

CPU Fuzzing

*Automatic Discovery
of Microarchitectural Attacks*

Daniel Weber, Michael Schwarz | May 12, 2023



DEVELOPING STORY

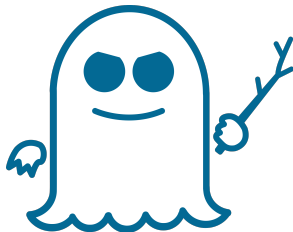
COMPUTER CHIP FLAWS IMPACT BILLIONS OF DEVICES

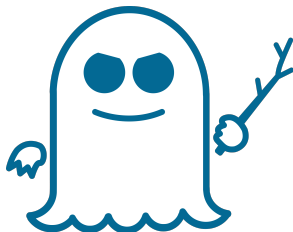
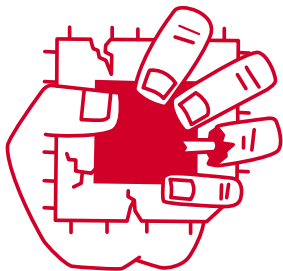
LIVE

CNN

DAX ▲ 164.69

NEWS STREAM







Microarchitectural attacks



Microarchitectural attacks



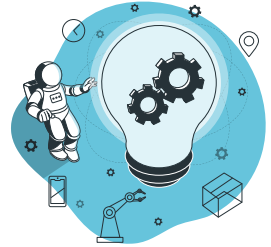
How do they **work**?



Microarchitectural
attacks



How do they **work**?



How can we
find them **efficiently**?



Who am I?



Daniel Weber

PhD Student @ CISPA Helmholtz Center for
Information Security

Research on CPU Security and Side Channels

🐦 @weber_daniel

✉ daniel.weber@cispa.de



Who am I?



Michael Schwarz

Faculty @ CISA Helmholtz Center for Information Security

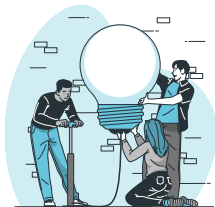
Research on CPU Security and Side Channels

🐦 @misc0110

✉ michael.schwarz@cisa.de

Osiris Research Team

Daniel Weber, Ahmad Ibrahim, Hamed Nemati, **Michael Schwarz**, Christian Rossow

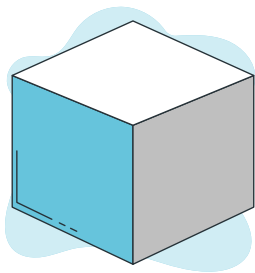


Transynther Research Team

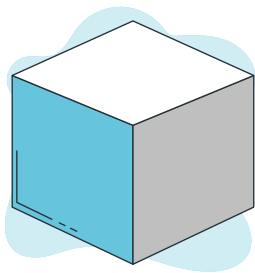
Daniel Moghimi, Moritz Lipp, Berk Sunar, **Michael Schwarz**

MSRevelio Research Team

Andreas Kogler, **Daniel Weber**, Martin Haubenwallner, Moritz Lipp, Daniel Gruss, **Michael Schwarz**



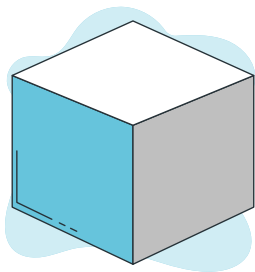
CPU



CPU



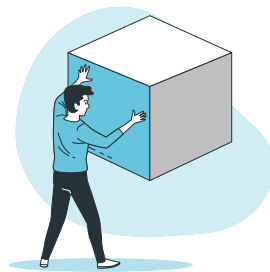
Specification (ISA)



CPU



Specification (ISA)



Interaction



Everything **works**
as expected



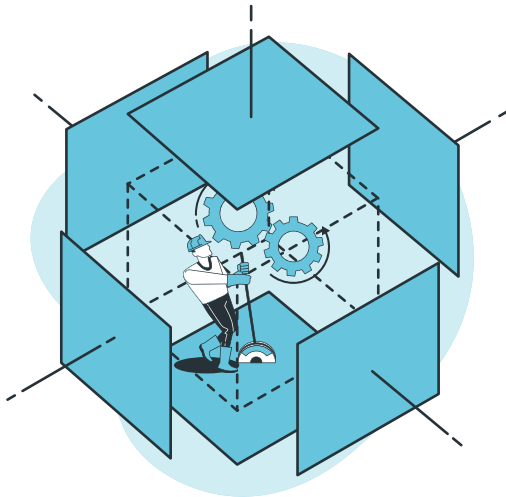
Everything **works**
as expected



No bugs



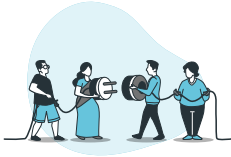
How can you attack this?



Information **leaks** through **side effects**



Power Consumption



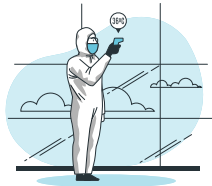
Power Consumption



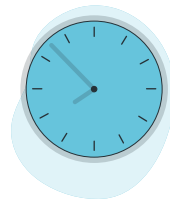
Temperature



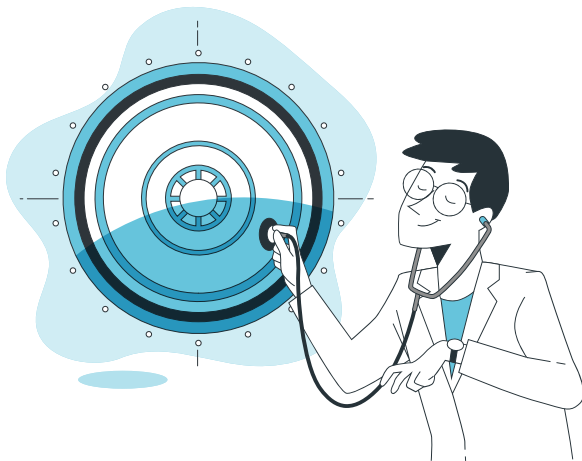
Power Consumption



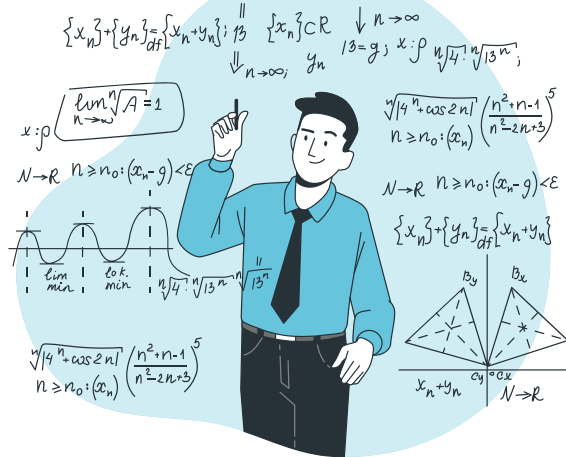
Temperature



Execution Time



Observe Device



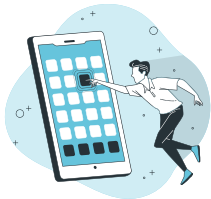
Evaluate data



Get the secrets. **Easy as that!**



Reality **is not** as easy

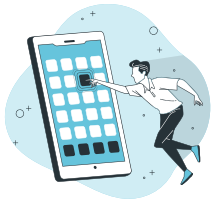


Software-only

No Physical Access required



Properties



Software-only

No Physical Access required



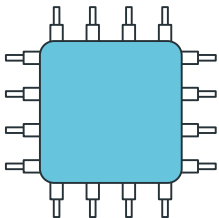
Understand Inner Workings of the CPU



What can we observe? How does a CPU work internally?



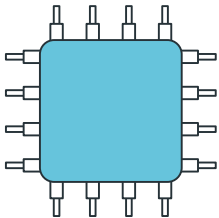
Architecture vs Microarchitecture



- Instruction Set Architecture (ISA) is an **abstract model** of a computer (x86, ARMv8, SPARC, ...)



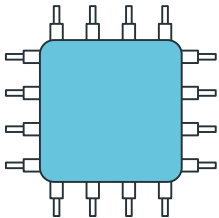
Architecture vs Microarchitecture



- Instruction Set Architecture (ISA) is an **abstract model** of a computer (x86, ARMv8, SPARC, ...)
- **Interface** between hardware and software



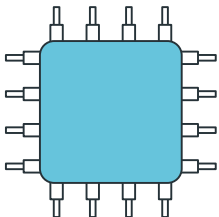
Architecture vs Microarchitecture



- Instruction Set Architecture (ISA) is an **abstract model** of a computer (x86, ARMv8, SPARC, ...)
- **Interface** between hardware and software
- Microarchitecture is an ISA **implementation**

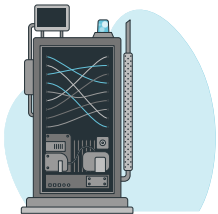


Architecture vs Microarchitecture



- Instruction Set Architecture (ISA) is an **abstract model** of a computer (x86, ARMv8, SPARC, ...)
- **Interface** between hardware and software
- Microarchitecture is an ISA **implementation**

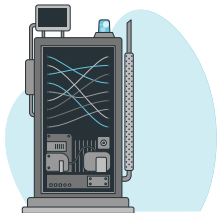




- Modern CPUs contain multiple **microarchitectural elements**



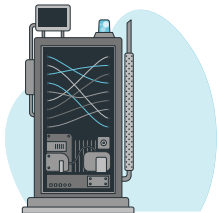
Optimizations



- Modern CPUs contain multiple **microarchitectural elements**
- **Transparent** for the programmer



Optimizations

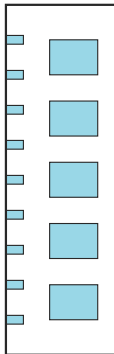
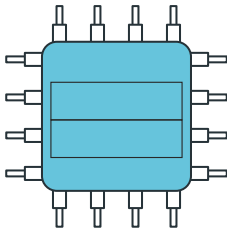


- Modern CPUs contain multiple **microarchitectural elements**
- **Transparent** for the programmer
- **Optimize** for performance, power consumption, ...



