A gaming machine (10), a method of playing the game, and a readable recording medium is disclosed. A plurality of playing cards (18) is displayed defining a hand (20) to a player, and the hand (20) is compared to a triggering combination (24) and to a winning combination (26) during a regular game. Next, the bonus game is activated in response to the hand (20) matching the triggering combination (24). A controller (51) then determines the number of hands (20) to be displayed during the bonus game and indicates an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player to stimulate the player while displaying the determined number of hands (20) during the bonus game. The indicia (44) are altered as the number of hands (20) displayed approaches the determined number of hands (20) and the bonus game ends when the final indicator (40) is altered.
Figure 1
Figure 2
DISPLAYING A PLURALITY OF PLAYING CARDS DEFINING A HAND 100

ACTIVATING A BONUS GAME IN RESPONSE TO THE HAND MATCHING A TRIGGERING COMBINATION 102

ANIMATING A CHARACTER A FIRST TIME FOR ACTIVATING THE BONUS GAME AND FOR DISPLAYING INDICIA ADJACENT THE PLURALITY OF PLAYING CARDS 104

Figure 8
DISPLAYING A PLURALITY OF PLAYING CARDS
DEFINING A HAND

ACTIVATING A BONUS GAME IN RESPONSE TO THE HAND MATCHING A TRIGGERING COMBINATION

DETERMINING A NUMBER OF HANDS TO BE DISPLAYED DURING THE BONUS GAME ADJACENT THE PLURALITY OF PLAYING CARDS

PROVIDING TIME BOMBS SUCH THAT THE TIME BOMBS EXPLODED INDEPENDENT OF TIME AS THE NUMBER OF HANDS DISPLAYED APPROACHES THE NUMBER OF DETERMINED HANDS

Figure 9

DISPLAYING A PLURALITY OF PLAYING CARDS
DEFINING A HAND

ACTIVATING A BONUS GAME IN RESPONSE TO THE HAND MATCHING A TRIGGERING COMBINATION

DETERMINING A NUMBER OF HANDS TO BE DISPLAYED DURING THE BONUS GAME ADJACENT THE PLURALITY OF PLAYING CARDS

PROVIDING AN ENHANCED PAYTABLE FOR THE BONUS GAME

Figure 10
DISPLAYING A PLURALITY OF PLAYING CARDS DEFINING A HAND TO A PLAYER

COMPARING THE HAND TO A TRIGGERING COMBINATION AND COMPARING THE HAND TO A WINNING COMBINATION

AWARDING A REGULAR PAYOUT IN RESPONSE TO THE HAND MATCHING THE WINNING COMBINATION

ACTIVATING A BONUS GAME IN RESPONSE TO THE HAND MATCHING A TRIGGERING COMBINATION

DETERMINING A NUMBER OF HANDS TO BE DISPLAYED DURING THE BONUS GAME

INDICATING AN IMMINENT ENDING OF THE BONUS GAME TO THE PLAYER TO STIMULATE THE PLAYER DURING THE BONUS GAME

Figure 11
PLACE WAGER

DEAL HAND

HOLD CARDS

REPLACE DISCARDS, IF ANY

COMPARE HAND TO PAY TABLE

WIN?

NO

YES

PROVIDE CREDITS

TRIGGER HAND?

NO

YES

INITIATE BONUS GAME

ROLL UP REGULAR PAY TABLE

LAY BOMBS

BRING DOWN NEW PAY TABLE

PLAY HANDS

PAY PROGRESSIVE

ROYAL FLUSH?

NO

NO

NO

YES

PROVIDE CREDITS

Figure 12
VIDEO POKER GAME WITH ENHANCED BONUS GAME

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The subject invention relates to a gaming machine with a bonus mode having indicating indicia, a method of playing the game, and a readable recording medium for storing the game.

[0003] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0004] Video poker games are well known in the art. Traditionally, these video poker games appeal to hard-core poker players, but these video poker games become stale very quickly to such an advanced player. Additionally, the occasional poker player also finds these traditional video poker games unappealing. These various gaming machines disclosed in the related art include a display, a display processor for displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player, a comparator for comparing the hand to a triggering combination and for comparing the hand to a winning combination during a regular game, and a payment processor for awarding a regular payout in response to the hand matching the winning combination.

