

THE JEFF'S 53 COUNTDOWN

February 19, 2024

#1 – "Can't Find My Way Home" by Blind Faith – Returning for a second year at the top of the countdown is this song which was released a year and a half before I was born. It took another 47 years before it reached the countdown in 2019. It debuted that year at number 34 and immediately rocketed up to number 14 the following year. After subsequent jumps to number 4 and 2, it did the once unthinkable and knocked Justin Timberlake out of the top spot. To close the Jeff's 53 Countdown in similar fashion to how it opened, I dedicate this song to a former actor from the *Rocky* franchise who recently passed away. This time it's Carl Weathers who died on February 1 of this year. The former Oakland Raider, who left the game of football the year I was born, died in his sleep 39 years after Ivan Drago killed his character, Apollo Creed, in the ring. Weathers was great in the Apollo role regardless of whether he was playing Rocky's nemesis Apollo, or Rocky's master motivator Apollo. After a life of 76 years, Carl Weathers has finally found his way home. Steve Windwood, who coincidentally was born the same year Weathers was, is still trying to find his way home as is evidenced in the video for this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8L82III1Njo>

#2 – "Counting Stars" by OneRepublic – This song celebrates ten straight years of countdown appearances by moving up one spot from last year into its highest ever position. In addition to ten straight years in the countdown, this year also marks seven straight appearances in the Top 10. I dedicate this one to my beautiful wife of 25+ years, Cindy Rogers. Typically, I would reserve the #1 spot for Cindy, but this year, a late celebrity death has led me to change course. Dedicating the #1 song to this celebrity will allow me to close out the countdown in similar fashion to how I opened it, and I simply can't ignore the opportunity to induce that kind of symmetry into the countdown. I love symmetry almost as much as I love Cindy. I count my lucky stars every night that she came into my life so many years ago and accepted my proposal for us to spend the rest of our lives together. She has been a super mom and more recently a super associate, and of course has always been a super wife. And this of course, is a super video for this super song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT_nvWreIhg

#3 – "Collide" by Howie Day – Now in its 19th straight year in the countdown, this song has made a few runs toward the top, although it's yet to reach the pinnacle. The first run took the song to the #3 spot for the Jeff's 40 Countdown. It stayed at number 3 for a second year before it began to fade. It dropped all the way to #20, before its second run took it all the way to #2 for the Jeff's 49 Countdown. It spent a second year at #2, before it once again dipped. This time it only dropped to #5 and quickly rebounded to number 4 last year, and this year it moves another spot higher. I dedicate this one to former baseball player and baseball executive, Branch Rickey. He only connected on three home runs during his playing career, yet he was still elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. After failing as a player and failing as a coach, Rickey finally found his calling as an

executive. In that role, he created the framework for what eventually became the minor league farm system. He introduced the batting helmet, a safety feature which likely saved multiple lives through the years as pitchers increased the velocity of their pitches over time. Rickey, however, is probably most famous for being the man who signed Jackie Robinson to play for the Brooklyn Dodgers, breaking baseball's color barrier in 1947. Given the success Rickey achieved in his career, some would say he was lucky. To that he would say that luck is the residue of design and that his success was the point at which hard work and opportunity collide. And this video comes from the point where music and film collide: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca9ub9rpNK4>

#4 – "What Goes Around... Comes Around" by Justin Timberlake – This song spent seven consecutive years in the countdown's top spot before it dropped to number 2 last year. It won't be making a return trip to the top this year as it drops two spots in its now 17th consecutive year in the countdown. I dedicate this one to the late Tim McCarver, who died on this day last year. McCarver was a former Major League Baseball player who played ball in four different decades, ending his career playing with the Philadelphia Phillies as Steve Carlton's personal catcher. That job assignment helped McCarver reach 121 shutouts as a catcher which ranks 9th all-time. Following his playing days, he became a color commentator for the Phillies local broadcast team. That's where I got to know McCarver, as I was a big Phillies fan during the early 1980s. He later became a national broadcaster and was eventually paired with Joe Buck on the Fox network's MLB telecasts, a role he held for 18 years. McCarver set a record for most times broadcasting a World Series. He ended his career with 24 World Series broadcasts for ABC, CBS, and Fox. My favorite memory of Tim McCarver was when he entered into a feud with Deion Sanders. The feud started during the 1992 National League Championship Series. Sanders was a two-sport star, playing for both the MLB's Atlanta Braves and the NFL's Atlanta Falcons. During the 1992 MLB playoffs, McCarver criticized Sanders for playing both sports on the same day. Sanders reacted to the criticism by literally dumping a bucket of ice water on McCarver following Game 7 of the series, a clinching victory for the Braves. After being doused with the water, McCarver shouted at Sanders, "You are a real man, Deion. I'll say that." I think McCarver also hinted that destiny might pay Sanders back for his hubris. I'm not sure karma ever came around for Deion, but the video for this song is still an appropriate one to play in light of that situation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IC8qPpnD0uE>

#5 – "Flagpole Sitta" by Harvey Danger – After debuting in the countdown three years ago, this song has consistently risen through the ranks. This year it moves up eight spots and breaks into the Top 5. Not only has this song become a top countdown contender, it has also replaced "Plush" by Stone Temple Pilots as my go to karaoke song. For this reason, I dedicate it to the guy sitting to the right of me at the poker table at the Borgata casino in Atlantic City on Maundy Thursday last year. Despite having several long conversations during our two or so hours of poker playing against each other, I don't remember his name. I just remember that it was his decision to call my all-in with queens, when I had kings, that led me to win my first ever GOPT Atlantic City bracelet championship. I started with a stack of \$240 in chips, and prior to that winning hand, I was up to about \$260. We were playing \$2-\$5 blinds, and with cowboys, I raised to \$15.

The guy to my right and one other player called, bringing the pot to \$45. The flop came with three under cards, but two of which were spades which gave me an uneasy feeling. Frightened that I could be beaten by someone playing for a flush, I decided to bet the entirety of my chip stack. I also knew that the guy to my right had won three consecutive hands and had a big stack. I thought he might suspect I was trying to buy the pot and pay me off. It was either that, or he thought his queens would be good enough, but he called my all-in. I avoided another queen with the two final cards and suddenly I was sitting with \$590. That gave me a commanding chip lead over my fellow GOPT contenders and from that point forward, I just needed to fold for another 45 minutes to clinch the win. I ended the night with a profit of \$335. More importantly, I won a hard fought GOPT AC Major Bracelet, which I was close to winning several times before but to this point had been so elusive. I celebrated the win with a visit to Planet Rose where I karaoked to this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYsMjEeEg4g>

#6 – "Take Back The Night" by Justin Timberlake – Life couldn't be much better for Justin Timberlake. A new tour was announced just a couple of weeks ago, a new album is set to drop next month, and now the news that this song has appeared in the Jeff's Countdown for a tenth consecutive year. After debuting at number 27, this song quickly ascended the countdown ranks, topping out at #3 in the Jeff's 49 Countdown. Following a two-year descension that landed it at number 10, it began a resurgence last year, moving up to number 8. This year it moves up another two spots as it celebrates its countdown ten-year anniversary. I dedicate this one to my daughter Allison Rogers. Every Valentine's Day, I think back fondly on the basketball game Allison played on Valentine's Day 2018. With her team, Elkton, deadlocked in a 46-46 tie against one of their bigger rivals, Harford Tech, Allison's coach designed a play which gave her the opportunity to make the game winning shot. Allison delivered on that opportunity, nailing a 15-foot jumper from the foul line extended that touched nothing but net. That basket gave Elkton the win and was the icing on the cake of Allison's best game of her high school career. While I'm proud of how Allison took advantage of that opportunity to be the hero of that one basketball game, I'm even more proud of the strong and thoughtful young woman she has become. She graduated with a degree in Architecture and began her first professional job last year, and I couldn't be prouder of her. I think I may be even more proud of Allison than Justin Timberlake is of making the countdown for a tenth straight year with this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEzREJbln-o>

