



(19) **United States**
(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Bryant

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2008/0248861 A1**
(43) **Pub. Date: Oct. 9, 2008**

(54) **GAMING MACHINE WITH MULTI SCATTER GAME**

Publication Classification

(75) Inventor: **Natalie Bryant, Lane Cove (AU)**

(51) **Int. Cl.**
A63F 9/24 (2006.01)
A63F 13/00 (2006.01)

Correspondence Address:
MCANDREWS HELD & MALLOY, LTD
500 WEST MADISON STREET, SUITE 3400
CHICAGO, IL 60661

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **463/20; 463/25; 463/31**

(73) Assignee: **Aristocrat Technologies Australia Pty Limited, Lane Cove (AU)**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

(21) Appl. No.: **12/141,678**

A gaming machine **10** has a display **14** and a game controller arranged to control images displayed on the display **14**. The game controller is arranged to play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display means and, if a predefined winning event occurs, the machine awards a prize. The display **14** displays a plurality of spinning reels **18**, each reel **18** carrying symbols from a set of symbols. One of the symbols of the set is a scatter symbol and, in respect of at least one of the reels, the set comprises more than one occurrence of the scatter symbol. The scatter symbols on the at least one reel are arranged on the reel so that more than one scatter symbol is able to be displayed simultaneously when the reels are in a rest condition. When more than a minimum number of scatter symbols are displayed at any one time, all the displayed scatter symbols contribute to a single paying combination of the scatter symbols.

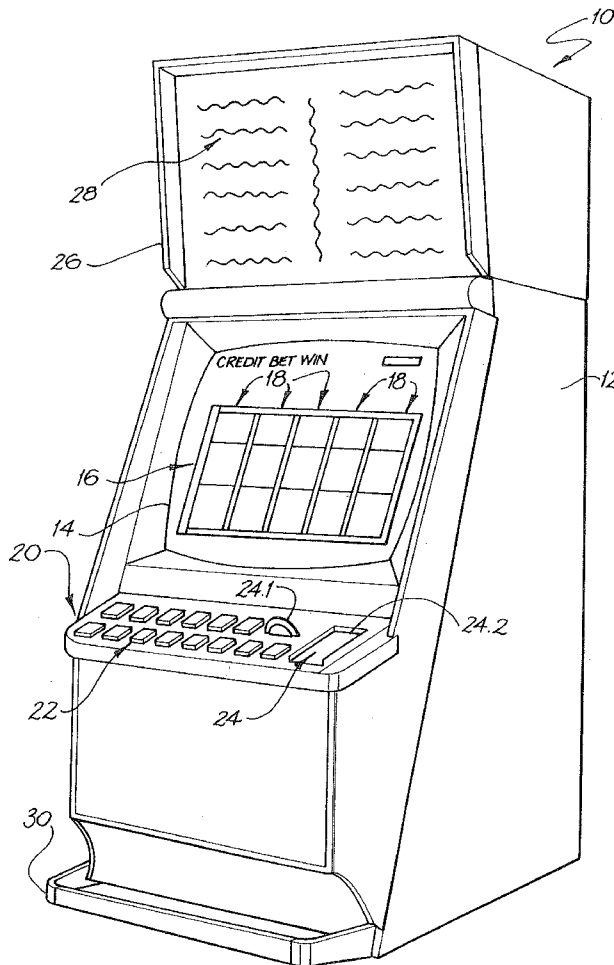
(22) Filed: **Jun. 18, 2008**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation of application No. 09/935,104, filed on Aug. 22, 2001, now abandoned.

