



⑫ **EUROPEAN PATENT SPECIFICATION**

④⑤ Date of publication of patent specification :
14.09.94 Bulletin 94/37

⑤① Int. Cl.⁵ : **G07F 17/34**

②① Application number : **89312571.6**

②② Date of filing : **01.12.89**

⑤④ **Gaming and amusement machines.**

③⑩ Priority : **13.12.88 GB 8829036**

⑦③ Proprietor : **Bell-Fruit Manufacturing Company Limited**
Leen Gate
Lenton
Nottingham NG7 2ND (GB)

④③ Date of publication of application :
20.06.90 Bulletin 90/25

④⑤ Publication of the grant of the patent :
14.09.94 Bulletin 94/37

⑦② Inventor : **Farrell, Peter**
80 Studland Way
West Bridgeford Nottingham (GB)
Inventor : **Melen, Simon Charles**
48 Fairfield Crescent
Sawley
Long Eaton Nottingham, NG10 3AH (GB)

⑧④ Designated Contracting States :
DE ES NL

⑤⑥ References cited :
GB-A- 2 098 779
GB-A- 2 114 347
GB-A- 2 119 145
GB-A- 2 182 476

⑦④ Representative : **Lawrence, John et al**
Barker, Brettell & Duncan,
138, Hagley Road,
Edgbaston
Birmingham B16 9PW (GB)

EP 0 373 801 B1

Note : Within nine months from the publication of the mention of the grant of the European patent, any person may give notice to the European Patent Office of opposition to the European patent granted. Notice of opposition shall be filed in a written reasoned statement. It shall not be deemed to have been filed until the opposition fee has been paid (Art. 99(1) European patent convention).

Description

This invention relates to gaming or amusement-with-prizes machines according to the preamble of claim 1.

Generally there are several different kinds of symbols (usually, but by no means essentially fruit) and the designated winning combinations are represented by all three symbols on the 'win' line being identical. A different payout is awarded according to whether the matching symbols are, for example, plums, or another fruit, for example cherries. A win may also be awarded when the matching symbols appear on the win line of only two of the three reels, provided they are the right symbol, for example it is common to award a win for two cherries on the first and second reels regardless of what symbol is present on the third reel. It is also known to have special 'Tic-Tac-Toe' symbols on the reels and to award a prize when the three Tic-Tac-Toe symbols appear in any position in view of the player. Thus, in a machine with three reels and three symbol positions for each reel in the field of view of the player, there are 27 possible ways of achieving a win from the Tic-Tac-Toe symbols.

GB 2 114 347 discloses a gaming or amusement machine which has a special gamble feature. At certain points during playing of the machine the gamble feature becomes available and the player may elect to gamble. This produces a plurality of separate gambles on a win-line which occur sequentially until the player chooses to terminate the feature, a losing gamble is encountered or a maximum member of gamble operations have occurred.

GB 2 182 476 discloses a gaming or amusement machine which has a first game of spinning reels and a player may choose one or more win lines after the reels have stopped spinning.

GB 2 119 145 discloses a gaming or amusement machine which has a bonus feature of a slow spin of one or more reels when a "skill stop" fruit appears in a display area of the machine.

Fruit machines which have more than one win line are also known. The 'three-liner' fruit machine, for example, has three horizontal win lines and the 'five-liner' machine has three horizontal and two diagonal win lines. On such machines, the player can choose either to play a game with one win line for one coin, token or credit, or to play a game with, say, three win lines at a cost of three coins, tokens or credits.

According to the present invention there is provided a gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine in which at least three reels carrying symbols are adapted to be set in rotation and then stopped in turn at random intervals and if the resulting combination of symbols on the reels appearing on a given line in the display is one which has been designated a winning combination the player receives an award or a credit, whereby following a normal game on the reels when

a winning combination appears on a single win line a credit or credits are awarded, and means are provided whereby the player can choose either to collect a prize equivalent to the credit or credits awarded or to use the credit or credits awarded to play a special feature game or a series of special feature games on the reels, characterised in that in said special feature game or games there are a plurality of possible win lines provided by the machine changing to a 'three-liner' or a 'five-liner' machine during the special feature game or games.

