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Game with Reservable Wild Indicia

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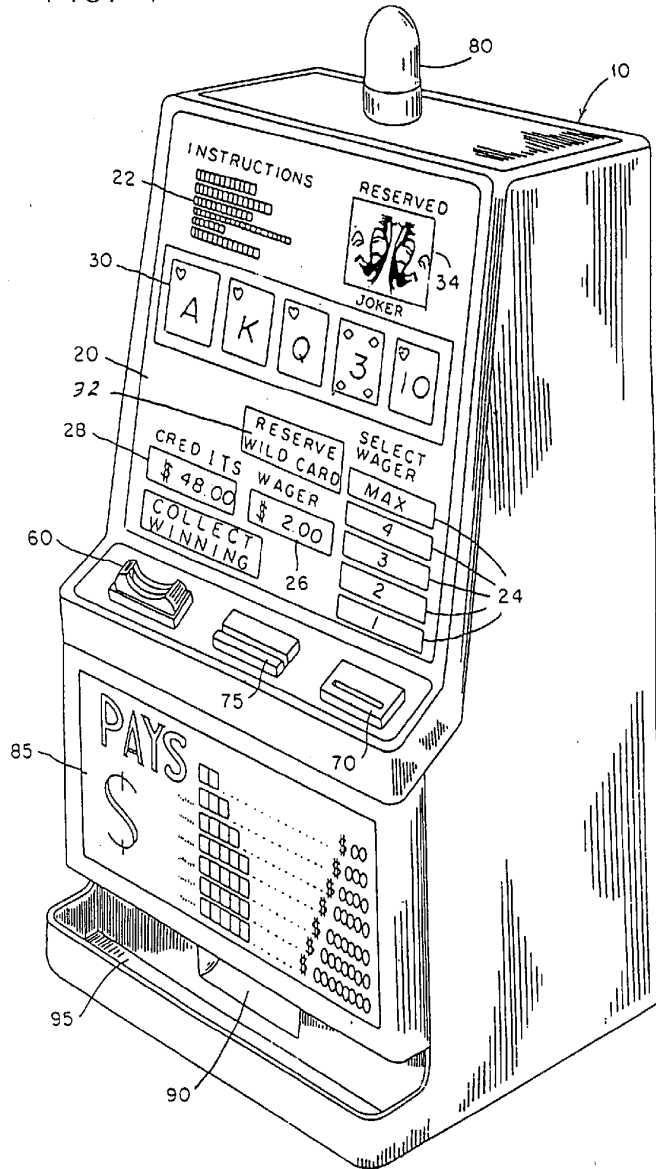
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ABSTRACT

Games of skill or chance which provide a player, who has received a wild indicia during one game, with the opportunity to reserve that wild indicia for use in a subsequent game.

FIG. 1

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COMPLETE SPECIFICATION

FOR A STANDARD PATENT

ORIGINAL

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The following statement is a full description of this invention, including the best method of performing it known to us:

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GAME WITH RESERVABLE WILD INDICIA

The present invention is directed to games and, more particularly, to novel games which provide a player with the opportunity to reserve a "wild" indicia from one play for use in a subsequent play.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Games utilizing playing cards are popular throughout the world. Many people get hours of enjoyment and relaxation from playing cards. In certain parts of the world, wagering adds an additional dimension of excitement to the game. Whether in "card room" games where the players play against each other or in a traditional "casino" game environment where an employee of the house acts as a banker, wagering adds excitement to many forms of card games.

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Players involved in card games with wagering often enjoy new games with relatively simple rules that can readily

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be learned by a beginner or casual player.

5 Typical card games involve a dealer providing a plurality of cards to each player. Each player then gathers the cards and tries to form the best possible hand according to some pre-determined hierarchy of hand values. For example, a standard poker hierarchy is, in descending order, Royal Flush, Straight Flush, Four of a Kind, Full House, Flush, Straight, Three of a Kind, Two Pair, One Pair, and High Card.
10 In some games, players are permitted to discard certain cards and receive new cards in an effort to form a better hand.