[0005] The related art further provides a method of playing the video poker game, which includes displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player, comparing the hand to a triggering combination and comparing the hand to a winning combination during a regular game, and awarding a regular payout in response to the hand matching the winning combination. Related art methods also include activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching the triggering combination, and determining a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game.

[0006] One such method is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 5,772,506 to Marks et al. The '506 Patent to Marks et al. discloses a method of playing a game including the steps of activating a bonus game in response to displaying a triggering combination. The triggering combination requires each of the playing card positions to be selected by displaying a predetermined card in each of the positions on successive hands. Once the predetermined card has been displayed in each of the positions, a bonus game is reached, allowing the player to win increased payouts. However, the '506 Patent to Marks et al. requires multiple hands to enter the bonus game which is not desirable to most casino operators since such games have a tendency to encourage hangers-on to intimidate players when the final triggering event is nearing in an attempt to force the player to leave the machine.

[0007] Another such method is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 5,542,669 to Charron et al. The '669 Patent to Charron et al. discloses a method of playing a game including the steps of activating a bonus game at the beginning of each hand. Before the hand is displayed to the player, a bonus combination is selected. If the bonus combination is displayed, a bonus payout is awarded. After the initial deal, the player must decide whether the bonus combination should be pursued to win the bonus payout or if the other winning combinations should be pursued. However, the '669 Patent to Charron et al. causes game play to slow down dramatically due to discrete decision making on each hand, which results in lower profits for the casino.

[0008] Yet another method is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 6,238,288 to Walker et al. The '288 Patent to Walker et al. discloses a method of playing a game including awarding a bonus payout in response to the player playing the game with increased speed. For example, if fifteen games are played in two minutes, the bonus payout will increase a regular payout by a predetermined multiplier. A clock is used to measure the playing of the player. The clock may measure either the number of games played or units of time. The increased speed is indicated to the player by modifying the pay table between a “standard”, “enhanced”, and “superior” pay tables. However, the method allows the player to continue receiving the bonus game for as long as the player continues playing the game. Furthermore, infrequent players are typically intimidated by the speed of such games and therefore reluctant to play or try these types of games.

[0009] Accordingly, it would be advantageous to provide a gaming machine and method of playing the game which includes having a bonus game including an enhanced pay table with an indicator for indicating an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player. The player is then aware of the imminent ending and finds more excitement and thrill in the playing of the bonus game to capitalize on the bonus payouts.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION AND ADVANTAGES

[0010] The subject invention provides a gaming machine, a method of playing the game, and a readable recording medium. The gaming machine includes a display and a display processor for displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player. The machine further includes a central processing unit (CPU) for activating a bonus game including a enhanced pay table in response to the hand matching a triggering combination; and characterized by the central processing unit adapted to indicate an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player to further enhance the players entertainment experience during the bonus game.

[0011] The subject invention provides a method of playing a video poker game. The game includes the steps of displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand and providing a video poker game to a player; activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination; and the method characterized by animating a character a first time for activating the bonus game and for displaying indicia adjacent the plurality of playing cards.

[0012] The subject invention further provides another game including the steps of displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand and providing a video poker game to a player; activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination; determining a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game; and the method characterized by providing time bombs such that the time bombs explode independent of time as the number of hands displayed approaches the number of determined hands during the bonus game.

[0013] The subject invention provides yet another game including the steps of displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand and providing a video poker game to a player; activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination; determining a number of
hands to be displayed during the bonus game; and the method characterized by providing an enhanced pay table for the bonus game.

The method includes the steps of displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player, comparing the hand to a triggering combination and comparing the hand to a winning combination during a regular game, and awarding a regular payout in response to the hand matching the winning combination. The method further includes activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching the triggering combination and determining a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game. The method is characterized by indicating an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player.