CPU Optimization: Cache

```
printf("%d", i);  
printf("%d", i);
```



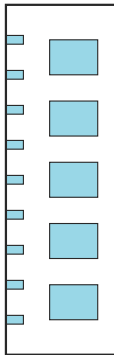
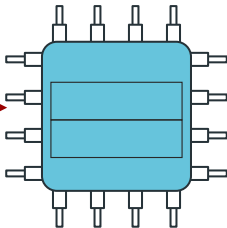


CPU Optimization: Cache

```
printf("%d", i);
```

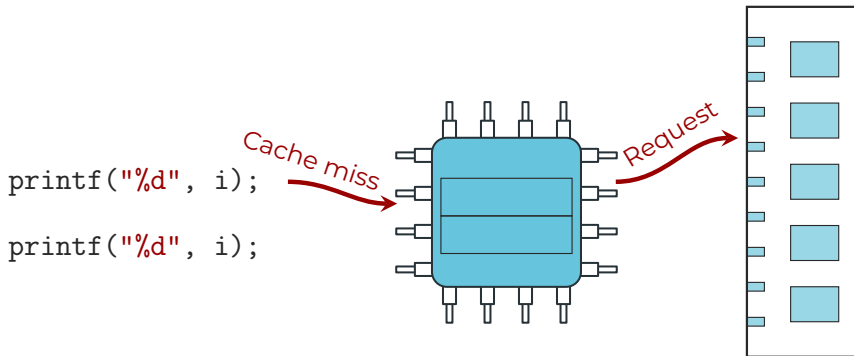
```
printf("%d", i);
```

Cache miss



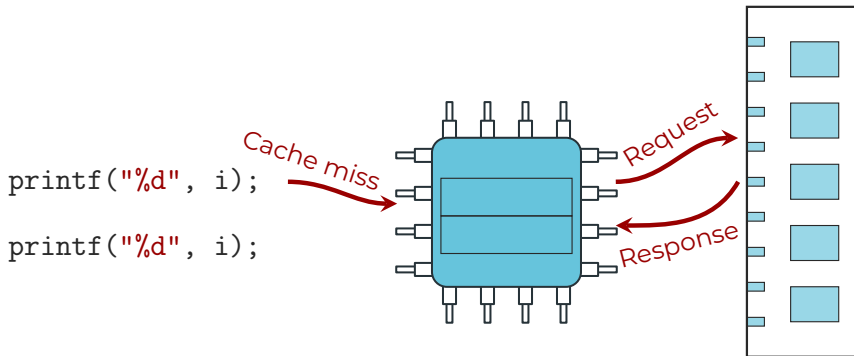


CPU Optimization: Cache



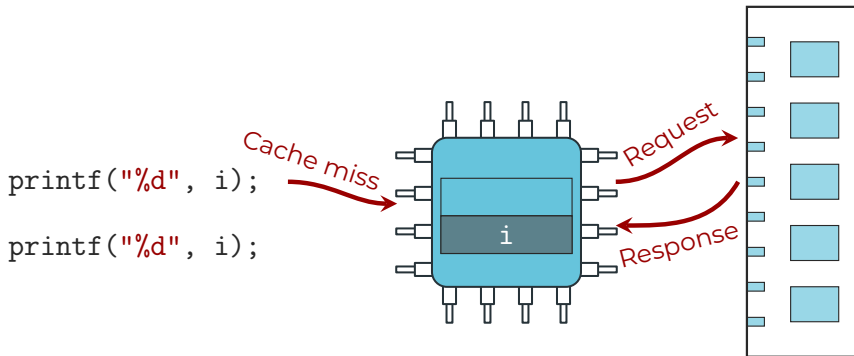


CPU Optimization: Cache



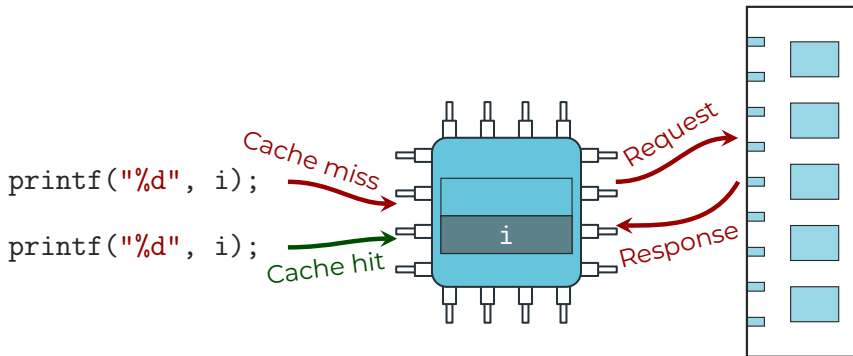


CPU Optimization: Cache



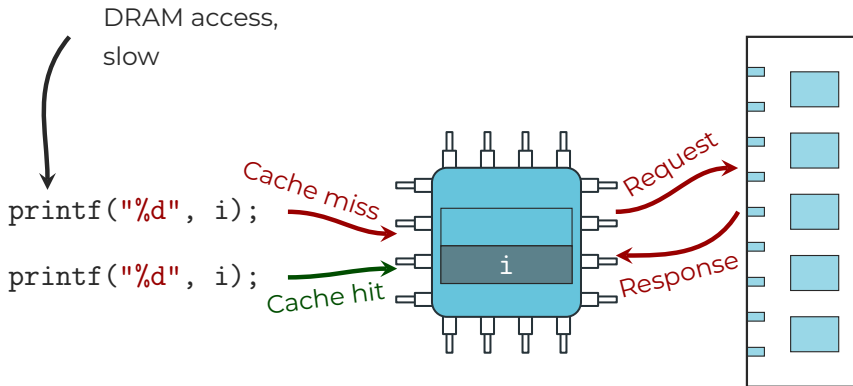


CPU Optimization: Cache



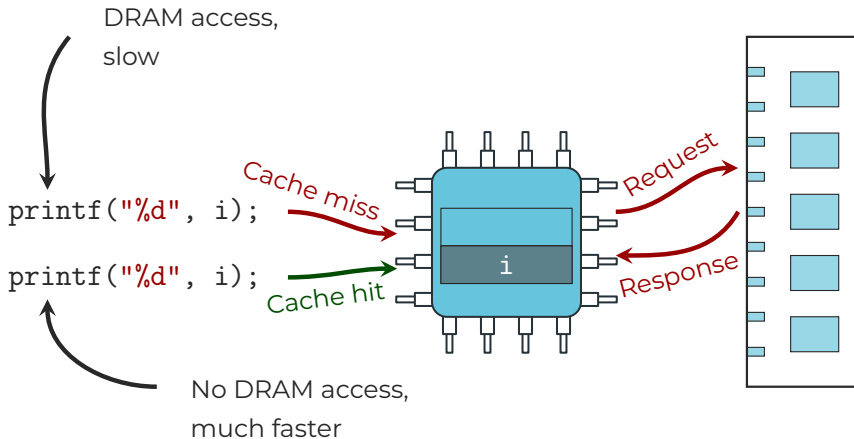


CPU Optimization: Cache



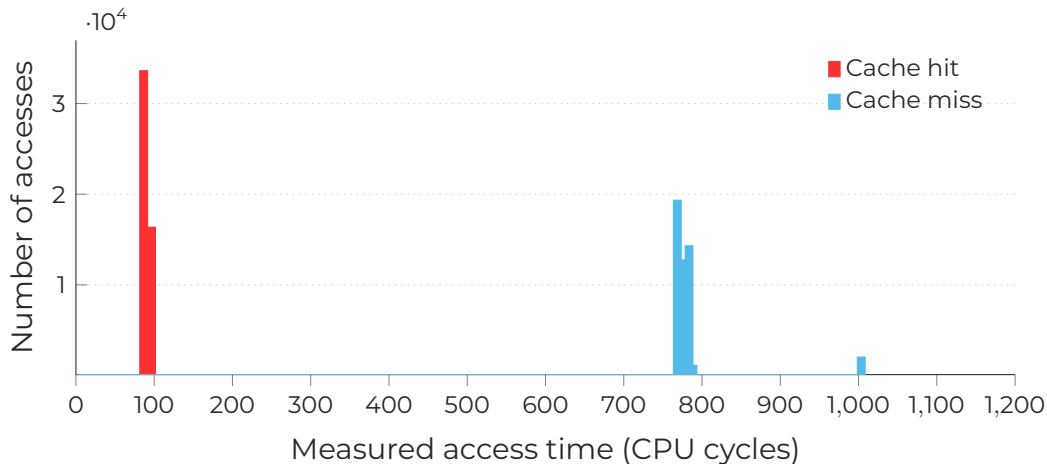


CPU Optimization: Cache



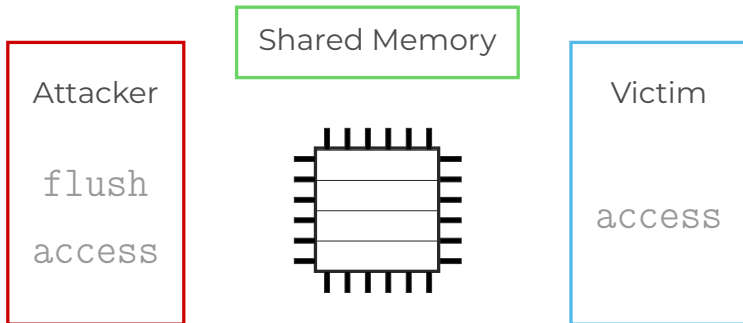


Caching speeds up Memory Accesses



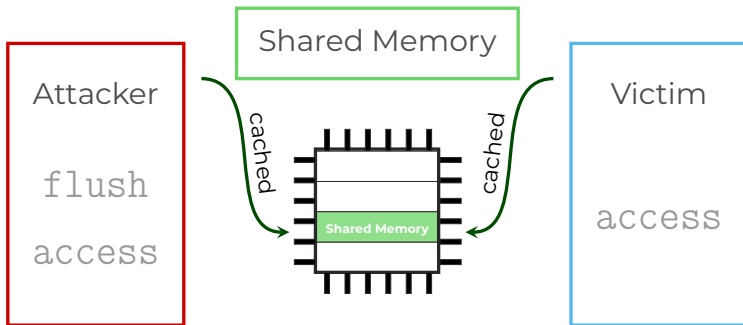


Flush+Reload



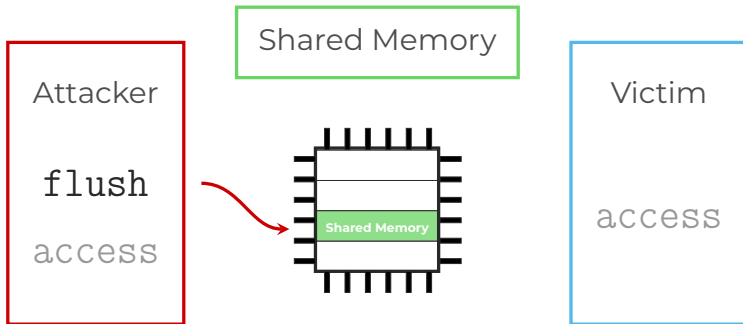


Flush+Reload



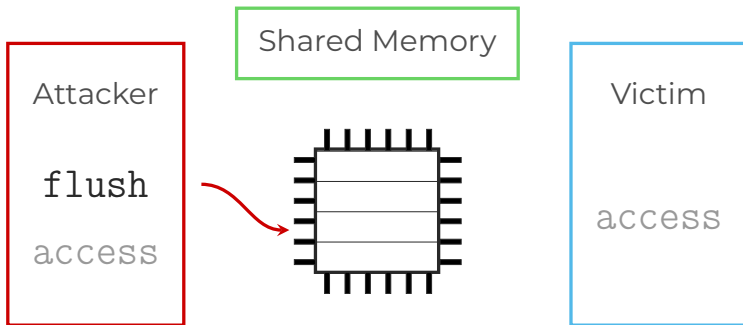


Flush+Reload



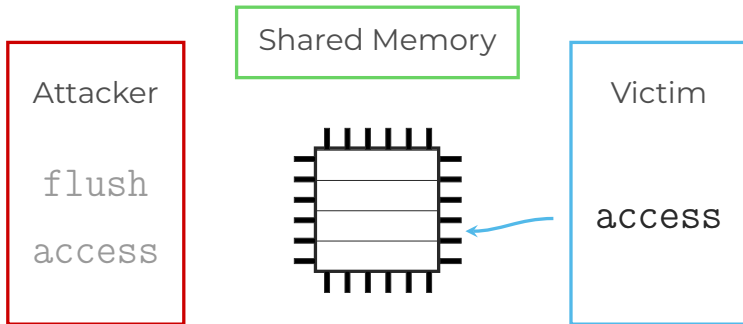


Flush+Reload



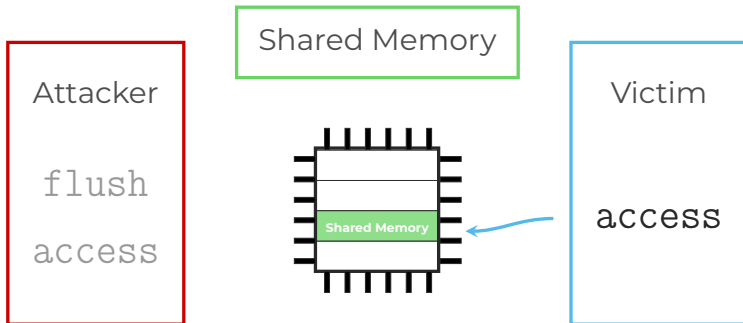


Flush+Reload



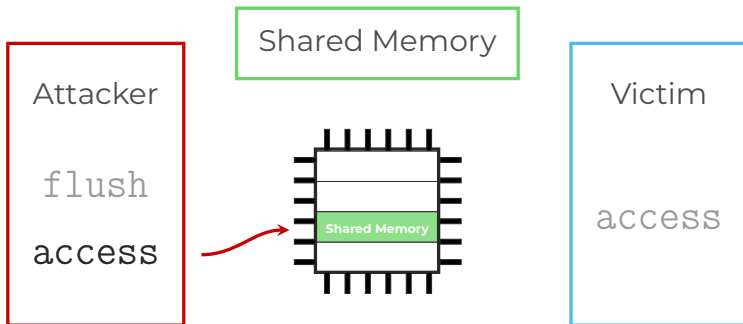


Flush+Reload



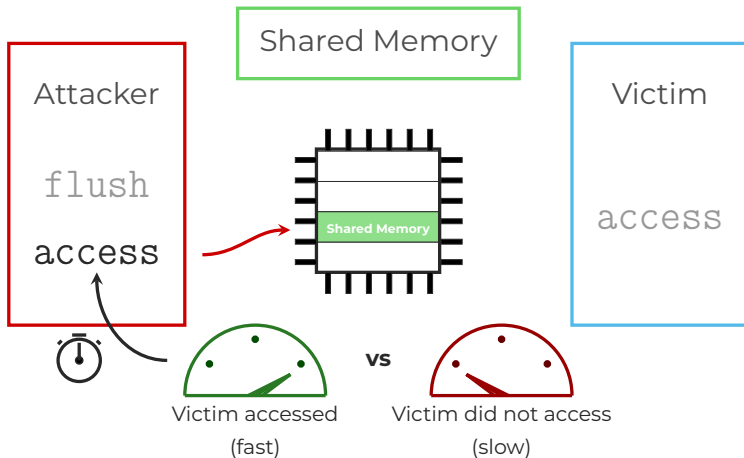


Flush+Reload





Flush+Reload





- Leak **cryptographic keys**



Cache Attacks



- Leak **cryptographic keys**
- Leak information on **co-located virtual machines**



Cache Attacks



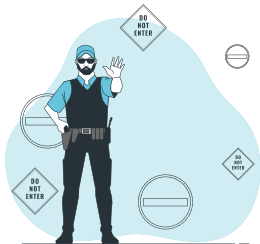
- Leak **cryptographic keys**
- Leak information on **co-located virtual machines**