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Aug. 22, 2000 (AU) PQ9587



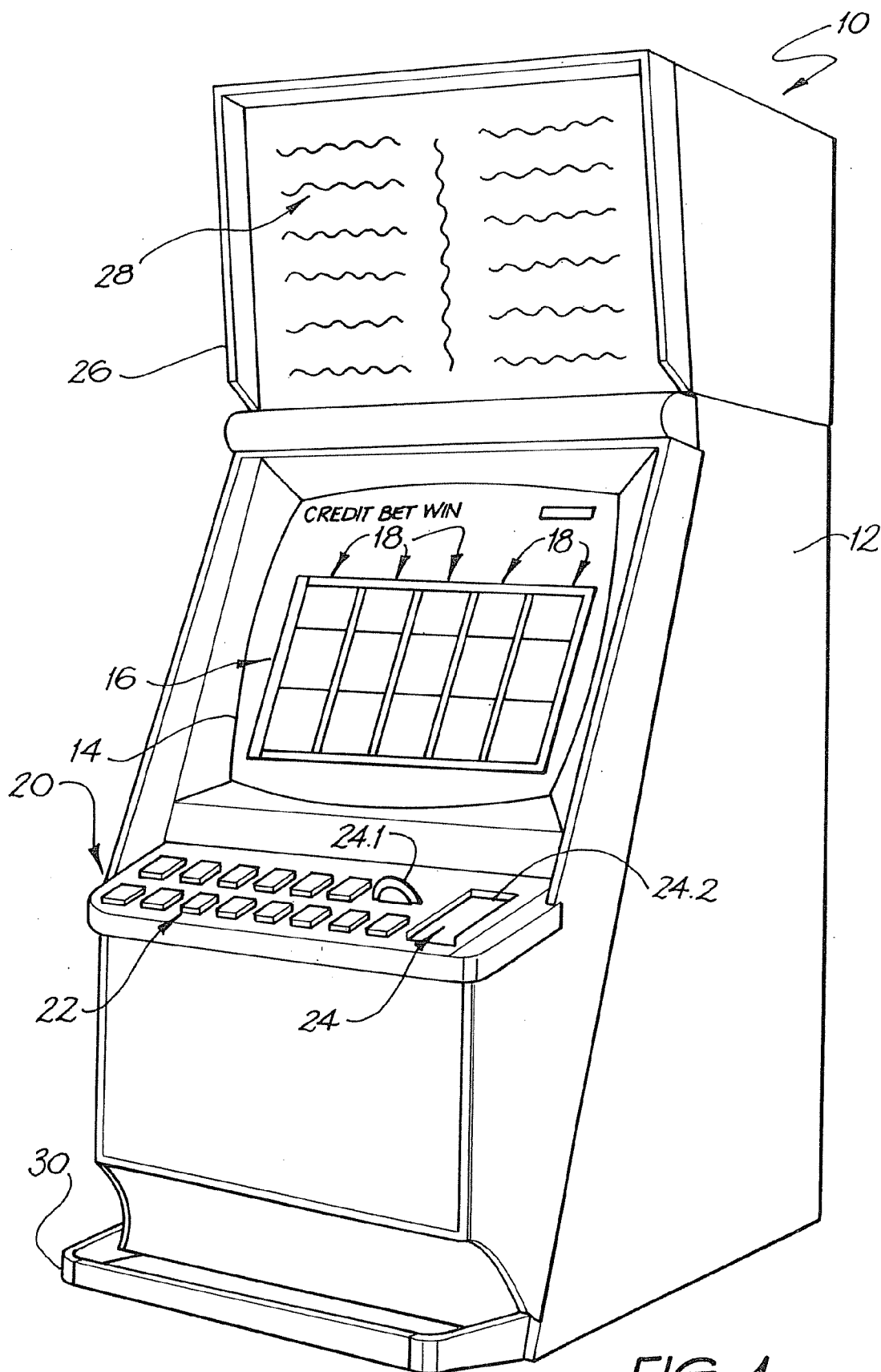


FIG. 1

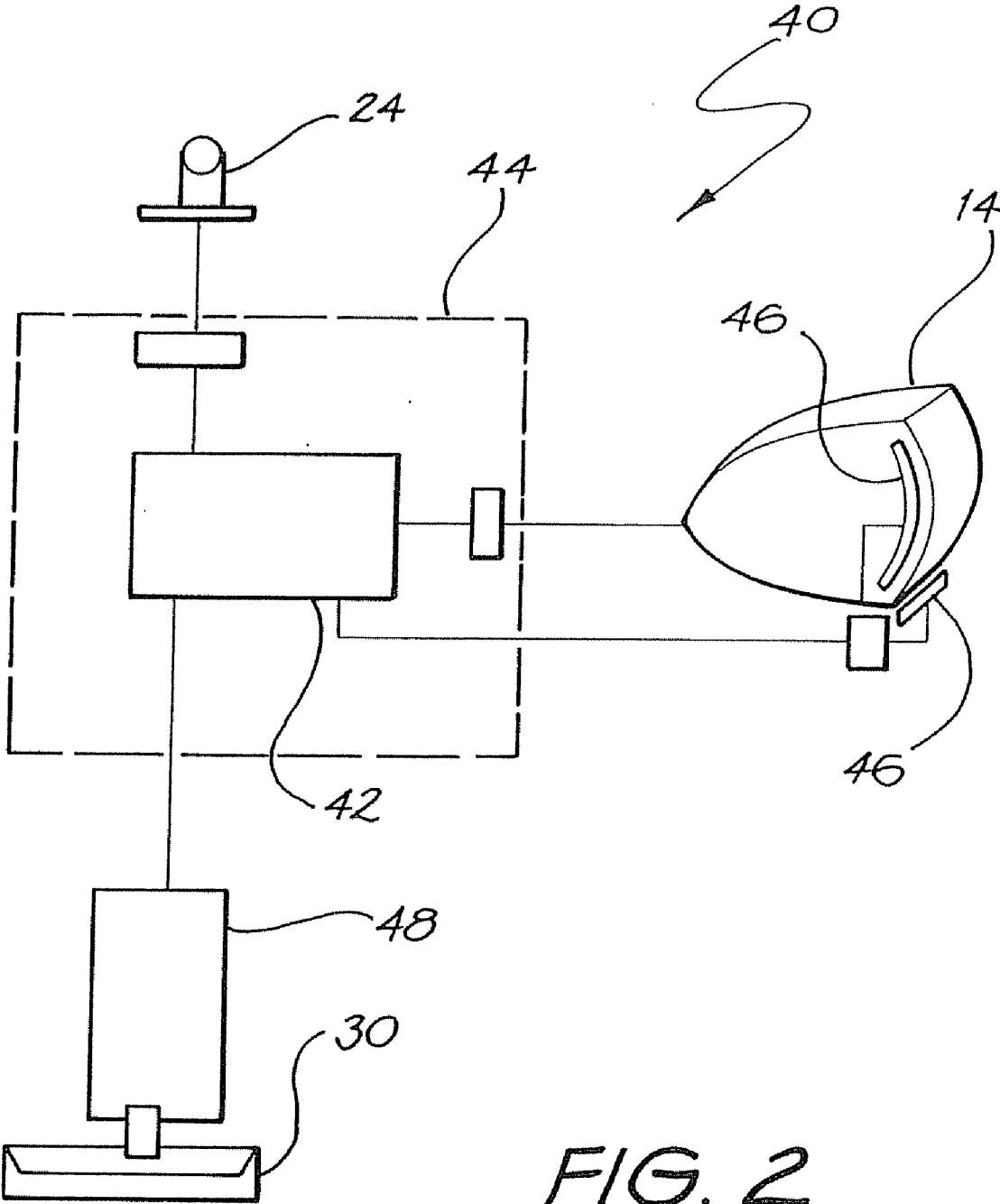


FIG. 2

POSITION	REEL 1	REEL 2	REEL 3	REEL 4	REEL 5
1	ACE	QUEEN	JACK	QUEEN	JACK
2	KING	ACE	SYM_B	KING	KING
3	JACK	TEN	ACE	TEN	SYM_A
4	SCATTER	KING	QUEEN	JACK	JACK
5	ACE	QUEEN	SCATTER	KING	SCATTER
6	SCATTER	JACK	JACK	TEN	SCATTER
7	QUEEN	SYM_A	SCATTER	SYM_B	QUEEN
8	JACK	TEN	ACE	QUEEN	ACE
9	ACE	KING	KING	KING	KING
10	QUEEN	SCATTER	TEN	SCATTER	QUEEN
11	JACK	SCATTER	ACE	SCATTER	TEN
12	TEN	TEN	JACK	ACE	SYM_B
13	SYM_A	KING	KING	TEN	TEN
14	JACK	JACK	SYM_A	SYM_A	ACE
15	QUEEN	SYM_B	TEN	TEN	QUEEN
16	SYM_B	QUEEN	ACE	ACE	SYM_C
17	JACK	KING	KING	TEN	TEN
18	TEN	SYM_C	TEN	SYM_C	JACK
19	SYM_C	QUEEN	SYM_C	KING	KING
20	QUEEN	JACK	TEN	TEN	TEN

