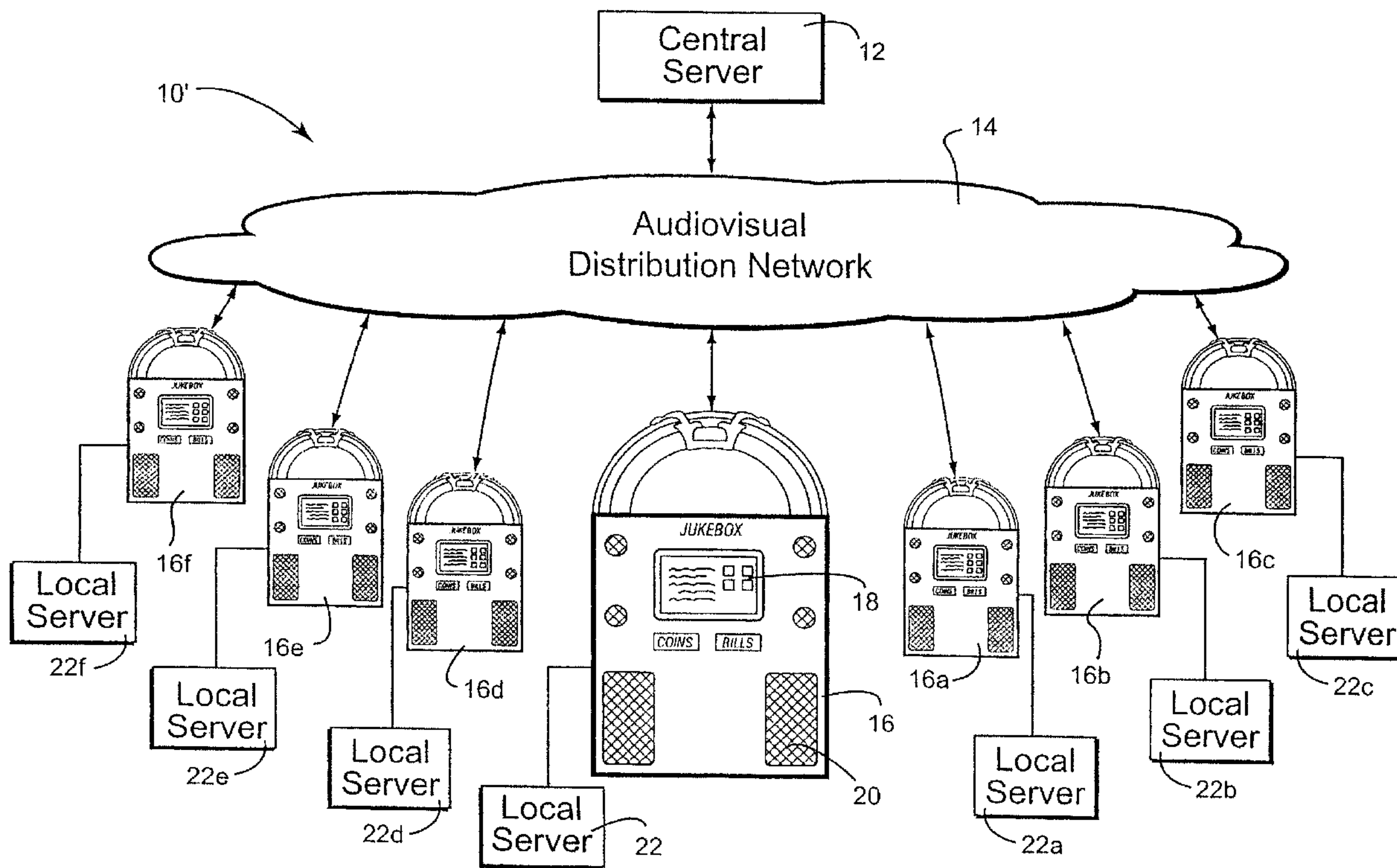




(22) Date de dépôt/Filing Date: 2006/02/07
(41) Mise à la disp. pub./Open to Public Insp.: 2007/01/21
(30) Priorité/Priority: 2005/07/21 (US11/185,974)

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. G07F 17/30 (2006.01),
G07F 17/16 (2006.01), H04H 1/00 (2006.01),
H04L 12/16 (2006.01)
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(54) Titre : SYSTEME NUMERIQUE DE JUKEBOX A TELECHARGEMENT ASSOCIE A DES SERVEURS DE MUSIQUE
CENTRAL ET LOCAL
(54) Title: DIGITAL DOWNLOADING JUKEBOX SYSTEM WITH CENTRAL AND LOCAL MUSIC SERVERS



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:

A digital downloading jukebox system including a central server and a plurality of remote jukebox devices each provided with a local server that preferably mirrors the central server and enables selected songs to be immediately downloaded to the jukebox for reproduction. The local server and jukebox may also provide, through control of the central server, song download services to other jukebox devices. The jukebox system may also act as a monitoring/management device for other coin operated equipment present in a location where the jukebox is located, thereby enabling the jukebox device to perform updates on other equipment under control of the central server.

ABSTRACT

A digital downloading jukebox system including a central server and a plurality of remote jukebox devices each provided with a local server that preferably mirrors the central server and enables selected songs to be immediately downloaded to the jukebox for reproduction. The local server and jukebox may also provide, through control of the central server, song download services to other jukebox devices. The jukebox system may also act as a monitoring/management device for other coin operated equipment present in a location where the jukebox is located, thereby enabling the jukebox device to perform updates on other equipment under control of the central server.

DIGITAL DOWNLOADING JUKEBOX SYSTEM
WITH CENTRAL AND LOCAL MUSIC SERVERS

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation in part of application Serial No. 10/661,811, filed September 15, 2003, which claims priority on provisional patent application Serial No. 60/410,832, filed September 16, 2002, entitled "Digital Downloading Jukebox System With Central And Local Music Servers," the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference in its entirety, herein.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The instant invention relates to, for example, jukebox systems and, more particularly, to digital downloading jukebox systems of the type which typically include a central server and remote jukebox devices that communicate with the central server for royalty accounting and/or content updates. Exemplary embodiments of the instant invention improve such systems by providing a local server for each jukebox device in the jukebox system network. The local server provides a second and more expansive source of content (i.e., audio and/or visual data) that can be selected by a user of the jukebox device for reproduction on the jukebox device. The local servers preferably provide a mirror of the central server, thereby enabling the entire library of audio and/or visual data to be conveniently available to each jukebox device without the need to download requested content, that is not available on the mass storage device of the jukebox device itself, from the central server. The collective group of local servers may also act as a network of distributed content servers that can be controlled by the central server through each jukebox device to provide services to other devices, such as, for example, non-portable jukebox devices. In addition, the jukebox device and local server can, under control of the central

server, operate as a "central hub" or management device for various downloadable fee-based devices present in a location with the jukebox device.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Jukeboxes have been around for decades and provide users with the ability to select desired music for reproduction in a convenient and advantageous manner. Jukeboxes have conventionally been provided in commercial establishments, such as restaurants and bars, in order to provide desired music on demand for patrons thereof for a fee. Over the last several years, a new generation of jukebox devices have become available that provide significant improvements in the operation thereof for all parties involved. More specifically, the conventional standalone phonorecord and CD jukeboxes are being replaced by digital downloading jukeboxes that are controlled by and communicate with a central server. An example of this new generation jukebox system is shown in U.S. Patent No. 6,308,204, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety. A leading provider of this new generation of jukebox systems is TouchTunes Music Corporation.

Figure 1 shows an overview of an exemplary embodiment of a digital downloading jukebox system 10 (hereinafter referred to simply as a "jukebox system"). As shown in Figure 1, the jukebox system 10 includes a central server 12 that contains a master library of audio content (typically music), as well as or alternatively audiovisual content (typically music and associated video or graphics), that can be downloaded therefrom. The jukebox system also includes a series of remote jukebox devices 16, 16a-16f. Each of these jukebox devices are generally located in a bar, restaurant, club or other desired location, and are operable to play music in response to receiving a payment from a user, such as coins, bills, credit/debit card, etc., and having one or more songs selected by the user for play. In an alternative embodiment, a music service is paid for on a subscription basis by the location, and the selected music is free for the end-user. The jukebox device 16 typically includes a screen 18 that presents

information to the user and allows the user to select songs therefrom, as well as an audio system 20 that plays the selected songs. The screen 18 may also be used for displaying song-related video or graphics. The screen 18 may also be used to display advertisements for the jukebox itself in order to attract customers thereto, to display other types of advertisements and/or to display any other desired information.

The jukebox devices 16 (sometimes referred to as simply "jukeboxes" herein) are operable to communicate with the central server 12 through a communications network 14, such as, for example, the Internet. The jukeboxes 16 periodically communicate with the server 12 in order to provide information to the server 12 regarding the specific songs that have been played on the jukebox. The central server then uses this information in order to determine the appropriate royalties and/or other payments that are owed for songs played on each jukebox. Thus, one significant advantage of this new generation of jukeboxes is that the sound reproduction and/or other applicable music rights can be adhered to in a more accurate and reliable manner, thereby assuring the proper royalties are paid to the artists or music owners. The central server 12 can also provide new songs to the jukebox 16 in order to assure that the appropriate or most popular songs are maintained on the jukebox based on the specific customers at that location. Thus, the songs available on each jukebox can be customized through communication with the central server in order to provide the songs and/or types of music that customers generally request at each jukebox location. As described in the above-referenced U.S. Patent No. 6,308,204, the central server can also advantageously be used to update the operating software on the jukeboxes in order to, for example, change the operation of the jukebox, such as to provide new or improved features. Thus, another significant advantage of this new generation of jukeboxes is that the songs (or other audio and/or visual content), and the operation of the jukebox itself can be remotely changed as desired without the need to have someone

(such as a routeman) personally service the jukebox. Instead, such updates can be done using the central server 12.

As indicated above, the jukebox devices 16 each include a mass storage device, such as a hard drive, which stores the songs and associated video/graphics data (if any), as well as any other desired graphical information for reproduction on the jukebox. The mass storage device of the jukebox typically has limited storage capacity relative to the storage device of the central server 12. As a result, only a fraction of the songs stored on the central server are actually stored on the mass storage device of the jukebox at any one time. There may be other reasons as well, such as for security of the data or limited room in the jukebox itself, for having limited storage capacity on the jukebox and/or limiting the number of songs stored thereon. For example, physical space may be limited on wall-mount jukeboxes or the like, which are designed to be small in size as compared to free standing models. As explained above, the songs on the jukebox can be changed through communication with the central server, but any one jukebox only stores a subset of the complete library of songs maintained by the central server at any one time.

In order to maximize the revenue that a jukebox generates it is important to make the most desired songs available on the jukebox over time. If customers cannot find songs they like on the jukebox, usage of the jukebox (and the revenue generated thereby) will dramatically decrease. On the other hand, it is impossible to predict in advance exactly what a customer at any particular location will desire to play on the jukebox. In fact, there are likely many instances where a customer would have selected a song that exists on the central server but is not currently present on the jukebox. As a result, the jukebox may not be enjoyed and used to its fullest extent. In order to address this problem and increase revenue, jukebox systems have in the past provided a feature which enables the user to search for songs on the central server from the jukebox and request an immediate download of a desired song from the

central server to the jukebox for an additional fee. This feature enables the user to play any song in the master library of songs maintained by the central server using the jukebox, regardless of whether or not the specific song is presently stored in the mass storage of the jukebox itself. Thus, the user can first look for desired songs on the local storage of the jukebox and then, if desired, search further on the central server for desired songs. The jukebox device typically charges an additional fee (such as five credits instead of one credit) for an immediate download and play of a song from the central server as opposed to a standard play directly from the jukebox's local storage.

One problem, however, with the immediate downloading feature is that it is desirable to have an immediate and high speed connection with the central server to implement. In addition, the central server and network must be prepared to and capable of handling such requests in a reliable and efficient manner for the feature to properly operate. These requirements cannot always be met and, as a result, implementation of this feature has been limited. For example, many locations that have jukeboxes do not have high speed connections (such as DSL) and instead use dial-up modem connections. Jukeboxes which rely on dial-up connections generally are only designed to communicate with the server periodically and do not allow the user to immediately download a song. They have, however, enabled a user to vote for a song to be downloaded at a later time when the dial-up connection is made. This, of course, is not as satisfying to the user as being able to immediately download a song. Other problems can arise in connection with this download feature if the network or server is not currently available for the download, due to traffic, malfunctions or the like.

For the reasons explained above, there is a need for a jukebox system that overcomes these and other disadvantages. The instant invention is designed to address these and other problems and to provide even further functionality for such jukebox systems.

In accordance with an exemplary aspect of the instant invention, a local content server is provided for each jukebox in the jukebox system. The local server preferably mirrors the master library of songs (and/or other content) on the central server. The local server is installed in close proximity to the jukebox to which it is assigned and preferably in the same restaurant or bar where the jukebox is installed. The local server may even be installed within the housing of the jukebox device itself if space permits. Preferably, however, the local server is simply installed in a convenient location and connected to the jukebox using a high speed connection, such as, for example, Ethernet or the like. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the local server is used to implement the immediate downloading feature described above without the need for a high-speed connection with the central server. In other words, the user can first search the local storage on the jukebox for desired songs and then, if desired, search further on the local server for desired songs. If the desired song is found on the local storage it is played from the local storage for a normal fee. On the other hand, if the song is only found on the local server, the song can be immediately downloaded, at the option of the user, from the local server to the jukebox for playing for a fee that is preferably higher than the normal fee. As a result, the immediate downloading feature can be reliably implemented regardless of the connection type to the central server and regardless of the availability of the network or the central server. Moreover, because the download comes from the local server rather than the central server is transparent to the user.

Alternatively, in another exemplary aspect, a jukebox is provided with locally-attached expanded storage media. While not as large as the server drive in the above preferred embodiment, the storage media may, in one embodiment, hold approximately 20% of the songs available on the central server. Studies have shown that the song group comprising approximately the top 20% of the most requested songs will satisfy the play requests of approximately 80% of the

end users. In another exemplary embodiment, this media may hold approximately 30% of the songs available on the central server, which correlates to the requests of approximately 90% of the end users. The amount of song data stored on the media can be any suitable amount to accomplish the desired functionality. For example, if new data indicates that only 10% of the songs need to be stored, then that would be an appropriate amount to store.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the invention, the local server or storage media is periodically updated with data (e.g., songs) to correspond with the contents of the master library of data (e.g., songs). The updating may occur remotely using dial-up or broadband connections, or it may be updated manually by, for example, an operator using an update tool provided by the entity controlling the jukebox system which can be directly connect to the jukebox or local server for the purpose of updating the local server or storage media so that the contents correspond to the master library on the central server, or so that the contents at least correspond to the current desired percentage of the most selected songs.

In accordance with another exemplary embodiment, the server includes an array of hard drives with associated IDE controller(s), a microprocessor, a flash memory containing the BIOS and the operating system, RAM and an Ethernet controller for communication with the jukebox. Each local server is preferably assigned or registered to the specific jukebox to which it is connected. For security purposes, the data on the local server preferably does not comprise any complete songs. Instead, the jukebox device includes missing data from each song on the local server, so that the jukebox can construct the entire song from the contents of its storage device and the contents of the local server. The data on the local server is also preferably encrypted using the missing data (e.g., one block), thereby preventing songs from being copied or played from the local server by any device other than the jukebox to which it is assigned.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the invention, a collection of local servers may be used as a network of distributed servers which can be controlled by the central server to provide music services to other devices which are connectable to the network through which the central server and jukeboxes communicate. For example, the local servers and associated jukebox are used to deliver any requested song to a dedicated residential or commercial jukebox device (or other suitable jukebox device) in addition to providing song services to the specific jukebox to which it is connected and assigned.

In accordance with a further exemplary aspect of the invention, the local server and jukebox device are used, under control of the central server, to provide management services for other types of coin operated or payment triggered equipment, such as gaming devices, installed in the same location as the jukebox. In other words, the jukebox system is preferably used to update the functionality of and/or manage other downloading devices present in the same location. As a result, the jukebox functions as a "central hub" for all downloading equipment in a location. This feature is achieved, in one embodiment, by networking all of the downloading devices in a single location together with the jukebox and local file server. The central server can then download information to the local server together with instructions to the jukebox as to which devices should be updated with what data and/or software. The jukebox device and local server can also be used to collect information from the other downloading devices to which it is managing and upload that information to the central server for reporting/accounting purposes. Thus, the owner/operator of the jukebox system can act as a third party service provider to other coin-op companies for the purpose of managing and/or updating their equipment, such as electronic gaming equipment.

In accordance with an additional exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, the jukebox has, or is given, the processing power to play

multiple songs simultaneously through different outputs to different zones. In a preferred embodiment, an establishment containing three zones: a restaurant, a bar, and a pool room, can have a number of selections, up to the number of zones or speaker outputs, playing at the same time. This allows for increased revenue in the jukebox system, as patrons of any one zone can listen to a selected song at the same time as patrons of another zone listen to a different song.

In accordance with a further exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, the user may select a song to play in more than one zone of the establishment. This play may be simultaneous in the multiple zones, or may occur at different times. This allows the jukebox operator to capture additional revenue for playing the same song more than once, and potentially an even greater amount of revenue for guaranteeing that the song is played simultaneously in multiple zones of the establishment.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, each zone is provided with a terminal which allows patrons in that zone to select songs for play on the jukebox. In a preferred embodiment, the terminal is a "dummy" terminal, provided with a graphical user interface (GUI) for song selection, however a gaming terminal or any other suitable device capable of providing a GUI may be used.

In accordance with an additional exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, the operator can restrict the selections that can be played in a given zone. For example, in a restaurant zone of a multi-zone establishment, the operator may desire to restrict music to that suitable for a dining atmosphere. The operator can also restrict or allow other aspects of selection play in each zone, such as volume, priority play availability, etc.

In accordance with a further exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, the jukebox may be provided with an algorithm or other method to

selectively select background music, based on the zone, the time, or any other suitable criteria.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, the different zones may be provided with independent priority and non-priority play queues.

