

This Hungarian Start-Up Will Make You Drop Your Driving License

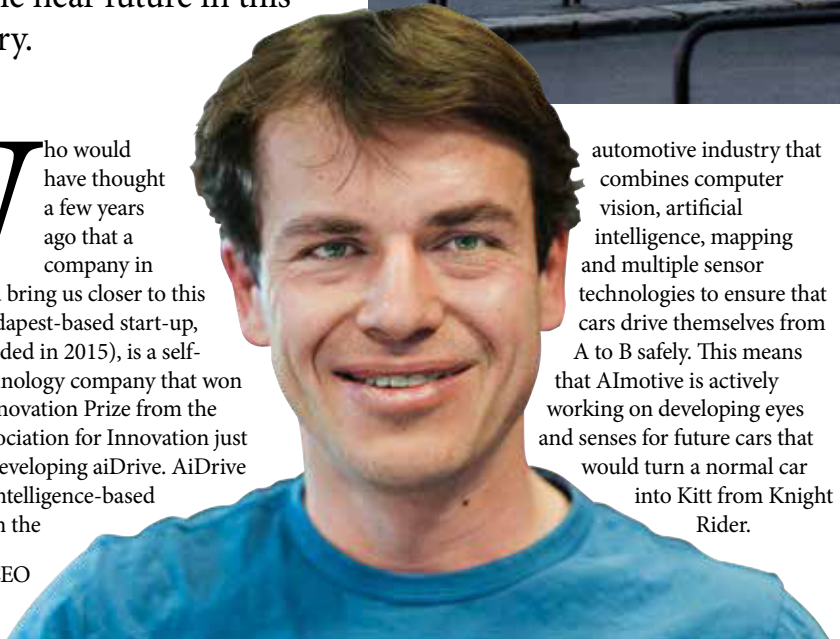
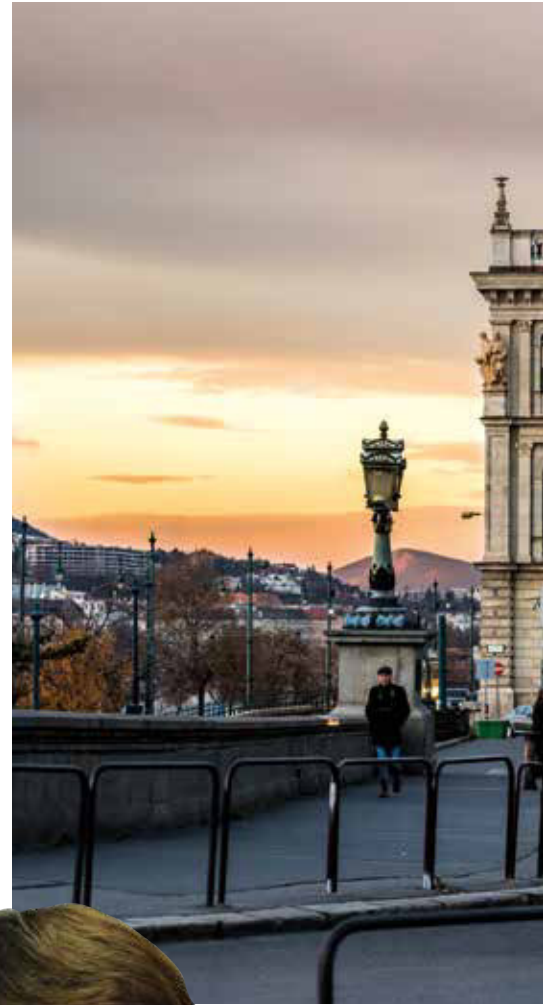
by Kata SZABÓ, Journalist

Imagine a regular start of the day. You wake up, brush your teeth, dress and walk into the kitchen. You simply tell your coffee machine to prepare your favourite latte. Then in a couple of seconds your coffee is ready to go and you rush outside to leave for work. You get in the car, say where you want to go, drink the coffee, put on your make-up and relax until your car takes you to your destination. This scenario might not be as far away as you would think. Welcome to the near future in this digital village we call 21st century.

Who would have thought a few years ago that a company in Hungary would bring us closer to this reality? The Budapest-based start-up, AiMotive (founded in 2015), is a self-driving car technology company that won the Start-Up Innovation Prize from the Hungarian Association for Innovation just one year after developing aiDrive. AiDrive is an artificial-intelligence-based software used in the

automotive industry that combines computer vision, artificial intelligence, mapping and multiple sensor technologies to ensure that cars drive themselves from A to B safely. This means that AiMotive is actively working on developing eyes and senses for future cars that would turn a normal car into Kitt from Knight Rider.

László KISHONTI, CEO





Gergely DEBRECENI,
Chief Scientist



What sets AIMotive apart from its huge competitors like Google, Intel or Baidu lies in using an unorthodox “vision first” approach. The firm claims that this system could navigate cars primarily using the input from webcams positioned around the vehicle. Radar sensors that operate onboard complement this input. In this way AIMotive wouldn’t need to rely primarily on so-called LiDAR laser scanners (which is a standard for most self-driving car technologies) that are very expensive. As the online car magazine Just Auto writes in a January article about the firm, “AIMotive hopes to bring autonomous driving to the masses”.

Just one year after winning the Hungarian state prize, the firm was selected to the 100 best artificial intelligence firms (AI 100) in 2017 by CB Insights. The mastermind behind the company is László Kishonti, Founder and CEO, who has grown his



Márton FEHÉR, Head of Hardware

company significantly and grown his team from 15 to 180 members in just 3 years. They now have offices in Helsinki, Finland; Mountain View, California, USA and Tokyo, Japan.

“The bulk of our development happens at our headquarters in Budapest where a team of 130 highly skilled engineers spearhead our effort. Among them are thirty specialized artificial intelligence researchers” – states the AImotive website. In 2017, AImotive was the first company to receive permission from Hungarian authorities to test its self-driving cars in traffic. There have been test drives in three continents already. AImotive has tested its technology with Volvo and is now working

with other companies, including a “Japanese Tier 1” automaker. “Clients would like to deploy the highway driving component as early as 2021”, said Kishonti in an interview for Fast Company, a US-American business magazine in June.

The company is also performing well in terms of attracting investors as they have raised USD 47.5million as they have received funding from Cisco Investments, Samsung Catalyst Fund, Series A and B investors Robert Bosch Venture Capital, Inventure, Draper Associates and Day One Capital. Some other partnerships include French car manufacturer PSA Group, the Chinese SAIC and Volvo.

It is expected that the technology will be ready to operate in five years’ time and production in the automotive industry will begin in about 20 years. Is that enough time for humanity to get used to the idea?

