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Following on its forays into epic sci-fi and network games, Ambrosia Software returns triumphantly to its arcade game roots with "Bubble Trouble." With superb graphics, perky music, and really addictive gameplay, Bubble Trouble is what a great shareware title should be.

The object of Bubble Trouble is to be a most eloooooosive fish! You swim around a maze of bubbles trying to squish the other fish before they squish you. Squishing is done by pushing objects around with your snout. Mostly your weapons are regular old bubbles, but as the game progresses, you can get unburstable bubbles, bouncing bubbles, and explosive bubbles. Watch out, however, because your enemies can squish you as well by simply running into you or pushing bubbles in your direction.

This simple premise lays the foundation for a classically structured arcade game of the Pac-Man era with all the benefits of modern gaming technology thrown in. The graphics are rich and detailed with both characters and objects rendered in three dimensions. The ever-

changing backgrounds are visually interesting without being distracting and the sound effects are well constructed and amusing. Especially on Power PCs, Bubble Trouble offers an impressive array of visual and audio options to render the game either as fast or as detailed as you wish.

One nice feature, and one which other games would be wise to emulate, is Bubble Trouble's music customization feature. Mind you the music in this game is quite good and varied (the more powerful your Mac, the more musical options you will have). In any game, however, even good music gets a bit tired. Thus, Bubble Trouble allows you to plug in customized music files. While this is not a simple matter and is effectively not an option on low-power machines, it is a considerable bonus nevertheless.

While the premise and some of the sound effects may seem a bit cutesy, rest assured that Bubble Trouble is a very challenging game. It requires agility, speed, reflexes, and a good sense of timing and spatial relations. Many players may have to adjust to not playing with a gun in their hand or a space ship to pilot, but the shift is worth the trouble. No arcade-style game has sucked me in this much since, well, Ambrosia's "Maelstrom".

As the hero fish, Blinky, you swim by means of the arrow keys and push things with your snout via the SPACE key. Once you have mastered these terribly complex controls, you are ready to enter the maze. Bubbles can be pushed, but if they rest against a wall or another bubble, they will simply burst. Also, if they collide with another bubble in motion, both will bounce back to where they started, so it is important to keep on the move and not stick around to admire your work. New bubble-types require new strategies, but the basic skills are the same.

The artificial intelligence of Bubble Trouble is quite strong. Unlike traditional arcade baddies who are programmed to generally move at random and occasionally pursue you, the villains of Bubble Trouble have a variety of behaviors. The simple fish are just simple; they swim aimlessly but will devour you if you get in their way. The sea snakes can push bubbles and will pursue you a bit more aggressively. The sharks will not only try to squish you, but they have the ability to change speeds and react to your attempts to squish them. These are just a few of the computerized opponents you will face, but it should be clear from this sample that Bubble Trouble is a matter of knowing your enemy and developing strategies for dealing with each type.

Bubble Trouble is a solidly programmed, slick, and classy shareware title. Its array of features and overall quality demonstrate why Ambrosia is at the top of the heap. After a few breathless hours in Bubble Trouble's odd world, you will never look at your aquarium the same way again.

#### [Publisher Info](#)

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