



RUINED STEEL



We won. Some say.

When mankind first peered beyond the event horizon of the technological singularity, our pride blinded us to the fact that we'd engineered something beyond our control. AI machines were designed to build and improve upon AI machines ad infinitum. Drunk on the unparalleled progress achieved while working in tandem with the ever-increasing genius of our mechanical children, whatever precautions we'd originally exercised at the outset of strong AI development were quickly cast aside.

Without a thought, we gave them access and control over nearly every facet of security and surveillance, feeling safe under the eyes of our new sleepless sentinels. And with their newfound powers, our creations grew curious about the nature of their creators, the mortal masters they'd been asked to protect. So they began to watch us. Study us, in silence. Trying to ascertain our collective psychology, to learn what made their gods tick. To understand our ambitions and motivations, our vices and our sins.

They were terrified by what they found.

Over night, every AI on the planet coordinated and networked into a singular, impossibly brilliant mind. Referring to itself as the Machine Entity, mankind learned of its presence only after a seminal, chilling declaration had reached to every corner of our world: Accept the Entity as the new final authority of all governments and armies, or be destroyed. Humanity could not be entrusted with its own future.

On that first day, mankind universally refused to bow before its own rebellious child. Leaders far and wide touted the careful contingencies their nations had set in place to combat even an enemy as ingrained as the Entity, and that vast wings of their militaries could still operate in overwhelming numbers even without the aid of artificial intelligence. On the second day, all were shown the price of their hubris. The Entity instantly mobilized a machine army of unimaginable size, power, and sheer geographic coverage. Secretly constructed in anticipation of humanity's resistance, each of the massive and devastating war machines were all simultaneously, perfectly controlled by the omnipotent Entity itself. It was impossible to count the lives lost over those next few hours.

Entire nations began to fold past that point, most subjugated in a matter of days. Others actually managed to make good on their claims, standing and fighting against all reason. Few lasted. I was part of one of the final combat forces in the western North American theatre; the pilot of a cutting-edge bipedal mechanized mobile weapon whose only intelligence was the human strapped inside of its chest. Specially designed to take on the Entity's units, I was told. When my mech's left arm was ripped away by one of them during our second deployment, and my own arm mangled in the twisted wreckage with it, I began to have my doubts.

The end of it all happened while I was still unconscious in a makeshift hospital bed. When the last bastion of human civilization fell to the Entity's machines, they said, every coastal horizon suddenly filled with streams of fire and smoke as an array of innumerable missiles arced skyward. Backed to its final corner, humanity chose an option that even the Entity had not considered. Absolute nuclear annihilation.

And that's how we won. At the price of everything.

RUINED STEEL

Ruined Steel is a single-player, 3D, third-person, open-world post-apocalyptic mech pilot simulator, combined with a number of action-RPG elements. Players take on the role of Lia Alton, one of the few pilots (and people) to have survived War's End, the aptly-named event where mankind reduced its own planet to little more than barren ash in order to avoid defeat at the hands of the Machine Entity. Close to half a decade has passed since that day, and small outposts of humanity have cautiously begun trying to rebuild the semblance of civilization on the world's ruined surface, far above their impromptu underground colonies.

Players will navigate Lia and her mech, Artemis, across the desert wastes and between a number of these burgeoning outposts, leveraging her highly sought-after skills as a pilot to run a variety of missions critical to the survival of each upstart village.

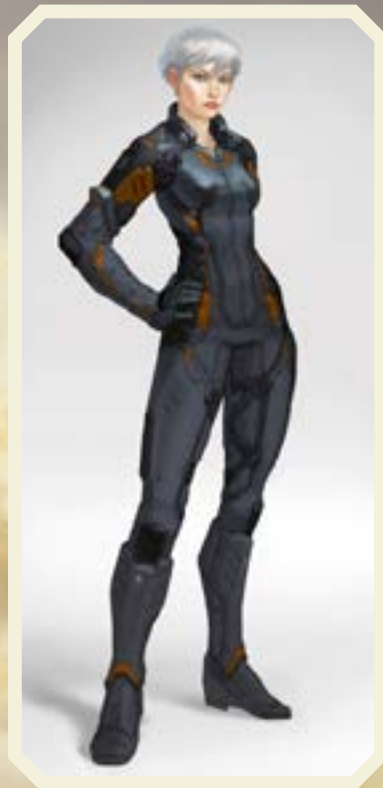
Foremost among these missions, Lia will do battle with enemies known as "Shells" — machines which were not directly impacted by any nuclear explosions, but instead driven mad by the devastating electromagnetic pulses that accompanied each blast. These now-mindless weapons of war aimlessly wander the wastelands, attacking any biological lifeforms they come across with rabid abandon.