- **Monitor** function calls of **other applications**



Cache Attacks



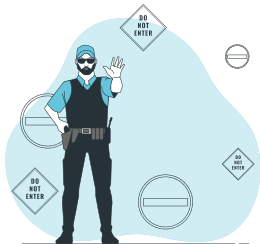
- Leak **cryptographic keys**
- Leak information on **co-located virtual machines**
- **Monitor** function calls of **other applications**
- Build **covert communication channels**
- ...



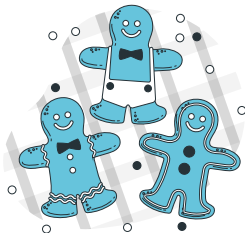
Leakage of **1-2** Instructions



Motivation



Leakage of **1-2** Instructions



There are **>3000** instructions



How do you find **these** attacks?



Read documentation
and patents



Read documentation
and patents



Develop ideas



Read documentation
and patents



Develop ideas



Test ideas and start
over



New CPU, **New** Features



New CPU, **New** Features



Repeat from the beginning



Finding side channels and vulnerabilities is a **complex** and **time-consuming** process



Can we do **better**?



Automation for Side-Channel Search

- How can you find bugs in **software** in an automated way?





Automation for Side-Channel Search



- How can you find bugs in **software** in an automated way?
- **Fuzzing** is an automated software testing method
 - Inject invalid, malformed, unexpected input to a program



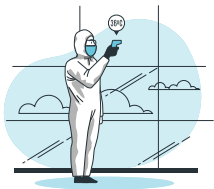
Automation for Side-Channel Search



- How can you find bugs in **software** in an automated way?
- **Fuzzing** is an automated software testing method
 - Inject invalid, malformed, unexpected input to a program
- Can we **apply a similar approach** to find microarchitectural side-channels?