FIG. 3

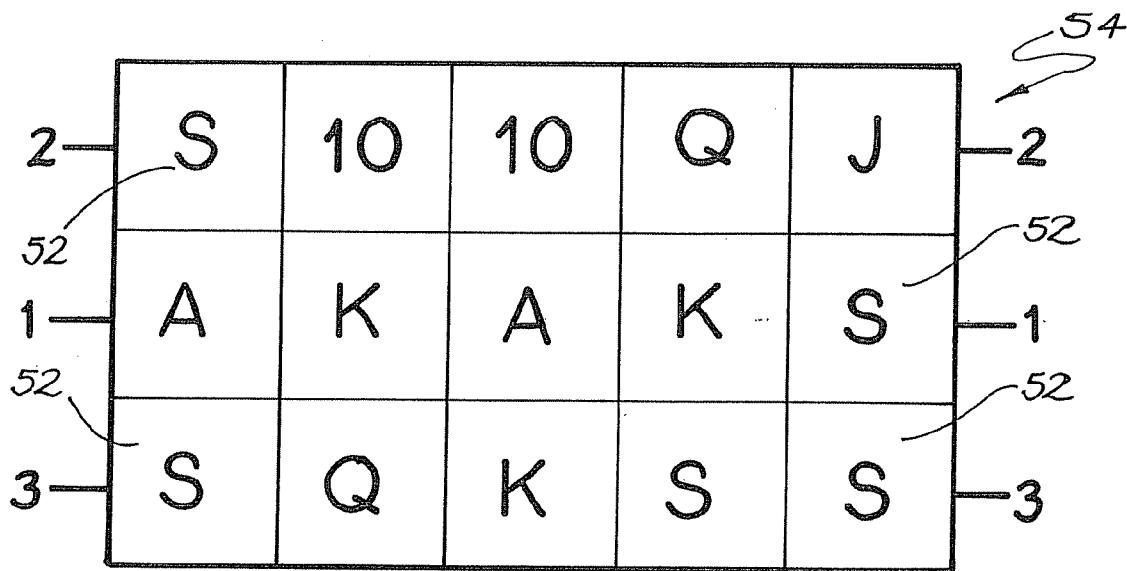


FIG. 4

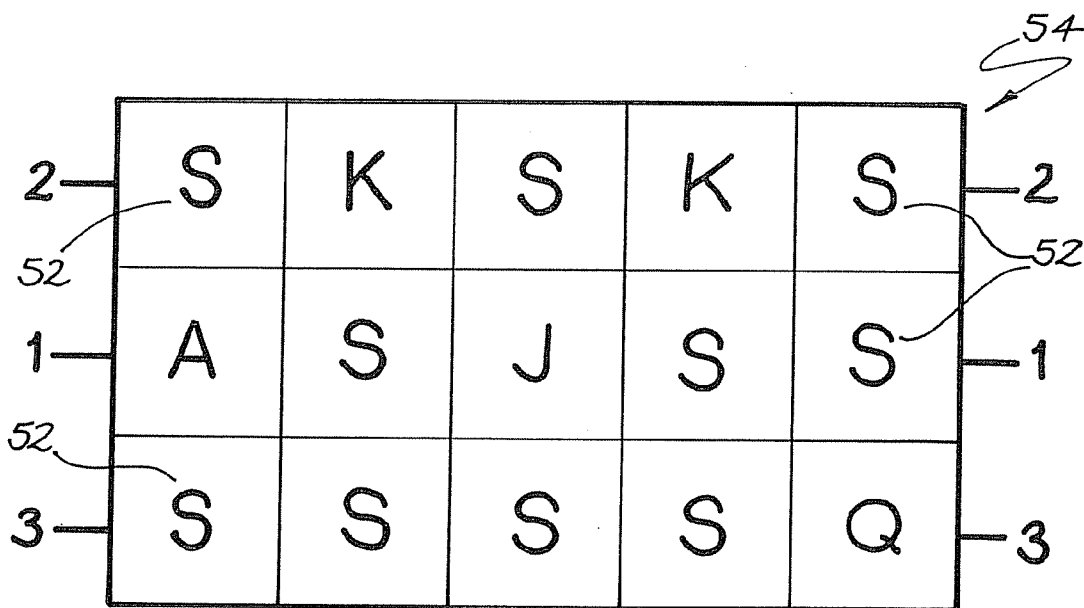


FIG. 5

GAMING MACHINE WITH MULTI SCATTER GAME

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of pending application Ser. No. 09/935,104 which was filed on Aug. 22, 2001, which claims priority to Australian Provisional Patent Application No. PQ 9587, having an international filing date of Aug. 22, 2000, entitled "Gaming Machine With Multi Scatter Game." Each application mentioned in this paragraph is hereby incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

FEDERALLY SPONSORED RESEARCH OR DEVELOPMENT

[0002] [Not Applicable]

[MICROFICHE/COPYRIGHT REFERENCE]

[0003] [Not Applicable]

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0004] This invention relates to a gaming machine. More particularly, the invention relates to a gaming machine and to an improvement to a game played on such a gaming machine. Players who regularly play gaming machines quickly tire of particular games and therefore it is necessary for manufacturers of these machines to develop innovative game features which add interest to the games. In so doing, it is hoped to keep players amused and therefore willing to continue playing the games as well as to attract new players.

