

GREENTECH

An Electric Glide, at a Price

By KRISTEN HALL-GEISLER

CRAIG BRAMSCHER is betting that there are thousands of motorcycle riders eager to buy zero-emissions bikes. He ought to hope that his potential customers are as prosperous as they are environmentally conscious.

Mr. Bramscher's latest creation, the Brammo Enertia, an 18-horsepower electric motorcycle with a top speed of 55 miles an hour, will make its public debut in New York on June 9. The 280-pound Enertia is available for preorder at \$11,995 — that's \$4 less than a Harley-Davidson Dyna Super Glide — though the electric motorcycle is eligible for a 10 percent federal tax credit.

When Enertia deliveries begin in early July — they will be sold through Best Buy — new owners can fill up for pennies per charge rather than dollars per gallon. The motorcycle's on-board charger can plug into a standard 110-volt outlet and recharge the lithium-ion batteries in less than four hours. Some of the Enertia's components are made entirely of materials that began life as pop bottles and carpets, while the body panels are created from a mixed percentage of recycled and new materials.

Unlike many proposed electric vehicles, the Enertia comes from a company with some experience. Mr. Bramscher knew, even as his company was building the open-frame Ariel Atom sports car in 2002, that he wanted to go electric. He even looked into making an electric version of the Atom, but could not strike a royalty agreement with the car's designer.

Mr. Bramscher contemplated a competitor for the Tesla Roadster, but determined it would take a half-billion-dollar investment to engineer and build an electric car. And there was a bigger challenge: while the promise of fast charging was (and still is) on the horizon, electric cars were not yet affordable for the average commuter.

"What makes sense now, in terms of power-to-weight ratio and energy density," Mr. Bramscher said in a recent interview, "is a motorcycle."

Mr. Bramscher sold the rights to produce the Ariel Atom, which reviewers have described as



RUN SILENT
Brammo Enertia has a 45-mile range on a full charge. Above, Craig Bramscher.

more like a four-wheel motorcycle than a car, to one of Brammo's original investors. Mr. Bramscher said he was still friends with the new owner, who is based in Virginia, and "the product is in good hands." The Brammo operation in Ashland, Ore., was cut from about 50 employees to a core research and development team of up to 18 people.

The new team started almost from scratch. Lessons had been learned from manufacturing the Atom, including how to make a prototype rapidly and then take the motorcycle into production. The motorcycle would not have the Atom's handcrafted parts.

It would be engineered for high-volume production and have labor costs lower than what it would take to ship the completed bike from China. Though parts come from around the world, Mr. Bramscher said he wanted to make assembling the bike in the United States economically feasible.

Mr. Bramscher also said he wanted to keep the supply chain as green as possible. Brammo coordinates "milk runs" through Europe to consolidate components before shipping the parts to

the United States. It also works with vendors to use recycled shipping materials. Sapa, a supplier of aluminum products in Portland, Ore., puts Brammo's orders in recyclable, reusable plastic crates for shipment to Ashland, at the state's southern border. Brammo then ships the crates back to be reused.

The first Enertia will roll out of Brammo's headquarters this summer. These first bikes will have a range of 45 miles at 25 m.p.h. (as with any battery-powered vehicle, maxing out the speedometer will significantly decrease the range). Mr. Bramscher expects to ramp up production into the tens of thousands quickly and employ 80 to 100 people by the end of the year.

Mr. Bramscher said he asked himself when embarking on the project whether this was a product for a lot of people. His research says yes; among the 10 million to 12 million motorcycle riders in the United States, many are looking for cleaner transportation. Mr. Bramscher said: "We've seen a tremendous amount of interest from women and aspirational riders, people who say, 'I've always wanted to, but . . .'"