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(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication****Bennett et al.**(10) **Pub. No.: US 2004/0266509 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Dec. 30, 2004**(54) **GAMING MACHINE WITH BINGO
FEATURE**(52) **U.S. Cl. 463/16**(76) **Inventors: Nicholas Luke Bennett, Lane Cove
(AU); Philippa Graham, Lane Cove
(AU)**(57) **ABSTRACT**

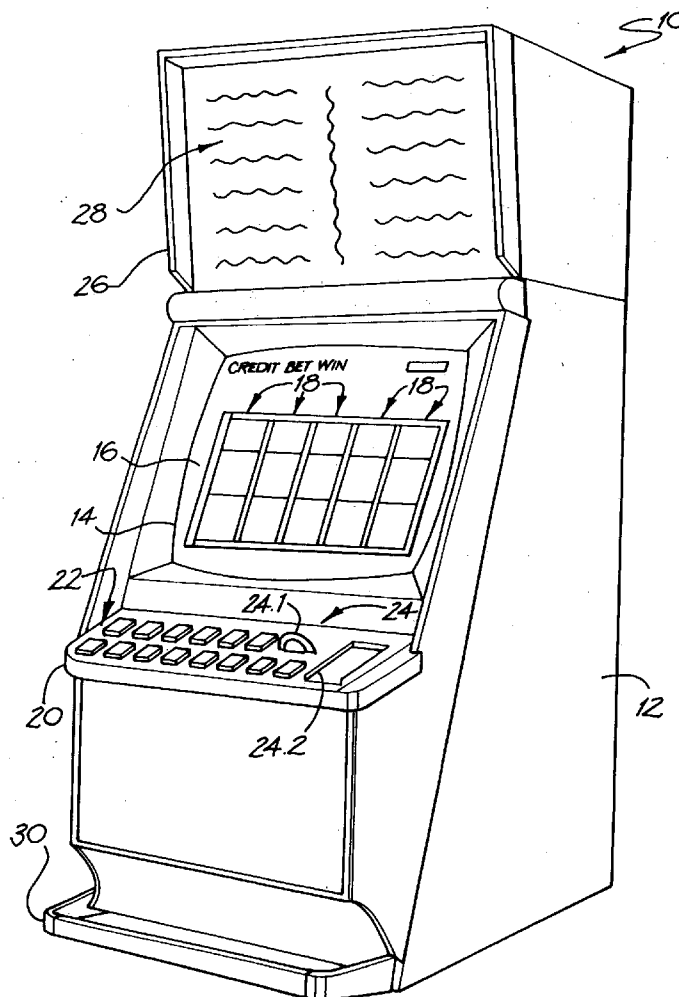
Correspondence Address:

**GREENBERG TRAURIG LLP
2450 COLORADO AVENUE, SUITE 400E
SANTA MONICA, CA 90404 (US)**(21) **Appl. No.: 10/792,685**(22) **Filed: Mar. 11, 2004**(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

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A gaming machine has a display and a game controller arranged to control images of symbols displayed on the display. The game controller is arranged to play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display and, if a predefined winning event occurs, a prize is awarded. The game includes a bonus feature in which a representation of a game card is caused to be displayed on the display, the card having a plurality of playing positions demarcated thereon and each of at least certain of the playing positions having a bonus prize associated with it. The bonus feature comprises a plurality of patterns of playing positions, at least one of which is required to be completed and, following completion of the pattern by the game controller, a bonus award made up of a combination of the bonus prizes associated with the completed pattern of the playing positions is awarded to a player.