Accordingly, the game of the subject invention overcomes the deficiencies of the related art games. The subject invention produces a bonus game to the hard-core video poker player which least impacts their normal play strategy. The subject invention is also more appealing to the occasional player because of the bonus games entertainment experience.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other advantages of the present invention will be readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a gaming machine,
FIG. 2 is a schematic representation of the gaming machine of FIG. 1,
FIG. 3 is a display illustrating the hand during a regular game,
FIG. 4 is a display illustrating a plurality of playing cards defining a hand having activated a bonus game,
FIG. 5 is a display illustrating indicia and a clock displayed adjacent the hand for indicating the imminent ending of the bonus game,
FIG. 6 is a display illustrating altered three of the indicia during the bonus game,
FIG. 7 is a display illustrating the ending of the bonus game,
FIG. 8 is a flowchart depicting one of the methods of the subject invention,
FIG. 9 is a flowchart depicting another method of the subject invention,
FIG. 10 is a flowchart depicting yet another method of the subject invention,
FIG. 11 is a flowchart depicting an additional method of the subject invention, and
FIG. 12 is a flowchart depicting the subject invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF ONE EMBODIMENT

Referring to the Figures, wherein like numerals indicate like or corresponding parts throughout the several views, a gaming machine 10, a method of playing the game, and a readable recording medium are disclosed. The gaming machine illustrated at 10 in FIG. 1 is a video gaming machine 10 into which the present invention can be incorporated to improve the enjoyment of a video game and to thereby increase the amount of time that the video game is played by patrons of a gaming establishment. FIG. 1 shows a general appearance of the video gaming machine 10 to which the present invention is applied. As shown in the FIG. 1, the machine 10 comprises a housing 2 standing upright. The housing 2 comprises a main body 3, a top box 4 mounted on a top portion of the main body 3 and a door 5 attached to a front side of the main body 3 so as to be swingable between an open position and a closed position. At a center portion of the front side of the main body 3, there is mounted a main display device 14 comprising a CRT, and below the display 14 is provided an operation panel 8. The operation panel 8 is attached to the door 5 so as to slope down in a forward direction of the machine 10. Below the operation panel 8 and on a front side of the top box 4, there are provided decoration panels 9a and 9b on which pictures, letters and the like representing a title of the machine 10 or the like are illustrated.

As shown in FIG. 1, the operation panel 8 is provided, from a right end toward a left end thereof, with an insertion portion 11, and an input portion 17. The insertion portion 11 is provided with a slot base 13 integrally formed with a coin insertion portion 15 and a bill insertion portion 21.

The input portion 17 is provided with four push button switches 25, 27, 29, 31 as first input devices, each of which is capable of being depressed. These push button switches 25, 27, 29, 31 are selected as switches to be operated with particular high frequency during the game, so that these switches are provided on the operation panel 8. For example, the push button switch 29 at a lower left position of the four switches is operated for starting the game. The number of the push buttons provided at the input portion 17 and functions assigned to the push buttons can be properly changed.

Referring now to FIG. 2, a block diagram illustrating a schematic configuration of a control system provided in the machine 10 is depicted. The machine 10 includes a game controller 51, or central processing unit (CPU), a coin-bill management device 53, a display processor 16, RAM 55 as a memory device and EPROM 59. The CPU 51 is mainly composed of a microprocessor unit and performs various calculations and motion control necessary for the progress of the game. The coin-bill management device 53 detects the insertion of a coin and a bill from the coin insertion portion 15 and the bill insertion portion 21, and performs a necessary process for managing coins and bills. The display processor 16 interprets commands issued from the CPU 51 and displays desirable images on the display 14. The RAM 55 stores programs and data necessary for the progress of the game, and the EPROM 59 stores, in advance, programs and data for controlling basic operation of the machine 10, such as the booting operation thereof and the game code.

The video gaming machine 10 of FIG. 1 further includes the display 14 that displays a card game, or other game of chance, and a player using the video gaming machine 10 interacts with the game.
The CPU 51 is electrically connected with a coordinate readout device 57 as well as the above-mentioned pushbutton switches 25, 27, 29, 31. The coordinate readout device 57 works as a second input device and comprises, for example, a so-called touch panel formed as a transparent panel on the display 14 and capable of issuing signals corresponding to the coordinates of a position touched on the display 14 by the player. The coordinate readout device 57 is closely put on the surface of the display 14 and integrated therewith. A random number generator 32 is included for randomly generating the hand to be displayed in the game as described below.