15 It is also common to designate one or more cards as "wild" cards which can have any one of a predetermined number of values at the option of the player(s) receiving such wild cards. In this manner, the designation of wild cards within a deck can significantly increase the chances of a player attaining a particular hand. In known games which utilize wild cards, players must use the wild card in the hand in
20 which the wild card is received. Therefore, if a player has a card hand of low or no value, the wild card may not be sufficient to allow that player to form a winning hand. For example, if the payout schedule for a given game starts at a pair of jacks, and the player has the following hand: 2, 4, 5,
25 10 of different suits and a wild card, the best poker hand that the player could form with one wild card would be a pair

of 10's. This hand would not qualify for a winning payout.

5 It is therefore desirable to provide a card game which increases the players' excitement and enjoyment, as well as the level of player participation by providing a player with an opportunity to maximize the impact of receiving a wild card.

10 It is also desirable to provide wagering games other than cards with an exciting, new feature which comprises a wild indicia and novel methods of using that wild indicia.

15 It is also desirable to provide novel games readily adaptable to wagering which are relatively simple to learn for a new players.

20 It is also desirable to provide games which provide one or more players with opportunities to modify the player's winning payout by using such a wild indicia, received during one play, with a subsequent play.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

25 The various embodiments of the present invention are directed to games which provide a player who has received at least one wild indicia during one play, with the opportunity

to reserve that wild indicia for use in a subsequent play. The advantages of the present invention are applicable to a wide variety of games including "card" games, and other conventional games of chance or skill including keno, bingo, gaming devices, such as reel slots, dice games and lotto. As used herein, the term "card game", is intended to include conventional table/board type games wherein one or more persons deal actual playing cards to one or more players, as well as any types of mechanical or electronic devices which display indicia of playing cards.

The wild indicia of the present invention may take any forms desired by the players or the establishment conducting the game. For example, when playing a card game, the wild indicia will typically comprise a wild card. While jokers may be utilized to indicate a wild card, it is also within the scope of the present invention to use one or more other indicia such as one of the other cards of a deck or non-conventional indicia to indicate a wild card. Similarly, in games other than card games any form of wild indicia may be utilized. In all forms of the present invention, a player is provided with the possibility of utilizing a wild indicia when it is most advantageous for the player to do so, i.e. when the player will maximize a winning payout. When a player receives a wild indicia, the player can use that wild indicia immediately or may reserve the wild indicia for use in a

subsequent play. For example, a player may use a wild card in a subsequent hand or may use a wild indicia received during the play of one game of bingo in a subsequent game.

5 One preferred embodiment of the present invention comprises a gaming device having an electronic touch-sensitive screen which is controlled, at least in part, by a player touching images on the screen.

10 Another embodiment of the present invention comprises a gaming device wherein input from a player is supplied to a device through actuation buttons.

15 A still further embodiment of the present invention comprises a game table designed for use by a dealer and a plurality of players. Along with conventional indicia on the game table including betting areas for each player, each player area is also provided with a reserve area wherein a player may place a wild card if that player decides not to use
20 the wild card in the hand in which he receives the wild card and prefers to use the wild card in a later hand.

 Each of the embodiments of the present invention provide one or more players with opportunities to maximize the
25 beneficial effect of a wild indicia.

These and other embodiments are described in greater detail with reference to the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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FIG. 1 illustrates a gaming device embodiment of the present invention comprising a touch screen.

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FIG. 2 illustrates a touch screen used with the embodiment of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 illustrates a gaming device of another embodiment of the present invention.

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FIG. 4 illustrates a board game embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

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The various embodiments of the present invention increase the level of player input, increase the likelihood of a winning payout, provide at least one player with the possibility to maximize the amount of a winning payout, and increase the overall level of enjoyment to a game which

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utilizes at least one wild indicia. The present invention achieves these desirable results by providing a player who

receives a wild indicia during the play of one game with the option of reserving that wild indicia for use in a subsequent game.

5 While the various embodiments of the present invention are illustrated in conjunction with a game of five-card draw poker, the advantages of the present invention are equally applicable to a wide variety of other games of skill or chance.