#7 – "Blurry" by Puddle of Mudd – Ten years ago, this song ascended to the #1 position in the countdown. It stayed there for a second year before giving way to a new #1. This song was essentially a bridge song between Nickelback's "How You Remind Me" and Justin Timberlake's "What Goes Around... Comes Around." Despite the longer stays at the top for those two other songs, this one had much success in its own right. In addition to its two years at the top, "Blurry" spent 15 years inside the Top 5 and 21 of its now 22 total years inside the Top 10. It's only year outside the Top 10 was last year when it came in at #11. On this Galentine's Day holiday, I dedicate this one to, Michael Schur, the true creator of Galentine's Day. Leslie Knope may have brought it into the public consciousness during Season 2 Episode 16 of *Parks and Recreation*, but it was

Schur who created it during a writer's meeting several days prior to that. Of course Schur was also famous for his work on *The Office* and *The Good Place*, two of my favorite shows. While Schur produced two great shows, this song produced two great years at number one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJJsoquu70o>

#8 – "The Rain Song" by Led Zeppelin – I tend to listen to this song when it is literally raining in my life. It rained a lot last year, so perhaps that's why this has made a big jump of eight spots, landing inside the Top 10 for the first time in its four years in the countdown. Rick Rubin once said, "I could listen to this song all day. That would be a good day." I think that's why I listen to this song when it rains, not because the word "rain" is in the title, but because it makes me feel good on an otherwise dreary day. I dedicate this one to astronaut, Frank Borman, the Commander of Apollo-8, the first mission to fly around the moon. Borman, who died last year, coincidentally appears on the cover of Led Zeppelin's second album. The artwork used for that album cover was an airbrushed remake of a photograph of the Jagdstaffel 11 Division of the German Air Force from World War I. The faces from the photo were replaced by artist David Juniper via airbrushing. The faces added were those of the band members, along with several other celebrities of the time. One of those celebrities was supposed to be astronaut Neil Armstrong, but instead Juniper unknowingly used a picture of Borman. So, this gives Borman a trifecta of recognition – a trip around the moon, an appearance on a Led Zeppelin album cover, and of course the most significant accomplishment of them all, a dedication in the Jeff's 53 Countdown. Just like this song, that helps one feel better on a rainy day: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeDylD8dV7U>

#9 – "Shape of You" by Ed Sheeran – After debuting at #21 in The Jeff's 47 Countdown, this song ascended the countdown ranks each and every subsequent year until it reached #5 last year. This year it drops for the first time, losing four spots. The reason for the drop may have been due to me seeing Sheeran in concert for the first time last year. While still my favorite Ed Sheeran song, it may have slipped in the ranks a little compared to some of his other songs which I'm starting to like almost as much. I also think this one gets overplayed a bit on the local radio station. That said, it's still a Top 10 song in the Jeff's Countdown and that's not too shabby. I dedicate this #9 song to Dawn Staley. The head coach of the South Carolina women's basketball team was drafted #9 in the 1999 WNBA draft. That was after her career at Dobbins Tech in Philadelphia, Virginia University, a stint playing in Europe, and a stint playing in a lower-level domestic league. It was also after winning the first of her three Olympic Gold Medals as a member of the U.S.A. Women's Basketball Team. While still playing in the WNBA, Staley became the head coach of the Temple women's basketball program, and after achieving success at Temple, she moved on to South Carolina in 2008. Under Staley, South Carolina has captured five SEC regular season championships, seven SEC tournament titles, four Final Fours, two NCAA National Championships, seven sweet sixteen appearances, five SEC player of the year awards and five SEC freshman of the year awards. Staley has been awarded SEC coach of the year five times. She also had her team at 32-1 and #1 in the polls when the 2020 NCAA Women's Tournament was cancelled due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. There is no doubt that Staley and her program at South Carolina has overtaken Geno Auriemma and his Connecticut team as the top

program in women's college basketball. Despite all that, the reason I dedicate this song to Staley is because of what she tells her team following a tough loss. This is her famous quote: "Things didn't quite work out like we wanted them too, but... we still have you, and you still have us." I think that's a great message and a great reminder that things don't always work out the way we want them to, but if we continue to surround ourselves with great people and work hard, then the next time the result will likely be better. It doesn't get much better than what Dawn Staley has accomplished in her career, and it doesn't get much better than what Ed Sheeran has done in his career, which of course includes the video for the #9 song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGwWNGJdvx8>

#10 – "Jane Says" by Jane's Addiction – This year's Top 10 kicks off with the countdown's biggest mover. The ode to Jane Bainter, which is now in its third year in the countdown, moves up 14 big spots this year which follows an advance of 11 spots the year prior. I absolutely love the live version of this song from the Kettle Whistle album. This version of the song opens with an extended bongo introduction, over Perry Ferrell's scat vocals, before abruptly shifting to steel drums for the percussion parts of the tune. I also like different structure of the song. The format does not follow standard verse–chorus form, instead it includes three verses and a bridge section with a coda ending. I dedicate this song to Doyle Brunson, a man whose life didn't follow a standard format either. Brunson, who died last year at age 89, was a professional poker player for over 50 years. He won ten total World Series of Poker Championship bracelets over the course of his career. His ten all-time bracelets is second only to Phil Hellmuth. Brunson's life was unique in that an aggressive form of cancer was detected in his neck while his wife was pregnant with their first child. Doctors operated on Brunson in an attempt to extend his life long enough to experience the birth of his child. Following the surgery, the cancer did not reoccur as expected, and Brunson went on to live a relatively healthy life from that point forward. Of course, Brunson's life was also unique in that he was a professional poker player. And here is a unique video for a unique song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-PzoKyv9fvk>

#11 – "Piano Man" by Billy Joel – The only song to be included in each and every edition of the Jeff's Countdown makes it 33 straight appearances this year. Not only has this song made every edition of the countdown, it has never been ranked any lower than #15. It even moves up one spot from where it resided last year. This song holds many countdown records including 11 years in the #1 position. I dedicate this one to a college basketball coach who also set many records. One of those records was an all-time high of 11 Big Ten Championships. I'm speaking of Robert Montgomery Knight, head coach of the Indiana Hoosiers for 30 years between my birth year of 1971 and 2000. Prior to his stint at Indiana, Knight was head coach for Army where he coached a future legend in Mike Krzyzewski. Following the Indiana gig, Knight spent another eight seasons at Texas Tech. Knight passed away last November. While he will be remembered for his hot temper and courtside antics, Knight was a great basketball coach just like Billy Joel was a great piano player and songwriter as evidenced by this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxEPV4kolz0>

#12 – "Breakeven" by The Script – When this song was released in late 2008 it quickly became a favorite of mine. It didn't show up in the countdown until a couple of year's later, but when it did, its position was quite high for a debut song, appearing in the number 22 spot in The Jeff's 40 Countdown. It remained in that #22 position for another year until it began an ascension that took it all the way to #2 in The Jeff's 45 Countdown. It only spent one year at number 2 and never broke through to number 1, but it did spend a total of eight years inside the Top 5. And this is the first time in ten years it drops outside of the Top 10, falling six spots from its #6 position of last year. I dedicate this one to French author, Jules Verne, who was born on this day in 1828. Famous for his adventure novel, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*, Verne has been the second most-translated author in the world since 1979, ranking below Agatha Christie and above William Shakespeare. I remember reading Verne as an assignment in school, and it being one of the more enjoyable books I ever read for school. I find the video for this song rather enjoyable as well: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MzCLLHscMOw>

#13 – "Don't You (Forget About Me)" by Simple Minds – Now in its 7th year in the countdown, this song moves up two spots into its highest ever position. When I hear this song come on the radio, it takes me back to August of 2019 when I used this music to create a video submission for entry into the Adam Caplan Invitational Fantasy Football League. I didn't make the selection then, or any other year I applied, dating back to my first entry in 2018. My daughter, Courtney Rogers, helped me make my video in 2019 and once again last year when she served as creative director. Therefore, I dedicate this song to her. One of these years I'm going to earn the invite into the ACI, and when I do, I'm sure it's likely I'll have Courtney to thank. Until then, I'll just have to turn to this video for potential inspiration: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gLVqjIvokc>

