite being the most powerful individual in the Roman Empire, Augustus wished to embody the spirit of Republican virtue and norms. He also wanted to relate to and connect with the concerns of the common people. I think that's one thing many of today's leaders miss, especially career politicians. Another important factoid about Augustus is that the month of August was named for him. This is important because that month was previously known as Sextilis, meaning that in today's abbreviation-happy world, we'd be abbreviating the eighth month of the year "Sex." The video for this song has a bit of sexiness to it as well and can be viewed from the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tI-5uv4wryI>

#36 – "Inside Out" by Eve 6 – Celebrating its 25th consecutive appearance in the countdown is this stalwart song which debuted way back in the Jeff's 28 Countdown. It climbed as high as the #2 spot in the Jeff's 32 Countdown, but this year it continues a recent countdown retreat, dropping 12 spots. I dedicate this one to Dave Stachowiak, host of the *Coaching for Leaders* podcast. I stumbled across Dave's podcast last winter when I was researching the topic of hybrid work. At the time, most of my team was working remotely due to the pandemic. Conditions improved to the point where they were now able to return to working in-plant, so I began looking to understand the pros and cons of working inside the plant versus out. My search on the subject uncovered episode 570 of the podcast, titled, "Effective Hybrid Team Management."

<https://coachingforleaders.com/podcast/effective-hybrid-team-management-hassan-osman/>

As is the case with most of Dave's podcasts, the format is a discussion with an expert on a certain leadership topic. The guest on this episode was Hassan Osman, who provided several insights which I've used in my everyday work life. After listening to that initial episode, I became a regular listener to the podcast, tuning in each week for a new episode and working my way backward through the library of 600+ episodes dating back to 2012. I recommend this podcast for just about everyone, leader or not. It's filled with great advice for many different situations. I also recommend the video for this song for just about everyone who likes good music:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8Xb_7YDroQ

#37 – "Possum Kingdom" by Toadies – After debuting at #43 in last year's countdown, this song moves up six spots and reaches this year's Top 40. I dedicate this one to Jim Dobler of Salisbury, North Carolina, who in a recent response on the Question & Answer website Quora, said that today, January 14, is the last day one should wish someone else a Happy New Year. I've been saying the same thing for several years, often commenting about it right here in the Jeff's Countdown. Thank you, Jim Dobler, for the #Validation. This song is for you: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkwD5rQ-_d4

#38 – "Girlfriend" by Matthew Sweet – This song has been around since 1991 but appears in the Jeff's Countdown for just the first time this year. I remember liking this song back in the 1990s, but I never purchased a Matthew Sweet album, or otherwise pirated this song by recording it from radio play or copying it from a friend as I often did in the 80s and early 90s. But now that we are in the era of Spotify, I added this song to one of my playlists, and it's been in my rotation ever since. What I like most about this song is the underrated guitar solo which comes about midway through. I'm not sure if it's Sweet or a studio musician playing that solo, but it really ties the song together quite nicely. I dedicate this one to another musician, the late Christine McVie, of Fleetwood Mac fame. McVie, who for a period of time was scandalously the secret girlfriend of Fleetwood Mac's lighting engineer, not only performed in the band but also wrote several of their most successful songs. Her catalog includes, "You Make Loving Fun," "Don't Stop," and "Songbird." She was also a contributing writer on many of the band's other songs. McVie died at the age of 79 in November of last year following a brief illness. Although her music never reached the ranks of the Jeff's Countdown, I still respect her work and have reverence for Fleetwood Mac. I also have reverence for the video for song #39 in the Jeff's 52 Countdown: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n12OB1cHx9E>

#39 – "Little Guitars" by Van Halen – Now in its third year in the Jeff's Countdown, this song has settled in quite nicely as my current favorite Van Halen single. I don't know anything about playing a guitar, but I do know that the intro to this song is next to impossible for even the best guitarists to replicate. I love the intro which is played on an acoustic guitar, and I love the way it transitions to the drums and then the electric guitar. David Lee Roth's vocals are top notch as well. In the YouTube Comments, @bleedlakerspng says it best, calling this song an underrated masterpiece and an absolute classic while pondering how "Jump" was their biggest hit with amazing cuts like this in their early portfolio. I agree and I dedicate this one to the late Kirstie Alley, who also had a successful early portfolio. Alley, who passed away last year, was born on this day in 1951. Her television career began with appearances on the popular game shows *Match Game* and *Password Plus*. A few years later she kicked off her acting career for real by appearing as a Vulcan Starfleet officer in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. Her big break came in 1987 when she joined the cast of NBC sitcom *Cheers*, replacing Shelley Long. It was kind of like Sammy Hagar replacing David Lee Roth in Van Halen. In this case Alley was analogous to Hagar, so perhaps this isn't the most representative song for this dedication, but this is the one we have: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VR1zPh3B92Q>

