

DAILY LIFE

Mac changes its spots

Apple's new "Leopard" OS X operating system adds many features that should entice buyers into giving Macs a try. Here's a grand tour.

If you're in the market for a Macintosh computer, now is a good time to buy. ● Apple has just released a fifth major upgrade to its Mac OS X operating system. Dubbed "Leopard," the software replaces "Tiger" and adds hundreds of fresh features that make a Mac purchase all the more enticing. ● Leopard isn't a must-buy for Mac users happily running Tiger. The older OS is also speedy, polished and powerful. But Mac fanatics were in a tizzy last week — as usual — about getting the latest OS X installation disc. ● Should you take the Leopard leap? I found it to be excellent software, with few technical problems and only minor annoyances. I upgraded a loaner iMac without a hitch. Glitches are sure to crop up, which is why many will wait until Apple releases "bug fixes." But I'm taking the plunge; I plan to get a new iMac with Leopard later this week. ● Here's a look at some of Leopard's top features. These collectively place OS X ahead of Microsoft's Windows Vista:



JULIO OJEDA-ZAPATA

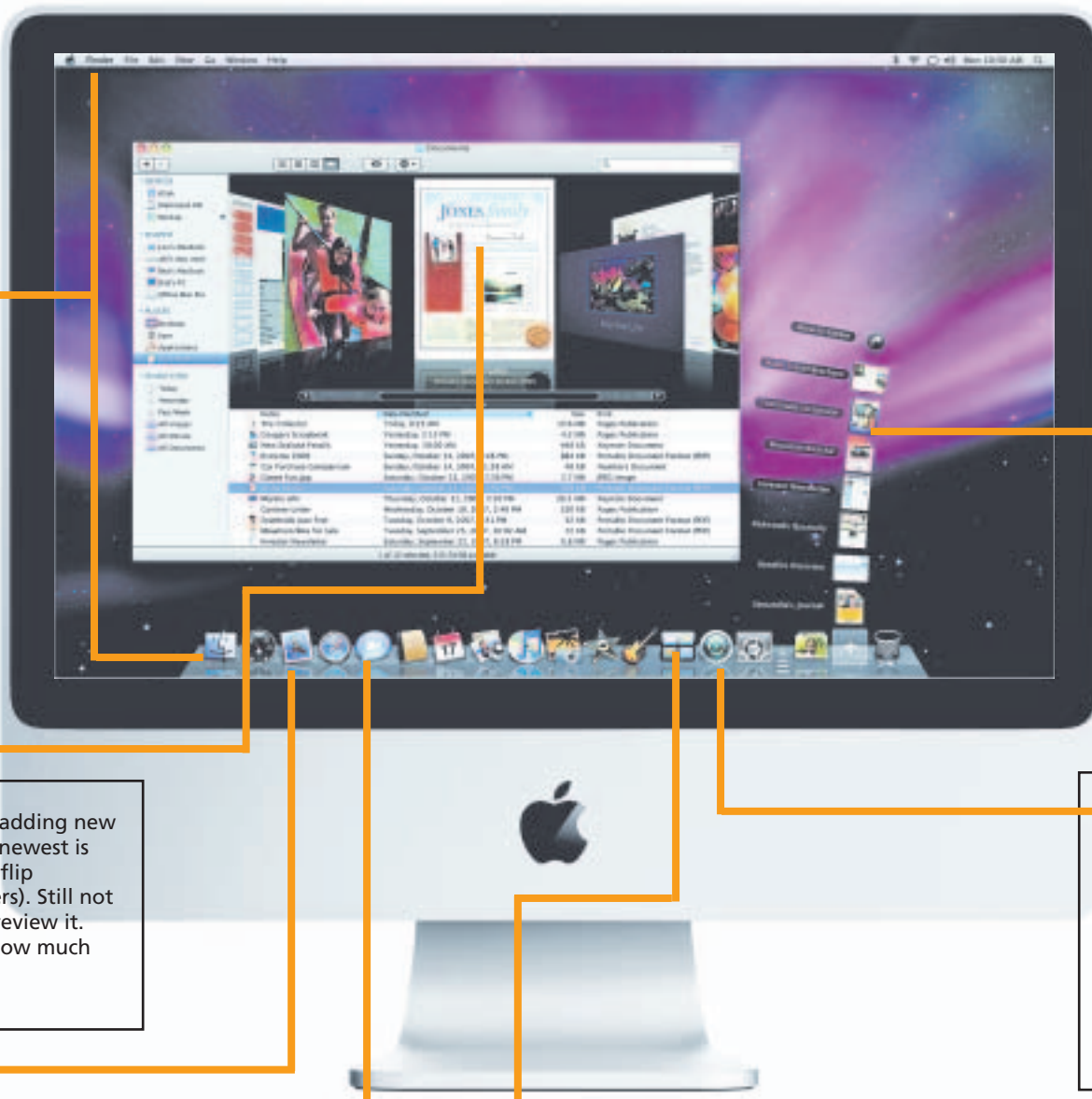
● **Boot me up.** Newer Macs with Intel chips can run Windows, too. Users did so until recently with "beta" software (as in "use at your own risk"). This Boot Camp feature is now baked into Leopard (sorry, Tiger users). Put Vista on your iMac or MacBook with confidence, but note that installations are a bit more involved.

● **Mom is watching.** Macs are huge with families, so Apple has built in a host of new security features for kid-safe use. Mom and Dad can set time limits, filter online content, view activity logs, even monitor kids' use from a different Mac over a home network. But don't use this as a crutch; hands-on supervision still rocks.