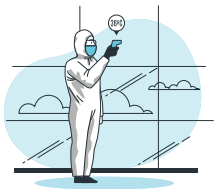
Challenges when Fuzzing CPUs



Limited Feedback



Challenges when Fuzzing CPUs



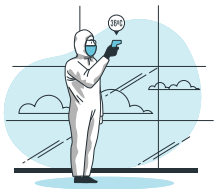
Limited Feedback



Dirty States



Challenges when Fuzzing CPUs



Limited Feedback



Dirty States



System Noise



Side Channel Search



Can we **automatically decide** whether we **found a side channel**?



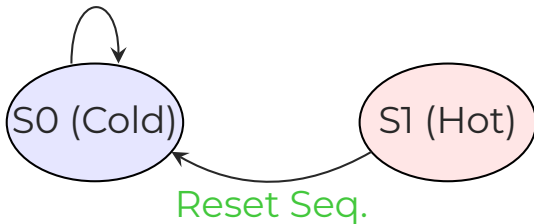
Modelling Side Channels





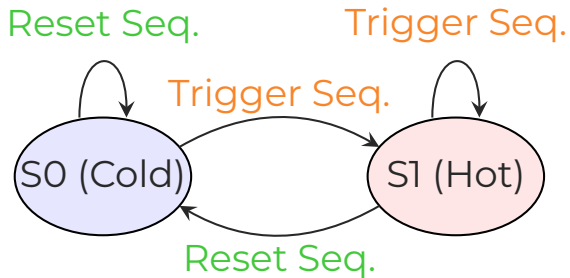
Modelling Side Channels

Reset Seq.



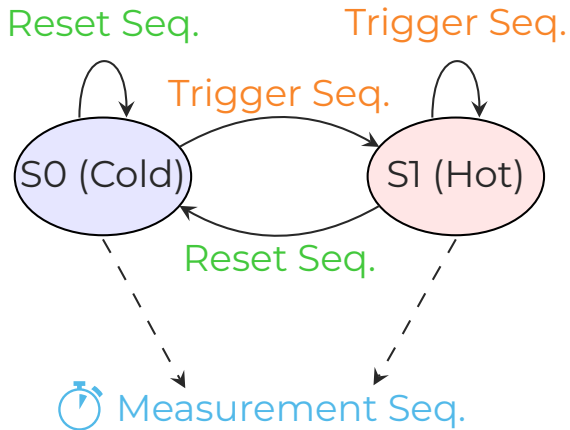


Modelling Side Channels





Modelling Side Channels





Testing Potential Side Channels





Testing Potential Side Channels





Testing Potential Side Channels



*Seq*_{reset}



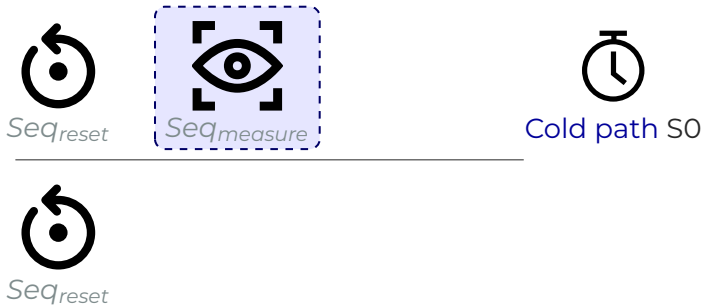
*Seq*_{measure}



Cold path S0

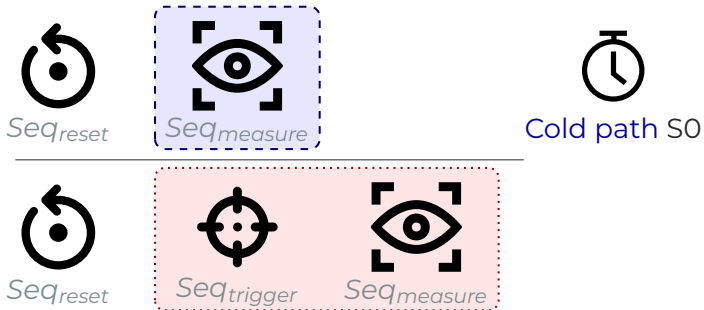


Testing Potential Side Channels



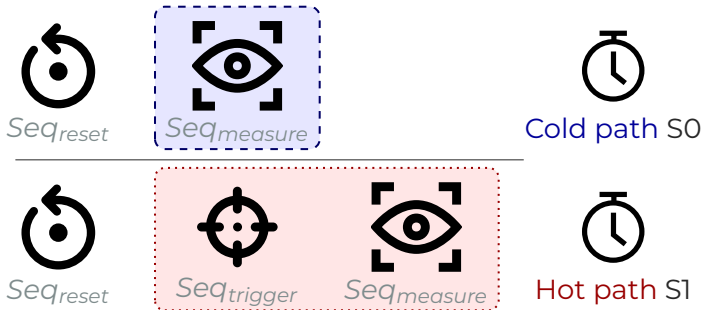


Testing Potential Side Channels



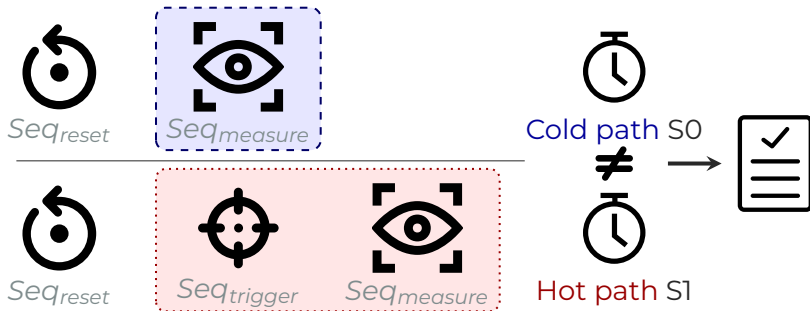


Testing Potential Side Channels





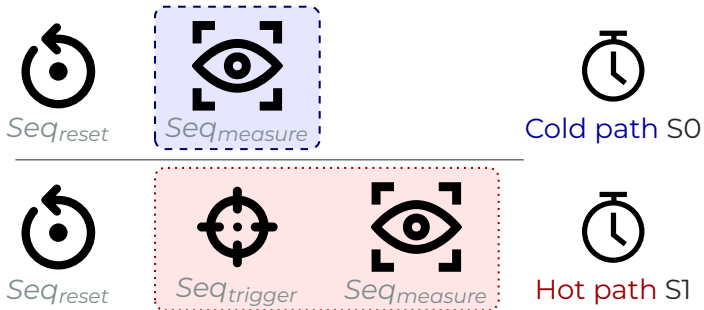
Testing Potential Side Channels





Testing Potential Side Channels

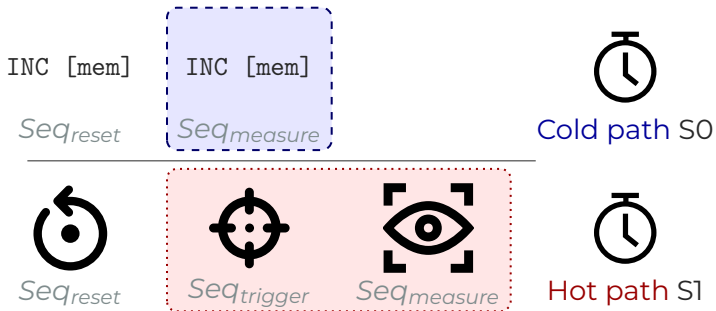
Example 1: $Seq_{measure} = Seq_{trigger} = Seq_{reset} = \text{INC} \text{ [mem]}$





Testing Potential Side Channels

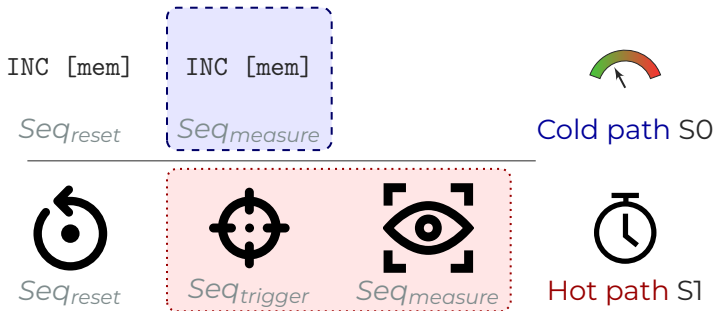
Example 1: $Seq_{measure} = Seq_{trigger} = Seq_{reset} = \text{INC } [\text{mem}]$





Testing Potential Side Channels

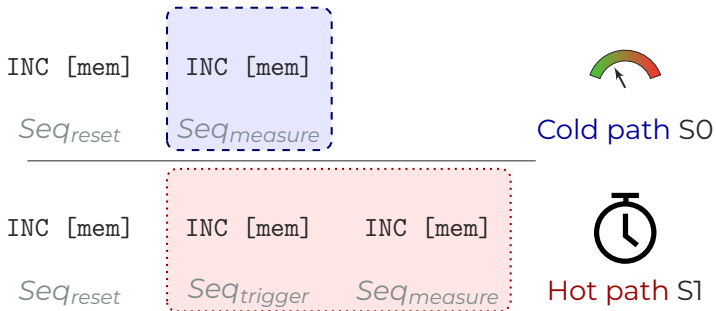
Example 1: $Seq_{measure} = Seq_{trigger} = Seq_{reset} = \text{INC} \text{ [mem]}$





