

FTN Motion

What started with a trip to the tip and a roll of plastic wrap has grown into a burgeoning electric motorcycle business. Luke Sinclair shares what got the wheels moving.



Interview by Jane Nicholls

What's your elevator pitch?

“We’re building the ultimate urban motorcycle, the Streetdog, which is electric for those low-speed, short trips around town (ftnmotion.com).”

What is the problem you are aiming to solve?

“We thought other electric motorcycles looked either futuristic or a bit boring and we wanted to bring a bit of that analogue feel – the soul that people love motorcycles for – with the ease of use and accessibility of electric.”

How did you get it off the ground?

“Kendall and I have been mates since school and studied mechanical engineering at university together. After uni we walked the length of New Zealand on the Te Araroa trail, which ended up being a time for ideas. We started thinking about doing something meaningful with our engineering degrees. Kendall came up with the idea of converting a bicycle into an electric moped. We found an old BMX frame at the rubbish dump and an old electric motor, figured out how to make a battery pack and plastic-wrapped it to the frame. Later, when Kendall and I were flatting together in Wellington during lockdown, we had four weeks to sit in the garage and put together a proper prototype. Saskia came onboard in 2020 to help us with branding and marketing. In late 2024 she stepped away as a director to have her first child – we still see her regularly.”

How does it work?

“The advantage of electric is the instant response and with a hub motor on the wheel and the battery under the seat, you have all this extra room within the frame to maximise for 30 litres of lockable storage. The Streetdog50 has up to 100 kilometres of range with a 50 kilometres per hour

top speed and the Streetdog80 can go 80 kilometres per hour with a range of 60 to 80 kilometres on a single battery. The removable battery is charged from any wall socket. You can customise the colour scheme – there are a couple of hundred different configurations, which is a nightmare from the production side but people get really excited about it.

We manufacture in Hamilton, which is a strong industrial hub. Some motorcycle-specific components come from China and Taiwan, and some key premium components are sourced from Italy and Germany but the Streetdog’s core components are all made here in New Zealand. Manufacturing locally is a real game changer – the relationships you build, the speed of making changes and improvements, and managing inventory all becomes easier.”

How did you convince investors?

“We were bloody hopeless at pitching but we had an amazing prototype that looked like the finished product and it was something no-one had seen before. We got into the startup

ecosystem in Wellington and Creative HQ gave us office space and access to mentors and advisors to help us build a business plan. It was brilliant – like a four-year uni degree in a couple of months. Today we have investors who want to see innovative things happening in New Zealand and the decarbonisation of commuting. Most of them are mad about motorcycles – it turns out there’s a lot of crossover between investors and people with large motorcycle collections! Our most high-profile investor is Roland Krueger, former CEO of Dyson and an industrial designer who has a lifetime experience in the automotive industry, and he is quite involved now.

What's next?

“We launched the Streetdog in Australia last month. Next year we’ll start to look to bigger markets – in the long-term our ambition is to get into the European and American markets and there will be more products coming into the Streetdog line. Our focus is to build the best bike in terms of quality and customer experience.”

Fact file

Co-founders Kendall Bristow, 34 (far left); Saskia Thornton, 37; and Luke Sinclair, 34

Investors Private investors, including Roland Krueger

First customer 2022, Brandon Skilton, first Streetdog owner and fan from the prototype days

Headquarters Hamilton, New Zealand

Number of employees 15

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