Disney’s Loki faces backlash over reported use of generative AI

A promotional poster for the second season of *Loki* on Disney Plus has sparked controversy amongst professional designers following claims that it was at least partially created using generative AI. Illustrator Katria Raden flagged the image on X (formerly Twitter) last week, claiming that the image of the spiraling clock in the background “is giving all the AI telltale signs, like things randomly turning into meaningless squiggles” — a reference to the artifacts sometimes left behind by AI-image generators.

The creative community is concerned that AI image generators are being trained on their work without consent and could be used to replace human artists. Disney previously received backlash regarding its use of generative AI in another Marvel series, *Secret Invasion*, despite the studio insisting that using AI tools didn’t reduce roles for real designers on the project.

a:hover]:text-gray-63 [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63 dark:[&>a]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray”>Image: Disney / Marvel / *The Verge*

Several X users (including Raden) noted that the background on the Loki artwork appears to have been pulled from an titled “Surreal Infinity Time Spiral Space Antique.” According to @thepokeflutist who purchased the stock image, it was published to Shutterstock this year — ruling out the

possibility of it being too old to be AI-generated — and contains no embedded metadata to confirm how the image was created. Several AI image checkers that scanned the Stock image also flagged it as AI-generated.

AI-generated stock imagery is a real issue for many creative professionals. As Raden notes: “licensing photos and illustrations on stock sites has been a way many hard-working artists have been earning a living. I don’t think replacing them with generated imagery via tech built on mass exploitation and wage theft is any more ethical than replacing Disney’s own employees.”

Companies like Adobe and Getty are also promoting ways for AI-generated content to be commercially viable, but it’s unclear if these platforms are any better than Shutterstock at moderating submissions that don’t abide by their contributor rules.

a:hover]:text-gray-63 [&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-black dark:[&>a:hover]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a:hover]:shadow-underline-gray [&>a]:shadow-underline-gray-63 dark:[&>a]:text-gray-bd dark:[&>a]:shadow-underline-gray”>Image: Apple / Disney / Marvel
It also isn’t clear if generative AI was used elsewhere by Disney to create the promotional material for *Loki*. Some X users have speculated that it may have been used on sections of the image like the miniaturized characters surrounding Tom Hiddleston’s Loki, noting their awkward positioning. Disney has ignored our request to clarify if AI was used in the *Loki* promotional art, and to confirm if the company had licensed the aforementioned Shutterstock image.

There’s the argument here that since the clock image used for Loki isn’t labeled as AI-generated by Shutterstock, Disney might not be aware of its origins. Still, the errors present in the stock image would be easy for most graphic designers to spot, so the inclusion of random artifacts in the final poster

isn’t a good look for Disney’s design or editing process.

The creative industry has become saturated with AI-powered tools like Adobe Firefly and Canva Magic Studio over the last year. These tools aim to make things easier for folks with limited design experience, and are typically promoted to organizations who want to produce cheap art at scale. Stock images are often used by companies because they’re fast, affordable, and accessible, reducing the need to hire experienced designers to make content from scratch. As AI-generated stock also grows in popularity, it’s easy to understand why creative professionals are concerned about the future of their industry.

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/9/23909529/disney-marvel-loki-generative-ai-poster-backlash-season-2