The fruit machines may, for example, change from a one-liner' machine in a normal game to a 'three- or five-liner' machine during the special feature game or games, giving the player an enhanced chance of winning. In a preferred embodiment, however, the plurality of win lines in the special feature game are of the 'Tic-Tac-Toe' kind in which identical symbols do not have to be in a straight line for a win to be awarded. In a three-reel fruit machine, 'Tic-Tac-Toe' win lines give 27 ways of producing a win for each symbol.

Prizes or credits awarded in a special feature game may be collected or they may be used to play further feature games. The player may be given the opportunity to continue playing special feature games until either a maximum permitted jackpot has been accumulated or all credits have been lost. Alternatively, there may be a limit on the number of special feature games which may be played following a win on a normal game.

A preferred embodiment of the present invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawing.

The display area of a conventional three-reel fruit machine is shown in the drawing and has a single set of reels 1, 2 and 3, control button 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, a coin or token slot 9 and an alphanumeric display 10 for indicating prizes won and credits available.

Although three symbol positions on each of the reels 1, 2 and 3 are visible to the player, during a normal game there is only one win line W operable. When three identical symbols appear on the win line W at the end of a normal game the prize awarded is indicated on the alphanumeric display 10. The player then must choose either to collect his win by pressing the 'collect' button 8 or, by pressing the 'play' button 9, to use the prize awarded as credits for a special feature game. A greater number of credits may be needed to play a special feature game than the equivalent value of coins or tokens needed to play a normal game.

During a special feature game the machine is arranged to award wins when three identical symbols appear in any of the nine reel positions visible to the player. Thus there is an enhanced chance of winning owing to the 27 possible 'Tic-Tac-Toe' winning combinations. For example, as shown in the drawing, a

prize would be awarded for three 'star' symbols appearing on the reels in the positions illustrated. The prize awarded for three identical symbols in the special feature game may be the same, or different from, the prize awarded for those symbols in a normal game.

Preferably, the player may play as many special feature games as the credits won from the normal game will allow. Any prizes won from the special feature games may be accumulated in the alphanumeric display up to a maximum number of credits.

Claims

1. A gaming or amusement-with-prizes machine in which at least three reels carrying symbols are adapted to be set in rotation and then stopped in turn at random intervals and if the resulting combination of symbols on the reels appearing on a given line in the display is one which has been designated a winning combination the player receives an award or a credit, whereby following a normal game on the reels when a winning combination appears on a single win line (W) a credit or credits are awarded, and means (8, 9) are provided whereby the player can choose either to collect a prize equivalent to the credit or credits awarded or to use the credit or credits awarded to play a special feature game or a series of special feature games on the reels, characterised in that in said special feature game or games there are a plurality of possible win lines provided by the machine changing to a 'three-liner' or a 'five-liner' machine during the special feature game or games.
2. A machine according to claim 1 characterised in that the plurality of win lines in the special feature game are of the 'Tic-Tac-Toe' kind in which identical symbols do not have to be in a straight line for a win to be awarded.
3. A machine according to any preceding claim characterised in that prizes or credit awarded in a special feature game may be collected or used to play further special feature games.
4. A machine according to claim 3 characterised in that the player is given the opportunity to continue playing special feature games until either a maximum permitted jackpot has been accumulated or all credits are lost.
5. A machine according to claim 5 characterised in that there is a limit on the number of special feature games which may be played following a win on a normal game.

