



**S**COOTERS CAME INTO existence after the First World War as modified bikes that used step-through frames, and the two globally popular scooters of the time were born in Italy – Vespa followed by Lambretta. Both made their way into India in the

60s around the same time – Vespa, when owners Piaggio licenced production to Bajaj and then subsequently to LML, and Lambretta, when Innocenti, the makers of Lambretta, licensed the scooters to Automotive Products of India or API, (and then when Scooters India

Limited or SIL bought over Lambretta's operations and trademarks from Innocenti).

While the latter's days ended in the 80s in India, Vespa continued to be a fashion icon in Europe and America, made famous by the likes of Hollywood legends Audrey

Hepburn and Marlon Brando. In India the Vespa bore inspiration for scooters like the Bajaj Chetak and LML Stella/P-Series, but the original romance associated with the icon had died down. Then Piaggio announced their plans of reviving the Vespa in India with the LX 125 at the 2012 Auto



# RHAPSODY DE ITALIANO

The iconic Vespa Scooter is at India's doorstep;  
will India dwell in its romance?

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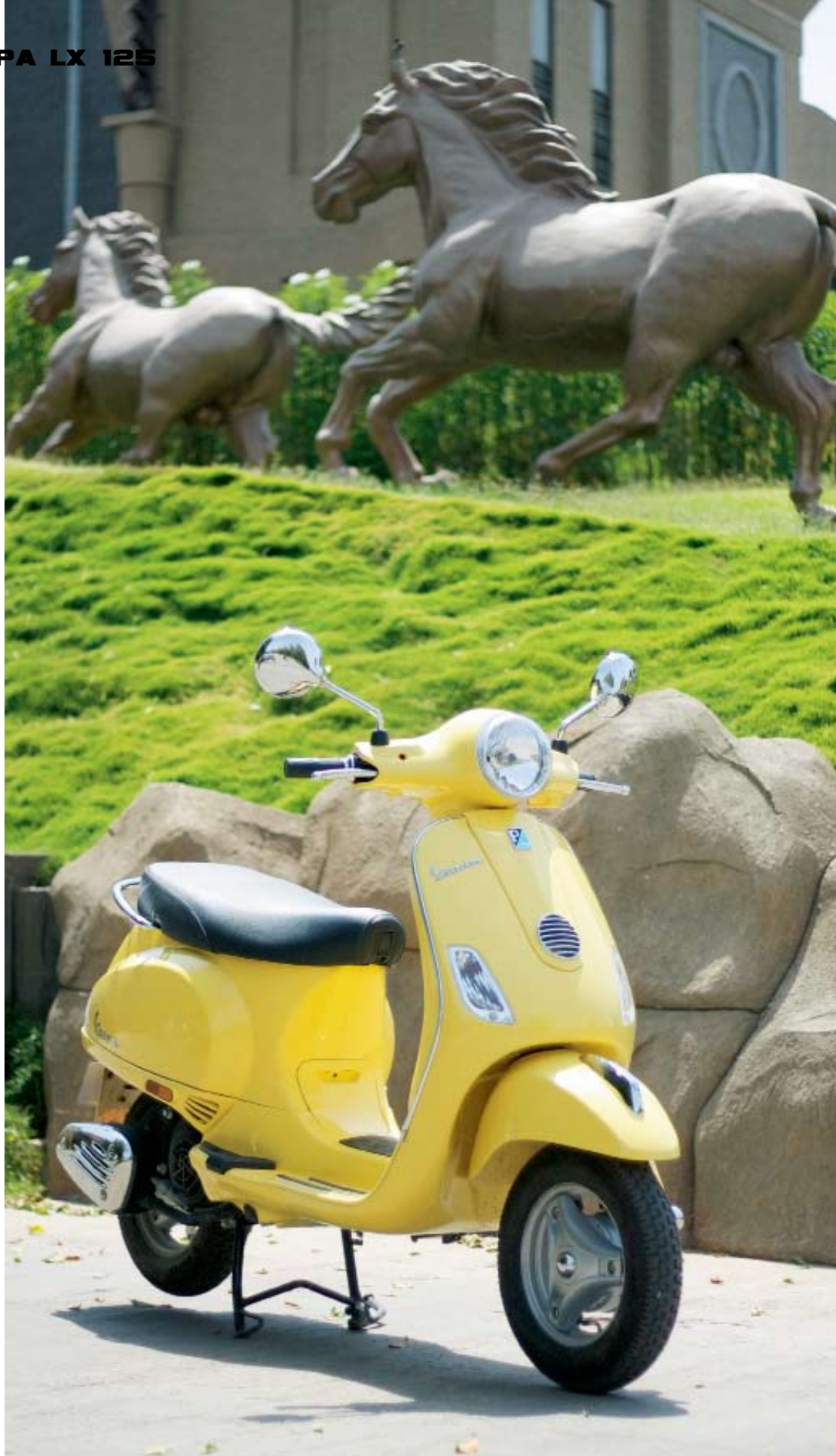
## TESTRACK VESPA LX 125