In accordance with an additional exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, jukeboxes with expanded song storage capability may provide only a subset of the total songs stored as the basic available songs. If a user desires a song that is not a member of the provided subset, the user may pay extra to have the song played. If the song is stored in the larger master set on the expanded storage capacity, the song can be queued up immediately, without the need for download, allowing users faster access to an expanded song selection. Even if the song is not available on the expanded list, the user may order the song, and if suitable conditions, such as a high speed connection, exist, the user may hear the song almost immediately. Alternatively, the song may be downloaded and saved for the user to select at a later date or time, such as, for example, when the jukebox is connecting in dial-up mode and needs to download the songs at a later time.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, the jukebox can be set to "customize mode," where users can use an interface to select songs that will be transferred from the local server or expanded media storage to the jukebox or jukebox set. This mode could be used, for example, by regular users or customers and location staff to specify which songs should permanently reside on the jukebox after a jukebox is newly installed in a location.

In accordance with a further exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, a jukebox can "morph" based on a triggering event. Triggering events can include themed establishment nights, time changes, or any other suitable criteria. When the jukebox morphs, it may provide a wholly or partially

different subset of available songs for user selection at normal cost. Additionally, since the interface is a digital one, new graphics, advertising or other suitable display changes may occur, in accordance with the morph. The morph may also selectively block all access to certain songs, based on the appropriateness of the song under the criteria which caused the morph. For example, if an establishment had a "country night," then the available songs might shift to all country songs. The jukebox might further block expanded access to all songs that were not defined as appropriate for a "country night," so that such blocked songs were not even available for play at an increased price until the morph had expired. The definition of "appropriate songs" can be a factory set definition, or can be definable by the operator of the jukebox or by any other suitable classification mechanism.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, different terminals of a multi-zone system can morph independently of each other, so that, for example, a bar zone may morph after a certain hour while a restaurant zone may remain the same.

In accordance with an additional exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, a user can bid on the right to have a song played before other songs previously selected for priority play are played. In a preferred embodiment, the user is shown the top price paid for a priority play, and can pay more than that price to obtain the highest priority available.

In accordance with a further exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, a user may not be shown how much anyone else has paid for priority. The user can pay however much the user desires to spend to obtain a priority ranking, and then receive a ranking of priority based on the amount paid.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, a user can pay however much the user desires to spend to obtain a priority ranking, and then be shown the priority spot which has been obtained based on the paid amount. If this spot is not satisfactory to the user, the user

can pay additional money to move the song up in priority ranking. The user can also pay additional money to make it harder for other users to pre-empt the selected priority spot on the list in a bidding-type situation. Any other suitable method of increased-pay-for-increased-priority may also be implemented.

In accordance with a further exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, a user can "lock in" a priority ranking with a payment of a pre-selected amount. For example, if a user pays 15 credits to obtain a ranking of 3rd in priority, and wishes to guarantee the third ranking, the user may pay, for example, 4 more credits to "lock in" the ranking. Since locking in the ranking may require the "lock in" of all the rankings above the user as well, the user may be required to pay a certain amount to "lock in" all songs above the user's selection. In one such situation, the user can either choose to pay the price quoted for the "lock in" or pay the same or a varying amount of credits in an attempt to prevent future over-bidding or to move the user's song up further in the priority list.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, any of the aforementioned bidding strategies may be implemented, and the user may be shown how much everyone has paid for their particular rankings. This allows the user to know exactly how much he will have to pay to obtain a certain priority position. If the "lock in" feature is implemented, this will also let a user know if it is cheaper to pay the price to "lock in" the song or to pay to move up on the priority list. All of these options result in increased revenue for the operator.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other features, objects and advantages of the instant invention will be further understood by review of the following detailed description of the invention when read in conjunction with the appended drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a conventional downloading digital jukebox system;

Figure 2 is a block diagram of the improved downloading digital jukebox system in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the instant invention;

Figure 3 is an exemplary screen shot showing an initial selection screen in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the jukebox system of the present invention;

Figure 4 is another screen shot showing an exemplary search screen for use in searching for songs on the local server in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the instant invention;

Figure 4A shows an exemplary process for using a Personal Music Assistant to search for songs that might be appropriate for a user-specified profile;

Figure 4B shows an exemplary process for using a Personal Music Assistant to search for songs that might be appropriate for a recognized user's profile;

Figure 5 is another exemplary screen shot showing the results of a search on the local server and providing the user an option of downloading a desired song to the jukebox device for a fee, in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the instant invention;

Figure 5A shows an exemplary process for searching through a list of popular songs;

Figure 6 is another exemplary screen shot showing an alternative method of allowing access to the downloading feature of the instant invention;

Figure 7 shows a block diagram of a preferred embodiment of the local sever of the instant invention;

Figure 8 shows a block diagram of an exemplary overall network including commercial jukeboxes and residential jukeboxes, as well as other

downloading devices and associated connections that are managed by the jukebox system of the instant invention.

Figure 9 shows an overhead view of an exemplary establishment layout for a multi-zone jukebox system;

Figure 10 shows an overhead view of an exemplary establishment layout for a multi-zone jukebox system with selection terminals in each zone;

Figure 11 is a flowchart showing an exemplary implementation of a zone selection process for a multi-zone jukebox system;

Figure 12 is a flowchart showing an exemplary implementation of a priority play by zone selection process for a multi-zone jukebox system;

Figure 13 shows an exemplary implementation of a multi-zone set of priority and non-priority queues, with a subset of queues for each zone;

Figure 14 is a flowchart showing an exemplary distribution and initialization scheme for a jukebox with morph capability;

Figure 15 is a flowchart showing an exemplary implementation of an automatic jukebox morph initiation process based on a triggering event;

Figure 16 is a flowchart showing an exemplary implementation of a jukebox morphing process;

Figure 17 shows the relationship between a jukebox with expanded media storage and a central server;

Figure 18 is a flowchart showing an exemplary process for a song selection process when a song is not in the "standard" available playable song list; and

Figure 19 is a flowchart showing an exemplary process for a priority play queue with prioritization-based-on-bidding capability.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

Referring now to the drawings, Figure 2 shows a block diagram of an exemplary preferred embodiment of an improved jukebox system 10'. The jukebox system 10' includes similar elements as shown in Figure 1 and

described above, including a central server 12, communications network 14, and remote jukebox devices 16, 16a-16f. However, the jukebox system 10' further includes local servers 22, 22a-22f respectively connected to each of the jukebox devices 16, 16a-16f. The central server 12 includes a master library of songs (and/or other content). Each of the jukebox devices includes a subset of the master library on a local storage device of the jukebox. The central server may be used to individually manage the contents of the jukebox device, by monitoring usage of and updating the subset of songs on each of the jukebox devices with the intent of maximizing the usage thereof. The central server 12 periodically receives data from each of the jukeboxes for the purpose of royalty accounting and payment for songs played. The jukebox devices may connect to the network in any suitable manner, such as dial-up modem or broadband modem (e.g., DSL, cable, wireless broadband, or satellite). The communications network 14 may be any suitable network capable of distributing data (e.g., audiovisual data) from the central server 12 to the jukeboxes 16 and enabling data to be uploaded from the jukeboxes 16 to the central server 12.

The songs (and/or other data) are preferably digitized, compressed and encrypted by the central server 12 prior to sending songs to the jukeboxes for security and bandwidth purposes using known techniques. The songs are then decompressed and decrypted by the jukeboxes for storage and reproduction thereon. Thus, each of the jukeboxes maintains in a database a library of digitized songs for play on the jukebox, wherein the library can be changed or updated through communication by the central server. The jukeboxes preferably also receive and store data constituting images (e.g., still and/or moving video and/or graphical images) that can be displayed on the display 18 of the jukebox device 16. In one exemplary embodiment of the invention, the jukebox devices have the structure and operation described in U.S. Patent No. 6,308,204 referenced above. Thus, the jukebox devices 16 each preferably include one or more microprocessors, such as a main CPU and an audio DSP, a memory, such

as a hard drive, for storing songs and/or other content, a display of displaying visual items, an audio arrangement 20 for providing audio, a communication system for enabling the jukebox to communicate with the central server 12 through the communications network 14, and operating software, preferably including a multitasking operating system, that controls the operation of the jukebox. The operating software is also preferably updateable through communication with the central server 12 as described, for example, in U.S. Patent No. 6,308,204 referenced above. The jukeboxes 16 further include one or more payment devices, such as coin, bill and/or credit card input devices, for enabling a customer to pay for usage of the jukebox device in a convenient manner. The screen 18 is preferably a touch screen that enables the user to input selections by touching the screen.

Each jukebox device has a local server 22 that can be accessed by the jukebox device. The local servers are respectively connected to the jukebox devices using Ethernet or other type of local connection. The local servers 22 each preferably include a mirror copy of the master library of musical recordings maintained by the central server 12. The local server 22 can be loaded with the master library by the entity that owns and/or controls the jukebox network prior to shipping the local server and jukebox device to the jukebox distributor or operator. Of course, over time, the local sever will no longer correspond identically to the central server, due to the fact that the central server is preferably continually updated with additional or new songs. Thus, the local servers 22 are also preferably updated periodically to maintain a correspondence with the library on the central server 12. This updating can be done, for example, by the central server 12 through communication with the jukebox devices connected with the local servers 22 using, for example, either dial-up or broadband modems. Alternatively, the updating can be done personally with an update tool that can be connected by a routeman or other person directly to the jukebox or local server for the purpose of updating the

contents of the local server. The portable tool could include a removable storage medium, such as a hard drive, that could be returned to and reused by the owner of the jukebox system for future updates. The tool itself could be kept by the operator or other person in charge of maintaining specific jukeboxes for use upon receipt of the updated removable storage medium from the owner of the jukebox system.

For security reasons, the local server 22 preferably does not include all of the digital data that constitutes any one song that is stored on the local server 22. In addition, the part of the song that is on the local server is encrypted. The jukebox device 16 contains the missing part of each of the songs on the local server, thereby enabling the jukebox to assemble the complete song based on the contents of the local server and the memory on the jukebox device. The missing data located on the jukebox is needed in order to decrypt the songs. For example, a single block (or other small fraction) of data for each song may be missing on the local server but present on the jukebox device, and the encryption may be based on the missing block and may proceed on a block by block basis. Thus, none of the blocks can be decrypted without obtaining and/or decrypting a preceding block. This feature provides significant security and prevents or deters theft or other type of unauthorized use or copying of the songs on the local server. Thus, in this embodiment, each local server must be specifically assigned to a specific jukebox device so that the decryption described above can be properly performed.

In accordance with a preferred exemplary embodiment, the local servers may also each be individually registered with and identified to the central server 12, so that the central server can individually manage and monitor each local server. The same is true for the jukebox device itself, i.e., it may also preferably be registered with the central server so that it too can be individually monitored and managed by the central server. As will be understood from the foregoing description, the local servers become an important and advantageous part of the

jukebox system by allowing the contents thereof to be accessed by the jukebox device to provide additional services (such as providing additional songs) not available on the jukebox device itself. As will be explained below, the song library of the central server and/or the storage capacity itself can be advantageously used to provide services to other jukeboxes, such as fee-based residential and commercial jukeboxes and/or other fee-based equipment. One preferred use of the local servers may be to provide an immediate song downloading feature for the jukebox device will now be described below in detail with reference to the exemplary screen shots of Figures 3-6.

Figure 3 shows an exemplary screen shot for a music selection screen 30 as displayed on the touch display of the jukebox device. As can be seen in Figure 3, this selection screen, which is preferably the initial selection screen displayed to a customer, includes graphical representations 32 of the various album covers for songs that are stored in the memory of the jukebox device. The albums covers are shown in alphabetical order and the virtual slide bar 33 can be used to scroll through the available albums. Up and down arrows (34 and 35) are also provided for stepping through the available albums. A "Now Playing" button 36 is also provided for showing information on the song currently playing on the jukebox (if any). A "Top Ten" button 38 is also provided for showing a list of the ten most popular songs on the jukebox. A "Tune Central" (TM of TouchTunes Music Corporation) button 39 is also provided, the function of which will now be described in detail with reference to Figure 4.

If the user does not see an album of interest in the display of album covers or desires for any reason to search for available songs that are not present on the jukebox device, the user may select the "Tune Central" button 39. When the "Tune Central" button is pressed, the display on the jukebox is changed from that of Figure 3 to that of Figure 4. The exemplary screen shot of Figure 4 shows a search screen 40 which enables a search to be performed on the local server 22 connected to the jukebox device. This screen 40 provides a

virtual keyboard 42 for use in entering a search request. The search can be done by album, artist, song, or genres or themes (i.e. categorized lists of songs, preferably based on popularity, that help a user find a particular song), based on the associated buttons 47. Once a search is typed, the user touches the "Search" button 44 and a search of the contents of the local server is initiated. Input from the virtual keyboard can be cleared using the "Clear" button 46.

Similar to the genres and themes search, a user may, for example, search for a song using a Personal Music Assistant, an exemplary process for which is shown in Figure 4A. Preferably, after pressing a Personal Assistant button (step 402), the jukebox would ask certain information to identify the user if the user is not already identified (step 404). Such information could include, for example, age (or date of birth), preferred style, background, place of birth, or other information that could be used to generate a profile of the user. The jukebox then preferably could compare the profile information to selections made by other users with similar profiles (step 406) from, for example, the specific jukebox, the particular establishment, or a national database and recommend songs (step 408). For example, the jukebox might suggest a song by "The Doors" to a male user from California who was born in 1960. The user could then choose a song from that list or initiate a new search (step 410).

Furthermore, instead of entering identifiers, as shown in Figure 4B, the Personal Music Assistant could recognize a user in other ways (step 422), such as, for example, after a credit card or a pre-programmed site-specific identification card is swiped by the jukebox. Preferably, the Personal Music Assistant would maintain a list of selections made by the user. The user's list of selections could be maintained, for example, on a local jukebox terminal, on a site's central jukebox server, on a remote server, or on an identification card. After the Personal Music Assistant recognizes the user, it could then recommend songs based on, for example, songs by the artists the particular

user enjoys (step 426), songs played frequently by the user (428), songs not heard recently by the user (430), etc.

Additionally, a Personal Music Assistant recognizing, for example, a preferred customer or a customer with a large number of credits might morph the jukebox into a jukebox more enjoyable to that specific user. Credits could be, for example, purchased by the user; or given to the user as a reward, for example, for purchasing drinks or souvenirs at an establishment, or for being a regular repeat customer. Thus, a Personal Music Assistant could make selecting songs a more enjoyable, dynamic, and responsive process while removing the immediate pressure place on the user to know which song to choose.

When a search is initiated from screen 40, the screen is changes to that shown in Figure 5 to display the results of the search. As shown in Figure 5, the results of the search are listed. More particularly, in this example, a list of songs that satisfy the search request are listed. The list could also be by album if the search was album based. The user can scroll through the search results using slide bar 53. The user is also shown a display 55 of the number of current credits and a display 56 of the number of credits that are required to download a song from the local server to the jukebox device. The user can go back to the previous screen by touching the "Back" button 57. If the user selects and song from the search list and then touches the "Get It Now" button 54, the jukebox is operable to immediately download the selected song from the local server to the jukebox for play on the jukebox. The downloaded song can be queued up with any other selected but unplayed songs (if any) for play on the Jukebox. In this example, the download costs five credits instead of one credit like a normal selection from the storage of the jukebox itself. Once the downloaded song is played, it is preferably deleted from the jukebox device (together with any graphical data, such as the album cover graphic) that was also downloaded from the local server in connection with the song download). In this way, the user has the option, through use of the "Tune Central" button, to temporarily obtain on the

jukebox any song from the master library of recordings without the need to contact the central server 12. As a result, the jukebox provides a more enjoyable experience for the user, while also increasing revenue generated thereby.

Also providing an enjoyable experience for the user is the central servers' capability to identify "hot hits," preferably in real-time. Preferably, new songs could be made available in a master catalog – that is, they need not reside on local servers or expanded media storage. Then, songs played frequently in a given area (ranging from, for example, a single site or group of sites, to a state or country, to a global connection) could be identified as popular. These songs, or "hot hits," preferably could be downloaded by, or sent to, individual jukeboxes. Individual jukeboxes preferably would maintain lists of "hot hits" in real-time, allowing users to search through the most popular songs at any given time. Alternatively, a jukebox might maintain a list of "hot hits" without downloading the popular songs, thereby potentially saving download time and resources. As a result, the jukebox could provide an enjoyable experience for the user by providing easy access to the most popular songs.

Figure 5A shows an exemplary process for maintaining a "hot list" on a jukebox with a broadband connection. It should be noted that the same process could apply for a system with a different type of connection, though more time and resources may be used to download a song over a slower connection. In step 502, songs from a master catalog are received by a site's central server. Of course, it should be noted that songs could be stored to a local jukebox's storage media. In step 504, a user using a jukebox terminal would select a "Hot List" button. After the "Hot List" is displayed (step 506), the user could select a particular song or initiate a new search (508).

Figure 6 shows another exemplary screen shot of a song selection screen 60 that is displayed when a user touches an album cover graphic from the screen 30 of Figure 3. Thus, this screen shows an alternative (or typical)

method of selecting a song, wherein the song is selected directly from the subset of songs that are directly available from the storage device of the jukebox itself (rather than the local server). In this example, Joe Cocker's Greatest Hits was selected from the screen of Figure 3. As shown in Figure 6, the resulting screen display 60 shows the selected album graphic 61 and a list of the songs 62 that are available on the jukebox for that album. The jukebox may or may not include all of the songs for a particular album. The available songs can be scrolled through if necessary using scroll bars 63a and 63b. The user has the option, through the "Play" button 65, to select a song from the list for play on the jukebox. A "Play Now" button 66 is also provided for enabling the user to select a priority play of the song, thereby giving the song a higher priority than songs selected using the "Play" button 65. This priority feature preferably requires more play credits than the normal play. A display 67 shows the number of credits available for the user. Button 64 shows other albums for the same artist being shown at 61, thereby enabling a user to easily search through the albums for a particular artist for a desired song.

As also shown in Figure 6, a "Tune Central" button 68 is displayed that enables the user to search for songs by this same artist on the local server as explained in connection with Figure 4. In other words, button 68 takes the user to the search screen 40 of Figure 4 for searching the local server. The user can then proceed to search the local server and select songs therefrom, if desired, as described above in connection with Figures 4 and 5. Thus, as explained above, the user can access the local server at various screens in a convenience and efficient manner, depending on the desires of the user when interacting with the jukebox screen.

As can be seen from Figures 3-6, the user is provided with the option of playing songs that are resident on the jukebox device itself or, alternatively, selecting songs from the local server for download and play in an efficient and reliable manner, thereby significantly improving the operation of jukebox

systems, particularly those that cannot quickly, easily or reliably receive downloads of music on demand from a central server. It is noted that the screen shots of Figures 3-6 are only exemplary and any suitable screen configurations can be used to provide the functionality described herein. In addition, the jukebox operator is provided with the ability through operator screens (not shown) to set filters per genre or style of music in order to limit access to the end user and avoid undesirable music being played at a specific location.

