

→ PUBLISHER: MICROWORLD TECHNOLOGIES PRICE: £33 RETAILER'S WEB SITE: WWW.MWTL.NET  
 SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: WINDOWS 95/98 PENTIUM PROCESSOR, 64MB RAM, 100MB HDD SPACE.  
 FOR WINDOWS ME/NT/2000/XP, PENTIUM II PROCESSOR, 128MB OF RAM, 100MB HDD SPACE

# Escan 2003

Matthew Moore checks out a jam-packed Web security package that promises to send viruses, spam and pop-ups, er, packing

Among the plethora of me-too virus products and scanners, often offering less-than-impressive combinations and features, it's both refreshing and surprising to find an anti-virus product that stands out. *Escan 2003* offers excellent protection against virus attack and unwanted email, although its content checking and control capabilities lag a little behind. As well as scanning incoming emails for viruses and malware, *eScan* offers Web scanning and parental control options, deletion of Web activity and other Web management functions.

*eScan* appears to have employed the Stanley Kubrick of *Flash* movies to create its epic opening sequence. It's perhaps not the most appropriate medium to communicate support for automatic or manual browser settings deletion. Skip the introduction, though, and you're on to firmer ground.

The two main components of *eScan* – the *eScan* Anti-Virus Monitor and the Server Monitor – are available via icons in the System tray. The AV monitor provides real-time scanning of any file on your PC as you open it, with options to take on what to do if *eScan* finds a virus, which drives or file types to scan and so on. You can also find out about the number of anti-virus bases known, and when to check for new viruses.

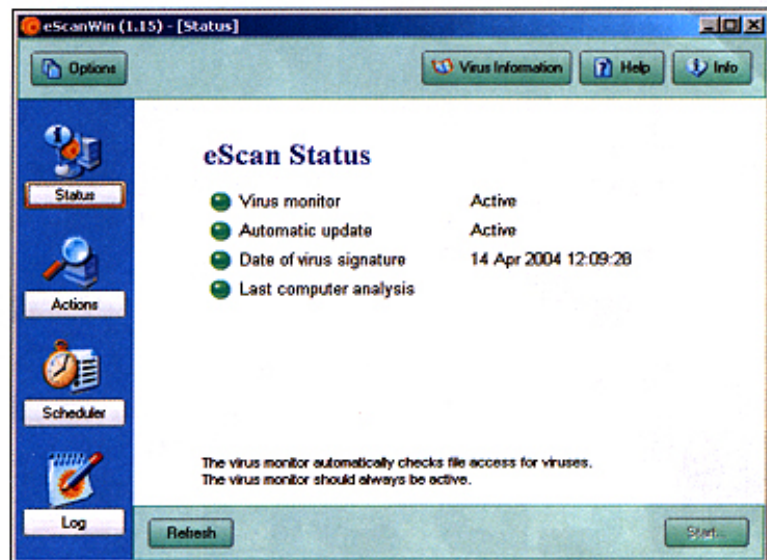
From *eScanWin*, you can check whether the AV monitor and automatic update are active, and when the virus signature was last updated. It also enables you to set

warnings if the virus signature is older than a specified time period. MWTL – the makers of *Escan* – recommends updating virus signatures once a day. Of course, you can check for viruses, including memory and Registry areas, and schedule regular scans. The scanner doesn't shine in terms of speed, as it took 1 hour and 41 minutes to check a 71.5Gb hard disk drive.

## Scanning choices

You can access the Content Administrator from the System tray or the Start menu. Dedicated to scanning incoming communications, you can block attachment types, and even set up the scanner to scan ports other than the standard port 25 for SMTP and 110 for POP3. If you have multiple servers, though, they all need to run from the same port. There's some sophisticated handling of *Internet Explorer* vulnerabilities, including the option to delete files with CLSID extensions, and deleting HTML with scripts attached. It's also possible to compress outgoing emails, and to decompress incoming communications safely. To combat truly sharp spammers, you'll probably need a slightly more sophisticated tool.

