

PC

Search

PCMag editors select and review products [independently](#). If you buy through affiliate links, we may earn commissions, which help support our [testing](#).

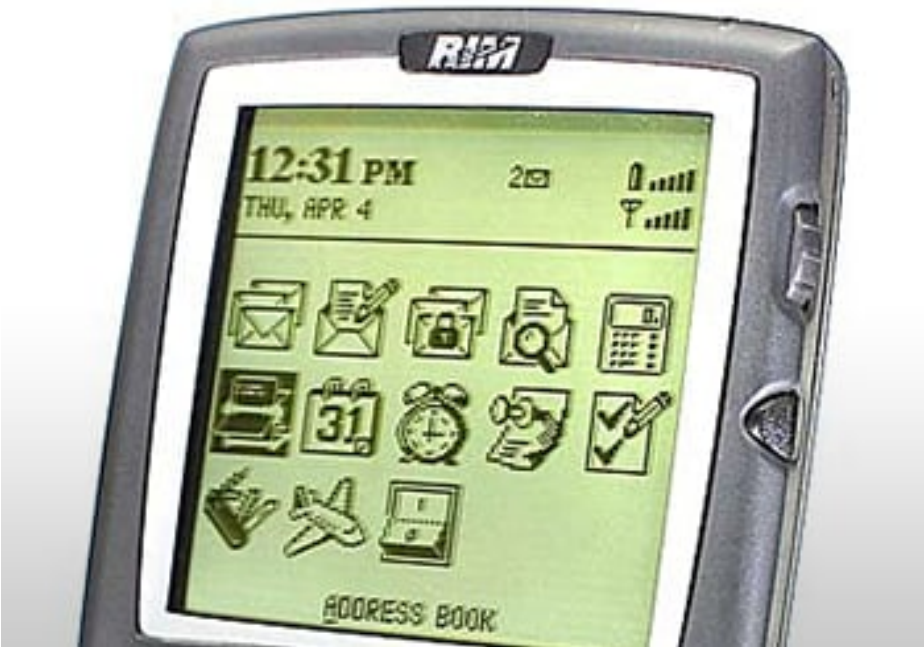
Home > News > Mobile Phones

The Evolution of the BlackBerry, From 957 to Z10

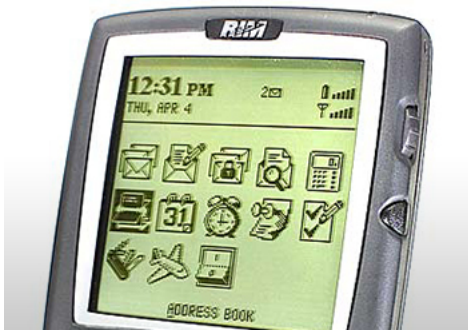
With BlackBerry 10 on the horizon, we take a look back at the long history of RIM's hot handhelds.

By [Sascha Segan](#)
January 28, 2013

[f](#) [t](#) ...



RIM 957 Wireless Handheld (2000)



The highly anticipated BlackBerry Z10 is the latest step on a long road for one of the world's first smartphone makers. It's a chance for rebirth. If Research in Motion, Waterloo's finest, can pull this comeback off, it'll manage to do something none of its peers has done: Carve out smartphone success for more than ten years running.

The major U.S. handheld players ten years ago included Palm, Dell, HP, Nokia, Danger, and RIM. Samsung and HTC were just starting to dabble. What do those first six companies have in common? Four aren't making handhelds any more, and two—RIM and Nokia—are working hard to reinvent themselves.

When we ran our review of the RIM 957, we classified it as a pager. RIM had already been selling two-way pagers for six years at that point, but it's safe to call the 957 (and its sibling the 950) the first true BlackBerrys: they introduced the QWERTY keyboard and many of the icons and UI elements that would endure for the next decade.

