

# *paranoia*

AN INTERNET MYSTERY

*N E X P O*

-open with Nexpo intro, then "Coming soon to own on VHS and DVD", play commercials, then "pop out" to monitor, fade to silence-

## Introduction

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As we enter the new year, there becomes a collective understanding that we are now far, far away from the era in which we grew up. The era of home movies, daytime game shows, analog cable television, and the wild, wild west that we all once called – **[the Internet]**.

-drop Mysterious Ambient – Mario Paint-

At the turn of the millennium, the net was a new frontier. An expanse of discovery – an entire world that anyone with a server and enough will – could carve out of to make a corner of their very own. There was a special sort of - magic during this time. Something that can't and likely never will be replicated in the modern day. The social MMO faltered – due to a lack of viable monetization. The Geocities page – replaced entirely by social media. And even the family desktop computer, with it's constant allure of excitement to enter cyberspace for even *thirty minutes a day* – replaced by supercomputers we can hold in the palm of our hand.

It's undoubtedly become easier than ever to access the Internet, however paradoxically, it's become harder and harder to trek the virtual landscape outside of the major pillars of social media we use today. Statistically, there is so much out there. So much *waiting to be found*. So much *completely forgotten*.

Mysteries – resting, waiting – some that may never be discovered in our lifetime.

-fade-

-Windows 98 intro, music drop: Mist Echo – Broad Sky-

But there is – one.

## Welcome to Paranoia.com

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In 1995, a website was created by a man known as none other than *KevinTX*. It's called *Paranoia.com*, and it's main focus was to foster what he described as a "*free speech platform*" to anyone wanting to host their own little piece of cyberspace.

The website largely functioned as a repository. Back during it's prime, *hundreds* of users flocked to Kevin's site, hosting all sorts of strange, abrasive webpages on his servers. In fact, Kevin partook in this too, and seemed to relish the fact that Paranoia was garnering so much attention - so quickly.

*Just to set things straight, Paranoia is run "not-for-profit". I personally provided all the initial equipment and have supported the system's costs (in finances and time) at a personal loss because I feel so strongly about the presence of a system like this on the net. It's been very rewarding to watch an idealistic dream turn into reality! I've met a lot of really great net-denizens and seen firsthand how this project has been able to empower people who wouldn't otherwise have nice net access at a low cost.*

*Internet access without silly restrictions, censorship, or fear tactics is good! When offered the chance to act responsibly in an open-minded environment, people actually will! I've been thoroughly impressed with the quality of users who have come to Paranoia in the first six months. Those who didn't join with a lot of unix and Internet experience have wanted to learn! People who joined without ever having seen the source of a web page are starting to put up better pages than me! It keeps my hope alive for the future of the net.*

It's clear that Kevin's motives were noble, even if some of what he states on his various pages are a bit – eccentric [highlight brainwashing]. Nevertheless, he harbors an excitement for community, a drive to give people a voice of expression, and scattered across Paranoia's archives, for better or worse [mouse click to silence] we're able to find – just that.

*-riser then cut to Dance With Night Wind, mouse cursor over various pages-*

#### **/EXPLORING PARANOIA**

The world of Paranoia.com is expansive, and contains some of the most random and bizarre content that I've ever seen. It's - a mixed bag, a look into the minds of complete strangers. A time capsule, of the wholly unconventional – and immoral.

[Paranoia.com/Satan](#) – contains the name – emblazoned over a black background.

[Paranoia.com/Xtreme](#) – brings us to an unapologetically 90's homepage for an electronics store.

[Paranoia.com/theslurp](#) lands us on a page for ... Pedophile Pride... Jesus Christ.

And [Paranoia.com/stagg](#) – brings us to the homepage of a very outspoken stranger named Stagg Meander.

*“It was very cool of paranoia to set up this server so depraved bastards like me can put up subversive web pages like this one. Thanks dude.”*

Of course, all of this is but a tiny sample of what you can find here, however by now I'm sure you all get the picture. Paranoia's reign over the Internet throughout the 1990s was big, and even gained the attention of major media outlets like the Austin Chronicle, at one point granting KevinTX an award for best “[local website](#)” back during its heyday. The site, from top to bottom, is a monumental rabbit hole, and the interesting thing about it is that it's been archived *hundreds* of times on the Wayback Machine since its inception.

