'A Violence of Law!'

There can't be many Amiga users who have not heard about the infamous VIRUS, a nasty routine written by the Swiss cracking service (SCA). Its role in life seems to be to corrupt as many disks as possible, to cause programs to crash randomly and to spread the name of the SCA (which they seem to have succeeded in doing extremely well). The VIRUS probably started life as a free bonus included on illicit copies of programs 'hacked' by the SCA and which due to their very nature were soon spread around. A few people have been heard to say that anyone who catches the VIRUS deserves to. Unfortunately the VIRUS is not selective and will quite happily 'spread' to non-pirated disks etc. This now seems to be the case as it has reared its unsavoury head in some rather unexpected places. One company whose name we will not mention (thanks for the £8000.00 in used, unmarked bank notes) sent us several new programs to review, each of which were infected with the VIRUS. Luckily none of them had been released to the public before we told them of the problem.

So how does the VIRUS work?

For a disk to be bootable (Auto-startup) it must contain certain start-up information in a special boot sector. This sector is read in when such a disk is inserted at the Workbench prompt and the code executed. In the case of an infected disk the boot information also contains a routine that locates itself somewhere out of sight in the
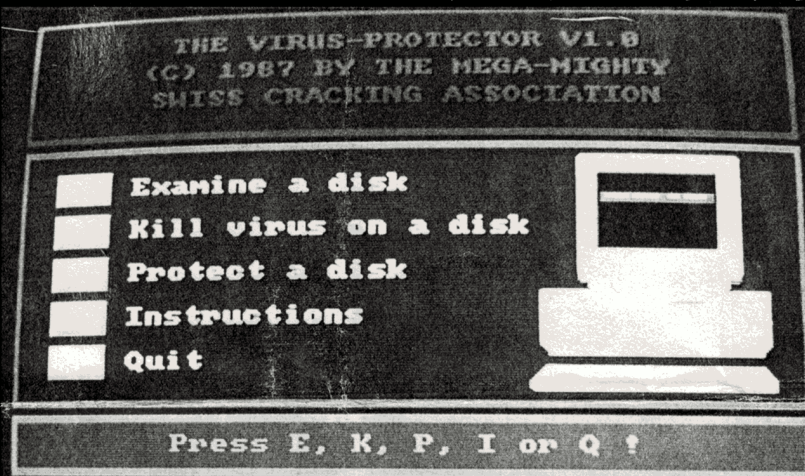
Amiga's memory and where it won't be disturbed by the three-key reset. Once activated it starts a random timer which when it triggers, terminates any program you are running and brings up a silly message telling you that your Amiga is alive and what clever boys the Swiss cracking service are. If this were all it did then it would not be too bad but once the VIRUS as been loaded it copies itself onto any unprotected disks that are subsequently inserted thus propagating itself. Now the 'SCA' may think this funny (we could

make some comments on the Swiss sense of humour but we won't) but it can have serious and unpleasant results especially on commercial or business programs. Hacking may be accepted as a challenge created and overcome. Piracy is stealing as simple as that. However, spreading a destructive virus of this kind is vandalism or as the virus killer disk rightly but oddly calls it 'a violence'. We would be happy to hear from the 'SCA' for an explanation of this stupid and destructive act. We hope they will in future devote their talents to more worthwhile activities.

I think I might be infected. What can I do?

The most important thing to do is to identify the disks that are infected. The best way to do this is to use one of the VIRUS detectors/killers/protectors that are now available. Unfortunately the copy I have was made by the Swiss cracking service themselves and although not a case of once bitten twice shy I am somewhat reluctant to use a product made by

someone who has deliberately 'attacked' his fellow computer colleagues. However, it does work and further more it also inoculates any disk which it has disinfected to prevent future infection. Some small recompense for the original inconvenience and damage.

How can I protect myself from the VIRUS?

There are a number of things that can be done to help prevent the chance of you contacting the VIRUS.
1) Don't use pirated software!
2) Write protect all your program disks (program permitting).
3) Power off the Amiga if you run a program of suspect origin before you load any new programs.

Alternatively you could INSTALL each disk using INSTALL dfo: (df1:). However, any programs that make use of the boot sector to start the program such as Insanity Fight will no longer work and would probably serve better as beer mats.

We would like to thank Bill Hardwick of Digipix for providing information for the above article. He has kindly offered to provide AUI readers with a Virus Killer disk, which will of course be extremely useful for Amiga users as a form of insurance against damage to their software. The nominal cost of the Virus Killer disk to AUI readers is £2.00. This includes the price of a disk containing the Virus Killer program, postage and packing.

If you would like a copy of the Virus Killer disk please send us the coupon below. (Photocopies will not be accepted.)

Please send me a copy of the Virus Killer.

I enclose £2.00 to cover the cost of Disk, postage and packing.

Please tick type of computer:

A2000 ☐   A1000 ☐   A500 ☐

Name _____

Address _____

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Cheques/P.O.'s made payable to DIGIPIX

Please send to:
Virus Killer Offer,
c/o Amiga User International,
40 Bowling Green Lane,
London EC1R ONE.