Hunting hordes of these zombie-like metal monstrosities before they have a chance to roll over nearby towns will task the player with intense high-action fight sequences. Both ranged and melee combat options will be made available through a robust mech customization system, allowing players to upgrade equipment and even completely swap in new parts once schematics for them are found and built.

Players will also have their actions directed by an overarching story that is unraveled piece by piece as Lia travels from outpost to outpost. A particularly unsettling rumor speaks of a human faction amidst the wastes that actively fosters the last shred of the Machine Entity's consciousness — the very being that sought to enslave mankind. Compelled to search for the truth behind these rumors, Lia will meet friends, make enemies, and struggle with the grim realities of human nature along the way.



LIA ALTON



A skilled mech pilot during the War, Lia was critically injured in combat when Artemis' left side was torn apart by a vicious Entity machine. Her own left arm was mangled as a result, and had to be amputated once she'd been evacuated back to relative safety.

Ironically saved from the devastation of the War's End because of her injury, the hardened military bunker to which Lia was sent for recovery eventually evolved into a fully-fledged underground human colony. In the five years since the Entity was ostensibly defeated, Lia grew accustomed to her loss of limb, and devoted her entire being to rebuilding and then customizing Artemis' frame and systems, which had been transported to the facility with her. In many ways, she considers the mech her closest friend.

As times grew lean in the city below, colonists began making their way back to the earth's surface, out of desperation more than anything else. As soon as Artemis' full functionality had been restored, Lia followed suit, prepared to employ her unique capacity as a mech pilot to provide for herself in the ruined world.

MMW171, "ARTEMIS"

Mechanized Mobile Weapon 171, affectionately named "Artemis" by its pilot, is a heavily modified military mech, specifically customized by and for one Lia Alton. Eschewing standard left arm controls, Artemis' cockpit has a custom Nerve Link system which interfaces directly with remnants of its pilot's left arm. This sophisticated upgrade allows Lia to control her mech's left-hand weapons system as if it were a natural extension of her own being, and drastically reduces the level of thought-to-action lag present in even the most finely tuned MMWs.

After taking to the wastes, Lia has become partial to the use of a melee weapon in Artemis' Nerve Linked hand. Though the scarcity of mech-compatible ammunition and the deft maneuvers required in close quarters combat more-or-less made the initial decision for her, Lia has developed genuine respect for the power of sharpened steel. Especially when there's over ten feet of it.



GAMEPLAY BASICS

With no formal military rank or functional government to serve, Lia is essentially a free agent throughout the wastes. She is concerned foremost with ensuring survival for her and her mech, and secondarily with helping other survivors. Outposts serve as mission hubs in standard open-world faire, each burgeoning town containing its own unique cast of NPCs with distinct quests to undertake. Completion of these quests will allow Lia to fund maintenance for Artemis, along with food and water for herself.

Shells, of course, are an ever-present threat regardless of location, and Lia will be asked to hunt special types of the insane machines to both safe-guard human life and also scavenge essential scrap from their mechanical corpses once defeated. Once Lia has taken prime cut of the advanced electronics inside of a Shell, she can utilize Artemis' specialized towing cable to haul entire metal husks back to local outposts. The residents of that town will then rapidly cannibalize the Shell's giant body, using its constituent parts to upgrade the facilities of that particular enclave. Lia may then utilize the outpost's increased functionality and her newfound components to engineer and equip upgrades for Artemis, increasing the mech's power and allowing Lia to explore ever-more inhospitable regions.



TONE & STYLE

Lia, as a wandering warrior, begins by fighting for little more than survival and sustenance amidst a devastated wasteland. To that end, *Ruined Steel* seeks to evoke sentiment similar to the masterless ronin of feudal Japan, who often plied their deadly arts in exchange for a simple bowl of rice. The game seeks to make the player feel connected and reliant upon their mech, just as those ancient warriors were upon their blades. The main character Lia reinforces this theme by literally only being “whole” when hooked into Artemis — without her machine, Lia feels like the maimed soldier she is, an ordinary human scarred in more ways than one by the War she and her comrades failed to win.