Unfortunately, though, this is the only way to access it today since Paranoia.com was eventually shutdown due to server issues. Reportedly, the project became too much for Kevin to handle, and so by the late 1990s, he had informed users that it would officially - die. That's not to say, that the URL itself is dead, though. In fact, it's very much alive, and upon heading to it today -

*-load Disney site, cut to silence-*

**/BRIDGE TO THE MYSTERY**

*Wait, that can't be right.*

*P – A – R – A – yeah that's right. There's no way this is the actual si- nope, no it's Disney. But I don't remember ever hearing about this or watching, or playing, or experiencing anything remotely close to "Paranoia". Paranoia, by definition, doesn't exactly scream family-friendly, so why are we led here?*

*-Avery Alexander – Investigation – Stealth Music 2016 music drop, cut to black, then to webpages researching this-*

**Down the Rabbit Hole**

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At four in the morning, on February 18<sup>th</sup> of 2021, a Reddit user named *u/Logical\_Elephant* made their way to a subreddit called *r/InternetMysteries*, a hub dedicated to uncovering oddities from the dark side of the net. Curious about a recent, almost random discovery they had, they inquire about Paranoia.com – and its strange connection to Disney.

[\*Disney owns paranoia.com which was a controversial, kind of illegal website in 1995.\*](#)

*I've noticed that searching for paranoia.com redirects you to the Disney page.*

*What puzzles me is that in 1995, Paranoia hosted many controversial or close to illegal content websites. I'm not sure if it's normal for them to buy these types of pages but it seems strange to me.*

*Here's the page in the times when it still worked thanks to the Wayback Machine.*

*I have seen that in approximately 2000, paranoia closed and became a kind of French page and then it would redirect you to disney.com.*

*Being a controversial page at the time, has anyone heard about it? I've been researching and can't find any information about the page (for example rotten.com was also working at that time and there is much more information about this)*

*This means that Disney bought this domain, and if so, why would it buy such a domain?*

*-slight pause-*

*...It's a question so simple, yet it peaks the enduring interest of internet denizens like me. Why do they own this domain, and why are they still sitting on it to this day?*

Below this, the OP includes a myriad of updates that they stumbled upon after their initial discovery, one of which being a link to repository of URLs the Disney Company has purchased since their online inception.

Hosted on a website named [hackerone.com](http://hackerone.com), we can observe a trove of URLs, with some containing purposeful misspellings, some related to their parks, some to their gaming department, and even a few random outliers that I wasn't quite able to source. Even with this, though, *Paranoia*, with its peculiar, adult-oriented definition stands as a stark outlier – an anomaly of sorts in this list of family-friendly titles. All in all, though, this list is handy to have, yet unfortunately doesn't tell us much about the broader picture.

*-fade, start "Mission – Avery Alexander"-*

One week later.

*u/Logical\_Elephant* returns to *r/InternetMysteries* for one more go at getting eyes on this case.

*A few days ago I made this post about paranoia.com and its connection with disney.com. Although I haven't solved why Disney bought it, I have discovered a lot of things about paranoia.com and it is very interesting.*

*Paranoia.com was a website that hosted pages created by its users for free (this with the lack of control of the internet in 1995 = posts about pedophilia, drugs, prostitution, euthanasia, television cracking, bizarre images, mind control...) that and along with other pages that were against internet censorship.*

*There was not much interaction between users (except with those mentioned in the wall of the page) since it was not a social network in itself. It was just a place to make your page and add the content you want.*

*It closed because its bandwidth had been reduced and Kevin asked to avoid using this server to keep what they had usable until they disappeared.*

Below this one, they link to various 90s articles mentioning Paranoia, along with a Unabomber fansite, something called the Church of Euthanasia where they explain how to cook a human body, a psychoactive drug archive, and a site focused on the Simpsons. Interestingly, though, this go-around, their post caught much more attention, lending this investigation a theory it desperately needed.

