# Scam Interceptors expose rise of AI deepfake scams targeting celebrities



This week’s newsletter, authored by Nick Stapleton and Mark Lewis from the BBC’s "Scam Interceptors," delves into the alarming rise of deepfake technology and its exploitation by scammers. The fourth series of "Scam Interceptors," currently airing on BBC One, confronts the issue by showcasing various scams, including a notable case involving a convincing deepfake of Hollywood actress Reese Witherspoon.

The series aims to educate viewers about the vulnerabilities presented by advances in generative artificial intelligence. One recent case highlighted involved a woman from France who fell victim to a scammer impersonating Brad Pitt, ultimately losing nearly a million euros. The scammer utilised AI-produced deepfakes alongside real news reports about Pitt’s personal life to orchestrate a fraudulent romantic relationship.

Stapleton and Lewis emphasised that while it is easy to critique individuals who fall prey to such scams, the emergence of AI technologies presents new challenges to public online interactions. Their investigation led them to infiltrate online groups where scammers operate freely, impersonating a range of celebrities, including Mariah Carey and Keanu Reeves. They described this environment as akin to a "digital mafia," where deceptive practices are rampant.

In their attempts to explore these scams, they joined a Facebook fan club for Witherspoon. Within moments, they received messages from multiple accounts claiming to be the actress. The communication took on a personal tone, with the scammer sharing purportedly authentic details, including edited images of driving permits and messages mirroring Witherspoon’s busy schedule. Over time, the interaction became immersive, leading the presenters to anticipate messages as if they were communicating with a friend.

To reinforce the charade, the scammers used manipulated videos that convincingly mimicked Witherspoon’s likeness and voice, saying, “Hello, I’m real. So if you don’t believe me, I don’t know what to tell you.” However, the presenters noted discrepancies in the videos, which betrayed their artificial origin.

Presenting several tips for discerning real from fake content online, Stapleton and Lewis advised viewers to:

1. **Engage Actively:** Be vigilant about online content, scrutinising what you see rather than passively absorbing it.

2. **Examine Skin Texture:** Unnaturally smooth skin can indicate the use of deepfake technology, as AI struggles to replicate organic texture.

3. **Watch for Dubbed Speech:** Pay attention to mouth movements to ensure they align with spoken words, looking for disjointed or unnatural facial expressions.

4. **Listen Closely to Voices:** Mechanical or flat vocal inflections might signal the use of AI-generated speech, which often lacks the emotional variance of real human communication.

As technology progresses, the capability to detect fakes is expected to diminish, underscoring the urgency for individuals to hone their skills in distinguishing reality from deception. The creators of AI are persistently advancing their work, with discussions around its potential applications, including in military and surveillance contexts.

"Scam Interceptors" aims to raise awareness of these issues, providing viewers with insights into the evolving landscape of online scams exacerbated by advancements in artificial intelligence. The fourth season airs on BBC One every weekday at 2pm and is also available in full on BBC iPlayer.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

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2. <https://www.livemint.com/news/trends/brad-pitt-reacts-to-shocking-ai-scam-that-swindled-850k-from-french-woman-dont-respond-to-unsolicited-outreach-11737120732802.html> - This piece reports on a French woman who was scammed out of $850,000 by a scammer impersonating Brad Pitt using AI-generated selfies, emphasizing the dangers of unsolicited online outreach from individuals without social media presence.
3. <https://www.newsweek.com/brad-pitt-ai-dating-scam-france-deepfake-social-media-2014546> - This article details how a 53-year-old French woman was deceived into believing she was dating Brad Pitt after receiving AI-generated images of the actor, leading to significant financial loss.
4. <https://ew.com/brad-pitt-rep-responds-to-arrest-of-five-imposters-scammed-women-8718891> - This report covers the arrest of five individuals who posed as Brad Pitt online to scam women, with a representative for the actor warning fans about the dangers of unsolicited online outreach.
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7. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2025/may/02/your-new-celebrity-best-friend-its-just-a-deepfake-trying-to-con-you> - Please view link - unable to able to access data