

No, it s not over



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Another killer virus strikes.

Leaving in its wake destroyed data, shattered schedules and wounded hopes. And the smug smile of a devious programmer who unleashed this mindless evil.

But the greatest harm a virus does is not to data, but to people's faith in the tools of their trade. The PC-using world (now over a billion people) is confronted with a chilling reality. Will the greater information intercourse allowed to us by networking, also lead to the eventual death of computing? Can anyone rely upon their PCs to enhance their output if the work of years can be undone in seconds by a villainous virus?

Such a sense of foreboding is reminiscent of the dread that gripped the world in the wake of the first news of another, deadlier virus—AIDS. Humanity is condemned to a painful death for its sins, is what the more morbid among us felt. The AIDS virus has claimed many hundred thousand innocents, but even after fifteen years of its discovery, humanity happily continues to flourish. People have found some sensible principles that may well be applicable in our electronically promiscuous world—take simple precautions, stick to known partners for any intimate exchanges, protect yourself using simple tools that are commonly available and, most importantly, don't panic.

Contrary to what some people may feel, computing as we know it is not over.

It is staggering to have your life's work destroyed because a programmer in Taipei or Norway (or wherever), decided to take up a perverted new hobby. But we must remember that knowledge is a common pool available to everyone. The same evolution in understanding technology that allows a rogue programmer to do incalculable damage also allows others to develop new ways of countering him.

Indeed, the Internet did facilitate the contagious spread of the ExploreZip worm with stunning rapidity. But the same Internet allowed millions to send out e-mails warning the world, and enabled an anti-virus company to post a free patch on its Web site within hours of the worm being discovered.

For every knave working in isolation to destroy, there are ten others arrayed to protect, armed with superior knowledge and the strength that comes from fighting a righteous battle.

Even at the risk of leaning towards melodrama, it must be accepted that this finally boils down to a battle between Good and Evil. And the history of mankind has shown us whose backside finally gets kicked.

So protect yourself, relax and take a ringside seat. The Bad Guys are in for a nasty surprise.

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