Patentansprüche

1. Ein Spielautomat oder ein Unterhaltungs-Automat mit Preisen, bei welchem zumindest drei, Symbole tragende Walzen dazu befähigt sind, in Rotation versetzt zu werden und sodann in der Drehung bei Zufallsintervallen gestoppt werden und, falls die resultierende Kombination der Symbole an den drei Walzen, welche auf einer gegebenen Linie in der Anzeige erscheint, eine solche ist, welche eine Gewinnkombination angezeigt hat, der Spieler einen Preis oder ein Guthaben erhält, wodurch im Anschluß an ein normales Spiel an den Walzen, wenn eine Gewinnkombination in einer einzigen Gewinnreihe (W) erscheint, ein Guthaben oder Guthaben zuerkannt werden, und wobei Mittel (8, 9) vorgesehen sind, wodurch der Spieler auswählen kann, entweder einen dem zuerkannten Guthaben oder den zuerkannten Guthaben gleichwertigen Preis zu sammeln oder das zuerkannte Guthaben oder die zuerkannten Guthaben dazu zu verwenden, um ein Sonderspiel oder eine Reihe von Sonderspielen an den Walzen zu spielen, **dadurch gekennzeichnet**, daß bei dem genannten Sonderspiel oder bei den genannten Sonderspielen eine Mehrzahl von möglichen Gewinnreihen durch ein Wechseln des Automaten zu einem "Drei-Reiher"- oder zu einem "Fünf-Reiher"-Automaten während des Sonderspieles oder während den Sonderspielen vorgesehen ist.
2. Ein Automat gemäß Anspruch 1, **dadurch gekennzeichnet**, daß die Mehrzahl von Gewinnreihen bei dem Sonderspiel von der "Tic-Tac-Toe"-Art ist, bei welcher identische Symbole nicht in einer geraden Reihe für einen Gewinn zu sein haben, welcher zuzuerkennen ist.
3. Ein Automat gemäß einem der vorhergehenden Ansprüche, **dadurch gekennzeichnet**, daß zuerkannte Preise oder ein zuerkanntes Guthaben in einem Sonderspiel gesammelt werden können oder dazu benutzt werden können, um weitere Sonderspiele zu spielen.
4. Ein Automat gemäß Anspruch 3, **dadurch gekennzeichnet**, daß dem Spieler die Gelegenheit gegeben ist, das Spielen von Sonderspielen fortzusetzen, bis entweder ein maximal zugelassener Jackpot angesammelt worden ist oder sämtliche Guthaben verloren sind.
5. Ein Automat gemäß Anspruch 5, **dadurch gekennzeichnet**, daß es eine Begrenzung bei der Anzahl der Sonderspiele gibt, welche im Anschluß an einen Gewinn bei einem normalen Spiel gespielt werden können.

Revendications

1. Machine de jeu et de loisirs à gains dans laquelle au moins trois roues portant des symboles peuvent être mises en rotation, puis arrêtées tour à tour à intervalles aléatoires et dans laquelle, si la combinaison de symboles obtenue sur les roues et apparaissant sur une ligne donnée sur le système d'affichage a été désignée comme combinaison gagnante, le joueur reçoit un prix ou un crédit, dans laquelle également, lorsqu'après un jeu normal sur les roues, une combinaison gagnante apparaît sur une seule ligne gagnante (W), un ou des crédits sont attribués, et des moyens sont prévus pour permettre au joueur de choisir soit d'empocher un prix équivalent au(x) crédit(s) attribués, soit d'utiliser le ou les crédits attribués pour participer à un jeu spécial ou à une série de jeux spéciaux sur les roues, caractérisée en ce que, dans le ou les jeux spéciaux, la machine offre une série de lignes gagnantes possibles en se transformant en machine "à trois lignes" ou "à cinq lignes" au cours du ou des jeux spéciaux. 5
10
15
20
2. Machine selon la revendication 1, caractérisée en ce que la série de lignes gagnantes du jeu spécial sont du type "tic-tac-toe" dans lequel des symboles identiques ne doivent pas être alignés pour gagner. 25
30
3. Machine selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, caractérisée en ce que les gains ou le crédit attribué(s) au cours d'un jeu spécial peuvent être empochés ou utilisés pour participer à d'autres jeux spéciaux. 35
4. Machine selon la revendication 3, caractérisée en ce que le joueur a l'opportunité de continuer à participer à des jeux spéciaux jusqu'à ce qu'il ait accumulé une cagnotte autorisée maximum ou qu'il ait perdu tous les crédits. 40
5. Machine selon la revendication 5, caractérisée en ce qu'il y a une limite au nombre de jeux spéciaux auxquels un joueur peut participer après avoir gagné à un jeu normal. 45

50

55

