

This is an open letter to the Dischord & Riot Grrrl scenes & members and the existing music community. A warning that this letter contains descriptions of statutory rape, sexual assault, and coercion against girls and women that have gone on out in the open without consequence for years, or decades even.

I hope that this letter finds you all well. I have been conflicted for a while about whether or not I should write to you but do feel now compelled to do so as I cannot stay silent any longer. I am writing to share experiences and possibly some perspective on the predatory behavior of Ian Svenonius.

Firstly, I would like to thank you. Thank you for being examples of integrity and character. Thank you for being some of the first people, in my world and life at least to speak up for the mistreatment of women and sexism in general. Ian M/Dischord Scene, you were honestly the first example of men identifying as feminists that I had experienced. Granted my world as a child was greatly affected by neglect and abuse. Still, I was grateful for your example and it helped inform me of how to navigate out of these abusive patterns or to simply choose better people or better men in general. The Riot Grrrl scene, walking and breathing examples of feminine power & strength and held space to talk about these experiences.

There are some positive and some negative side effects of surviving trauma. You develop a heightened and immediate awareness of potential predators. There is an acute awareness of the precursory clues that most people miss entirely. I first met Ian S. when I was 19 and the Make-Up was playing in town. I thought he was dating Michelle at the time but was confused that he spent the entire night hanging out and flirting with a group of 15-year-old girls. The episode seemed off and left me feeling a bit disturbed but when I asked my friends their opinion, it was dismissed as him just being friendly and engaging his fans. This is a negative side effect of trauma, you look to others to negate your hyper-vigilant suspicions and try to undo your initial gut feelings.

I had often heard that his penchant for underage girls was considered "DC's worst-kept secret". The writing is on the wall and everyone seems to try and talk themselves out of what seems glaringly obvious. At least that's what I did until I could no longer be complicit. When I first heard of all of the accounts of predatory behavior coming out against Burger Records I wondered if he would be next. He was socially linked with a handful of the Burger musicians and do know of one person specifically that he is close friends with since they would often lament about society and its puritanical constraints. So for him, it just seemed like it would be a matter of time as there was also a news outlet working on an investigation. He soon after posted an Instagram admission or apology (it's difficult to tell what the actual intent was) as it still reads in his Spiv character speak and was difficult to take seriously as it severely minimized his predatory actions.

He isn't just a creep who has been inappropriate at times and it wasn't a singular incident that happened in the past, it is active and ongoing and has victimized many. Many women began sharing their experiences of his predatory behavior in the comment section only to have him quickly delete and then block the individuals. The admission post was only up for a few hours before his account went private and the post was deleted altogether. (Not to mention the many who were blocked before the admission was posted in the first place). Many women commenting took the post as an invitation for dialogue about how his behavior may have affected them personally, but it wasn't an invitation at all, it was a feeble attempt to get out in front of something before it got out.

An additional discovery that came after the post was learning that he pushed himself on a very intoxicated girl and the woman happened to be a friend of a known musician friend of his, who thankfully believed and supported her. I was equally horrified and validated by the news because I personally witnessed him do the same thing. There was a young girl, her early 20s at the oldest, who would go to his shows

often and would show up fairly intoxicated. One night she showed up to a show completely belligerent, vacillating between laughing hysterically and sobbing hysterically when he began to aggressively pursue her. He was very forward with her and then turned more handsy and then he moved on to openly petting her in front of a group of equally fucked up people. Panicked and disgusted, I intervened, pulled him off of her, and told her friends to take her home immediately. We then had an explosive fight and then once things calmed down he directed those advances towards me when he came up from behind me and began grabbing my breasts. I elbowed him in the chest repeatedly and got him to stop. After that incident, he acted like the event never happened but began trashing my name to our mutual acquaintances, bands, and record labels. I was honestly shocked by the situation and it took some time for me to make sense of what had happened that night and then what he was now doing to me in retaliation. I was so distraught and confused by the experience that I could only confide in one friend to help me navigate the situation.

Historically, time after time after time, women are not believed or their experiences are diminished and most of the allowances or benefit of the doubt are given to the predators rather than the victims. Case after case after case... Cosby, Epstein, Weinstein, Larry Nassar. It often takes an overwhelming number of accounts before women are believed. So if it isn't just the friend's account of sexual coercion, or the one I witnessed, or the one I experienced myself, when is it far enough? When is there enough information that people will see him and his predatory behavior clearly? There's an overwhelming amount of hints/ clues/ information demonstrating his problematic behavior readily available. For one, his dating history- he is the living breathing version of David Wooderson's character in Dazed & Confused where he brags about him getting older and his girls getting younger. Ian likes young girls, period. He "fucks" around with as young as he can go but dates as close to 18 as possible so that it is "socially acceptable" and legal for that matter. Each girlfriend is younger than the previous one. Just look at the bands that he had and how young the girls were in the bands. He has often bragged about how he almost dated the guitarist when she joined Chain & the Gang, omitting that she was 16 at the time.