*[I think you nailed the reason Disney bought the domain](#) - it was likely a title for one of their projects. Buying domains tied to IPs is extremely common in the media business. The reason you might not be finding a lot of examples is because Disney and other corporations use shell companies to buy domains so they don't get extorted on the price, and also to conceal their involvement with the domain until they're ready.*

*For example, if Activision bought a domain called "Skyrim2ElectricBoogaloo dot com", that would tip everyone off that they were making a direct sequel to Skyrim before they were ready to announce the project. Similarly, a woman who owned a small business making*

*coffee cups that were powder blue around the top wouldn't ask for as much money for her" Skyrim dot com" domain if the company offering to buy it was called "Ted Franklin Consulting, LLC" and not Bethesda.*

*-slowdown song to stop, then gray out video. Music drop to upbeat song-*

## /DOTCOM BUBBLE AND THE URL INCONSISTENCY

### [1998, over sunny VHS driving footage]

In the late 1990s, Internet adoption – was growing.

It was an unmapped expanse, ripe for the taking. Perfect for those wanting to make a quick buck. Companies, left and right, swooped in, buying up hundreds, *thousands* of domain names centered around anything and everything you can think of. Pets.com, Lemon.com, Ranch.com, Gandalf.com, MSN, eBay, Amazon, you name it. The stock market was growing at an unprecedented rate, as even corporations with no prior Internet presence were getting in on the action. Internet Domains – were currency, and those with an eye for business saw an opportunity. The gold rush was on, and for a while, things seemed to be going – pretty damn good. People left their day jobs to trade stocks, company valuations – peaked. However, something was on the horizon – something unforeseen. A little something – called Y – 2 - K.

Y2K scared the ever-living shit out of people. And it was all based in urban legend. There was a – persistent belief that computers, the internet, and technology as it was known would cease to function at the turn of the millennium. An idea that only catalyzed the frenzy - the growth - of what became later known as the *Dot-com Bubble*. But as the year 2000 came and went... everything was fine. The storm quelled, and the stock market fell –

Down, down, back to where it all began.

*-show statistics going down and fade to black, then fade in Reddit post-*

It is not out of the realm of possibility that Disney partook in this, even if Paranoia is a considerable outlier in the domains they purchased. But, let me ask you something:

Why would *The Walt Disney Company*, in the early 2000s, purchase *Paranoia.com*, and not –

*-type Aladdin.com into URL bar-*

Aladdin.com is not owned by Disney.

*-type SnowWhite.com into URL bar-*

SnowWhite.com isn't either.

*-type Fantasia.com-*

Fantasia.com – same story.

*-type aliceinwonderland.com-*

And AliceinWonderland.com – I’m sure you get the idea.

*-cut to silhouette shot-*

Some of the biggest Disney IPs in history have URLs that are not owned by the company that created them, however Paranoia – is. Now, while this commenters theory is a solid one, I’m just not convinced this is why they have it.

*-fade-*

**/INTERMISSION, NIGHT SKY, RAIN AMBIENCE**

Over the years, whispers about this mystery have come and gone. Theories crop up, yet lead to nothing. It seems like it just wasn’t getting the attention it needed, but it *is* weird.

*-Stellar A SFX-*

*ELI5 - Can someone tell me how come when you put the in the URL Paranoia.com, it takes you to Disney.com?*

-

*Companies will buy domains that share names with their products so that if someone just types in the name of their product it they get sent to the company's website.*

*In this case Disney released a movie titled Paranoia so they bought paranoia.com and set it to ship people to disney.com*

*Typically they will ship people to a page on their website related to the named product but in this case the movie is several years old and wasn't a success so they aren't promoting it on their website, just dumping you on disney.com.*

*-silence, silhouette shot off center, slight zoom in, then comedic cut to “In 2013”-*

In 2013, a movie released starring Harrison Ford, Liam Hemsworth, Gary Oldman, and Amber Heard. It was an action thriller about an employee caught up in a heist situation and – okay, I’m not going to bore you with the details here. Paranoia was a film distributed by a studio named Relativity Media. Relativity Media was launched in 2004, and was a subsidiary of Sony Pictures. Sony Pictures and the Walt Disney Corporation – are two entirely separate entities. And essentially, this theory – one that was accepted by the Redditor who asked the question, unfortunately is not exactly - true.

