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## **Whimsic Alley Offers Customers New Harry Potter Book for Free**

**SANTA MONICA, CA 2/13/05** While Internet titans Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble are busy battling for pre-sales of the new \$30 Harry Potter book, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, relative small-fry Whimsic Alley has announced it will be giving the book away absolutely free to customers of its website ([www.whimsicalley.com](http://www.whimsicalley.com)) and its Santa Monica, CA store.

“We could join the pre-sale marathon, but there’s no way we could compete with those big players,” said Stan Goldin, president of Whimsic Alley. “We’ve carved our small market niche by being different from the giants, so we’re doing this a little differently too—rather than discounting the book, we’re giving it away for free.”

Different is an understatement. Whimsic Alley is not just different from other stores, it is perhaps the only place of its kind in the world. Built by Hollywood visual set designer Paul Felix-Montez, it is reminiscent of a mystical London street where student and professional wizards converge to procure their magical wares. One of its shops—Phoenix Wands—offers twenty styles of handcrafted wooden wands. Other shops offer such things as wizard clothing, crystal balls, quill pens, potion bottles, caged owls and phoenixes, swords, staffs, magical candies and plush hippogriffs. The centerpiece is HP Wizard Store, boasting the largest selection of licensed Harry Potter products in the world.

Harry Potter fans seem to have adopted Whimsic Alley as their own. In chat rooms and news articles, fans have been referring to Whimsic Alley as “the Harry Potter store.” In the three months since the store opened near Los Angeles, it has attracted visitors from all over the country, as well as Canada, France, Australia and Russia.

“We’re continually amazed when visitors tell us they’ve read about us in their local newspapers,” said Goldin. “We had no idea that people in Canada, Russia and elsewhere have been writing about us.”

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince is scheduled to be released July 16. It is the sixth book in the hugely popular Harry Potter series by author JK Rowling.

Whimsic Alley is located at 2717-1/2 Wilshire Blvd,, Santa Monica, CA. Hours are noon to 5 Wednesday thru Sunday (11-5 Saturday).