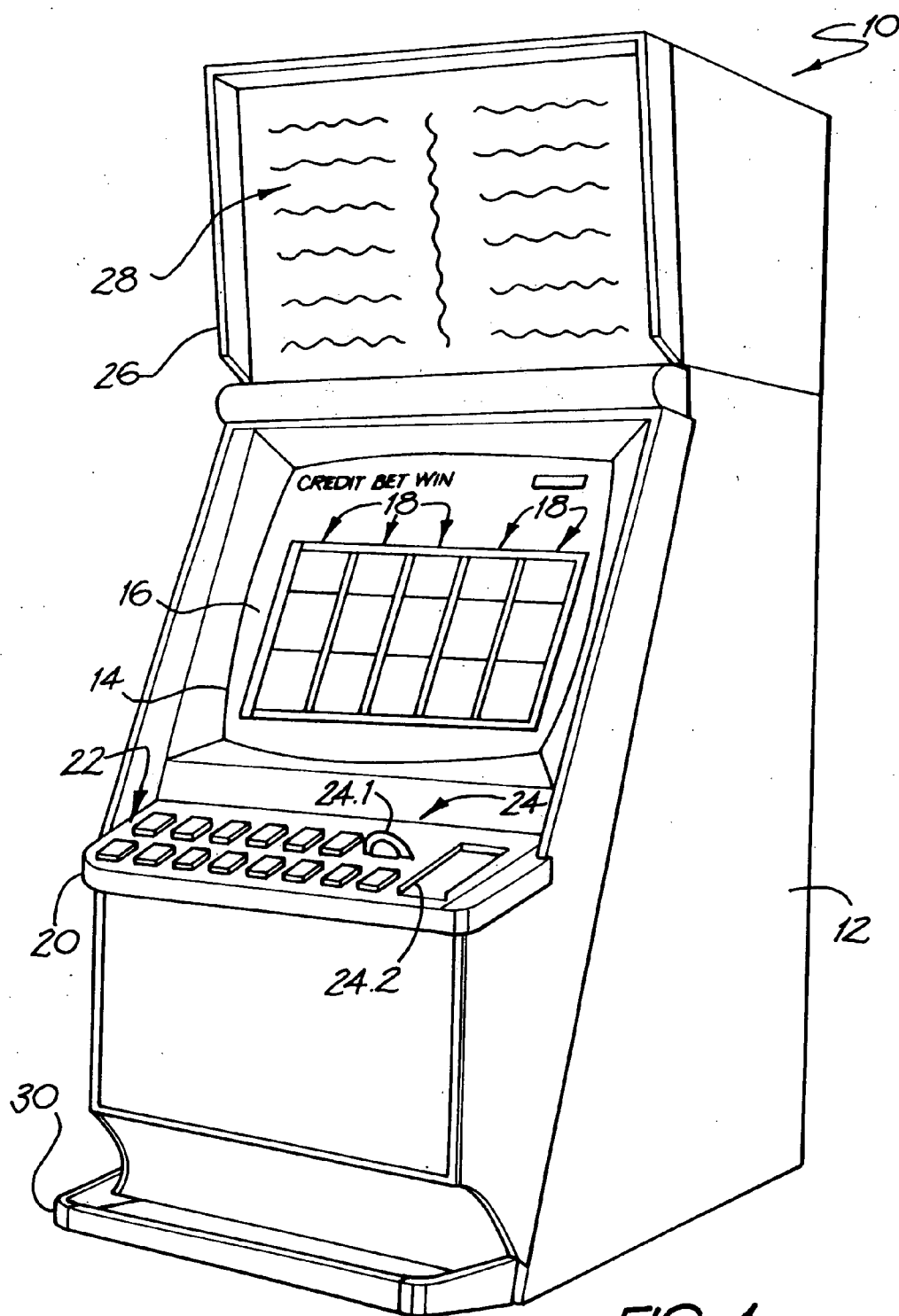
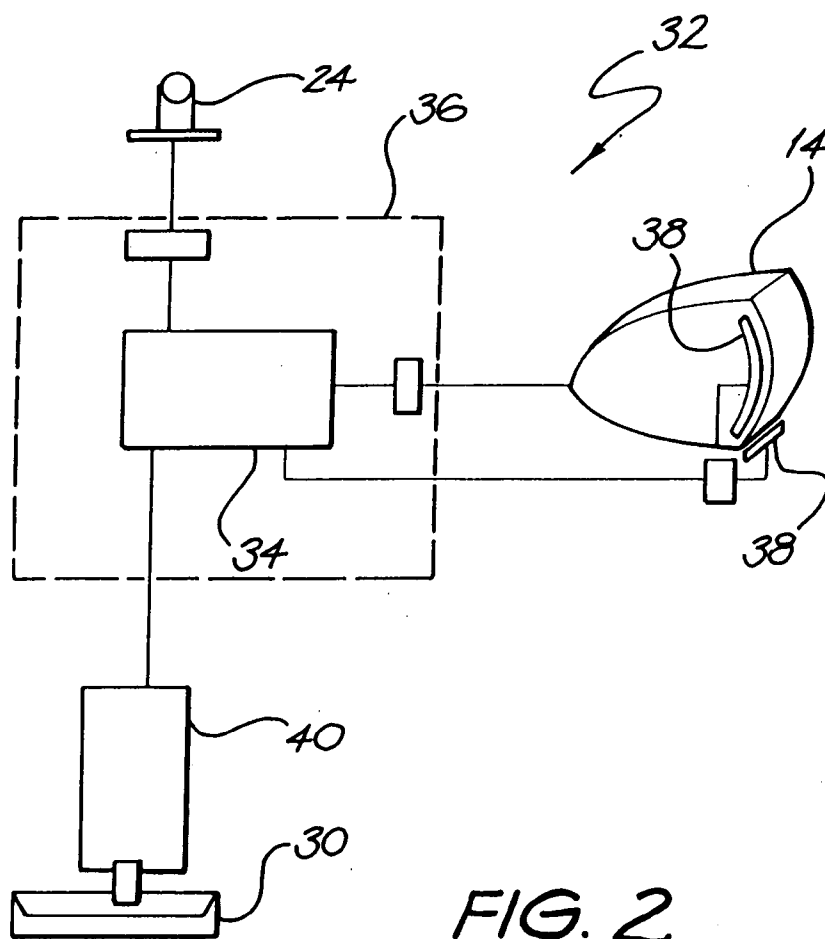


FIG. 1



MYSTERY PRIZE	1 FREE GAME, WINS x5	12 CREDITS	20 CREDITS
15 FREE GAMES	2 CREDITS	SECOND SCREEN FEATURE	5 CREDITS
10 CREDITS	4 CREDITS	BONUS WINS FOR NEXT 10 GAMES	5 FREE GAMES, WINS x3
10 FREE GAMES, WINS x2	15 CREDITS	20 FREE GAMES	3 CREDITS

FIG. 3

MYSTERY PRIZE	1 FREE GAME, WINS x5	12 CREDITS	20 CREDITS
15 FREE GAMES	2 CREDITS	SECOND SCREEN FEATURE	5 CREDITS
10 CREDITS	4 CREDITS	BONUS WINS FOR NEXT 10 GAMES	5 FREE GAMES, WINS x3
10 FREE GAMES, WINS x2	15 CREDITS	20 FREE GAMES	3 CREDITS