10 According to the illustrated embodiments, five indicia of playing cards are displayed to a player. The player is provided with the opportunity to discard one or more of the cards and, if the player has received a wild card, to
15 place that wild card in a reserve area for use with a later hand. To the extent that the player has discarded any cards or moved a wild card from his hand to a reserve area, the player is provided with replacement cards. Furthermore, a
20 player may be provided with the option of reserving a wild card even if that player received the wild card as a draw card, i.e. as a replacement to one of the first indicia of playing cards displayed to that player. A winning payout is then provided to either the player with the highest hand or to any players which have attained a winning hand as determined
25 by a predetermined payout schedule.

According to one preferred embodiment of the present invention, a first plurality of playing card indicia which are displayed to a player are selected from a collection which does not include a wild card. In this manner, the game can be controlled so that the first plurality of card indicia displayed to a player never contains a wild card. The cards remaining after making the first display can then be reshuffled along with one or more wild cards to form a second collection of cards from which additional cards are selected.

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10 The first plurality of playing card indicia may comprise a number of cards sufficient to form a complete hand or some lower number of cards. For example, the first three cards displayed to a player in a five-card poker hand may be selected from the first collection which does not include any wild cards while all remaining cards may be selected from collections to which at least one wild card indicia has been added. Similarly, wild card indicia may be placed in a first collection of cards from which the player's first card indicia are selected and then wild card indicia not displayed to one

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20 or more players as of a certain point in a hand may be removed so that no further wild cards are displayed. For example, in a five-card draw poker game, each player's first five cards may be selected from a first collection comprising one or more wild cards while draw cards may be selected from a second

25 collection from which wild cards have been removed.

From the present description, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the odds of a player attaining a successful hand may be modified by modifying certain parameters of a game including the number of wild cards used, the number of indicia displayed from collections comprising one or more wild indicia, and the timing of when indicia are selected from collections comprising wild indicia. These and other parameters may be modified without departing from the scope of the present invention.

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Further limitations can be placed upon one or more of the games of the present invention by limiting the number of plays for which a player may reserve a wild indicia. For example, in a game of bingo, a player may be provided with the opportunity of reserving a wild indicia for ten bingo games. In such instances, if the player does not use the reserved wild indicia within ten games after the wild indicia was displayed, the wild indicia would be forfeited. Similarly, in a card game, a player may be limited to utilizing a wild indicia in a certain number of hands following receipt of that wild indicia. By so limiting the use of a wild indicia, a player's chances of achieving a very high payout can be controlled. Those skilled in the art will also appreciate that the chances of displaying a wild indicia to a player can be controlled by controlling the total number of playing indicia in the collection from which cards are selected, by

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controlling the number of wild indicia added to the collection, as well as by keeping the wild indicia out of the collection until a predetermined number of indicia have been displayed.

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FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of the present invention in the form of a gaming device 10 having a pressure-sensitive touch screen 20, a coin slot 60, a bill validator 70, a credit card receiver/terminal 75, flashing light 80, payout schedule 85, coin chute 90 and coin trough 95. This embodiment of the present invention can be activated by a player inserting an item of monetary value including coins, paper currency, tokens, or some form of credit indicator, such as a credit card. Suitable instructions are provided in instruction window 22 to guide a player through the initial steps necessary to start the game, as well as through subsequent steps. If a player has inserted more than the amount of the minimum wager, the player will be required to designate the amount of his wager by touching the corresponding wager area 24 under the designation "SELECT WAGER". The amount wagered will then be displayed in wager window 26. If the player had inserted an amount greater than the amount wagered, the player's remaining credits will appear in credit window 28. Wagers for subsequent hands can then be automatically drawn from the player's credits in a manner which is now well known in the art.

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After a player has selected an amount for an initial
wager, a plurality of indicia of playing cards 30 are
displayed on the screen. Following instructions and prompts
provided in instruction window 22, the player may opt to hold
5 one or more of the cards by simply touching the image of the
card on screen 20. An actuator may also be provided for this
and other player input on a button panel. If the player
receives a wild card, the player may also opt to reserve the
wild card for use in a subsequent hand by touching the
10 "RESERVE WILD CARD" area 32. When a player reserves a wild
card, the player is preferably provided with an image of the
wild card in reserve area 34. In this and other embodiments
of the present invention, a player may or may not be permitted
to utilize a wild indicia in the same hand or game in which
15 the player designated that the wild indicia be reserved. Such
rules are preferably set by the house or other rulemaker prior
to play. Furthermore, as stated above, a player may receive
a wild indicia either in an initial display or in a subsequent
display, such as cards drawn after a discard.