A few Reddit conversations are discussing how he accosted 2 sixteen-year-olds at one of his shows a few years ago. This story came up again maybe a year before the Instagram admission when a group of women showed up to one of his shows to confront him for grabbing the asses of the teenagers involved. I asked him directly about the accusation to which he responded, "I didn't ask for their IDs". He had a 17-year-old from Australia or New Zealand visit and stay with him in DC. While there she filmed a video that he took down before the admission post. He did an internet scrub before the post and blocked many of the people who he had assaulted beforehand. I know several previous flatmates who moved out because it was "getting creepy" to stay with him. I mean the Make-Up has a "no young girls in the room" rule when they share lodging but claim to know nothing about his proclivities. Instagram has emboldened and unleashed him. The app has allowed him far greater access to young girls to groom well in advance of when he is single. He recently started following my friend's teenage daughter and messaging her, so he is still at it. Just look at his posts- he has the youngest girlfriend yet who he regularly posts provocative and suggestive photos of. He is so bold as to cheat on his current girlfriend when she leaves the room when he has the opportunity. A middle-aged man cheating on a girl 30-plus years his junior doesn't sit well with me.

With all that said, I want to acknowledge the complexity of the situation and the internal work required to navigate it. I got to the point where I could no longer be around it as I felt it signals to others that I was OK with this type of behavior. As a female, as a person with younger siblings, and as a person who had the opportunity to see the whole picture, I cannot remain quiet about or go along with the program so that this cycle of trauma continues. I do also know that he hides it very well from his peers but the information is still there. It's an unfortunate coincidence that Dischord bands play all age shows and that combined with his proximity to Bikini Kill and the Riot Grrrl scene has given him additional and continuous access to young females.

I know that the association with Dischord and Bikini Kill is a large part of what allowed me to talk myself out of what my gut was telling me about him being potentially dangerous. That combined with really wanting to see the best in this smart and charismatic person who was part of scenes that I very much looked up to growing up. I do feel it's important to recognize all the parts of a person though, to be honest and real about how they are treating females and the damage being done. I can be empathetic to the trauma he experienced in his life and do know that trauma begets more trauma and hurt people hurt people but there is no accountability on his part nor is there any work being done around it. For myself and others to remain silent or to continue to be publicly supportive of him allows for him to continue the abuse.

With all of that said, what happened to you? Fugazi was known for calling out negative male behavior at their shows. It was almost expected. You would call out dudes for inflicting way less harm than what your peer Ian Svenonius has done. As for the Riot Grrrls, what happened to you? I think it's obvious what one would expect from that scene. Has everyone aged into complacency? Is it about the money? Is it inconvenient? This isn't a past story or mistake, where he admitted fault and worked on himself. It's active and ongoing, he continues to abuse and your silence and/ or public support allows him to do further damage. Your complacency makes you complicit.

A space for conversation was created when he posted his admission post on Instagram but then was quickly taken away once he realized the realities of his behavior. His victims deserve the space and time to share their experiences and question why the scene/ music industry continues to go along with this type of abuse against women. Their stories deserve to be heard as does mine.

The Spiv finally admits what was an open secret for decades in the most obnoxious and un-reflective manner, then locks his account. Between this and Paul Vivari, what a week it's been in the DC counterculture