Figure 7 shows a block diagram of the electronic elements that define the local server 22 in accordance with an exemplary embodiment. As shown in Figure 7, the local server 22 includes a CPU 72 (e.g., AMD Elan 100 MHz), a flash memory (e.g., 8MB) containing the BIOS and OS, a pair of master/slave hard drives (82, 84 and 86, 88, respectively), a pair of IDE controllers 78 and 80 for the hard drive pairs respectively, a RAM 76 (e.g., 32MB), an Ethernet controller for controlling communication with the jukebox device 16, and the appropriate buses interconnecting the various elements. Of course, other configurations or arrangements for the local server 22 may be used. A unique identifier may be provided in the local server for enabling the local server to be uniquely identified and registered by the jukebox and/or central server. The identifier may, for example, be located in the flash memory 74.

As will be appreciated from the description of the invention above, the addition of the local server significantly enhances the operation of the jukebox devices that are part of a jukebox system. However, the local servers also provide other benefits and features that will now be described.

A collection of local servers 22 may be used as a network of distributed servers that can be controlled by the central server 12 through its associated jukebox device 16 to provide music services to other devices. For example, the local servers and associated jukebox can be used to deliver requested songs to a dedicated residential or commercial jukebox device (or other suitable jukebox device) in addition to providing song services to the specific jukebox to which it

is connected and assigned. Thus, the network of distributed servers can provide a support network for implementing residential and commercial jukeboxes of the type which allow a user to download songs for reproduction and/or storage at a residential or commercial location for an appropriate fee. As a result, the jukebox system operator can provide and control commercial jukeboxes and well as residential jukeboxes through the jukebox system. In this embodiment, the jukebox device and/or local server are connected to the Internet (or other suitable network) using a broadband modem and is provided with software that can selectively deliver song files to any dedicated residential jukebox device (also connectable to the Internet) under control of the central server. The central server receives requests from a residential jukebox and, by analyzing traffic on the network, provides instructions to a selected jukebox device to download the requested song file (either from its memory or from the local server) to the residential jukebox for a fee or under a subscription plan for the residential jukebox.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the invention, the local server and jukebox device are used, under control of the central server, to provide management services for other types of coin operated or payment triggered equipment, such as gaming devices, installed in the same location as (or in close proximity to) the jukebox. In other words, the jukebox system is preferably used to update the functionality of and/or manage other downloading devices present in the same location. As a result, the jukebox becomes a "central hub" for all downloading equipment in a location. This feature is achieved, in one embodiment, by networking all of the downloading devices in a single location together with the jukebox and local file server. The central server can then download information to the local server together with instructions to the jukebox as to which devices should updated with what data and/or software. The jukebox device and central server can also be used to collect information from the other downloading devices to which it is managing and upload that

information to the central server for reporting/accounting purposes. Thus, the owner/operator of the jukebox system can act as a third party service provider to other coin-op companies for the purpose of managing and/or updating their equipment.

The large amounts of memory provided by the local servers and the fact that they are provided and accessible at thousands of locations over a well controlled network, turns the jukebox system into a powerful tool that can be used to perform a variety of functions in the coin-op industry. More and more coin-op manufacturers are going towards games that are software upgradeable through their internal hard drives. These updates are done periodically, but as these devices increase there will be an ever increasing need for a system that can reliably and efficiently perform the updates from a remote location. The jukebox system described herein satisfies this need by enabling all suitable electronic coin-op devices at a jukebox location to be managed by the central server using the jukebox and local server at the location. The central server can download software or data updates, store them on the local server and then dispatch the updates to the intended units of equipment in the establishment. Thus, the jukebox system can act as a third party service provider to other companies in the coin-op business, thereby significantly enhancing the functionality of the jukebox system.

As an example, there are currently about 140,000 Merit coin-operated countertop devices in the USA, each of which enables users to play games and the like for a fee. Many of these devices operate with a hard drive that can be upgraded with new software. Merit does this by shipping CD-ROMs to operators who then need to drive to each location and manually update each machine. In accordance with the instant invention, however, all suitable coin-op equipment at a location are connected (directly or indirectly) with the local jukebox and local server assigned thereto. This enables the central server to receive the intended software update for any device, together with information that identifies what

devices are to be upgraded with what software. The upgrade services are preferably fee based and provide an additional revenue stream for the jukebox system. The central server then downloads the software to the local servers with the upgrade instructions to further download the upgrades to the appropriate device(s).

As explained above, the local server enables songs to be downloaded to a commercial jukebox to which it is assigned or to residential jukeboxes under control of the central server. In addition, the local servers can be used for an on-premise networked application which manages other coin-op devices. These various features of the instant invention are illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8 shows a block diagram of a complete jukebox system network as contemplated by an exemplary embodiment. As explained above, the system includes a central server 12 connected to a communications network 14, a series of commercial jukeboxes 16a, 16b and 16c with associated local music file servers 22a, 22b and 22c, a series of residential jukeboxes 100a, 100b and 100c connected to the network via broadband devices 102a, 102b and 102c, and an on-premise network shown on the right hand side of Figure 8. This on-premise network includes a jukebox device 16d connected via a router or network hub 110 to a local file server 22d, a number of additional coin-op equipment, such as a dart game 104, a golf game 106 and a countertop videogame 108, and a broadband modem 112 connecting this local network to the communications network 14. With this exemplary configuration as shown in Figure 8 all of the functionality described herein can be implemented through the jukebox system of the instant invention.

Figure 9 shows an overhead view of an exemplary establishment layout for a multi-zone jukebox system. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the establishment has three zones 121, 123, 125. Each zone is equipped with its own set of speakers 127, 129, 131, which are operably connected to the jukebox 133. Different music may be played simultaneously in all three zones 121, 123,

125 and all the music may be played from a single jukebox 133. The jukebox 133 may be provided with additional hardware to allow this implementation.

Alternatively, the user may elect to have a song played in more than one of the zones 121, 123, 125 simultaneously, or in more than one of the zones at different times. The user may have to pay additional credits to implement either of these features. A preferred embodiment of a multi-zone system could play music at a high quality in the different zones using the system described in application Serial No. 11/023,390, filed December 29, 2004, entitled "Wireless Digital Transmission System for Loudspeakers," which is a continuation in part of Serial No. 09/161,584, filed on September 28, 1998. The entire contents of both applications is incorporated herein by reference. Using this system, for example, a jukebox could compress and transmit audio data through AC power lines to an addressable location, where it could be received, decompressed, converted, and played.

It is to be appreciated that Wireless Digital Transmission System can be used for other purposes in other embodiments where data needs to be sent between two or more devices. For example, this system could be used to configure dummy terminals. In such an embodiment, the Wireless Digital Transmission System could be used to send information such as, for example, whether to morph, what songs are appropriate given a particular morphing of the jukebox, the zones in which selected music should be played, maximum volume levels, etc.

The operator may also restrict what kind of music is available in a given zone, based on the type of activity in the zone, the time of day, or any other suitable selection criteria. For example, in Figure 9 zone three 125 is a restaurant. Restaurant patrons may not wish to listen to the same type of music as someone in zone one 121, which is a bar room in Figure 9, or in zone two 123, which is a pool room. The operator may recognize this and restrict the type of music that can be played in zone three 125. Alternatively, the operator may

restrict the volume of the music in any given zone. For example, patrons of a pool room 123 or a restaurant section 125 may not want the music as loud as it is desired to be in the bar room 121. And maybe the restaurant section 121 is to be kept quieter even than the pool room 123. The owner can adjust and control all suitable settings to provide the most versatile, patron friendly environment in each of the zones, based on any suitable criteria.

Figure 10 shows an overhead view of an exemplary establishment layout for a multi-zone jukebox system with selection terminals in each zone. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the bar has three zones 121, 123, 125. Each zone is equipped with its own set of speakers 127, 129, 131, which are operably connected to the jukebox 133. Different music may be played simultaneously in all three zones 121, 123, 125 and all the music may be played from a single jukebox 133. The jukebox 133 may be provided with additional hardware to allow this implementation.

In Figure 10 there are also one or more "dummy" terminals 137, 139 located throughout the establishment. An exemplary illustrative dummy terminal could use X-server technology. These terminals 137, 139, which may be stand alone devices or may be provided as part of the interface on a gaming machine or other suitable device with a digital display, allow selection of songs from the jukebox 133. These terminals 137, 139 duplicate the zone restrictions imposed on the main jukebox interface and selection criteria. The terminals 137, 139 may be restricted to only allowing selection of music for play in the zone where each respective terminal is located, or they may allow selection for play in one or more different zones.

Additionally, the graphical interface of the terminals 137, 139 may change in accordance with available selections, themes of the bar, themes of the room in which each terminal is located, or any other suitable criteria.

Figure 11 is a flowchart showing an exemplary implementation of a zone selection process for a multi-zone jukebox system. In accordance with an

exemplary embodiment, the jukebox first begins the transaction 141 with the user. The user is instructed to select a song 143, and select one or more zones 145 in which the song is to be played. The jukebox then determines the price based on the number of zones selected 147. The jukebox accepts payment from the user 149 and queues the song for play in the selected zone or zones 151. Next, the jukebox checks to see if the user would like to select another song 153. If the user wants another song, the process returns to the select song step 143 and repeats from there. If the user is finished making selections, the process ends 155.

Figure 12 is a flowchart showing an exemplary implementation of a priority play by zone selection process for a multi-zone jukebox system. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, certain jukebox systems may be provided with one or more priority queues corresponding to one or more zones. If priority play is provided for a zone or zones, the jukebox first checks to see if the user would like to select priority play for the selected song 161. If priority play is selected, the jukebox then provides an option for the user to choose a zone or zones in which priority play should occur 163. Based on the number of zones selected for priority play, the jukebox determines a price 165, and accepts payment of that price 167 from the user. The jukebox then places the song in a priority play queue for each selected zone 169.

Figure 13 shows an exemplary implementation of a multi-zone set of priority and non-priority queues, with a subset of queues for each zone. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, each of N zones 171 may be provided with its own set of queues, comprising a priority queue 175 and a non-priority queue 173. A list of songs selected for play is maintained within each queue 173, 175. Each song in each queue may be provided with an identifier 177, 179, which identifies the song, and/or the position of the song in the queue, and/or any other suitable factors.

Figure 14 is a flowchart showing an exemplary distribution and initialization scheme for a jukebox with morph capability. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the contents of a factory drive are defined at the point of manufacture 181. This same drive (expanded media storage) may be shipped out with all jukeboxes 183, and may only contain a subset of the total number of songs available on the central server. Once the jukebox containing the drive has reached its destination, the operator may select a subset of songs on the drive as the basic playable list 185. This selection can be made based on the type of establishment, the type of music the establishment's patrons typically prefer, or any other suitable criteria. The operator may also allow the central server to recommend a basic playable list. The drive may also allow selection of songs not on the basic list for an additional fee 187. This list of "alternate" songs might not include all songs however, as the operator might desire to restrict access to songs that don't meet the theme of the establishment. For example, a country bar owner might not ever want to allow selection of rap or hip-hop songs on the jukebox.

Once the songs on the drive have been appropriately categorized, the jukebox begins operation 189. As long as a new basic playable list is not desired 191, the jukebox continues to operate 189 with the currently selected basic playable list. If a new basic playable list is desired 191, the jukebox morphs 193 into a "new" jukebox, selecting a different playable subset of songs for basic selection 185, and changing additional characteristics as dictated by the morph.

Figure 15 is a flowchart showing an exemplary implementation of an automatic jukebox morph initiation process based on a triggering event. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the user may define an event 201, for example a themed night or a time of day, as a triggering event which triggers a jukebox morph. The jukebox then operates as normal 203, checking periodically to see if the triggering event occurs 205. If the triggering event has not occurred, the jukebox simply continues to operate 203, but if the triggering

event occurs, the jukebox is morphed into a "new" jukebox. The triggering events may be one time events, or they may be scheduled to occur weekly, daily, monthly or scheduled based on any other suitable criteria. It should be noted that in a multi-zone configuration, different zones may be morphed while others do not change. This feature of the illustrative embodiments allows, for example, a given zone or zones to be dedicated to a certain kind of music while the other(s) may vary based on any variety of factors, such as the time of day, an owner's desire to change the music, or a user's request.

Figure 16 is a flowchart showing an exemplary implementation of a jukebox morphing process. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, when the jukebox begins morphing 211, it selects a new subset of songs to be the basic playable list 213. The jukebox then allows some or all of the remaining songs on the jukebox to be selected for an enhanced fee 215. Some of the remaining songs may be restricted based on what triggered the morph. Other characteristics of the jukebox may also change 217, for example, the user interface may be changed, and different advertising may be displayed which corresponds with the predicted tastes of the crowd for which the jukebox has been morphed. Other suitable changes may also be made. In one example of a preferred embodiment, a club owner has a hip-hop night on Wednesdays, beginning at 9:00 pm and ending at 4:00 am. At 9:00 pm on Wednesdays, the jukebox morphs into a hip-hop jukebox, with a basic selection of appropriate music. In accordance with the morph, the jukebox blocks all access to genres of music such as country music, classic rock, jazz, blues and oldies, and the jukebox limits the available selection of hard rock additional songs to "hip-hop-esque" hard rock songs. The graphics on the jukebox convert to edgy, urban graphics, and the advertising changes accordingly, displaying products such as apparel, drinks, and goods which should appeal to the hip-hop crowd. At 4:00 am, the jukebox morphs back into the "standard" jukebox for that club, or into any other suitable jukebox. Alternatively, the jukebox may remain set in hip-hop

mode until the next triggering event occurs. Again, it should be noted that in a multi-zone configuration, different zones may be morphed while others do not change. In the above exemplary non-limiting embodiments, the system might morph into hip-hop in one zone for the night, while the "standard" music for the club remains playing in another area.

Figure 17 shows the relationship between a jukebox with expanded media storage and a central server. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the central server 221 contains a master library of songs, such library comprising all songs that are currently available to be downloaded and all songs currently installed on jukebox hard drives. The central server may communicate 222 with the remote jukebox 225 containing a local hard drive 223. The hard drive 223 on the jukebox may have several sections, including available space for downloads 227, space occupied by preloaded songs 228, and space for software and an operating system 229. Additional suitable sections may be added, for example, a section containing different pictures for altering the GUI. The jukebox 225 may communicate with the central server 221 to download songs, upload usage information, update software, and perform any other suitable functions.

Figure 18 is a flowchart showing an exemplary process for a song selection process when a song is not in the "standard" available playable song list. In accordance with an exemplary embodiment, the user first selects a song 231. The jukebox checks to see if the song is available on the local hard drive as a "non-standard" selection 233. If the song is available on the local hard drive, the jukebox charges the customer the price set for obtaining and playing a non-standard song 235 and plays the song 237 (or adds it to a playlist, when appropriate).

If the song is not available on the local hard drive, the jukebox checks to see if a high-speed connection to the central server is available 239. If there is no high-speed connection, the jukebox informs the user that the song is

temporarily unavailable 241 and orders the song for download 243. The jukebox may or may not charge an additional amount for ordering the song. If, however, there is an available high-speed connection to the central server, the jukebox orders the song immediately and uses the high-speed connection to download the song right away, queuing it up for playing 245. The jukebox then charges the customer the price of a non-standard selection 247.

Figure 19 is a flowchart showing an exemplary process for a priority play queue with prioritization-based-on-bidding capability. According to an exemplary embodiment, the user first indicates that he would like priority play 251. The jukebox then displays the current status of the priority play queue 253. This display may include information such as how many songs are in the queue, what the top bid is, how much has been bid on each song, which songs are "locked in," and any other suitable information about the priority queue. The jukebox then allows the user to select how much additional money the user would like to pay to place his song in a particular spot on the priority list and accepts payment in the selected amount 255. After accepting the payment 255, the jukebox places the song in a position on the priority list corresponding to the additional amount received from the user 257.

Alternatively, in another exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, a user can bid on the right to have a song played before other songs previously selected for priority play are played. In a preferred embodiment, the user is shown the top price paid for a priority play, and can pay more than that price to obtain the highest priority available.

Another exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments does not allow a user to be shown how much anyone else has paid for priority. The user can pay however much the user desires to spend to obtain a priority ranking, and then receive a ranking of priority based on the amount paid.

In accordance with a further exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, a user can pay however much the user desires to spend to obtain

a priority ranking in accordance with the previous exemplary aspect, and then be shown the priority spot which has been obtained based on the paid amount. If this spot is not satisfactory to the user, the user can pay additional money to move the song up in priority ranking, and be shown the new priority ranking obtained based on the additional money paid. The user can repeat this process until the desired priority ranking has been obtained. The user can also pay additional money to make it harder for other users to pre-empt the selected priority spot on the list in a bidding-type situation. Any other suitable method of increased-pay-for-increased-priority may also be implemented.

In accordance with an additional exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments which may provide a "lock in" feature, a user can "lock in" a priority ranking with a payment of a pre-selected amount. For example, if a user pays 15 credits to obtain a ranking of 3rd in priority, and wishes to guarantee the third ranking, the user may pay, for example, 4 more credits to "lock in" the ranking. Since locking in the ranking may require the "lock in" of all the rankings above the user as well, the user may be required to pay a certain amount to "lock in" all songs above the user's selection. In one such situation, the user can either choose to pay the price quoted for the "lock in" or pay the same or a varying amount of credits in an attempt to prevent future over-bidding or to move the user's song up further in the priority list.

In accordance with another exemplary aspect of the illustrative embodiments, any of the aforementioned bidding strategies may be implemented, and the user may be shown how much everyone has paid for their particular rankings. This allows the user to know exactly how much he will have to pay to obtain a certain priority position. If the "lock in" feature is implemented, this will also let a user know if it is cheaper to pay the price to "lock in" the song or to pay to move up on the priority list. All of these options result in increased revenue for the operator.

It should be noted that although the embodiments above describe a system for distributing media to non-movable jukeboxes, alternative embodiments using similar systems could distribute media to portable jukebox devices and are contemplated by, and within the scope and spirit of, this invention. A portable jukebox may be, for example, a PDA, a cell phone, or any other movable device capable of receiving and playing music. Furthermore, media may be distributed to portable jukeboxes using the above described methods (e.g. through a broadband connection, wireless connection, etc.), or any other appropriate method, more suited to the particular portable device, such as, for example, using Bluetooth technology. Additionally, the jukeboxes described above typically are for commercial purposes. However, jukeboxes for other purposes such as, for example, playing residential media, also are contemplated by, and within the scope and spirit of, this invention.