#40 – "Flood" by Jars of Clay – After debuting in the Jeff's 45 Countdown at the very same #40 position, the song from this Christian Rock band from Nashville spent the next four years ascending the countdown ranks until it reached its peak position of #25 in the Jeff's 49 Countdown. Since then, it dropped to #30 in the Jeff's 50 Countdown and remained in that position last year. This year it drops 10 spots into its original debut position. I dedicate this one to Leonard Thompson, who on this day in 1922 became the first person to receive an injection of insulin. The original injection contained impurities which rendered it ineffective, but the team of doctors and scientists supporting the project quickly figured out a way to purify the insulin and 12 days later Thompson was injected again. This time the shot was successful and Thompson, who was 13 years old and days away from dying, went on to live another 13 years before he died from pneumonia at age 26. Thompson was the first of a "flood" of patients saved through the use of insulin in the years since his brave famous first, 101 years ago. The video for this song came out nearly 28 years ago and can be viewed from the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNGLU_VsePg

#41 – "Cumbersome" by Seven Mary Three – When the pandemic took hold of the U.S. in March of 2020, I started listening to more 90's alternative and grunge music. I was turned on to the Lithium channel on SiriusXM by Howard Stern. I really grew to like the format of the channel, and I've been listening to it fairly frequently ever since. This song is often played there and over the last three years has become a favorite of mine. It debuted in the Jeff's 50 Countdown in the #48 position, moved up to #42 last year, and moves up one more spot this year. I dedicate this one to Swiss tennis star Roger Federer. The 20-time major champion retired from professional tennis last year at the age of 41. My interest in tennis began to wane when Pete Sampras retired in 2003, but in recent years I've started playing and watching the sport more frequently since my daughter Danielle has picked up the sport and is playing on her high school team. While Federer was never a favorite of mine (I definitely like Rafael Nadal better), I do respect his game and his longevity in a sport previously dominated by 20 somethings. As the window on the Federer/Nadal/Djokovic era begins to close, it will be interesting to see what happens next in Men's Professional Tennis. Will someone come along, dominate the sport, and challenge the record for major titles, currently held by Nadal with 22? Or will those titles be spread out among several challengers, diminishing the chances that any one individual will be able to vie for the records held by the Big 3? I may just renew my interest in tennis so I can watch the answers to those questions unfold in the coming years. While we wait on those answers, we can watch the video for this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjNn4bbbgSw>

#42 – "If You Ever Come Back" by The Script – Making its 11th consecutive appearance in the Jeff's Countdown is this 2011 release from one of the countdown's most successful artists. This is one of six songs from The Script to appear in the Jeff's Countdown. It debuted at #32 in the Jeff's 42 Countdown and reached its peak position of #16 in the Jeff's 47 Countdown. It has lost ground in each subsequent year, and in this edition, it falls to its lowest ever position. I dedicate this one to product designer and businessman, Jony Ive. The former Chief Design Officer for Apple, Inc. was the design officer for Apple's original iPhone project, known in the early days as "Project Purple."