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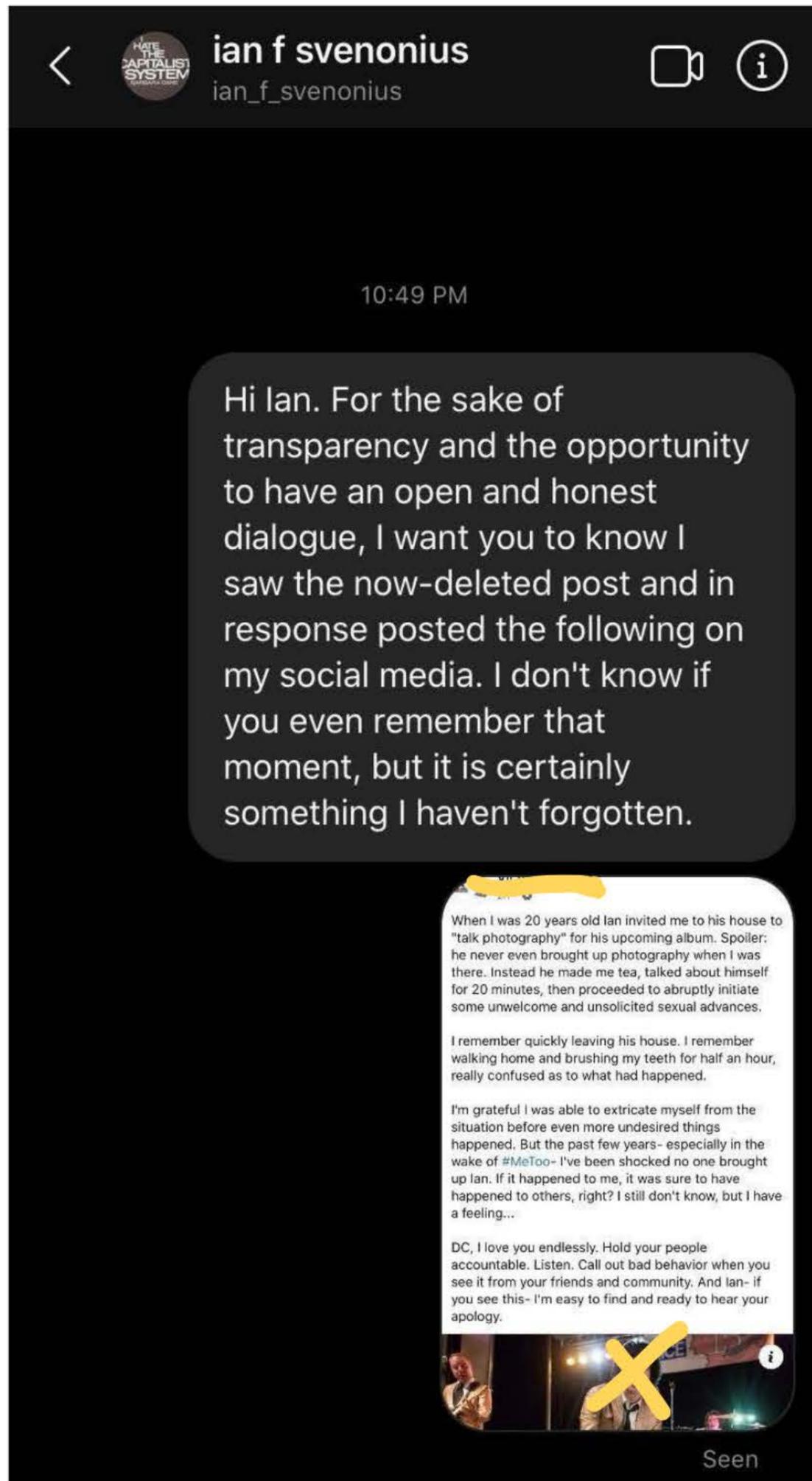
Ian Svenonius: “[I] have been completely inappropriate to women”

“The trash fire burning through underground music is long overdue,” says the Nation of Ulysses/Make-Up frontman in a lengthy new statement.

5:32 PM · Jul 25, 2020 · Twitter Web App

[Redacted]

When I was 20 y/o Ian invited me to his house to "talk photography" for his upcoming album. Spoiler: he used that as a guise to attempt some sinister things. Relieved to see #DC folks finally coming out and talking about this open secret about a "local hero."



Thanks for hiping me to this. He tried to pull me in when I lived in Cambridge. Completely creepy, but way too common. Can't listen to him without getting sick. When I moved to DC and saw him at shows, he was always with a very young female, dressed in provocative ways, that gave me the feel of groomed victims. Grateful I missed at least one scumbag. Plenty of others I didn't.

I'm no one in DC, despite knowing who I would think is the top dog. My POV doesn't rate, but at least that post gave me an opportunity to speak.

Like Reply 1y



Now, it's deleted.  3

Like Reply 1y

He deleted the post. Smells like  to me

Like Reply 1y



He went private. "Not virtue signaling" my ass.

Like Reply 1y



Seems like he realized that sharing an apology for being a creep on the same IG account where he regularly shares sexually provocative photos of his gf who is *28 years younger than he is* didn't go over too well.

Like Reply 1y