Like I said, whispers about this mystery have come and gone, and that’s led to an unfortunate reality. Discussion about Paranoia and Disney.com is scant, and answers have been admittedly difficult to come by. With this, I’d like to pivot our tactics here – instead of

focusing on what's been said about this in the *past*, let's rather direct our attention – *right to the source*.

*-artistic transition to Paranoia Homepage-*

## **Paranoia – As It Is; As It Was**

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Welcome back to Paranoia.

*-music drop-*

According to the Wayback Machine, it's been archived over 430 times since December of 1996, however the major phases hinted by *u/Logical\_Elephant* involve the years 1996, 1999, 2001, and 2002.

Scrubbing through Paranoia's archives for ourselves, we're able to see that its early years were more or less uneventful. KevinTX seemed to be growing his platform, and it seemed to be takin' off. The structure of his front page mostly remained the same, too, as Paranoia was nothing but a hub of sorts, for the odd and unconventional.

In the year 1998, though, we begin to see a change. There are only two archives during this time period, however jumping to the latest one gives us, not the main website, but a message:

*This web server is now on the way to being completely down. Our bandwidth has been reduced and you should avoid using this server to keep what we have usable. Most pages will have messages informing you of their new locations.*

*Please remove bookmarks to this page!*

For half a year, this PSA would remain here, untouched, until Kevin gives an update in April of 1999.

*Unfortunately, [www.paranoia.com](http://www.paranoia.com) is no more. All but one of the pages here have been moved since at least the summer of 1998. Please visit your favorite search engine to try to locate the page's new home.*

When it comes to Paranoia as we know it, this archived version - is it. This message remains here for nearly two years, untouched, and forgotten. At least, until we finally encounter – this change.

*-click, then load-*

At first glance, this seems like your typical early 2000's homepage, just in French. Reminiscent of cyberspace titans like MSN and AOL, Paranoia.com begins hosting news, stock information, the weather, and even offers it's own email service. The interesting thing



about this, though, is that the site doesn't actually go by Paranoia – at all, as all across the site we see *another title*.

-pan cursor to Excite-

Something called *Excite*. And they appear to have offered a messenger, a mobile SMS service, and even custom profiles. Furthermore, the copyright information at the bottom of the page reveals a company of the same name – *Excite Europe Limited*.

It's an interesting discovery no doubt, however it doesn't exactly tell us much about the Disney company, or why they ended up buying this. What we *do* know, though, is that the original version of Paranoia wasn't actually purchased by them - it was something much less controversial.

-fade-

Unfortunately archives of Paranoia's transition to this *Excite* branding only carry forward through April of the same year, and to be honest, there aren't many changes in that timeframe. 2002 is a complete dead zone, and then *right here*, on *February 7<sup>th</sup>*, of *2003*, we get our first glimpse of Paranoia.com redirecting to Disney's hub site, called Go.

-slight pause-

Again, I have absolutely no recollection of an IP tied to this name, yet then again I was 8 years old when this happened. Kid me was probably too busy – you know, being a kid, going to school, and –

-PS2 intro-

In late 2002, Disney expanded its efforts into a myriad of entertainment mediums. Kingdom Hearts makes its debut, The Lion King – premieres in IMAX. Epcot is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and a cartoon called Fillmore graces televisions for its short three year tenure.

Interestingly, Fillmore, while ending its run on *Toon Disney*, actually made its debut on *ABC Kids*, an [affiliate channel of the Disney Company](#). In fact, Disney has purchased a *monumental shit ton* of companies over the years, and this revelation *right here* has made me think – what if by the off chance, Paranoia isn't tied directly to Disney at all? What if it's a random project of Boss Realty? A&E? ESPN? Catalyst Investments? Silver Creek Pictures? Buena Vista Games? Freeform? WLS-7 KRTK-13 – what if – this *entire time*, we've been looking in the wrong place?

