

Mike & Marcie Campbell

Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers Mike Campbell and Wife Marcie 'Won't Back Down for the Animals'

By Melissa Maroff



If life mirrors song, Mike Campbell “got lucky babe” when he found his wife Marcie. Before he went on to fame as lead guitarist for one of the world’s greatest rock bands, Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers, Mike met Marcie -- literally because of a dog. It was in 1974 at an LA Halloween party where Marcie brought her dog Medena; Mike mistakenly called Medena “Daisy,” the name of the host’s dog. Marcie had to set him straight -- and the rest as they say, is rock and roll history.

“I connected with the dog and then found out the dog came with her,” Mike says. “If it weren’t for the dog, we probably wouldn’t have met.” And for two dog lovers it was “something very good from the get go,” they admit. After 34 years of marriage, the love is still strong, which is evident the minute you see them together. They compliment each other; both have a sense of humor, don’t take themselves too seriously and love their family, which extends to their animal family -- and other animals as well.

Mike Campbell has a resume that speaks for itself. In addition to playing on and co-producing Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers albums and co-writing some of their biggest hits, he has also co-penned other classics like *Stop Draggin’ My Heart Around* (Petty’s duet with Stevie Nicks) and Don Henley’s iconic *Boys of Summer*, which ranks among Rolling Stone’s 500 Greatest Songs of All Time. He’s collaborated with an array of legends, including playing on Bob Dylan’s recent album, and in addition to touring with Tom Petty, also plays gigs around Southern California with his own side band, The Dirty Knobs.

Considering how high profile Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers is and how high he ranks as a musician, Mike is content to keep a low profile. Marcie is the same way and loves what she does: owning and operating Bow Wow Bungalow, a Burbank doggie daycare and boarding facility. Since 2008 both have also served on the board of Tazzy Animal Rescue Fund, a Burbank-based nonprofit of which Marcie is vice president. Tazzy raises funds for two specific organizations: Norcal Equine Rescue and Boxer Rescue LA, as well as coordinates fundraising efforts for animals in need of medical care. Tazzy started out raising funds for other rescue organizations before it evolved into its own full-fledged rescue that helps a variety of animals including dogs, cats, horses, birds and goats.

One of Tazzy’s most recent efforts assisted the Coalition to Unchain Dogs, a North Carolina-based all-volunteer organization that works to free dogs from chains and instead build fences. The coalition also funds spaying/neutering and educating the public about the detrimental effects of chaining, as well as lobbies for legislation to ban or restrict tethering of dogs. Tazzy reached their fundraising goal and then matched donations to free 8 tethered dogs in Virginia and North Carolina, including one blind dog that had been chained for 10 years.

Bow Wow Bungalow also serves as a haven for rescued animals. For the past two years in a row Marcie took in 12 red-listed dogs from the Burbank shelter over Fourth of July weekend when the shelters are the most overcrowded. She kept them for 5 days and returned them when space freed up at the shelter and they were out of danger. She ended up keeping and finding homes for several of the dogs, all except for Lexus that is, a 5-year-old lab/pit mix that has been a BWB resident for almost 2 years now. Marcie is still determined to find the right household for Lexus where he is the only dog, since he has issues with male dogs and may be unpredictable with females. “He’s a really sweet dog though, and I won’t give up on finding him a home,” she says.

Marcie and her eldest daughter started Bow Wow Bungalow in North Hollywood in 2001 and then in 2003 expanded to the present location near Burbank airport with room for 5,000 square feet of combined indoor/outdoor play space and a separate 12,000-square-foot outdoor area that includes a bone-shaped swimming pool with a cascading waterfall for the dogs. On an average day, there are about 50 frolicking canines and a 1 to 10 ratio of staff to dogs. When you tour the facility with its tranquil setting, warm staff and happy dogs, you can't help but wish every dog got to spend time there. All dogs must be evaluated for behavior prior to being admitted to "the Bungalow," although the majority pass. Trained professionals are also on hand to work with what Marcie terms the "barkaholics" and socialize those guests that don't exactly play well with others.

One of the main things Marcie boasts about Bow Wow Bungalow is that her human clients are welcome to drop by anytime and that she's always up front with them. "You need to feel safe about your dog. You don't need an appointment -- you can drop by 2 to 3 times a day if you want, and some people do," she laughs. "Sometimes it comes in under the wire," she admits. "If there was a fight, diarrhea, limping, I'll let you know about it."

