

## Press Text

Amy Ball  
Energy

Red Bull® hit the market in 1987 -- the original, the infamous, the die hard energy drink is a mere thirty one years young, eleven years junior to it's foreign big brother Krating Daeng®, who is going on forty two.

In 1982, the Austrian Blendax GmbH exec touched down in the beautiful, sweltering, muggy Thailand, severely jet-lagged from his travels without a minute to rest and recalibrate. Dietrich Mateschnitz was in Bangkok on business and would immediately be taken by private car to some four star hotel, in some pleasant-for-tourists neighbourhood, to attend some conference on market integration, or some trade fair on product assimilation. Later in the day, he would be escorted to some guffawing hob knob of a wine and dine, both to do the courting, and to let himself be woo'd: collecting cards, creating clients, forging connections, introducing products, integrating markets, receiving pats on the back, extending firm hand shakes, Dietrich Mateschnitz would, yes, indeed be gazing out at the vista of his perpetually expanding network.

Now, this story is oft told with an air of simplicity: Dietrich was a toothpaste man, a marketing exec. He landed in Thailand, it was 1982, he was exhausted, it was suggested to him that he try Krating Daeng® to help ease his fatigue, and in tasting it for the first time over ice, the beverage absolved him of his jet-lag, his exhaustion vanished into thin air, and this gave him an idea... Krating Daeng® gave him wings. The stage was suddenly set: our business minded friend is the protagonist of his very own high flying game of irl monopoly in the balmy, far flung foreign land, ticking all the boxes for a truly inspiring tale of unfettered growth...But, not just your average tao of triumph, nor a familiar rebranding saga of success: this, this is the birth of Red Bull®...This is the birth of the energy drink.

Before everyone gets their panties in a twist: you'll be happy to hear that Dietrich, believe it or not, didn't go about his new fervent dream by acquiring Krating Daeng® and swallowing it up into a more Western centric market in the all too familiar colonial method of simply taking from the distant poor and giving, more, to the rich back home. In fact, Dietrich got in immediate contact with Krating Daeng® inventor and distributor, the Chinese pharmacist and entrepreneur Chaleo Yoovidhya, to talk about going into business together, fifty fifty, so long as he didn't mind adapting the original recipe to a more "western pallet".

But in spite of all that would be to come, Dietrich would have to have gone through the motions of the day laid out before him, in a daze of disinterest, his mind already far away from the comfortable all too familiar world of dental hygiene, and onto this new unfamiliar, innominate industry. Unable to get the taste of that sweet sticky nectar out of his mouth, his mind would drift up to the clouds as he sat through yet another presentation by yet another hopeful inventor then yet another lacklustre investor. Dietrich found himself instantly disinterested in the world of dental hygiene, immediately superior to the colleagues he'd toiled alongside with for years in the darkest of cavities. This brash shift in attitude was immediately observed by the other conference attendees and even commented on as snobbish and crude. This was rare for Dietrich - a man known well at these gatherings for his innate ability to raise even the most tenacious of the old line compadres to the dance floor in a drunken splendor for an Austrian Schuhplatter, whilst breaking off mid-stride only to sign the final merger documents facilitating some form of synergy, before returning to the floor to rial the crowd once again. But not tonight, nor any night in the future, would Dietrich be the man considered the life of the party in the dental hygiene world; he would have gotten up to leave, wandered listlessly out of the hall just as things were really about to get going, trying his best to go unnoticed, an effort futile at best. A young CEO of a promising Finnish company which produced toothbrushes made of biodegradable materials, and other natural dental hygiene products (including a toothpaste made from licorice root and fine mud that would soon drive the company into great debt and inevitable closure), would be overheard commenting, in a heavily inflicted Nordic-noir tone, "perhaps he's soon to have a stroke, my sister's husband became very distant in the weeks leading up to his stroke, as if his body were turning in on itself, trying to understand this new change to come. And then he died". Little did he, or his audience at the time know, Dietrich had had a stroke, but his was a stroke of genius.

