

# LABTEST ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE

FROM  
**PCPlus** pcplus.co.uk  
 #187 MARCH 2002

## Safe from harm

With the internet rapidly becoming the playground for virus writers and script kiddies, you need some form of viral defence. Frank Charlton puts ten of the best through their paces

**D**edicated followers of computer news sites will have noticed that there seems to have been an alarming upsurge in the activity of virus writers in recent months. It seems that the internet is the chosen method of delivery for viruses and other malicious code, and there's barely a week passes by without a new virus alert from the major anti-virus software companies.

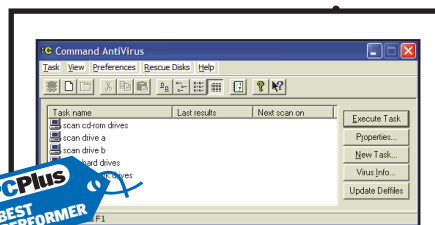
Whether you're the paranoid sort that is convinced you're likely to be the subject of virus attack, or one of the more relaxed PC users in the world, you can't fail to be aware that virus writing is once again becoming an attractive hobby for groups of talented, although monstrously misguided, programmers. The chances are that you already have some sort of defence against viruses, but it may not be as up to the job as you might first think – is it time to upgrade?

Whatever your reasons for upgrading, changing or simply installing virus protection for the first time, this month's **PC Plus Lab Test** has something for you. We're looking at ten anti-virus packages from major league players who've been in the virus defence industry since it began, to lesser-known and much smaller outfits.

We tested each application in an isolated environment on two test machines: one running Windows 98 Second Edition, and the other running Windows XP Home. Each was tested in both an everyday working situation on a busy machine connected to the internet, and the isolated test machine with no external connections.

On the isolated machine, we tested the overall effectiveness of each package in spotting known viruses in two ways. First, each scanner was given the task of routing out and finding each one of over 500 viruses hidden away on the system. These viruses hadn't infected the machines, and were hidden in both executable programs and ZIP files. Then, on the same PC, we deliberately attempted to infect the machine with recent viruses, including Badtrans, Goner, Nimda and SirCam. Finally, we evaluated how easy each package is to get to grips with – it's all very well if a program kills 100 per cent of known viruses, but it helps if the average user can actually understand what's going on.

**COVER STORY**



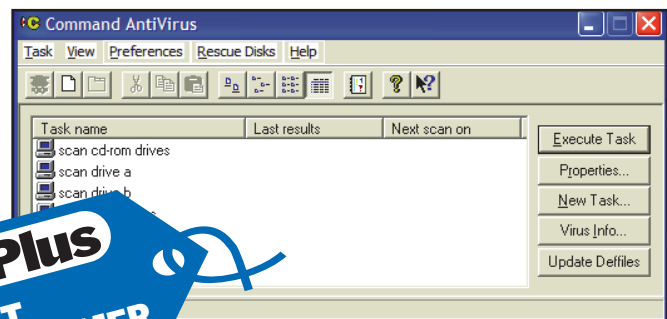
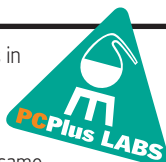
**PCPlus BEST PERFORMER**

**BEST PERFORMER**

### → Command AntiVirus

It may seem odd that the only program this month to mis-diagnose a virus gets the Best Performer award, so let's justify this. This happened on three machines, and Command still flagged the sample in question as highly suspicious and quarantined it. The general instability of that particular XP machine leads us to think it wasn't Command's fault at all. In the meantime, Command AntiVirus outperformed all others in the speed stakes, and offered excellent performance in all other areas.

**PCPlus Verdict..... 8/10**



↑ This meagre but fast interface is home to the fastest scanning engine on test this month.

## COMMAND SOFTWARE

### Command AntiVirus

**PRICE** Download £59; boxed £106 **EX VAT** £50; £90 **PHONE** 0207 931 9301  
**SUPPLIER** Command Software **WWW** www.command.co.uk

If you're after a fast virus scanner with no cosmetic frills, this could be the one for you

**C**ommand AntiVirus may not be a name you're familiar with, but the heritage behind this virus defence system is well known to anyone with a reasonable knowledge of virus history. Command is based on the venerable F-PROT engine which has been around almost as long as PC viruses themselves.

Since taking over use of the core scanning engine, Command has continued to update both the engine itself and the main application's interface. Compared to the more well-known alternatives, Command has a somewhat spartan look and feel, with almost all operations being controlled from one simple dialog.

#### Useful aspects

When viruses are detected by either the real-time or on demand scanners, infected files can be repaired, deleted, renamed or moved to a quarantine area for storage or later analysis. Despite the basic appearance, Command is very powerful with some useful tweaks. Network

administrators will delight in Command's ability to send custom messages via email containing a short warning or the full scan result report. This is superb if you manage virus protection on a range of machines you don't actually sit in front of.

Command blasted through our huge test directories with

#### System requirements

Win95/98/Me/NT4/2000/XP

#### Tested on

AMD Duron 800, 128MB RAM, Win98SE/XP Home

commendable speed, and produced the fastest results in this **Lab Test**. Sadly, the program was the only one on test to generate a less-than-perfect scan report as it labelled an old virus called Trivial.241 as unknown. However, it did flag the assorted virus construction kits as "destructive programs". Command AntiVirus also listed three files as suspicious when we deliberately altered them to generate false reports, without declaring them as actual infections and spitting out scaremongering reports.

The network mail option and sheer speed make Command an attractive proposition for both home and networked users, but the single detection failure is odd – a case of speed over perfect accuracy? But we're willing to overlook this since we couldn't reproduce it.

#### PCPlus Verdict

### COMMAND ANTIVIRUS

**FOR**  
 → Blistering speed  
 → Good for network users  
 → Simple, no frills approach

**AGAINST**  
 → Missed one infection once

Specification.....8  
 Quality .....7  
 Performance.....9  
 Value for money .....6

**OVERALL .....8/10**

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**Command - World leaders in anti-virus solutions.**