The iPhone was introduced to the public on this day in 2007. There is no doubt it changed the world, ushering in the era of the smartphone and the “cell phone app economy.” Ive left Apple a few years ago to start his own company and most recently began working with Ferrari on the design of their vehicles. In my opinion the most recent models of the iPhones have been a bit lackluster so I’m hoping Ive might return to Apple and re-invigorate the innovation for the iPhone. Perhaps Apple will leave his old office door unlatched and iPhone under the mat in case he might ever come back:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJIUmzQlXDM>

#43 – “Best of Times” by Styx – It’s been 21 years since this song spent one singular year in the countdown’s top spot. It was in the Jeff’s 31 Countdown that this song reached its pinnacle, and although it’s fallen down the countdown ranks since then, it continues to hang on. This year marks 26 consecutive appearances. I dedicate this one to Isabel Allende. The Chilean writer, referred to by many as the world’s most widely read Spanish-language author, moved to the United States in 1989 and was granted U.S. citizenship in 1993. President Barack Obama awarded Allende the 2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom. I knew nothing about Isabel Allende until I read an article about her in the *New York Times* a few months ago. The article mentioned that Allende always starts a new book on this day, January 8, every year, and she works everyday Monday through Saturday from 9 AM to 7 PM, presumably until the book is complete. I respect that kind of work ethic and admire that kind of discipline and commitment to a routine. I also respect and admire this song very much:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzJGxpcenc>

#44 – “Break My Heart” by Dua Lipa – Back for a second year in the countdown is this contemporary pop song from the former model and current fashion diva. Lipa is one of the few new pop artists I enjoy listening to. I also gave serious consideration to Lipa’s song “Levitating,” but it fell just short of the Top 52. I dedicate the #44 song to Galileo Galilei, the Italian astronomer who on this day in 1610 discovered the four largest moons of Jupiter, known as the Galilean Moons. Galileo is 16th on my list of my Top 40 scientists and inventors. Among his other achievements, Galileo is also credited with the development of the Scientific method. As someone who has studied science and work in the field most of his life, I appreciate the discipline and prescriptiveness of Galileo’s approach to scientific learning and discovery. And speaking of discovery, you can discover the video for this song at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nj2U6rhnucl>

#45 – “Beverly Hills” by Weezer – It looked like this song was on life support last year when it dropped all the way down to the #49 position. This was after spending nine of its prior 17 years within the countdown Top 20. Now it appears this song has undergone a resurgence as it moves up four spots. I dedicate this one to Ivan Reitman, the Hollywood director/producer who passed away last year. Reitman, who spent much of his time with actors and actresses from Beverly Hills, was actually born in Czechoslovakia, and raised in Canada. He began his career in Toronto, in local television and stage productions. His big break came when he produced *National Lampoon’s Animal House* in 1978 and directed *Meatballs* in 1979. From there, he directed and produced several comedies

including *Stripes*, *Ghostbusters*, *Kindergarten Cop*, and *Dave*, all favorites of mine. He also served as producer for, *Private Parts*, the 1997 adaptation of Howard Stern's autobiography. It's a shame that with all that great work Reitman never won an Oscar or other major award. He even directed a music video, that being "Ghostbusters" by Ray Parker, Jr. He didn't direct this one, but I include the link here in his honor:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL_WvOly7mY

#46 – "I Lived" by OneRepublic – In addition to seeing Pitbull in concert this summer I also saw OneRepublic. I've obviously been a big fan of OneRepublic for several years as evidenced from the trio of OneRepublic songs that have been included in the countdown ranks through the years. The debut of "I Lived" in this year's countdown makes it a quartet. I dedicate this one to my daughter Allison. She will graduate from college this Spring and begin life her on own shortly thereafter. Very soon she'll be in the process of interviewing for jobs and deciding what she wants to do and where she wants to live. I look forward to giving her advice as she contemplates her potential opportunities, but ultimately, I just want her to be able to say "I lived" as she moves through life. I can't think of a better song to dedicate to her at this point in her life. I love the lyrics which is why I have posted the version which includes the lyrics here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMKOume1hNQ>

#47 – "Forever Young" by Alphaville – Like the #49 song in this year's countdown, this one was also featured in the movie *Napoleon Dynamite*. And this one also celebrates ten appearances in the countdown this year. It debuted at #40 in the Jeff's 43 Countdown and rose as high as #24 in the Jeff's 48 edition of the countdown. I dedicate this song #47 to John Lynch, general manager of the San Francisco 49ers, who wore #47 during his playing days. Lynch played for the 2002 Buccaneers who upset my Philadelphia Eagles in the NFC Championship Game that year, in what may have been the Andy Reid era Eagles' best chance at winning a Super Bowl. I always considered Lynch a great player, but I gained a new respect for him after watching his episode of *A Football Life*, a documentary show which airs on NFL Network. It was impressed with Lynch's football life, but also a bit jealous to know that he's the same age as me but looks about 20 years younger. Evidently, he's forever young while I'm just forever immature. As such, this is an appropriate song to dedicate to him:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1TcDHrkQYg>