Testing Potential Side Channels

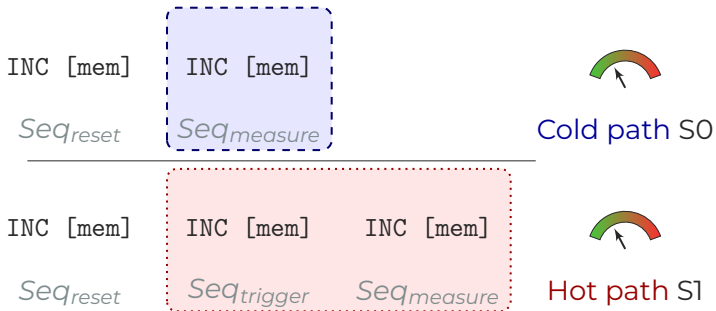
Example 1: $Seq_{measure} = Seq_{trigger} = Seq_{reset} = \text{INC } [\text{mem}]$





Testing Potential Side Channels

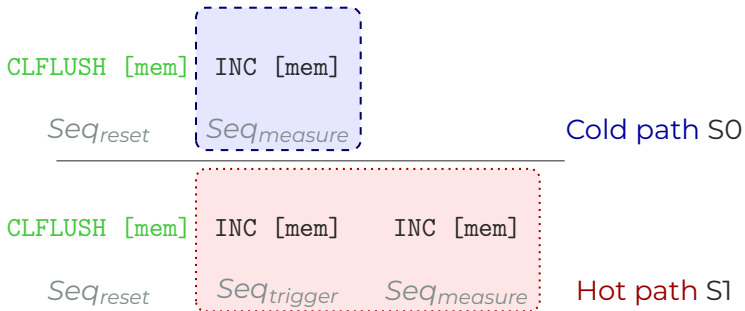
Example 1: $Seq_{measure} = Seq_{trigger} = Seq_{reset} = \text{INC } [\text{mem}]$





Testing Potential Side Channels

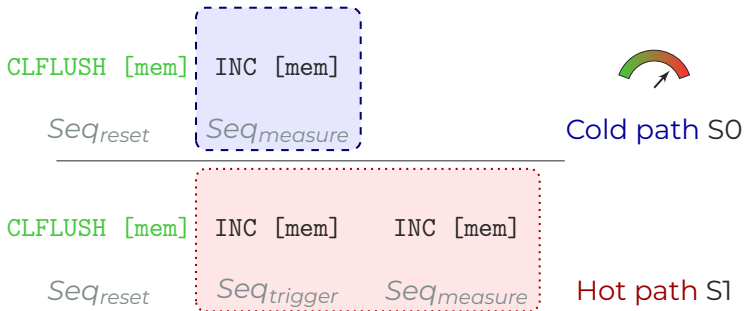
Example 2: $Seq_{measure} = Seq_{trigger} = \text{INC } [mem];$
 $Seq_{reset} = \text{CLFLUSH } [mem]$





Testing Potential Side Channels

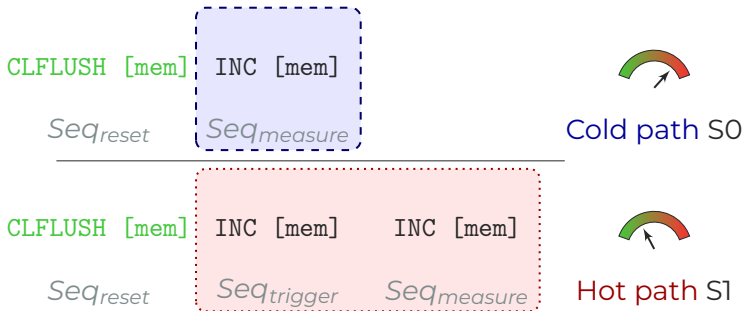
Example 2: $Seq_{measure} = Seq_{trigger} = \text{INC } [mem];$
 $Seq_{reset} = \text{CLFLUSH } [mem]$





Testing Potential Side Channels

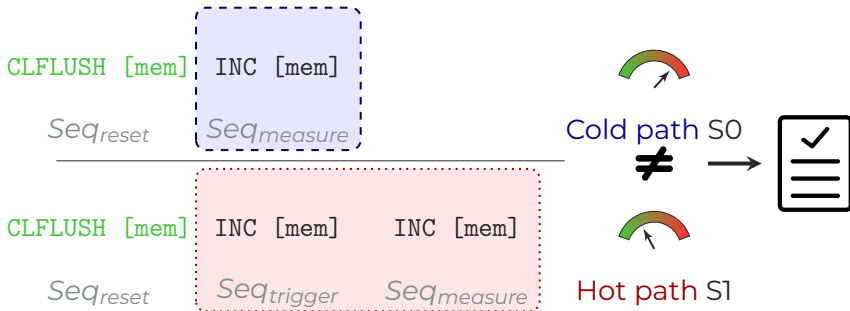
Example 2: $Seq_{measure} = Seq_{trigger} = \text{INC } [mem];$
 $Seq_{reset} = \text{CLFLUSH } [mem]$

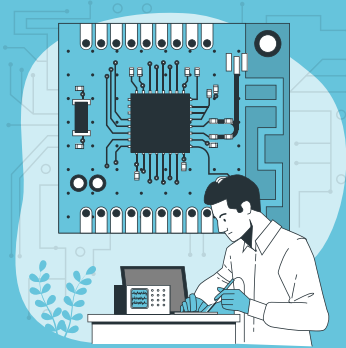




Testing Potential Side Channels

Example 2: $Seq_{measure} = Seq_{trigger} = \text{INC } [mem];$
 $Seq_{reset} = \text{CLFLUSH } [mem]$

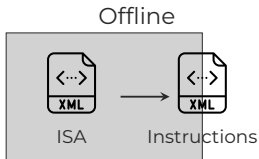




Let's Fuzz for Side Channels

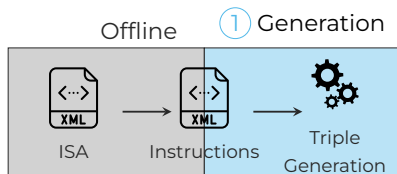


Osiris – Fuzzing x86 CPUs for Side Channels



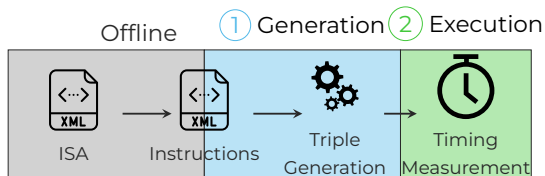


Osiris – Fuzzing x86 CPUs for Side Channels



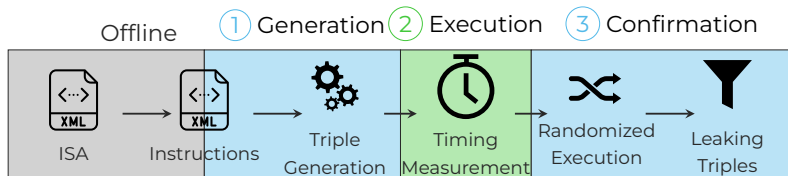


Osiris – Fuzzing x86 CPUs for Side Channels



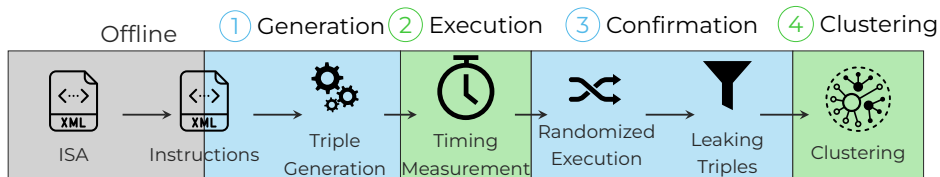


Osiris – Fuzzing x86 CPUs for Side Channels



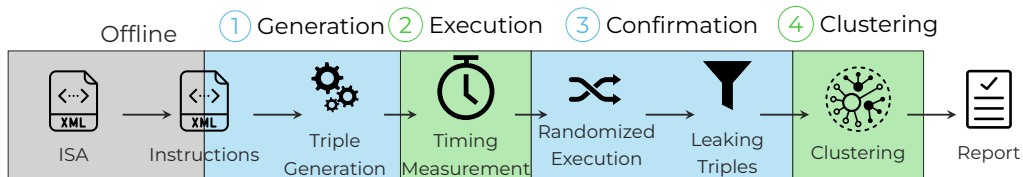


Osiris – Fuzzing x86 CPUs for Side Channels





Osiris – Fuzzing x86 CPUs for Side Channels





Osiris – Results Overview



4 days



Osiris – Results Overview



4 days



2 side channels reproduced



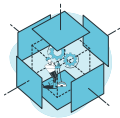
Osiris – Results Overview



4 days



2 side channels reproduced



4 new side channels



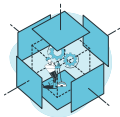
Osiris – Results Overview



4 days



2 side channels reproduced



4 new side channels



1 new attack



Kernel ASLR (KASLR)



- Many exploits rely on the **knowledge of the memory location** of a certain function



Kernel ASLR (KASLR)



