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Brakes off Suffolk cycle

Inquiries for electric machine are over 10,000



Mr. Stone with his latest brainchild . . . the electric bicycle
Picture: Andy Abbott

THE Suffolk developer of a battery-powered bicycle believes he may have hit the jackpot.

Inquiries for up to 10,000 machines have been received from one foreign source — but so far only 15 sample models exist.

“The potential seems phenomenal. I am looking for new premises, extra staff and possibly a backer,” said Mr. Dave Stone, of the TGA Tricycle Company.

Based in the village of Stanstead near Sudbury, Mr. Stone has been overwhelmed since launching his product a few days ago.

He puts part of the interest down to enthusiasm for battery-powered vehicles following the arrival of the Sinclair C5.

Mr. Stone has previously specialised in the production of battery-driven three-wheeled bicycles. His latest two-wheeled 24-volt model has been developed in association with Electric Motor Developments of Halstead, following nine months of research.

He employs only three full-time and two part-time workers but may have to completely restructure his firm in view of the interest in the new machine.

It was launched last week at the international

By
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Cycle Trader exhibition at Wembley, as well as a trades fair in Cologne.

Four other British-made battery bikes were on show at Wembley, but it was Mr. Stone's machine that turned out to be the star, and his telephone has hardly stopped ringing since.

The interest from abroad has been even bigger. The Cologne show resulted in a request for 500 machines from Finland, while a machine sent to Malaysia has led to an inquiry for 10,000.

Mr. Stone believes the machine gives greater flexibility than that previously achieved.

Rivals have only 12-volt power and do not offer three-speed facilities. Also, the Suffolk invention

largely retains the styling of a bicycle, rather than appearing to be a moped variant.

Mr. Stone said, “The performance is completely controllable up to a top speed of 15 mph. You can open the throttle and go zooming up a hill. But because it is limited in top speed there is no need for tax, insurance and a crash helmet, which puts so many people off machines like mopeds.

“After overnight mains charging, the bicycle has a 15-to-20-mile range, which can be doubled by supplementary use of the pedals.”

The interest in the product has forced him to drastically re-think production ideas. He believes an efficient line could see units leaving his premises at the rate of one an hour, with motors provided by his Halstead supplier fitted to purpose-built frames from another major manufacturer.

First Mr. Stone has to receive confirmation of inquiries, recruit more workers and find more suitable premises in the Sudbury area.



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