



Bez sulked because he'd forgotten his glow sticks



The **FHM**
Internet
Special

FOUR YEARS AGO THIS MAN WAS BRANDED THE 'WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS HACKER'.

THE HEADLINES HAVE FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH HIM AND HE NOW FACES EXTRADITION TO THE US AND 70 YEARS IN THE PEN. THE FBI WANT HIM, *FHM'S* GOT HIM →

Words: Anna Hart Photography: Chris Terry



YOU KNOW, I really lost it today," Gary McKinnon says as he slides the damning papers that just arrived on his doorstep across the bar. "I cried those crap, suppressed, blokey tears – for the first time in years."

Looking across at him, we can't help but wonder how long this unemployed systems administrator from north London will last in an American state penitentiary.

"I'm terrified. I'm a weedy foreigner, and I'll be lumped in with rapists and murderers, accused of attacking *their* country." His hopes now rest on the outcome of one appeal, and if it doesn't go his way, by the time you read this, he'll be serving hard time for a bit of illicit computer jockeying.

Gary's been making headlines ever since he was arrested for the first time in 2002, but the charges never amounted to much – until now. And on the very day *FHM* caught up with him in his local boozier, he'd been hit with the extradition notice that could see him shackled aboard a Virginia-bound flight within weeks. When he lands on US soil he would face the rest of his life in jail for hacking into nearly 100 different networks belonging to the US Army, Navy, Air Force, the Pentagon and NASA. According to Paul McNulty, a US State Attorney, it's the "biggest military computer hack of all time."

BOOTING UP

Virtually every night from March 2001 to March 2002, Gary would stick some chilled-out music on the stereo, spark up a joint, and sift through some of the most sensitive material in cyberspace. Military criminal records were a personal favourite. He browsed internal sexual harassment claims and dossiers on soldiers taking LSD and sabotaging equipment. He even accessed special-forces training videos. Surely the Pentagon protects itself better than that, we ask.

"Well, it did have some security," Gary says. "It was a program called



"Dear Money Penny, I'm in a crap pub in Wapping. Still no sign of Blofeld"

'SUDDENLY I SAW THE CURSOR MOVE WITHOUT ME TOUCHING ANYTHING. I KNEW I'D SCREWED UP'

SMS, which basically shuts down the connection of any unauthorised user after 13 minutes. So I had exactly 13 minutes to get into the administrator's list of applications and turn the program off. Simple."

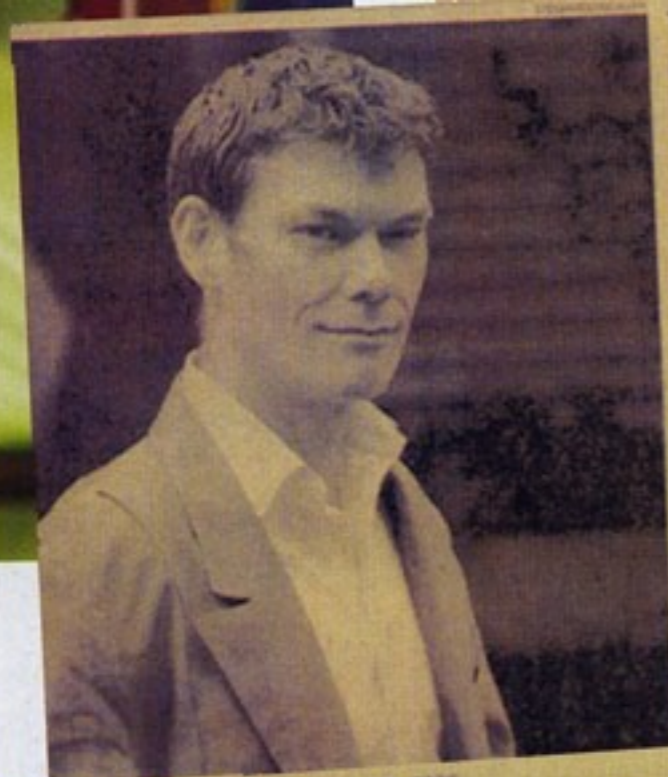
We find Gary McKinnon to be neither the sci-fi geek nor the criminal mastermind that his online supporters and the US media respectively would have us believe; but there have been some very serious charges levelled at him. He's cagey over his first pint, understandable considering *The*

Daily Telegraph recently dubbed him "the 9/11 hacker". "If *FHM* do that," Gary says, grinning, "I'll have to wipe your credit rating." But three pints later, the defences are down and he starts to tell us how his two-year-old mid-range Pentium 2 got him into this much trouble.