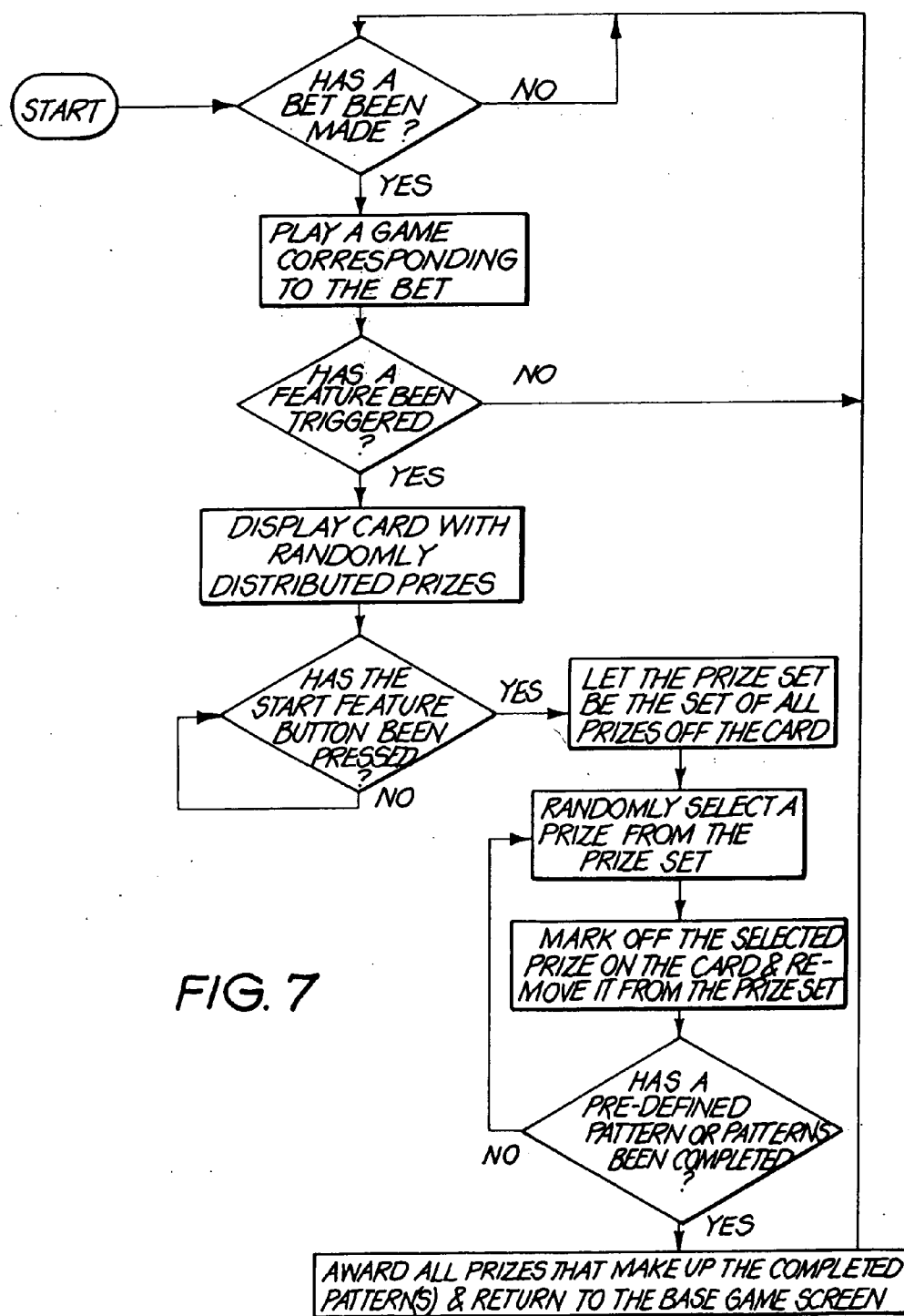
FIG. 4

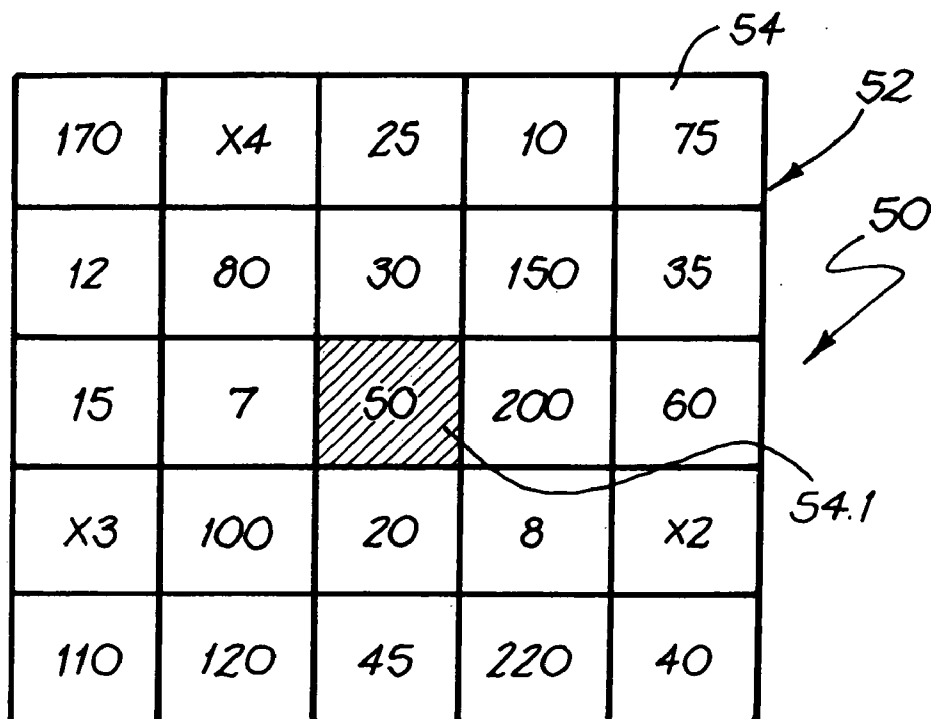
MYSTERY PRIZE	1 FREE GAME, WINS x5	12 CREDITS	20 CREDITS
15 FREE GAMES	2 CREDITS	SECOND SCREEN FEATURE	5 CREDITS
10 CREDITS	4 CREDITS	BONUS WINS FOR NEXT 10 GAMES	5 FREE GAMES, WINS x3
10 FREE GAMES, WINS x2	15 CREDITS	20 FREE GAMES	3 CREDITS

FIG. 5

MYSTERY PRIZE	1 FREE GAME, WINS x5	12 CREDITS	20 CREDITS
15 FREE GAMES	2 CREDITS	SECOND SCREEN FEATURE	5 CREDITS
10 CREDITS	4 CREDITS	BONUS WINS FOR NEXT 10 GAMES	5 FREE GAMES, WINS x3
10 FREE GAMES, WINS x2	15 CREDITS	20 FREE GAMES	3 CREDITS

