

I get no kick from 'Cocaine'

by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Redux Beverages LLC, creator of the high-energy drink, "Cocaine," certainly knows how to create buzz. Media from Los Angeles to London have run stories about the drink and the furor it has created among health and law enforcement officials. It has been pulled from shelves nationwide, and Monday the company said it will sell its product under a new name. At least for now.

Last year, the wife of the Redux's founder told the Associated Press that the product's name was a bid to stand out in the crowd of 500 or so energy drinks on the market. The company said "Cocaine" contains no drugs, but markets it as a legal alternative to drugs. The Las Vegas beverage firm also used sexy models on its Web site to sell shirts and underwear with "COCAINE" printed on them.

The kick from Cocaine comes not from coca plants but from its high caffeine content - about 35 milligrams of caffeine per ounce, which the company claims is more than a Starbucks grande coffee, Rock Star Juiced, Red Bull, Full Throttle, Monster or Bawls energy drinks.

Redux no longer hawks its drink as "Speed in a Can," "Liquid Cocaine" and "Cocaine - Instant Rush," hype that brought a warning from the Food and Drug Administration that it was illegally marketing the drink as a street drug alternative and dietary supplement.

Redux also stands accused of using the allure of the illicit to attract young people. It marketed Cocaine on YouTube and Facebook. Its Web site linked to an amateur video showing young men appearing to use real cocaine and appearing to enjoy it.

All that was too much for Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, who threatened to sue Redux, claiming Cocaine violated consumer protection laws by promoting the illegal use of drugs. Her threat got the desired result: Redux agreed to stop marketing Cocaine in Illinois last week, and this week said it would do the same in the rest of the country.

A Redux spokesman said the company would like to fight to keep its name, which it thinks has a humorous, tongue-in-cheek appeal that its hip 20-something target customers understand.

Maybe. Meanwhile, the joke's on Redux.

Good riddance, Cocaine. High five, Madigan.

Reprinted from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

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