Referring now also to FIG. 3, the controller 51 sends a signal to a display processor 16 for displaying a plurality of playing cards 18 defining a hand 20 to the player on the display 14. The display includes a cash-out touchpad 41 such that when the cash-out touchpad 41 is touched any accumulated credits are paid to the player in a coin bin 7. A winner paid meter 43 keeps track of winnings paid out to a player for a hand. A credit meter 45 is displayed for informing the player of the number of winning credits accumulated. The display further includes a help touchpad 47 for accessing information about the game. A bet-1-coin touchpad 49 is displayed to allow the player to bet one credit each time. The player may push the bet-1-coin touchpad 49 numerous times increasing credits. For example, touching the bet-1-coin button three times results in three credits being wagered. A max bet touchpad 61 is also displayed to allow the player to bet the maximum amount by pushing one touchpad, preferably the maximum amount is five coins. Actuation of the max bet touchpad 61 also initiates the game. A deal/draw touchpad 63 is displayed for allowing the user to deal and draw the playing cards during the game. The touchpad could also be buttons affixed to the machine.

The controller 51 awards a regular payout in response to the hand 20 matching the winning combination and the controller 51 also activates a bonus game in response to the hand 20 matching the triggering combination 24. The regular payout varies according to the amount of credits wagered. If the maximum number of credits is wagered, then the maximum regular payout is awarded for a winning combination. The controller 51 further awards a bonus payout in the bonus game in response to the hand 20 matching the winning combination. Once the bonus game is activated, the controller 51 determines a number of hands 20 to be displayed during the bonus game. The random number generator 32 randomly generates the number of hands to be played during the bonus game, as described further below.

The gaming machine 10 of the subject invention provides a method of playing the game, specifically for playing video poker, as illustrated in FIG. 3. The game begins by the player inserting coins or credits into the gaming machine. The player bets a desired number of credits for playing the game between one credit and five credits. Different games may allow for different desired number of credits being wagered. The method includes the steps of displaying the plurality of playing cards 18 defining the hand 20 to the player. The hand can be any number of playing cards but is preferably drawn poker. The regular game begins by displaying the plurality of playing cards 18 to the player in the initial deal of the plurality of playing cards 18. Next, the player is prompted to select the cards to be held (or conversely, discarded) in the hand 20, as is known in the art of playing poker. The cards that are not selected to be held by the player are replaced by dealing additional cards. After the draw, the plurality of playing cards 18 are compared to the winning combinations. In one embodiment, the winning combinations includes, but are not limited to: jacks or better, two pair, three of a kind, straight, flush, full house, four of a kind, straight flush, and royal flush. The regular payout is awarded in response to the hand 20 matching one of the winning combinations and the amount wagered, as shown in columns titled 1st Coin, 2nd Coin, etc. The winning combinations are known in the art of playing poker, and the subject invention may be utilized with different styles of playing poker, such as deuces wild, bonus poker, double bonus poker, etc.

The controller 51 also indicates an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player to further provide excitement to the player. The controller 51 displays indicia 44 adjacent the plurality of playing cards 18 to indicate the imminent ending of the bonus game, as in FIG. 4. The indicia 44 are preferably bombs 45, each of the bombs 45 having a lighted fuse 47. The controller displays a character 48 and a clock 56 on the display 14 and animates the character 48 a first time to activate the bonus game and a second time to signify the end of the bonus game. Character 48 starts the bonus game by rolling up the regular pay table. Next, the character 48 lays bombs and rolls down the enhanced pay table, as shown in FIG. 5.