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If the player has discarded any cards and/or
reserved a wild card, replacement cards are provided to the
player's hand and displayed in display area 30. If the
resulting display comprises one of a predetermined plurality
25 of winning card hands, the player is provided with a winning
payout. Particularly high winning payouts may be accompanied

by discernable signals such as a flashing light 80 and audible sirens from a speaker (not shown). The amount that the player has won is then preferably added to the amount shown in the "CREDITS" window 28.

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As an example, the hand shown in card display area 30 of FIG. 2 indicates a hand in which a player would want to utilize a wild card previously held in RESERVE area 34. Those familiar with poker will appreciate that by replacing the 3 of diamonds with the wild card, the player will have attained a Royal Flush and, typically, a large payout.

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Since the present invention can be played with a wide variety of games, the winning payouts for a winning hand can vary widely. As an example, with the five-card draw poker game described above, the payout schedule could be as follows:

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SAMPLE TABLE PAYOUT SCHEDULE

	Royal Flush	800 for 1
20	Straight Flush	50 for 1
	Four Of A Kind	25 for 1
	Full House	8 for 1
	Flush	5 for 1
	Straight	4 for 1
25	Three Of A Kind	3 for 1

Two Pair	2 for 1
Pair of Jacks or better	1 for 1

An alternative embodiment of the present invention
5 is illustrated in FIG. 3 in the form of a gaming device. This
embodiment of the present invention differs from the
embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2 in that decisions are
input to the machine by the player depressing one or more
buttons on a button panel 125. Button panel 125 comprises a
10 "DEAL/DRAW" button 126, "BET ONE" button 128, a "BET MAX"
button 127, a plurality of "HOLD" buttons 132, a "RESERVE WILD
CARD" button 133, a "CASH/CREDIT" button 136, a change button
137 and a "COLLECT WINNINGS" button 138. According to this
embodiment of the present invention, after a player has input
15 monetary value into coin slot 160 or bill validator 170, he
can select the amount that he wants to wager on the present
hand by depressing "BET ONE" button 128 the number of times
needed to properly show his wager in the wager window on
screen 120 or BET MAX button 127. The remaining portion of
20 the player's credits will be indicated in credit window 129.
The player then depresses "DEAL/DRAW" button 126 in order to
receive a first plurality of cards. The player may then
select which cards to hold by depressing corresponding "HOLD"
buttons 132 which are most preferably aligned with the indicia
25 of playing cards 130 appearing on screen 120. If the player
has received a wild card that he wishes to reserve for use in

a subsequent hand, the player then depresses "RESERVE" button 133 which will move the wild card up into wild card reserve area 134 on screen 120.

5 When the player has made his selection regarding which cards to hold and/or reserve, he must then again press "DEAL/DRAW" button 126 in order to receive replacement cards. According to this illustrated embodiment, after the player has received any necessary replacement cards the gaming device 100
10 automatically evaluates whether the player has received a winning hand and, if he has, provides a winning payout according to payout schedule 185 and increases the player's credits shown in credit window 129 accordingly. When a player has finished playing and wishes to withdraw any credits shown
15 in credit window 129, the player can simply depress "COLLECT WINNINGS" button 138 in order to receive his money and/or credits. As illustrated, button panel 125 is also provided with "CHANGE" button 137 which will alert a casino attendant that a player requires change.

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 Another embodiment of the present invention is illustrated in FIG. 4 wherein a gaming table 200 is provided with a playing surface 210, chip rack 220, card shoe 230 and discard tray 240. A plurality of player stations are located
25 around the playing surface. According to this embodiment of the present invention, each playing area comprises a wager

area 250, a card area 260 and a wild card reserve area 270. According to this embodiment of the present invention, when a player wishes to reserve a wild card for subsequent use, the reserved wild card is placed in a "wild card reserve area" 270.