While the preferred aspects of the invention have been illustrated and described herein, it will be apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art that various changes and/or modifications can be made. Thus, the specific description herein is meant to be exemplary only and is not intended to limit the invention beyond the terms of appended claims.

Claims

1. A jukebox comprising:

instances of media available for output;

a plurality of output channels, wherein a first output channel and at least a second output channel different from the first output channel are capable of simultaneously outputting different instances of media; and

a user interface, wherein the user interface allows a user to select one or more of the plurality of output channels for output of a specific instance of media.

2. The jukebox of claim 1, further comprising:

a collection mechanism, wherein a fixed amount of money is collected for playing certain preselected instances of media.

3. The jukebox of claim 2, further comprising:

a plurality of output devices operably connected to the plurality of output channels.

4. The jukebox of claim 2, wherein the user interface further allows a user to select one or more first output channels for the output of a specific instance of media and at least one or more second output channels different from the one or more first output channels for output of at least a second instance of media different from the first instance of media.

5. The jukebox of claim 4, wherein the collection mechanism further collects some additional amount of money greater than the fixed amount of money if a user selects more than one of the output channels for output of an instance of media.

6. The jukebox of claim 4, further comprising a memory storing a plurality of queues of instances of media for each of the plurality of output channels.

7. The jukebox of claim 6, wherein the each of the plurality of queues further comprise:

a non-priority queue, wherein a list of instances of media selected by one or more users for play on the output channel corresponding to the plurality of queues is ordered in the temporal order that the instances of media were selected by the one or more users; and

a priority queue, wherein a list of instances of media selected by one or more users for play on the output channel corresponding to the plurality of queues is prioritized based on a prioritization algorithm.

8. The jukebox of claim 7, wherein the prioritization algorithm determines list prioritization order based on the amount collected by the collection mechanism from a user for output of a specific instance of media, whereby an instance of media for which a greater amount was collected by the collection mechanism is given priority in the list over an instance of media for which a lesser amount was collected by the collection mechanism.

9. The jukebox of claim 7, wherein the user interface shows the amount collected by the collection mechanism for each instance of media in the priority queue corresponding to one of the plurality of outputs.

10. The jukebox of claim 7, wherein the prioritization algorithms of more than one of the plurality of priority queues corresponding to more than one of the plurality of the output channels will assign a same priority position in the respective lists to a specific instance of media selected for output on the more than one of the plurality of output channels to guarantee simultaneous play on the more than one of the plurality of output channels.

11. The jukebox of claim 10, wherein the collection mechanism collects an additional amount from the user for guaranteeing simultaneous play.

12. The jukebox of claim 1, wherein the user interface further comprises:

a main user interface provided at a first location (area) in an establishment; and

one or more additional secondary user interfaces different from the main user interface and provided at second locations (area) in an establishment different from the first location.

13. The jukebox of claim 12, wherein the second user interfaces comprise graphical user interfaces provided on machines operable for at least a second purpose different from providing a graphical user interface.

14. The jukebox of claim 1, wherein the output of one or more of the plurality of output channels can be limited to the output of a subset of the available instances of media.

15. The jukebox of claim 3, wherein the output level of one or more of the output devices can be limited to a specific maximum and/or minimum.

16. The jukebox of claim 12, wherein the main user interface and the secondary user interfaces further comprise graphical user interfaces.

17. The jukebox of claim 16, wherein the graphical user interfaces are capable of changing to display at least one of a different graphic, advertisement, or available list of instances of media based on the occurrence of a predetermined event.

18. The jukebox of claim 17 wherein the predetermined event comprises the occurrence of at least one of an operator specified date, time, or day of the week.

19. A method of outputting a user selectable instance of media in one or more user selectable areas of an establishment, comprising:

providing a jukebox with a user interface which allows a user to select an instance of media for output;

allowing the user to select one or more areas of an establishment for output of the selected instance of media;

determining a price for the selected instance of media and the selected areas of the establishment;

collecting an amount from the user equal to the determined price;
and

queuing the selected instance of media for output in one or more queues assigned to the one or more selected areas of the establishment.

20. A method of prioritizing output of a user selected instance of media in one or more user selectable areas of an establishment, comprising:

providing a jukebox with a user interface which allows a user to select an instance of media for output;

allowing the user to select a prioritization option for output of the selected instance of media;

allowing the user to select one or more areas of the establishment in which the output of the selected instance of media is to be prioritized;

determining a price for the play and prioritization of the selected instance of media in the selected areas of the establishment;

collecting an amount from the user equal to the determined price;
and

placing the selected instance of media in a position in one or more priority queues assigned to the one or more selected area of the establishment.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein the position in the one or more priority queues is based on the amount collected from the user, whereby collection of an greater amount from the user results in a position of priority greater than the position of priority assigned to a selected instance of media for which a lesser amount was collected.

22. A method of providing priority and non-priority output of user selected instances of media in a plurality of areas in an establishment, wherein a single jukebox is used for output of all instances of media, wherein the jukebox is capable of simultaneous output of a plurality of different instances of media, comprising:

storing, in a memory, a non-priority queue of instances of media selected for output, wherein the instances of media are ordered according to the order in which they were selected for output; and

storing, in a memory, a priority queue of instances of media selected for output before the instances of media stored in the non-priority queue, wherein the instances of media are ordered according to a prioritization algorithm.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the prioritization algorithm determines queue prioritization order based on an amount collected by a collection mechanism from a user for output of a specific instance of media, whereby an instance of media for which a greater amount was collected by the collection mechanism is given priority in the queue over an instance of media for which a lesser amount was collected by the collection mechanism.

24. A jukebox comprising:

a mass storage media, wherein the mass storage media is pre-defined to comprise at least a predetermined set of instances of media and software for operation of the jukebox, wherein the software for the operation of the jukebox further comprises:

software which selects a first subset of the predetermined set of the instances of media;

software which assigns a basic status to the selected first subset;

software which selects a second subset of the predetermined set of the instances of media different from the first subset, whereby the selection of the second subset can comprise a selection of all predetermined instances of media not selected for the first subset; and

software which assigns an enhanced status different from the basic status to the selected subset.

25. The jukebox of claim 24, wherein the software for the operation of the jukebox further comprises:

software which assigns a first fixed price to the instances of media having a basic status;

software which assigns a second fixed price, different from and higher than the first fixed price, to the instances of media having an enhanced status.

26. The jukebox of claim 24, wherein the software for the operation of the jukebox further comprises:

software which prevents the play of songs not having one of a basic status or an enhanced status.

27. The jukebox of claim 24, wherein the software for the operation of the jukebox further comprises:

software allowing for a new selection of a first subset of the preselected instances of media to which a basic status is to be assigned and selection of a second subset of the preselected instances of media, different from the first subset, to which an enhanced status is to be assigned.

28. The jukebox of claim 24 wherein the storage media further comprises an amount of blank space.

29. A method of morphing a jukebox, wherein the jukebox comprises a set of instances of media and a graphical user interface displaying at least one of: a first list of instances of media selectable by a user for output at a normal fee, a second list of instances of media, different from the first list, selectable by a user for output at an enhanced fee higher than the normal fee, one or more advertisements, or one or more graphics different from the lists of instances of media or the one or more advertisements, comprising:

defining an event to trigger the morphing of the jukebox;

operating the jukebox;

checking to see if the event to trigger the morphing of the jukebox occurs or has occurred; and

changing, to a different graphic, at least one of the displayed: first list of instances of media selectable by a user for output at a normal fee, second list of instances of media, different from the first list, selectable by a user for output at an enhanced fee, higher than the normal fee, one or more advertisements, or one or more graphics different from the lists of instances of media or the one or

more advertisements, if the event to trigger the morphing of the jukebox occurs or has occurred.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the changing to a different graphic further comprises changing to graphics that match a certain criteria, whereby the criteria is set based on the event which was defined to trigger the morphing of the jukebox.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein the changing, to a different graphic the first list of instances of media selectable by the user and the second list of instances of media selectable by the user further comprises:

displaying a new first list of instances of media selectable by the user, wherein the contents of the new first list are determined based on a certain criteria, whereby the criteria is set based on the event which was defined to trigger the morphing of the jukebox; and

displaying a new second list of instances of media selectable by the user, different from the new first list, wherein the contents of the new second list are determined based on a certain criteria, whereby the criteria is set based on the event which was defined to trigger the morphing of the jukebox, and wherein the new second list may not contain all remaining instances of media, from the set of instances of media, which are not contained in the new first list.

32. The jukebox of claim 1, wherein the user interface allows the user to search for media using a personal music assistant, comprising:

a data entry mechanism, to collect profiling information about the user;

a comparator, to compare the entered profiling information to other profiles and to recommended media to the user;

a display, to output the list of recommended songs; and
a selector, for specifying which instance of media should be played.

33. The personal music assistant of claim 32, wherein the data entry mechanism comprises a keyboard.

34. The personal music assistant of claim 32, wherein the data entry mechanism comprises a credit card.

35. The personal music assistant of claim 32, wherein the data entry mechanism comprises a pre-programmed media card or wand.

36. The jukebox of claim 1, wherein the user interface allows the user to search for media from on a list of popular media compiled based on media selection habits of jukeboxes within a pre-defined geographic area.

37. The jukebox of claim 17, wherein the predetermined event comprises the identification of a preferred user of the jukebox.

38. The method of claim 29, wherein the triggering event comprises a specified date, time, or day of the week.

39. The method of claim 29, wherein the triggering event comprises the recognition of a preferred user.

40. The method of claim 19, wherein the step of selecting instances of media further comprises:

entering identifying data to build a profile for the user;
comparing the entered profiling information to other profiles;
recommending a narrow list of media to the user; and
specifying which instance of the media should be played.

41. The method of claim 40, wherein the user is identified by swiping a credit card.

42. The method of claim 40, wherein the user is identified by waving a pre-programmed card or wand by a receiver connected to the jukebox.

43. The method of claim 19, wherein the step of selecting instances of media further comprises a choice of media from a list of popular media compiled based on media selection habits of jukeboxes within a pre-defined geographic area.

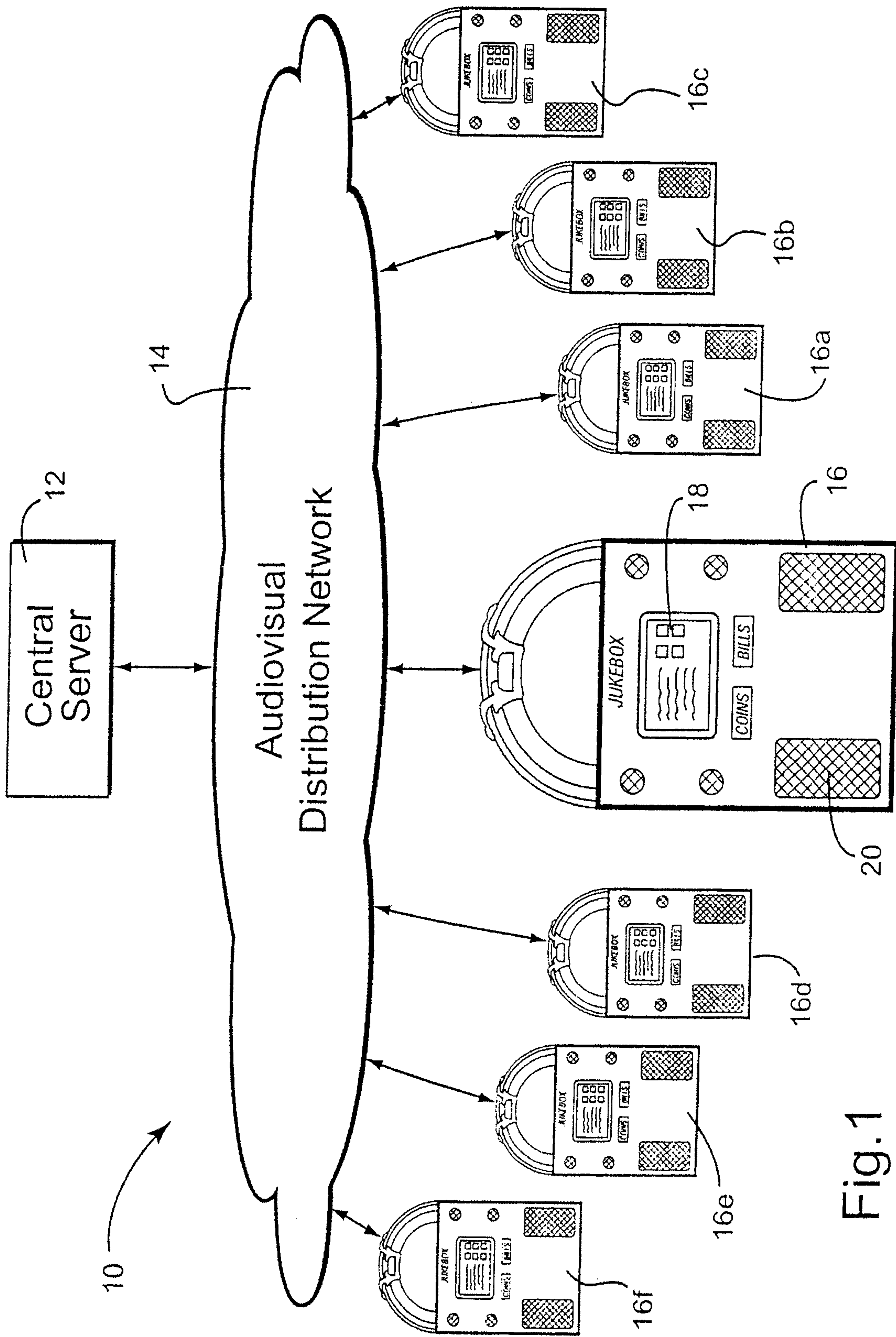


Fig.1
(PRIOR ART)