Referring to FIG. 6, the indicia 44 are altered as the number of hands 20 displayed in the bonus game approaches the determined number of hands 20 and ending the bonus game in response to all of the indicia 44 being altered. As hands 20 are played, the fuses 47 burn and the bombs 45 explode causing an explosion and leaving a mound of ashes 54 behind. The clock 56 is displayed, however, the indicia 44 are altered independent of the clock 56. The clock 56 is displayed adjacent one of the bombs 45 to illustrate the passing of time and in now way related to the altering of the indicia 44. The clock 56 in no way measures an appreciable time passing during the bonus game. The altering of the indicia 44, or exploding of bombs 45, is independent of the clock 56 and is based upon the determined number of hands 20 played during the bonus game.

The method further includes activating the bonus game in response to the hand 20 matching the triggering combination 24. In one embodiment, the bonus game begins only when the triggering combination 24 is matched on the initial deal. Furthermore, the beginning of the bonus game is preferably activated in response to the player wagering the maximum amount of credits prior to the initial deal. Once the triggering combination 24 is matched, the character 48 is animated on the display 14 for the first time. In one embodiment, the triggering combination 24 is defined as displaying each of the plurality of playing cards 18 having an identical suit, referred to as a flush. The triggering combination 24 may further include displaying the sequential series of the plurality of playing cards 18 having the same suit, or straight flush. The triggering combination 24 may still further include displaying sequential face card series of the plurality of playing cards 18 having the same suit, or royal flush. Other triggering combinations 24 may be selected other than those described above, such as five random cards or three of a kind. Additionally, there may be
more than one triggering combination 24, as in one embodiment which has three, a flush, a straight flush, and a royal flush.

[0041] After the triggering combination 24 is displayed, the character 48 modifies a pay table 58 to include the bonus payout. FIG. 3 illustrates the pay table 58 during the regular game having regular payouts, while FIGS. 4-6 illustrate the pay table 58 in the time bomb mode. Preferably, the character 48 rolls the pay table 58 up and rolls the pay table 58 back down which now includes the bonus payouts. FIG. 4 illustrates the pay table 58 being rolled up. The bonus payouts may include increasing each of the regular payouts by a multiplier, such as multiplying the regular payouts by five. The bonus payouts may also only increase certain winning combinations 26, such as the royal flush, the straight flush, and the four of a kind. Different multipliers could further increase each of the winning combinations than one another. In one embodiment, the royal flush in the bonus game is linked to a progressive jackpot.

[0042] Once the bonus game is activated, the controller determines the number of hands 20 that are going to be displayed during the bonus game. The controller 51 may determine the number of hands 20 to be between five hands and twenty hands. Of course, it is to be understood that the number of hands may be greater or lesser while still achieving the subject invention.

[0043] The method is characterized by indicating an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player to heighten the player’s excitement in the displaying of the determined number of hands 20 during the bonus game. The animated character 48 moves from right to left across the display 14 displaying indicia 44 adjacent the playing cards 18. The indicia 44 indicate the imminent ending of the bonus game to the player as the bonus game is played. As the bonus game is played, the indicia 44 are altered as the number of hands 20 displayed approaches the determined number of hands 20. Preferably, the indicia 44 that are displayed by the character 48 are bombs 45. The character 48 displays the bombs 45 above four of the five cards. Each of the bombs 45 appears to ready to explode. The bombs 45 are altered by showing the bombs 45 exploding. The bonus game ends after all of the indicia 44 have been altered, as in FIG. 7. For example, if the determined number of hands 20 to be displayed in the bonus game is ten hands, then the first bomb 60 explodes after two hands 20. The second bomb 62 may explode after three games. The third bomb 64 may explode after the sixth game and the fourth bomb 66 explodes after the tenth hand 20. As the indicia 44 are altered, the animation causes the player to become more excited and enthusiastic. The animated character 48 also displays the clock 56 adjacent the bombs 45 to further stimulate the player in the bonus game.

[0044] Once the fourth bomb 66 has exploded, the bonus game is ended. Next, the character 48 is animated a second time and the character 48 removes the altered indicia 44, in FIG. 7. In one embodiment, once the indicia 44 are altered, ashes 54 remain where the bombs 45 were displayed. The character 48 moves from left to right across the display 14 removing the ashes 54. The character 48 may proceed with a broom or a vacuum to illustrate the clearing of the altered indicia 44. Then, the pay table 58 is modified a second time, by rolling the pay table 58 up and down, to return to the regular payouts and the regular game is restored.