#48 – "Alive Again" by Chicago – This song has been around since 1978, but it didn't become a favorite of mine until I purchased tickets to see Chicago play during the summer of 2021. I hadn't been listening to much Chicago music prior to purchasing those tickets, so I found their set list on the internet and created a Spotify playlist in advance of the show so I could better familiarize myself with the songs I was going to hear. "Alive Again" quickly became one of my favorites on that playlist and following the concert I moved it into my regular rotation of songs I routinely listen to. The song debuted in the Jeff's Countdown last year at the leadoff position of #51 and remained popular with me throughout the year. During church service on Easter, my church brought in a brass section to supplement the music. Listening to those brass instruments made me long to hear this song, and on Easter, "Alive Again," felt like an appropriate

song to play, perhaps with some alternate lyrics, but title is certainly suitable. Of course it wasn't played during the service, but I did play it for myself later that day and started to work on revised lyrics to make it a praise song. This year, as it moves up 3 spots in the countdown, I dedicate it to one of my favorite authors, J.R.R. Tolkien. The father of modern fantasy literature was born on this day in 1892. I read the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy as a teenager and those books remain among my favorite reads of all time. Unfortunately, I didn't discover this song as a teenager, or perhaps it would have reached the countdown sooner. As it is, it's here now and here is the video for it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtt5JPstK0w>

#49 – "The Promise" by When in Rome – Despite losing ground for a fourth year in a row, this song hangs on for a tenth consecutive appearance in the Jeff's Countdown. It debuted at #28 in the Jeff's 43 Countdown and ascended to #24 the following year. A few years later it would reach the #24 spot again, but it never moved any higher. I dedicate this one to Rocky Marciano, the legendary heavyweight boxing champion. Marciano won 49 matches during his professional career and never suffered a defeat, making him the only professional boxing champion with an undefeated record. Most boxing experts don't regard him as the best heavyweight boxer ever due to the perceived lack of competition during his era, but I've always had a fondness for him given his perfect record. I also lament the tragic manner in which he died. Marciano was killed when the small aircraft he was travelling in crashed while making an approach to landing. The pilot was relatively inexperienced and was flying in bad weather. The aircraft hit a tree just a few miles short of the runway. The crash occurred the day before Marciano's 46th birthday. He was flying to an event where he was supporting the friend of a son. While away, his wife was setting up a surprise birthday party for him to be held the next day. It's a stark reminder that no day is promised to us, not even our birthdays. What I can promise to the readers of the Jeff's Countdown is the link to the video for this song (at least until YouTube changes their website architecture):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HI_xFQWiYU

#50 – "Adventure of a Lifetime" by Coldplay – After delaying a planned trip to Europe for a couple of years due to the pandemic, my family and I finally completed our personal adventure of a lifetime during the summer of 2022. We started with flight from New York City to Barcelona where we boarded a cruise that would take us to several Mediterranean ports in Spain, France, and Italy. We saw many memorable places including the birthplace of Napoleon, the birthplace of pizza, and the birthplace of the Roman Empire. Along the way we saw statues, castles, cathedrals, and other architectural marvels such as the Roman Coliseum. After returning to Barcelona a week later, we boarded a train which took us to Paris. There we saw even more grandeur, including the Eiffel Tower, the Arch de Triomphe, and the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Following a couple of days in Paris, we ventured a 100 or so miles northward to the small town of Arenberg which sits just south of the Belgium border. It was there we watched the final few meters of Stage 5 of the Tour de France. It was a fun day and something I had wanted to do for several years. Following another day of sight seeing in Paris, we returned home, weary from almost two full weeks on the road. Despite the many sights I just described the highlight of the trip for me was the morning we spent exploring the

