

Hacking Myths and Truths

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In the video referenced below, Hacker and Security Analyst Keren Elazari reviews and grades twelve hacking scenes some famous screenplays based on how they portray hacking operations and procedures, and by the same occasion, dismantles some misconceptions about cybersecurity.

I personally was always skeptical about everything I see in movies since I watched my first Superman movie. So, being skeptical about hacking scenes came naturally. However, prior to studying Cybersecurity I had in mind that hacking is always quick, easy, always done remotely and always successful.

My first personal myth buster came when I took my penetration testing class. Before I got to the point where I would exploit vulnerabilities on a given system, I would go through multiple steps notably, reconnaissance, scanning, and enumeration, which depending on the target system, it could take considerable time before producing useful results.

My conception about Easy was proven wrong when I had to exploit a target system. The presence of a given vulnerable software or an open port is not a guarantee that it would be exploitable. Some systems are updated regularly, while others have mitigation mechanisms against known exploit frameworks.

I used to believe that hacks could always be carried out remotely because of how interconnected the world is now with the advent of internet. I have since learned that some systems are digital fortresses and the only way to attempt a hack is through physical proximity.

Furthermore, after I learned about honeypots/honeynets I now hold the view that not every successful hack is really worth the weight. Some systems are made easy on purpose, so no actual skills are developed in exploiting such systems.

Additionally, I also assumed that hackers relied primarily on technical expertise to compromise systems. After studying cybersecurity, I realized that many successful attacks exploit human behavior through phishing, pretexting, or other forms of social engineering rather than sophisticated technical exploits.

To summarize, novels and screenplays are meant to exaggerate any capabilities or sort of intelligence. It could be to make it worth the watch or inspire viewers to push on the currently known limits, or both. The only certainty is that the misconceptions they may create can be dismantled by actual experience or study of fields being portrayed.

References

Insider. (2021, March 16). *Hacker rates 12 hacking scenes in movies and TV | How real is it?*
[Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BqpU4V0Ypk>