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While the present embodiments have been described as providing a player with an option of reserving a wild card when that player receives such a wild card during the initial deal, the various embodiments of the present invention can also provide a player with the option of reserving a wild card for use in a subsequent hand even if that player receives one or more wild cards as replacement cards for those which he had originally discarded or reserved. Furthermore, a player may be provided with the option of retrieving a wild indicia from a wild indicia reserve area for use in the same game that the wild indicia was received, either between or after the player has received or seen additional playing indicia.

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As a further enhancement to the excitement provided by the games of the present invention, it is also within the scope of the present invention to provide a higher or lower payout when the player uses a wild indicia.

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The present invention is readily adapted for use with a wide variety of wagering games of chance or skill

including blackjack, other forms of poker, keno, bingo, lotto,
as well as with video slots and/or a reel slot. For example,
other card games such as blackjack may be similarly played
wherein one or more wild card indicia are displayed to players
5 either in a physical form, such as in a table version, or as
an image on a screen in a video version.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the
present invention can be modified for use in other games with
10 or without additional restrictions. For example, in a bingo
game, a wild indicia received during one game may be utilized
in subsequent games to cover whatever spot that a player
chooses. In a lotto game, a player might utilize a wild
indicia for use as any number in a subsequent play. Still
15 further embodiments may comprise placing a wild indicia on one
or more faces of a die for use in a dice game. Therefore, it
is within the scope of the present invention to utilize the
traveling wild indicia of the present invention in games of
craps. In a keno game, a keno game could be limited to permit
20 a player to use a reserved wild indicia in subsequent plays
only if the player was using an identical wager in an
identically played game. The use of the wild indicia may be
restricted to a predetermined number of hands following the
receipt of the wild indicia by the player. These and other
25 restrictions may or may not be imposed on other wagering games
of chance or skill.

According to further embodiments of the present invention, a wild indicia may have limitations. For example, the wild indicia may be completely wild in that it can be used as a substitute to any indicia in the game. Alternatively,
5 the wild indicia may be restricted so that it can only be played as certain other symbols.

Furthermore, according to a further embodiment of the present invention, the mere receipt of a wild indicia can
10 provide a player with one or more winning advantages. For example, a wild indicia may act as a multiplier in order to modify the payout schedule. Alternatively, the receipt of a wild indicia may provide or qualify the player for a super
15 jackpot. Still furthermore, a player may be provided with an opportunity to increase the amount of a payout by some percentage e.g. 25% or even by a multiplier of two or three. Still furthermore, the wild indicia could also provide
opportunities for a player to qualify for other opportunities. For example, in a card game if a wild card was utilized to
20 form a royal flush, that winning player could be entered into a super-jackpot prize drawing. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that these embodiments may be achieved without departing from the scope of the present invention.

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The term "slots" as used herein is used to refer to what is known in Australia as a poker machine. Thus "reel slots" are poker machines provided with a number of spinning reels whilst "video slots" are poker machines provided with a video display.

The term "comprising" (and its grammatical variations) as used herein is used in the inclusive sense of "having" or "including" and not in the exclusive sense of "consisting only of".

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A machine comprising:
 - a display screen that is capable of generating video images;
 - a plurality of selection devices;
 - a machine-accessible medium including data that, when accessed by a machine, cause the machine to:
 - provide a player with the opportunity to place at least one wager;
 - provide a first collection of playing indicia to define a first game, the first collection of playing indicia being selected from a plurality of playing indicia, wherein the plurality of playing indicia include at least one wild indicia;
 - cause a video image representing the first game to be displayed on the display screen;
 - provide the player with the option of reserving the at least one wild indicia for use in one of one or more subsequent games if the at least one wild indicia has been displayed to the player;
 - limit in which one of the one or more subsequent games the player may use the at least one wild indicia;
 - determine a game outcome according to a collection of playing indicia and the at least one wild indicia; and
 - determine a game payout according to the game outcome.
2. The machine of claim 1 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to decrease a payout to the player when the player uses at least one wild indicia.
3. A machine comprising:
 - a display screen that is capable of generating video images;
 - a plurality of selection devices;
 - a machine-accessible medium including data that, when accessed by a machine, cause the machine to:
 - provide a player with the opportunity to place at least one wager;
 - provide a first collection of playing indicia to define a first game, the first collection of playing indicia being selected from a plurality of playing indicia, wherein the plurality of playing indicia include at least one wild indicia;

cause a video image representing the first game to be displayed on the display screen;

provide the player with the option of using at least one of the plurality of selection devices to reserve the at least one wild indicia for use in one of one or more subsequent games if the at least one wild indicia has been displayed to the player on the display screen;

determine a game outcome according to a selected collection of playing indicia and the at least one wild indicia; and

decrease a game payout to the player when the reserved at least one wild indicia is used in determining the game outcome.