The following morning Dietrich would have taken the private car paid for by the company he was preparing to leave behind, to an obscure location obtained through minimal research: the address printed on the reverse label of the small brown glass Krating Daeng® bottle would, in fact, be the headquarters of T.C. Pharmaceutical, the company founded and run by Chaleo himself, the sole manufacturer and distributor of Krating Daeng®. After a long traffic-plagued ride, Dietrich's car would pull up in front of a surprisingly humble office, part of a newer industrial quarter in the far edges of the urban domicile of Bangkok: a squat white, stand-alone stucco building with a Spanish hacienda style tiled roof which extended out over awnings that covered the brief walkways and blocking the direct sunlight from the small windows at the front of the office. There were two signs mounted atop the ochre colour roof, one for T.C Pharmaceuticals and the other, without words, but depicting two red bulls, suspended in a moment of severe violence as their horns are about to interlock in charge, before a screaming yellow sun. The sight of the logotype drove Dietrich into a state of sweaty boyish excitement, as he would exit the car and tell the driver he was free to take some time for himself, that he would "be a while". The driver, concerned not for the odd European man's safety, but for his own job security, told the man he would happily circle back every hour on the hour as to not keep his client waiting.

Dietrich would have then wandered into the office and quickly feel satisfied his assumptions of the business were not far from the truth, he knew they would be happy to speak to him, and happy they were. He would have been met at the reception desk by a well dressed, slender Thai woman, roughly in her mid-thirties (though he generally tried to avoid estimating the ages of women), who spoke English with the ease of a native speaker, and would have informed the greying haired, red-faced, sweating Dietrich that: "Yes, Mr. Yoovidhya was in at the moment, he is just in a meeting that is scheduled to end at any moment, and he would surely be interested in...oh what did I tell you, here he his! Mr. Yoovidhya, this is...I'm sorry sir, what did you say your name was? Yes, Mateschnitz, Mr. Mateschnitz would like to schedule a meeting with you regarding the product Krating Daeng®." Dietrich wasn't entirely sure, but he sensed a similar smirk emerge on his face to that of Chaleo's - a grin that could only signify their mutual realization that this was the moment they'd both been waiting for.

Chaleo, would have jumped at the opportunity. As a man with a mind for business all his own, he would have been impressed by Dietrich's candid air, his confidence, his sincerely zealous vision for a product Chaleo himself invented some eleven years ago, and watched it grow with pride, as it became a staple in the industries of overburdened workers of Thailand. Energy drinks were not completely uncommon in Thailand before Daeng hit the scene, and especially in Chaleo's world of pharmaceuticals, though most were manufactured in Japan, didn't suit his tastes, and were marketed more as medicine and not recreational pick-me-ups. And, Chaleo, he knew an opportunity when he saw one: and saw one he did in Dietrich's enthusiasm. The funny, heavily accent Austrian had an ardour for his invention, and this, in the least, was flattering. It wouldn't be long before contracts would be signed and hands would be shaken and two men would embrace tenderly, and both know for their lack of superstition and their staunchly rational philosophies would be overheard saying independently of one another "there was just something in the air." The men were already well on their way to make Red Bull® to Europe, Oceania, and the Americas, what Krating Daeng® had already started to be in Thailand; the go-to source for liquid synthetic empowerment...They just had to invent the category first....

II.

Now, I'm not going to pretend I've got an understanding of economics beyond your standard concept of supply and demand, but it doesn't take a much more than that to come to an understanding of how and why Red Bull took the West by storm. The concept of supply and demand was taught to me in the seventh grade, using the product example of toilet paper. Toilet paper, is a product which maintains its demand and therefore, a consistent need to provide the supply to satisfy that demand. That is the basic principle, and has been since people stopped shitting in pots and dying from mass outbreaks of cholera. There are of course other, more contemporary and ever-growing factors to add in: what about the one ply vs two ply vs three ply preference? There certainly isn't a need for three ply toilet paper, that's a matter of choice, comfort and means, but it's simple to understand that since we live under capitalism: choice, the option for comfort, and the ability to upgrade are all freedoms we should feel lucky to have, and

these decisions, in fact, can even help define who we are as people. No matter how many bottles of fine French Champagne, nor how many courses are served at the dinner you're hosting, if your guests need to use the loo and find only one ply is available to them, they certainly won't leave talking about the oysters.

