

# Lawyer Pleads Guilty to Setting Copyright-Trolling Traps for Downloaders

One of the two attorneys behind the notorious Prenda Law copyright factory has finally admitted extracting more than \$6 million from internet users by accusing them of illegally downloading porn, **reports *Forbes***.

John Steele pleaded guilty to federal charges of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and wire fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering.

The U.S. Department of Justice alleged that Steele and co-defendant Paul Hansmeier set up an elaborate “honeypot” operation by buying rights to porn videos in the name of various shell companies and then uploading the videos to torrent sites themselves. They also produced some videos themselves, Steele admitted.

The scheme called for the two lawyers to obtain subpoenas to force internet service providers to hand over IP address of downloaders. Then they would threaten downloaders with financial penalties and public embarrassment unless the hapless victims agreed to pay a \$3,000 settlement fee, writes **Emma Woollacott**.

**Read the *Forbes* article.**