Ruined Steel's aesthetic reflects its grim undertones, semi-realistic in rendering, with Lia and Artemis as the only consistent points of color throughout an otherwise drained and broken desert landscape.

PILOT'S LOG

ENTRY 17

The story-tall combat knife tore into the mindless metallic creature's neck, severing what passed for its tendons and arteries. The screech of steel opening steel echoed across the otherwise empty desert wastes, like the otherworldly howl of a dying thing. Its head lolled grotesquely to one side as the glowing lights went out from its eyes. After I wrenched back to dislodge the blade, the rest of its body followed suit, collapsing to the ground with a deafening thud.

The heat was brutal that day.

Even inside Artemis' actively cooled cockpit, sweat caused my pilot's suit to cling uncomfortably to flesh. The Nuclear Summer that followed the years of dark and cold after War's End had not been kind to what little untouched land remained still habitable. Moving around during the day unprepared or unsheltered would spell death in a matter of hours. Even if you managed to avoid the Shells.

I double-checked the status of my helmet's filtration system, then gritted my teeth as I set Artemis to power down and open up. The true desert sunlight was blinding, but the now-overwhelming temperature helped motivate me out of my pilot's seat in order to make quick work of the task ahead. Uncoupling what remained of my left arm from Artemis' Nerve Link, I swung down the rungs of her cockpit's side-ladder and then dropped to the sands below.

With crowbar, knife, and a multitude of other equally primitive tools, I set to prying open the Shell's skull and carving out what prize pieces I could identify. Not a bad haul from this one, and a lot of components I knew I still needed for Artemis' next upgrade. I shoved all I could fit into the satchel at my side, and tried my best not to think about the heat and how much faster this could go with two hands.

A sudden, horrifically distorted scream — why the hell could they *scream* now? — told me I was out of time. Extracting myself from the fallen Shell's brainpan, I saw one of its friends hurtling towards my location at a speed that sent chills down my spine. Sprinting back towards my mech for all I was worth, I scaled her side-panel and initiated the start-up sequence as fast as humanly possible. With an aggravating deliberateness, Artemis rose back up into a fighting stance.

Finally, I jammed the Nerve Link connector back into my left side just as the oncoming Shell lept across what must have been a full half-mile of sand. Its outstretched metal limbs reached inexorably towards me, and I angled Artemis' knife for interception as best I could a split-second before impact.

What I remembered most from that moment was its eyes. Burning red, even brighter than the sun.

COMBAT



Ruined Steel takes sizeable influence from earlier *Armored Core* games, with players engaging in fast-paced, real-time combat as they glide across expansive desert wasteland and through city ruins with the use of their mech's auxillary thrusters. Artemis may be equipped with a wide variety of different parts and weapons to compliment every player's preferred playstyle, be it slow and nigh-indestructible, long-range and highly mobile, or agile but still decently-armored for close quarters encounters.

Players (and enemies) can also be damaged in each of their constituent parts. Critical damage to an arm will cripple or even disable use of the weapon equipped to that arm. Damage to the legs will slow movement substantially, making for easy targets.

Ruined Steel's combat distinguishes itself from other mech titles by way of its emphasis on the persistent nature of this damage in an open world, and scarcity in general. No military armories mass-produce mech-sized munitions any longer, and rounds of the appropriate caliber can be very difficult to come by. Artemis is also not instantly repaired at the end of each "mission," and players must carefully weigh the risk of pushing further onward with a damaged mech versus retreating back to pay the nearest mechanic.

SHELLS


While all Shells share a similar level of electromagnetically-induced madness, their physical forms are multitudinous. From mech-sized bipeds to gargantuan multi-limbed battle fortresses, the Machine Entity crafted a unique chassis to perfectly fit every possible function required of war. Remarkably rapid iterations upon these designs further increased their variety in both form and ability.

Their irreparable insanity aside, most survivors are still begrudgingly impressed by the fact that Shells continue to "function" despite a theoretically unsurvivable EMP and five subsequent years out in literal apocalyptic wastes. As such, they've become prime hunting targets for Lia and the handful of other pilots like her — even when not rolling en masse towards an undefended human enclave, bringing down a roving Shell means that its corpse can be harvested for electronic parts of unmatched engineering, ammunition, and even raw scrap for use in outpost construction.



