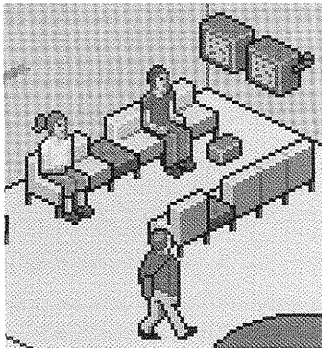


■ | WITHIN A YEAR
WEB TRAVELING

When it comes to buying travel on the Internet, we've al-



ready seen “name your own price” and the so-called reverse auction (complete with a ticking clock). But most consumers are like William Shatner: The campy crooner

for Priceline had to admit that he'd never actually bought a ticket on the site. To change all this, several services are trying to offer lower fares by seizing on a new technology from ITA Software. Described by pundits as a generation ahead of its online predecessors, the software speedily sifts billions of flight options and automatically provides alternate airports and dates. Unlike clunky computer reservations services that need constant prompting, the ITA system will compare, say, the best nonstop fare with the best one-stop fare. Orbitz, the nascent Internet airline reservations system owned by the major carriers, is planning to use the system, and last fall a site called Travelbyus.com be-

came the first to use the search tool for flights in North America. ITA says it will soon add negotiated fares to its database—which could threaten those cheap-ticket sites that currently act as dumping grounds for the airlines' unsold inventory.

pit stops

You can find just about anything on the Internet these days, including, very soon, a list of every public toilet in Australia. The government-funded project is scheduled to go online sometime this year. Now if only they included the GPS coordinates. . . .