What is so remarkable about Red Bull's© history, is that in the years following 1982 when Dietrich and Chaleo first shook hands and threw their heads back in simultaneously anticipatory gay bouts of laughter at their then forthcoming and invariably successful collaboration, and the first partially rebranded aluminium can hitting the shelves in Austria in 1987, is that Red Bull© created both the supply and the demand: it was the golden egg, a perfect union, all three sections of the evenly distributed Venn diagram. Red Bull© was pure potential. Before it, there was coffee and there was tea and there was coca-cola, and before that there was cocaine; before it all there may have been some abstract rural rituals of testing out different consumables picked out of the ground to see how they'd make you feel, some of which may have been energy boosting, but soon Red Bull© would burst through the glass ceiling, paving the way for an endless stream of competitors, none of which to this day, have surpassed the groundbreaking hard rock base jumping skydiving sales of Red Bull©. It was not only such a success because it dominated a market, but because it invented the market, founding a solution for previously non-existent need and initiating an entire product category, which to this day continues along a path of drool-worthy growth, filling Red Bull©'s neighbouring shelves with your Monsters©, your Rock Stars©, your Full Throttles©, your Amps©' and your Nos'©; and, arguably soon after your healthier branded alternatives, your Club Mates'© and your Matchas'.

But where did this demand come from? Humans have experimented and relied on an incomprehensible variety of consumable assistants at keeping them awake or making them more alert or altering their outlook in some way, but why now, has there been an energy deficit for 31 years that took 75+ billion cans to fill? The Red Bull© can soon became synonymous with pubs, clubs, and bars of all kind; with late night driving, with long haul transport, with epic study benders in university libraries, with meeting deadlines in cramped cubicles, with high school gym classes, with family barbecues, with smokers, with non smokers, with mountain bike rides, with beach vacations, with chess tournaments, with online poker, with getting ready to go out, with deciding to stay in; it is 355mL that goes hand in hand with nearly every cultural event from skydiving to fashion shows, from music festivals to art exhibitions. Since it hit the ground running in 1982, Red Bull©, true to form, has been like an energetic kid, hungry for airtime and not old enough to feel shame about it. Red Bull© was willing to associate itself with any need for energy, even when no energy was needed at all.

Dietrich came up with a pretty hardcore groundbreaking marketing strategy: already in 2004 Red Bull© was ploughing through 30% of its annual budget and dedicating it to their guerilla strategy (while Coca-Cola© allocated only 9% of it's). The bull's brand of punk rock propaganda cum advertising may feel familiar today, but in 1987 it was one-of-a-kind: Dietrich wanted to focus the budget not on paying for one or two big faces to condone his fledgeling fluid, but to try and hit a wide variety of dog and pony shows, becoming the benevolent patron of fringe athletes, students, and start-up extraordinaires around the globe. His was a quantity not quality method, his was straight visceral associative marketing, his meant linking any happening that ever so slightly could insinuate 'a rush' to go hand in hand with that blue, silver, and red can, 355 mL of viscous vitality. Red Bull©'s long game product promotion seemed convoluted, but it worked. It told you the only thing you'd be drinking while watching Johnny Big Potatoes launch himself in his homemade flying machine across the English Channel, would be Red Bull©. The product itself didn't need the pitch, instead what was being slung was the surefire association of the libation with a life on the wild side, guaranteeing the next time you felt that hit of adrenaline you recall from seeing Stevie Size Eleven get back on the metaphorical horse for a third and final attempt at his famed 360° backside nosedive, surprise surprise, you can imagine nothing but cracking open a can of that sweet succulent carbonated syrup.

Why did Red Bull© summit so smoothly, to such outstanding never-before-seen-heights, hammering its flag into the frozen yet scorched earth at the apex of energy drinks? Why exactly do we even need all this energy? What came first The Bull or the drought?

III.

I am aware that when I walk into a room all eyes are on me. Though I certainly longed for this attention in my younger years, now, as a 75 year old man, I want nothing more than for that attention to fade away. At this time in a man's life, he should be left to slowly sink into the background. Sink back into a chair, sink back into the corner of a room, sink back further and further into himself until eventually, he cannot be pulled out, and he is simply gone, vanished and nearly already forgotten. That's what should be happening now, but instead I am caught, trapped, the lighthouse on the shore aimed directly to me, out to sea bobbing, with a beach full of people screaming at me to come back to shore. I do not want to come back to shore, I want the lighthouse to lose sight of me and I want to bob, aimlessly into the darkness so dark that I cannot tell water from sky, and what does it matter anyway, bob out there in the black mix until only I know that I've stopped bobbing, and I sink down into the water or up into the sky.