When Gary was six he moved from Glasgow to London with his mum and stepfather. A confirmed sci-fi fan, he got his first computer at 14. He left school at 17, then drifted from job to job until friends convinced him to get a qualification

in what he loved most. By 1995 he was a systems administrator for a small business, had a long-term girlfriend called Tamsin and a serious puff habit. So far, so average.

Then one evening in that same year, Gary downloaded three perfectly legitimate programs and launched his career as an amateur hacker by the name of Solo. At this stage, he was simply attracted to the challenge of breaking the system – cracking relatively innocuous networks like Oxford University (trickier than NASA, apparently)



Hacker who tapped into secret U home fa
By Nicole Martin
 A BRITON accused of penetrating the "biggest military back of all time" using a "super-weapon" to steal computer codes should be extradited to America to stand trial, a district judge ruled yesterday.
 Gary McKinnon, 34, from Wood Green, north London, could face a 70-year jail sentence for allegedly accessing US United States government computers, causing damage estimated at £200,000.
 He is alleged to have deleted files and spy the computers at the US Navy Weapons Station Earle in critical time when the fighter jet 11 attacks, including 3 hours' access of 200 of

BRIT HACKER SHUT DOWN PENTAGON!

'Nerd' will be tried in

'WAR GAME' WORLD'S NO

Gary's exploits were big news on both sides of the pond

was into
ern-
com-
39,
world's
named computer hacker

by TIM STEWART
 were available on the break into system Pentagon, NASA, US Navy and US Air Force the 1990 movie 'War' which a hacker of World War Three. The US Army said of Washington



IN COURT, McKinnon

UFO-MAD HACKER COST USA \$700K

Brit faces 70yrs in American jail

By MIKE SULLIVAN
 A BRITISH UFO nut caused \$700,000 of damage by hacking into top-security US military computers, a court



BREAK AND ENTER

Just how easy is it to hack into cyberspace?

UNLESS YOU FANCY A LITTLE chat with Scotland Yard - or even worse, the FBI - you're probably not interested in finding out how to fleece HSBC or "alter" your own criminal record before that big job interview. But your girlfriend's Hotmail account? Well, that's another story.

Mathew Bevan is a man who's been around the hacking block and made it through. We asked him to tell all about four hacks that might actually come in handy.

COMPANY PAYROLL
 Find out what colleagues are earning
Level of difficulty: VERY EASY "As an employee, you're already in and most companies tend to use older, less-secure systems."

YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S HOTMAIL ACCOUNT
 Find out if she's doing the dirty
Level of difficulty: VERY DIFFICULT "Systems like Microsoft and Yahoo protect themselves really well. Hire a private investigator instead."

AIRLINE BOOKING SYSTEMS
 Upgrade yourself to first
Level of difficulty: NEAR IMPOSSIBLE "Airlines have been hacking targets for so long, and today's political climate has really changed things. They've the best security going."

SMUT SITES
 Browse premium porn for free
Level of difficulty: VERY DIFFICULT "Porn sites have been huge targets of unwanted intruders, so they're now very well protected."

For more about Mathew Bevan and computer hacking check out www.kujimedia.com

and leaving little notes for the administrators. "I got a thrill from being somewhere I wasn't supposed to be," Gary admits. "But it didn't last long. A lot of hacks are boring." Then Gary discovered a site called The Disclosure Project. It's a Washington lobbyist group run by Steven Greer, a military doctor who has written a book containing 300 testimonials from everyone from former NATO staff to air traffic controllers, confirming stuff like the existence of UFOs and the secret military development of advanced energy resources. Gary is unashamed about his interest in such matters. "I was amazed by the amount of information out there, and from reliable sources too, not your usual conspiracy theorists or sci-fi nutters." Gary wanted in. He felt compelled to contribute to the

debate - and he had the know-how to go places most people couldn't.

PLAYING WITH FIRE
 First he needed to find out which relevant systems ran on Windows as it tends to be more vulnerable to hacking programmes. "Turns out the US military use Windows. And NASA. And the Pentagon. I simply scanned addresses for high-ranking officials". All he needed now was a lazy sod who hadn't bothered to set themselves a password.

