

May 5, 2024: The Top 7 (Part 1)

1. Will Moseley: Lynyrd Skynyrd's **Gimme Three Steps** is hard rocking story of a Ronnie Van Zant (lead vocalist) misadventure. He went into a bar to talk to a friend, got side-tracked, and ended up dancing with a beautiful girl. They were soon joined by her boyfriend, a big drunk southern redneck toting a .44 magnum semi-automatic pistol (a three-way-combination that should never ever happen and if it does, you should leave the premises immediately). He pointed the gun at Ronnie and started screaming at him and his girl. Ronnie got scared and yelled back, "*Man, just gimme three steps and I'm outta here*". When the guy turned away to scream at his girl a second time, Ronnie ran to his car where his bandmates were waiting for him and escaped the situation. The boys had a good laugh and wrote the song on the way back to their hotel. **Gimme Three Steps** has that same old tried-and-true hard rock country blues that define The Black Crowes' **Sting Me** and **Jealous Again**, two of my favorite rock songs ever, as well as Georgia Satellites' **Keep Your Hands To Yourself**, The Fabulous Thunderbirds' **Tuff Enuff**, and ZZ Top's **Tush**. Will was in fine form tonight and I was rocking out to this one. I guess he did the best he could with his Adele Pick, **Rolling In The Deep**, since the tempo is upbeat. The lyric is not. It's 100% about a broken relationship that could have been. Hence, the title, **Rolling in the Deep**. The phrase is used to describe something or someone that is perfect. In this case, the something is a perfect love. "*We could have had it all. But you broke it.*" Tells you everything you need to know. There's just not much in the Adele songbook for a southern rocker. For example, I love **Someone Like You** but I can't listen to an entire album of songs about heartache and lost love. I wish there was a way that Will could work in some Brittany Howard (former singer with Alabama Shakes). For me, she is the best singer in the rock music today. Finally, Will is getting a run for the money. According to my 11 point data

tracking system, the contestants with the best chance of winning are: Will at (11/11) leads Jack at (10.5/11) by 0.5 points, and also leads a very likable Tristan (10/11) and an adorable Emmy (10/11) by a point, and has a 3.5 pt lead over a resurgent Abi. Of the remaining five contestants, only a point separates Will, Jack, Emmy, and Tristan. Abi has very little chance of winning based on the historical data. Briefly, here are the critical categories for winning: 76% of Idol winners are Caucasian (four of the remaining five are Caucasian); 66% are male (which further enhances chances of winning for Will, Jack, and Tristan and decreases the chance of winning for Emmy); 62% are from the Southern United States; 66% play guitar; and 62% are good old southern boys or girls (Will, Jack, Tristan, and Emmy all fit neatly in the remaining three categories). It is the latter four categories that will make things difficult for Abi as no Idol contestant with a score less than 8/11 pts has ever won Idol.

2. Jack Blocker: Jack always picks the right songs. And there's more. When he picks an artist, he also picks the best songs belonging to that artist. The Little Richard songbook is dicey. For example, Little Richard said that **Good Golly Miss Molly** was a celebration of the individuality of women but according to the lyrics Miss Molly also liked to ball (euphemistically speaking of course) *from the early, early morning till the early, early night...*not that there's anything wrong with that. **Tutti Frutti** is said to be a celebration of youthful romance but it's really about sex. The line "*Tutti Frutti, Oh Rudy*", is not what it seems. Little Richard said that "*Tutti Frutti, Oh Rudy*" is a euphemism for the original lyric "*Tutti Frutti, good booty*" which the record company execs did not like and forced him to change. While **Lucille** is an honest, inspirational song written to console a grieving woman whose boyfriend was killed in a bar fight that was witnessed by Little Richard, **Long Tall Sally** is a celebration of strong independent women but also a revelation of a woman with multiple boyfriends including some that were

married. 99% of the Little Richard songbook is about his youthful experiences with sex and romance. Jack did a good job with **Long Tall Sally** but is here because of his wonderful interpretation of Adele's **One and Only**. This song, unlike most of Adele's songs, is uplifting as she dreams of meeting her Mr. Right, the perfect man who can fill the romantic void in her life. Based on talent, Jack has an excellent chance of winning but the historical data says Will should win. I love Jack, Abi, and Emmy but even without the data, I think Will is the best singer in the competition.

3. Abi Carter: Before I say more, let me say that I fully support Adele's decision to wear Bantu Knots. I don't think she ever meant to insult anyone or any race of people by doing that. Fallout Boy's **My Song Knows What You Did In The Dark** tells an angry story of betrayal, revenge, and the lack of honesty. I don't like the song much but vocally, this was a good cover and Abi, as always, looked fantastic and performed wonderfully on the Idol stage. It was her emotional, intense, and lyrical interpretation of Adele's **Hello** that set her apart from the others. That was a master class performance. It's amazing how she uses her mixed voice, transitioning from chest to head to falsetto voices, alternating between octaves at will with effortless tessitura.