Expo in Delhi, albeit this time, a solo venture. And on the brink of its launch, we rode this historic marvel, and here's what we thought. The Vespa is currently the world's only scooter that uses a monocoque body construction. Its pressed steel unibody encompasses the engine cowl, flat footboard and front fairing all into one structural unit. Vespa designs have always carried an aeronautical background and true to its name, the modern day LX 125 continues to be shaped like a wasp (Vespa is Italian for wasp). In fact the LX 125 is a fantastic take on an age old vintage classic. The full body paint and the various colours offered make the Vespa a definite standout. There's plenty of chrome too – not something any Indian scooter can boast of. Build quality too isn't something Indian scooter owners are used to – tolerances are small and it feels like it will last a life time.

The 125cc mill feels smooth, quiet and fuss-free. But the technology in use under the cylinder head is quite impressive. Three Valves are actuated for extra air intake with an Over Head Camshaft with roller rocker arms.

Absolute pressure sensors in the manifolds aid variable spark timing allow better combustion of fuel. The twist-and-go CVT transmission is seamless and quite friendly in traffic. Vespa claims that all this technology will give the LX 125 a fuel efficiency figure of 60kpl, which if true, is outstanding. Yes, the low-end torque and acceleration does leave you needing more and it will barely reach 100kph. It does make one wonder if the LX 150 would have been more popular amongst enthusiasts.

The Vespa's single sided trailing arm front suspension is inspired by aircrafts, which again is quite unique. Both suspensions work well and along with the comfortable seats make riding quite pleasurable. Despite





**SPEC CHECK**

**Price:** TBA

**Engine:** 125 cc,

**Forced Air cooled, 3 Valve**

**9.92bhp @ 7500rpm,**

**10.6Nm @ 6000rpm**

**Gearbox:** CVT

**Susp F:** Single sided trailing arm

**Susp R:** Coil Spring

**Brakes F:** 150mm Drum

**Brakes R:** 140mm Drum

**Tyres F:** 90/100 R10

**Tyres R:** 90/100 R10

**Wheelbase (mm):** 1290

**Seat Height (mm):** 770

**Dimensions (mm):** 1770/690/1140

a long wheelbase, it has a surprisingly small turning radius. It is small and nimble but not something you can abuse in corners. Besides, the brakes too don't inspire too much confidence, and could do with a bit of more bite.

Urban dwellers will find the

Vespa quite enjoyable to ride in traffic. The LX 125 has an 8.0-litre fuel tank and that will easily give it a range of at least 400km. It also has useful storage spaces – an under-seat hub which will fit a half-face helmet and a lockable glove-box too. Apart from the analog speedo, the instrument

cluster hosts a digital gauge which shows the time and date.

Vespa has the heritage, technology or the inexplicable knack of trending for ages – the 685 official clubs across the world are testimony to this, dedicated to the world's first scooter. So it's almost axiomatic

that a Vespa is unique in terms of emulating its romance and legend. It however remains to be seen whether India accepts a 'premium scooter', and whether Vespa and Piaggio are third time lucky in India. Will we also see the 'Lamby' back on Indian roads in the near future? 