

Command's royal performance

VIRUSES – the bane of the industry. There's nothing more annoying than your system becoming infected with a virus strain.

Even when it's a non-destructive virus, you will still suffer delays and aggravation by either letting it run its mischievous course or purging it from your system – if your virus package can actually deal with it.

The risk of both spreading and contracting viruses is increasing with more people emailing document attachments as freely as they do plain text mail.

Curing the disease

There are several high-profile virus packages on the market catering

for the heavy demands of a networked environment.

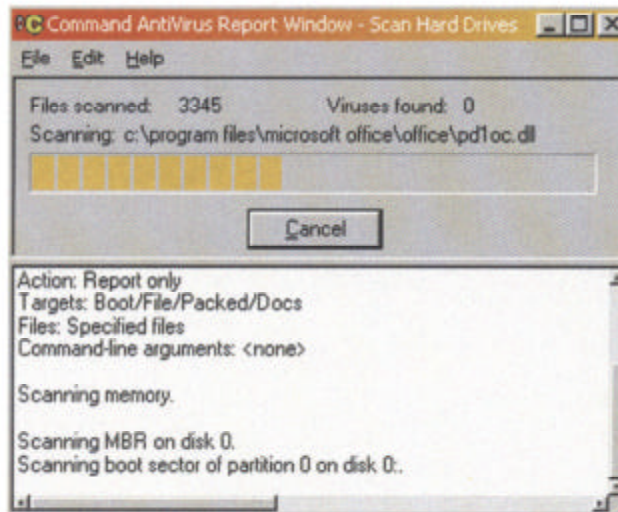
Sadly these aren't totally fool-proof, due to their dependence on information files released after the infection – by which time its normally too late. One alternative option is Command Anti Virus (AV) – from Command Software.

We tested Command in both server and workstation environments, using machines running Windows NT4 Server (Service Pack 4) and Windows 95 version 2.1. Installation was surprisingly painless on both platforms and did not require a reboot on either platform.

Working in the wild

The virus-chasing community has three lines of thought on how to search for a virus. The first is to maintain a database of all known strains, against which scans of your system can be cross-referenced. Then there is the 'in-the-

Chris Green tests a new anti-virus detection package for an entire business infrastructure, and is impressed with the results



Information: Command provides ongoing reports during scanning

wild' approach, where the software scans for suspect code strings, searching for generic anomalies that match the known signs of a virus infection, isolating as many examples of the code as can be found.

The final approach is to use both. This is the best approach, but many AV packages struggle to find the right balance, with the end result being a reliance on passive and non-linear virus databases alone. Command not only includes a bustling database of viruses – some choice memories from databases over 10 years old, but still very nasty – it is also backed up by both a FTP and web site, where regis-

tered users can obtain the latest database updates, along with 24-hour telephone support.

On the other hand, the wild scanning takes in everything from the common macro virus to the hard-to-trace stealth and polymorphic strands.

Malicious Melissa virus

We received a copy of Command some weeks before the first reported outbreak of the Melissa virus, a particularly annoying and potentially quite destructive example of a macro virus.

Nonetheless, we infected a test workstation with it, delivered through an infected Word document. Impressively, Command detected and isolated the infection immediately. It didn't know

what it had discovered, only that the code exhibited the tell-tale signs of a macro virus. The same test was performed on an equivalent machine using Dr Solomon's Anti Virus, Norton Anti Virus, Sophos, McAfee Vshield and

VDS. All were running with their most recent pre-Melissa updates – all failed.

Control the process

Command has a great interface, among the best and least offensive we have come across. A basic explorer-style window lists your available drive resources along with data on the last scan and schedule for the next one, while just four buttons control the day-to-day actions of scanning and configuration.

Menus for pre-setting automatic scanning scheduling and remote administration options are buried far enough away to deter

a user from destroying the configuration, but are still accessible and

carries enough features to effectively monitor and cleanse a system.

In short, Command Anti Virus is one of the best AV tools released in recent

years. It strikes a good balance between its database and raw scanning abilities and is simple enough to deploy and configure so that it can be exploited to its full potential. Where many established names in the industry have lost their way with their offerings, Command has definitely found the correct route.

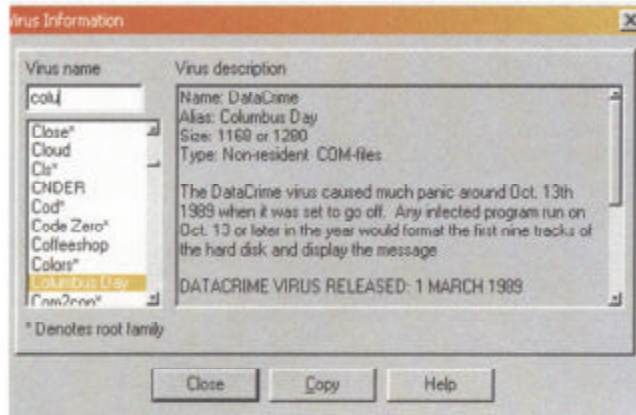
At a glance Command Anti Virus

What it is A highly sophisticated anti-virus package for both servers and workstations. Operating systems supported include Windows 9x, Windows NT, Novell Netware, MS-Dos and OS/2

Price From £275 (11 user-licence), excluding VAT

Contact Command Software (0171) 931 9301, www.command.co.uk

Computing verdict Command Anti Virus is a highly competent virus security option for the entire corporate IT infrastructure. Its simple installation combined with an extensive database of known strains and a genuine ability to effectively identify previously undiscovered strains is invaluable. Any package that could save a system from the Melissa virus using 'in-the-wild' detection has to be good



Good memory: Command has an extensive database of known viruses