THEY'RE WILD ABOUT 'HARRY'

HO'S GOING to be the bestselling author of 1999—John Grisham? Thomas Harris? It may well be Joann Rowling, better known as J.K. Rowling, whose Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (Levine/Scholas-

tic, \$17.95)-book 2 of a proposed seven-

part series—debuted at No. 1 on several adult hardcover fiction lists and now has more than 700,000 copies in print. Rowling's novels are archetypal British boarding-school books with a twist: The school that orphaned Harry attends is for wizards. The first book, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, landed on The New York

Times' list in December (the first hardcover book to do so in Scholastic's history) and hasn't left. Adults, it's clear, are reading the books as fervently as kids.

Originally scheduled for fall '99, Chamber of Secrets was rushed out three months early because Scholastic was horrified by the flood of Internet sales

of the British edition.
Thanks to amazon.com,
barnesandnoble.com,
and other online bookstores, when an indemand title is published
anywhere in the world,
it's now only a click away
for eager fans. During a
U.S. book tour last fall to
push Sorcerer's Stone,
Rowling saw evidence of
this firsthand. "I was
amazed how many kids

had turned up with [British] copies of the second book," she says. Because of those lost sales—estimated by one insider to be as high as 20,000—Scholastic will also release the third book, Harry Potter and



the Prisoner of Azkaban, this September, only a few weeks after it comes out in the U.K. Some publishing insiders believe the series may spur big changes in the industry: Rights to popular authors may soon be sold by language instead of by country.

Rowling, 33, wrote part of the first novel while on the dole (she couldn't afford to work and pay for day care for her daughter at the same time), but now movie rights have gone to Warner for seven figures. And the British tabloids assume she's made so much money, "they've just started adding zeros for decoration, I swear to God. Because any figure they suspect is true, they multiply by 10 and print it." —Michael Giltz