ADVERTISEMENT



The BlackBerry wasn't a smartphone yet, though. That came in 2002 with the BlackBerry 5810, which didn't even have an integrated microphone. You had to wear a headset. It took another year, and the BlackBerry 7230, to deliver a true smartphone. That was almost exactly ten years ago.

RIM rode high for the next six years. From 2005 to 2009, the BlackBerry brand dominated the smartphone market in the U.S., with models on every carrier. The OS advanced gracefully, adding media features but staying focused on messaging. Nothing could match BlackBerry's reliability for business customers. We called them "crackberries."

But then the company got hit by the one-two punch of touch screens and app stores. Just like Nokia, RIM was stuck with an OS that hadn't been designed for touch, and it stumbled when trying to graft that functionality on, resulting in the embarrassing BlackBerry Storm.

Touch worked much better on the Torch a year later, but the menu-heavy OS still had a lot of long lists and small touch targets. RIM also came late to the game of encouraging third-party apps, letting Google and Apple build a strong lead, especially on games. That's a painful irony, as BlackBerrys could install apps long before Apple and Google even made their first phones.

RIM has its faithful, and RIM still has a chance. BlackBerry 10 looks like the OS the company has needed for two years now: sleek and touch-centric, but still focused on messaging. Based on QNX, the new OS is prepared for this decade's hardware. We'll have full coverage of the BlackBerry 10 launch on Wednesday, but for now, let's see how we got there.

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

Top Deals Are Waiting.

Shop the best deals and featured offers at Best Buy. Find great savings on electronics, from TVs to laptops, appliances, and much more.

Shop now >

A Best Buy advertisement featuring a black laptop on a blue and yellow background. The laptop screen displays a Windows-style desktop with a blue abstract background and a taskbar. The Best Buy logo is in the top left corner. The text "© 2023 Best Buy" is visible in the bottom left corner of the image area.

1. RIM 957 Wireless Handheld (2000)



The first true BlackBerry wasn't even called a BlackBerry, and it was a big-screen handheld without phone capabilities. For many people, it was a revelation: For the first time they could get their email on the go, assured that it would arrive on the handheld the instant it would have shown up on a desktop. The RIM 957 couldn't handle e-mail attachments and didn't have a Web browser by default, but back then, this was enough.

2. BlackBerry 5810 (2002)



The first BlackBerry phone was, in the words of our reviewer Bruce Brown, a "not-so-convenient combo." RIM hadn't reengineered the 5810 to include a microphone and speaker, so if you wanted to make a phone call, you had to wear a headset. The 5810 also supported SMS, which Brown had to explain to PCMag's readers: "Two-way SMS is a near-instantaneous method of communicating between wireless devices. It's more popular in Europe, but gaining currency in the U.S. as effective corporate communication."

ADVERTISEMENT



3. BlackBerry 7230 (2003)



Now we're really talking. The BlackBerry 7230 had a color display, an integrated microphone and speaker, and a full Web browser, ushering RIM into the true smartphone era. The 7230 and its variants and slight upgrades on different carriers became ubiquitous in American business by 2005; the CrackBerry Era was afoot.

4. BlackBerry 7100t (2004)



BlackBerrys were great for typing, but they were rather wide. That left the company with a challenge: how could it build a narrower device that still had the keyboard BlackBerry fans expected? The 7100t introduced the SureType keyboard, which put two letters on each key and used predictive text software to figure out what you were trying to say. SureType hit a sweet spot, and the 7100 series was the first line of BlackBerrys to really break through with consumers.

ADVERTISEMENT

5. BlackBerry Pearl 8100 (2006)



By 2006, consumers were starting to demand fun with their smartphones, and RIM delivered with the spectacularly popular Pearl line. The Pearl took the 7100t's SureType keyboard, swapped out the thumb wheel for a track ball, made everything smaller and brighter, and added a camera, music, and video players. No longer a serious phone for serious people, the Pearl was genuinely fun.