As one ages, these things come to your mind, no matter how determined you are to maintain your air of excellence, your perceived sage wisdom percolating after all the years. One does not have to call upon these considerations, they simply cannot be avoided, they come like a barreling flood rushing full speed to man on the front lawn of his fortified home as he spots the murky water rise, he races full speed back toward the indoors of his comfortable curated surrounding, trying desperately to slam closed the ironclad door he installed specifically to fend off these unwanted floods of reflection. But they seep in, no matter how hard he tries, no matter how many preparations he has made, no matter how thick his walls are, or how far his island is from shore, the contemplations bleed through, soak in, permeate his fortress of surety, his citadel of certainty.

All my life I never asked any questions. Never asked a question unless I already knew the answer. I remember now, walking in the foothills of the Alps with your grandmother one fall day, summer still holding a firm grip still on the change of seasons. Mother was out to pick mushrooms and I, thinking myself an expert on the subject (having consumed one short educational pamphlet on mycology), recall nothing of what the day felt like, or looked like, or smelled like, only the sound of my own voice hollering the names of mushrooms as I spotted anything looking even remotely like fungi, frantically racing from hove to hollow, from trunk to furrow, determined I already knew and could find every mushroom. Not once that day did I ask my mother anything, she who had been picking mushrooms in that exact forest most of her life, but instead I chose to berate her with a knowledge I pretended was my own. In terms of constructing one's own soul, I think of this as a very terrifying moment in my own system, my inexperience oozed out of my behaviour in a way so obvious to all but my self. I learn, I take and I swallow up information and I call it my knowledge, I go places, do things and I swallow up experiences, I call them my own. But if a man is to make a list of all he has done, does that mean he experienced doing it?

I learned during my studies in Vienna, that man can dig himself a hollow in the face of a cliff wrought with other man's hollow's - some already established while others are being bored alongside. Man may have to start small but that never limits his growth. Man's primal urge to discover and to own only breeds as he occupies his hollow with tenacity, digs it out further, deeper longer and taller until it begins to touch the edges of other hollows and eventually consumes them until ultimately there is nothing left of the cliff face only one mans encompassing hollow. When there is nothing left of the cliff face and in its place is just one gigantic carved out hole, passers-by will think of as it odd for a short time, but quickly dilute their memory of the rock facade and replace it with something that was previously unthinkable: the absence of the cliff. I spent my life, my 75 some years, frantically digging, recklessly burrowing, my head down with the fervent energy of a mad man, sure of my hollow, certain of the need for it, until one day I stopped and I looked at it. My pride drained from instantly as I realized: not a soul had noticed it hadn't been this way always.

So I have made my hollow, but so what? I worked 75 years on it, imagining it, inventing it, defining it, expanding it, and the only thing I'll do from now on is watch it grow without me as I live less of the life I've constructed. As I watch myself shrink, my energy depleting, my mind wandering and myself becoming weaker, I shy away from the attention I so greatly sought as a young man, and I am left asking myself all the questions I never did before. No one young wants to talk about death. No one young wants to think about ageing. The young, they want motion, they want dynamism, they want speed and progress; they want the new. They have stamina and they cannot imagine it will ever fade.

I know this well because it was what I wanted as well, it was how I felt. But what they do not know now, and what I did not know then, is that no matter the shape mans individual hollow takes, no matter how defined its edges are, no matter how big it grew, it's all the same in the end. No amount of lived fury can change that. No amount of energy will make that not so. Now, now all I long for is a simple walk in the foothills of the Alps, a wander through the dim tree cover, surrounded by the mountain ash, the oak, the linden. I want to get down to my knees on the soft ground and dig myself a new hollow, but one without definition, one among the moss and the kingdom of fungi and all the critters of the forest floor, and I want to lay in it and smell all the scents, and listen to all the sounds, and examine all the things I never allowed myself to notice before. I am tired. There is no fountain of youth. My energy is fading and it cannot be replaced. I no longer want to work, I simply want to lay down.

-D.M, 2019