



HEADING WEST

Lesley Smith takes a look at the popularity of colourful consoles

There was a time when consoles came in one colour, usually black, but now it's a whole different ballgame. Almost every console on the market today has been released multiple times in numerous shades and it's a growing trend. In fact, part of the reason it was so hard to get a DS if you lived in Japan was due to the numerous different colours made available, which became a must-have status symbol.

This colourful console trend really took off during the days of the PlayStation 2, but alternate colours were seldom seen outside of the Land of the Rising Sun. The release of *Metal Gear Solid: Guns of the Patriots* recently caused a stir in Japan and the US with the release of a bundle including the game and a 'gunmetal' coloured console, but sadly, it never made it as far as our shores. However, the fact it was even released in the west shows there's a growing demand for this relatively niche market.

Here in the UK, we're not immune to the appeal of colourful consoles and the hardware companies know it. Nintendo is releasing some more colours for Europe - in red, turquoise and green - while the PSP recently got a special bundle to commemorate the release of *Crisis Core: Final Fantasy*.

So what is it about many-coloured consoles that attract gamers? Sporting a console in your favourite colour not only sets you apart but also helps to express your individuality. Japan still remains the most obvious place to see how popular this theory is - just look at the enormous queues that appear each time a new colour is released. The average Japanese gamer must own at least five DS Lites.

On one level, alternate colours are a status symbol, but on another they can also appeal to people who wouldn't necessarily class themselves as gamers: girls, grandparents, mums and dads. Gaming isn't just for kids and teenagers anymore, it's for everyone - and there's a rainbow of colours out there to prove it.

