LIVE, FROM THE LOSER-NET IT'S "HOLLYWOOD, PA."! THINK "TRUMAN SHOW," EXCEPT THE GUY, "A COMPLETE FAILURE," KNOWS HE'S ON. IT'S A FILM, IT'S A WEBCAST ABOUT THE FILM, IT'S MAYBE THE NEXT "BLAIR WITCH," AND IT'S ALL GOING ON IN CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA.

Daniel Rubin, INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Greg Swartz got the idea at 3 a.m., sleepless on his parents' couch.

The aspiring filmmaker had come home to Harrisburg to be best man in a wedding. Except his folks had moved into a smaller place. So there he was one night, 6-foot-6 and flopping around on the living room sofa, wondering what it would be like to really live like this.
A loser. Back home. No money, no job, no prospects.

But what if this loser started filming his life, every moment of it, putting his ordinariness on the Internet?

What if people started watching it, and the residents of his town hungered to get on camera? And started figuring out there was a way to make a buck off the publicity?

That, Swartz realized, was a movie.

And, to top it off, what if Swartz actually broadcast the making of this movie about the Internet on the Internet?

That, he realized, was a whole lot of free publicity, and free stuff.

Which is how the makers of Hollywood, Pa. - an L.A. indie crew with no backing, no distribution, and no money for postproduction - have been floating for the last few weeks around Harrisburg on free airline tickets and rental cars, promotional jackets and caps, and donated office space and meals.

"Everyone," says producer Gerald Stetson, "is Internet-crazy. We've got dot-com coming out of our ears."

Stetson, a Los Angeles-based Brit who makes music videos and television commercials, is coproducing both the film and the Web broadcast, which can be seen today between noon and 4 p.m. at http://www.hollywoodpa.com. He is also quite a horse trader, persuading Tower Air, for instance, to fly the promising-project members

in exchange for a Web site plug.

The germ of this idea came that night last April. He worked through August, writing four drafts holed up in his 500-square-foot apartment in a modest section of the real Hollywood while dining on delivered dinners. He lived off money made from freelance TV production.

"I was interested in exploring the whole idea of what technology does to privacy and the willingness of people to give it up," the 28-year-old former newspaper reporter said Friday, between scenes of the film he is also directing.

"I was interested in how people will give up privacy to explore an idea - or maybe because of psychological insanity."

At that turn of phrase, he gestured toward actor Stephen Mark Seeber, who plays Gordy, the character based on Swartz's nightmare vision of himself. Seeber was taking five in black shoes, white socks, boxer shorts, a frayed T-shirt, and an old plaid hunting jacket.

"You see my point? He's a complete failure, but people start to take an interest in his life. He has managed to capture the smallness through technology."

The crew had taken over a house on a quiet street in this town 15 minutes outside Lancaster. Swartz's friends Keith and Mary Beth Schweigert own the house, one of many ways the filmmakers have been able to make the full-length for about $50,000, Stetson says. No one gets paid unless the film sells.

After lunch, they were shooting a scene in which Gordy is awakened on the couch to the sound of his father hammering a sign for Keystone Tires and Brakes on the wall.

"What the hell are you doing?" Gordy asks.

"Some guy is paying me $300 a month to hang this," his father tells him. "Think of it as your rent."

As they rehearsed, four cameras rolled.

There was the director of photography's camera, and the Web camera shooting the shooting. Then there were two spycams, as they call them, discreet digital lenses that pick up the inside stuff - from arguments among the crew to the numbing repetitions needed to get some shots.

Sometimes, one of the spycams might be hidden on a crew member's vest. Another might be mounted in some corner, the fly on the wall that observes everything - and beams it out to the world.

A fifth camera will be added today. That will be World Wide Web-famous JenniCam, owned by Jennifer Ringley, who has been streaming live images of her everyday life since 1995, when she was a student at Dickinson College.

Ringley has a cameo in the film - "She comes in and says something like, 'You're going to be bigger than JenniCam,' " says Stetson, who at 40 is by far the oldest of the bosses. In addition to playing herself, Ringley will host today's streaming on the film's Web site. At the same time, of course, her own viewers will get to see the action through the JenniCam.

"I think they've got a really good idea," Ringley said by phone Friday from her apartment in Washington, where her end of the conversation was being streamed onto the Web. "People are interested in interactive content."

Stetson says 25,000 people have visited the film's Web site in the last two weeks. The Microsoft Network can be thanked for some of that traffic. MSN has promoted Hollywood, Pa. on the first page of its own Web site. A Sunnyvale, Calif. company called iBEAM (in which Microsoft has invested) has donated the Web-casting equipment and some crew as well. Pnuts, a German company, designed the Web site in exchange for a small percentage of any profits, Stetson said.

Friday was to be the last day in the Conestoga house. The Web people had taken over a study, where Internet director Sven Pape, 28, hosted the broadcast and called which shots would go out to the public.

Pape, a Berlin native who also is based in Los Angeles, was also taking time to chat online with 18 fans who were talking about the Sundance film festival and asking whether Hollywood, Pa. would be the next Blair Witch Project, the low-budget horror hit that was promoted on the Web for a year before its release. Its domestic box office has topped $140 million.

"We hope," said Seeber, who slipped into the study after hearing that a fan had written that he looked good in boxer shorts. "We hope."

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