In the four decades that LMC Automotive has been covering the global auto industry, we have not seen this unprecedented magnitude of change – or, according to some, disruption – that is currently unfolding. One might even argue that it harks back to the end of the 19th century and the birth of the automobile itself, and Henry Ford’s creation of the first moving assembly line that enabled mass production of cars in 1913.

What is undeniable is that these changes will only intensify in the years ahead and that this second automobile revolution has been made possible by the extraordinary progress in computer science and artificial intelligence.

"the notion that vehicles in the future will be fully operated and controlled by software is daunting to many, not least to some industry experts and car enthusiasts"

Over the coming decades, cars will no longer be cars in the traditional sense, but will instead transform into alternative, multi-functional devices, in the same way that a smartphone or a computer does today. That being said, the notion that vehicles in the future will be fully operated and controlled by software is daunting to many, not least to some industry experts and car enthusiasts. These wise individuals have seen this movie before ... Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines ring any bells?

I, on the other hand, am not wise and will be first in line to buy an Autonomous Vehicle (AV) as soon as they become commercially available. Anyone who has endured Bangkok’s appalling traffic and reckless drivers (and I include myself in that category) would not hesitate for a moment, believe me, to head straight to that showroom!

On a more serious note, there is little denying that AVs will, in due course, become a commonplace form of transport, although that reality is still far from imminent for the time being. And this will come despite the obvious challenges surrounding the development and adoption of AVs.

"even the cleverest human being stands little chance against the computing power of artificial intelligence"

If we consider the fact that most road traffic accidents are caused by human error, then it is only a matter of time before AVs eventually replace human drivers as a safer alternative. To wit, an AV will never suffer from fatigue or become distracted. Nor will it panic in hazardous situations. And even the cleverest human being stands little chance against the computing power of artificial intelligence. So, if we accept that the ability to make swift and accurate decisions is fundamental to safety on the road, then we must concede that, ultimately, AVs will have the upper hand over human drivers.