[0045] The subject invention further includes a readable recording medium storing an executable control program for displaying the plurality of playing cards 18 defining the hand 20 to the player. Readable recording medium, as is known in the art, includes magnetic recording medium and portable recording mediums. The portable recording mediums include a compact disk read only memory (CD-ROM) or a floppy disk. Further, the control program can be stored in a storage device of a computer connected to a network, and transferred to other computers. When the program is executed on one computer, the program is stored in a hard disk or the like within the computer and is loaded into a main memory for execution.

[0046] The control program also includes comparing the hand 20 to the triggering combination 24 and comparing the hand 20 to the winning combination during the regular game, awarding the regular payout in response to the hand 20 matching the winning combination 26, activating the bonus game in response to the hand 20 matching the triggering combination 24, and determining the number of hands 20 to be displayed during the bonus game. The executable control program characterized by indicating an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player to enhance the experience while displaying the determined number of hands 20 during the bonus game.

[0047] The control program is further characterized by displaying indicia 44 adjacent the playing cards 18 to indicate the imminent ending of the bonus game. The control program is further characterized by altering the indicia 44 as the number of hands 20 displayed in the bonus game approaches the determined number of hands 20 and ending the bonus game after all of the indicia 44 have been altered. The control program is further characterized by animating the character 48 the first time for activating the bonus game and for displaying the indicia 44 adjacent the plurality of playing cards 18. The control program is further characterized by animating the character 48 the second time and removing the altered indicia 44 in response to ending the bonus game.

[0048] One such embodiment of the method is illustrated in FIG. 8, which includes displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand and providing a video poker game to a player in step 100. Step 102 includes activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination and step 104 includes animating a character a first time for activating the bonus game having enhanced pay tables, and for displaying indicia adjacent the plurality of playing cards.

[0049] Another embodiment of the method is illustrated in FIG. 9 including displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand and providing a video poker game to a player in step 106. Step 108 activates a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination and step 110 determines a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game adjacent the plurality of playing cards. Step 112 provides time bombs such that the time bombs explode independent of time as the number of hands displayed approaches the number of determined hands during the bonus game cards.

[0050] Yet another embodiment of the method is illustrated in FIG. 10 including displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand and providing a video poker game to
a player in step 114. Step 116 activates a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination and step 118 determines a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game adjacent the plurality of playing cards. Step 120 provides an enhanced pay table for the bonus game such that winning a royal flush awards a progressive jackpot.

[0051] Still another embodiment is illustrated in FIG. 11 including displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand and providing a video poker game to a player in step 122. In step 124, the hand is compared to a triggering combination and compared to a winning combination. Step 126 awards a regular payout in response to the hand matching the winning combination. Step 128 activates a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination and step 130 determines a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game adjacent the plurality of playing cards. Finally, step 132 indicates an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player to further provide excitement to the player while displaying the determined number of hands during the bonus game.

[0052] Referring to FIG. 12, a flowchart depicts the steps of the subject invention as described above.

[0053] The controller 51 is described as performing the necessary functions to carry out the subject invention. However, multiple elements may be used to accomplish the subject invention as is known in the art. Each element may be software code programmed into the controller 51 for each step or the elements may be hardware connected to the controller 51.

[0054] Many modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. The invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described within the scope of the appended claims, wherein that which is prior art is antecedent to the novelty set forth in the “characterized by” clause. The novelty is meant to be particularly and distinctly recited in the “characterized by” clause whereas the antecedent recitations merely set forth the old and well-known combination in which the invention resides. These antecedent recitations should be interpreted to cover any combination in which the incentive novelty exercises its utility.

What is claimed is:

1. A gaming machine comprising:
   - a display;
   - a display processor for displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player;
   - a central processing unit (CPU) for activating a bonus game in response to said hand matching a triggering combination; and
   - said machine including said central processing unit adapted to indicate an imminent ending of said bonus game to the player to encourage the player to stimulate the player while displaying said determined number of hands during said bonus game.