4. The machine of claim 3 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to limit in which one of the one or more subsequent games the player may use the at least one wild indicia.

5. The machine of any one of claims 1-4 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to provide the player with the option of using the reserved at least one wild indicia in one of a predetermined number of subsequent games.

6. The machine of any one of claims 1-5 wherein the first and one or more subsequent games are one of the following games: poker, blackjack, keno, reel slots, video slots, dice, bingo, and lotto.

7. The machine of any one of claims 1-6 wherein the video image represents one of the following games: video poker, video blackjack, video slots, video keno, video bingo, video dice, or video lotto;

the video image comprising an image of at least five playing cards if the game comprises video poker,

the video image comprising an image of a plurality of simulated slot machine reels if the game comprises video slots,

the video image comprising an image of a plurality of playing cards if the game comprises video blackjack,

the video image comprising an image of a plurality of keno numbers if the game comprises video keno,

the video image comprising an image of a bingo grid if the game comprises video bingo,

the video image comprising an image of at least one die if the game comprises video dice, and

the video image comprising an image of a plurality of numbers if the game comprises video lotto.

8. The machine of any one of claims 1-7 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to qualify the player for a bonus game when the player uses the reserved at least one wild indicia.

9. The machine of any one of claims 1-8 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to qualify the player for a super-jackpot when the player uses the reserved at least one wild indicia.

10. The machine of any one of claims 1-9 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to select a subsequent collection of indicia from the plurality of indicia to define the one of one or more subsequent games.

11. The machine of any one of claims 1-10 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to select the first collection of indicia and the subsequent collection of indicia randomly.

12. The machine of any one of claims 1-11 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to determine a game outcome of the one of one or more subsequent games according to a subsequent collection of indicia, wherein the at least one reserved wild indicia is included in the subsequent collection of indicia, and wherein determining the game payout comprises determining a subsequent payout according to the subsequent game outcome; and

wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to:

determine a first game outcome of the first game according to the first collection of indicia, wherein the at least one wild indicia is reserved for use in the one of one or more subsequent games and is not used in the first game; and

determine a first payout according to the first game outcome.

13. The machine of any one of claims 1-12 wherein the first game and the one or more subsequent games are card games, the plurality of indicia is a plurality of cards, the first collection of indicia is a first collection of cards, and the at least one wild indicia is at least one wild card.

14. The machine of claim 13 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to provide the player with a draw card that is selected from the plurality of cards to replace one of the plurality of playing cards in the first collection of cards.

15. The machine of claim 13 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to provide the player with at least one replacement card that is selected from the plurality of cards to replace one of the plurality of cards in the first collection of cards when the player reserves the at least one wild card for use in the one of one or more subsequent card games.

16. The machine of claim 15 wherein the machine-accessible medium further includes data that cause the machine to prohibit the player from reserving the at least one wild card if the player received the at least one wild card as a draw card.

17. The machine of any one of claims 1-16 wherein the at least one wild indicia is not one of the plurality of playing indicia.

18. A machine for playing a game, or a series of games, wherein at least one indicia of the playing indicia is designated as a wild indicia to be used in one of one or more subsequent games, the machine being substantially as herein described with reference to the drawings.