-fade to black, then cut to behind me shot of Googling-

## A Last Ditch Effort

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*-music to black, then fade in sped up version of me googling this mystery-*

You know, this mystery is – interesting. Some of you may not even care, I mean, *why is it a big deal anyway?* Who really cares if Paranoia.com redirects to the official Disney homepage? It’s something so silly. So innocent, and what if I don’t find it? Then what? I just accept it? I move on, going about the rest of my life with this annoying, simple little question resting in the back of my mind? I mean, statistically upon viewing this chart, this task seems impossible. It could literally be any of these. So where in the world do we even st–

*-boom stop on Paranoia (2000 game show)-*

*-behind shot of me shaking my head slowly*

*-mouse closeup, click on wiki article, load*

*-pan cursor over to “Fox Family”, click, begin slow riser*

*-slowly highlight “Purchase by Disney”, cut to black, begin show intro, play for about a minute*

To be honest, I’m not quite sure if this is “it”, but it feels like we’re pretty damn close. A fellow YouTuber named Kylie tipped me off on this show, and while she wasn’t able to confirm anything, she had a hunch that we’re getting there.

In April of 2000, the Fox Family channel premiered a game show. It involved four contestants at a time – one in the studio, and three scattered around the world. Paranoia consisted of ten rounds of multiple-choice questions, and the in-studio contestant was put up against the satellite players in a race for a grand prize of \$10,000. Get a question right, and move onto the next round. Get it wrong, and lose \$1,000 of potential winnings. It was a program that undoubtedly pushed the limits of what a live 2000s game show could be, and in retrospect, I don’t think I’ve seen anything quite like it since.

The unique thing about Paranoia, though, was that it incorporated audience interaction. The Internet, in 2000, was budding, and the shows producers knew this. And if *you, sitting at home*, wanted to jump into Paranoia for yourself, it was, apparently, only a website away.

*-play online part-*

And holy shit, there it is.

*-whoosh to Wayback Machine zoomout, type Paranoia.excite.com-*

*-click on first archive*

*-click on next one, show redirect*

-mouse over to *Excite*

-click over to *Paranoia.com 2000 archive*, then click zoom to *Excite Europe*

And there we have it. This is Paranoia. This is why The Walt Disney Company owns this domain. It was a random show with a two-month tenure, owned by a subsidiary company of the corporation the URL was later redirected to, and completely forgotten.

Excite is a multinational company that facilitated a multitude of web and entertainment mediums, and the portal to play Paranoia for yourself –

[-click to Paranoia archive-](#)

At least, back then, is right here.

America Plays Paranoia.

A game that led to a mystery. And a mystery that endured completely *under the radar* – for years.

-laugh, then lighthearted SFX to black, nostalgic music-

## Reflection and Closure

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You know, this oddity has bugged me since *u/Logical\_Elephant* first made their post – three entire years ago. It's something that is so simple on the surface, yet perplexing to *me* all-around. It's an oddity that seems entirely ominous, yet is so much less in reality.

And I missed stuff like this.

I've gone back and forth on covering this topic for a long time, it's quite literally stained into my whiteboard it's been up there so damn long. To be honest - I never *really* know what constitutes a good video, or a topic even really worth covering, because YouTube is honestly one massive balancing act. You try something new and it flops, and you never do it again. But if you try something new and it takes off, it lends to how intriguing it, or the journey to the resolution was - all along.

This is completely off-topic but I've battled depression for 3 years now, and I know I've had a lot of slowdowns, but lately I've been shaking it off. I quite literally have a laundry list of peculiar, short internet mysteries much like this on my list, some that I've held off on covering for *years*, but if you guys liked this, then I think it's time to bring them outta the vault. Anxiety and depression can paralyze you, they can cause anyone to overthink to the point to where months bleed by with no progress at all. But pulling through this, being on this journey with you guys for nearly seven years now, and with everything we've done tonight, I'm not going to lie, it's been a hell of a ride.

Paranoia.com is owned by Disney because of scrapped gameshow that was forgotten to time. A relic of broadcast history, only remembered by the few who caught it. Maybe you'd just gotten off work, maybe it was a late-night rerun – no matter where you were, I'm confident on the conclusion we reached. It wasn't anything crazy – but it was closure.

*-slight pause-*

From the bottom of my heart, thank you for your support. And thank you for watching.

I've got a lot coming up this year, so trust me when I tell you, *even seven years in* –

*We're just getting started.*

*-roll credits-*