2. A machine as set forth in claim 1 further including said central processing unit adapted to display indicia adjacent said plurality of playing cards to indicate said imminent ending of said bonus game.

3. A machine as set forth in claim 2 further including said central processing unit adapted to alter said indicia as said number of hands displayed in said bonus game approaches a determined number of hands and ending the bonus game in response to all of said indicia being altered.

4. A machine as set forth in claim 3 further including said central processing unit adapted to display a character on said display and adapted to animate said character a first time to activate said bonus game and a second time to signify said end of said bonus game.

5. A machine as set forth in claim 4 further including a clock for measuring a time interval during said bonus game wherein said indicia are altered independent of said clock by said indicia processor.

6. A machine as set forth in claim 5 wherein said controller is adapted to award a bonus payout in said bonus game in response to said hand matching a winning combination.

7. A machine as set forth in claim 1 wherein said central processing unit is adapted to display an initial deal of said plurality of playing cards and to prompt the player to select at least one of said plurality of playing cards and dealing replacement cards for unselected playing cards.

8. A machine as set forth in claim 7 further including an input for allowing the user to select at least one of said plurality of playing cards after said initial deal.

9. A method of playing a game, said method comprising:
   - displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player;
   - activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination; and
   - animating a character a first time for activating the bonus game and for displaying indicia adjacent the plurality of playing cards.

10. A method as set forth in claim 9 further including altering the indicia as the number of hands displayed in the bonus game approaches a predetermined number of hands and ending the bonus game after all of the indicia have been altered.

11. A method as set forth in claim 10 further including randomly determining the predetermined number of hands of to be displayed during the bonus game.

12. A method as set forth in claim 10 wherein activating the bonus game is further defined as modifying a pay table to include a bonus payout in response to animating the character the first time.

13. A method as set forth in claim 12 wherein the step of ending the bonus game is further defined as animating the character a second time and removing the altered indicia.

14. A method as set forth in claim 13 wherein the step of ending the bonus game is further defined as modifying the pay table to have the regular payout and restoring the regular game.

15. A method as set forth in claim 14 wherein the step of activating the bonus game is further defined as displaying the triggering combination on the initial deal of the playing cards.

16. A method as set forth in claim 15 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying each of the plurality of playing cards having an identical suit.
17. A method as set forth in claim 16 further including awarding a bonus payout for the hand matching a winning combination during the bonus game.

18. A method of playing a game, said method comprising:
   - displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player;
   - activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination;
   - determining a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game;
   - displaying time bombs such that the time bombs explode independent of time as the number of hands displayed approaches the number of determined hands during the bonus game;

19. A method as set forth in claim 18 animating a character a first time for activating the bonus game and for positioning the time bombs adjacent the plurality of playing cards.

20. A method as set forth in claim 19 activating the bonus game is further defined as modifying a pay table to include a bonus payout in response to animating the character the first time.

21. A method as set forth in claim 20 wherein the step of ending the bonus game is further defined as animating the character a second time and removing the altered indicia.

22. A method as set forth in claim 21 wherein the step of ending the bonus game is further defined as modifying the pay table to have the regular payout and restoring the regular game.

23. A method as set forth in claim 22 wherein the step of activating the bonus game is further defined as displaying the triggering combination on the initial deal of the playing cards.

24. A method as set forth in claim 23 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying each of the plurality of playing cards having an identical suit.

25. A method of playing a game, said method comprising:
   - displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player;
   - activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching a triggering combination;
   - determining a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game;
   - providing an enhanced pay table for the bonus game such that the player has enhanced excitement during the bonus game.

26. A method as set forth in claim 25 further including awarding a progressive jackpot in the bonus game in response to receiving a royal flush while playing within the bonus round(s).

27. A method as set forth in claim 26 further including animating a character a first time for activating the bonus game and for displaying indicia adjacent the plurality of playing cards.

28. A method as set forth in claim 27 activating the bonus game is further defined as modifying a pay table to include a bonus payout in response to animating the character the first time.

