Police may have caught the LA Venmo scammer



Police have arrested a man named Andy Mai in connection with a string of Venmo scams against LA-area resellers, according to Los Angeles County Superior Court records. Andy Mai faces six charges of grand theft, filed on January 25th. On Wednesday, Mai posted a $145,000 bond, pleading not guilty to all charges. He is next scheduled to appear in court on February 26th. Detectives on the case said the investigation was still ongoing, and declined to comment further.

In November, *The Verge* traced more than $125,000 in scams perpetrated under the name Andy Mai, exploiting a poorly understood feature of Venmo's payment system. Arranging to buy iPhones, cameras, and other big-ticket items on Venmo, the scammer would pay with fraudulent funds that disappeared from seller's accounts after 24 hours. When Venmo reversed the charges, sellers were left with no money and no goods, often out tens of thousands of dollars. Venmo advises users never to purchase goods from strangers using Venmo, but few are aware of the restriction, which proved crucial to the scammer's success. In recent weeks, a number of the victims have received official notifications of court proceedings.

Victims had little success in reporting the scams to local law enforcement, and for years, the scammer seems to have operated with relative impunity. Most surprisingly, the recent charges allege that Mai used his real name when conducting the scams, which should have made it trivial for police to locate the person involved.

While Mai's arrest could be good news for his alleged victims, it's unlikely to put a dent in other Venmo scams, as the same tactics spread to criminals in other cities. Earlier this

week, a scammer in New York used a similar trick to make off with a $2,700 Nikon D810A. Fortunately, the scammer was apprehended trying to resell the camera, and the device was ultimately returned to its owner.

https://www.theverge.com/2018/2/9/16995408/venmo-scammer-arrested-los-angeles-andy-mai