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(54) **INTERACTIVE AMUSEMENT DEVICE**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

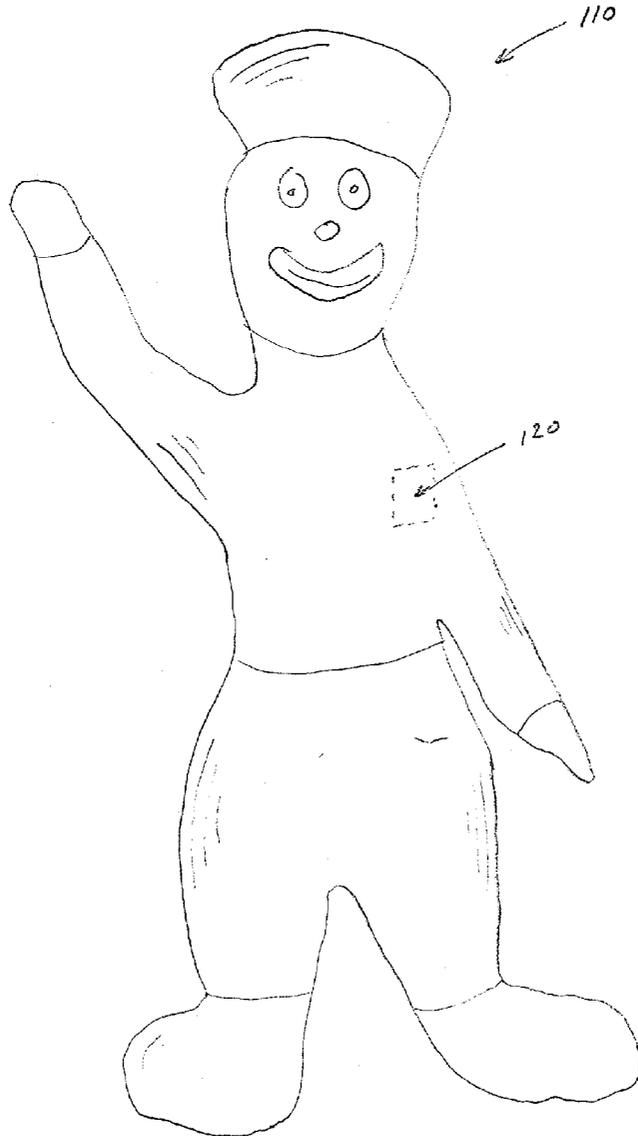
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The invention is an interactive pinata, equipped with an electronic recording/playback system. The recording system can either play previously recorded messages, or in an alternative embodiment, the system can record and play back original messages from a person such as the owner. In either embodiment, the pinata can respond to being struck (or missed) by playing a message. The present invention may be embodied with cartoon or celebrity voices being prerecorded. Finally, the recording system could be operated via a type of remote control, ranging from simple pushbuttons to a karaoke-like arrangement.

