

The best hackers thought history. Enjoy.

Kevin Mitnick: A self-proclaimed "hacker poster boy," Mitnick went through a highly publicized pursuit by authorities. His mischief was hyped by the media but his actual offenses may be less notable than his notoriety suggests. The Department of Justice describes him as "the most wanted computer criminal in United States history."

His exploits were detailed in two movies: *Freedom Downtime* and *Takedown*. Mitnick had a bit of hacking experience before committing the offenses that made him famous. He started out exploiting the Los Angeles bus punch card system to get free rides. Then, like Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, dabbled in phone phreaking. Although there were numerous offenses, Mitnick was ultimately convicted for breaking into the Digital Equipment Corporation's computer network and stealing software.

Mitnick's mischief got serious when he went on a two and a half year "coast-to-coast hacking spree." The CNN article, "Legendary computer hacker released from prison," explains that "he hacked into computers, stole corporate secrets, scrambled phone networks and broke into the national defense warning system." He then hacked into computer expert and fellow hacker Tsutomu Shimomura's home computer, which led to his undoing.

Today, Mitnick has been able to move past his role as a black hat hacker and become a productive member of society. He served five years, about 8 months of it in solitary confinement, and is now a computer security consultant, author and speaker.

Gary McKinnon: This 41-year-old Scotsman, also known as Solo, Gary McKinnon is the perpetrator of what's considered the biggest hack in the history of computer science – into a military system. Not satisfied with this, in the years 2001 and 2002, he made a mockery of the information security of NASA itself and the Pentagon. Currently he is at liberty awaiting his extradition to the U.S. and prohibited access to a computer with Internet connection.

Vladimir Levin: This Russian biochemist and mathematician was accused of having committed one of the biggest bank robberies of all times by means of the cracking technique. From Saint

Petersburg, Levin managed to transfer funds estimated at approximately 10 million dollars from Citibank in New York to accounts he had opened in distant parts of the world. He was arrested by INTERPOL in 1995 at Heathrow airport (England). Although he managed to rob more than 10 million dollars, he was only sentenced to three years in prison. Currently he is free.

Kevin Poulsen: Today he may be a journalist and collaborates with authorities to track pedophiles on the Internet, but Poulsen has a dark past as a cracker and phreaker. The event that brought him the most notoriety was taking over Los Angeles phone lines in 1990. A radio station was offering a Porsche as a prize for whoever managed to be caller number 102. It goes without saying that Poulsen was the winner of the contest.

Timothy Lloyd: In 1996, information services company Omega, provider of NASA and the United States Navy, suffered losses of around 10 million dollars. And it was none other than Tim Lloyd, an x-employee fired some weeks earlier, who was the cause of this financial disaster. Lloyd left a virtually activated information bomb in the company's codes, which finally detonated July 31 of that same year.

Robert Morris: Son of one of the forerunners in the creation of the virus, in 1988 Morris managed to infect no fewer than 6,000 computers connected to the ArpaNet network (one of the precursors to the internet) He did it from the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and for his criminal activities he earned a four year prison sentence, which was finally reduced to community service.

David Smith: Not all hackers can boast of creating the virus that spread the fastest to computers the width and breadth of the globe – David Smith can. In 1999, the father of the Melissa virus managed to infect and crash 100,000 email accounts with his malicious creation. Smith, who was thirty years old at the time, was sentenced and freed on bail.

MafiaBoy: In February of 2000, many of the most important online companies in the US, such as eBay, Yahoo and Amazon, suffered a technical glitch called Denial of Service, which caused a total of 1700 million dollars in losses. But did these sites know that the perpetrator of the attack was a 16 year-old Canadian who responded to the alias MafiaBoy? Surely not, although

it didn't take them long to find out, thanks to his bragging about his bad deed to his classmates at school.

Masters of Deception (MoD): MoD was a New York cyber-gang that reached its apogee in the early 90s. Under the cover of different aliases, its biggest attacks involved taking over telephone lines and centers of the Internet, then still in its infancy. During this time MoD starred in the historic "battles of the hackers," along with other groups like the Legion of Doom (LoD), as they sought to destroy each other until the computers couldn't take it anymore.

Richard Stallman: Since the early 80s when he was a hacker specializing in artificial intelligence, this hippie-looking New Yorker has been one of the most active militants in favor of free software. At MIT he firmly opposed the privatization of the software used by the institute's laboratory, so much so they he created what today is known as GNU and the concept of CopyLeft. Popular systems like Linux utilize the GNU mode and Stallman is currently one of the gurus of software democratization.