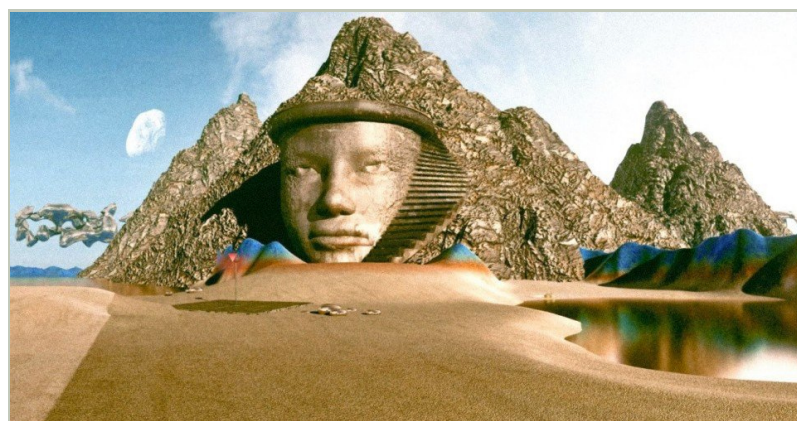


Catyph: The Kunci Experiment

REVIEW



Written by [Becky Waxman](#) — June 17, 2016



The Good:

- + Intriguing science fiction theme
- + Exotic alien surroundings
- + Intricate story
- + Lots of puzzle-based pleasures
- + Good hint system
- + Impending disaster adds zest

The Bad:

- Some hair-pulling puzzles can be overwhelming
- Timed pathway puzzle in particular is a gobsmacker
- Blue Matter resource management is annoying

Our Verdict:

A love letter to gamers who prefer first-person, devilishly difficult, puzzle-heavy adventures, *Catyph* offers tasty dollops of sci-fi and a hint of *Myst*.

Very good [Ⓢ]



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It's the year 2062 and you are an astronaut sent to explore an alternate universe similar to, yet separate from, our own. After an eerie futuristic cutscene, you find yourself on a moon orbiting the breathtaking ringed planet Catyph. You are diverted from your quest by a cryptic messenger with glowing yellow eyes named Germinal. He explains that the planet is suffering a disastrous instability, and its destruction will soon threaten your own native Terra. The only way to save the solar system is to travel to disparate parts of Catyph's moon Tytaah and gather a mysterious force contained in six black dice. A further complication is the cigar-chomping General Lantier from Terra, who contacts you and claims that Germinal himself may be the true threat. As *Catyph: The Kunci*

Experiment unfolds, you'll come to realize that this mission will require not only courage but brain power and perseverance as well, as the dice can only be accessed after myriad shrewdly devious challenges are solved.

Catyph is the sequel to *ASA: A Space Adventure*, and is once again mostly the work of one man, Simon Mesnard, who is the game's primary designer, artist, writer, animator and programmer. I've played *ASA*, and as solid as that debut adventure was, I found many improvements this time around. The environments are larger and animation now brings them to life. Navigation is smoother and the voice-overs are more engaging, particularly those of Germinal and Lantier. Although you will find more nuances in the story if you've already played *ASA*, newcomers will find that *Catyph* can be thoroughly enjoyed entirely on its own.

While trying to outwit Germinal and save the world, you will visit several imaginative alien locales (you can drop by most of them in any order you choose). There's a frozen region with austere rock formations and ominous machines hidden under a blanket of snow. In direct contrast, a magnificent palace sits at the heart of a lava flow, full of gleaming tiles, carved wood and monstrous statues. Another area features immense plants with white spire-tipped stalks, twisty paths, slick high-tech devices and shadowed, jungle-like depths. One environment in particular was wildly unexpected and extremely effective. If the *Catyph* universe is an echo of our own, this world is an impressionistic twin within a twin. It is colorful, gorgeous and refreshing.



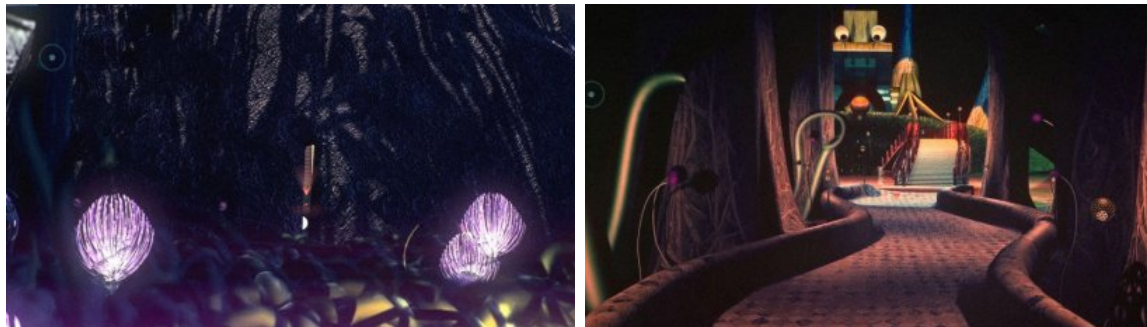
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Each location has its own brand of animated vitality, ranging from blowing mist to drifting snow, buzzing insects to floating spores, and creatures that threaten or flee. The opening and closing cutscenes, in particular, are fascinating to watch. The first has an almost balletic quality, with geometric shapes, stark contrasts in black-and-white with bits of color strewn about, and soaring movement on the part of your astronaut avatar. The last reveals the fate of the characters as the world balances between salvation or extinction.