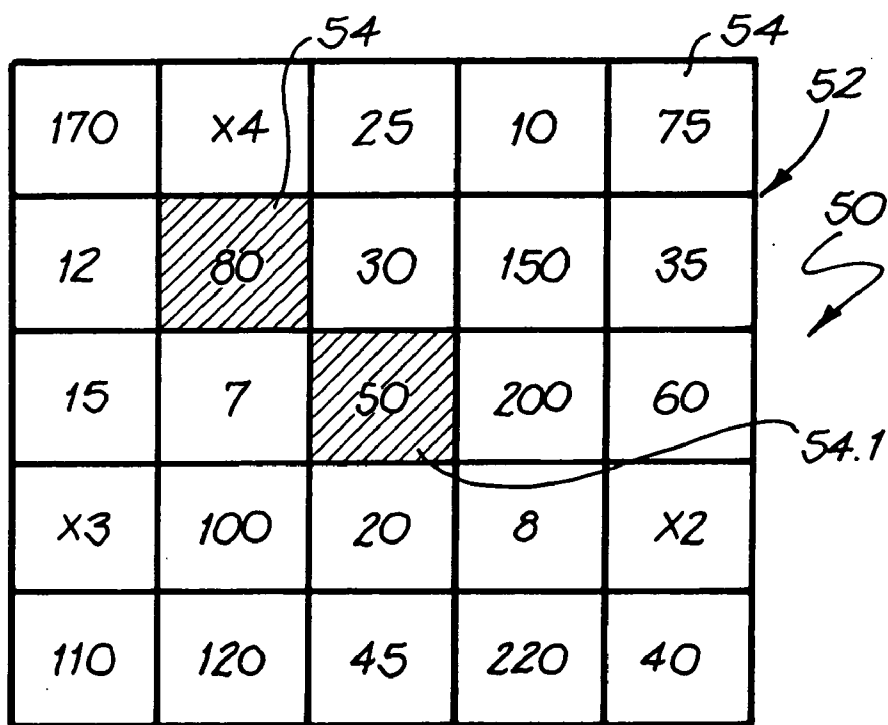
FIG. 6





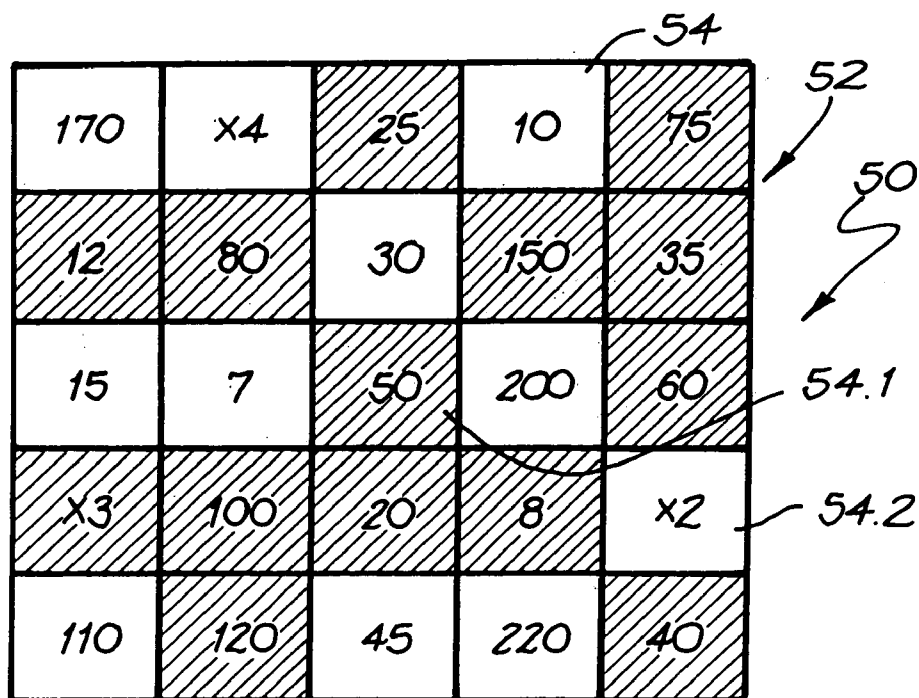
170	X4	25	10	75
12	80	30	150	35
15	7	50	200	60
X3	100	20	8	X2
110	120	45	220	40

FIG. 8



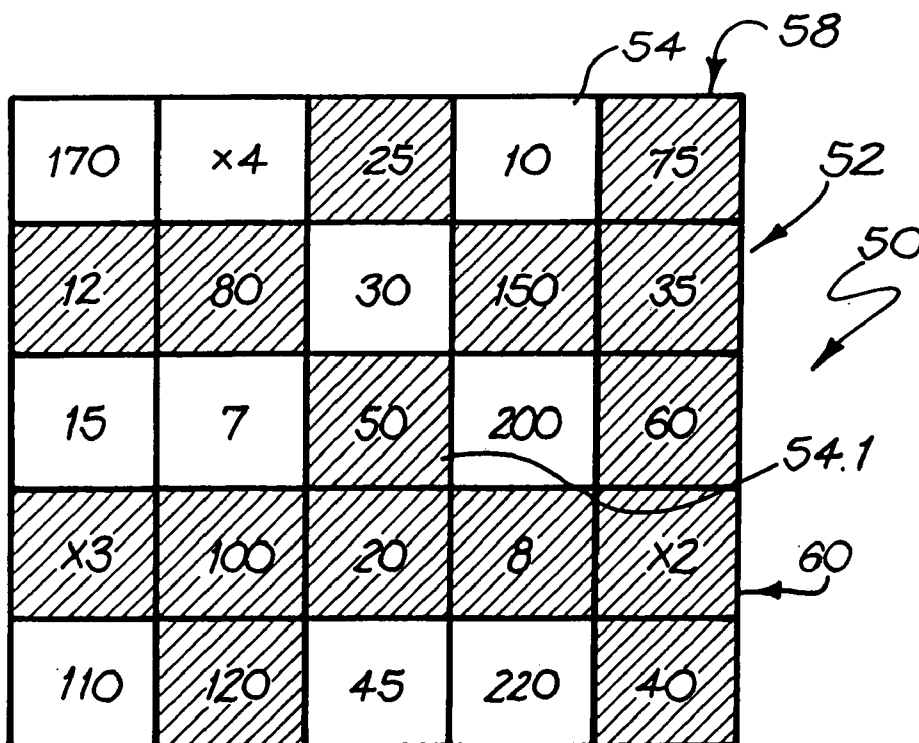
170	X4	25	10	75
12	80	30	150	35
15	7	50	200	60
X3	100	20	8	X2
110	120	45	220	40

FIG. 9



170	x4	25	10	75
12	80	30	150	35
15	7	50	200	60
x3	100	20	8	x2
110	120	45	220	40

FIG. 10



170	x4	25	10	75
12	80	30	150	35
15	7	50	200	60
x3	100	20	8	x2
110	120	45	220	40

FIG. 11

GAMING MACHINE WITH BINGO FEATURE

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates to a gaming machine. More particularly, the invention relates to a gaming machine and to an improvement to a game played on such a gaming machine.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

[0002] Players who regularly play gaming machines quickly tire of particular games and therefore it is necessary for manufacturers of these machines to develop innovative game features which add interest to the games. In so doing, it is hoped to keep players amused and therefore willing to continue playing the game as well as to attract new players.