"For the first 30 years of our marriage Marcie was busy with the kids," Mike explains. (They have three, two daughters and a son.) "Then when her time was freed up she wanted to do something independent of the family. Even if she didn't make money, she would still do this," he says proudly. "She loves it."

If Bow Wow Bungalow started out as a business separate from the family, it has turned into a family business of sorts. Aside from Marcie's eldest daughter who helped start it, her other daughter contributes graphic arts and her son is a partner in BWB and does rescue transports for Tazzy.

Says Marcie of her job: "This is a dream come true for me. It fulfills every fantasy. Being able to play with dogs all day. Being able to save dogs. How cool is that?"

Additionally, Mike and Marcie (neither of whom had pets growing up) have their own animal clan at home, which consists of rescued dogs, cats, Chinese chickens and four potbellied pigs: Leadbelly, Buckwheat, Napoleon and 18-year-old Maynard that they've had since he was a hand-sized piglet. The dogs have the added bonus of accompanying Marcie to work. "All I have to do is grab their harnesses or say 'wanna go to the bungie?' and they go crazy," she says.

Mike talks about his dogs like any proud father. He marvels at how they know the difference between the phone ring and the gate ring. When the phone rings they don't do anything, when the gate rings they wait 30 seconds like clockwork (the time it takes for a car to pull up) and then all go to the door. Mike even tested them by switching the rings. "It took a month, but they made the adjustment," he recalls with a grin.

“I love animals, but there’s something special about dogs. You look into a dog’s eyes and they look back at you with feeling. There’s nothing like giving love to a dog and getting it back,” Marcie says. “They enrich your life,” Mike adds.

Marcie also has some sound advice for dog guardians: “Before you make a decision about getting a dog, do some research and learn the breed, because there are too many in the system. Treat them as you would your 2-year-old; they’re very intuitive,” she further advises, and then echoes the mantra of anyone involved in animal rescue: “spay and neuter.”

Another issue close to Marcie’s heart is keeping dogs secure with a car harness while traveling. Along with other pet supplies she features the S.A.S.H.A. harness (Safe and Secure Harness Alliance) at Bow Wow Bungalow, with all of the profits going toward promoting the cause of car safety. She became a proponent of the harness after a beloved 7-month-old pit bull named Sasha flew out the windshield of her guardian’s car. The humans in the front seat were unharmed because of their seat belts; the dog ejected through the window and died 5 minutes later in her mom’s arms. Marcie started to do research and became an advocate for dog safety and this particular harness.

“The S.A.S.H.A. harness saves our dogs’ lives,” she says emphatically. “You buckle yourself. You buckle your loved ones. We need to legalize dog safety, but until then, buckle your dog.”

In 2008, during the last Tom Petty Tour, the Campbells set up Rock The Dogs, a campaign to raise funds for Tazzy Rescue as well as awareness about animal cruelty and neglect. They are doing it again this year through their eBay charity store by auctioning off a variety of items including tickets for assorted dates on the upcoming North American tour, autographed guitars, Marcie’s vintage collectibles and a new addition: guitar pick jewelry, which is proving to be a big seller.

According to Leilani Laca, Tazzy founder, the major impetus for Mike and Marcie getting involved with fundraising was the need they saw to cover costly veterinary medical procedures, including orthopedic surgery. “A 2-year-old dog can be put down due to a simple broken leg if the funds aren’t there,” Leilani notes.

The Campbells have two very different jobs, but occasionally the jobs intertwine: Mike has been known to wear a button on stage that says “Dog is God at Bow Wow Bungalow” and Marcie sometimes joins Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers on the road, as she will for part of the upcoming tour, which finishes at home at the Hollywood Bowl, Oct. 1 and at Irvine’s Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre, Oct. 2.

After reminding Mike that he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, played the Super Bowl and toured the world, I couldn’t resist asking him the inevitable cliché question: how all of that compares to his family. “I love my job. I’m fortunate to have one of the best,” he admitted. “But nothing is more important than family...except maybe playing the Super Bowl.” A true heartbreaker.

For more information about Tazzy Animal Rescue Fund, including Rock The Dogs, visit www.tazzyfund.com.

Melissa Maroff is an L.A.-based writer and animal advocate.