Dated this 29th day of January 2004

IGT

By

FRASER OLD & SOHN

Patent Attorneys for the Applicant

FIG. 1

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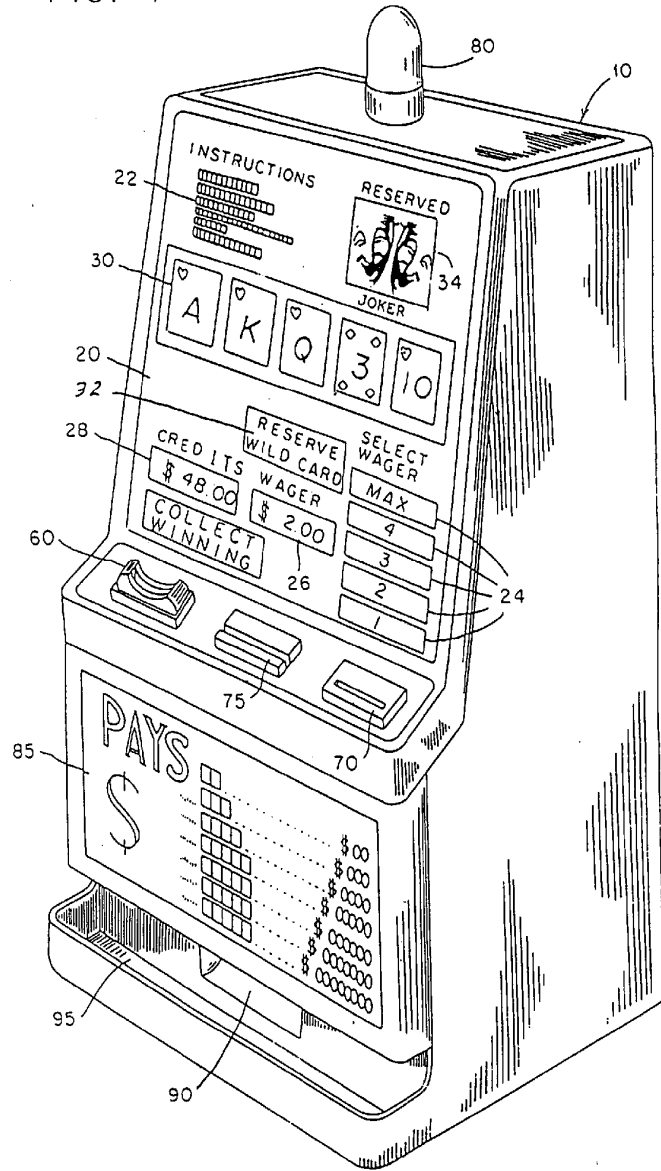