"Fuckit' crops up a lot," he chuckles. "But passwords that have been left blank - and the word 'password' - are the most common." We're gobsmacked. High-ranking officials at the Pentagon leave their passwords blank? Bollocks. "I couldn't believe it either," he says. "If you set yourself up as the world

police, defending the world's largest superpower, you should bother to give yourself a bloody password."

When we ask him what the most shocking thing he ever found was, Gary leans back to get a better view of our reaction to what he's about to say. "I was following up a lead from a photographic expert named Donna Hare, who came out publicly and said that in Building 8 of the Johnson Space Centre, they regularly airbrush out UFOs from satellite images." And? "And online, I went into the Space Centre, into Building 8, and found stuff that corroborated her statement. I saw a picture of a cigar-shaped craft hanging in space and I'm convinced it wasn't man-made. Or if it was, it used suppressed technology. There were no rivets and no seams, it was like nothing I'd seen before."

Now we're not sure what to think. Nutter? Liar? Or is there in fact some truth in what he's saying? And there's one other thing that's still bothering us: how could such a prodigious hacker as Gary get caught in the first place? He recounts this moment with vivid clarity.

"I was in Building 8 this one time," he remembers. "I was staring at that photograph I told you about, then suddenly I saw the cursor move without me touching anything. I knew I'd screwed up. Seconds later, my connection was shut down." Gary had previously juggled time zones in order to avoid hacking when the user could be at work, but he'd got sloppy. His hacking addiction controlled him: he'd quit his job, Tamsin had dumped him, and he could barely be arsed to eat or wash. "I was asking for it. That →



was when NASA got really pissed off and decided to share information with the Department of Defence.”

DEAL OR NO DEAL?

Because he used the same software to hack each network, investigators soon realised they were after the same man. They found he'd also used his own e-mail address to download one of the hacking tools. Then one morning, Gary was woken up by the voice of a man standing at the foot of his bed. “Gary McKinnon? My name's Jeff Donson from the National High Tech Crime Unit – you're under arrest.”

NASA had contacted the NHTCU, who contacted BT and got the name of the owner – Tamsin, whose spare room he was still crashing in. Every computer was removed from the house.

“I still wasn't really scared until the US authorities got involved,” he says. His mates saw it as a massive joke. They nicked a newsstand board and customised it so it read “World's Biggest Slacker Caught”. Even Donson laughingly told Gary this was the only porn-free machine he'd ever investigated. Gary's main concern at this point was the condition of his bail stating that he wasn't allowed near a computer, effectively paralysing his career.

While no charges have ever been brought against Gary in the UK, US authorities clearly see him as a significant threat. They even questioned him about connections to Al-Qaeda and began indictment proceedings. They proposed another condition of bail that would require him to sign on at his local police station every two hours.

Then he was offered a deal. If he cooperated, incurred the cost of the extradition process and came voluntarily to America, they'd only hit him with three or four years in the slammer, but he could have nothing in writing and no right to appeal. What he did next confirmed his fate – he turned it down. They came down hard on his arrogance.

In July 2005 Gary was once again arrested – snatched off the street one day while walking home. The US had formally begun extradition proceedings and the charges had



“Listen up Edmonds, he'll deal at ten grand”

AMERICAN AUTHORITIES EVEN QUESTIONED GARY ABOUT CONNECTIONS TO AL-QAEDA

gathered steam. In Britain, the most he'd face would be three or four years under the Computer Misuse Act. On US soil, he's looking at up to 70 years in prison on counts including proving a threat to national security, fraud and causing criminal damage to the tune of \$700,000. A US government representative, Mark Summers, told a London court recently that Gary's hacking was “intentional and calculated to affect and influence the US government by intimidation and coercion.”

A skittish, post-9/11 press was

hanging him out to dry as well. “But I was hacking long before 9/11, and hacking long after it,” Gary explains. “9/11 just happened in the middle of it all.” And under current legislation, Britain has agreed to hand over anyone US authorities point a finger at – no evidence required.

The oddly toadying Extradition Act of 2003 was passed in the wake of 9/11, with the intention of shipping suspected terrorists off to a speedy trial in the US. Gary's lawyer believes he could spend up to two

years in a maximum-security prison before the trial even comes to court.

As we finally get up to leave we ask Gary to give it to us straight – does it really take a total computer geek to hack into the Pentagon, or could we do it with our own battered old Dell laptop? Gary leans in: “It would take me five minutes to tell you everything you needed to know. Download this tool, that tool. Do this, do that – you're in. I could scribble it here for you on this beer mat. If I wanted to fuck up your life.” **FHM**