pany can still deliver breakthrough hardware and a Siri virtual assistant capable of competing in the AI race.

Analysts expect Apple to announce at its Cupertino, California, headquarters a new iPhone that folds open like a passport. They said it could quickly emerge as the category leader in the nascent folding phone market, despite an expected price of more than $2,500 and having cameras and processors that may not lead the market. The company has already announced a deep

Apple a good chance of pulling even with longtime rival Google's Gemini assistant, analysts said.

Investors have largely looked past Apple's slow start in generative AI because of the company's billion-plus device installed base and loyal customer base.

Ternus now faces pressure to convince consumers that Apple's devices are the best way to use AI, which could determine whether he inherits former CEO Tim Cook's momentum or plays catch-up.

CEO John Ternus will unveil latest products on Wednesday. REUTERS

NEW PREMIUM IPHONES

Apple is expected to update its premium iPhone Pro and Pro Max devices but hold off on refreshing the iPhone Air and the base and budget lines until spring. The aim is to drive interest in the real star of this week's show, the folding phone.

"Even with a $2,500 price tag, the Apple foldable is going to fly off the shelves, especially because Apple is excellent at

of next year, even as foldables overall remain a single-digit share of the phone market. The main appeal of a folding phone is the sheer newness after nearly two decades of candybar-style phones. While Samsung , Google and China's Huawei have sold folding phones since 2019, analysts expect Apple to benefit from entering late by solving key engineering challenges, such as a hinge that feels sturdy over thousands of uses and minimizing any crease in the screen when the device is open.

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