The way *eScan* blocks content is less sophisticated, using just simple textual phrase checking, although you



Check whether *eScan* is up and running, and the date and time of your last virus update

can add and remove entries from the word list to enable screening of offensive phrases. The reverse approach is used for blocking pop-ups. You can specify which sites you do want to see pop-ups from. Browser clean-up is simple to use and intelligently categorised.

The Internet security suite edition doesn't contain higher-end features such as a management console, but you get some enterprise-like features in the shape of remote file access rights, enabling users to modify and delete system and other files.

Technically, *eScan* has some good features both as a AV tool and mail scanner. The MWL (MicroWorld WinSock Layer) is a transparent gateway that sits on the Windows Socket Layer and consequently scans all incoming and outgoing network traffic, decoding HTTP, FTP and chat objects on the fly. As well as using standard virus definitions, *eScan* includes a heuristic virus scanner that

detects virus-like behaviour – very useful if you don't update your virus definitions frequently and need to be aware of suspicious files. There's also detection of polymorphic viruses.

There's not a great deal to criticise about *eScan*. It's more suitable for small businesses than large companies, and the GUI is a little rough around the edges. Yet in terms of the protection it offers and the combination of features, it's a very strong offering in the virus protection and content scanning market. ■

## → PC ANSWERS VERDICT

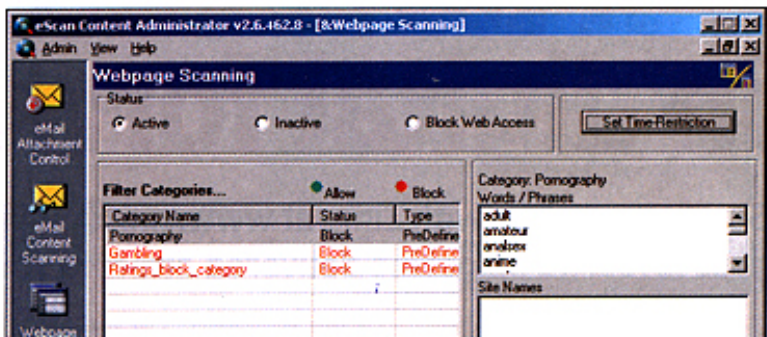
Ease of use  
 Features  
 Performance  
 Value for money

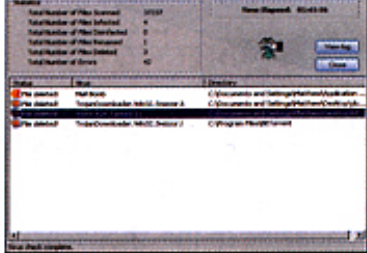


## → Overall

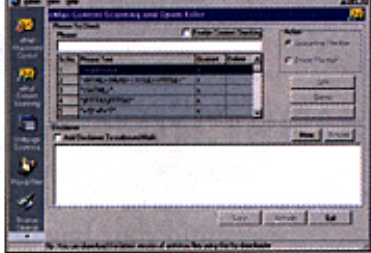
82%

A good technical specification is only let down by a slightly rough user interface

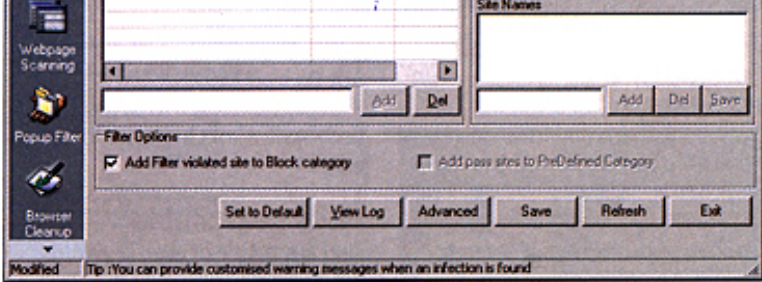




*The virus scan window: a progress Indicator would be a welcome addition*



*Unwanted emails are checked against a list of undesirable terms*



*Scanning Web pages is carried out against a list of 'danger' words and site names*