

11 July 2009

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NAV 2010 beta brings SONAR 2 to the table

## **NAV 2010 Beta**

### *First release of Norton Antivirus 2010*

With BitDefender breaking the ice and rushing to the final version, the race for the best antivirus for 2009 has begun. Symantec has recently rolled out the betas for Norton Antivirus 2010 and Norton Internet Security 2010. As new types of threats come out every day, security software developers make haste to providing fresh, smarter ways to keep users' systems safe from the dangers lurking online.

The new beta for Norton Antivirus does not look too different from last year's issue and there are actually little aesthetic modifications. A keen eye, however, will discover new options and features such as the SONAR protection or Download Intelligence.

Installing the application on a Vista running 1.8GHz and 1.5GB of RAM system took a little over one minute (it took a while to get the trial serial number), which is quite an impressive time. The comfort of skipping system restart from the 2009 edition was preserved, allowing for a streamlined installation process.

Coming up with looks very similar to the 2009 edition, Norton Antivirus 2010 integrates some new helpers for the fight against malware. SONAR 2 technology and Download Insight (with its Quorum, the cloud-grounded, reputation-based intelligence) are designed to work to the benefit of both the novice and experienced user, combining community knowledge and behavioral security to cut down quickly and accurately the threats trying to make it on your system.

A new option introduced in this beta edition of Norton Antivirus is the double-faced interface. Flip Screen is exactly what it hints at: flip the screen around to access a different window. It is an innovative way to get to the Performance window that shows the chunk of CPU and RAM currently used by the application and overall resource consumption of all the other processes.

From the old version, Symantec kept Pulse Updates, which are new virus definitions downloaded almost as soon as they are created via Norton LiveUpdate (according to Symantec, the user benefits from Pulse Updates every 15 minutes or so). Updating the application with the latest definitions is done silently in the background without sacrificing the performance of the Norton-protected system.

Norton Insight has also been preserved in order to drop the time required for scanning all the files. This feature identifies Norton-trusted files on your computer, which will be skipped during the scan procedure. Users have the possibility to add files to the trust list themselves, which will be marked as User Trusted.

After the installation process finishes and all the updating is done, an uncomplicated interface having all the options within fast reach, awaits. Protection modules (antivirus, antispyware, SONAR, intrusion prevention, email and browser protection and download intelligence) are aligned in the right part of the screen showing their current status through the on/off buttons and information tips, while settings for computer and network protection are available to their left. A side panel in the left provides real-time info on the overall CPU levels, as well as Norton-specific CPU usage.

Customizing Norton Antivirus 2010 beta requires no advanced knowledge as it is aimed to give less skilled users an easy shot at configuring the program. Security settings panel contains the configuration options for both local machines and the online environment. It allows enabling different types of scanning (enable heuristics, look for rootkit and stealth items, tracking cookies), schedule full system checking, create a list of exclusions, enable real-time protection, turn on antispyware module (you can choose the categories of spyware to be tracked down), turn on SONAR (Symantec Online Network for Advanced Response) protection and set heuristic scanning degree (automatic or aggressive).

Configuring Network settings is not difficult either and includes turning on the four online protection modules available and customizing the alerts. More detailed configuration is available for email protection, IM scanning and intrusion prevention.

Under Miscellaneous Settings, you can tune up the application's appearance and security. Thus, CPU usage graph in the main window can be eliminated, as well as window transparency. An important option present in the product is Silent Mode. Once enabled, all alerts are inhibited and background activities are suspended.

There is also the Quiet Mode, which can be used to feed NAV a list of programs that can trigger the suppression of background activities, but all notifications and alerts will be shown. Silent and Quiet modes come in handy especially while playing a game or when you run an application and want to suspend antivirus activity.

The application looks great on the outside and really fits the new direction of today's security suites: an appealing interface dubbed by easy-to-use and security-comprehensive features, unintrusive alerts, simple but efficient configuration. But taking it for a test reveals the early development stage and brings out the deficient sections in the application.

Given it is a beta, so there is plenty of ruggedness to smoothen out, we did not do comprehensive testing and used instead only a small malware database. After NAV 2010 finished with it, no rootkit was present (detected and eliminated 74 out of 74), but left some nasties standing, and one of them should not have been left breathing, by all means: [Independence Day Waledac worm](#). Not even after executing the worm did NAV lift a finger. The same happened in the case of a fraudware and a trojan-infected file.

SONAR 2 protection proved to be undergoing future improvement as it picked up a totally legit file and threw it to Quarantine. It detected suspicious behavior in the setup of the newly released Maxthon Softpedia Edition and deleted it from its original location. Yet, in NAV 2010's defense, this happened only on one of the three test machines we used.

More proof of the beta stage of the software is the fact that, on the main test machine, CPU usage of the application started to raise, reaching constant values of 50%. Sure, a restart would solve the problem and turn things back to normal, but for a user running a heavily loaded low-end machine, a restart would be a last resort solution that should be avoided as much as possible. Also, the numerous instances of Symantec Service Framework that popped up in Task Manager are definitely not a good sign.

Though NAV 2010 is not yet ready to protect the computers of all types of users because it is still a work in progress, it is yet another step forward from Symantec into building its once glorious reputation in the security world. The application fits the new standards for successful protection software (light on resource usage, fast scanning, cloud-based technology, which increases the detection rate and speed). NAV 2010 brings complex features yet its ease of use is amazing, giving novices slim chances to dismiss it as having

perplexing functions that only the advanced can manage.

### The Good

It delivers smooth and fast install that skips the once mandatory system reboot. Pulse updates offers quick and frequent new definitions, sometimes as often as four new updates per hour as we've seen during testing.

With Norton Insight, scan times are not wasted on items identified by Norton, the user or Norton community as clean, this leading to less elements to be scanned and faster processing.

### The Bad

All the flaws and discomfort while using the application are, for now, attributed to the beta condition of the application.

### The Truth

This beta announces a Norton Antivirus 2010 that breaks free more and more from the traditional forms of antivirus protection, giving way to implementing new technologies that bring upgraded scan times, efficiency in detection and elimination, as well as conserving on system resources.

NOTE:&nbsp;Norton Antivirus 2010 is in beta stage and, as such, Softpedia awarded it a three-star rating, which is the default appraisal for a work in progress.

*Here are some snapshots of the application in action:*