#14 – "Wonderwall" by Oasis – Two years ago this song peaked at number 7 in the countdown. Last year, it spent another year in the number 7 position before falling off the pace this year. I dedicate this one to number 14 on the football field, Amon-Ra St. Brown. I drafted St. Brown in my fantasy football league this with my pick in our Player Redistribution and Rookie Free Agent Draft. I felt my team needed a young wide receiver that I could count on last year and in the years to come. Coincidentally, St. Brown finished the season as the number 14 overall fantasy scorer in my league. He was #3 in scoring for wide receivers. That made him a bargain from the number 20 draft slot where I selected him. As a still young and ascending player, I'm looking forward to having Amon-Ra on my team for the next several years. You could say I love him like a sun... god. And you could say I love the video for this song as well: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx1Bh8ZvH84>

#15 – "Kids" by OneRepublic – Following a six-year run of positive gains in the countdown, this song takes a step back for the first time. After breaking through into the Top 10 last year, in the number 9 position, it drops six spots this year. I dedicate this one to Kyle Shanahan, head coach of the San Francisco 49ers. On this day in 2017, Shanahan was coaching in the Super Bowl as offensive coordinator for the Atlanta Falcons. With less than 3 minutes remaining in the third quarter, the Falcons held a 28-3 lead over the New England Patriots. Through a combination of conservative offensive play calling

from the Falcons, breakdowns on the defensive side of the ball, and the magnificence of Tom Brady, the winningest quarterback in the history of the big game, the Falcons managed to lose the 25-point lead and drop the game to the Patriots, 34-28. A week ago yesterday, Shanahan encountered the situation in reverse. This time, as head coach of the 49ers, his team was facing the upstart Detroit Lions the NFC Championship Game. The Lions held a 24-7 lead at halftime, midway through the third quarter, with the lead now 24-10, the Lions had moved the ball into San Francisco territory and were in position to score once again. Faced with a 4th down and 2 at the 49ers 28-yard line, Lions coach, Dan Campbell, wasted a timeout, and then made the disastrous decision to go for it on fourth down. The alternative option would have been to try a 45-yard field goal which would have restored the Lions lead to 17 points. Such a lead would have required the 49ers to possess the ball and score at least three times. More importantly, a successful field goal would have prevented a significant momentum shift in favor of the 49ers. As it was, an obviously anxiety ridden Josh Reynolds dropped a pass that would have resulted in a Lions' first down. Now you could say Campbell made the right decision, and blame the unfavorable result on Josh Reynolds, but I would vehemently disagree with that assessment. Sure, Reynolds screwed up by losing concentration and dropping the pass, but Campbell's decision to forgo the field goal was the fatal flaw. The risk of going for the first down was far greater than the potential reward. The reward was a first down at the 25-yard line. It wasn't points. The Lions would still have to had to cover 25 or so more yards to receive the award of the four additional points. The risk however was exactly what transpired. The defensive stop gave the 49ers momentum. It gave their players hope and confidence. Conversely, the Lions' players began to doubt the outcome of the contest. That one decision was the turning point of the game. The drive prior, the 49ers were in a similar position. For them it was a 4th and 8 at the 25-yard line. The distance to go was a little longer making the decision a bit easier, but Kyle Shanahan made the right decision in going for the field goal. The successful field goal made it a two-possession game, but more importantly it helped the 49ers' players regain their confidence that they could come back and win the game. It also prevented a big momentum shift back in the Lions direction. And finally, Shanahan didn't need to waste a timeout to make his decision. He was thinking ahead and had a plan for what to do if the situation presented itself. In addition to his leadership skills, Shanahan is also a solid offensive coach. OneRepublic put together a solid video for this song and you can watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y56lpXvXbs0>

#16 – "American Girl" by Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers – Loyal readers of the Jeff's Countdown blog know that I'm haunted by the fact that I twice turned down the chance to see Tom Petty in concert just a few months before he died in 2017. That event sent me down a potentially overly restrictive path of wanting to only go to concerts featuring artists I've never seen before. This is so I don't end up missing someone the way I now miss never having seen Petty perform live. A few days ago, two of my children independently approached me with the news that Justin Timberlake is going on tour with dates in Raleigh, Baltimore, and Hershey, all places I would typically go to see one of my favorite artists. When I didn't seem overly excited by this news, my kids were a bit surprised, as they know I have unhealthy obsession with Justin Timberlake. What they didn't know was that I had already seen Timberlake live, almost 10 years ago, on

July 14, 2014. That was a great show and I'd love to see JT again, but there are several other great artists touring in 2024, many of which I haven't yet seen. So, it will be an interesting decision as to which concert or concerts I will go to this year. In terms of a dedication for this song, I send it out to the late Suzanne Somers. The actress, who portrayed Chrissie Snow on one of my favorite shows of the 1970s, passed away last Fall following a battle with cancer. This song was popular at the same time Somers' show, *Three's Company*, was popular, and you can tell it was also from the 70s from watching the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hm4FbWX4FM>

#17 – "25 or 6 to 4" by Chicago – This song debuted in the countdown five years ago at number 47. It has ascended every year since, including a three-spot increase in this edition. The song was released in 1970, and the band Chicago was big throughout the 70s, as was the television show *All In The Family*. The show broke ground in its depiction of issues previously considered unsuitable for a US network television comedy, such as racism, antisemitism, infidelity, homosexuality, religion, abortion, breast cancer, the Vietnam War, menopause, and impotence to name a few. The show, while advertised as a sitcom, doubled as a cutting-edge drama. Norman Lear developed and produced the show and was universally lauded for bringing real life to the television screen. I laud Lear by dedicating this song to him. He passed away late last year at the age of 101, but his legacy lives on as does this 54-year-old song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uAUoz7jimg>

#18 – "Regulate" by Warren G. featuring Nate Dogg – After a five-year run inside the Top 15, this song drops eight spots into its current position. It debuted at #34 in The Jeff's 46 Countdown and began its streak of Top 15 appearances just two years later. On his birthday, I dedicate this one to George Toma. Known as the Sod Father, Toma is a well-known groundskeeper who has been the field supervisor for every single Super Bowl through last season. Following last year's big game, Toma resigned from that position amid a whirlwind of controversy. The field conditions for Super Bowl LVII were abhorrent. Players were constantly slipping with large divots of turf regularly becoming unearthed. As an Eagles' fan, it was frustrating to see Eagles' players slipping and sliding as the team's lead was sliding away. Knowing Toma was the longtime groundskeeper for the Chiefs didn't help matters either. Both teams had to play on the same field, so I'm not using that as an excuse why my favorite team lost, I'm simply sharing how it hurt to know the quality of the playing field fell so far short of what it should have been for the World's biggest sporting event. As I researched how this monstrosity could have transpired, I initially placed the blame on Toma. He was the field supervisor after all, and he was quick to blame field director Ed Mangan for overwatering the turf the morning of the game. I'm not a fan of leaders who blame their subordinates. It's poor form in my opinion. But as I dug deeper into this issue, I came to learn how constrained Toma was in his ability to prepare the field. In the days leading up to the game, the NFL dictated that the field needed to be covered as the various pre-game and halftime acts rehearsed their performances. Toma warned the league that covering the field in such a manner could affect the playing surface, but the league did nothing to alter their Super Bowl week schedule. The grass began to decay, which forced Mangan to water it excessively in the hopes that the watering and removing of the surface from the

dome into the exterior environment would revive it. However, the league insisted that the field be moved back into the dome before it was completely dry so the pregame preparations wouldn't be impacted. Ultimately that led to the poor field conditions for the game and the ensuing controversy. Tired of being hamstrung by the league and how they dictate Super Bowl Week activities, Toma resigned from any future work for the NFL. For the first time in the 58-year history of the Super Bowl, a new sod specialist will be in charge of how to regulate the turf for the big game. This year's Super Bowl will be played in Las Vegas, a city where it's important to regulate. For an example of how to do that on the East Side of the LBC, you can watch the video for this song:

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

#19 – "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana – The song, which ushered in a whole new genre of music, continues to have success in The Jeff's Countdown. This marks its seventh consecutive year of inclusion. After the first 26 editions of the countdown came and went without this song included, I finally came to my senses in 2018 and included it for the first time. After debuting at number 28 that first year, it steadily rose through the countdown ranks until it peaked at number 14 last year. This year, it drops five spots into its current position. I dedicate this one to the late Bob Barker. Winner of 19 daytime Emmys over the course of his career, Barker passed away in August of last year, just four months shy of his 100th birthday. Most famous for hosting *The Price is Right*, the longest-running game show in North American television history, Barker was also a passionate animal rights advocate. He hosted *The Price is Right* from 1972 to 2007, before giving way to current host, Drew Carey, who seems like he wants to exceed Barker's 36-year run. That smells like adult spirit while this video smells like teen spirit:

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

#20 – "How You Remind Me" by Nickelback – This song shares the distinction of having the longest consecutive run in the Jeff's Countdown top spot. It and two other songs have spent seven consecutive years in the number one position. This song's run at the top spanned The Jeff's 36 Countdown to the Jeff's 42 Countdown. That run highlighted a 14-year stay inside the Top 10. All told, this song has spent 23 total years in the countdown. I dedicate it to the late Barbara Walters. The broadcast journalist, most famous for her 26-year run on the ABC news magazine *20/20*, passed away in late 2022. During her career, Walters interviewed every sitting U.S. president and first lady from Richard and Pat Nixon to Barack and Michelle Obama. She also interviewed both Donald Trump and Joe Biden, though not when they were president. Walters was known for not shying away from the tough questions, often raising the ire of those she interviewed. Regardless, no one shied away from being interviewed by Walters due to her immense popularity. She reminds me of Nickelback in that way, extremely popular but not well-liked. Personally, I like both Walters and Nickelback and of course I like the video for this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aiay8I5IPB8>

#21 – "Something About You" by Level 42 – A few years ago my family dragged me into a Forever 21 store to do some shopping. As I was meandering around the store trying to survive what was becoming an unpleasant experience, this song came on playing in the over the store's speakers. Suddenly my mood improved, and I quickly

realized the coincidence of a Level 42 song being played in a Forever 21 store – you know, the mathematics behind it – the fact that 42 is exactly double 21. I couldn't waste that observation, so I mentioned it to my daughter, Courtney. She is the one member of my family who might give just a sliver of appreciation to such a circumstance. She did, and it made my day. It helped me tolerate that shipping trip just a bit more than I would have normally. The power of music worked again. I dedicate this one to another powerful musician, the late Tina Turner. The singer, songwriter, and actress passed away in May of last year. I gave strong consideration to including her song, "We Don't Need Another Hero" in this year's countdown as a tribute to her legendary body of work. Ultimately, there were just too many other great songs I wanted to incorporate into the countdown, and Tina's song narrowly missed out. Instead, her tribute comes in the form of my dedication of this song to her memory, a song that was released in the same year as some of her best work, including, "We Don't Need Another Hero." As great as that song is, so is the #21 song in this year's countdown. I've come to prefer the remixed version which you can give a listen to here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRygbFeHJQ0>

#22 – "Hold Me Now" by Thompson Twins – When the mood strikes me, I could listen to a cadre of about a half dozen Thompson Twins on a continuous loop for hours at a time. Even though they only rank 25th on Ranker's List of The Best Synthpop Bands & Artists, for me, the Thompson Twins perfectly define the sound that was 80s synthpop. Released in late 1983, "Hold Me Now" is my favorite Thompson Twins song, and this year it makes its eleventh appearance in the countdown. I dedicate this one to the late Hossein Khosrow Ali Vaziri. Better known as "The Iron Sheik," Khosrow was a professional wrestler, and likely best known as the man Hulk Hogan defeated to win his first ever WWE Championship Belt. Before losing the Belt to Hogan, Khosrow won it from Bob Backlund in late 1983, at about the same time this song was becoming a hit. In addition to being a fan of pop music during the 1980s, I was also a big fan of professional wrestling. While the Iron Sheik was never a favorite of mine, I certainly respected his willingness to be top level heel, and I loved his interviews. The combination of his broken English and his outlandish statements made for great entertainment. The video for this song is another form of great entertainment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvzVTRK1nOY>

#23 – "You Make My Dreams" by Daryl Hall & John Oates – When I went to see Hall & Oates perform in concert just days before a worldwide lockdown went into effect, I thought I was fortunate to have seen them perform before they grew too old to play. As the Covid-19 pandemic raged on, I began to think that I was fortunate to have seen them before the concept of public gatherings came to an end. Now, four years later, with the two artists filing restraining orders against each other, I think I was fortunate to have seen them before their relationship devolves into a series of court cases and a promise to never play together ever again. In his role as John Munch on the television show *Law & Order SVU*, Richard Belzer, witnessed a lot of relationships devolving and a lot of court cases. Belzer, who died on my birthday last year at the age of 78, portrayed the John Munch character for 23 years in the NBC police dramas *Homicide: Life on the Street*, *Law & Order SVU* and several other related series. I always enjoyed the *Law & Order* franchise, just like I've always enjoyed the music of Hall & Oates. I hope the two pop icons from

Philadelphia can mend their fractured relationship, but if not, at least we still have this classic video from 1981: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EErSKhC0CZs>

#24 – "The Man Who Can't Be Moved" by The Script – Consistent with its title, this song can't be moved from the countdown ranks, at least that's been the case over the last 13 years. The song debuted at #31 in The Jeff's 40 Countdown. After a second year at #31 it began a steady ascension, maxing out at #8 in The Jeff's 46 Countdown. It's dropped lower in recent years, but again, it hasn't been moved from the ranks of the countdown, at least not yet. I dedicate this one to the late Billy Packer. The former college basketball player and television analyst died a year ago yesterday. From 1975 to 2008 Packer couldn't be moved from his broadcast position at the NCAA Men's Basketball Championship Tournament. From the early 1980s through the mid-2000s, I couldn't be moved from in front of the television at tournament time. Thus, I've spent a good deal of time watching the games Packer broadcasted. I don't watch as much NCAA basketball as I used to, but back then, I was the man who couldn't be moved from in front of the television when NCAA Tournament games were on. Much like me and my TV, in this video, Script front man, Danny O'Donoghue, can't be moved from the street corner where he and his former girlfriend first met:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gS9o1FAszdk>

#25 – "Girlfriend" by Matthew Sweet – Last year's highest debut song moves up 13 big spots to break into this year's Top 25. Speaking of the number 25, I've been married to my girlfriend for life for 25 years now, so I dedicate this one to her, Cindy Rogers. We were married on November 7, 1998, and over our 25 years we've been lucky enough to raise three wonderful daughters, three interesting dogs, and a myriad of other small pets. I'm lucky to have a bride who has sacrificed many of her own professional aspirations to be a full-time mom. As our youngest daughter prepares to leave home for college in about seven months, it will be time for a new chapter in our lives. Cindy has returned to full-time work as we await many new decisions. Will we continue to live in the area we've called home for the last 23 years? Will we seek out new career opportunities or continue as Gore associates until we retire? When will we retire? Where will we travel to? How will we fill the void of attending our kids' school events and sporting events once common to our schedules? These are questions for which I truly have no answers at the moment. All I know is that Cindy and I will tackle these questions together and whatever we decide will lead to success. That's how we've rolled for the past 25 years, and I'm sure that's how we'll roll for the next 25. While we're on a roll, here is a video for the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n12OBlcHx9E>