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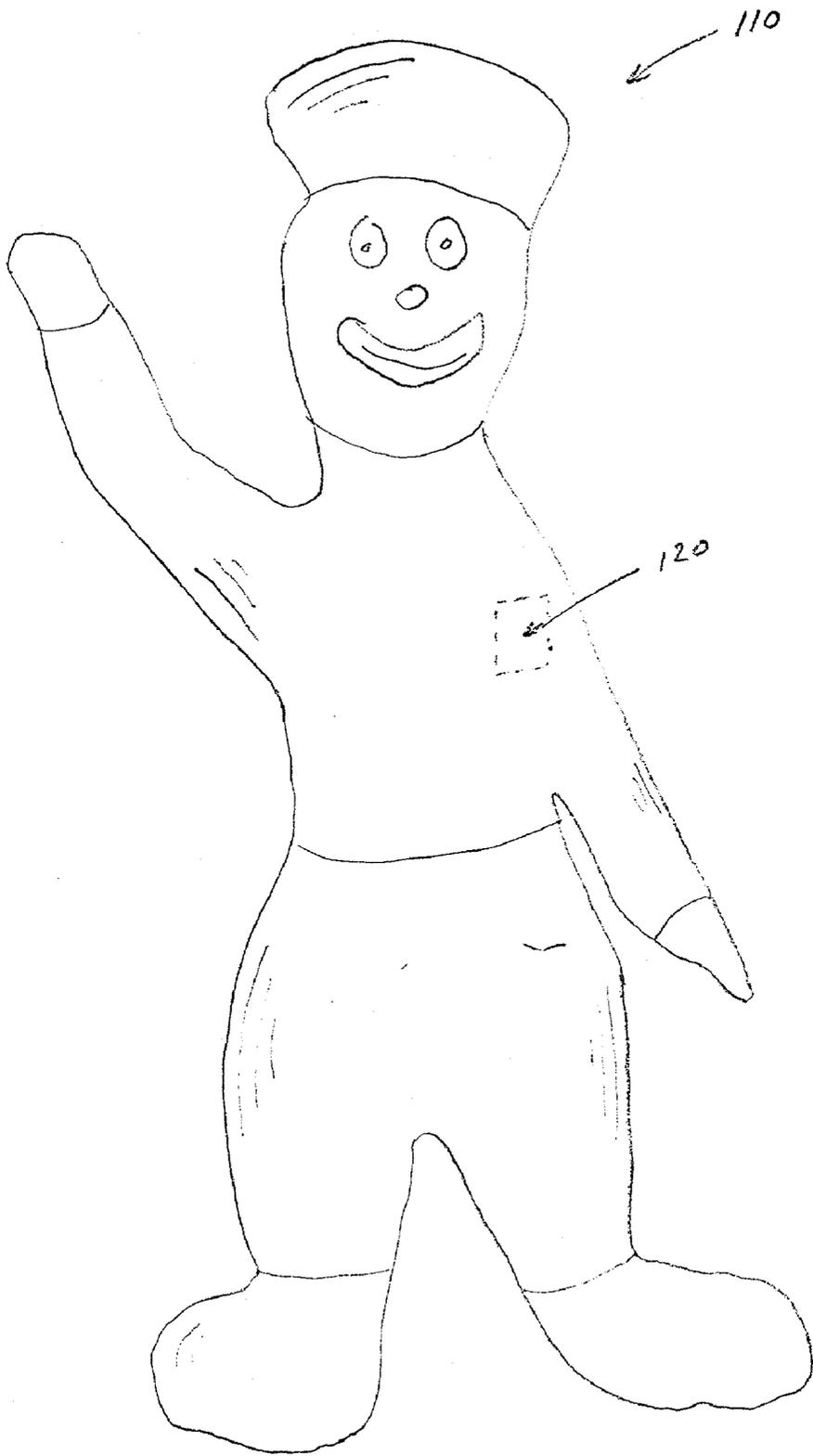