FIG. 2

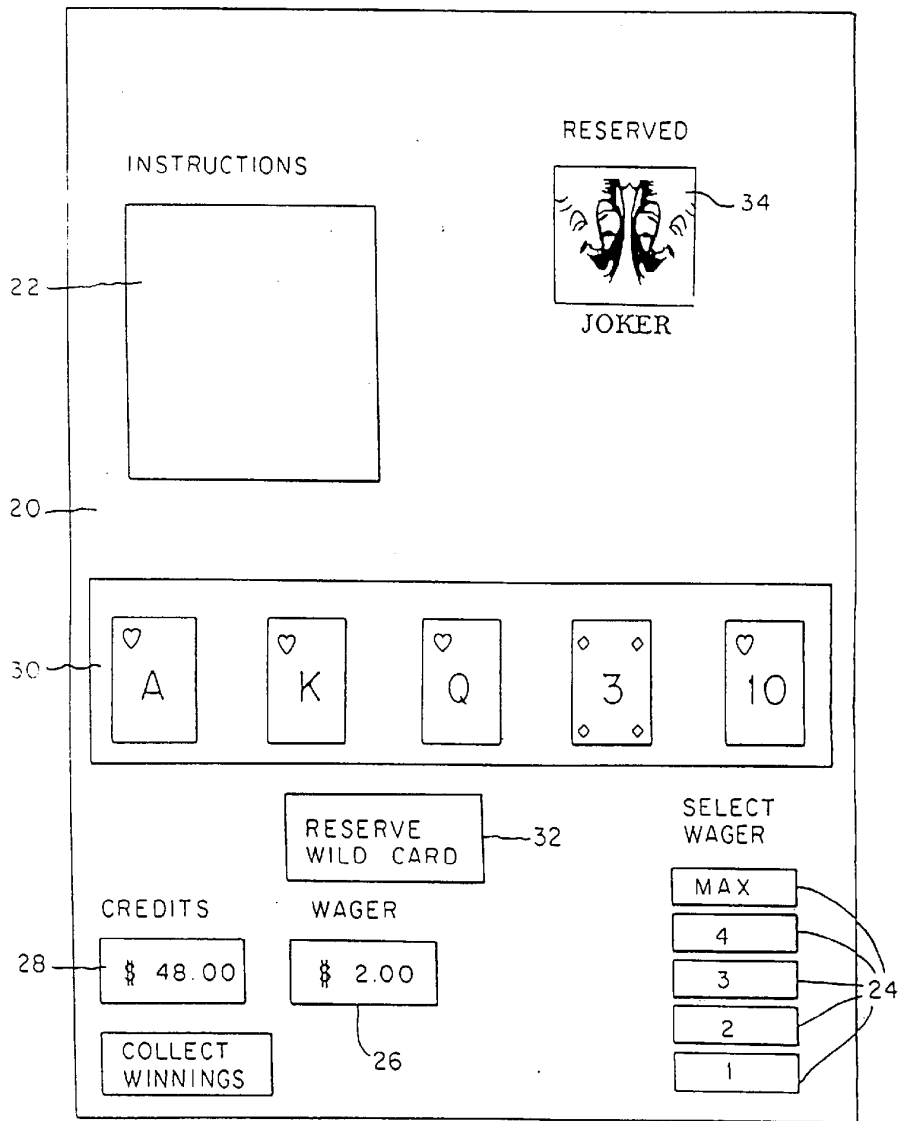


FIG. 3

3/4

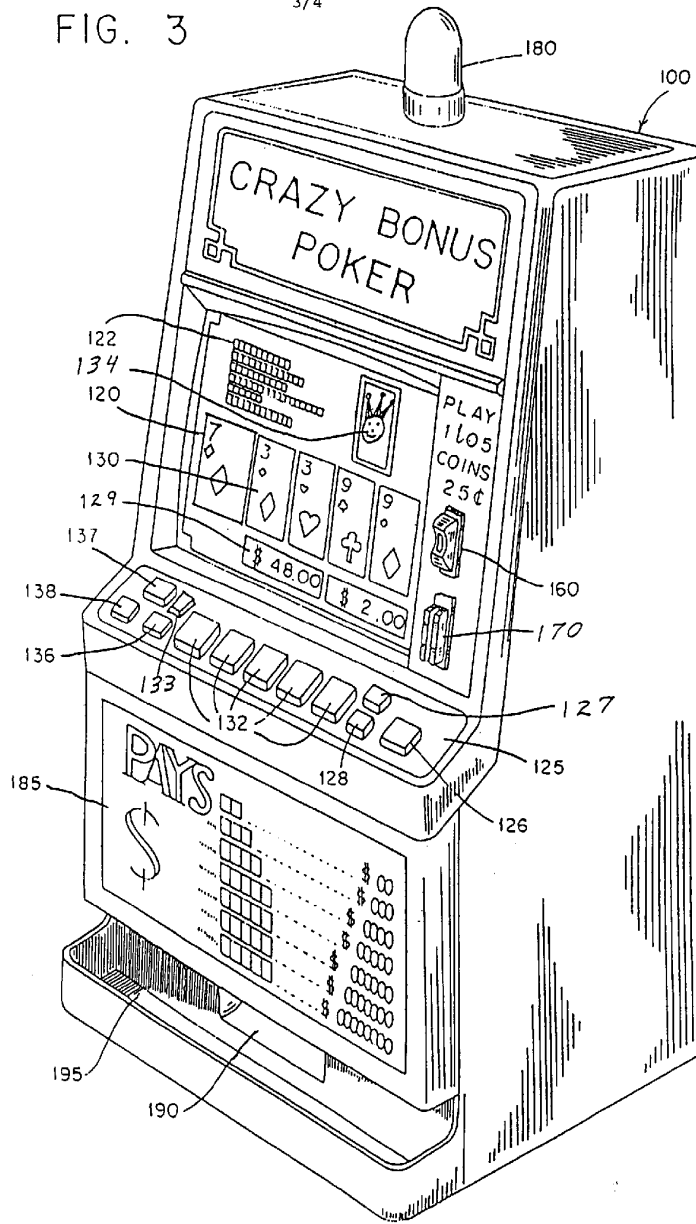


FIG. 4