- Many exploits rely on the **knowledge of the memory location** of a certain function
- OS Kernels are **protected by KASLR**



Kernel ASLR (KASLR)



- Many exploits rely on the **knowledge of the memory location** of a certain function
- OS Kernels are **protected by KASLR**
- Memory location of the kernel is **randomized**



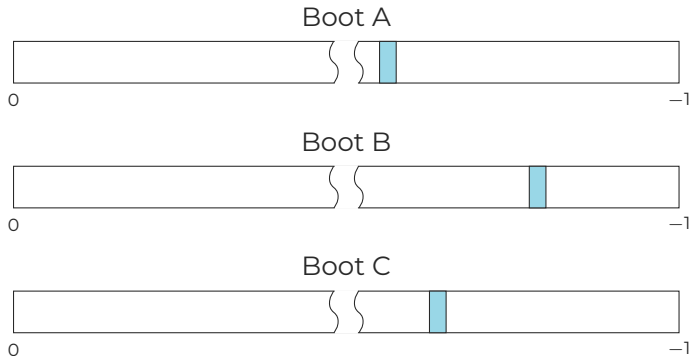
Kernel ASLR (KASLR)



- Many exploits rely on the **knowledge of the memory location** of a certain function
- OS Kernels are **protected by KASLR**
- Memory location of the kernel is **randomized**
- Attacker **do not know where** to attack



KASLR: Kernel Address Space Layout Randomization



- Kernel is loaded to a different offset on every boot



Findings – FlushConflict



- **KASLR break** based on MOVNT and transient execution



Findings – FlushConflict



- **KASLR break** based on MOVNT and transient execution
- Works **on new Intel CPUs** (tested up to Alder Lake)



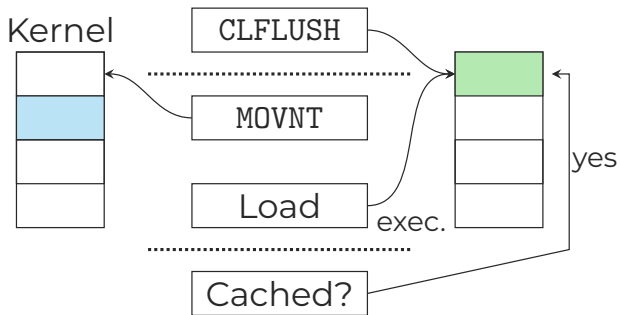
Findings – FlushConflict



- **KASLR break** based on MOVNT and transient execution
- Works **on new Intel CPUs** (tested up to Alder Lake)
- Breaks KASLR reliably in **136ms (average)**

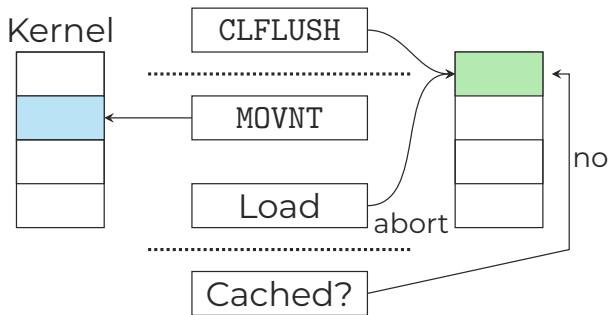


Findings – FlushConflict



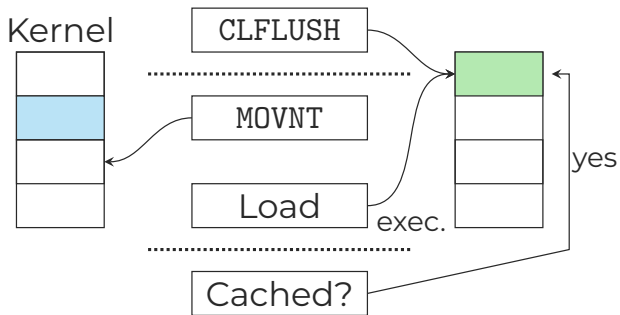


Findings – FlushConflict





Findings – FlushConflict





FlushConflict Live Demo



Osiris – Lessons Learned



- We can **automatically search** for side channels



Osiris – Lessons Learned



- We can **automatically search** for side channels
- **Scaling** such tools is challenging



Osiris – Lessons Learned



- We can **automatically search** for side channels
 - **Scaling** such tools is challenging
- Osiris prototype is currently limited to 1 instruction per sequence



Can we find **more powerful attacks?**



Can we find **more powerful attacks**?
Can we **leak actual data** instead of meta data?



CPU Optimization: Lazy Error Handling



- With **Meltdown**, we exploit out-of-order execution to leak the content of **inaccessible** kernel addresses



CPU Optimization: Lazy Error Handling



- With **Meltdown**, we exploit out-of-order execution to leak the content of **inaccessible** kernel addresses
 - Faulty state is **never architecturally visible**



CPU Optimization: Lazy Error Handling



- With **Meltdown**, we exploit out-of-order execution to leak the content of **inaccessible** kernel addresses
 - Faulty state is **never architecturally visible**
 - Use a side-channel (Flush+Reload) to make it visible



CPU Optimization: Lazy Error Handling



- With **Meltdown**, we exploit out-of-order execution to leak the content of **inaccessible** kernel addresses
 - Faulty state is **never architecturally visible**
 - Use a side-channel (Flush+Reload) to make it visible
- Many different attack variants:
 - Fallout, ZombieLoad, CrossTalk, ...

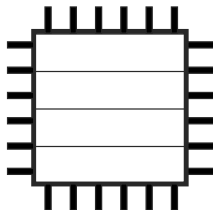


Meltdown-type Attacks

User Memory

	A	B
C	D	E
F	G	H
I	J	K
L	M	N
O	P	Q
R	S	T
U	V	W
X	Y	Z

```
char value = faulting[0]
```





Meltdown-type Attacks

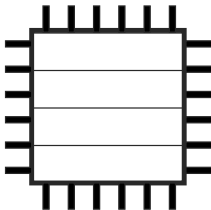
User Memory

	A	B
C	D	E
F	G	H
I	J	K
L	M	N
O	P	Q
R	S	T
U	V	W
X	Y	Z

```
char value = faulting[0]
```



Fault





Meltdown-type Attacks

User Memory

	A	B
C	D	E
F	G	H
I	J	K
L	M	N
O	P	Q
R	S	T
U	V	W
X	Y	Z

```
char value = faulting[0]
```

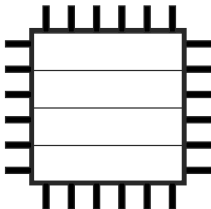


mem[value]



Fault

Out of order





Meltdown-type Attacks

User Memory

	A	B
C	D	E
F	G	H
I	J	K
L	M	N
O	P	Q
R	S	T
U	V	W
X	Y	Z

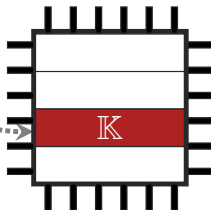
```
char value = faulting[0]
```

mem[value]

Fault

Out of order

K





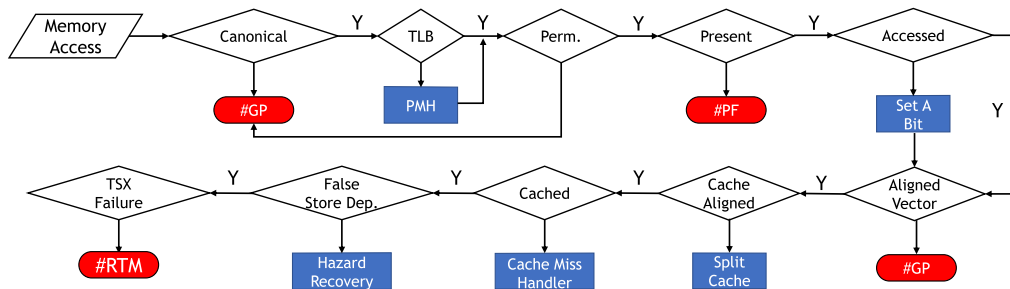
Memory Access Checks (simplified)

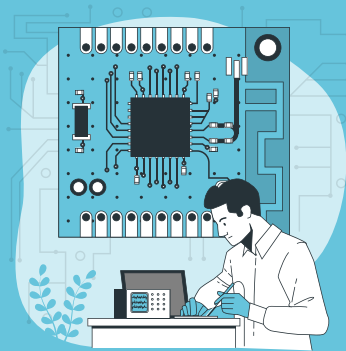
- Many possibilities for **faults** and **microcode assists**



Memory Access Checks (simplified)