Though compelling storytelling and immersive surroundings are clearly aspects of *Catyph's* appeal, the game's fiercest focus (and that which will take up the majority of time and energy) is its abundant puzzles. There's a sprinkling of inventory-based challenges, but the bulk of the puzzling involves acute scrutiny of the gameworld, pinpointing patterns, and using that knowledge to open doors, activate machines, or enter codes. You will have to take notes and/or study the scenery. I did lots of both, spending hours poring over various screenshots I'd taken because clues are often located far from the actual mechanisms. My favorite challenges were a time travel sequence with a dripping pipe, stymieing a sea creature while retrieving a clapper, and deciphering the clues in hamster formations.

Many of the conundrums can be solved by ordinary folks, but the harder ones are aimed at a certain type of gamer – someone who, when presented with a puzzle, feels a pleasant rush and a desire to noodle the answer out, no matter how long it takes. You know who you are. You think

about the puzzle in the shower. You think about it before bed at night. You think about it when you ought to be working. And then, in a moment of distraction, suddenly the solution (or an entirely different hypothesis) occurs to you. You test your new idea and then celebrate – you've done it!



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Catyph throws you into the puzzle den almost immediately with a real doozy of a spark plug puzzle. (You think inserting spark plugs in the right slot would be easy? Think again.) This is odd because in all the other areas you explore, the puzzles start out easier and then get tougher. Perhaps the initial conundrums are tough from the get-go to give you a chance to start again and adjust the Mode in which you will play: Story, Normal, Hard or Classic. I recommend Story Mode for all but the most passionate lovers of brazenly difficult puzzles. Story Mode gives you the greatest flexibility: all the same puzzles as in the more difficult Modes, plus access to the hint system, the ability to skip a few of the more difficult puzzles, and unlimited Blue Matter points.

What are Blue Matter points, you ask? Well, they represent a kind of resource management on the harder difficulty settings. Some of the puzzles can only be solved and (for certain places) access can only be gained by the latest, greatest Blue Matter technology, which is stored in your inventory. A small menu in the lower right tells you how many times you can still use this special energy, shown in the form of points. If using Blue Matter were simply straightforward – if you always knew exactly how and where to use it – managing it wouldn't impact puzzle solving. But it's possible to have to experiment with some of the puzzles, and if you use Blue Matter too soon or incorrectly, you'll deplete all the points you've built up and will have to find a way to get more.

One of the ways to do this is by avoiding whizzing objects in a keyboard-based arcade game, which experienced action gamers will find quite simple. (Story Mode also allows access to this game through its on-screen icon, but only for fun with no Blue Matter point incentive.) I personally spent about an hour getting to the stage where, each time I played the sequence, I got at least one point. Alternatively, there are a few places (about one per environment) where you can backtrack to collect Blue Matter, but that means re-navigating to those spots to acquire it. Of course, you can always save your game every time right before using Blue Matter, and then reload the save if you haven't used it correctly. But that's a pain in the neck after a while. You've gotta really love the I'll-do-anything-awkward-to-solve-this-puzzle philosophy in order to constantly reload your game while fiddling around.

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What our readers think of **Catyph: The Kunci Experiment**



Posted by [My Dune](#) on Apr 9, 2017

Great sequel to ASA: A Space Adventure

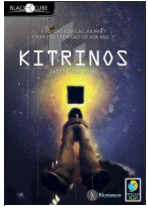
I said I would like to see the sequel and play it, and that I did! What a good story! About all the questions I was left with and was unclear about in the first game, were answered in this part. The game feels and looks a bit better. Cut scenes are great! I...

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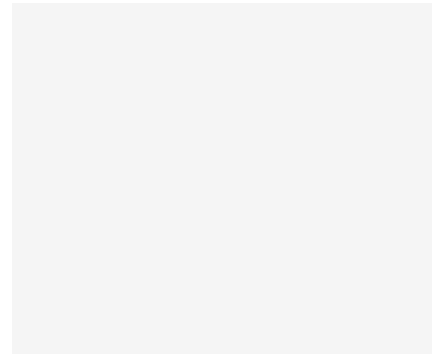
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