[0005] Also, with the growth that has occurred in the gaming machine market, there is intense competition between manufacturers to supply various existing and new venues. When selecting a supplier of gaming machines, the operator of a venue will often pay close attention to the popularity of various games with their patrons. Therefore, gaming machine manufacturers are keen to devise games and/or game features which are popular with the players as a mechanism for improving sales, retaining customers and attracting new customers.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] According to the invention, there is provided a gaming machine having a display means and a game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display means and, if a predefined winning event occurs, the machine awards a prize, the gaming machine being characterized in that the display means displays a plurality of spinning reels, each reel carrying symbols from a set of symbols, one of the symbols of the set being a scatter symbol and, in respect of at least one of the reels, the set comprising more than one occurrence of the scatter symbol, the scatter symbols on said at least one reel being arranged on the reel so that more than one scatter symbol is able to be displayed simultaneously when the reels are in a rest condition and, when more than a minimum number of scatter symbols are displayed at any one time, all the displayed scatter symbols contributing to a single paying combination of the scatter symbols.

[0007] The display means may be a video display unit and the display of the reels may be constituted by a video simulation of spinning reels.

[0008] It will be appreciated that, to achieve a winning combination, a predetermined number of the symbols must be displayed. Normally, at least three symbols constitute a winning combination. Hence, the minimum number of the scatter symbols which must be displayed to constitute a winning combination may be three scatter symbols.

[0009] The set of symbols on each of the reels may have more than one occurrence of the scatter symbol. Preferably, the set of symbols of each reel has at least two scatter symbols. The scatter symbols may be positioned on each reel such that up to three scatter symbols are able to be displayed together at any one time. Hence, for a five reel video simulation, a maximum of fifteen scatter symbols may be able to be displayed at once to constitute a fifteen of a kind winning combination.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] The invention is now described by way of example with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings in which:

[0011] FIG. 1 shows a perspective view of a gaming machine, in accordance with the invention;

[0012] FIG. 2 shows a block diagram of a control circuit of the gaming machine;

[0013] FIG. 3 shows a table of reel strips for a game to be played on the gaming machine of FIG. 1;

[0014] FIG. 4 shows a first example of a screen display the game; and

[0015] FIG. 5 shows a second example of a screen display of the game.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0016] In FIG. 1, reference numeral 10 generally designates a gaming machine, including a game, in accordance with the invention. The machine 10 includes a console 12 having a video display unit 14 on which a game 16 is played, in use. The game 16 is a spinning reel game which simulates the rotation of a number of spinning reels 18.

[0017] A midtrim 20 of the machine 10 houses a bank 22 of buttons for enabling a player to play the game 16. The mid-trim 20 also houses a credit input mechanism 24 including a coin input chute 24.1 and a bill collector 24.2.

[0018] The machine 10 includes a top box 26 on which artwork 28 is carried. The artwork 28 includes paytables, details of bonus awards, etc.

[0019] A coin tray 30 is mounted beneath the console 12 for cash payouts from the machine 10.

[0020] Referring now to FIG. 2 of the drawings, a control means or control circuit 40 is illustrated. A program which implements the game and user interface is run on a processor 42 of the control circuit 40. The processor 42 forms part of a controller 44 which drives the screen of the video display unit 14 and which receives input signals from sensors 46. The sensors 46 include sensors associated with the bank 22 of buttons and touch sensors associated with the screen 16. The controller 44 also receives input pulses from the mechanism 24 indicating that a player has provided sufficient credit to commence playing. The mechanism 24 may, instead of the coin input chute 24.1 or the bill collector 24.2, or in addition thereto, be a credit card reader (not shown) or any other type of validation device.

[0021] Finally, the controller 44 drives a payout mechanism 48 which, for example, may be a coin hopper for feeding coins to the coin tray 30 to make a pay out to a player when the player wishes to redeem his or her credit.

[0022] As indicated above, the game 16 is a spinning reel game which simulates the rotation of a number of spinning reels 18. The controller 44 contains, in a memory (not shown), data relating to reel strips. Each position on the reel strip maps to a corresponding position on the reel 18 to be displayed. The controller 44 selects random locations of the reel strips which map to the positions at which the reels 18 will stop.