- Many possibilities for **faults** and **microcode assists**

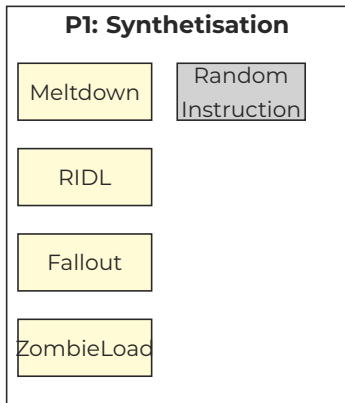




Fuzzing for Meltdown-type Attacks

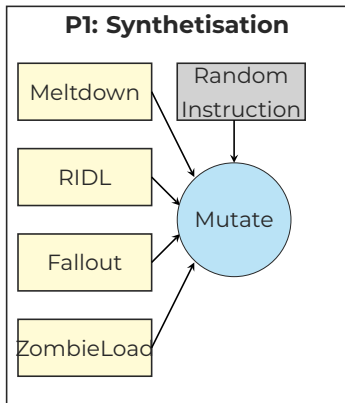


Transynther – Fuzzing for Meltdown-type Attacks



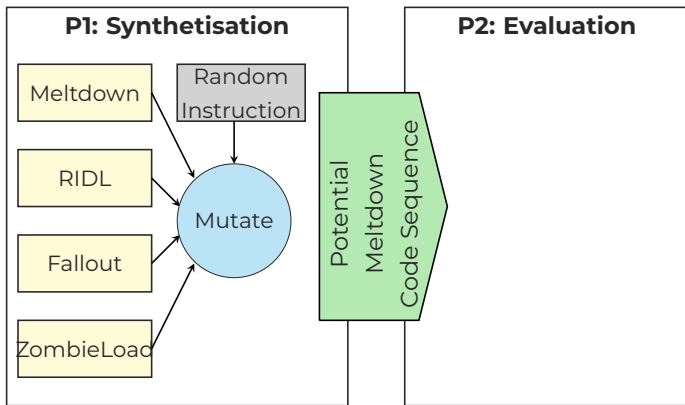


Transynther – Fuzzing for Meltdown-type Attacks



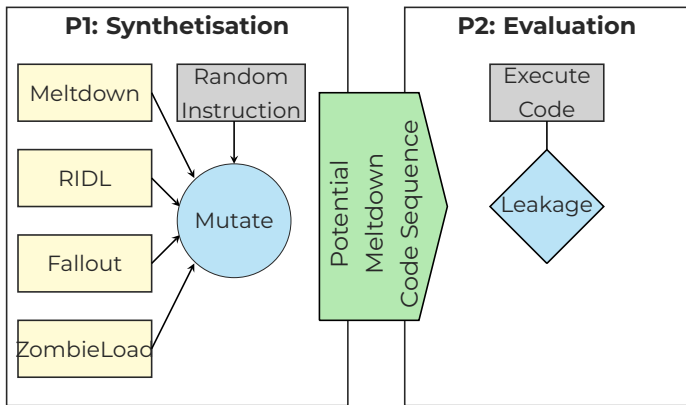


Transynther – Fuzzing for Meltdown-type Attacks



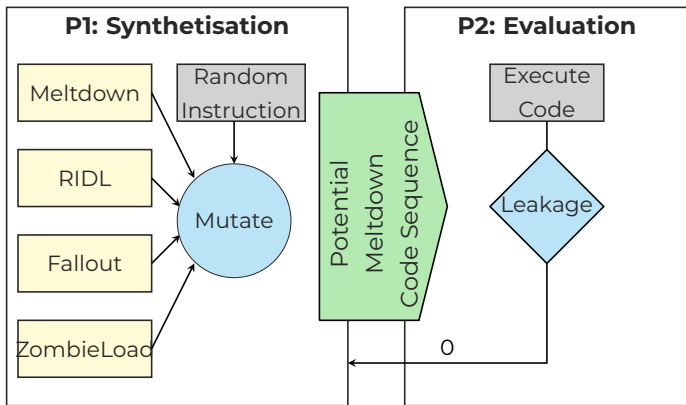


Transynther – Fuzzing for Meltdown-type Attacks



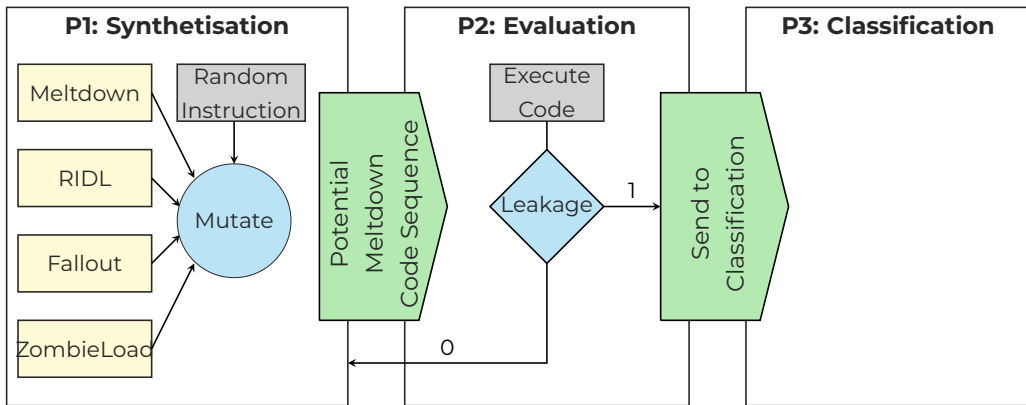


Transynther – Fuzzing for Meltdown-type Attacks



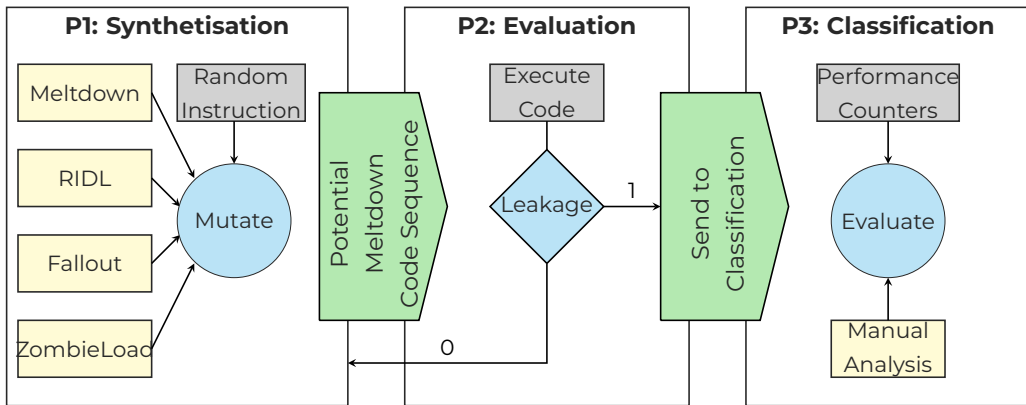


Transynther – Fuzzing for Meltdown-type Attacks





Transynther – Fuzzing for Meltdown-type Attacks





Transsynther – Results Overview



26 hours



Transsynther – Results Overview



26 hours



100 unique leakage
patterns



Transsynther – Results Overview



26 hours



100 unique leakage
patterns



7 attacks reproduced



Transsynther – Results Overview



26 hours



100 unique leakage
patterns



7 attacks reproduced



1 new vulnerability



Transynther – Results Overview



26 hours



100 unique leakage
patterns



7 attacks reproduced



1 new vulnerability



1 regression



Findings – Reenabling MDS Attack



- **Medusa**: new variant of **ZombieLoad**



Findings – Reenabling MDS Attack



- [Medusa](#): new variant of [ZombieLoad](#)
- Leaks from **write-combining buffer**, i.e., `REP MOV`



Findings – Reenabling MDS Attack



- [Medusa](#): new variant of [ZombieLoad](#)
- Leaks from **write-combining buffer**, i.e., `REP MOV`
- Used for fast [memory copy](#), e.g., in OpenSSL or kernel



Findings – Reenabling MDS Attack



- **Medusa**: new variant of **ZombieLoad**
 - Leaks from **write-combining buffer**, i.e., `REP MOV`
 - Used for fast **memory copy**, e.g., in OpenSSL or kernel
- Leaked RSA key while decoding in OpenSSL



Findings – MDS Attack on Ice Lake



- Intel's Ice Lake CPUs were labeled **MDS-resistant**



Findings – MDS Attack on Ice Lake



- Intel's Ice Lake CPUs were labeled **MDS-resistant**
- Transynther found a **working MDS attack**
 - Variant of a Fallout attack



Transsynther – Lessons Learned



- We can **automatically search** for transient-execution attacks



Transsynther – Lessons Learned



- We can **automatically search** for transient-execution attacks
- **Post-analysis** can also be **automated**



Transsynther – Lessons Learned



- We can **automatically search** for transient-execution attacks
- **Post-analysis** can also be **automated**
- **Regression bugs can be found** using automated tools



Are there also **architectural bugs**?



Are there also **architectural bugs**?
What about **unknown instructions**?



Finding Unknown Instructions

- **Sandsifter^a** searches for undocumented x86 instructions





Finding Unknown Instructions



- **Sandsifter**^a searches for undocumented x86 instructions
 - Trick to check for valid instruction bytes using page faults
- **Haruspex**^b uses speculative execution and performance counters

^aSandsifter (Christopher Domas):
<https://github.com/xoreaxeaxeax/sandsifter>

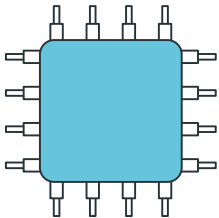
^bHaruspex (Can Bölük): <https://github.com/can1357/haruspex>



What else is **left**?