#26 – "Natural" by Imagine Dragons – Continuing its upward trajectory in the Jeff's Countdown is this 2018 pop rock anthem from the Las Vegas based quartet that has charted this and two other songs in the countdown. This song debuted in the Jeff's 49 Countdown at number 40. In subsequent years it moved up six, three, and three spots. This year it moves up another two spots. I dedicate this one to my daughter, Danielle Rogers, who I consider a "natural" in the sport of volleyball. She took up the sport when she entered high school which is a little late for most serious athletes. Despite the late start, she quickly learned the game, both as a hitter and a setter, and has achieved a good

deal of individual success. With the exception of the season she spent playing for the Top Guns volleyball club, Danielle has never played on a team that won very often. But despite that, she has steadily improved over the past few years. That improvement culminated in achieving All-County Honorable Mention status in her senior season. She received that recognition after playing for four different coaches over the course of her high school career. Imagine Dragons lead singer and songwriter, Dan Reynolds, refers to this song as a story about finding yourself and being willing and able to stand up to whatever adversity comes your way. Danielle faced a good amount of adversity during her high school playing career and I'm so proud of her for not giving up on the sport, reaching her potential, and proving she is a natural. The long armed piano player in the video for this song would probably be a natural volleyball player, too. Check out said video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0I647GU3Jsc>

#27 – "Heathens" by Twenty One Pilots – Prior to the release of this song, I had heard of the band Twenty One Pilots, but I wasn't a fan of their music, and I don't recall even knowing any of their songs. But when this one was released, it caught my attention, and it quickly became a favorite of mine. It debuted in The Jeff's 46 Countdown at number 37. The following year it rocketed up to number 10. From there it went to 6 and then to 5. It didn't move any higher than number 5 and has dropped in the countdown each year since, including a drop of four spots this year. On his 50th birthday, I dedicate this one to Ed Helms. Famous for his work on both television and on the big screen, Helms is one of my favorite comedic actors. He's starred in several television shows and several movies, but *The Office* and *The Hangover* are easily my favorites. He's also appeared in a few music videos, although this is not one of those: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a7G9hlkbRxQ>

#28 – "Hurt" by Johnny Cash – While competing in a Greater Oxford Poker Tour Texas Hold 'em event a few nights ago, I got into a spirited discussion as to which version of this song is best. Several of my friends believe the original, Nine Inch Nails, version of this song is better, while I believe the Johnny Cash version is the best. Honestly, I don't even think the Nine Inch Nails version is even second best. I give that distinction to the A.I. generated Joe Biden rendering of this song, the video for which you can view here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAZTFuVVBeg>. But going back to the argument at hand, even the songwriter himself, Trent Reznor, said "that song isn't mine anymore," after he heard how great Cash's version was. Since I obviously won that debate with my friends, I will dedicate this song to another winner, Nick Saban. The former head football coach at Alabama University retired from coaching following his team's loss to Michigan in the college football playoff semifinals a few weeks ago. Saban spent 28 seasons as a head coach in college football and won seven national titles, the most in college football history, during that time. I was never a fan of Alabama, but I've always admired Saban for his success and his approach to coaching and leadership. Saban once said, "know what you want to accomplish and focus on the process rather than the outcome." I try my best to live by that credo. In today's society littered with short attention spans and the desire for instant gratification, I think way too many people prioritize results over process. In the poker world, we call that playing results-oriented poker. That may win you a few hands here and there, but it's not going to win you many

bracelets. In the end, prioritizing results over process is only going to lead to hurt, the kind of hurt we feel as we watch the video for this song:

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

#29 – "Champagne Supernova" by Oasis – Fun Fact: The supernova SN 2003fg, an unusual Type Ia supernova was discovered in 2003 in a galaxy some 4 billion light-years from Earth. It was nicknamed, the Champagne Supernova, after this song. This particular supernova was unusual because of the mass of its progenitor. According to current understanding, white dwarf stars explode as Type Ia supernovas when their mass approaches 1.4 solar masses, termed the Chandrasekhar limit. However, the progenitor of SN 2003fg reached two full solar masses before exploding. The primary mechanism invoked to explain how a white dwarf can exceed the Chandrasekhar mass is unusually rapid rotation; the added support effectively increases the critical mass. An alternative explanation is that the explosion resulted from the merger of two white dwarfs. The evidence indicating a higher than normal mass comes from the light curve and spectra of the supernova—while it was particularly over luminous, the kinetic energies measured from the spectra appeared smaller than usual. One proposed explanation is that more of the total kinetic energy budget was expended climbing out of the deeper than usual potential well. I'm not sure if that proposed explanation was every substantiated, but how fun was that fact?? Now that you know more about supernovas than you ever wanted to know, I dedicate this song to Haason Reddick. On this day last year, Reddick collected a sack and a half and another tackle for a loss in the Eagles 38-7 blowout of the New York Giants in the NFC Divisional Playoff Game. That game feels like it was played ten years ago rather than just one year ago. Over that year the Eagles defense went from the most dominating unit in the league to quite possibly the worst unit to step on an NFL field this millennium. I'm not sure who exactly deserves the blame for that, but I certainly agree with John Hansen that coaches who put pencils in their ear never have success in the NFL. I also don't blame Reddick who brings it on every play, and is willing to contribute in any way asked of him. In the Eagles' convincing win over the Dolphins earlier this season, Reddick almost single handedly shut down the Dolphins' running game, giving the birds what may have been their last convincing victory. Reddick will enter the final year of his contract for the 2024 season. Hopefully it won't be his last season as an Eagle and hopefully he can help his team regain the kind of form they had on this day last year. That form seems like it's some 4 billion light-years away, just like the celestial body for which this song in a nickname:

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

#30 – "Plush" by Stone Temple Pilots – There is only one other song to have enjoyed more success in The Jeff's Countdown than this one. Although it never reached the top spot, "Plush" has now spent 31 of a possible 33 years in the countdown. Over those 31 years, it spent three years at #2, eight years in the Top 5, and 14 years in the Top 10. For many years this was my karaoke go to song. A new song, one ranked higher in this year's countdown, has taken that crown, but "Plush" remains among my favorites, and I feel another resurgence coming, perhaps as early as next year. This year, I dedicate it to the late George McInnis. The former Philadelphia 76er, who wore uniform number 30, teamed up with Julius Erving during the mid-1970s and helped transform the 76ers into a

championship contender. He reached the NBA Finals with the Sixers in 1977, but sadly they lost that series to the Portland Trail Blazers. A year later McInnis was traded to the Denver Nuggets. In return, the Sixers received Bobby Jones who became a cornerstone of the 76ers 1983 Championship Team. It's hard to believe it's been more than 40 years since the 76ers last won a championship. That's even longer that this song has been a part of the countdown. I've been grooving on the acoustic form of this song of late, so here is the video for that version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnWGJoPvQ5U>

#31 – "Stolen" by Dashboard Confessional – Released in 2007, this song performed much better in Germany than it did in the United States. That was due to the fact the pop band Juli was featured in the German version of the song. I made a trip to Germany in 2005 during which I saw the video for Juli's song, "Warum," on German television. I really liked that song and in 2007 when "Stolen" was released, I really liked it as well. It debuted in the Jeff's 37 Countdown the following year and when I stumbled across the version featuring Juli, this song started climbing the countdown ranks more quickly. It reached the number 5 position in the Jeff's 42 Countdown, and although it never climbed any higher than that, it has remained in my playlist and in the countdown. I dedicate this one to the late Rosalyn Carter. The former First Lady became First Lady on this day in 1977 when her husband Jimmy Carter was inaugurated into the office of The President of the United States. As First Lady, Rosalyn Carter was a leading advocate for women's rights and mental health. One could argue that her time in the White House was more successful than her husband's. Similarly, one could argue that the Juli version of this song was more successful than the song proper, and you can watch the video for Juli's version of the song here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxB0OT17KsU>