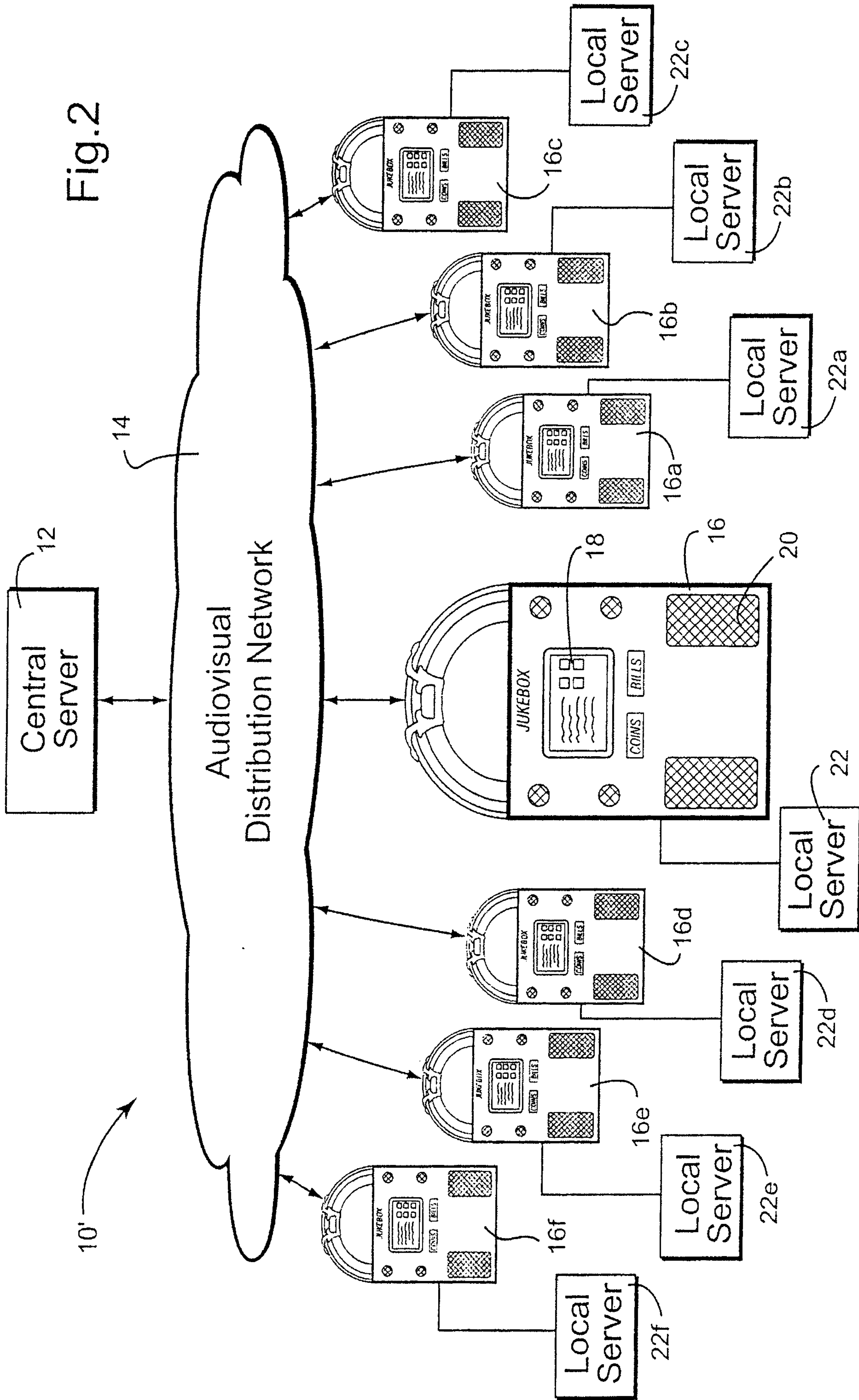


Fig. 2

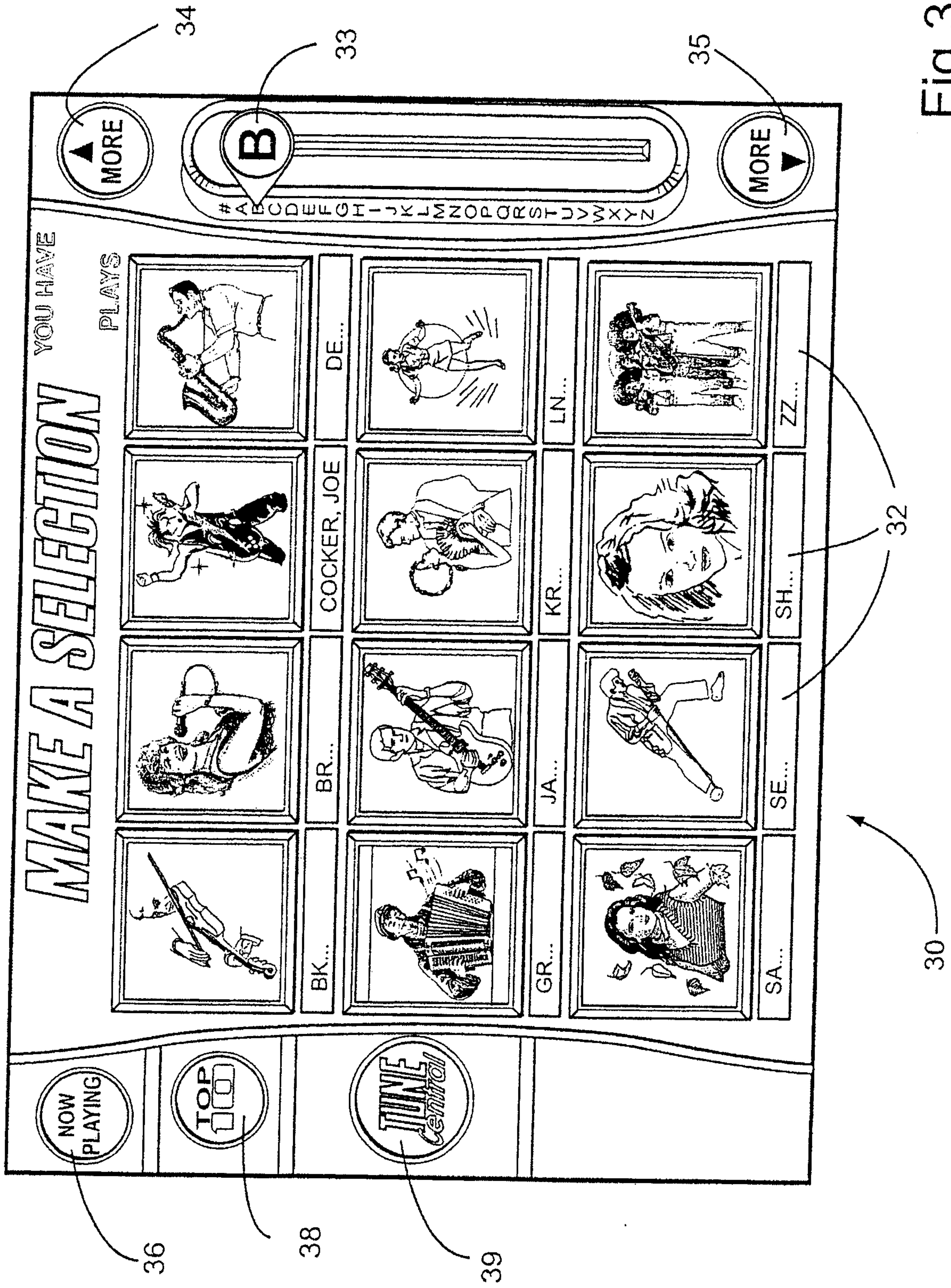


Fig.3

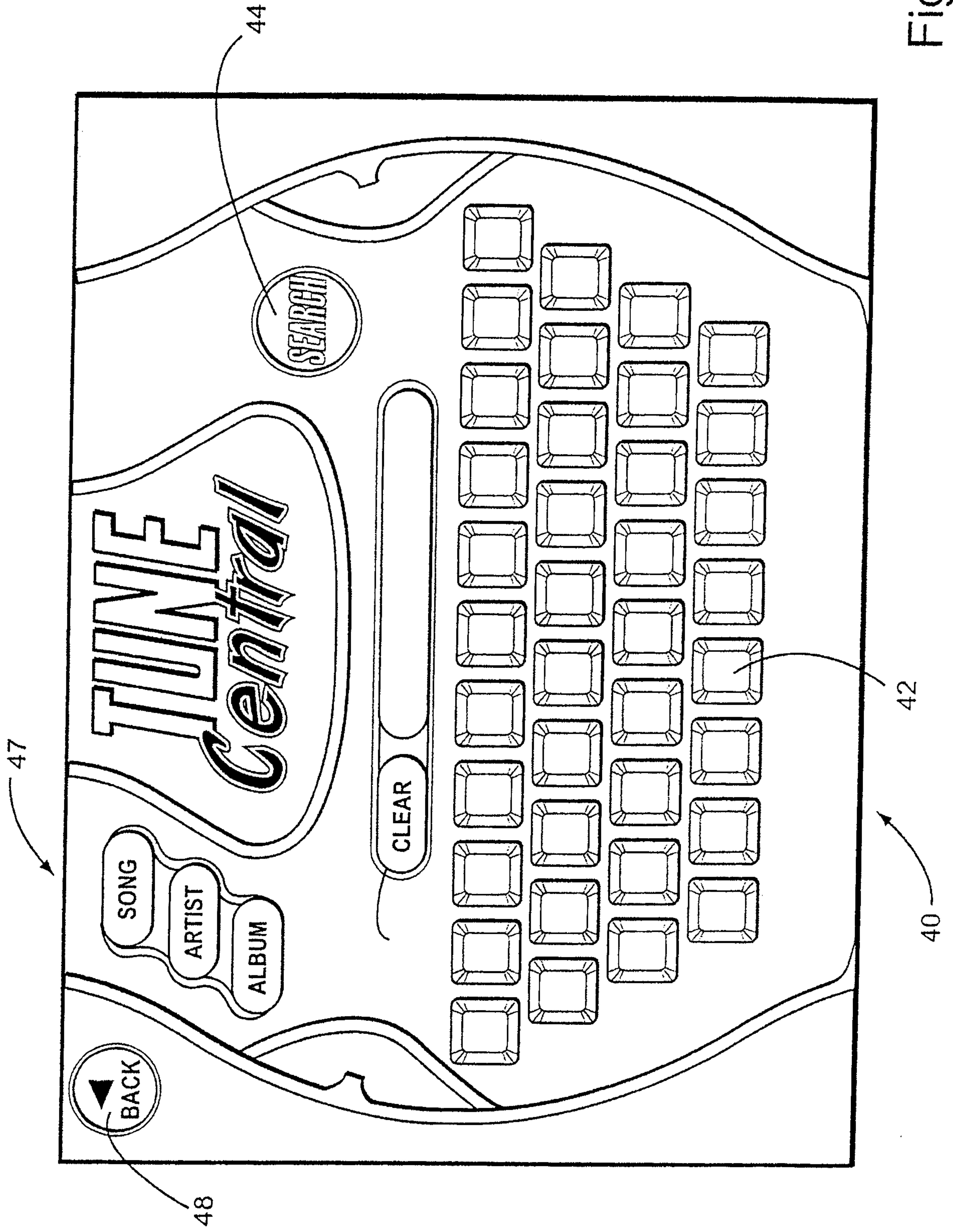


Fig.4

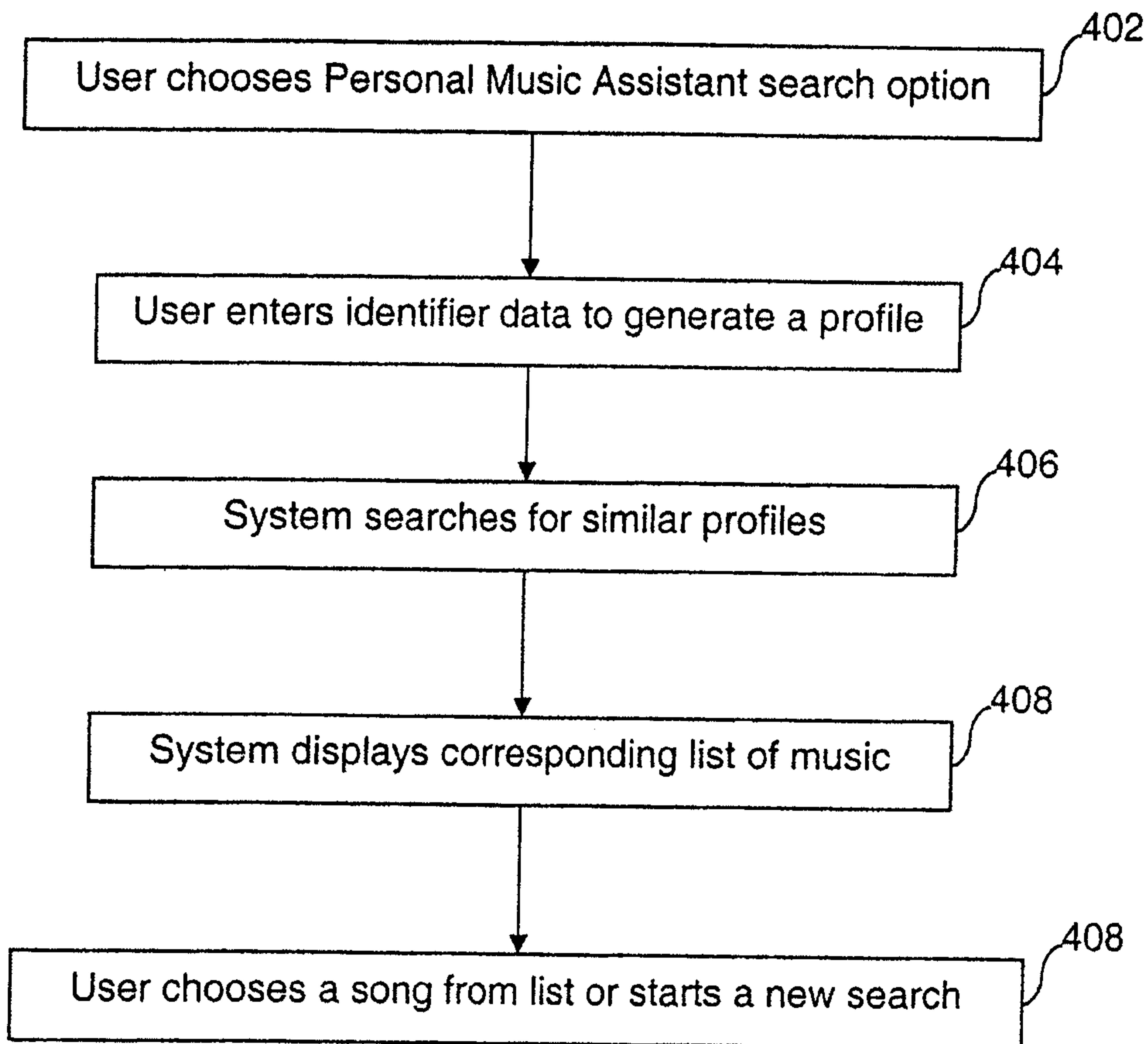


Fig. 4A

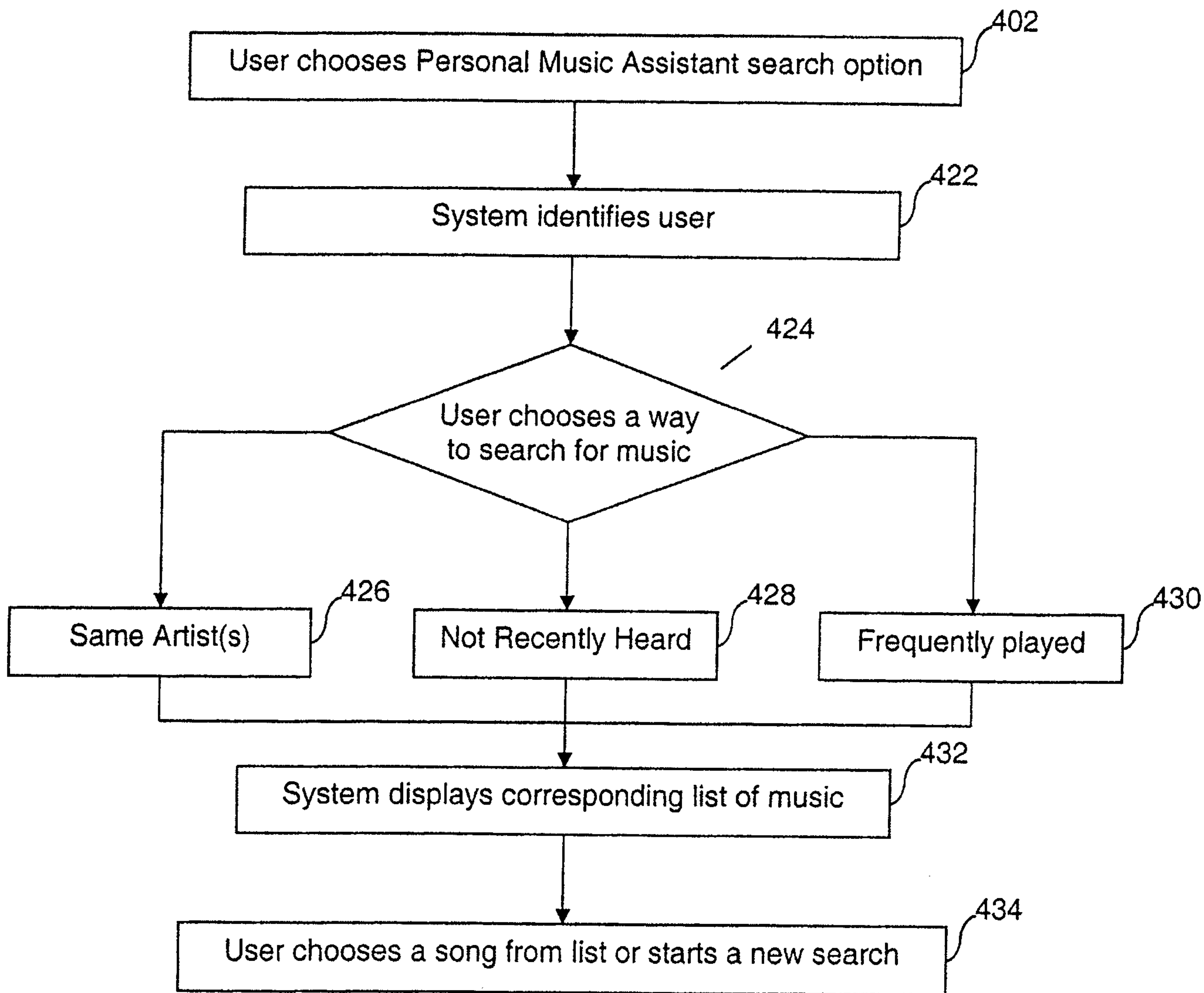


Fig. 4B