Fig. 1

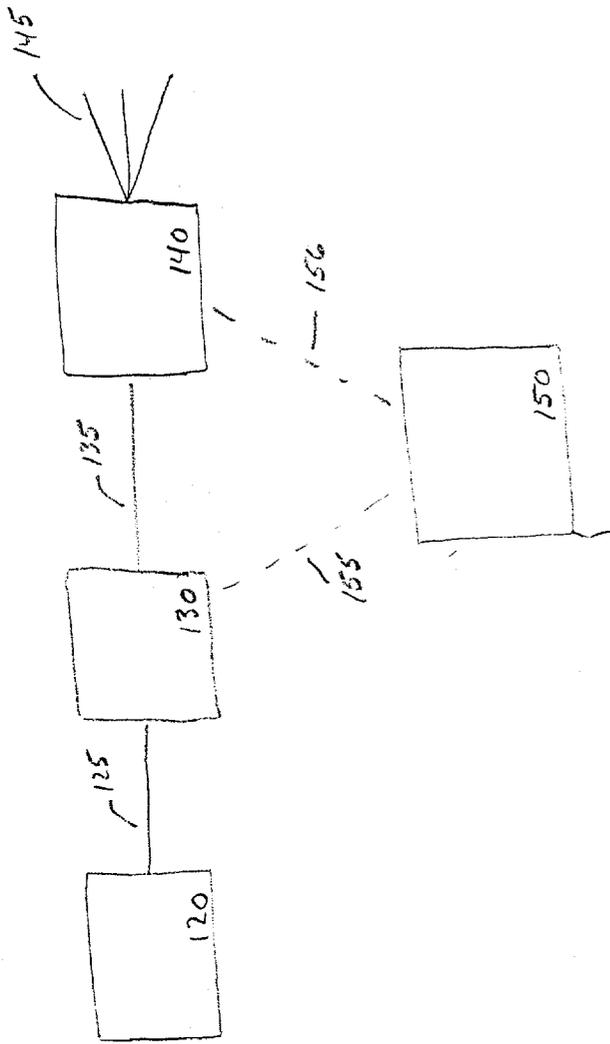
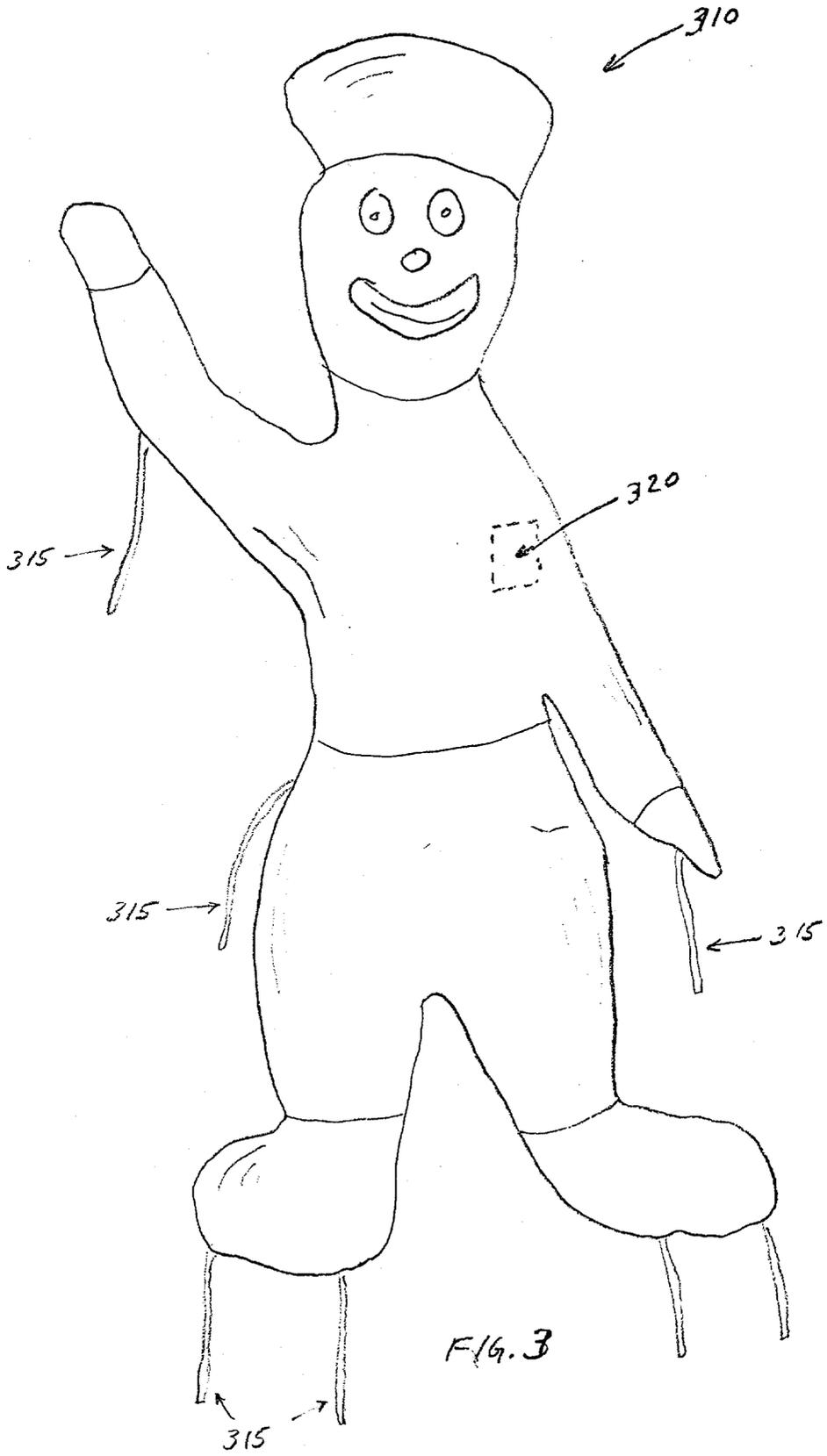


