

Duped 'porn stars' awarded \$13m

A US judge has awarded \$13m in damages to 22 women who were defrauded by the owners of GirlsDoPorn, a website specialising in 'amateur'-style pornography. The women were coerced and tricked into making pornography that was released on to some of the biggest adult sites in the world without their consent, leaving some of them suicidal. The San Diego Superior Court heard evidence from the women, Jane Does 1 to 22, in a case their lawyers say has 'exposed the rotten underbelly' of the city's sex industry. GirlsDoPorn is an adult subscription service launched in 2006 by New Zealander Michael Pratt. Filmed in homes, hotels and trailer parks, explicit videos promote the image of 'ordinary' college girls who are making their first pornographic film. **The Guardian** reports that the complainants said they had replied to ads asking for 'beautiful college-type preppy girls' aged 18 to 22 interested in modelling. **They said they were contacted by 'reference women' who pitched the idea of making porn and assured them that it would never go online.** Judge Kevin Enright described in his findings how the need to keep finding young women new to the porn industry drove the 'deceptive, coercive and threatening behaviour' used by the defendants.

In late November, the moderator of three highly trafficked websites posted a message titled 'R.I.P.' It offered a convoluted explanation for why they were left with no choice but to close. The unnamed moderator thanked over 100 000 'brothers' who had visited and contributed to the sites before their demise, blaming an 'increasingly intolerant world' that did not allow children to 'fully express themselves.' In fact, forums on the sites had been bastions of illegal content almost since their inception in 2012, containing child sexual abuse photos and videos, including violent and explicit imagery of infants and toddlers. **The New York Times** reports that **the sites managed to survive so long because the Internet provides enormous cover for sexual predators.** Apps, social media platforms and video games are also riddled with illicit material, but they have corporate owners like Facebook and Microsoft that can monitor and remove it.

In other developments, hackers have found a new method to bypass the strict filters and spam prevention on your e-mail to bombard you with e-mails claiming that they will publish a video of you watching porn to all your contacts. Typically, the cybercriminals claim to have secretly filmed you watching adult content online, which they will then publish and send to all of your contacts unless you pay an extortion demand. These claims are almost always false – and are only made to push victims into paying the hackers, usually in untraceable Bitcoin. And they have now found a way to reliably bypass the spam filters and other security protections put in place by e-mail providers, including Gmail, Yahoo, iCloud and the like. **The Express** reports that **the scams are now being sent in foreign languages and splitting bitcoin addresses into two parts to avoid detection from the filters.**