[0003] Also, with the growth that has occurred in the gaming machine market, there is intense competition between manufacturers to supply various existing and new venues. When selecting a supplier of gaming machines, the operator of a venue will often pay close attention to the popularity of various games with their patrons. Therefore, gaming machine manufacturers are keen to devise games and/or game features which are popular with the players as a mechanism for improving sales, retaining customers and attracting new customers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] According to a first aspect of the invention, there is provided a gaming machine having a display and a game controller arranged to control images of symbols displayed on the display, the game controller being arranged to play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display and, if a predefined winning event occurs, a prize is awarded, wherein the game includes a bonus feature in which a representation of a game card is caused to be displayed on the display, the card having a plurality of playing positions demarcated thereon and each of at least certain of the playing positions having a bonus prize associated with it, the bonus feature comprising a plurality of patterns of playing positions, at least one of which is required to be completed and, following completion of the pattern by the game controller, a bonus award made up of a combination of the bonus prizes associated with the completed pattern of the playing positions is awarded to a player.

[0005] According to a second aspect of the invention, there is provided a game to be played on a gaming apparatus, the gaming apparatus having a display and being controlled by a game controller arranged to control images displayed on the display, the game including a representation of a game card that is caused to be displayed on the display, the card having a plurality of playing positions demarcated thereon and each of at least certain of the playing positions having a bonus prize associated with it, the bonus feature comprising a plurality of patterns of playing positions, at least one of which is required to be completed and, following completion of the pattern by the game controller, a bonus award made up of a combination of the bonus prizes of the completed pattern of the playing positions is awarded to a player.

[0006] A gaming apparatus is to be understood to include apparatus that does not require the wagering of a stake in order to play the game and further includes apparatus which is connectable to a network.

[0007] The bonus feature may follow an underlying base game. For example, the base game may be a spinning reel game which, when a trigger condition occurs in the base game, results in the awarding of the bonus feature.

[0008] The bonus feature is, preferably, a bingo-related feature. Thus, the representation of the game card may be a representation of a bingo card. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that a bingo card is subdivided into a plurality of playing squares being the playing positions of the game card.

[0009] The playing patterns to be selected, whether by the player or the game controller, may be, for example, horizontal lines, vertical lines, diagonal lines, the four corner squares of the bingo card or a number of central squares, such as, for example, the four central squares of the bingo card.

[0010] The game card may include at least one free playing position, the at least one free playing position being demarcated as such. Typically the free playing position is designated as such by being displayed as being marked off. The at least one free playing position may or may not have a bonus prize associated with it. The free playing position may, for example, be the centre square of the bingo card.

[0011] The bonus prize associated with each playing position may relate to one of a number of bonus prize outcomes. Thus, the game controller may store a set of bonus prize outcomes.

[0012] The set of bonus prize outcomes may comprise the same number of bonus prize outcomes as there are playing positions on the game card. Instead, the set of bonus prize outcomes may comprise a greater number of bonus prize outcomes than there are playing positions on the game card but, for each bonus feature, the game controller selects from the set of bonus prize outcomes the same number of outcomes as there are playing positions on the game card. Preferably, none of the outcomes in any set of outcomes or selected set of outcomes, as the case may be, is repeated.

[0013] The bonus prize outcomes may be selected from the group comprising at least one prize of a number of credits, at least one free game with or without a multiplier applicable to prizes awarded during the at least one free game, at least one mystery prize, at least one second screen feature, a prize multiplier and the awarding of at least one bonus win for a number of bought games following the bought game in which the bonus feature occurred.

[0014] When the feature is awarded, the game card may be displayed on the display with one of the selected outcomes filling each playing position on the card, the game controller randomly selecting playing positions until a pattern is completed. When the pattern has been completed by the controller, the bonus award made to the player may be the total of the prizes of the playing positions constituting the selected pattern. Each playing position selected by the controller may be displayed in a highlighted configuration.

[0015] The player may select a playing pattern to be completed and, only if the selected playing pattern is completed, is the bonus award made.

[0016] It may be possible to re-trigger the bonus feature during the playing thereof. When that occurs, any other bonus prizes are awarded first before the bonus feature is replayed.

[0017] The distribution of the bonus prizes in the playing positions of the game card may occur randomly so that, each time the bonus feature is awarded, the bonus prizes and their distribution on the game card differ.

[0018] According to a third aspect of the invention, there is provided a method of operating a gaming machine having a display and a game controller arranged to control images displayed on the display, the game controller being arranged to play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display means and, if a predefined winning event occurs, the machine awards a prize, the method comprising

[0019] awarding a bonus feature upon a triggering event occurring during a preceding base game and, during the bonus feature:

[0020] displaying a representation of a game card on the display, the card having a plurality of playing positions demarcated thereon and each of at least certain of the playing positions having a bonus prize associated with it, the bonus feature comprising a plurality of patterns of playing positions required to be completed;

[0021] completing at least one of the patterns of playing positions; and

[0022] awarding a bonus award, made up of a combination of the bonus prizes associated with the completed pattern of playing positions, to a player.

[0023] The method may include designating at least one of the playing positions of the game card as a free playing position, the at least one free playing position being demarcated as such by the at least one free playing position being displayed as being marked off. Further, the method may include associating a bonus prize with the at least one free playing position.

[0024] The method may include selecting the bonus prize associated with each playing position from one of a number of bonus prize outcomes. Thus, the method may include storing a set of bonus prize outcomes.

[0025] The method may include constituting the set of bonus prize outcomes to comprise the same number of bonus prize outcomes as there are playing positions on the playing card. Instead, the set of bonus prize outcomes may comprise a greater number of bonus prize outcomes than there are playing positions on the game card and the method may include, for each bonus feature, selecting from the set of bonus prize outcomes the same number of outcomes as there are playing positions on the game card.

[0026] The method may include selecting the bonus prize outcomes from the group comprising at least one prize of a number of credits, at least one free game with or without a multiplier applicable to prizes awarded during the at least one free game, at least one mystery prize, at least one second screen feature, a prize multiplier and the awarding of at least one bonus win for a number of bought games following the bought game in which the bonus feature occurred.