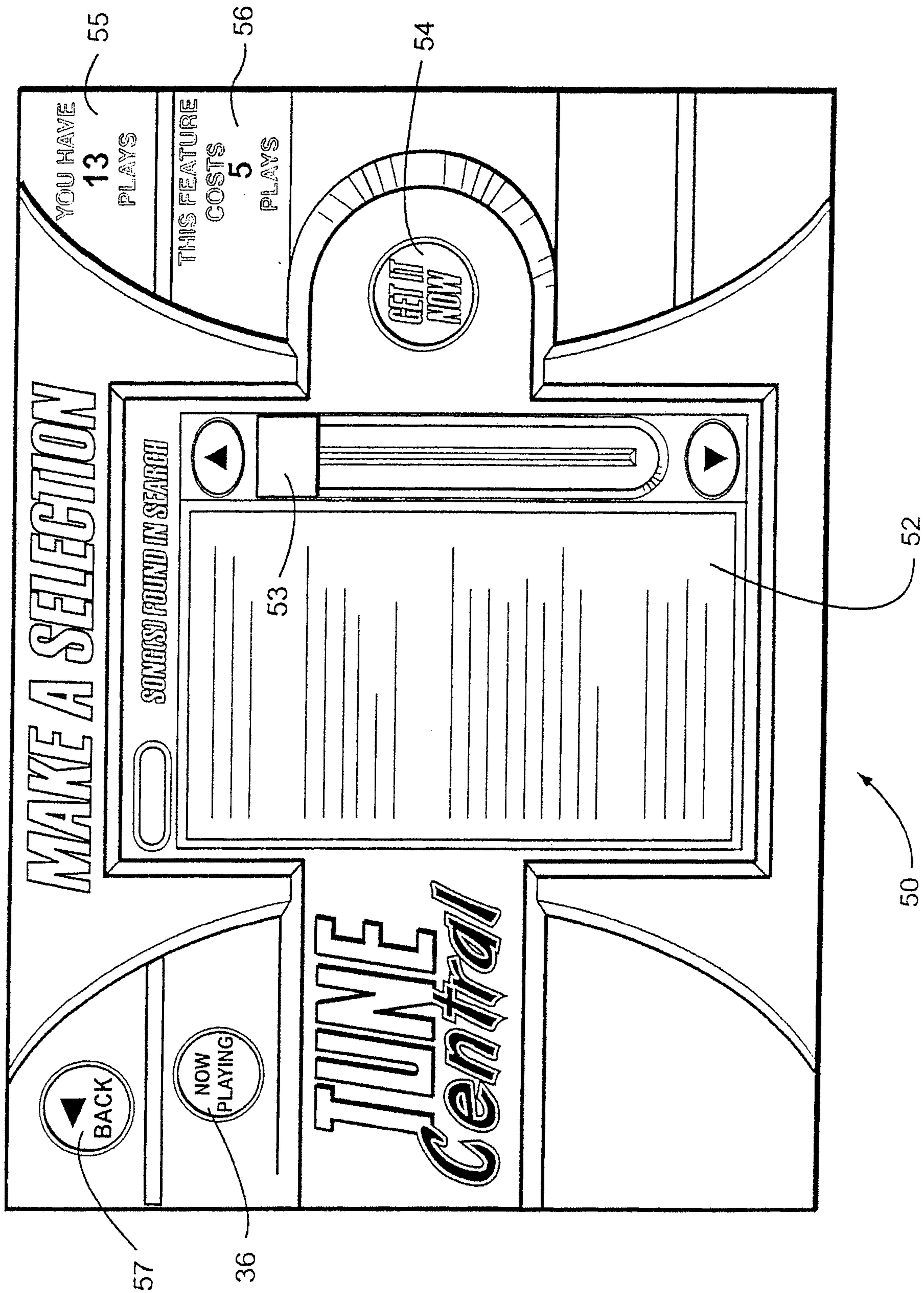


Fig.5

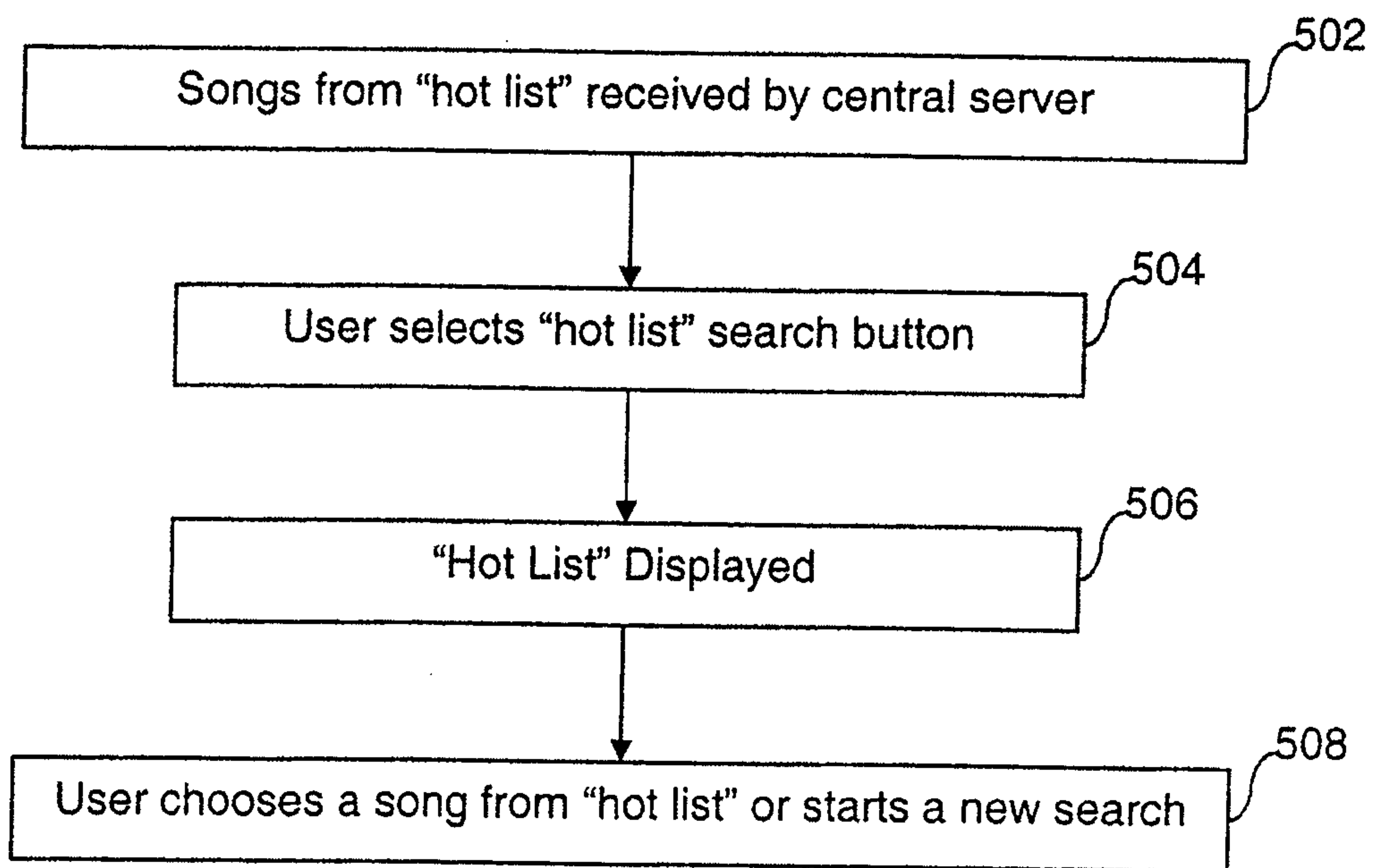


Fig. 5A

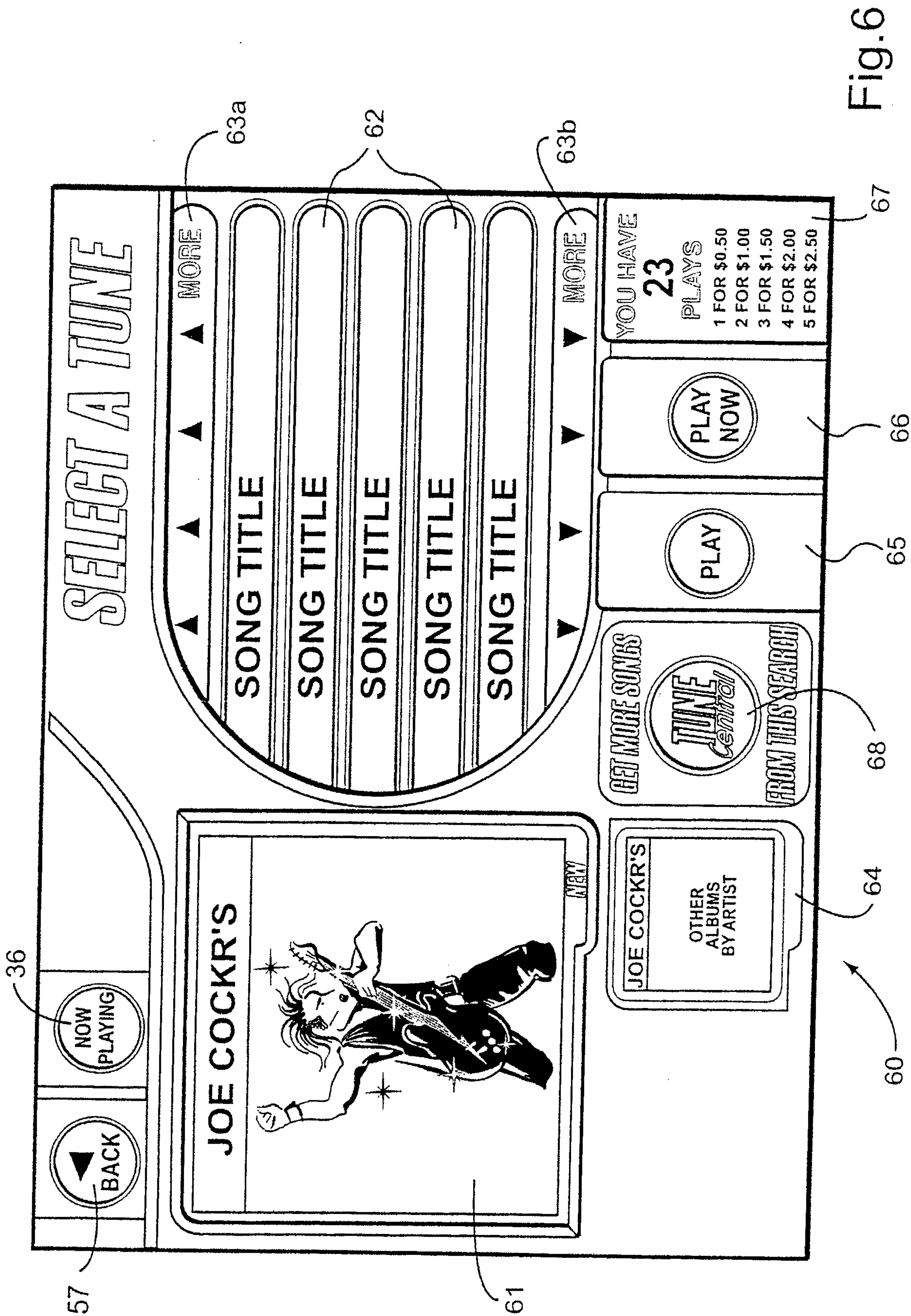


Fig.6

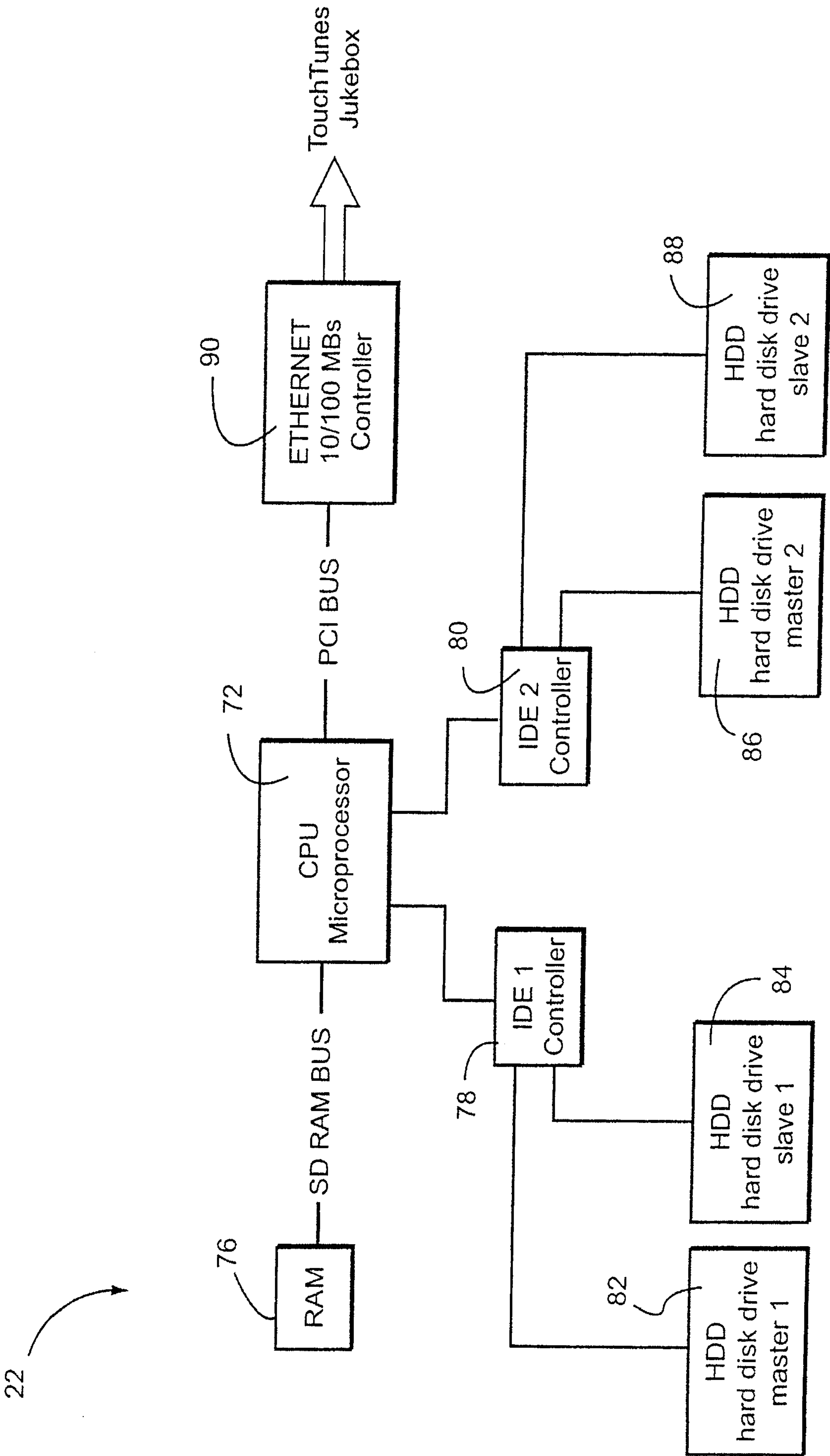


Fig. 7

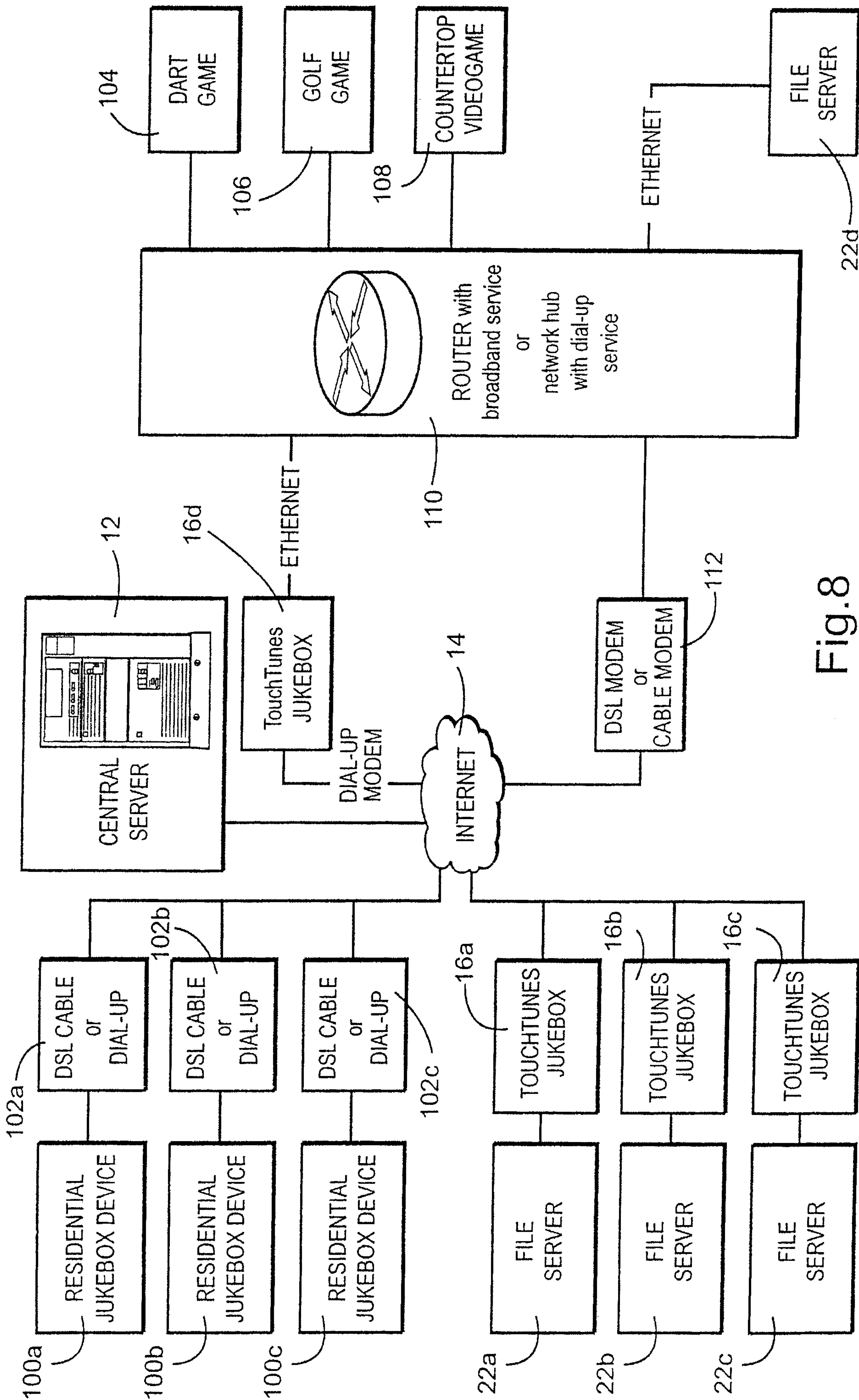


Fig.8

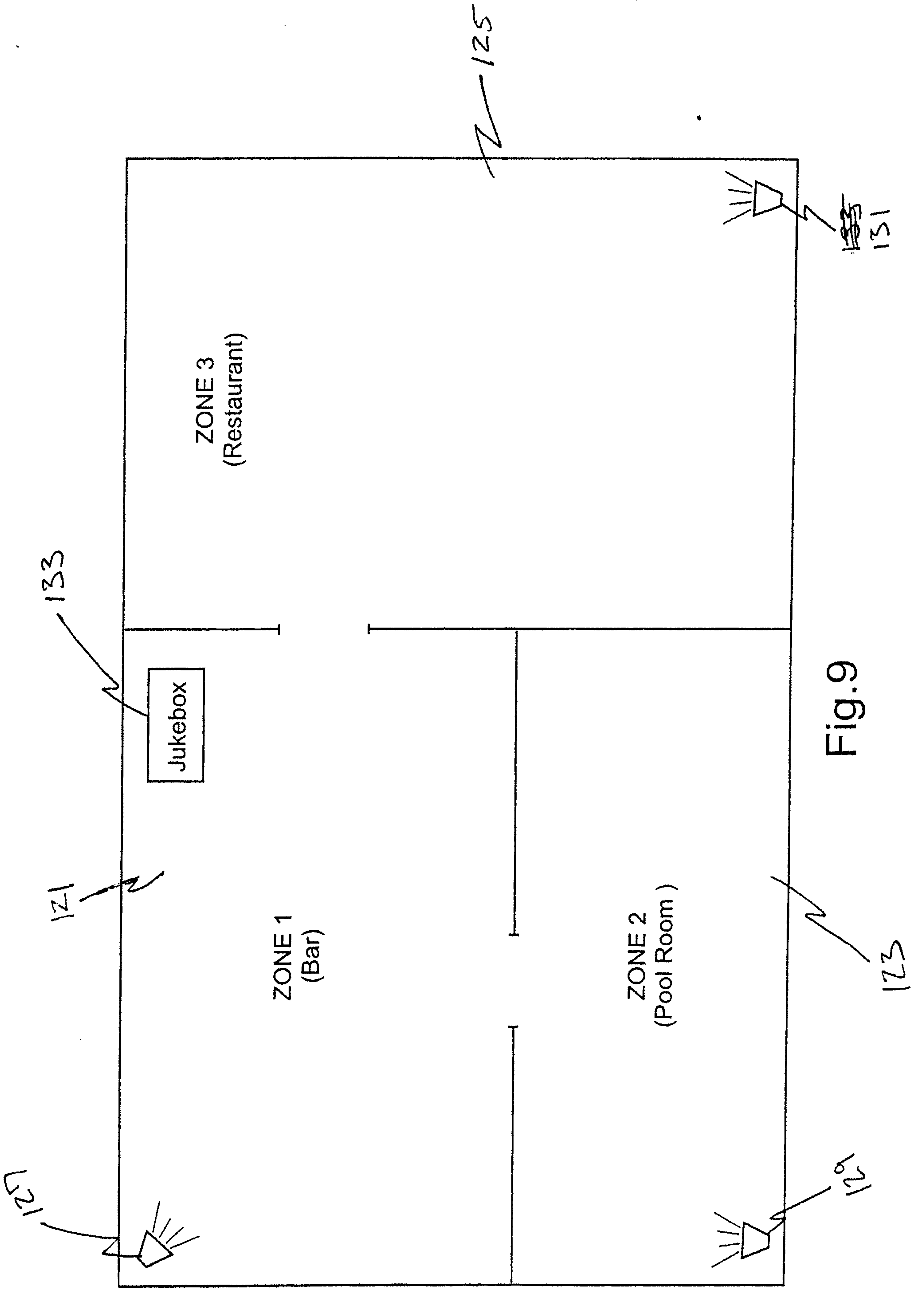