6. BlackBerry Curve 8300 (2007)



The Curve is my pick for the best hardware smartphone keyboard ever. In all of history. The combination of key size, shape, and separation made for a QWERTY keyboard that was absolutely joyous to type on, whether it be with one or two hands. Many people agreed, and the colorful Curve went on to become one of the most popular smartphone lines in history.

ADVERTISEMENT

**Bitdefender: Save on Cybersecurity
So You Can Splurge on Style**

Gear up for the school year with the toughest tech! Dependable cybersecurity that ensures your protection. Get your Back to School discount today!

Get Offer >

Bitdefender Global Leader
In Cybersecurity

60%



7. Bold 9000 (2008)



For C-level executives circa 2008, carrying the BlackBerry Bold meant that you had arrived. Everything about this device was designed to feel luxurious, down to the leatherette back. The Bold 9000 was probably the pinnacle of the traditional BlackBerry: You now had a high-res screen, fast processor, and strong media players. But it also showed the weaknesses that would later hamstring RIM: a weak Web browser and a thin app selection.

8. BlackBerry Storm 9530 (2008)



RIM's fall began, slowly, on Black Friday 2008, when Verizon released the buggy, unfinished BlackBerry Storm. RIM knew touch screens were becoming a major trend, and it wanted to find a technology that combined the configurability of a touch screen with the tactile response of a hardware keyboard. But the Storm was an epic mess, unstable, and with a less-than-obvious interface that didn't make it clear what would happen when you clicked. RIM sorted out most of the bugs after six months, but the damage was already done.

ADVERTISEMENT



9. BlackBerry Torch 9800 (2010)



RIM's second major stab at a touch screen device fared much better. The Torch, with BlackBerry OS 6, got touch screens right: it was a big screen phone with a portrait-style QWERTY keyboard that slid down from behind the screen. The hardware was definitely there, but consumers' desires had turned to third-party apps, and BlackBerry App World was getting off to a slow start.

10. BlackBerry Style 9670 (2010)



RIM had been toying with flip-phone designs for a while, like with 2008's BlackBerry Pearl Flip. The Pearl Flip was cute, but off trend; it tried to pick up on the 2007-era popularity of flip phones in mid-2009, when everyone was interested in touch screen slabs. The Style brought

a full QWERTY keyboard to the flip form factor, which we liked, but by 2010 there was much more of a focus on app stores, where RIM was really falling behind.

ADVERTISEMENT

11. BlackBerry Bold 9930 (2011)



This Bold was as powerful as the BlackBerry 7 OS could get. The Bold 9930 continued in the CEO-quality tradition of the 9900, adding a much faster processor and "liquid graphics" while maintaining the luxurious build and excellent battery life. But the software platform here was clearly coming to an end. "If you've been eyeing Androids or iPhones lately, or are already carrying one, the Bold 9930 is just more of the same-old, same-old," our reviewer Jamie Lendino wrote.

12. BlackBerry Z10 (2013)



The BlackBerry Z10 is a fresh start for RIM, with a brand-new OS based on QNX and a brand-new Web browser as well. The new BlackBerry 10 OS is designed for media and multitasking, with innovative UI features like being able to peek at your messages from any other app. Will it succeed? Here's hoping. It's RIM's best chance in years.

ADVERTISEMENT



Like What You're Reading?

Sign up for **Fully Mobilized** newsletter to get our top mobile tech stories delivered right to your inbox.



This newsletter may contain advertising, deals, or affiliate links. Subscribing to a newsletter indicates your consent to our [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). You may unsubscribe from the newsletters at any time.

18 People Reacted

Was this article helpful?



Yes

29



No

5

AdChoices

Sponsored

Conversation

2 Viewing

Log in | Sign up

Be the first to comment...





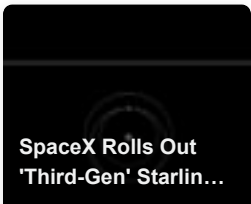
No one seems to have shared their thoughts on this topic yet

Leave a comment so your voice will be heard first.

