



the jazzy insert

micahel vick's redemption song

by n.m. shabazz

Seemingly everyone believes in second chances, yet not everyone is lucky enough to receive one; nor is everyone selfless enough to offer one. Michael Vick, the current starting quarterback for the Philadelphia Eagles, understands this all too well. The highest pick in the 2001 N.F.L. draft, he lost virtually everything in April 2007 after being implicated in an illegal interstate dog fighting ring. Months later, in August, he plead guilty to federal felony charges, serving 23 months in prison.

After having initially signed a 10 year, \$130 million contract with the Atlanta Falcons in 2001—plus receiving more through endorsement deals—Sports Illustrated in 2006 reported that Vick's annual income was \$25.4 million. However, after he was indicted on felony charges and placed in jail, he was forced to file bankruptcy. No longer earning millions from playing on the field or able to make money from his celebrity status, he was hit with numerous lawsuits from creditors and even the Atlanta Falcons who sought to recover \$22 million of the signing bonus they had awarded him in 2001.

I confess that when I heard news of Vick's indictment and subsequent guilty plea later, I was angry and disappointed; not because he fought and euthanized dogs across interstate lines—that's another matter entirely—but because he so brazenly risked his future engaging in something that was illegal. In my mind—as in many others'—if Vick was asinine enough to throw away a \$130 million career because of his love of dog fighting, then he deserved what he got. I *still* feel that way. Yet, I also believe in second chances.

Vick's return to football has been nothing short of remarkable. After being signed by the Philadelphia Eagles in 2009 and patiently awaiting his chance to play, that season he was used only sporadically and mainly as a decoy in Philadelphia's Wildcat scheme. But exiting starting quarterback Donovan McNabb to the Washington Redskins in 2010, and a



Michael Vick

Picture courtesy of Nicole Bengiveno/New York Times

concussion to former starting Philadelphia quarterback Kevin Kolb, has thrust Vick back into the limelight. The new and improved Vick appears to be a better quarterback, not prone to run as much, carefully sitting back in the pocket to throw to his receivers. The Eagles have gone 2-0 with Vick as starting quarterback. His rating for the 2010 N.F.L. season so far is an astounding 110.2%.

Vick has also repeatedly stated that jail made him a changed man. He no longer believes in dog fighting and is an outspoken representative of the Humane Society in that organization's effort to eradicate the practice in the United States (something for which Vick personally lobbied the president of the organization). Yet, popular opinion still seems to be against him. After he had gotten the nod to start his first game, the Philadelphia Daily News ran a front page story with the caption TOP DOG in bold print on the side of Vick's picture. The audacious title was obviously a diss on Vick because of his past history, yet many sports fans and Americans feel the same way. They are not ready to forgive him, no matter the strides in his life he's made.

Some are quick to make a racial issue out of the uproar surrounding Vick's past transgressions. They point to football players, like Pittsburgh quarterback Ben Roethlisberger—who

has been accused by several women of two sexual assaults in two years (a supposed third victim did not come forward)—and former lauded professional baseball pitcher Roger Clemmons—who was indicted August 19, 2010 on six counts involving perjury and false statements and obstruction of Congress—as not suffering from the public backlash that Vick has undergone. Yet, Roethlisberger and Clemmons may not be the pariahs that Vick is, in part, because neither has yet to be charged with a crime; Roethlisberger settled out of court for one of the alleged assaults and Clemmons will have his day in court next year.

But let's look deeper than race. There's an old saying, "*To much is given, much is expected*". Sure Roethlisberger signed a \$108 million, 8-year contract in 2008, but it took him two Superbowls to be able to command such an amount; Clemmons, a legend in his own right, also commanded a high salary in his day but was not the phenomenal athlete that Vick was when he was with the Atlanta Falcons.

Vick was the face of the franchise. I would even dare say that he was brought in to fill seats. Though statistically he was a subpar quarterback, he astonished the audience with his acrobatics, aloofness and dexterity, several times rushing for over a 1,000 yards. Vick became Superman in America's eyes, its hero, one who was invulnerable. Thus, as much as America once adored him, once the charges of dog fighting were lobbied against him, it started to loath him just as much.

Whether or not America will eventually forgive Vick is anyone's guess, but it should. He's served his time, has tried to exhibit model behavior, and tried to right the wrongs of his past. Hopefully in the near future, he can start to sing his redemption song. Until then, America needs to be reminded of another old saying, "*Let he who is without sin cast the first stone...*"

brooklyn Jazz Calendar

October 2010

| Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | | | October 1 The Buster Brown Band | October 2 Natural Change |
| October 5 Mahogany and Jam Box | October 6 Mike Phillips | October 7 Ascension | October 8 Melanie Dutton | October 9 Zac Harmon |
| October 12 Montrose | October 13 Family Feud with Eric Willis | October 14 The Freddie Jones Quartet | October 15 Natural Change | October 16 Ascension |
| October 19 Mahogany and Jam Box | October 20 Claud Hardrick | October 21 The Freddie Jones Quartet | October 22 The Buster Brown Band | October 23 Zac Harmon |
| October 26 Domino Effect | October 27 Family Feud with Eric Willis | October 28 The Buster Brown Band | October 29 Melanie Dutton | October 30 Natural Change |
| Sunday Jazz Brunch 11:00am – 4:00pm Musical Performances 11:30am – 3:30pm | | | | |
| October 3 Breggett Rideau | October 10 Breggett Rideau | October 17 Linny Nance | October 24 Freddie Jones | October 31 Carolyn Lee Jones |
| Jazzy Sunday Evenings with Ms Martha Burks Musical Performances 7:00pm – 11:00pm | | | | |

Special Events @ brooklyn Jazz Cafe

Michael Phillips live in concert, Monday and Wednesday—October 4th & 6th @ 7:00PM

Legendary Mondays, hosted by Roger Boykin—Monday October 18th @7:00PM

Absolutely Vegas—Saturday October 23rd @ 10:00PM

Out In The Open...A Talent Showcase hosted by Domino Effect—Tuesday October 26th @ 7:00PM

The Monster Bash Masquerade Ball—Saturday October 30th @ 8:00PM