Fig. 9

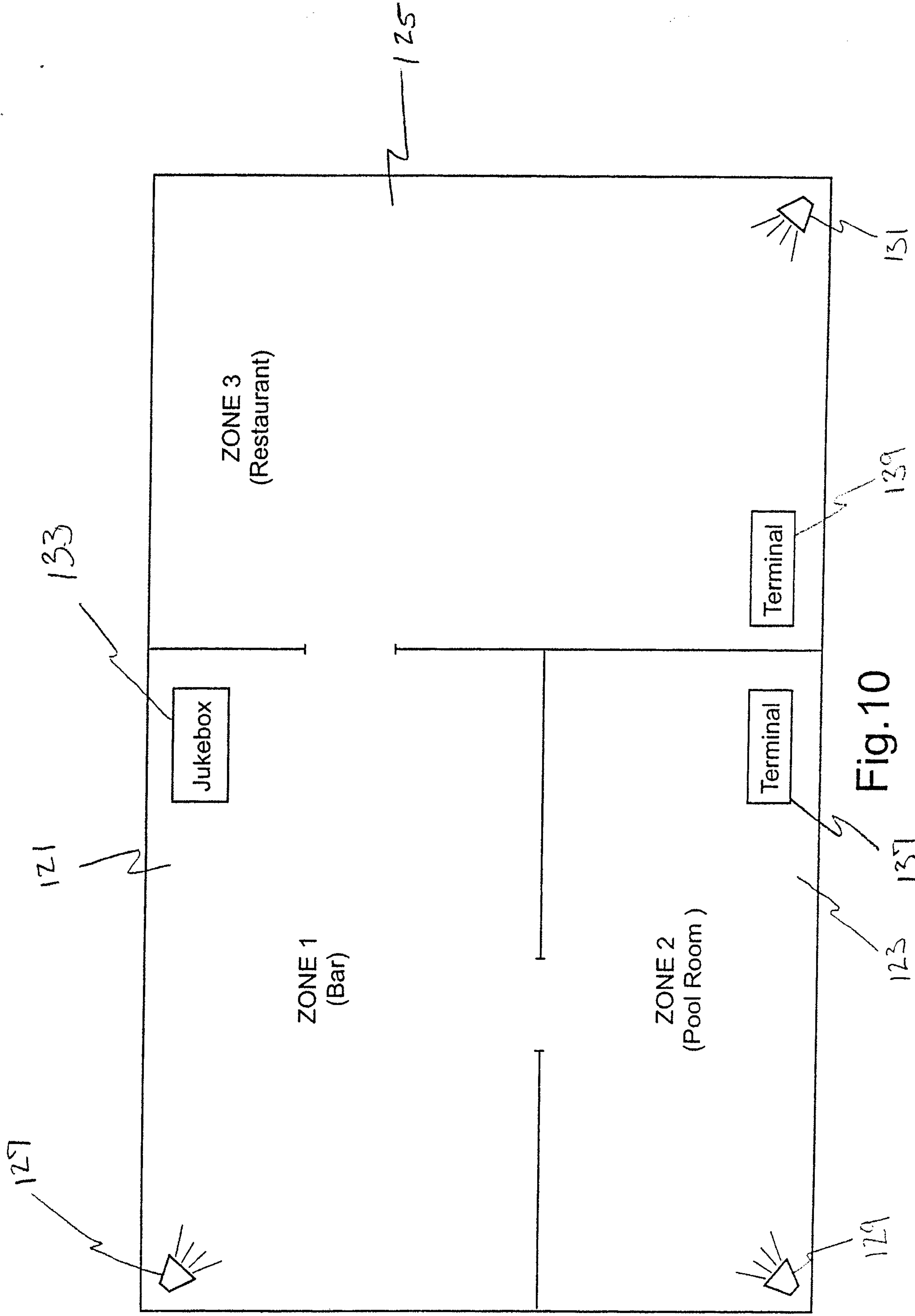


Fig. 10

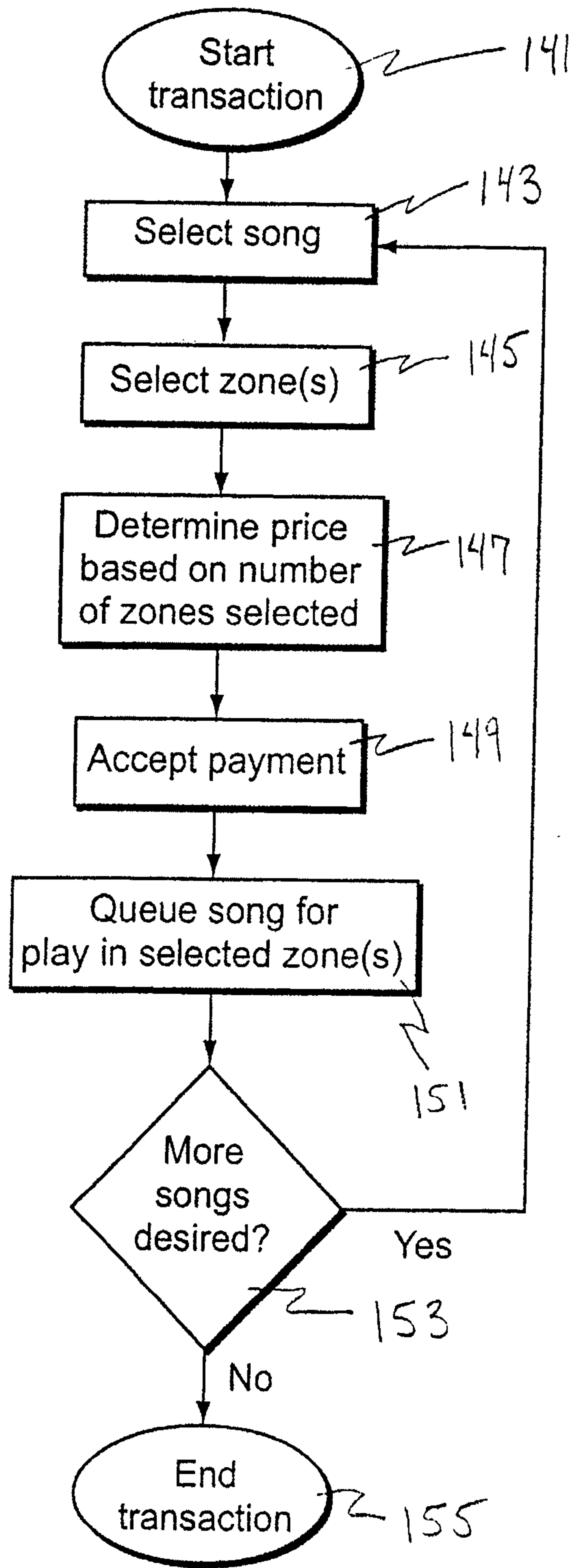


Fig.11

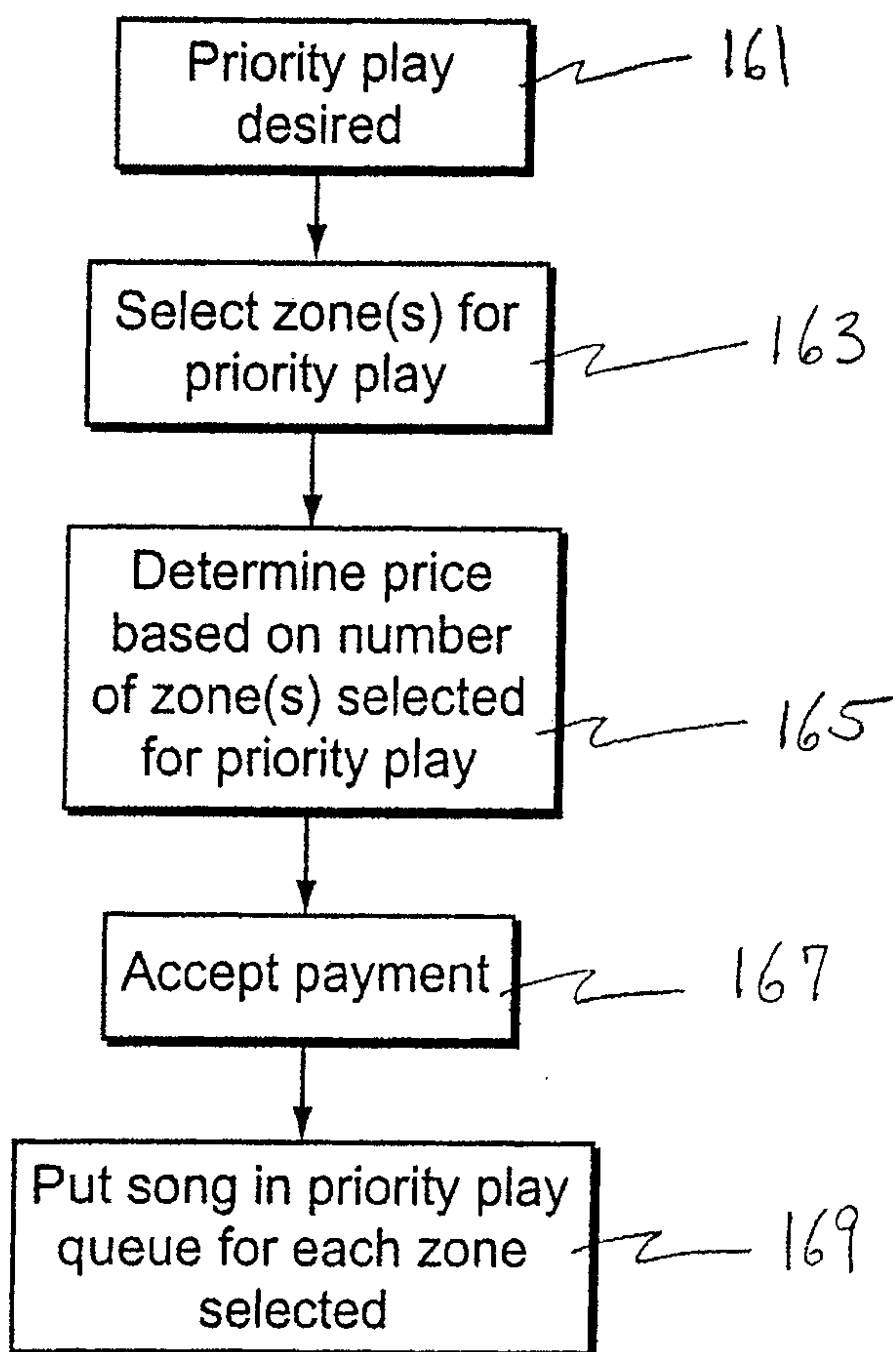


Fig.12

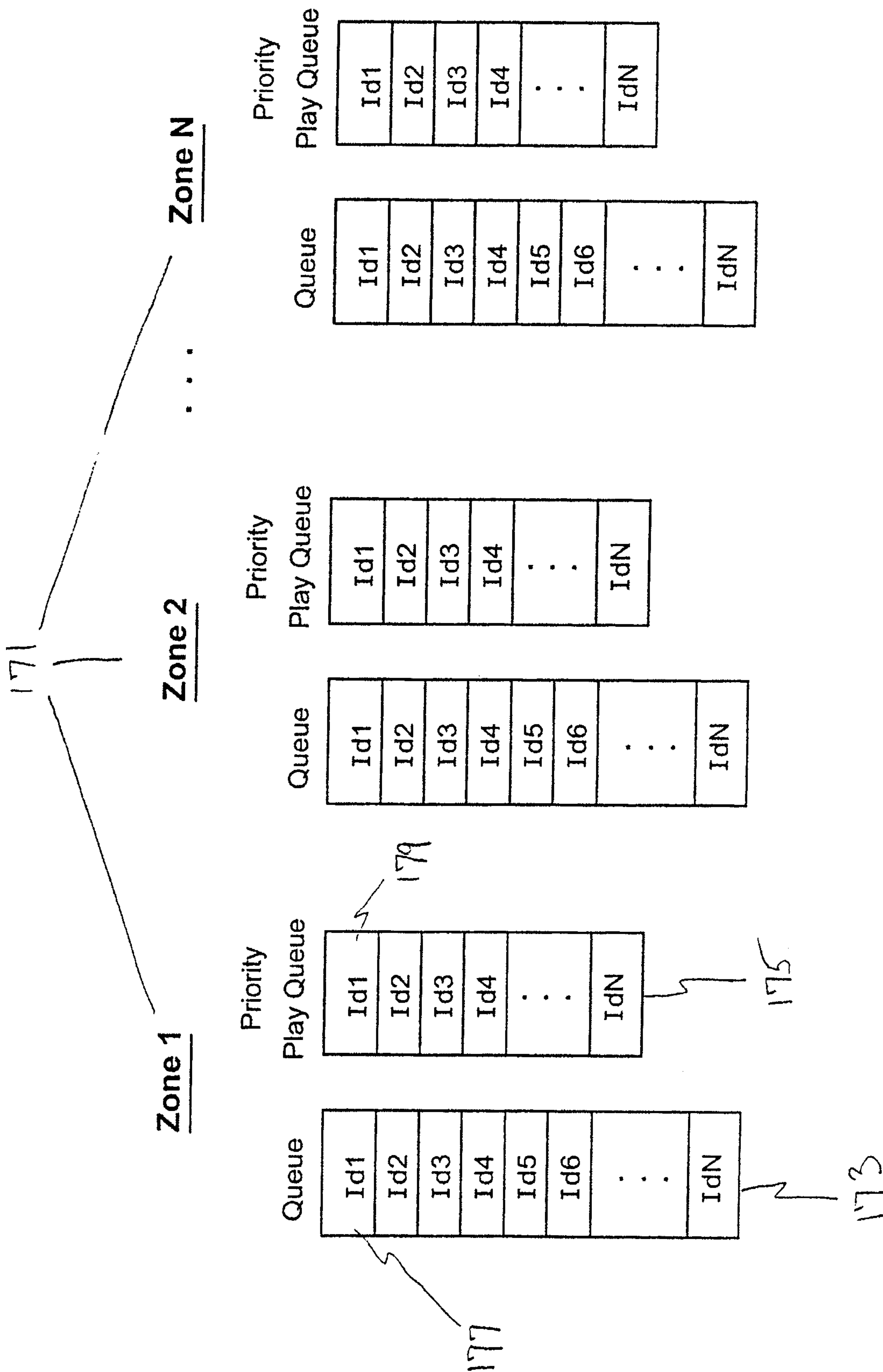


Fig.13

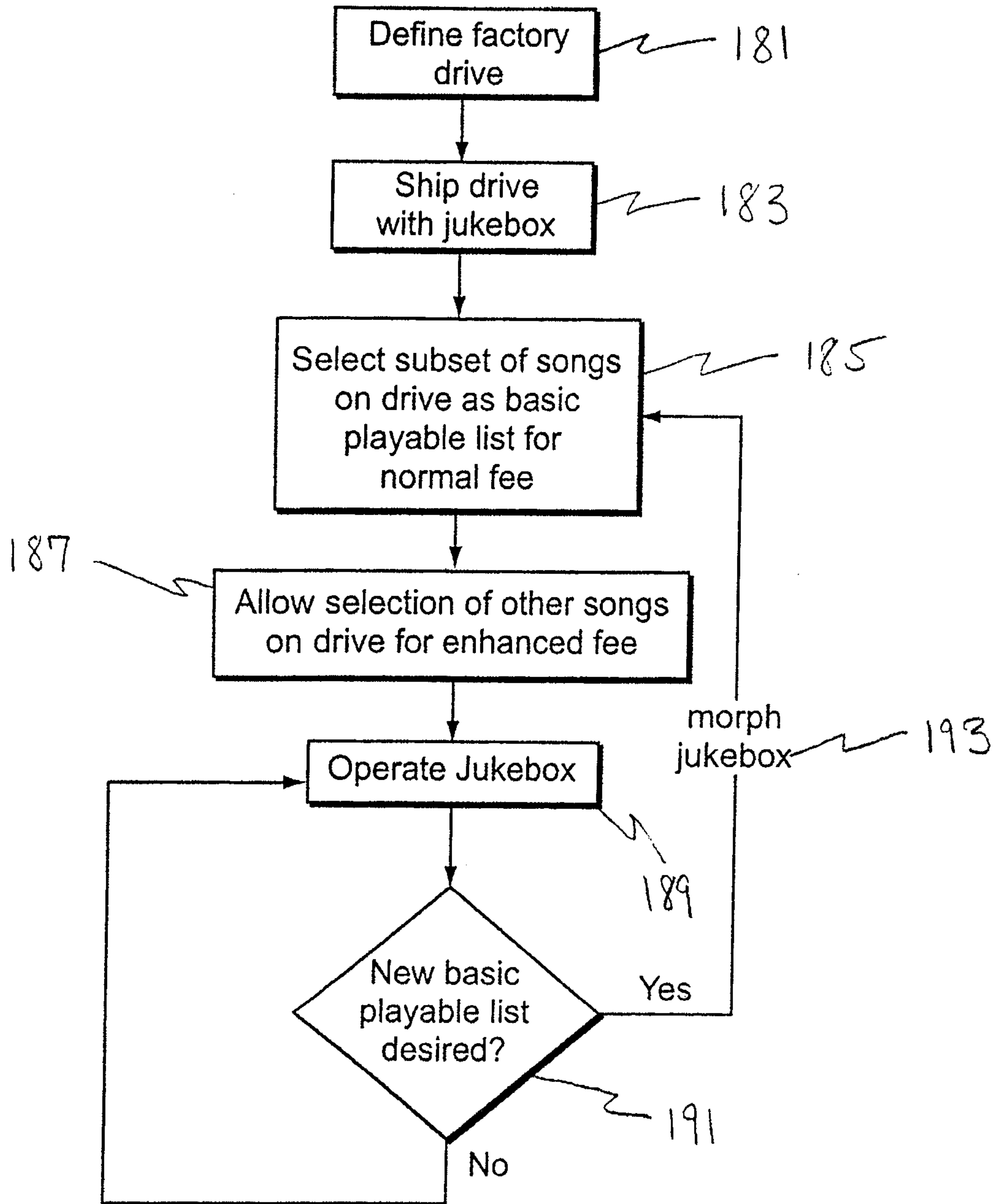