ruins of the ancient city of Pompeii. It was fascinating to me to see how people lived 2,000 years ago, the city they built, and how they built it. It was also interesting to see how much that old city had in common with modern cities. For example, Pompeii had sidewalks like we have today. Their houses were divided into various rooms, and they had kitchen counters with sinks similar to what we have today. I guess there is truth in Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr's saying that the more things change the more they stay the same. Given my affection for exploring the Pompeii, I dedicate this song to Karl Jakob Weber, the Swiss architect and engineer who led the first organized excavations at Pompeii. Weber's approach was one of preservation. Prior excavators were essentially pirates digging for gold and other valuable artifacts for their own profit. Weber, on the other hand, began the effort to uncover and preserve the city of Pompeii for the architectural marvel that it was. Weber began his work in 1749, and to-date only 2/3 of the excavation is complete. Approximately 22 more acres remain buried by the ash and earth from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 A.D. I'm thankful for Weber and those who came after him who took meticulous care in uncovering the ancient city so I could richly enjoy my experience on my adventure of the lifetime. Here now is the Adventure of a Lifetime as brought to us by Coldplay:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtXby3twMml>

#51 – "Interstate 80" by Tom Morello featuring Slash – Former Rage Against the Machine and Audioslave guitarist Tom Morello used the Covid-19 pandemic to unleash his creative genius and collaborative tendencies. The Libertyville, Illinois native spent the greater part of the pandemic living with his mom, Mary Morello, in the small town of Marseilles, which is the neighboring town to Ottawa, Illinois, where I lived for 5 years during the late 1990s. Interstate 80 runs adjacent to both towns as the main East to West thoroughfare through Illinois. I've travelled it many times. As I heard this song played for the first time while listening to Morello's *One Man Revolution* show on SiriusXM, memories of the many times I spent driving on Interstate 80 came rushing back to me. When I checked out the video for the song, I also caught footage of what I thought were very familiar surroundings from in and around the town of Marseilles. The video also features the animated "Guitar Hero" versions of Morello and Slash battling it out in the popular Nintendo game. The mixture of the memories, the video, and the monster guitar-shredding riffs from both Morello and Slash instantly made this song a favorite of mine. After adding the song to my Spotify playlist a couple of years ago, it now makes it's debut in the Jeff's Countdown. I dedicate it to U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower. After Eisenhower became President in 1953, his administration developed a proposal for an interstate highway system, eventually resulting in the passage of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. Interstate 80 was one of the originally planned pieces of the interstate system, although it took nearly 30 years to fully complete. This song, and its video were made much more quickly than that as Morello and Slash didn't have much else to do during the pandemic. You can view the result of their work from the link below. If you are familiar with the Marseilles, Illinois, region, be sure to look for scenes of that area in the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFQYBtADwT0>

#52 – "Fireball" by Pitbull featuring John Ryan – After watching Pitbull perform on television a few times I decided to earmark him as an artist I wanted to see in concert. I loved his energy and the way he played to the crowd. In July of 2022, I finally took the opportunity to see him in when he and played at Hershey Stadium. Tickets at Hershey Stadium are notoriously inexpensive, and I couldn't pass on the opportunity to check Mr. Worldwide off the list of artists I wanted to see. I wasn't disappointed. The concert was great, and this song was easily my favorite. I couldn't let this countdown pass without paying the proper respect to Pitbull and including my favorite Pitbull song. I left the concert liking Pitbull even more than I did previously. It wasn't just his performance that night. It was also what he said in between sets. I loved his message of how one needs to work hard to achieve success in life. That fits my values quite well. I also liked his statement about race. He said he believes there is only one race, the human race. At a time when division seems to be growing, I like Pitbull's attempt to unify. I dedicate this one to longtime actor William Shatner. I was never a big fan of Star Trek, the 1960s television series which brought Shatner to fame, but I do find his dramatic "talk-singing" quite amusing. He's a regular target of jokes on the *Howard Stern Show* on SiriusXM satellite radio where an impersonator frequently talk-sings various popular songs. After listening to "Fireball" one morning while running on my treadmill in my basement, I decided to test out how the song would sound as a dramatic talk-sing. As it was it sounded great. It sounded great to me at least. When I went back upstairs, I was embarrassed to learn that my wife Cindy had heard my Shatner-style talk-singing. So much for what I thought was soundproof insulation in the basement ceiling. While my talk-singing is second to none, I will spare everyone a repeat performance of that and just include the proper version of this Jeff's Countdown debut song which can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMqgVXSvwGo>

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