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Is she real?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I recently had a discussion over the telephone about a service I required.

It was a fairly detailed conversation where the person asked me different questions about what I needed, and then provided answers.

Except there was no person on the other end of the line. It was an AI-generated voice.

At the start of the call it was explained you are being transferred to speak to someone who will help you, but it also briefly explained with not too much detail, that the person you would be speaking to was not a real person.

The call went fine. I got the information I needed and the voice was pleasant, accommodating, and knowledgeable.

In fact, it was so real, that there were only a couple of times that you could notice a slight variation that may give away the fact that the voice you heard was not a real person.

The advancements in Artificial Intelligence over the past few years have been phenomenal.

So far, the only AI that I have had experience with has mostly been positive. However, there is definitely a side to this technology that can be used for nefarious purposes.

I'm pretty sure that over the next few years, we will learn more about the not-so-positive side of AI.

Some of the dark side of this technology has already been revealed through replicating a person's voice so accurately that you may receive a telephone call, thinking it is from a family member, and that you recognize the voice.

If your child calls you looking for help, and you recognize them, would you refuse?

Over the past few weeks, I have watched a series of AI-generated videos.

The first series recreated historical figures based on paintings and sculptures of that person. They went as far back as to create Cleopatra as a modern-day person.

It was fascinating to see what Cleopatra or Napoleon Bonaparte would have looked like if their photograph had been taken yesterday, complete with minor skin blemishes and lifelike complexion.

The second video brought people from a long-gone era back to life. They used black and white photos from the Edwardian age as a base for the work.

It was a time when photography still required a person to sit very still, not blink, and not smile, to achieve a sharply focused image.

For that reason, people who were photographed at the time always appeared to be stern or unhappy.

The truth is, even in the Edwardian era, people smiled and laughed, you just couldn't show that in a photograph.

In the video, they first colourize the photo to create a very modern-looking picture.

From there, they bring the people in the photo to life. The characters laugh and smile. It is a very convincing production.

If I were a budding movie actor, I would be worried about future opportunities.

Although AI has been used to create locations that do not exist, so far, movies are still using actors.

In the near future, I think we should expect to see the first entirely AI-created feature film.

From a filmmaker's perspective, this could be a huge advantage.

You wouldn't have to pay a top star $20 million to be in your movie, and several more million to supporting characters.

You could create the perfect character for the role based on the director's vision. Creating the most beautiful woman or man, or the ugliest person based on what you need, could all be done from a desk.

There would be no need for a second take if you create the first take exactly as you want it to be.

You could do it right the first time and create the perfect emotion you want the actor to show.

You could create just about any setting you want to place your characters in.

I'm not sure how the public will react to watching a movie where none of the characters are real.

However, it has already worked for Disney Studios who have created an entire empire based on animated characters.

AI has a world of possibilities if it is used for good purposes, however, there is no doubt it is here to stay and will only get better over the next few years.

To what end? We don't yet know.

However, I did see a humorous post about visiting websites where you have to prove you are real.

?AI has now advanced to the point where you have a robot demanding that you prove you are not a robot.?

Yeah, that is weird.