#32 – "Possum Kingdom" by Toadies – Now in its third year in the countdown, this song continues to make steady, upward progress. It debuted at #43 and then moved up six spots to #37 last year. This year it moves up another five. I dedicate this one to the best NFL running back to ever play the game, the late Jim Brown. The man who wore number 32 for the Cleveland Browns played nine seasons and led the league in rushing yardage in eight of those seasons. He was eight times All-Pro. He made nine Pro Bowls and won the NFL MVP three times. He was even a member of Cleveland's last NFL Championship team in 1964. Brown passed away in May of last year, leaving behind one of the most impressive legacies of any professional athlete. That legacy will last forever, just like the figurative young woman with dark hair and soft skin in the video for this song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkwD5rQ-_d4

#33 – "Closer to Love" by Mat Kearney – Celebrating its 15th year in the countdown is this former #2 song which drops outside of the Top 30 for the first time since its debut. This song spent its first 12 years in the Top 20 of the countdown before regressing over the past few years. I dedicate this one to the late Raquel Welch. The American actress, famous for the doe-skin bikini and an appearance in the *Naked Gun 33 1/3: The Final Insult*, died in February of last year. As I looked through Welch's filmography, I realized I didn't see many of her films, but regardless I certainly always recognized her stardom from her many mentions in pop culture. In addition to her appearance in the *Naked Gun* franchise, she also appeared on *Saturday Night Live*, *Mork & Mindy*, *The Muppet Show*,

and *Seinfeld*. She didn't appear in the video for this song, but it's still a good one:

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

#34 – "Psycho" by Puddle Of Mudd – Holding steady in the number 34 spot for a second consecutive year is this countdown veteran, now in its 16th year. While this song never slotted in any higher than the #8 position, it has spent 9 of its 16 years inside the Top 20. I dedicate this song about a human with bad behavior, to behavioral scientist, Edgar Schein. The Swiss born Harvard graduate passed away last year. He studied organizational behavior and became a leading expert in the field. He was a frequent guest on my favorite podcast, *Coaching For Leaders* with Dave Stachowiak. His absence from the podcast will be missed, but his son Peter Schein also works in the field, and will likely carry on much of his father's work. So, we'll have Peter as a potential future podcast guest, and of course we also still have the video for this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDdeOncpD5E>

#35 – "The Distance" by Cake – Seventeen years after this song debuted in the leadoff position of the Jeff's 36 Countdown, it drops into its lowest position since then. Following its debut, it climbed the ranks of the countdown, all the way to its peak position of #2. It spent two years in the runner up position, and a total of eight years in the Top 10. I dedicate this song to NFL quarterback Joe Flacco. Today is his 39th birthday, and although things didn't go well for him a couple of days ago in the Cleveland Browns' Wild Card Playoff loss, he still made a great late season run to lead the Browns to just their second playoff appearance in the last 20 years. That's not bad for the guy who was the Browns' fourth choice to play quarterback for them this season. He proved he could go the distance for the Browns when their \$230 million quarterback could not. Also unlike that other quarterback, Flacco is the owner of a large bejeweled ring, even bigger than the one John McCrea wears in the video for this song:

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

#36 – "Cumbersome" by Seven Mary Three – I added this song to my regular rotation shortly after the breakout of the Coronavirus pandemic. I listened to music a bit more frequently during the pandemic and during that time I developed a liking for this song. It made its countdown debut at number 48 in the Jeff's 50 Countdown and has steadily risen to its current position. On the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., I dedicate this song to him in his memory. The world needs more leaders like Dr. King, men and women who believe differences in opinion should be resolved by peaceful means. Current leaders seem more concerned about feeding their own egos rather than leading people, and like Jason Ross proclaims in the lyrics of this song, that bitter taste is cumbersome: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjNn4bbbgSw>

#37 – "Castle On The Hill" by Ed Sheeran – In June of 2023, I finally got the chance to see Ed Sheeran in concert. In the lead up to the event, I of course put together a Spotify Playlist of the songs that were to be played that evening. As I listened to the playlist a dozen or so times, this song bubbled up as one of my favorites and thus it enters the Jeff's 53 Countdown as the highest debut song. I must say I was a little disappointed by the concert though. I felt like Sheeran was a bit narcissistic in the way he made his

band play on a secondary stage while he alone plays on the main stage. I can't deny that Sheeran is a modern-day poet laureate, however. Thus, I dedicate this song to Lewis Carroll, a historical poet laureate, who died on this day in 1898. The *Alice in Wonderland* author was also a mathematician. As a writer and a scientist, I admire that. I also admire the video for this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0ibBPhiaG0>

#38 – "Little Guitars" by Van Halen – I was moved to add this song to my countdown following Eddie Van Halen's death a few years ago. It entered the countdown at number 49, and in three years since it has slowly ascended into its current position. Many of Eddie's songs exemplify his guitar playing prowess, but this is the one that does it for me. I love both the acoustic intro and the high-powered electricity in the song proper. I dedicate this one to Henry Ford. The founder of the Ford Motor Company oversaw the production of a few high-powered automobiles during his years in the business. On this day in 1941, Ford was awarded the patent for the Soybean Car. It feels like this patent was about 100 years before its time. The body of the Soybean Car was made primarily from plastic derived from soybeans, wheat, and corn. The prototype car was Ford's response to the steel shortage during World War II. The car was never mass produced, but it was certainly a precursor for the cars of today which use many plastic body parts, and the cars of tomorrow which will likely utilize farm grown plant-based plastics for those parts rather than materials made from petroleum. A little soybean can go a long way in building a powerful car, just like the little guitar can lay the foundation for a powerful song like this one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRIZPh3B92Q>

#39 – "Superheroes" by The Script – This year marks the tenth consecutive countdown appearance for this song. It was released in 2014, near the end of The Script's run of popularity, and became the sixth and most recent Script song to enter the countdown when it debuted at #43 in The Jeff's 44 Countdown. It rose as high as #21 in The Jeff's 48 Countdown but has never been able to crack the Top 20. I dedicate this one to Christian McCaffrey, one of the superheroes of the Cecil County Bayfoxes, my top fantasy football team. McCaffrey teamed with Tyreek Hill, Amon-Ra St. Brown and the Browns and Cowboys defenses to lead my team to an overall record of 12-3-1 this season. My regular season record of 11-2-1 was tops in the league, earning me a bye in the first round of the playoffs. I cruised to victory in the quarterfinals of the playoffs, but in the semifinals, I was let down by my duo of Kansas City Chiefs, Travis Kelce and Harrison Butker. Though I fell a couple wins short of the championship, it was still another great season. The 34-team Eastern States Fantasy Football League is the major leagues of fantasy football, and although I'd never celebrate a Top 4 finish, I'm still proud of my team, especially Christian McCaffrey. He's one of those guys, that if you saw him on the street, you wouldn't suspect he's a football player. He's a hard-working regular guy, similar to the hero figure in the video for this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIm1GgfRz6M>

#40 – "Lose Yourself" by Eminem – After 13 years of countdown inclusion, this song is now bordering on "countdown classic" status. It debuted in the Jeff's 41 Countdown in the number 25 position and reached its peak position of number 17 just two years later. It drops into its lowest ever position this year but remains a countdown stalwart. I dedicate

this one to the late Bud Grant. The former head coach of the Minnesota Vikings, who died in March of last year, coached in his first Super Bowl on this day in 1970. Grant's Vikings lost that game and three other Super Bowl's during the decade of the 1970s. Though Grant never won the NFL's signature game, his Vikings were officially NFL champions in 1969 since the AFL had not yet officially merged with the NFL. Grant also won four Grey Cup Championships as head coach in the Canadian Football League. And if that wasn't enough, Grant also won an NBA championship as a member of the Minneapolis Lakers in 1950. In addition to coaching professional football and playing professional basketball, Grant also played professional football for my favorite team, the Philadelphia Eagles. The multisport star had a well accomplished career and was involved in just about everything except maybe rap music. Fortunately, we have Eminem for that: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Yhyp-hX2s

