Your Robotic Chariot Awaits

Furrion is developing a mech in the hopes of launching racing into realms so far only explored by science fiction.

Alex Cannella, News Editor

Call it a mech, call it an exosuit, even call it pure science fiction if you want; Furrion's Prosthesis is freaking cool.

At 14-feet tall and 7,000 pounds, the Prosthesis is a titan of chromoly tubes and ambition.

And the craziest part? This giant mech is a man-powered racing machine.

"Prosthesis is a sports machine," Jonathan Tippett, president and CTO of Furrion Robotics, said. "It is 100 percent human controlled and will require an athlete to operate but will rely more on skill than on strength. With no autonomy, gyros or self awareness, it relies completely on the skill of the pilot to run and jump."

Well, to say this monster is entirely man-powered isn't entirely accurate. The Prosthesis is also packing a 200-hp lithium ion battery to power its systems. But there's no joystick to direct it with. Instead, it's designed to follow the pilot's movements through an "exo-skeletal interface" that they wear and translates those movements into the machine's. When you take a step, your big, metal exosuit does, too.

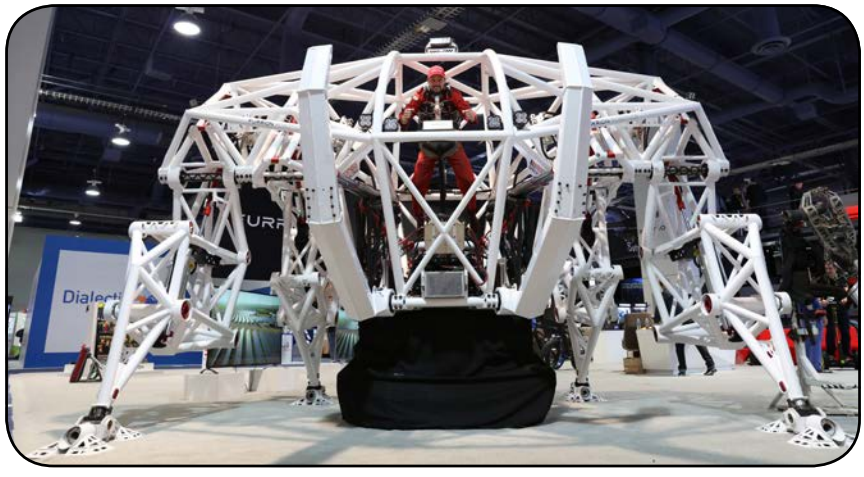
"Prosthesis was designed from inception with the pilot in mind first and foremost," Tippett said. "While Prosthesis gets its power from batteries, it gets its control from the human pilot. This has always been central to its purpose: to create a new human experience based on skill and physical mastery. Humans are still the most sophisticated and adaptable motion control systems."

The Prosthesis is capable of some astonishing feats of motion for a fledgeling mech of its size. It's designed to sprint at speeds of up to 30 km/h, is capable of turning at speed and, perhaps most impressive of all, can actually jump.

Furrion's Robotics division has been working on the Prosthesis for seven years now. The project is a departure for the company, which has other divisions making everything from kitchen appliances to solar powered batteries, and is the freshman project for the team.

"Prosthesis is the culmination of many influences in over the course of my life, ranging from mountain biking, to snowboarding and all they way back to a childhood love of dinosaurs," Tippett said. "I was inspired to embark on such an ambitious project by my trips to Burning Man, where giant, mechanized, interactive art projects are in abundance. I wanted to build a powerful, technically sophisticated machine that was focused on the experience of the pilot and celebrated the pursuit of skill and physical mastery."

However, Furrion's efforts have only just begun. The company's ambition goes well beyond the Prosthesis itself, which is merely the first of its kind. They're hoping to spawn an entirely new sport featuring giant mechs racing through the desert.



The Prosthesis is still in the tail end of development, so if Furrion can live up to that image remains to be seen. But whether Furrion can pull it off or not, if the possibility of watching racers duke it out in the desert in a bunch of giant mechs isn't enough to get the science fiction fan in you excited, I don't know what will.

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For more information:

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