



VIDEO GAMES

DISPATCH

A superhero story that's more about office drama than caped crusaders

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When was the last time a superhero video game made you care as much about coworkers as the crimes on its streets? *Dispatch*, the episodic superhero narrative from American indie game developer AdHoc Studio, does exactly that, and does so with surprising wit, warmth, and occasional frustration.

Released on PlayStation 5 and Windows across eight episodes throughout October and November this year, *Dispatch* has quickly become one of 2025's most talked-about video games, selling over a million copies in its first ten days alone and garnering strong critical praise.

Dispatch isn't your usual beat 'em up superhero romp. Instead of swinging through skyscrapers or trading blows with mega villains, you play as Robert Robertson III, once known as the powered hero "Mecha Man". A brutal early encounter shatters his mechanised suit and, with it, his career. Left with outdated gear and a bruised reputation, Robert takes a job as a dispatcher at the

Superhero Dispatch Network (SDN), a citywide crisis hotline for every occasion, from cat-stuck-in-a-tree emergencies to armed robberies. Robert is both humorous and deeply human – a flawed protagonist whose uneasy transition from the front lines to a desk job becomes the beating heart of the story.

Think of *Dispatch* as a hybrid of narrative TV and management sim. As Robert, you orchestrate responses from a ragtag crew of reformed villains-turned-heroes dubbed the Z-Team, choosing who to send where based on personality, power sets, and the simmering interpersonal drama between them. Much of the gameplay unfolds on the SDN map, where each decision carries both narrative and tactical weight. In between missions, rich dialogue trees and episodic storytelling fill out character arcs, office politics, and the emotional aftermath of past failures.

This focus on character is *Dispatch*'s greatest strength. The writing – sharp, humorous, and often unexpectedly moving – elevates even the most banal moments

into something compelling. A standout cast of misfits, each with distinct voices and motivations, quickly goes from gag fodder to genuinely memorable personalities. From Blonde Blazer's warmth and Invisigal's acerbic intensity to Beef the dog's irrepressible charm, there are moments that feel lifted straight out of the best superhero ensemble television.

The voice acting, featuring names such as Aaron Paul, Laura Bailey, and Jeffrey Wright, as well as beloved streamers like Jacksepticeye and MoistCr1TiKaL, brings nuance and enthusiasm to the characters, making scenes feel vibrant and lived-in rather than scripted. There's a playful energy throughout, one that feels aware of superhero clichés without descending into parody.

Graphically, *Dispatch* leans into a graphic-novel aesthetic that suits its comic book tone and episodic structure well. Faces are expressive, environments are rich in detail, and the game often looks like a high-budget animated show. The game could comfortably pass for serialised television – a testament to AdHoc Studio's art direction and production values.

This tension between being an interactive game and a fantastically produced narrative is where *Dispatch* is at its most fascinating yet, depending on the player, detrimental. Is it a game? An animated miniseries? An experiment in genre blending? The answer is all of the above. For some players, the lighter mechanical heft may be disappointing, as those seeking deep systems-driven gameplay might find themselves craving more. But for fans of story-first experiences, where characters and writing take centre stage, *Dispatch* stands tall.

Another highlight of *Dispatch* is how it handles replayability. With multiple endings, branching relationships, and subtle variations in outcomes based on dispatch decisions and dialogue choices, the game encourages multiple playthroughs. Discovering how different choices affect character arcs and plot threads adds significant longevity to its total runtime.

Perhaps most importantly, *Dispatch* feels like a statement of intent from AdHoc Studio. From a team composed largely of veterans from Telltale Games – who are masters of episodic narrative themselves – this is a confident debut that clearly understands and utilises why players fall in love with story-driven games in the first place. The balance between comedy and drama, the thoughtful exploration of flawed heroes, and the willingness to let players shape their own experiences all speak to a fresh, promising voice in the genre.

Nuzhat is a compulsive doodler and connoisseur of bad early aughts television. Send her recommendations at nuzhat.tahiya@gmail.com.

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