Fortnite season X has changed so much that it's overwhelming

I dropped into a game of *Fortnite* this weekend and, in the span of about five minutes, I was in a war zone-like Gotham City, atop a floating island held aloft by a purple cube, and in a swampy area where I could disguise myself as a literal barbecue and hide. Each area had its own rules — in Gotham, for instance, I could use my parachute anytime — and a different look to go along with it. On the single island that is home to *Fortnite* battle royale, it felt like I was playing five or six different games, packed with references to the game's past and other media.

One of the best parts of *Fortnite* has always been its constantly shifting nature; part of the game's massive success is its ability to be everything to everyone. That philosophy has been taken to its extreme in season X, where major changes have rolled out more frequently and exist alongside each other. In a quest to keep the game relevant, however, developer Epic has turned *Fortnite* into something that now feels overwhelming. The game is bursting at the seams with purposeful nostalgia for its earlier, simpler times; off-the-wall features and items; and whatever news advertiser tie-ins Epic can manage.

Season X debuted at the beginning of August — immediately after the inaugural *Fortnite* World Cup — and it seemed relatively tame at first. There were new mech suits, called B.R.U.T.E., which proved controversial in competitive play, but most of the other changes were small in comparison. The most curious was what Epic described as "rift zones," unstable areas where things could change. "Locations once thought to be lost are beginning to appear, but they aren't the same as they

once were," the developer explained at the time.

The first rift zone was fun: an anti-gravity bubble over Loot Lake, where a giant time-bending explosion had occurred. Inside that bubble everything felt slow and dreamlike, making it particularly distinct from the rest of the island. But it wasn't long before more rift zones appeared, and brought with them much more significant changes. There was Neo Tilted, a sci-fi metropolis introduced in season 9, which was turned into Tilted Town, a Wild West-themed area designed for shootouts. In fact, it introduced a new ruleset explicitly focused on shooting – when you were in Tilted Town, you couldn't build or destroy objects. Your character even wore an old duster and the game was rendered in a sepia tone.



Later, a zone appeared that transformed Mega Mall back to classic location Retail Row, and brought with it the not-zombies that spawn from giant, purple crystals. Moisty Palms – another callback to early *Fortnite* – then appeared in the middle of the desert, a lush oasis that included a new gameplay element where players can turn into "props," disguising themselves as inanimate objects like garbage cans or comfy chairs. This same update brought back the fast food-themed area Greasy Grove, where players get so excited for

tacos they can’t help but dance. Oh, and there’s currently a hotel on a small island floating across the map.

Each of these areas has their own rules
Some of these new zones have also been branded. At the end of August, just ahead of the launch of *Borderlands 3*, an area of *Fortnite*’s map was transformed into the alien world of Pandora, complete with a new art style. And just this weekend the Wild West of Tilted Town was no more: instead, it transformed into Gotham City, just in time for Batman’s 80th anniversary. Again, each of these areas has their own rules. In Pandora, you could automatically generate a shield inside of the zone, while everyone in Gotham gets their own Batman cowl, complete with the ability to redeploy their glider at will.

Now, I’m the kind of person who loves the weird and unexpected changes that have become so intrinsic to *Fortnite*. It’s one of the main reasons I play. I’m someone who followed the mystery cube’s quest around the island, and who always makes sure to check out the in-game events, whether that’s a mech vs. kaiju battle or a Marshmello concert. I love that this virtual island, essentially a place where players go to kill each other, is a place that has its own ingrained history. I even kind of like the mechs.

But even for me, season X has been too much.



Part of the reason for this is the speed of the updates. These changes are happening at a frequency that makes it hard to keep up. But when you combine that with the scale of the changes, playing *Fortnite* can feel like an exhausting effort that's demanding an ever-increasing amount of your time and energy.

There aren't just new locations, but new locations with their own distinct sets of rules. Sure, the changes aren't necessarily massive on their own. Redeploy in one area, props in another. But when they're all happening simultaneously, it's a lot to remember, especially if you aren't playing *Fortnite* daily. I took some time off from the game in order to play through *Control* and *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening*, and when I came back it was like returning to an entirely different game.

'Fortnite' is facing increased competition

I understand the thought process behind these changes. *Fortnite* is facing increased competition, not just from obvious games like *Apex Legends*, but also the return of *World of Warcraft* and a resurgent *Minecraft,* which have steadily taken over Twitch. Regular updates help keep *Fortnite* exciting

and in the headlines, and they’re a big part of what make it different from its competition and more accessible to young kids.

But there’s a limit to what players can take and, for me at least, season X has hit that limit. Not only do I feel like I *have* to play regularly just to keep up, which isn’t an enjoyable feeling, but I also don’t get the time to explore and investigate the changes in the same way. There’s too much clamoring for my attention at any given moment.

We’re about two weeks out from the 11th season of the game, and as we approach it I find myself thinking something I never thought I would: I really wish *Fortnite* would slow down.

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