Fig. 2



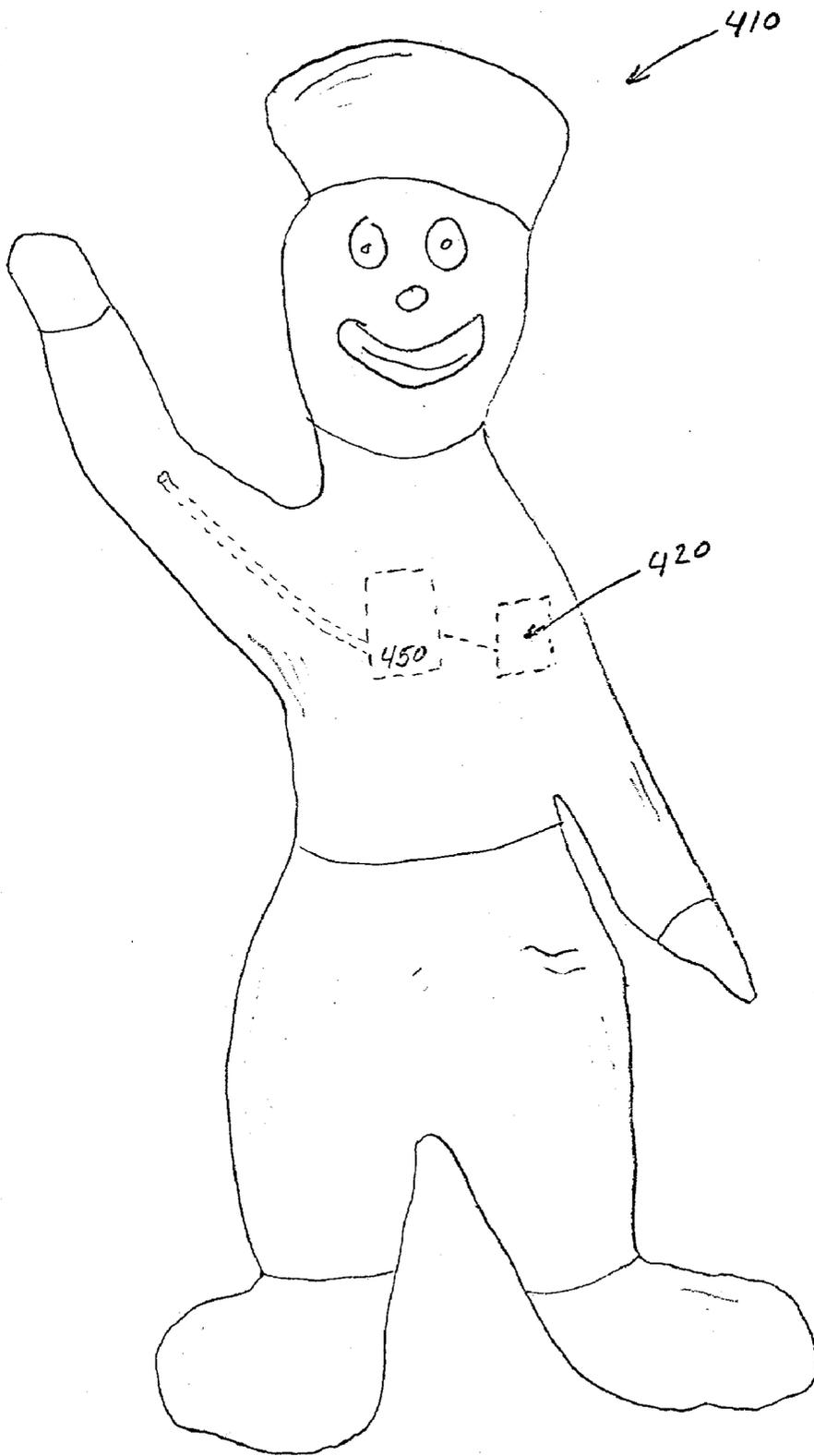


FIG. 4

## INTERACTIVE AMUSEMENT DEVICE

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Technical Field

[0002] The present invention relates generally to interactive amusement devices for use in a group party or gathering where a plurality of active participants interact with the amusement device. In particular, the invention relates to an interactive pinata equipped with at least one sensor and an electronic recording/playback system.