#41 – "Money and Fame" by Needtobreathe – This band makes their Jeff's Countdown debut with this song released in 2016. It took a while before I first noticed it. That came in July of 2022 when I saw OneRepublic in concert and Needtobreathe was the opening act. I still didn't grow an affinity for this song until the following summer, last summer, when I heard snippets of this song every time Philadelphia Phillies' catcher, J.T. Realmuto came to bat. The song was Realmuto's walk-up music, and I recognized it from the concert a year prior. It quickly grew on me, I added it to my Spotify playlist, and bam, it's now a Jeff's Countdown song! I dedicate this one to Roy E. Disney, who was born on this day in 1930. The nephew of Walt Disney was a longtime senior executive for the Walt Disney Company, which, of course, was founded by his Uncle Walt. I've been to Disneyworld twice in my life, once as a child and once as an adult. Both times were outstanding experiences. I also love ESPN and the Star Wars franchise, two other Disney brands. Many of the Disney family members may have been ruined by money and fame, just like this song warns. But damn, the Disney Company sure puts out a great product, just like how Needtobreathe puts out a great song like this one: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8pOsNa25mU>

#42 – "I Lived" by OneRepublic – After debuting at number 46 last year, this song moves up four spots this year as it remains in heavy rotation in my standard playlist. As much as I like the tune, I like the message even more. It's about squeezing every last drop out of life every day. Dorothy Hoffner was certainly someone who did that during her life and for that, I dedicate this song to her. Dorothy set a World Record last year when, at the age of 104, she became the oldest person to complete a skydive. This was after she made her first jump at the age of 100. Dorothy passed away shortly after her record setting jump, but that was a testament to how she lived her life. She chose to be adventurous and daring rather than to sit on her couch and convalesce. Perhaps she was inspired by this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0rxydSolwU>

#43 – "Alive Again" by Chicago – This song entered the countdown two years ago after I saw Chicago in concert for the first time. I went to see them at the recommendation of Tom Martin, and what a great recommendation that was. I enjoyed the concert very much. In the lead up to concert, I of course listened to the set list frequently as is my custom. As I listened to that great compilation of songs, this one really stood out. It's

upbeat sound, aggressive horns, and buoyant vocals really caught my attention and made it a favorite of mine heading into the concert. I dedicate this one to U.S. Skier, Mikaela Shiffrin. On this day last year, the Vail, Colorado native achieved her 82nd World Cup victory, making her the most prolific World Cup champion in Women's Skiing. Later in the year, Shiffrin won her 87th World Cup race, overtaking Ingemar Stenmark for the most World Cup wins by any alpine skier regardless of sex. At the time of this writing, her title count stands at 93. I'm not a big fan of skiing, and in fact, I've never even skied myself, not even the bunny slopes. I do appreciate athletic achievement however, and I cannot help but be impressed by Shiffrin's achievements. Her versatility in unparalleled in the sport of skiing. Similarly, the band Chicago has also demonstrated a lot of versatility during their long career, much of which is on display in the video for this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtt5JPstK0w>

#44 – "Need A Favor" by Jelly Roll – Over the past few years my taste for new music has changed significantly. I once listened to new music almost exclusively, but now I'd say I listen to the hits of today less than 5% of the time, and not more than one or two contemporary songs make my countdown in any given year. This year, this is the only new song that has made the cut. It was released in late 2022 and featured on the charts over the summer of 2023. No other song in this year's countdown was released after 2018. This song was played so frequently on Wilmington's 93.7 WSTW radio last year that you couldn't have the radio on for more than an hour or so without it coming up in their rotation. I quickly became a fan of the song, not only due to its catchiness, but also because of its message. I am certainly guilty of praying only when I need a favor. Typically I pray for health and safety for me and my family, that a meeting I need to facilitate at work goes well, or I'm ashamed to say, I pray that my fantasy football team is victorious. Rarely do I thank God for the many blessings he's bestowed on me or praise him simply because he's good. I seldom pray for the less fortunate and others in tough situations. I'll change that for the moment by dedicating this song to Volodymyr Zelenskyy and praying that he makes the right decisions for the people of Ukraine and Russia both. I'm not one to get too involved with politics, but lately it's felt to me like he's fighting an unwinnable war. I'm not sure whether it's better to continue defending the Ukraine against Vladimir Putin's aggressions or to try and broker a compromise solution with the Russians. I just pray whatever decisions he makes are the right ones for those suffering and those displaced from their homeland. Hopefully those folks are done the favor they are in need of and hopefully Jelly Roll receives the favor he's requesting in the video for this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1nRboaLTzU>

#45 – "Vehicle" by The Ides of March – Here is another song that made its way into my consciousness after listening to an episode of Tom Morello's *One Man Revolution* show. Morello played this song and noted that this was the first album he purchased as a kid. I remembered hearing the song before. It has a real 70s groove about it. I had never heard of the band Ides of March however, and when I researched them I was interested to learn that their lead singer, Jim Peterik, also co-founded the band Survivor and co-wrote all of their platinum hits including "Eye of the Tiger," "The Search Is Over," "High on You," and "I Can't Hold Back". I definitely had more exposure to Survivor in my youth than I did The Ides of March. Regardless, I added "Vehicle" to my regular playlist and

it's remained there ever since. I dedicate this one to Zack Wheeler, ace pitcher for the Philadelphia Phillies, who wears uniform number 45. Wheeler was magnificent in the playoffs last year. He had a 3-0 record and a 1.95 ERA. He, momentarily at least, changed the momentum of the National League Championship Series when he stepped up and dominated in Game 5. He pitched another inning and two thirds of shutout ball in Game 7, but it was to no avail as the Phillies offense was unable to manufacture enough runs to pull out the game and series. Sports radio host Joe DeCamara astutely observed how clutch Wheeler was during the playoffs. In contrast, DeCamara pointed out the glaring dichotomy to another Philadelphia star athlete, Joel Embiid, and how Embiid has come up small during the playoffs year after year. As the Phillies season came to an end, I once again proclaimed how much I hate baseball and swore off ever watching it again. Unfortunately I'm quite sure I'll get sucked in once again this Spring. I'm guessing I'll once again allow Phillies' baseball to be the figurative vehicle that gets me to Tour de France season. And until we get to baseball season, we can use the video to "Vehicle" to be our vehicle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOFxUM7aOzs>

#46 – "Inside Out" by Eve 6 – The alternative rock genre makes up a large part of the Jeff's 53 Countdown. Some of these songs I've loved since they were first released in the 1990s. Others I've grown fond of more recently, since I've been listening to the Lithium channel over the last five years or so. This song falls into the former category. It was released in 1998 and made its first countdown appearance the following year in the Jeff's 28 Countdown. It's been included in every edition of the countdown since, even reaching as high as number 2 in the Jeff's 32 Countdown. I dedicate this one to the late Sonny Bono who died on this day in 1998 following an accident skiing. Bono not only wrote and performed some great music, he also served his city of Palm Springs and his state of California as a public servant. You could say he made an impact in the world both from both the inside of the government and out. Eve 6 also made an impact in the world via the video for this song:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8Xb_7YDroQ&list=RDT8Xb_7YDroQ&start_radio=1