Powered by OpenWeb

Terms | Privacy | Feedback

Popular in the Community



SpaceX Rolls Out 'Third-Gen' Starlin...



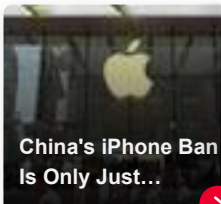
Ben Myers

Can I say it? Well, it's about time!



Top Comment





China's iPhone Ban Is Only Just...



Frank

In the process we have given China our...



Top Comment



AdChoices

Sponsored

APPLE



iPhone 15 Hands On: Action Button, Pleasing Portraits

BY ANGELA MOSCARITOLO



Hands On With Apple Watch Series 9, Ultra 2: Putting Double Tap to the Test

BY ANGELA MOSCARITOLO



Apple iPhone 15 vs. iPhone 15 Pro: What Difference?

BY IYAZ AKHTAR

FURTHER READING



Apple iPhone 15 vs. Google Pixel 7: Android and iOS Do Battle

BY IYAZ AKHTAR



Apple iPhone 15 vs. Samsung Galaxy S23: Which Flagship Is Best?

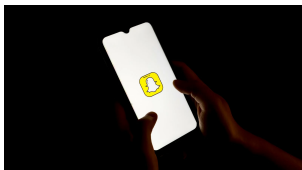
BY IYAZ AKHTAR



7 iPhone 15 Rumors Were Dead Wrong

BY WILL GREENWALD

TRENDING



Snapchat Makes It Harder for Teens to Connect With People They Don't Know

BY KEGAN MOONEY



Amazon Faces Lawsuit For Snubbing SpaceX From Project Kuiper

BY MICHAEL KAN



MIT Hypes Lunchbox-Sized Robot Producing Oxygen on Mars

BY NATHANIEL MOTT

About Sascha Segan

Lead Analyst, Mobile



I'm that 5G guy. I've actually been here for every "G." I've reviewed well over a thousand products during 18 years working full-time at PCMag.com, including every generation of the iPhone and the Samsung Galaxy S. I also write a weekly newsletter, [Fully Mobilized](#), where I obsess about phones and networks.

[Read Sascha's full bio](#)

Read the latest from Sascha Segan

- [5 Times We Were Very, Very Wrong](#)
- [Apple iPhone 14 Release Date Rumors and Leaks: What Can You Trust?](#)
- [OnePlus Torments Flagship Phone Owners With Earbuds They Can't Use](#)
- [Motorola's Latest Edge Cuts the 5G Tax](#)
- [Videotron, Freedom Sign Merger in Canada: We Have Maps](#)
- [More from Sascha Segan](#)

PCMag Newsletters

[Our Best Stories in Your Inbox →](#)

Follow PCMag



HONEST, OBJECTIVE, LAB-TESTED REVIEWS

PCMag.com is a leading authority on technology, delivering lab-based, independent reviews of the latest products and services. Our expert industry analysis and practical solutions help you make better buying decisions and get more from technology.

How We Test

Editorial Principles

Reviews

Categories

Events

Encyclopedia

About PCMag

Contact Us

Best Products

Brands

Series

Sitemap

Careers

Press Center











PCMag supports Group Black and its mission to increase greater diversity in media voices and media ownerships.

© 1996-2023 ZIFF DAVIS, LLC., A ZIFF DAVIS COMPANY. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

PCMag, PCMag.com and PC Magazine are among the federally registered trademarks of Ziff Davis and may not be used by third parties without explicit permission. The display of third-party trademarks and trade names on this site does not necessarily indicate any affiliation or the endorsement of PCMag. If you click an affiliate link and buy a product or service, we may be paid a fee by that merchant.

About Ziff Davis

Terms of Use

Accessibility

Privacy Policy

Advertise

Do Not Sell My Personal Information

 AdChoices