[0003] 2. Related Art

[0004] It is known to provide toys or other amusement devices which incorporate voice record chips that are activated to broadcast appropriate noises or messages during play to make the toy more versatile and attractive to play with. However, there exists a need for an amusement device which is useful in a game involving a plurality of players, such as a pinata, and which can interact with the players by responding to actions or miscues of the players.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] It is therefore a feature of the present invention to overcome the above shortcomings related to interactive amusement devices, especially pinatas, by providing a novel interactive pinata and method for employing the interactive pinata.

[0006] In a first general aspect, the present invention provides an interactive pinata comprising: a first object, wherein said object includes a sensor for operationally receiving an action from a second object, wherein said second object is manipulated by a person; a control device responsive to an input from said sensor; and an audio device, said audio device responsive to at least one input from said control device.

[0007] In a second general aspect, the present invention provides a method for an interactive pinata, said method comprising: providing a first object, wherein said object includes a sensor for operationally receiving an action from a second object, wherein said second object is manipulated by a person; providing a control device responsive to an input from said sensor; and providing an audio device, said audio device responsive to at least one input from said control device.

[0008] The foregoing and other features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following more particular description of embodiments of the invention.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009] The features and inventive aspects of the present invention will become more apparent upon reading the following detailed description, claims, and drawings, of which the following is a brief description.

[0010] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an interactive pinata of the present invention.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a control system for the interactive pinata of the present invention.

[0012] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of an alternative interactive pinata embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] FIG. 4 is a perspective view of another alternative interactive pinata embodiment of the present invention.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

[0014] The following is a detailed explanation of the interactive pinata, and a method for employing the interactive pinata, with reference to the attached drawings. It should be noted that the same reference numbers are assigned to components having approximately the same functions and structural features in the following explanation and the attached drawings to preclude the necessity for repeated explanation thereof.

[0015] In an illustrative embodiment, the interactive pinata 110 shown in FIG. 1 is known as a Mexican pinata, and is designed to be struck with a stick or similar implement. When properly struck, the pinata 110 opens to release numerous candies or other treats to the waiting partygoers. The present invention improves on this design by adding at least one sensor 120 to the pinata 110.

[0016] As shown schematically in FIG. 2, sensor 120 reacts to the striking of the pinata 110 by sending a signal 125 to control unit 130. Control unit 130 may be incorporated in pinata 110 itself, or it may be located apart from pinata 110. Upon receipt of signal 125 from sensor 120, control unit 130 in turn provides signal 135 to audio device 140. Audio device 140 broadcasts a noise or message 145 in response to this signal 135. Message 135 may be a simple sound effect, or it may be a message such as a phrase spoken in the voice of a well-known celebrity or cartoon character. In an embodiment, audio device 140 is mounted in a suitable location (such as, inter alia, in the head) in pinata 110 so that it appears that pinata 110 is responding to being hit by the partygoer.

[0017] Control unit 130 may be designed so as to be operationally attached to pinata 110. Therefore, control unit 130 may be subsequently reused in more than one pinata.

[0018] In an alternative embodiment, remote control unit 150 may be operatively coupled to control unit 130 and/or audio device 140. Remote control unit 150 permits a party host to override signal 135 to produce a desired result in audio device 140. For example, remote control unit 150 may be a karaoke-like device, thereby enabling the party host to broadcast commands or comments through audio device 140 in order to further encourage the partygoer.

[0019] Alternatively, sensor 120 could be able to detect a near miss by the partygoer, and will then automatically produce a corresponding audio response. Sensor 120 could be any of a variety of sensors, including a motion sensor, a thermal sensor, an optical sensor, an audio sensor, and a visual sensor.

[0020] In another alternative embodiment, the pinata 110 may be in any of a variety of configurations, such as, inter alia, a celebrity or notorious figure, an animal, an inanimate object, or a cartoon character. In each of these cases, the audio device could broadcast an appropriate voice message or sound effect, or the audio device could alter the party host's voice so that it resembles an appropriate voice for the given pinata configuration.