[0027] When the feature is awarded, the method may include displaying the game card on the display with one of

the selected outcomes filling each playing position on the card and randomly selecting playing positions until a pattern is completed.

[0028] The method may include the player selecting a playing pattern to be completed and, only if the selected playing pattern is completed, awarding the bonus award.

[0029] The method may include re-triggering the bonus feature during the playing thereof.

[0030] The method may include randomly distributing the bonus prizes in the playing positions of the game card so that, each time the bonus feature is awarded, the bonus prizes and their distribution on the game card differ.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0031] Embodiments of the invention are now described by way of example with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings in which:—

[0032] **FIG. 1** shows a perspective view of a gaming machine, in accordance with the invention;

[0033] **FIG. 2** shows a block diagram of a control circuit of the gaming machine;

[0034] **FIG. 3** shows a screen display of a first embodiment of a bonus feature after the bonus feature has been awarded following the playing of a base game on the gaming machine of **FIG. 1**;

[0035] **FIGS. 4 and 5** show screen displays of stages in the playing of the bonus feature;

[0036] **FIG. 6** shows a screen display of the bonus feature after it has been completed;

[0037] **FIG. 7** shows a flow chart of the playing of a game including the bonus feature; and

[0038] **FIGS. 8-11** show a sequence of screen displays of a second embodiment of the bonus feature.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0039] In **FIG. 1**, reference numeral **10** generally designates a gaming machine, including a game, in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. The machine **10** includes a console **12** having a display means in the form of a video display unit **14** on which a game **16** is played, in use. The video display unit **14** may be implemented as a cathode ray screen device, a liquid crystal display, a plasma screen, or the like. The game **16** includes a base game which is a spinning reel game that simulates the rotation of a number of spinning reels **18**. A midtrim **20** of the machine **10** houses a keypad **22** for enabling a player to play the game **16**. The midtrim **20** also houses a credit input mechanism **24** including a coin input chute **24.1** and a bill collector **24.2**.

[0040] The machine **10** includes a top box **26** on which artwork **28** is carried. The artwork **28** includes paytables, details of bonus awards, etc.

[0041] A coin tray **30** is mounted beneath the console **12** for cash payouts from the machine **10**.

[0042] Referring to **FIG. 2** of the drawings, a control means or control circuit **32** is illustrated. A program which implements the game and user interface is run on a processor **34** of the control circuit **32**. The processor **34** forms part of

a controller **36** that drives the screen of the video display unit **14** and that receives input signals from sensors **38**. The sensors **38** include sensors associated with the bank **22** of buttons and touch sensors mounted in the screen of the video display unit **14**. The controller **36** also receives input pulses from the mechanism **24** to determine whether or not a player has provided sufficient credit to commence playing. The mechanism **24** may, instead of the coin input chute **24.1** or the bill collector **24.2**, or in addition thereto, be a credit card reader (not shown) or any other type of validation device.

[0043] Finally, the controller **36** drives a payout mechanism **40** which, for example, may be a coin hopper for feeding coins to the coin tray **30** to make a pay out to a player when the player wishes to redeem his or her credit.

[0044] The game **16** includes a bonus feature. When a trigger condition occurs, such as, for example, the occurrence of a predetermined number of scatter symbols in the base, spinning reel game of the game **16**, the bonus feature is awarded.

[0045] The bonus feature is a bingo-style bonus feature where, following the triggering of the bonus feature, the spinning reel display of the base game of the game **16** is replaced by a screen display **50** (FIG. 3) of a bingo card **52**.

[0046] A first embodiment of the feature is described below with reference to FIGS. 3-6 of the drawings. In this embodiment, the bingo card **52** is made up of a plurality of playing positions or playing squares **54**. In accordance with the standard bingo game, one of a plurality of playing patterns is required to be completed in order for a bonus award to be made. In this case, the pattern which is completed is determined by the controller **34** of the gaming machine **10**. However, the feature may require that the player selects one of a plurality of playing patterns to be completed on the bingo card **52** and, only if the pattern which is completed by the controller **34** matches the pattern selected by the player, is a bonus award made.

[0047] The patterns which are required to be completed on the bingo card **52** comprise, for a 4x4 bingo card as illustrated in this embodiment, one of four vertical lines, one of four horizontal lines, one of two diagonal lines, a pattern made up of the four corner playing squares **54** of the playing card **52** or a pattern made up of the four central squares **54**.

[0048] One of a plurality of outcomes displayed in each playing square **54**. The game **16** has a fixed set of outcomes, corresponding in number to the number of playing squares **54** constituting the card **52**. Instead, the set of outcomes may have a greater number of outcomes than there are playing squares **54** but the controller **34** then selects the same number of outcomes as there are playing squares **54** from the set of outcomes. The controller **34** selects a set of outcomes in which none of the outcomes is repeated. For example, for the card **52** having sixteen playing squares **54** and where there are the same number of outcomes in the set as there are playing squares **54**, the set of outcomes is as follows:

- [0049] 1. 2 credits
- [0050] 2. 3 credits
- [0051] 3. 4 credits
- [0052] 4. 5 credits
- [0053] 5. 10 credits

[0054] 6. 12 credits

[0055] 7. 15 credits

[0056] 8. 20 credits

[0057] 9. 1 free game, winsx5

[0058] 10. 5 free games, winsx3

[0059] 11. 10 free games, winsx2

[0060] 12. 15 free games

[0061] 13. 20 free games

[0062] 14. mystery prize

[0063] 15. second screen feature

[0064] 16. bonus wins for next 10 games.

[0065] Accordingly, when the bonus feature is awarded and the screen display **50** occurs, the bingo card **52** has each of its playing squares **54** having one of the above outcomes. It is to be noted that, each time the bonus feature is awarded, the distribution of the outcomes is randomly selected by the controller **34** so that the position of each of the outcomes is very rarely the same. This will reduce familiarity with the game by players thereby maintaining their interest.

[0066] The player may have to press a "Start Feature" button on the keypad **22**. This will be highlighted by an appropriate message (not shown) on the screen display **50**. Instead, the feature could start automatically after it has been triggered.

[0067] The feature proceeds by the controller **34** randomly selecting one of the outcomes from the set of outcomes and highlighting, or otherwise marking, that outcome in the appropriate playing square **54** of the playing card **52**.

[0068] In this case, the controller **34** has selected the outcome of 15 free games and the playing square **54** having that outcome is highlighted as illustrated in FIG. 4 of the drawings.

