



Bernard Madoff

🕒 This article is more than **5 years** old

Bernie Madoff photos offer rare glimpse of convicted fraudster in prison

The Guardian publishes two images of Madoff in prison garb that are believed to be the only photographic public records of the grand swindler behind bars

Ed Pilkington in New York

Sat 20 May 2017 12.00 BST

Robert De Niro takes on the role of Bernie Madoff, the Wall Street legend who fleeced investors of billions of dollars in the largest financial fraud in US history, in a new original movie that was aired on [HBO](#) on Saturday night.

How convincing is De Niro? For anyone assessing his performance, help is now at hand in the form of the first images of the real Bernie Madoff behind prison bars.

Madoff, 79, was last seen in public on 12 March 2009, when he pleaded guilty to running a giant Ponzi scheme: a \$65bn (£50bn) scam that evaded detection for decades

running a giant Ponzi scheme: a \$650M (£500M) scam that evaded detection for decades. Since that day, no pictures of the Wizard of Lies, to use the title of the HBO film, have emerged.

Until now. The Guardian is publishing two images of Madoff in prison garb that are believed to be the only photographic public records of the grand swindler in captivity.



📷 Madoff in the Butner federal prison outside Durham, North Carolina.

The images were taken in the course of an interview with Madoff in the Butner federal prison outside Durham, North Carolina, where he is serving a 150-year sentence. The inmate is wearing a white T-shirt under a standard-issue khaki coat - Madoff is often to be seen wearing the jacket inside the prison as he complains of feeling cold, a side effect of his high blood pressure.

He has his hands outstretched as though in animated conversation. In the second image he smiles broadly, enjoying a moment of levity that may irritate some of his many financial victims still left reeling by the vast deception.



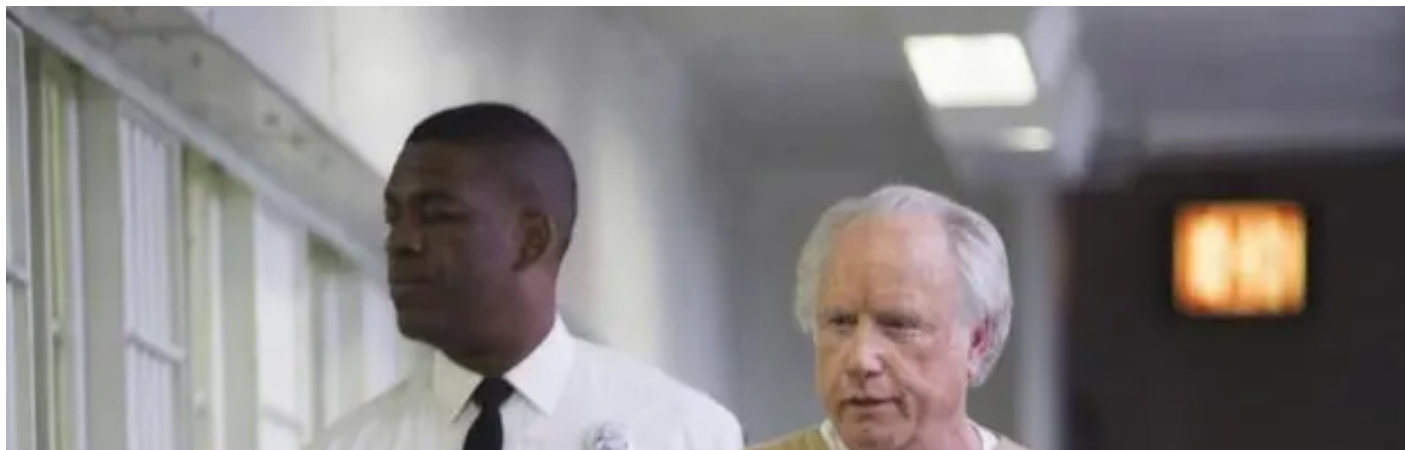


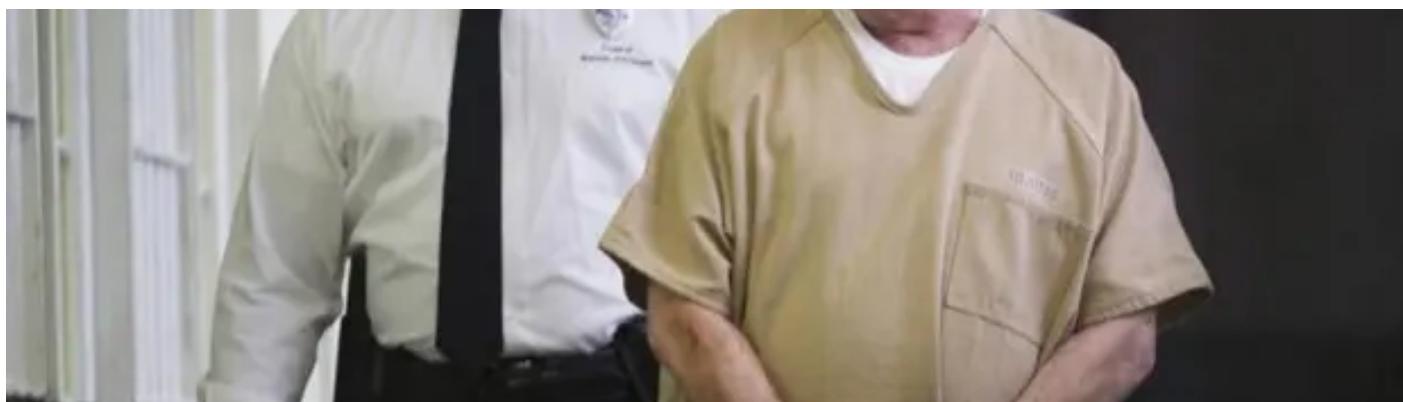
📷 Robert De Niro plays Bernie Madoff in The Wizard of Lies. Photograph: HBO

It's been a busy couple of years for the Bernie Madoff infotainment industry, with De Niro's performance in the [HBO movie](#) by Barry Levinson (the Oscar-winning director of Rain Man) being just one element of it. Last year, ABC broadcast a mini-series, Madoff, with Richard Dreyfuss in the title role.

Then there's Audible Originals, the Amazon-owned digital books company and now podcast outlet. It launched its new channel with [Ponzi Supernova](#), a deep dive by the journalist Steve Fishman into the scam based on 12 hours of recordings of Madoff talking about his crimes.

Both Dreyfuss and De Niro listened to the tapes as they prepared for their performances. The [podcast](#) reveals intimate details of Madoff's life in captivity, including the memorable fact that Madoff has established a monopoly inside Butner over hot chocolate - he bought up every packet from the prison shop and traded them at a profit with other inmates.





📷 Richard Dreyfuss as Bernie Madoff in the ABC production Madoff. Photograph: Eric Liebowitz/ABC

Now that we can check against the images of the real Bernie Madoff, how do his imitators fare? Credit to ABC's costume department for the uniform worn by Dreyfuss that is close to the real deal, at least in colour, though it should be noted that Madoff dismissed the series as inaccurate and "absurd".

The bright orange jumpsuit worn by De Niro for HBO is, by contrast, wide of the mark. It comes across as more Guantánamo than Butner jail.

The actors' voices can also be put through the reality test, by comparing their renditions to the real deal on Audible's Ponzi Supernova tapes. De Niro and Dreyfuss, native New Yorkers both, put on their best New Yawk drawls, but neither come close to the thick Queens accents that flows from the mouth of the con artist himself.
