



THE DOTCOM MANIFESTO

9 WE WILL ALWAYS BE ENTERTAINED

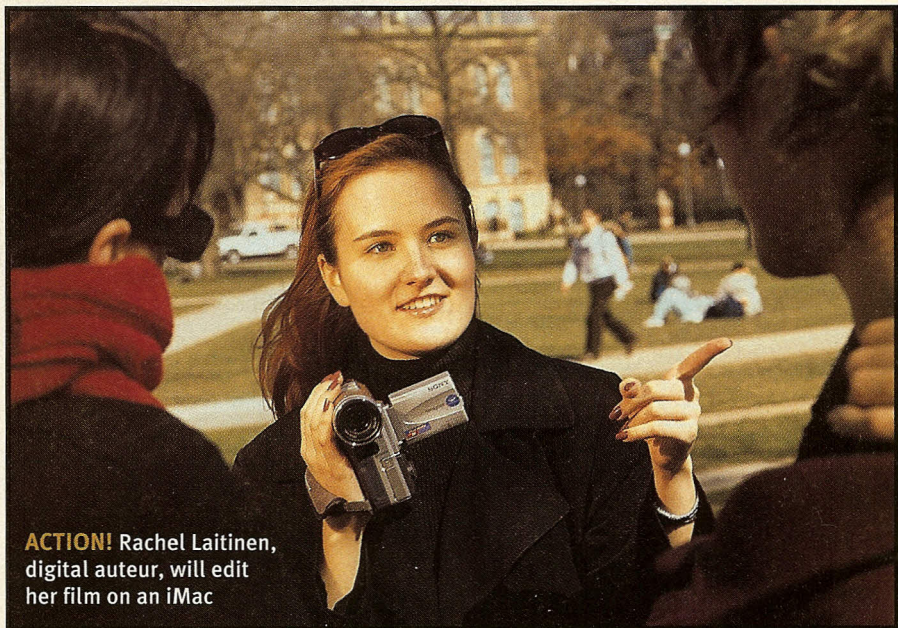
BY GREG LINDSAY

Forget Spielberg and Puff Daddy. It's now time for the Artist Formerly Known as You. With the right gear and websites, you can make the movie of your dreams, write the great Net novel or even be a rock-'n'-roll cyberstar. Download an album or take in a short film, "remix" the works of masters or create and distribute your own opus. It's your choice. It's your world. And let's face it, who's more entertaining than you?

As more and more media go digital, they become more malleable in the hands of our computers. Stitching together the fictional trailer for the next *Star Wars* movie, now circulating on the Net, requires just a VCR, a PC and a good eye for editing. As music migrates to the Internet, and as TVs and PCs converge, we're going to have even more media to play in and reshape.

Video is getting the most attention these days, thanks in part to the buzz over Apple Computer's iMac DV, which comes bundled with movie-editing software. But all newer-vintage PCs can be home Hollywoods. It's best to start with a digital video camera (figure that you will spend \$1,000 or more), which plugs right into the computer. When your film is done, try a website like *atom-films.com*, *ifilm.net* or *eveo.com*, all of which are calling for aspiring filmmakers to send in their shorts so they can be shown, perhaps at a profit, to the world. (The only restrictions: no pornography or home videos.)

Many digital auteurs consider their work well above home video, of course. Rachel Laitinen of Urbana, Ill., for instance, is using a svelte Sony camera and her iMac DV to make a commercial (she hopes) serial short about a group of angst-ridden twentysomethings. If the technology isn't quite up to Hollywood standards, that's fine for Laitinen's film. "It's not as



ACTION! Rachel Laitinen, digital auteur, will edit her film on an iMac

BLACKBOARD FOR TIME DIGITAL

linear and logical and pristine as a well-written screenplay," she says. That's part of its charm—it's real.

In the world of music, the MP3 standard has liberated music from the CD and set it loose on the Web, where sites like Listen.com and Scour.net and software like Napster make it their business to find it. At MP3.com, unsigned bands post songs for free, hoping to build a brand name. Their tunes are just begging to be used as sound tracks or the raw material for a remix. If you don't happen to have professional mixing software lying around, Beatnik will help you do the work through a browser.

The remix concept doesn't apply as well to books, unless you count postmodern fiction as one long remix. But the Net is making it much easier for authors, both budding and established, to broadly distribute their work. At Fatbrain, simply set your price and upload your manuscript. That's what Bob Zeidman did. A self-described "world-renowned electrical-engineering consultant," Zeidman posted a

13-page piece of fiction called *The Lost and Found Virginity*. Available for \$2, it is "the humorous story of one man's first experiences with sex," Fatbrain says. If Zeidman isn't afraid to post something like that, what's stopping you? ■

Greg Lindsay is the digital-media reporter for *Powerful Media*, launching this spring

TOOLBOX»»

Beatnik.com

Remix your own tunes, or take a crack at improving hits like Blondie's *Maria* or David Bowie's *Fame*. You can e-mail the results to a friend

Fatbrain.com

Post your writings here and read the "e-matter" of other authors, budding and established

MaMaMedia.com

If you think interactive entertainment sounds like kids' stuff, let your kids try it. This site lets children create stories, plays and cartoons