29. A method as set forth in claim 28 wherein the step of ending the bonus game is further defined as animating the character a second time and removing the altered indicia.

30. A method as set forth in claim 29 wherein the step of ending the bonus game is further defined as modifying the pay table to have the regular payout and restoring the regular game.

31. A method as set forth in claim 30 wherein the step of activating the bonus game is further defined as displaying the triggering combination on the initial deal of the playing cards.

32. A method as set forth in claim 31 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying each of the plurality of playing cards having an identical suit.

33. A method as set forth in claim 32 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying a sequential series of the plurality of playing cards.

34. A method as set forth in claim 33 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying a sequential face card series of the plurality of playing cards.

35. A method as set forth in claim 34 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying a sequential series of the plurality of playing cards.

36. A method as set forth in claim 35 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying a sequential face card series of the plurality of playing cards.

37. A method of playing a game, said method comprising:
   - displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player;
   - comparing the hand to a triggering combination and comparing the hand to a winning combination during a regular game;
   - awarding a regular payout in response to the hand matching the winning combination;
   - activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching the triggering combination;
   - determining a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game; and
   - indicating an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player to encourage the player to stimulate the player while displaying the determined number of hands during the bonus game.

38. A method as set forth in claim 37 further including displaying indicia adjacent the playing cards to indicate the imminent ending of the bonus game.

39. A method as set forth in claim 38 further including altering the indicia as the number of hands displayed in the bonus game approaches the determined number of hands and ending the bonus game after all of the indicia have been altered.

40. A method as set forth in claim 39 further including animating a character a first time for activating the bonus game and for displaying the indicia adjacent the plurality of playing cards.
41. A method as set forth in claim 40 wherein activating the bonus game is further defined as modifying a pay table to include a bonus payout in response to animating the character the first time.

42. A method as set forth in claim 41 wherein the step of ending the bonus game is further defined as animating the character a second time and removing the altered indicia.

43. A method as set forth in claim 42 wherein the step of ending the bonus game is further defined as modifying the pay table to have the regular payout and restoring the regular game.

44. A method as set forth in claim 43 wherein displaying the plurality of playing cards further includes displaying an initial deal of the plurality of playing cards and prompting the player to select at least one of the cards to be held in the hand, and dealing replacement cards in a draw, such that the cards not selected by the player are replaced.

45. A method as set forth in claim 44 wherein the step of activating the bonus game is further defined as displaying the triggering combination on the initial deal of the playing cards.

46. A method as set forth in claim 45 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying each of the plurality of playing cards having an identical suit.

47. A method as set forth in claim 46 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying a sequential series of the plurality of playing cards.

48. A method as set forth in claim 47 wherein the step of displaying the triggering combination is further defined as displaying a sequential face card series of the plurality of playing cards.

49. A method as set forth in claim 37 further including awarding a bonus payout for the hand matching the winning combination during the bonus game.

50. A computer readable recording medium storing an executable control program for displaying a plurality of playing cards defining a hand to a player, comparing the hand to a triggering combination and comparing the hand to a winning combination during a regular game, awarding a regular payout in response to the hand matching the winning combination, activating a bonus game in response to the hand matching the triggering combination, determining a number of hands to be displayed during the bonus game, and an imminent ending of the bonus game to the player to stimulate the player while displaying the determined number of hands during the bonus game.

51. A computer readable recording medium as set forth in claim 49 wherein the control program is further including displaying indicia adjacent the playing cards to indicate the imminent ending of the bonus game.

52. A computer readable recording medium as set forth in claim 50 wherein the control program is further including altering the indicia as the number of hands displayed in the bonus game approaches the determined number of hands and ending the bonus game after all of the indicia have been altered.

53. A computer readable recording medium as set forth in claim 51 wherein the control program is further characterized by animating a character a first time for activating the bonus game and for displaying the indicia adjacent the plurality of playing cards.

54. A computer readable recording medium as set forth in claim 52 wherein the control program is further characterized by animating the character a second time and removing the altered indicia in response to ending the bonus game.

* * * * *