[0023] As illustrated in FIG. 3 of the drawings, each reel strip 50 contains two scatter symbols 52 thereon. The scatter symbols 52 are either arranged adjacent each other on the reel strips 50 or, as shown in respect of reel strips one and three, the scatter symbols are separated from each other by, at most, one other symbol which may be a standard symbol or another special symbol.

[0024] Consequently, it is possible for both scatter symbols 52 on each reel 18 to be visible simultaneously in a screen display 54 (FIG. 4) if the relevant reel 18 stops in the appropriate position.

[0025] Insofar as conventional, standard symbols of a set of symbols of the reels 18 are concerned, normally a minimum number of symbols, preferably three, is required in order for a winning combination to result. The symbols must appear in a predetermined order on an active payline of the game. For example, most gaming machines pay for left-to-right winning combinations appearing on any active payline.

[0026] However, with scatter symbols, the appearance of a predetermined number of the scatter symbols, anywhere on the screen 16, results in a winning combination. In other words, scatter symbols need not appear on active paylines to be eligible to contribute to a winning combination.

[0027] The set of symbols associated with reels of spinning reel type games normally each only have a single scatter symbol or the symbols are laid out on reel strips of the reels so that it is not possible to get more than one scatter symbol displayed in respect of that reel at the same time. Also, for cases where it may be possible to get more than one scatter symbol displayed on the same reel at any one time, each of the symbols on the same reel is regarded separately when determining winning combinations. For example, two scatter symbols on the same reel will not constitute two scatters towards a single winning combination but rather two separate occurrences that may each contribute to separately paying winning combinations in respect of the scatter symbols. Hence, the maximum number of scatter symbols that can make up a single paying scatter combination will be equal to the number of reels of the spinning reel game.

[0028] The reel strips 50 are set up in such a way so as to allow for two or more scatter symbols to be displayed simultaneously on the screen 16 in respect of each reel 18. When this occurs, each scatter symbol contributes to a single paying winning combination of scatter symbols.

[0029] In respect of the reel strips 50 illustrated in FIG. 3 of the drawings it will, accordingly, be possible to obtain a winning combination of ten scatter symbols. It will, however, also be appreciated that it is feasible, in respect of a five reel game with a window of three symbols displayed per reel, to have up to fifteen of a kind winning combinations.

[0030] In the example of the game shown in FIG. 4 of the drawings, it is assumed that the reels 18 stop at positions 5, 4, 16, 9 and 5 of the reel strips 50 to generate the screen display shown in FIG. 4 of the drawings. This embodiment will pay a prize for five scatter symbols.

[0031] Assuming that the reels 18 stop at positions 5, 10, 6, 10, 6 of the reel strips 50, as shown in FIG. 5, the maximum scatter prize of ten of a kind scatter symbols will be awarded.

[0032] Hence, it is an advantage of the invention that a game is provided which can pay a prize for more scatter symbols than there are reels.

[0033] It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

1. A gaming machine for playing a spinning reel game in which a player wagers a bet on the outcome of the game, comprising:

a video display arranged to display a simulation of spinning reels, each of the reels carrying a plurality of symbols, the symbols carried by each reel including a plurality of standard symbols and one or more scatter symbols, the video display being configured to display at least three symbols for each reel when the reels are in a rest condition;

a wager selector in which a player selects the wager to be made on the outcome of a game played on the machine, the wager selector being adapted to accept wagers by a player for one or more of a plurality of paylines on the display; and

a game control arranged to cause the reels to spin and then come to rest, thereby defining a game outcome, and

- (a) if a predefined combination of standard symbols occurs on a payline on which the player has wagered a bet, or
- (b) if a predefined number of scatter symbols occur anywhere on the display,

the machine awards a prize defined by a paytable;

and wherein the scatter symbols are arranged on the respective reels such that each of the reels has at least one scatter symbol and at least one reel has at least a pair of scatter symbols separated from each other on that reel by no more than one standard symbol, wherein all the displayed scatter symbols contribute to the number of scatter symbols on the display, it thus being possible to achieve a game outcome in which the number of scatter symbols displayed is greater than the number of reels in the game.

2. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which the display is a video display unit and the display of the reels is constituted by a video simulation of spinning reels.

3. The gaming machine of claim 2 in which the set of symbols on each of the reels has more than one occurrence of the scatter symbol.

4. The gaming machine of claim 3 in which the set of symbols of each reel has at least two scatter symbols.

5. The gaming machine of claim 3 in which the scatter symbols are positioned on each reel such that up to three scatter symbols are able to be displayed together at any one time.

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