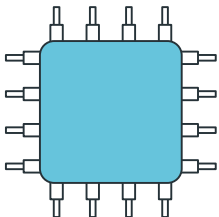
Model-Specific Registers and their Hidden Secrets



- Model-Specific Registers (MSRs) are **special CPU control registers**

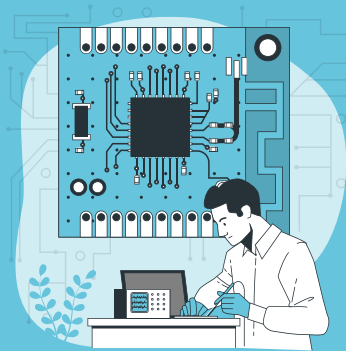


Model-Specific Registers and their Hidden Secrets



- Model-Specific Registers (MSRs) are **special CPU control registers**
- VIA C3 CPU had [backdoor access](#)^a hidden behind an **undocumented MSR bit**

^aGOD MODE unlocked: Hardware backdoors in x86 CPUs (Christopher Domas – BlackHat USA '18)



Searching for Undocumented MSRs

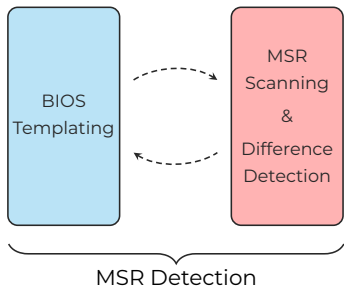


MSRevelio – Overview

MSR
Scanning

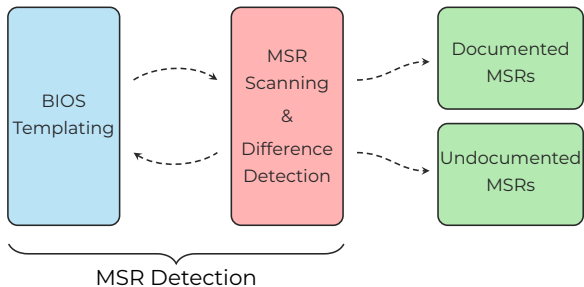


MSRevelio – Overview



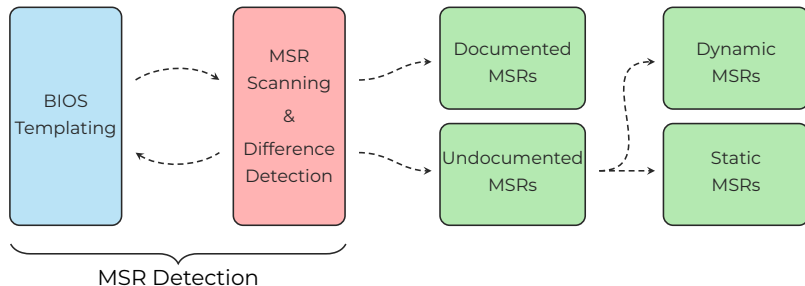


MSRRevelio – Overview



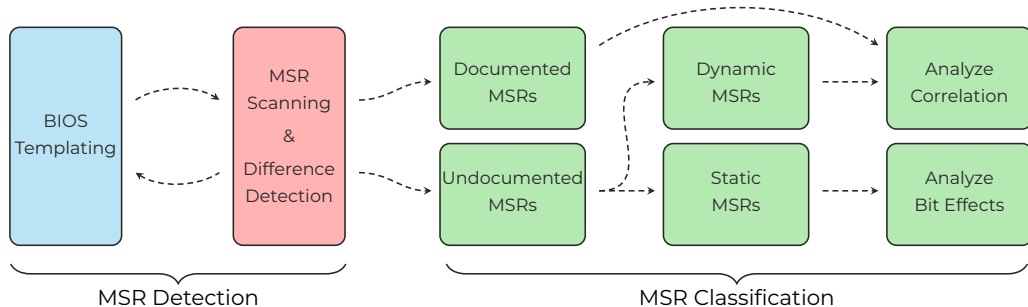


MSRRevelio – Overview





MSRRevelio – Overview





MSRevelio – Results Overview



5890 undocumented MSRs



MSRevelio – Results Overview



5890 undocumented MSRs



3 MSRs as attack **mitigation**



MSRevelio – Results Overview



5890 undocumented MSRs



3 MSRs as attack **mitigation**



1 MSR allows
TOCTOU vulnerability



MSRevelio – Results Overview



5890 undocumented MSRs



3 MSRs as attack **mitigation**



1 MSR allows
TOCTOU vulnerability



New MSRs hint towards
vulnerabilities



Findings – Undisclosed Attacks



- MSRs often used to introduce **vulnerability fixes**



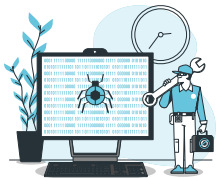
Findings – Undisclosed Attacks



- MSRs often used to introduce **vulnerability fixes**
 - MSRs exist **before public disclosure**
- Useful for 1-Day Exploits



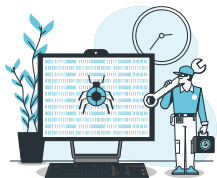
Findings – Attack Mitigation



- Mitigate **prefetch side-channel attacks**



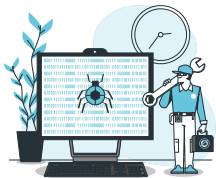
Findings – Attack Mitigation



- Mitigate **prefetch side-channel attacks**
- Reduce **Crosstalk leakage**



Findings – Attack Mitigation



- Mitigate **prefetch side-channel attacks**
- Reduce **Crosstalk leakage**
- Reduce **Medusa leakage**



MSRevelio – Lessons Learned



- Searching for **unknown behavior is hard**



MSRevelio – Lessons Learned



- Searching for **unknown behavior is hard**
- We can **automate the search** for undocumented MSR behavior



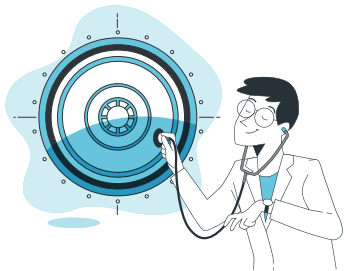
MSRevelio – Lessons Learned



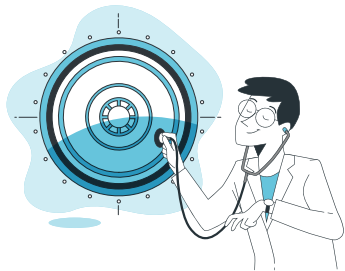
- Searching for **unknown behavior is hard**
- We can **automate the search** for undocumented MSR behavior
- Automation allows **tracing changes between releases**
(cf. Transynther)



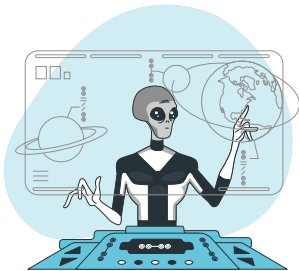
Conclusion



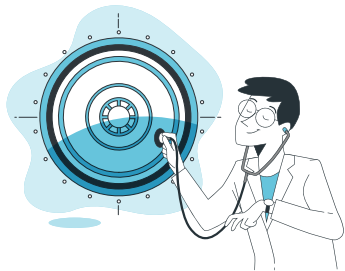
Automated **side-channel** discovery



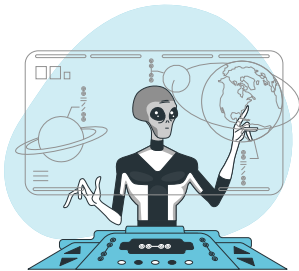
Automated
side-channel discovery



Automated
transient-execution
attack discovery



Automated
side-channel discovery



Automated
transient-execution
attack discovery



Automated detection of
undocumented MSRs



CPU Fuzzing – Lessons Learned



- **Scalability:** Automation is easier than manual efforts (even if limited)



CPU Fuzzing – Lessons Learned



- **Scalability:** Automation is easier than manual efforts (even if limited)
- **Extensible:** Able to scan way **more variants** (often minor changes)



CPU Fuzzing – Lessons Learned



- **Scalability:** Automation is easier than manual efforts (even if limited)
- **Extensible:** Able to scan way **more variants** (often minor changes)
- **Versatile:** Execute on **various microarchitectures**



Open-Source – Feel Free to Test



All our tools are **accessible** and **open source**:



Open-Source – Feel Free to Test



All our tools are **accessible** and **open source**:

→ <https://github.com/D4nielMoghimi/medusa>

→ <https://github.com/CISPA/osiris>

→ <https://github.com/IAIK/msrevelio>



- Automated approaches are a **fruitful** way in



- Automated approaches are a **fruitful** way in
 - finding **new and unknown** attack variants



- Automated approaches are a **fruitful** way in
 - finding **new and unknown** attack variants
 - **regression** testing



- Automated approaches are a **fruitful** way in
 - finding **new and unknown** attack variants
 - **regression** testing
 - **extensible** for new building blocks and architectures



- Automated approaches are a **fruitful** way in
 - finding **new and unknown** attack variants
 - **regression** testing
 - **extensible** for new building blocks and architectures
- Despite **limitations**, great toolkit and support for manual efforts



- Automated approaches are a **fruitful** way in
 - finding **new and unknown** attack variants
 - **regression** testing
 - **extensible** for new building blocks and architectures
- Despite **limitations**, great toolkit and support for manual efforts
- Play an **essential role** in CPU research

CPU Fuzzing

*Automatic Discovery
of Microarchitectural Attacks*

Daniel Weber, Michael Schwarz | May 12, 2023



References



- Slides partially by Moritz Lipp
- Icons and Images from [storyset.com](https://www.storyset.com)
- Images from CNN