[0069] The feature progresses by the controller **34** randomly selecting remaining outcomes from the set of outcomes. It is to be noted that, once an outcome has been selected by the controller **34**, it is removed from the set of outcomes so that it cannot be re-selected.

[0070] In this example the second outcome selected by the controller is "bonus wins for next ten games" and the relevant square **54** of the playing card **52** is highlighted.

[0071] As indicated above, one of the playing patterns that can be completed is one of the two diagonal lines **56** (FIG. 6) of the playing card **52**. FIG. 6 shows the end result of the feature where one of the diagonal lines **56** has been completed.

[0072] When the final position in the pattern has been marked off, the pattern itself is highlighted as the bonus award which is made up by the outcomes contained in the squares **54** constituting the pattern. In this case, the player receives, as a part of the bonus award, **24** credits which are paid to the player instantly. Two separate features are included in the bonus award. The first of the features is a feature of ten free games where all wins are multiplied by two and the second feature is a second screen feature.

[0073] Once the twenty-four credits have been credited to the player, the ten free games where all wins are multiplied by two are played. Once the free games have been completed, a secondary, second-screen feature is played. This second screen feature may be, for example, the same bingo-style feature or it may be another independent feature altogether.

[0074] It is also to be noted that it is possible to re-trigger the bingo-style feature during free games won from the bingo-style feature in the same way that the bingo-style feature was triggered from the base game. When this occurs, rather than the bingo-style feature being played immediately after the trigger condition occurs, the free games and any remaining features from the first bingo-style feature are completed before the following bingo-style feature commences. The second and any subsequent bingo-style features are completely independently and commence immediately following the conclusion of any earlier bingo-style feature or features.

[0075] Referring now to FIGS. 8-11 of the drawings, a second embodiment of the bonus feature is illustrated. With reference to FIGS. 3-6 of the drawings, like reference numerals refer to like parts, unless otherwise specified. In this embodiment of the invention, the bingo card 52 comprises twenty five playing squares 54 in a 5×5 matrix. A centre square 54.1 is a free square and, as illustrated, is always highlighted. By having the centre square 54.1 always highlighted and forming a part of some of the potential winning patterns, the mathematics of the game is considerably simplified as, although all the winning combinations comprise five squares, some combinations only require four squares to be highlighted in order for the pattern to be completed.

[0076] The set of outcomes or prizes applicable to the bingo card 52 is as follows:—7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 60, 75, 80, 100, 110, 120, 150, 170, 200, 220, ×2, ×3, ×4.

[0077] It is to be noted that the prizes consist of a number of credits or multipliers and no secondary features such as free games, etc., are applicable.

[0078] The prizes that are a number of credits are multiplied by the bet per line in the triggering base game of the game 16 before being displayed in the playing squares 54 of the bingo card 52 so that the prizes as displayed are exactly what the player will be awarded if the player is successful in winning the bonus award.

[0079] Assuming that the player is betting 1 credit per line, the initial bingo card 52, at the commencement of the bonus feature has the appearance as shown in FIG. 8 of the drawings. It is to be noted that, as is the case with the first embodiment, the prizes or outcomes are distributed randomly in the playing squares 54 at the commencement of each bonus feature so as to reduce the likelihood of the player becoming overly familiar with the game 16.

[0080] The controller 34 of the gaming machine 10 randomly draws, from the above set of outcomes, one of the prizes. The selected outcome is highlighted on the bingo card 52. Each outcome, once it has been drawn, is removed from the set so that it is not re-selected. In this example, the first prize drawn is a prize of 80 credits and the appropriate playing square 54 is marked as shown in FIG. 9 of the drawings.

[0081] FIG. 10 shows the bingo card 52 after a number of prizes have been drawn but prior to any pattern having been completed.

[0082] In this regard, it is to be noted that, in this embodiment, there are 13 different patterns that apply, being the 5 horizontal lines, the 5 vertical lines, the 2 diagonal lines and the pattern made up of the 4 corner playing squares 54 plus the centre square 54.1.

[0083] In FIG. 10 of the drawings, the line that is the fourth row and the line that is the fifth column of the bingo card 52 both have four playing squares 54 marked off, as do certain of the other lines.

[0084] Assuming that the next prize which is drawn from the set by the controller 34 is the multiplier “×2”, the playing square 54.2 is marked off. This results in the completion of two patterns 58 and 60. The multiplier, ×2, applies to the total number of credits in each completed line of the bingo card 52 in which the multiplier occurs. In this case, therefore, there are two sets of prizes awarded being a prize of $(75+35+60+40) \times 2$ for the completed pattern 58 and a second prize made up of $(100+20+8) \times 3 \times 2$ for the completed pattern 60. This results in a prize of 420 credits for the completed pattern 58 and a prize of 768 credits for the completed pattern 60 for a total bonus award of 1188 credits.

[0085] Hence, it is an advantage of the invention that a bingo-style feature is awarded to the player which makes a bonus award to the player in an interesting and entertaining manner. The player's sense of anticipation is heightened as the player is unaware, once the bonus feature has been awarded, what the final bonus award will be. The player has the enjoyment of seeing the bingo pattern being completed before his or her eyes knowing that the completed pattern will govern the final bonus award.

[0086] Due to the random nature in which the bingo patterns are completed, the player is unlikely to become familiar with the patterns or the sets of outcomes associated with the bingo card 52 this will further enhance the player's enjoyment of the bonus feature.

[0087] It will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive.

We claim:

1. A gaming machine having a display and a game controller arranged to control images of symbols displayed on the display, the game controller being arranged to play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display and, if a predefined winning event occurs, a prize is awarded, wherein the game includes a bonus feature in which a representation of a game card is caused to be displayed on the display, the card having a plurality of playing positions demarcated thereon and each of at least certain of the playing positions having a bonus prize associated with it, the bonus feature comprising a plurality of patterns of playing positions, at least one of which is required to be completed and, following completion of the pattern by the game controller, a bonus award

made up of a combination of the bonus prizes associated with the completed pattern of the playing positions is awarded to a player.

2. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which the bonus feature follows an underlying base game.

3. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which the game card includes at least one free playing position, the at least one free playing position being demarcated as such.