Fig.14

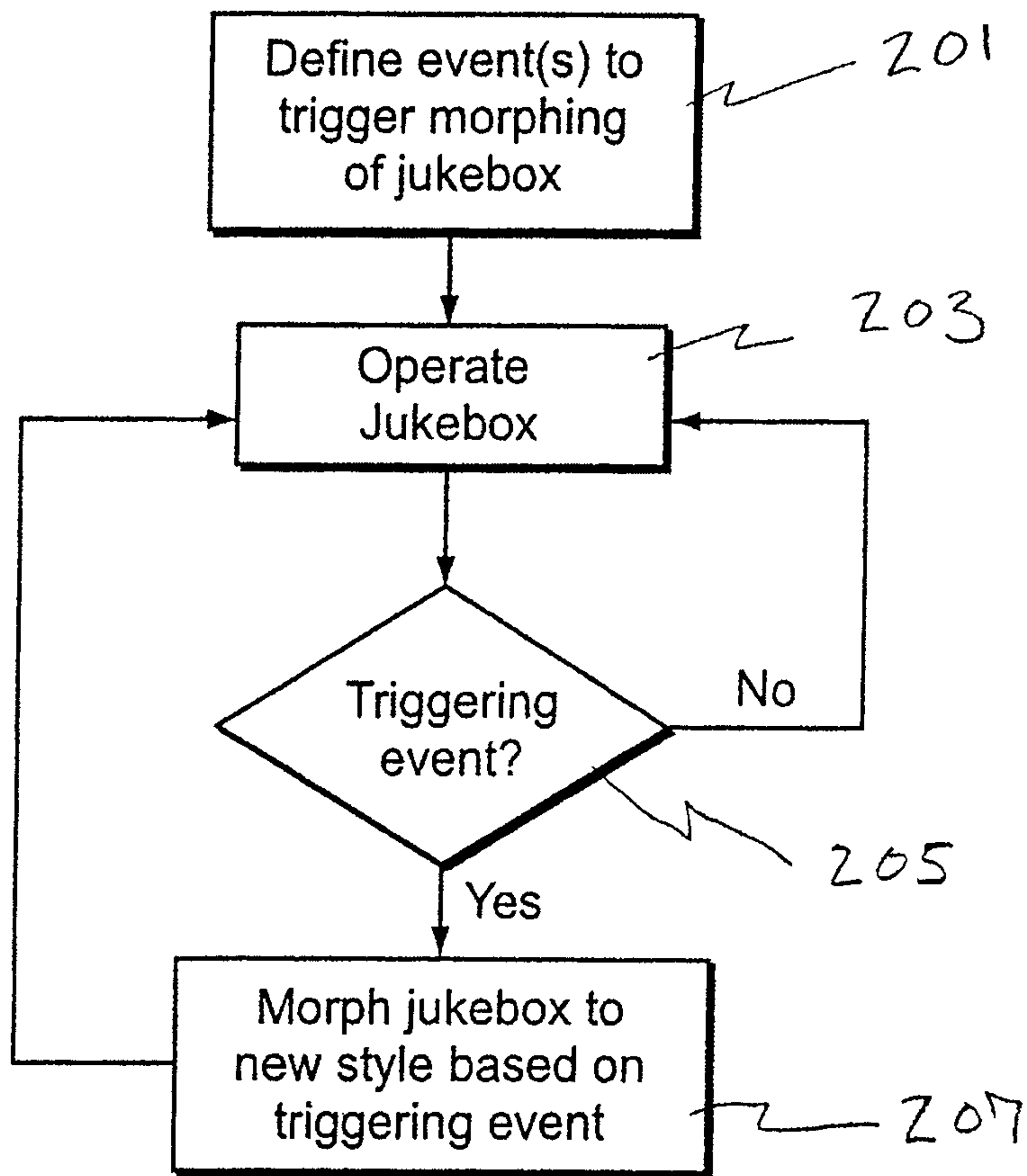


Fig.15

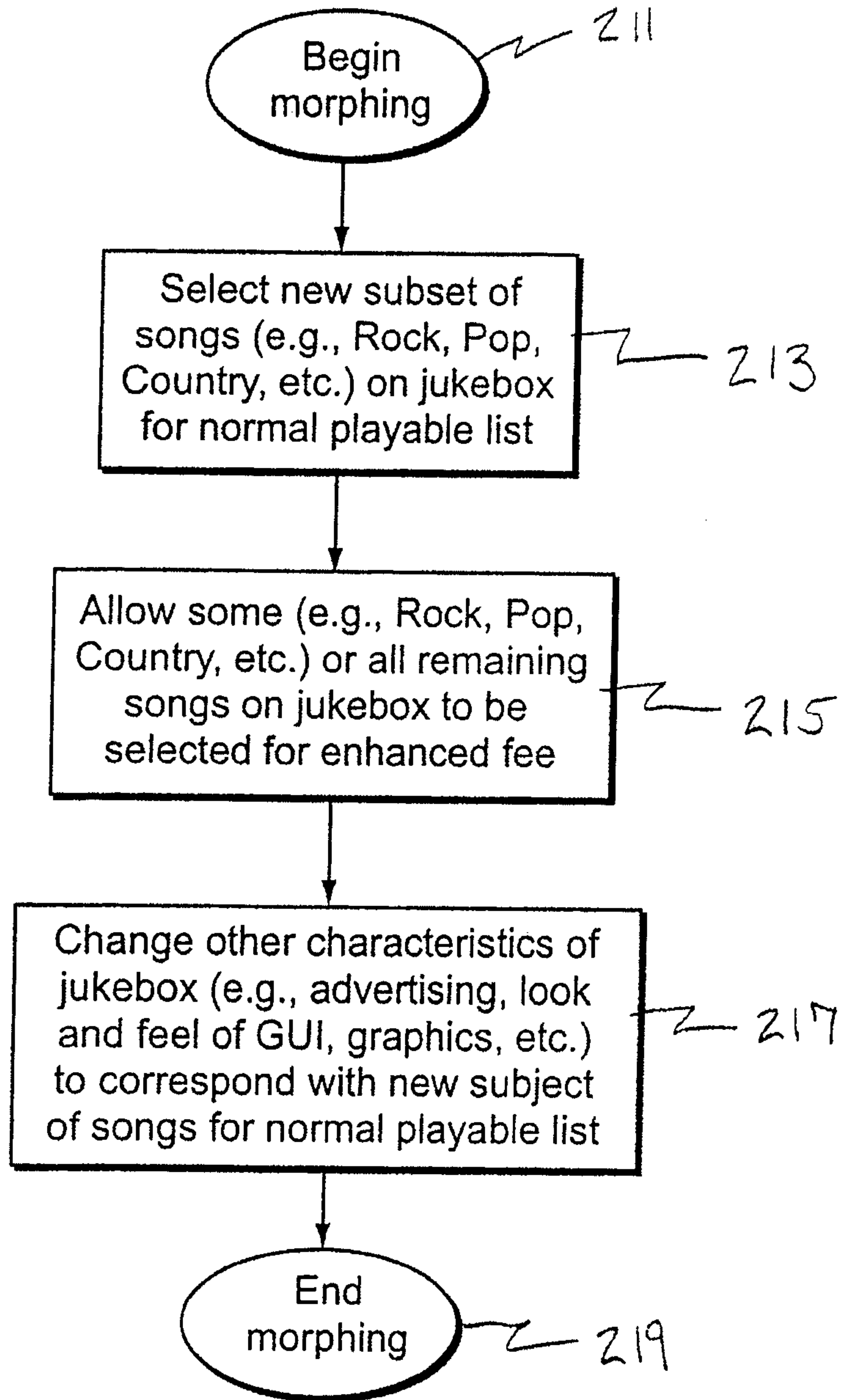


Fig.16

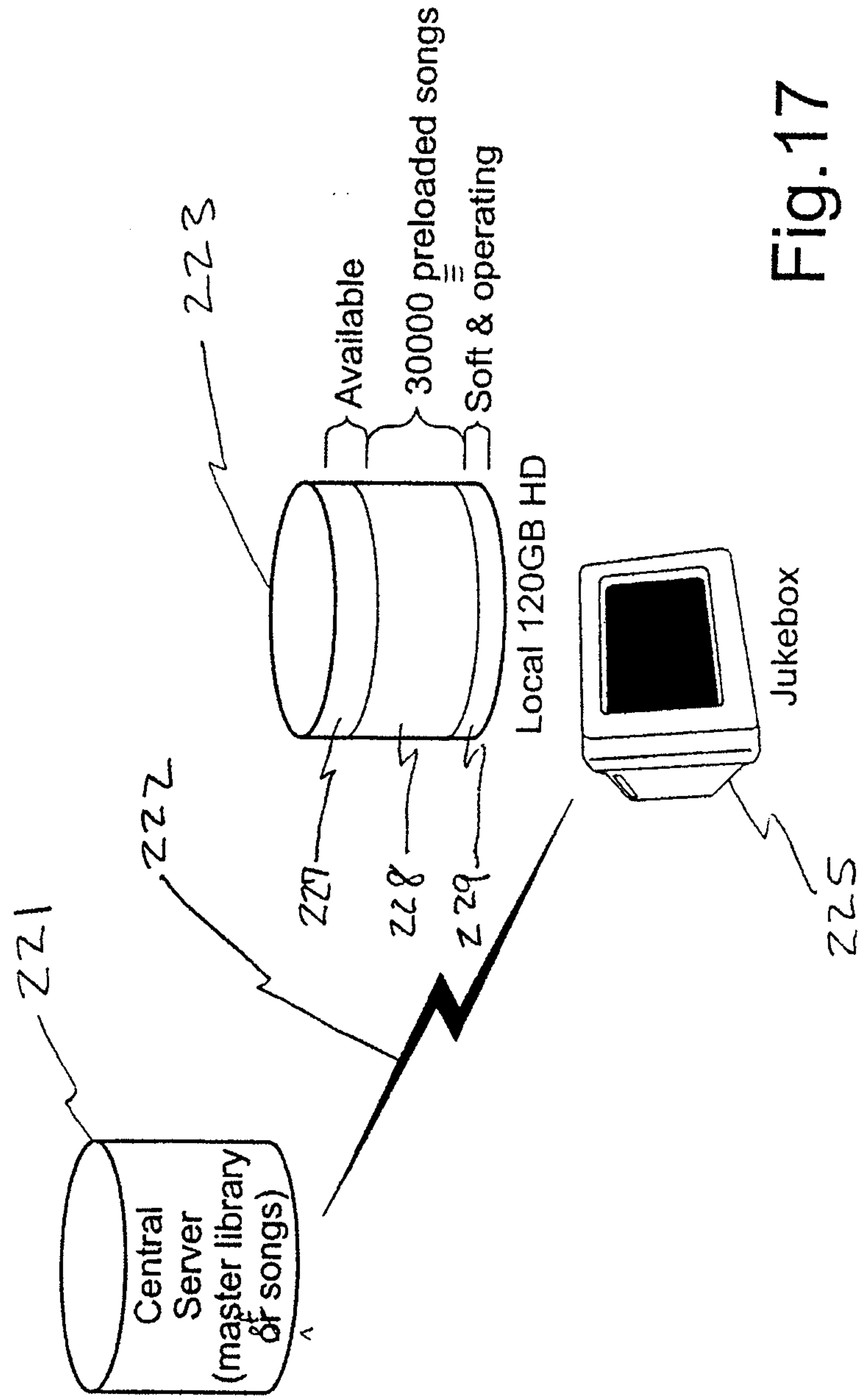


Fig.17

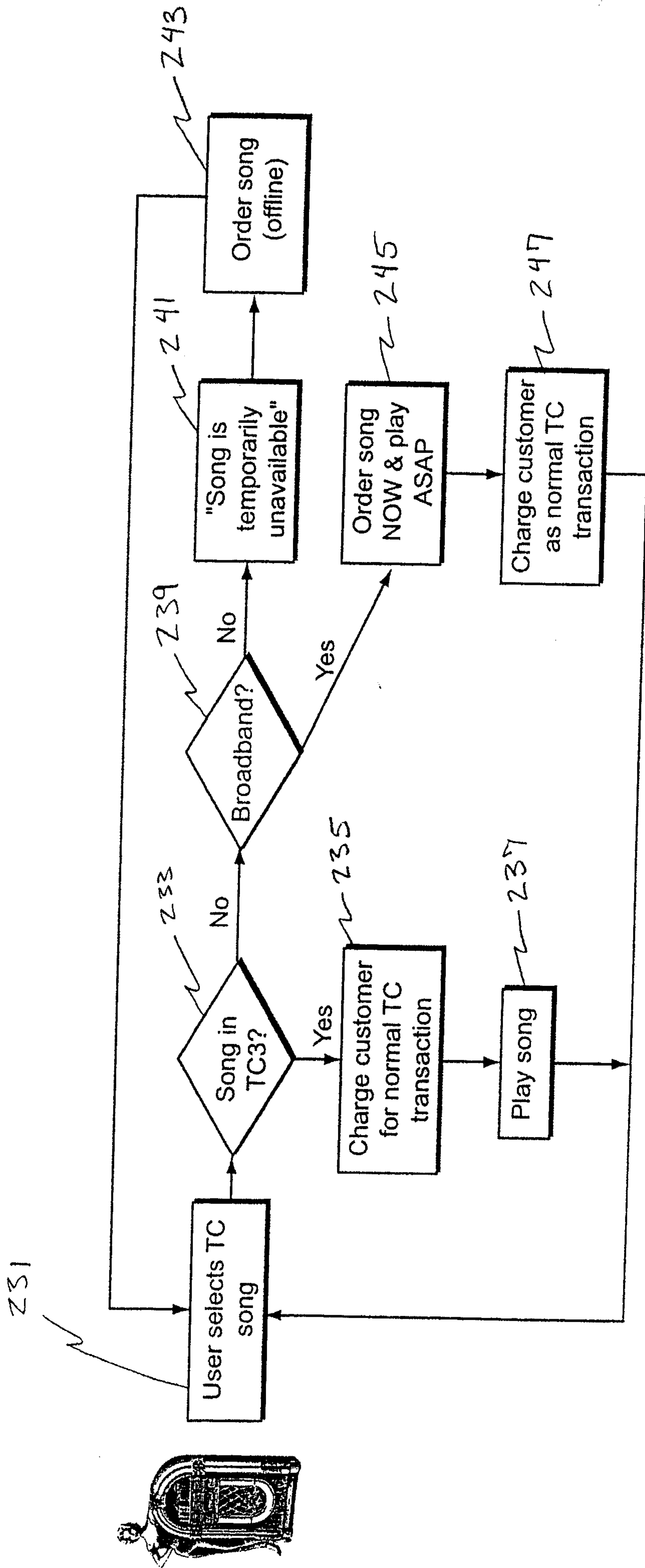


Fig.18

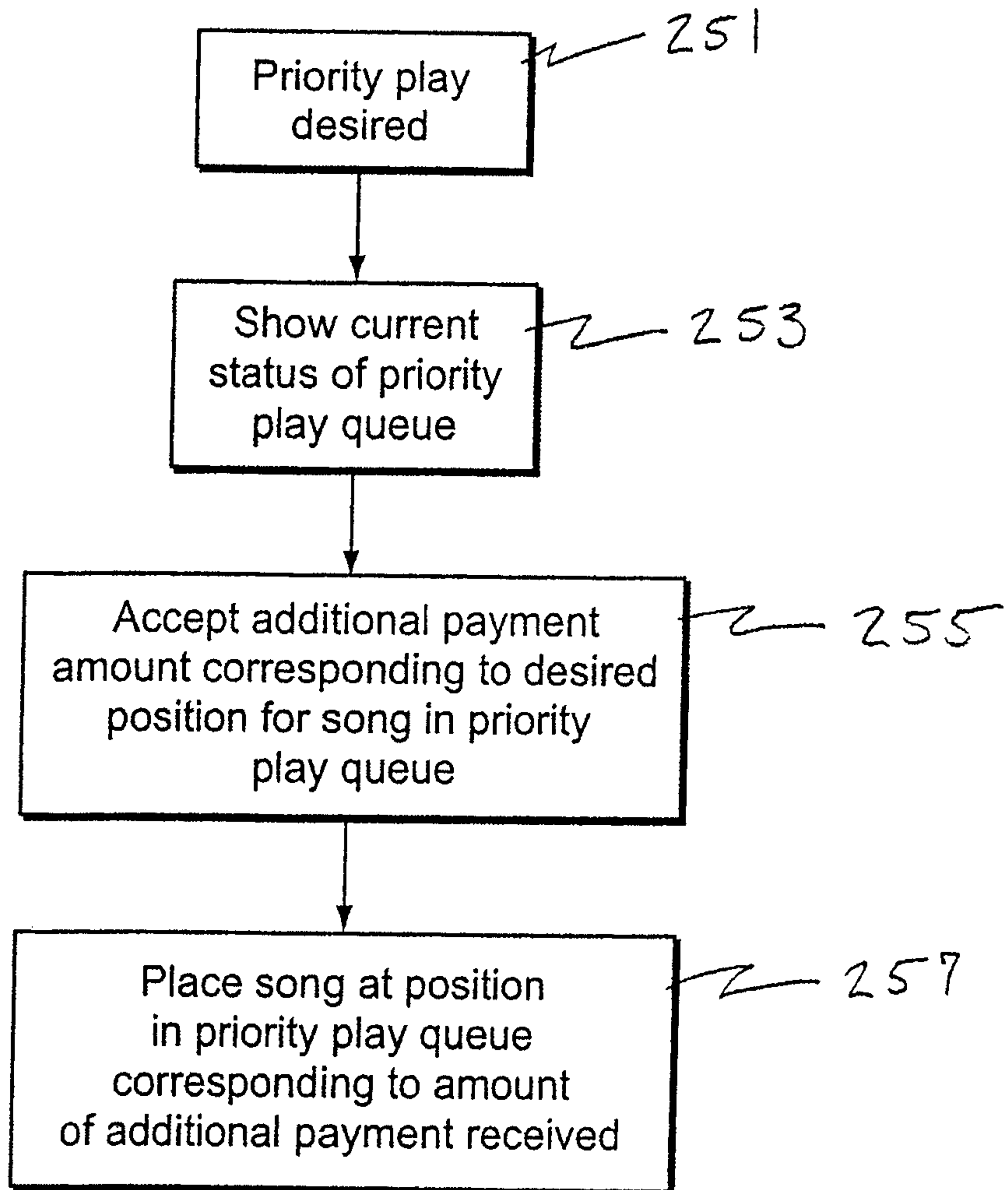


Fig.19

