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An integrated Duende Rock & Roll fitted with the MAHLE XS system – the eX1 battery sits in the bottle cage and lifts off in seconds.

A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

A big water bottle, something clever at the back end, and a Pegoretti that still rides like steel should – with a little help from our friends at MAHLE.

VERONA, ITALY — Most eBikes ask the frame to swallow a battery: to fatten its tubes, hide a brick in the down tube, and carry the weight of being electric everywhere it goes — even on the days you'd happily ride unassisted. The new Pegoretti — not so much a new model, but an option — does not. The MAHLE XS battery looks like a water bottle (albeit one sized for longer days) and lifts off when you don't want it. The motor lives in the rear hub, where the work happens. Everything else stays a bicycle.

OLD HANDS, NEW TOOLS

We had been circling the idea of making a Pegoretti with a little lift for a few years. At shows and events across Europe, we kept finding ourselves in front of these compact electric systems, and the modularity of the work impressed us. But it was an existing client, Herman, and the design and performance of MAHLE's XS system that helped pull the idea out of the work drawer.

Herman had been a friend of Dario and the Bottega for many years. In espresso time, think hundreds of cups. He and his wife wanted to travel, to put their bikes on the car and go abroad. But the electric bikes they had were too heavy. What they wanted was something that still felt and moved like a high-performance bike, light in the hand, with the assistance there only when they reached for it. And they wanted it in time for their next vacation. As Cristina put it, *"Herman told us, 'This is what we want, and we want it from you!'"*

It was, Pietro will tell you, a real challenge. The thing that made it possible was trust. Building your very first of anything for a paying customer is a risk; building it for two is a bigger one. But Herman asked to be prototype number one — he and his wife both. So Pietro was less concerned. If it was completely wrong, we knew we had their support.

In truth, Pietro was excited about the project and the idea of melding a bespoke bike with the very latest advancements in the e-field. A frame made by eye, by hand, drawn before the blue flame, meeting a system light and modular enough not to argue with it.

DRAWN, NOT MOULDED

The bike we built our working concept around is, as shown, an integrated Duende Rock & Roll — the first one we have built with internal cables, and the first to accept the MAHLE system.

To the casual observer, it's a Pegoretti, but there are some differences, like the fuller 3D-printed dropouts designed to face the MAHLE hub. However, pull the wheel, drop a standard one in, and these same dropouts hold the wheel like a straight muscle bike — albeit one with a T47 bottom bracket, big enough to hold some of the wiring within.

OUT AND ABOUT

The XS Smart Controller mounts on the outside of the frame, just below the battery bracket. Because it does, a compatible Pegoretti with the MAHLE system onboard can live two lives — muscle or electric — with the motor and eX1 battery connecting directly to that controller. There's no internal battery to build a frame around, nothing buried in the tubes, nothing to compromise. The frame is made the way we'd make any integrated, disc Pegoretti. The electric part simply arrives and just as easily leaves. And that suits us down to the ground. The XS system is small and tidy enough to co-exist.

THE RANGE FINDER

Assistance is range — in every sense. The Duende Rock & Roll is an all-surface bike to begin with: tarmac, gravel, the road that turns to track and back again. Give the cockpit a squeeze, and you might need another map. From upending the commute that was too long to realistically ride every day, to keeping the wheel of your club mates through the early season while your legs catch up, to coming back from injury without coming back to square one, all with the freedom to leave the battery at home on the days you want the bike to fight back — riding with an element of assistance is a far more nuanced road than may first appear.

A Pegoretti has always been built to be ridden hard and often, no matter how pretty it might be. The XS option only widens the circumstances in which that's true.

If you'd like to talk about a Pegoretti with the option of a little lift, come and find us in Verona.

THE MAHLE XS SYSTEM — AT A GLANCE

A minimal, external electric-assist system. No internal battery; the bike is powered entirely by the removable eX1 battery, which keeps weight low and lets the same frame work as muscle or electric.

SYSTEM NAME	MAHLE XS
CONCEPT	External-mount e-assist; no internal battery required
MOTOR	X20 rear-hub motor (275 W peak)
TORQUE	65 Nm
BATTERY	eX1 External Battery (e185), 171 Wh, removable
RANGE	Up to ~60 km per eX1 (carry a second eX1 to extend)
TOTAL SYSTEM WEIGHT	Approx. 2.5–3.0 kg
SENSORS	Choice of PAS (smooth, simple) or Torque & Cadence (adaptive, natural)
CONTROLLER MOUNT	Outside the frame (XS); can also sit inside on X20-ready frames
CHARGING	USB-C; full charge approx. 2.5 h. eX1 can also charge phones/laptops via the Energy Hub
CONTROL	Single integrated button: on/off, assistance mode, battery level
DIGITAL	MAHLE ONE Ecosystem — app, web, and connected devices
FRAME FIT	Designed for slim, compact and unconventional frames — exactly why it suits a steel Pegoretti

Specifications are MAHLE's and may be updated by MAHLE. See mahle-smartbike.com/xs for current figures.

FREQUENTLY ASKED

Does the bike still ride like a normal Pegoretti?

Yes — that's the point. The XS system is light (around 2.5–3 kg all in) and mounts externally, so the frame keeps its geometry, lines, and character. The assistance is there when you want it and out of the way when you don't.

Can one frame be both muscle and electric?

Yes. Because the controller mounts on the outside of the frame, any integrated, disc Pegoretti frame can be built as a pure muscle bike or as an electric one. The motor and battery connect directly to the controller.

Where does the battery go, and can I remove it?

The eX1 is an external battery that mounts to the frame and can be lifted off in seconds. It holds 171 Wh and gives up to around 60 km. Because it's small and light, you could even carry a second one to extend your day.

How is the assistance controlled?

Everything runs through a single, minimalist button at the cockpit: turn the system on or off, change the assistance mode, and check the battery level. There's no clutter on the bars unless you choose to add a display.

PAS or Torque & Cadence — which sensor?

PAS gives smooth, even assistance and is the easy, intuitive choice. The Torque & Cadence sensor reads how hard you're pedalling and responds in kind, for a more natural feel. We'll talk it through with you.

How do I charge it?

The eX1 charges over USB-C in about 2.5 hours. With the optional Energy Hub, it doubles as a power bank for your phone or laptop.

Which Pegoretti models can take it?

We're introducing it as an option on any disc, integrated Pegoretti. If you're interested in the option on another model, talk to us — the external mounting makes the XS unusually adaptable.

How do I order one?

Come and see us in Verona, or get in touch at info@dariopegoretti.com. You can also start the conversation with your local Pegoretti dealer. Every one of these is a conversation before it's a bicycle.

— ENDS —

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Officina Dario Pegoretti is a handmade steel bicycle workshop in Verona. Founded by the late Dario Pegoretti and continued as a collective workshop — the Bottega — it builds custom steel and stainless frames, painted by hand, one rider at a time. High-resolution imagery is available to accredited media via the download link above.