4. The gaming machine of claim 3 in which the at least one free playing position has a bonus prize associated with it.

5. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which the bonus prize associated with each playing position relates to one of a number of bonus prize outcomes.

6. The gaming machine of claim 5 in which the game controller stores a set of bonus prize outcomes.

7. The gaming machine of claim 6 in which the set of bonus prize outcomes comprises the same number of bonus prize outcomes as there are playing positions on the game card.

8. The gaming machine of claim 6 in which the set of bonus prize outcomes comprises a greater number of bonus prize outcomes than there are playing positions on the game card but, for each bonus feature, the game controller selects from the set of bonus prize outcomes the same number of outcomes as there are playing positions on the game card.

9. The gaming machine of claim 5 in which the bonus prize outcomes are selected from the group comprising at least one prize of a number of credits, at least one free game with or without a multiplier applicable to prizes awarded during the at least one free game, at least one mystery prize, at least one second screen feature, a prize multiplier and the awarding of at least one bonus win for a number of bought games following the bought game in which the bonus feature occurred.

10. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which, when the feature is awarded, the game card is displayed on the display with one of the selected outcomes filling each playing position on the card, the game controller randomly selecting playing positions until a pattern is completed.

11. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which the player selects a playing pattern to be completed and, only if the selected playing pattern is completed, is the bonus award made.

12. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which it is possible to re-trigger the bonus feature during the playing thereof.

13. The gaming machine of claim 1 in which the distribution of the bonus prizes in the playing positions of the game card occurs randomly so that, each time the bonus feature is awarded, the bonus prizes and their distribution on the game card differ.

14. A game to be played on a gaming apparatus, the gaming apparatus having a display and being controlled by a game controller arranged to control images displayed on the display, the game including a representation of a game card that is caused to be displayed on the display, the card having a plurality of playing positions demarcated thereon and each of at least certain of the playing positions having a bonus prize associated with it, the bonus feature comprising a plurality of patterns of playing positions, at least one of which is required to be completed and, following completion of the pattern by the game controller, a bonus award

made up of a combination of the bonus prizes of the completed pattern of the playing positions is awarded to a player.

15. The game of claim 14 in which the bonus feature follows an underlying base game.

16. The game of claim 14 in which the game card includes at least one free playing position, the at least one free playing position being demarcated as such.

17. The game of claim 16 in which the at least one free playing position has a bonus prize associated with it.

18. The game of claim 14 in which the bonus prize associated with each playing position relates to one of a number of bonus prize outcomes.

19. The game of claim 18 in which the game controller stores a set of bonus prize outcomes.

20. The game of claim 19 in which the set of bonus prize outcomes comprises the same number of bonus prize outcomes as there are playing positions on the game card.

21. The game of claim 19 in which the set of bonus prize outcomes comprises a greater number of bonus prize outcomes than there are playing positions on the game card but, for each bonus feature, the game controller selects from the set of bonus prize outcomes the same number of outcomes as there are playing positions on the game card.

22. The game of claim 18 in which the bonus prize outcomes are selected from the group comprising at least one prize of a number of credits, at least one free game with or without a multiplier applicable to prizes awarded during the at least one free game, at least one mystery prize, at least one second screen feature, a prize multiplier and the awarding of at least one bonus win for a number of bought games following the bought game in which the bonus feature occurred.

23. The game of claim 14 in which, when the feature is awarded, the game card is displayed on the display with one of the selected outcomes filling each playing position on the card, the game controller randomly selecting playing positions until a pattern is completed.

24. The game of claim 14 in which the player selects a playing pattern to be completed and, only if the selected playing pattern is completed, is the bonus award made.

25. The game of claim 14 in which it is possible to re-trigger the bonus feature during the playing thereof.

26. The game of claim 14 in which the distribution of the bonus prizes in the playing positions of the game card occurs randomly so that, each time the bonus feature is awarded, the bonus prizes and their distribution on the game card differ.

27. A method of operating a gaming machine having a display and a game controller arranged to control images displayed on the display, the game controller being arranged to play a game wherein at least one random event is caused to be displayed on the display means and, if a predefined winning event occurs, the machine awards a prize, the method comprising

awarding a bonus feature upon a triggering event occurring during a preceding base game and, during the bonus feature:

displaying a representation of a game card on the display, the card having a plurality of playing positions demarcated thereon and each of at least certain of the playing positions having a bonus prize asso-

ciated with it, the bonus feature comprising a plurality of patterns of playing positions required to be completed;

completing at least one of the patterns of playing positions; and

awarding a bonus award, made up of a combination of the bonus prizes associated with the completed pattern of playing positions, to a player.

28. The method of claim 27 which includes designating at least one of the playing positions of the game card as a free playing position, the at least one free playing position being demarcated as such by the at least one free playing position being displayed as being marked off.

29. The method of claim 28 which includes associating a bonus prize with the at least one free playing position.

30. The method of claim 29 which includes selecting the bonus prize associated with each playing position from one of a number of bonus prize outcomes.

31. The method of claim 30 which includes storing a set of bonus prize outcomes.

32. The method of claim 31 which includes constituting the set of bonus prize outcomes to comprise the same number of bonus prize outcomes as there are playing positions on the playing card.

33. The method of claim 31 in which the set of bonus prize outcomes comprises a greater number of bonus prize outcomes than there are playing positions on the game card and in which the method includes, for each bonus feature, selecting from the set of bonus prize outcomes the same

number of outcomes as there are playing positions on the game card.

34. The method of claim 27 which includes selecting the bonus prize outcomes from the group comprising at least one prize of a number of credits, at least one free game with or without a multiplier applicable to prizes awarded during the at least one free game, at least one mystery prize, at least one second screen feature, a prize multiplier and the awarding of at least one bonus win for a number of bought games following the bought game in which the bonus feature occurred.

35. The method of claim 27 which includes, when the feature is awarded, displaying the game card on the display with one of the selected outcomes filling each playing position on the card and randomly selecting playing positions until a pattern is completed.

36. The method of claim 27 which includes the player selecting a playing pattern to be completed and, only if the selected playing pattern is completed, awarding the bonus award.

37. The method of claim 27 which includes re-triggering the bonus feature during the playing thereof.

38. The method of claim 27 which includes randomly distributing the bonus prizes in the playing positions of the game card so that, each time the bonus feature is awarded, the bonus prizes and their distribution on the game card differ.

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