#47 – "Folsom Prison Blues" by Johnny Cash – I'm not going to lie. If it weren't for last summer's *Barbie* movie, this song probably wouldn't have made its debut in this year's countdown. But the music to this song and Cash's voice was used by an Artificial Intelligence application to produce a parody of the song "Barbie Girl" from the Danish-Norwegian dance-pop group Aqua. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAFdzBTe2lg>) I stumbled across that song on YouTube after the movie was out for a while and I thought it was a hoot. The parody wasn't released as a single, at least not that I could find on Spotify, so I added "Folsom Prison Blues" to my playlist instead. I came to really enjoy it, and bang! A Jeff's Countdown song was born. Actually, this song was born in 1955 making the oldest song ever to be included in the countdown by 12 years. I dedicate this classic to the late poet, T.S. Eliot. The American born, English poet died on this day in 1965. I'm not a big fan of Eliot's poetry, but I do like one of his famous quotes. Eliot once said, "Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go." I spent a lot of my life not willing to risk going too far until I learned there's also risk in not going far enough. I think we sometimes default to staying comfortable in life

and forgo the chance at something better because we fear it might make us uncomfortable. In his song, Johnny Cash sings about a literal prison, while in his quote, T.S. Eliot writes about a figurative one. The shame in the metaphorical prison is that we are the ones that actually lock ourselves into it, and the whole time we are there, we are holding the key to get out. We just fear that what is on the outside is worse than what is on the inside. I'd like to think that I freed myself from that prison a few years ago, but I didn't realize I was in figurative prison back then so how can I be sure now? I can't, but I can certainly enjoy listening to this song:

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

#48 – "Beverly Hills" by Weezer – Released in 2005, this song first appeared in the 2006 edition of the countdown at the number 11 position. Just two years later it ascended to the number 2 position. Despite that quick rise, it was never able to break through and reach the top spot. It spent each of its first ten years in the Top 25 but dropped to number 30 in the Jeff's 45 Countdown and hasn't been higher than that since. I dedicate this one to the late Gordon Moore who was born on this day in 1929. The American businessman, engineer, and co-founder of Intel Corporation is famous for proposing Moore's law. The famous observation, which he proposed in 1965, states that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit doubles about every two years. Moore was referencing a trend that was true to that point, but he was also proposing that this trend would continue well into the future. As it turns out, his law has held at least through the time of his passing on March 24 of last year. The integrated circuit, more commonly known as the microchip, is the basis of most of today's electronic items, including devices which house artificial intelligence applications. Not that you can't use one of your smart devices to play this video via voice command, but regardless, I'll provide the link to the video for this song here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HL_WvOly7mY

#49 – "Fireball" by Pitbull featuring John Ryan – Mr. Worldwide is back for a second straight year in the countdown. After debuting in the leadoff spot of #52 last year, this song moves up three spots. To the best of my knowledge, William Shatner hasn't yet recorded a talk-sing version of this song, but hey, maybe 2024 will be the year that inevitability finally happens. I dedicate this one to the late David Kirke. The extreme sports enthusiast, who once dined on the rim of an active volcano in Saint Vincent, passed away on October 12 of last year. Though he could have been struck by a fireball at any point in time during that dinner, Kirke survived and went on to become the first person to complete a modern bungee jump in 1979. His feat took place in England where he successfully plunged off the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol. From there, a new industry was born. I've yet to bungee jump myself, and honestly, I don't really have a desire to do so. I do want to provide a link for the video to this song though, which I will do here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMqgVXSvwGo>

#50 – "Best of Times" by Styx – This former number one song hangs on to make its 27th consecutive countdown appearance but drops into its lowest ever position. It debuted at number 17 in the Jeff's 27 Countdown and reached the countdown top spot for just one year in the Jeff's 31 Countdown. Despite spending only one year in the top spot, this song still managed 15 total appearances in the Top 10 with 14 of those appearances being

made consecutively between the Jeff's 28 and the Jeff's 41 Countdowns. I dedicate this one to the late Dick Butkus who passed away on October 5 of last year. The former Chicago Bears linebacker, was born in Chicago, played college football at the University of Illinois, and spent the entirety of his NFL career with the Bears. He wore uniform number 50 for the Fightin' Illini before switching to 51 in the pros. One of the best NFL players of all-time, Butkus was famous for creating reasons to be mad at the opponent because he felt it gave him a competitive edge. Similarly, when I compete in volleyball or any other sport, I often follow that same process of creating reasons to be motivated to defeat my opponent. Most of Butkus' playing career took place before I was born, but I still admire his toughness and competitiveness through what I've read and seen in highlight packages. I also admire Dennis DeYoung, Tommy Shaw, and James Young for what they put together back in the early 1980s:

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

#51 – "Just Because" by Jane's Addiction – Fueled by my love for the Lithium Channel on SiriusXM Satellite Radio, this song makes its first ever entry into the Jeff's Countdown. It's the third consecutive debut song to start this year's edition of the countdown. This song has been around for 20 years, but the first time I recall hearing it was on Tom Morello's *One Man Revolution*. The show is broadcast weekly on the Lithium Channel and features the former Rage Against The Machine and Audioslave guitarist playing his own music as well as his favorite songs from other artists. This song of course falls into the latter category. Morello is often joined on the show by his mother, Mary Morello, who during 2023 turned 100 years of age. In addition to being a schoolteacher for most of her life, Mary Morello was also an activist, a member of the civil rights movement, and the founder of the anti-censorship group Parents for Rock and Rap. She is also a native of Marseilles, Illinois, a town I lived just eight miles from for about five years of my life back in the 1990s. In honor of her 100th birthday, which she celebrated on October 1, 2023, I dedicate this song to Mary Morello, the video for which you can watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sb3FJdRk-tI>

#52 – "Roll With The Changes" by REO Speedwagon – Here is another song which entered my rotation following the announcement that my company would be reorganizing. Rather than fear change, I decided I would embrace it. Roll with it if you will. This song was released in 1978, and even made it to REO's "Hits" album in 1988 despite never being a big commercial success. I owned that greatest hits album back in the day which is why I remembered this song and added it to my rotation a few months ago. I especially like the way this song features a synthesizer solo immediately followed by a guitar solo. I dedicate it to Dan Baker. The longtime Philadelphia Phillies stadium announcer celebrated his 52nd season as Phillies' announcer last year. He is a cancer survivor who had 20 or more surgeries over the course of the last several years to win his battle with nasal cancer. I'm sure Baker has had a few changes he's needed to roll with in the last few years and perhaps this song means something to him as well. It's currently the baseball off-season so as we wait for Spring Training to arrive in a couple months, we can watch the video for this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jeHkaSH0Xw8>

#53 – "Don't Bring Me Down" by Electric Light Orchestra – The Jeff's 53

Countdown kicks off with this great big galloping ball of distortion. That's how ELO's songwriter and lead singer Jeff Lynne refers to this countdown debut song. It was released in 1979 and was ELO's highest charting song in the U.S., peaking a number 4 on the Billboard Hot 100. The song took on special meaning for me late last year when my company announced they were undergoing a reorganization which would lead to some associates losing their jobs. For me, I was told early on that my job was safe, and I was also very much in favor of the new direction that the company was heading. Many of my colleagues, however, felt differently. Many were upset, many felt betrayed, and many believed they were losing their job, even though they were given the chance to apply for a new position. Navigating this dichotomy of feelings has become quite difficult for me. On one hand I'm happy about the change and excited for what I believe will be a brighter future. On the other hand, I'm suffering from survivor's guilt and I'm sad to see how many of my friends have been impacted. As a coping mechanism, I try to temper my enthusiasm at work, but on the ride home I blast this song to keep the negativism of others from getting me down. Over the past month or so this song has become a staple for me. I dedicate it to the late Burt Young, who passed away in October of last year. Young played the character of Paulie in my favorite movie of all-time, *Rocky II*. Young earned an Oscar nomination for his work in the original *Rocky* and was one of four actors to have appeared in each of the first six *Rocky* films. Like this song, the film *Rocky II* was released in 1979. It's my favorite over the original *Rocky* because, as an eight-year-old, I watched it before I watched the original. Perhaps it's also in part because Rocky actually defeats Apollo in the second film. Much like how Rocky defeated many opponents in the ring, this song defeated a myriad of other great songs to earn inclusion into the Jeff's Countdown. You can follow the link below to see the video which features the beautiful shuffle girls, perhaps another reason to like this song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FuiMQPc5aKA>

Return to the Jeff's Countdown Website: <https://esffl.com/jeffs-countdown/>