



They're electric...

The Stanforth brothers, known within the industry for raising the Saracen brand over 20 years, are back on the scene and this time they're electrically charged. **Mark Sutton** attended the London launch of EBCO for a test ride...

HAVING SOLD THE Saracen brand to Madison in October 2008, few questions were asked about what was next for the Stanforth brothers. Since the birth of mountain biking they had spent two decades selling huge volumes of mainly off-road bicycles which were widely carried among the UK trade.

Throughout the Saracen heyday, over one million bikes were sold, largely due to the explosion in popularity that off-road cycling was enjoying. It is now the brothers' goal to turn trendy looking electric bikes into a sales winner. Based on the aesthetics alone, EBCO has already gathered interest from the boss of a large pizza firm whose curiosity about their use for deliveries was sparked by chance shortly after the first samples hit the UK.

It's interesting to note that the Stanforths believe the electric bike market is very much in the same position mountain biking was in the mid-eighties – in its infancy and with potential to achieve huge growth in a matter of years. So could the Stanforths be onto a winner yet again?

"We've been watching the market for around two years with great interest," says Paul Stanforth. "Having spent the past eight months designing,

speaking to our audience and sourcing the right manufacturer, we're now in a position to have EBCO's first bike line available by the end of August."

Crucial to the brand's philosophy is a no cut-corners approach to the manufacture of electric bikes, something which has arguably dogged the market to date.

"We've been watching the market for two years with great interest and we're now ready to launch EBCO bikes in August."

"Our bikes won't retail much below the £1,000 mark for a good quality starter model, meaning that there will be an option qualifying for the Cycle to Work scheme.

"Primarily the focus of EBCO is to produce only top-end, highly reliable e-bikes requiring just a low level of maintenance and minimal upkeep. It is our goal to be the leading brand in

terms of technology and performance, something we feel achievable utilising TransX's power support technology."

With battery technology steadily advancing, Stanforth feels that the market may gradually become more accessible as greater volumes go through production.

"With battery technology advancing, largely due to the need for longer lasting laptops and mobiles, we're starting to see the performance of electric bikes greatly improve. The range of our models per charge is up to 44 miles, which is clearly quite a significant distance. With greater volumes of lithium batteries in production, perhaps in time prices will be able to drop slightly."

Lithium polymer batteries, taking around five hours for a full charge, are utilised on each model while 250-watt motors, developed by TransX, provide the power

assistance. Carrying Shimano spec throughout, the six-bike line-up will feature three models in men's and women's versions ranging between £999 to £1,599. Other EBCO perks include puncture resistant, reflective sidewall Kenda tyres, as well as intelligent 'torque' monitors, which ensure the appropriate power assistance is supplied on each of the bikes' three speed settings.

EBCO will distribute its entire range through a newly created e-commerce website, though is looking to appoint a number of strategic retail partners throughout the UK. A dedicated Warwickshire showroom will also open toward the end of August, which will house the warranty and service centre, too.

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The Stanforth brothers are behind another new brand in the cycle industry – EBCO electric bikes