● **Boing! Enter "Stacks."** Stash a folder on the dock, then click it to see its contents pop upward in a fan-like format, or a grid-like arrangement. This is nifty but not an improvement over Tiger's hold-the-mouse-button-to-see-a-folder-hierarchy system. If you like the fan, you must put the dock at the screen bottom.

● **Travel back in time.** Haven't backed up your data? Big surprise. Apple makes it easier with Time Machine automated backups to external drives. Retrieve an old or accidentally deleted file by navigating backward in an on-screen timeline. A sci-fi star-field effect is lame, but this is otherwise Leopard's marquee feature.

● **The facts**
 ■ **Price:** \$130 for a single Macintosh, \$200 for up to five machines.
 ■ **Compatibility:** Intel-based and G5 Macs, some G4s but no G3s.
 ■ **Catch up:** Macs bought by Oct. 1 get Leopard for \$10 shipping.
 ■ **300+ features:** Grab the full list at apple.com/macosx/features.



● **Desktop weirdness.** Leopard has a nice new look, but some of its interface features are controversial. Mac fans have howled about a translucent menu bar and a weirdly shelf-like launching dock. Tip: Position that dock on the screen's left or right so it flattens out. Still, I will sorely miss Tiger's simpler and cleaner dock.

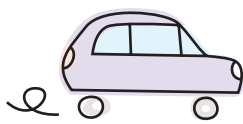
● **Where's that file?** Apple keeps adding new ways to poke through folders and files. The newest is Cover Flow, swiped from iTunes (except you flip through file icons and not music-album covers). Still not sure it's the right file? Click Quick Look to preview it. This is all great eye candy, but I'm not sure how much I'll use it.

● **Desktop mail rules.** Who says Webmail is best? Apple keeps yanking users back to desktop mail with upgrades to its Mail application. The latest enhancements include customizable stationery, notes, to-do items and RSS subscriptions for monitoring updates to multiple Web sites. Nice, but I still adore Google's Gmail.

● **Hello from Paris.** Get ready for fun with a vastly improved iChat instant-messaging and videoconferencing app. When video chatting, you can have Yosemite or the Eiffel Tower as a simulated backdrop. Not wacky enough? Try carnival-like face effects. There's super-serious stuff like document and computer sharing, too.

● **Space, glorious space.** If one desktop isn't enough for you, try four, or eight, or even 16. A Spaces feature lets you set up one full-screen area for Web and e-mail, another for photo editing, and so on. Moving from space to space is a cinch. Linux users have had this for a while. I like one Mac desktop just fine, though.

TIP OF THE DAY | SAFE DRIVING CONTEST



It's almost time for holiday get-togethers and travel, but it's also the most deadly time of year for teen drivers. To encourage safe driving, "Keep the Drive," a teen-led safe-driving movement funded by the Allstate Foundation, is sponsoring a song-writing contest.

Teens are invited to rewrite the lyrics of their favorite holiday tunes to focus on savvy driving, videotape themselves singing and upload their videos at HolidayHolla.com. Visitors to the site will vote for their favorites, and the top five finalists will get to perform their song Dec. 8 at Mall of America for a \$15,000 first-place prize. Country artist Taylor Swift, 17, will help judge the contest and will perform at the event.

Entries are accepted through Wednesday, and online voting will take place from Friday to Nov. 25. For more information, visit HolidayHolla.com.

— Courtney Sinner

HEALTH

Eyeing decorative contact lenses? Be careful

BY RIHAM FESHIR
Pioneer Press

They're scary and fun, but are they safe? Decorative contact lenses — in styles like banshee, angelic blue and blackout — are available year-round, but their sales and use spike around Halloween.

Terri Taray, an optician at Metro Optics in St. Paul, comes to work with whiteout eyes one day and blackout the next and receives all kinds of reactions from customers.

"I've had a blast with them," she said. The lenses sold by opticians are safe, but the cheap, nonprescription ones available at convenience stores, online, at beauty salons and even at flea markets can result in major eye irritations and serious eye injuries, said ophthalmologist Louise Sclafani of the American Optometric Association.

According to the Federal Trade Commission, "sellers may provide contact lenses only in accordance with a valid prescription that is directly presented to the seller or verified with the prescriber."

Some online retailers are obeying the law by asking for the prescription and calling doctors for



BRANDI JADE THOMAS, PIONEER PRESS
Terri Taray wears funky contact lenses popular during Halloween.

confirmation before sending their orders. But illegitimate ones are claiming the lenses are "suitable for everyone."

"Not everybody's eyeballs are the exact same shape," said Tina McCarty, president of the Minnesota Optometric Association. A complete pre-

scription includes a fitting that determines the size and the curve of the eye.

Even people who have perfect vision and don't otherwise wear corrective contact lenses need a fitting for the decorative styles because the lenses are considered a "medical device" that can worsen vision.

"They have a little hole for your pupil to look through, but if your pupil dilates, it reduces your vision," Sclafani said.

Visiting an eye doctor and getting a prescription before buying any type of contact lens is a way to avoid getting corneal scars leading to vision loss down the road.

McCarty said officials in Minnesota are seeing fewer eye infections due to the use of non-prescription contact lenses this year, in part because of education efforts by the Food and Drug Administration and the AOA.

It's too late to safely order Halloween-themed lenses for this year — it takes about 10 days for legitimate decorative lenses to arrive. But other decorative lenses — like smiley faces or snowflakes — can add a twist to your next holiday party.

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