# BBC’s Scam Interceptors expose rising threat of AI deepfake celebrity scams



In the latest edition of The Guardian, Nick Stapleton and Mark Lewis, the presenter and producer of BBC's *Scam Interceptors*, delve into a pressing issue surrounding the use of deepfake technology in online scams. Currently airing its fourth series on BBC One, the show has taken a proactive approach to counter computer-generated scams that pose significant risks to unsuspecting social media users.

In a notable incident referenced by the duo, a woman in France was scammed out of nearly one million euros by an individual posing as actor Brad Pitt. The scammer employed AI-generated deepfake imagery and leveraged real-life details from Pitt’s highly publicised divorce to convincingly portray a romantic relationship. This incident underscores the alarming extent to which AI is being exploited by scammers who use such technology to mislead and defraud those familiar with celebrities but unaware of the potential for deception.

Stapleton and Lewis revealed that while it is easy to judge victims of such scams, the rapid evolution of AI technology presents significant vulnerabilities to the general public. As part of their investigation in *Scam Interceptors*, the team infiltrated online groups frequented by scammers impersonating A-list celebrities such as Mariah Carey and Keanu Reeves. Their foray into these digital spaces revealed a systematic operation where scammers diligently crafted their facades to lure unsuspecting individuals.

In a rather unique twist, the duo joined a fan club for Reese Witherspoon on Facebook, where they were quickly bombarded with messages from multiple accounts claiming to be the actress. "Hello Sweetheart," one message read, accompanied by a kissy-face emoji, setting the stage for an ambitious deception. Over the course of several weeks, the scammer employed various tactics to maintain the illusion, sending manipulated images, purportedly Of Witherspoon's driving licence, and detailed narratives about her filming schedule—further ensnaring their targets.

To solidify the deception, the scammers created deepfake videos ostensibly featuring Witherspoon. These videos, although highly convincing, exhibited subtle discrepancies that could be detected by a discerning viewer. The unnerving nature of such technological advancements reflects broader concerns surrounding digital authenticity and the potential for pervasive emotional manipulation.

Stapleton and Lewis provided a series of tips on how to identify deepfakes, recognising the importance of these skills in an ever-evolving digital environment. Firstly, they advised active engagement with questionable content, rather than passively consuming media. "Harden those peepers," they advised, encouraging critical observation of videos. Additionally, they noted that deepfakes often lack realistic skin texture, exhibit awkwardly timed mouth movements, or have a monotonous vocal delivery that fails to capture the nuances of human emotion.

While these indicators offer some guidance, the duo cautioned that technological advancements will continue to pose new challenges. They noted that identifying genuine content from fabricated material will increasingly become a crucial skill as artificial intelligence progresses. They also touched upon concerns over the ethical implications of AI, particularly as companies like Google shift away from policies against the use of AI in weapon development.

The fourth season of *Scam Interceptors* is now showing on BBC One every weekday at 2pm, with all episodes available for streaming on iPlayer. As these themes continue to unfold, viewers are reminded of the profound implications that AI-generated content has on trust and authenticity in digital interactions.

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

## References

* <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2025/jan/16/brad-pitt-french-woman-scam> - This article details the case of a French woman who was scammed out of €830,000 by an individual posing as actor Brad Pitt, utilizing AI-generated images and messages to deceive her.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckgnz8rw1xgo> - This report discusses the widespread mockery and online harassment faced by the French woman after her story was broadcast, leading to the withdrawal of the program from TF1's platforms.
* <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2025/01/15/viral-scam-french-woman-duped-by-ai-brad-pitt-love-scheme-faces-cyberbullying> - This article highlights the cyberbullying and mockery the French woman encountered after her story went viral, including inappropriate responses from organizations like Toulouse FC and Netflix France.
* <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/woman-loses-life-savings-scammers-posing-brad-pitt-france/> - This piece covers the French woman's loss of her life savings to scammers posing as Brad Pitt, the use of AI-generated images, and the subsequent online harassment she faced.
* <https://www.connexionfrance.com/news/french-tv-show-pulled-for-mocking-woman-who-fell-in-love-with-ai-brad-pitt/699935> - This article reports on the French TV show 'Sept à Huit' being pulled after the broadcast led to a wave of online harassment against the woman who was scammed by an AI-generated Brad Pitt.
* <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 article includes a statement from Brad Pitt's representative expressing concern over scammers exploiting fans' connections with celebrities and advising against responding to unsolicited online outreach.
* <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