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Crowds Greet Apple's Tiger Release

Users line up to get their hands on the latest update to Mac OS X.

Channing Joseph, MacCentral.com

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Some people just aren't frightened by the prospect of big felines on the loose.

Hundreds of Mac users in the SoHo neighborhood of Manhattan certainly didn't seem to be, while they stood patiently in line and watched a man in a cat suit dance to the tune of "Eye of the Tiger," promoting the debut of Apple's new operating system.

The scene was repeated at Apple Stores from coast to coast on Friday for the worldwide unveiling of [Tiger](#), the latest update to OS X. In New York, people had queued up in an ever-renewing line for nearly three city blocks around the Prince Street store in order to purchase the \$129 update for their home computer systems.

Across the country in San Francisco, the line outside the Apple Store snaked up Stockton Street wrapping around to O'Farrell. Ten minutes before the San Francisco store opened its doors, more than 200 people were lined up, waiting to get their hands on Tiger and its promised 200 features and enhancements.

Customers standing in line on Friday evening seemed particularly excited about the various new features Tiger is offering. One of them was Willie Fuchs, a 56-year-old graphic artist from Queen who sat comfortably in a foldout chair at the front of the SoHo queue. Fuchs arrived on the spot at 2:45 p.m. and read the [iPod Photo](#) user's guide to pass the time.

Was there a special reason he wanted to be the first in the store?

"Somebody has to be number one," he said with a smile, adding, "I like the Spotlight and the Safari RSS. Plus, it has, like, a total of 200 new features. It's really worth it."

Mike Davidson, a high school teacher who had come all the way from Rutherford, New Jersey, to compete with Fuchs for the choice spot at the front of the line, agreed. "I'm excited about every one of the 200 features," he said. "I'm really hoping that the Spotlight feature makes my life easier."

Across the Country

In San Francisco, first-in-line honors went to Mario Ortiz, who showed up at the Apple Store two hours before the Tiger event. Ortiz, from San Francisco, had ordered a copy of OS X 10.4 from Amazon.com, but the software hadn't arrived yet; he decided to come down to the San Francisco store to get his hands on a copy.

"I've pretty much been an Apple fan for a while," said Ortiz, adding that he makes it a habit to be among the first adapters of Mac operating systems. "I want to keep up the tradition."

Right behind Ortiz was San Franciscan David Dellinger, who came to the Apple Store even though he planned to wait a week or two before installing Tiger to "let the dust settle."

"I had never come to a launch event before," said Dellinger, who was eager to try out the latest version of IChat AV. "Hands down, the quality [of IChat's video] is so much better than what's out there."

Andrew Taylor and his wife may have traveled the farthest to be a part of the San Francisco launch--they're on vacation from England and decided to take advantage of their close proximity to an Apple Store. "We don't have this back home, so it's good to be in San Francisco," Taylor said.

Automator is the feature that most excites Taylor. "As a tool, the opportunities are just endless," he said.

Other Mac users created their own excitement. In New York, 14-year-old Richard Hart stood out from the rest of the crowd by donning a Winnie the Pooh costume. "I tried to buy a Tigger costume, but I couldn't find one," explained Hart, who's hoping Tiger will speed up his work on documentary about the industrialization of Long Island. "It's a little 'out there,' but most of the people here are."

Costumes weren't just restricted to customers. At the San Francisco Apple Store, employee Nikki Bongard donned a set of ears and pair of Tiger-stripped sleeves to help greet patrons. "You've got to get into the spirit," she said.

More than just the prospect of trying and buying a brand new operating system brought out Mac partisans. Apple employees also handed out scratcher cards to some of the early arrivals. At a minimum, customers won a free song download from the iTunes Music Store; other prizes included assorted iPods, [AirPort Express hubs](#), and 15-inch PowerBooks.

Although most people in the queue were excited to buy the new software, others standing outside the store seemed less sure why they needed to be there. In New York, Joyce Bautista freely admitted that, after seeing all the new features Tiger offers, she thought, "I don't need any of that."

"I just learned that I'm supposed to get it, otherwise my iPod's not going to work," she said, adding in a whisper, "I don't even have the Internet at home. This is all in the pursuit of the iPod."

Meanwhile, some passersby outside the SoHo store looked on in bewilderment at the ever-growing line of Tiger-buyers and cheering Apple store employees (complete with a dancing man in a Tiger suit). One woman who walked by shrugged and said, "Maybe there's a celebrity."

Little did she know that, for devoted Mac users, there are few bigger stars than Tiger right now.

Philip Michaels contributed to this report.

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