[0021] As shown in FIG. 3, pinata 310 may also be a string-pull or Cuban pinata, wherein a plurality of strings or

ribbons **315** are attached to the pinata. As each successive string **315** is pulled, a sensor **320** within pinata **310** would send a signal **125** to a control unit **130**, and operation would continue as in **FIG. 2** described above.

[**0022**] **FIG. 4** depicts a further embodiment of an interactive pinata, shown for illustration purposes as a pinata **410**, which is similar in operation for the pinata **110** of **FIG. 1**, but which includes a motion device **450**. Motion device **450** is operatively coupled to pinata **410** so that motion device **450**, when activated, will produce motion in pinata **410** in addition to an auditory response. Motion device **450** may produce a motion through such actions as vibrating, rolling, spinning, or air flow.

[**0023**] Similarly, a variety of additional games are envisioned, such as "pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey" type games, wherein the pinning of the tail activates a sensor.

[**0024**] Embodiments of the present invention have been disclosed. A person of ordinary skill in the art would realize, however, that certain modifications would come within the teachings of this invention. Therefore, the following claims should be studied to determine the true scope and content of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An interactive pinata comprising:
  - a first object, wherein said first object includes a sensor for operationally receiving an action from a participant;
  - a control device responsive to an input from said sensor; and
  - an audio device, said audio device responsive to an input from said control device, wherein said audio device broadcasts a sound in response to said input from said control device.
2. The pinata of claim 1, wherein said first object is in the shape of a figure, said figure formed in the likeness of an animal, a person, an inanimate object, or a caricature.
3. The pinata of claim 1, wherein said sensor is chosen from the group consisting of: a motion sensor, a thermal sensor, an optical sensor, an audio sensor, and a visual sensor.
4. The pinata of claim 1, wherein said first object is a Mexican pinata.
5. The pinata of claim 1, wherein said first object is a Cuban pinata.
6. The pinata of claim 1, wherein said first object is a pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey type object.
7. The pinata of claim 1, wherein said control device includes an integrated circuit.
8. The pinata of claim 1, wherein said audio device includes a sound system for playing a voice message.
9. The audio device of claim 6, further wherein said sound system includes a sound transmission device.
10. The audio device of claim 6, further wherein said sound system includes a sound recording device.
11. The pinata of claim 1, further comprising a motion device, wherein said motion device produces a motion

through an action selected from the group consisting of vibrating, rolling, spinning, or air flow.

12. The pinata of claim 11, wherein said motion produces a corresponding movement in said pinata.

13. The pinata of claim 1, wherein at least one of said sensors, said control device, and said audio device is removably attached.

14. The pinata of claim 1, further including a remote input operatively coupled to said control device.

15. The pinata of claim 14, wherein said remote input includes a microphone.

16. A method for an interactive pinata, said method comprising:

providing a first object, wherein said object includes a sensor for operationally receiving an action from a second object, wherein said second object is manipulated by a person;

providing a control device responsive to an input from said sensor; and

providing an audio device, said audio device responsive to at least one input from said control device.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said first object is in the shape of a figure, said figure formed in the likeness of an animal, a person, an inanimate object, or a caricature.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein said sensor is selected from the group consisting of: a motion sensor, a thermal sensor, an optical sensor, an audio sensor, and a visual sensor.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein said first object is a Mexican pinata.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein said first object is a Cuban pinata.

21. The method of claim 16, wherein said first object is a pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey type object.

22. The audio device of claim 21, further wherein said sound system includes a sound recording device.

23. The audio device of claim 21, further wherein said sound system includes a sound transmission device.

24. The method of claim 16, wherein said control device includes an integrated circuit.

25. The method of claim 16, wherein said audio device includes a sound system for playing a voice message.

26. The method of claim 16, further comprising providing a motion device, wherein said motion device produces a motion through an action selected from the group consisting of vibrating, rolling, spinning, or air flow.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein said motion produces a corresponding movement in said pinata.

28. The method of claim 16, wherein at least one of said sensor, said control device, and said audio device is removably attached.

29. The pinata of claim 16, further comprising providing a remote input operatively coupled to said control device.

30. The pinata of claim 29, wherein said remote input includes a microphone.

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