



HACKERS

1x60



International

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They leave few fingerprints.

They spend their days casing potential victims—planting bugs that will eventually allow them access to homes and businesses around the globe. Their crimes include everything from vandalism to credit card fraud to multimillion-dollar bank heists. Bearing monikers such as “Mafia Boy” and “Comrade,” they prowl the Internet, searching for the cyberspace equivalent of unlocked doors, behind which lay the wealth—and secrets—of the world’s most powerful governments and corporations.

They are hackers: self-described techno-nerds who devote their time and considerable energies to demonstrating just how vulnerable the Internet has made once-secure information. But are hackers merely the mischievous, high-tech pranksters they purport to be or serious criminals costing businesses billions each year? And how can the world’s nations and corporations safeguard sensitive information from professional hackers with potentially deadly aims?

Hackers begins by demonstrating that the threats posed by hackers are not targeted solely at mega-corporations such as Microsoft; much of today’s hacking, in fact, involves tapping into the personal computers of John Q. Public.

The film includes interviews with numerous hackers, who are only too willing to share the customized software they’ve created in order to snoop unseen around the World Wide Web. These hackers describe the adrenaline rush that results when an ostensibly secure computer or Web site is cracked. Also shown are several teen hackers who claim that their true aim is not to wreak havoc or commit crimes, but to alert computer companies—and consumers—to the security breaches of the Internet.

Not everyone, however, believes that hackers should be congratulated for hacking into private computer systems. *Hackers* includes interviews with officials from the US Department of Justice’s Computer Crime Section and other computer security experts, who aren’t buying the hackers’ claims of altruistic motives.

Critics point to the billions of dollars in damage caused by hacker “pranks” such as the “I Love You” bug and the “Melissa” virus as evidence that hackers are causing tangible damage. Less well known among the general public are cases of cyber crime that threaten the stability of—and public confidence in—Internet banking and online commerce. Even more sobering than such white-collar crime, however, is the threat hackers pose to national defense systems.

Through interviews with security experts, government officials, and hackers themselves, *Hackers* spotlights the inherent security weaknesses of the Internet and the battle raging between the keepers of top-secret information and those who would attempt to retrieve it. The one-hour documentary also examines the question of accountability: Who is responsible for maintaining security in a wired world—the people who make the hardware and software that drives the Internet or the individuals, businesses, and governments that willingly connect their most sensitive information to it?

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