4. Emmy Russell: Walk The Moon's **Shut Up and Dance** was odd for me. She sang beautifully....but you always want to do at least some of what your advisers/mentors suggest. I would have tried a couple dance moves if I were her. So what if you can't dance well? So what if you embarrass yourself a bit? Will can't dance either but he moved about the Idol stage and made an effort. By making the effort, a contestant at least show the judges, the viewers, and perhaps even some record company execs watching that they are easy to work with. The music grave yards are full of singers whose careers were cut short because they were difficult to work with. Here's what Adele

said of **Water Under The Bridge** (yes, the song is about another broken relationship): The song is about *"that feeling when you first fall for someone is often displaced by something more complicated, by some kind of confusion, but it's only because you can't help not feeling vulnerable, and that scares the s**t out of you."* This, too, was a beautiful performance and Emmy looked beautiful tonight. The makeup artists are hard at work. I will keep asking the Idol suits to give them a raise.

5. Tristan Harper: I am not surprised that Tristan made top 5. As I said, he is now tied with Emmy for 3rd place in my chart. **T-R-O-U-B-L-E** whether the original by Elvis or Travis Tritt is a well-known and popular song. Why do Elvis gyrations not bother me? Because they actually look like an extension of his true self. But the judges loved it. Luke, Katy, and Lionel now have created a monster that they cannot control. Another line from the Little Prince and the fox: *"I am yours now for you have tamed me. You are forever responsible for what you have tamed."* Surprisingly, at least to me, Tristan created some very tender moments with Adele's **Easy On Me**. I don't know if Tristan knows the meaning as it appeared to me he was singing a romantic love song. I don't doubt that the lyrics could be interpreted that way but Adele said the song was written for her son; asking him to go easy on her, to cut her some slack, as she adjusts to being divorced from her husband and his father. Tristan's pipes aren't as ranging as the other guys but he uses it well. I liked the second song very much. One last thing. No, I won't be angry or even disappointed if Tristan wins. American Idol is interactive and I knew that going in. Therefore, I am obligated to respect the choices made by the voting public. They can vote for whomever they wish and for any reason they choose. Tristan is a good guy and I will always wish the best for him as well as all the other Idol contestants. And I will follow his career after Idol as I do all the Idol contestants from prior shows.

6. Julia Gagnon: I am alone on this but I wouldn't have chosen a B52s song for this competition. It really did not look good on her and it was an awkward performance. A mismatch of singer and song. Adele's **Set Fire To The Rain**, on the other hand, was a wonderful performance. Julia has now mastered the art of creating glory notes in songs that don't have any. Just as Adele's **25** upended favorite Beyonce's wonderful **Lemonade** for Album of the Year in 2017, Adele did the same to our beloved Katy Perry at the 2012 and 2013 Grammys for Pop Vocal Performance of the Year. First it was Adele's **Someone Like You** winning over Katy's **Fireworks** in 2012 and then the next year, it was Adele's **Set Fire To The Rain** that won over Katy's **Wide Awake**. Adele is a tough out. No shame losing to her. She's a one-in-a-generation singer. Katy at her best (**Teenage Dream**) and Adele at her best (**21**) met up in 2011 Album of the Year. Adele won again. Any way, hold you head up high, Julia. You were a worthy competitor and created some memorable moments on the Idol stage. I wish you the best.

7. McKenna Faith Brienholt: Katy Perry's **E.T.** is about falling in love with a stranger; e.g apparently an extra-terrestrial. As I am huge **String Theory** fan, I can honestly say I do believe in love across parallel universes. It's foolish to think that we are the only species in the universe. There are at least ten dimensions of space. Do you really think the fourth dimension is the only dimension of space that man inhabits? Logically, there should be many versions of you in other worlds and at some point each version of you will communicate with the others. Once that happens, then you establish lines of communication across different worlds. This makes it even more possible that one or more versions of you will fall in love with some version of your beloved so that all versions of you can communicate across parallel worlds with all versions of your beloved. Laugh if you must, but I believe in **String Theory**. **E.T.** maxed out at #1 on the Billboard Club and Dance Charts so is a perfect fit for this category. McKenna

sang Adele **Make You Feel My Love**. It's a beautiful song but I would have chosen a different song. It's been done to death, even for this season. No matter how well you sing (McKenna did a great job) it still loses impact when over-exposed. Good luck, McKenna. I also wish you the very best in your post-Idol endeavors.