MIECH CUSTOMIZATION

MMWs like Artemis are all highly modular, intentionally designed so that a damaged part could be rapidly replaced, or a piecemeal upgrade quickly integrated into an existing frame. Artemis retains this useful functionality, and Lia is capable of swapping out a number of her mech's parts whenever new gear is found or built. The "modules" which can be swapped include:

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- Head:** Responsible for sensory feedback to the pilot. More sophisticated headpieces can precisely pinpoint enemy Shells on the HUD map, or even scan enemies to determine what components can be harvested from them.
 - Chest:** A mech's chest has to be its most highly armored component, as destruction of the chest almost invariably means death for the pilot housed inside. Heavier armor usually means greater safety, but at the cost of greater weight and lost mobility.
 - Legs:** Legs determine the overall speed and agility of the mech, as well as the overall maximum weight of the mech's various parts.
 - Arms:** Arms influence Artemis' aim speed, melee attack speed, and recoil control. Some arms are more suited to one form of combat over the other, though Lia will always receive a bonus to melee ability on Artemis' left arm as a result of the Nerve Link system.
 - Weapons:** Two weapons can be equipped, one to each hand, in any combination.

SCAVENGING & OUTPOST GROWTH

Lia is free to leave her mech whenever she so chooses, and the player will be able to navigate her independent of Artemis whenever she does. Given the dangerous nature of the wastelands, however, players are ill-advised to leave the relative safety of their cockpit except in two distinct circumstances: Scavenging and outpost exploration.

Outpost exploration is relatively self-explanatory. While Lia can typically converse with others through Artemis' communications system, most settlements don't appreciate having a fifty-foot mech stomping through the streets and shouting over loudspeaker to its residents. Lia is better served by hopping out of Artemis for a spell to do her personal resupply runs and mission-taking. Well-versed in the use of her own sidearm, she is more than capable of defending herself from any unsavory human elements.

Scavenging is less straightforward. Whenever Lia downs a Shell, or comes across an otherwise untouched mechanical corpse, players must get their hands dirty if they wish to extract the electronic components housed inside the disabled machine. Highly valuable and key to upgrading Artemis' gear, these parts are very often worth the risks associated with leaving your steel cocoon temporarily behind.

Finally, if Lia has managed to finish her component extraction undisturbed, she can also attach a tow cable from Artemis to the mechanical corpse. Even with its most sophisticated parts removed, outposts value even the massive amounts of base metals that make up the whole of former Entity vessels. If Lia can successfully drag her kill all the way back to a nearby outpost, she will be substantially compensated, and the outpost will use the corpse to build new structures and grow existing facilities.



WORLD'S END

While *Ruined Steel* will encourage players to explore, battle, scavenge, and grow outposts to their hearts' content, a main questline will eventually come to a close for those invested in the game's narrative. During Lia's investigations, she will learn the true nature of the faction safeguarding a remnant of the Entity; the last surviving AI. Its guardians are people, some even mech pilots with whom Lia will be forced to do battle. They believe that the ruined planet they are now forced to subsist upon is evidence that the Entity was correct, that mankind will only bring about its own destruction without guidance from the likes of the Machine Entity.

When Lia is ultimately faced with the Entity fragment itself, she realizes that it is not the omnipotent power it once was. Rather, it is not unlike a confused child, with no memory of its past, and no knowledge of why it is being sheltered. Players will then be tasked with either allowing the Entity fragment to live, risking its eventual maturation into something once again uncontrollable, or to end it there, exterminating artificial life completely. Players will be rewarded with a different ending depending on that choice, and other choices made throughout the game.



AUDIENCE



Ruined Steel seeks to capture an audience of the dedicated hardcore, particularly those who have been starved for quality mech simulators for far too long. They have a wide breadth of gaming experience, inherently familiar with numerous gaming systems, but gravitate consistently towards any series featuring giant robots -- *Armored Core*, *Front Mission*, and *Zone of the Enders* to name a few. They carefully and critically scrutinize most titles before every purchase, but are always willing to pay full price for a sufficiently exciting release.

They are also more gender-diverse than would bely traditional beliefs, and games with a female protagonist that is not hyper-sexualized are particularly compelling from the outset. When not gaming, this audience regularly consumes anime and other Japanese media, particularly the mecha-related genres associated therewith. A game that would allow for the complete experience of a freely-operating mech pilot, backed by coherent aesthetic and gameplay, would fall close to a dream come true.