

U2 hooks up with BlackBerry; does iPhone have a crying app?

March 12 2009, By John Boudreau

With or without Apple? Without.

The Irish [rock group U2](#) is moving on with a new corporate partner, at least for its upcoming dance across the globe. The tour begins June 30 in Barcelona, Spain, with the kickoff to the band's Live Nation tour to support its new "No Line on the Horizon" album. The tour will be sponsored by [Research In Motion](#), whose decidedly staid [BlackBerry](#) is being challenged by Apple's gadget eye candy [iPhone](#).

"This tour announcement marks the first stage of a relationship and shared vision between RIM and U2 that we expect will lead to new and innovative ways to enhance the mobile music experience on the BlackBerry platform for U2 fans," U2 manager Paul McGuinness said. "We look forward to sharing more details as the relationship unfolds."

It wasn't long ago that [Apple](#) and U2 were joined at the, uh, iPod

In 2004, lead singer Bono and the guitarist known as Edge joined Apple Chief Executive Steve Jobs on the stage of the newly restored California Theatre in San Jose to announce an unprecedented marketing partnership between U2 and the Cupertino technology company.

Then came the jet-black iPod U2 Special Edition.

"This love affair between Steve Jobs and Bono - I don't know," Needham analyst Charles Wolf said. "Hey, it's a democracy. Bono was

hanging out with Bill Gates for a while."

Alas, money is thicker than love.

Chances are, the capitalist rockers - Bono is a leader at Menlo Park, Calif.-based venture capital firm Elevation Partners, after all - played the two smart-phone makers off each other, said analyst Rob Enderle.

"RIM was able to come up with the cash and Apple didn't," Enderle said. "I imagine one of the reasons RIM got this is because Steve Jobs (out on sick leave) is not there to say, 'What a minute. We should probably own this one.'"

Of course, Apple isn't known for spending a lot of dough to sponsor concerts. Besides, Apple got plenty of marketing bang from U2 - without backing an expensive tour.

Apple had no comment on U2's new corporate playmate.

If anyone should be peeved, it should be Palm, Wolf said. After all, Elevation Partners is an investor in the Sunnyvale company, which is about to release its own touch-screen smart-phone, called Pre, that will compete with the iPhone and the BlackBerry.

"That tells you what (Bono) thinks about the new Pre," he quipped.

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