



Simply protecting your own is no longer enough – virus breeders will continue to prosper until even the most technophobic PC user is security savvy

As this month's *PC Advisor* goes to press, the IT industry is counting the cost of the Mydoom virus. £10m? £50m? £100m? The figures are notional, including not just disruption caused by downtime where infection occurred, but also financial loss incurred while shoring up defences at organisations that weren't infected.

Meanwhile in a dark corner of cyberspace, Mydoom's author(s) brag to their peers about the websites they crippled, the size of the clean-up bill, the breadth of publicity and – most importantly – their notoriety.

For those who have been using computers for years Mydoom was a familiar ritual: the virus is spotted in the wild, then the antivirus vendors analyse it and update their software to protect against it. Download the latest AV patch before you are infected and you should have nothing to worry about. Until the next attack.

For those new to computing, Mydoom was bewildering if they didn't get infected and disastrous if they did. Which icon is my antivirus software? What's a patch?

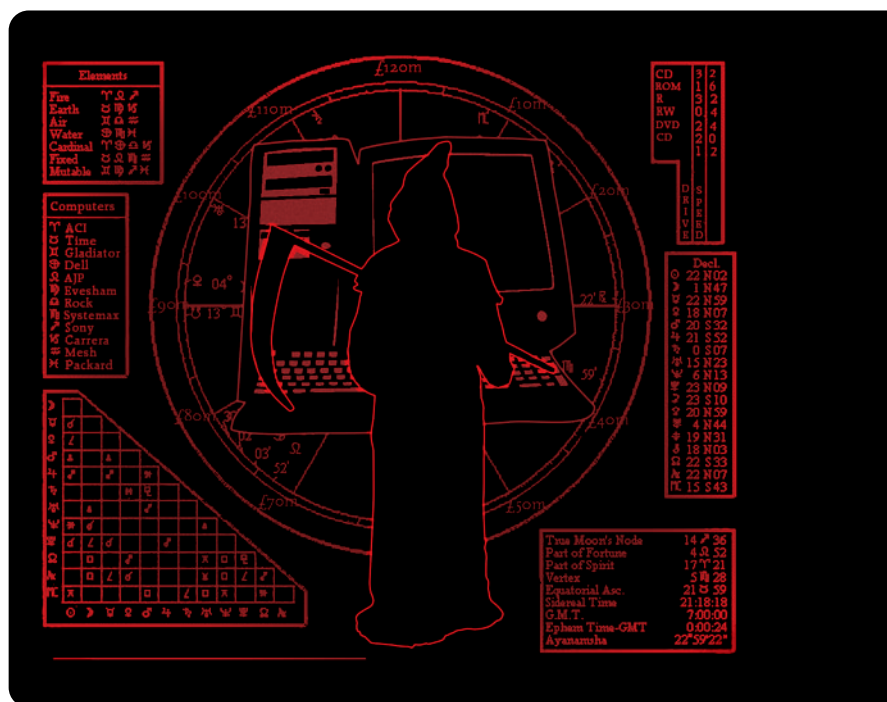
A lot of effort goes in to making software – especially operating systems – self-healing. Product registration may irk the paranoid, but it means software knows when it is vulnerable and will seek and install the right patch.

But automated security systems that operate unseen can be breached automatically and invisibly, so a degree of human intervention remains desirable. This means that thousands of non-techies have to be educated.

When the MS Blast virus struck last year, Microsoft telephone support was deluged, so it drafted in people who don't usually talk to the public – product marketing executives, accountants, the managing director.

A weekend of frenzied phonecalls left them shocked at how ignorant their average customer is and awed at the enormity of the responsibility they have to educate them.

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link and an intelligent computer system is only as smart as the person between the chair and the keyboard. Until every computer user knows how to prevent infection, there will still be fertile ground for viruses to breed. ☒



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