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[Apple Confirms Leopard Launch Date](#)

Pre-orders available at the Online Store...

It looks like the Leopard race is on its last leg, as Apple has just finished updating its site to offer Leopard preorders. The company's official date is the 26th, as was widely reported by all rumor sites. When Apple took the Online Store down earlier today, there was little need for speculating on what the new product might be. It was already known that Leopard had reached Gold Master status and moved on to the manufacturing process to be replicated on optical media and boxed. The Online Apple Store is back now, with a brand new Leopard banner that lets customers preorder today in order to receive free shipping when the OS goes live on the 26th. AppleInsider reports that we are looking at the Gold Master candidate build that was released internally over the weekend and goes by the name of 9A581. With just ten days until Leopard finally hits the shelves, Apple is not moving on to the next stage and reports are that the company is getting ready for the retail onslaught. Much like the iPhone launch, the party is expected to start at 6 PM on Friday and the stores are said to remain open later than usual. Similarly, Apple's Retail Stores are expected to close several hours before the launch and then reopen at 6 o'clock. Besides the increased activity on the retail side of things, Apple is said to be moving quickly with its support staff, with Leopard training having already begun. Much like in the case of the iPhone, the company's support lines are expected to be very busy over the first days after the launch with many customers calling in. There may have been quite a lot of disappointment when Apple delayed Leopard, but all that seems to be a thing of the past. Everyone is waiting to get their hands on the next big cat and people are already starting to talk about forming lines.