Apple counters talk it will shut Beats music service (Update)

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Apple on Monday refuted talk that it plans to close the Beats streaming music service it acquired as part of a $3 billion-deal earlier this year.

In statements released to website Re/code and other technology news venues, Apple dismissed talk of shutting Beats as untrue.

However, it did not address whether the "Beats" name might be abandoned in favor of meshing the service into one bearing the California company's powerful "iTunes" brand.

Apple is believed to be keenly interested in building on its relationships with musicians and the vast trove of iTunes users worldwide with a streaming music service.

News website TechCrunch had reported Monday Apple was set to discontinue the Beats streaming music service to focus on iTunes.

Citing sources at both Apple and Beats, TechCrunch reported that engineers from Beats music have been moved off the product and onto other projects at Apple, including iTunes.

Apple did not respond to an AFP query on the report.

TechCrunch said it had not determined a date for the shutdown but that five sources familiar with the product said Apple would "sunset" the brand.

It also noted that Beats Music did not come pre-installed on the new iPhone 6 and 8 Plus.

The Apple Watch unveiled this month includes an unnamed music app with a blue play button, another sign of the end of Beats.

A shutdown also would fit with Apple's strategy of maintaining a unified brand, according to the report.

Apple paid $3 billion for Beats, which is known for high-end audio equipment in addition to the streaming music service, a move which appeared to be aimed at helping the iPhone maker reach new audiences.

Apple's biggest-ever acquisition also brought on board the talent of Beats brains Dr. Dre, a rap musician, and Jimmy Iovine, a music producer seen by some as a visionary for recognizing the trend toward online streaming.

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