Dreams will finally launch this Spring on PS4 for $30—in “limited early access”

Enlarge / This Spring, Media Molecule’s latest “play, create, share” game could be yours… once we figure out what they mean by “limited early access.”

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Dreams, the first major PS4 exclusive from longtime PlayStation developer Media Molecule, is finally almost here. But if you think its protracted development cycle is anywhere near over, think again.

PlayStation Blog has the news today: starting “this Spring,” gamers will be able to buy the latest “play, create, share” title from the makers of *LittleBigPlanet* for $29.99 ($39.99CDN in Canada, €29.99 in Europe). But there’s a catch: this version of the game will be given a loud “early access” label, a rarity on the PlayStation Store.

“If you participated in the [closed] beta and felt like *Dreams* wasn’t fully featured enough for you yet, or you wanted more Media Molecule game content, then Early Access might not be for you,” Media Molecule director Siobhan Reddy wrote on Wednesday. The sales pitch seems targeted at excited content creators who are ready to dive into the game, even without a full-fledged “campaign” mode or finalized UI and tutorials.

- What kind of thing are we going to create? We'll follow the green "imp" to a "game" section.
- Welcome to Media Molecule's pre-made landmass for this E3 demo.
- In this image, you can barely see imps starting to clone trees by grabbing them and pressing a controller shortcut.
- More tree cloning!
- With the camera rotated (using joysticks), a question emerges: how can we cross that gap?
- Simple: we'll clone a stone-ground object a few times and chain it together using our DualShock 4 as a motion controller.
- The mountain we're heading toward could be bigger, so we'll clone it…
- …and while the "clone" button is held down, we'll rotate a joystick to create an attractive swivel effect for our new landmass.
- One tool lets you adjust the look of the world around you by altering the paint strokes, colors, and lighting of the general sky.
- After changing to a red sky, we can grab the sun with our imp and move it to the opposite side of the sky (or pull it beneath the planet for a spooky moonlight effect).
- Scanlines, pixellation, chromatic aberration, and VHS-tape effects can be applied to the full scene as you see fit.
- Oh, shoot. There's a gap from the bridge to the island. Let's use the "action recorder" to make a floating bridge object.
- That yellow path is a recording of the tester's controller motion. You can use this to record motions of any object in a *Dreams* world.
- Animation options allow us to loop, speed up, slow down, add wobble, and do other weird stuff to any object's animation pattern.

- Unsurprisingly, Media Molecule will pack *Dreams* full of pre-made objects (just like they did for *LittleBigPlanet*).
- What's the most dangerous thing we could add to this level?
- Lava. A big, stretchable and customizable lava pool, in fact.
- Only two pre-made characters were available in our pre-E3 demo, but this screen shows hints of a few more to come.
- Here's a shot of the build mode's "test" option, in which we run Foxy up to the bridge and make him jump on the floating part of the platform.

What's more, Sony has added an unclear asterisk to the launch: that this early access title will have "limited" availability. Since it will only be available as a digital-download purchase on the PlayStation Store, that raises some questions. Will Media Molecule only sell a certain number of licenses before shutting the listing down? Will the early-access version only be available for purchase for a certain amount of time? And will early-access buyers need to pay *more* money once the game launches to access updates like a new campaign mode? Media Molecule hasn't clarified any of those points.

Without a clearer indicator of what the developer means, antsy fans may want to sign up for Media Molecule's newsletter, which promises to have the first update on this front. (Access to the game's last closed beta was previously put behind a newsletter-subscription requirement, so the dev seems serious on this point.)

Sony's official dabbling in early access only has one other clear example: *The Tomorrow Children*. This free-to-play, craft-and-survive game from Q-Games (founded by Dylan "Star Fox" Cuthbert) never actually emerged from its "pre-launch" period. Eager fans could pay $30 to get into the game early in exchange for some in-game items, but those became moot when

the game’s servers were shut down roughly one year later.

Otherwise, the PlayStation Store has no official “early access” category, unlike the small-but-official “game preview” selection on Xbox One’s game-download shop (and an even bigger one on PC gaming storefront Steam). In the case of *Dreams*, at least, its most recent closed beta made clear that the game’s canvas is already ready for fan-made 2D and 3D adventures. We’ve already seen some wild stuff from that beta’s fanbase, including a total recreation of the notoriously delisted Konami horror experience *P.T.*, embedded below.

Still, *Tomorrow Children* is a good reminder that Media Molecule could change course and eventually leave its early purchasers high-and-dry—especially for a new game that apparently relies on server log-ins to access community content.

[embedded content]
Footage of *P.T.* recreated in *Dreams*.
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