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Luciano, JR.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2009/0011818 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Jan. 8, 2009**(54) **REEL-BASED GAMING MACHINE WITH
MULTIPLE OVERLAID DISPLAYS**(75) Inventor: **Robert Anthony Luciano, JR.**, Las
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Vegas, NV (US)(21) Appl. No.: **12/235,130**(22) Filed: **Sep. 22, 2008****Related U.S. Application Data**(63) Continuation of application No. 10/119,324, filed on
Apr. 8, 2002, which is a continuation-in-part of appli-
cation No. 10/045,192, filed on Oct. 18, 2001, now
abandoned.**Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.**
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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **463/20**(57) **ABSTRACT**

A gaming machine and method are disclosed that provide enhanced visual effects for a player through the use of one or more electroluminescent displays overlaying a display area associated with a set of electro-mechanical slot reels (or reel tape). Various embodiments are shown, such as overlaid displays that include cutouts about one or more reels and provide video or static images that are interactive with the reels during either the base game or feature game.

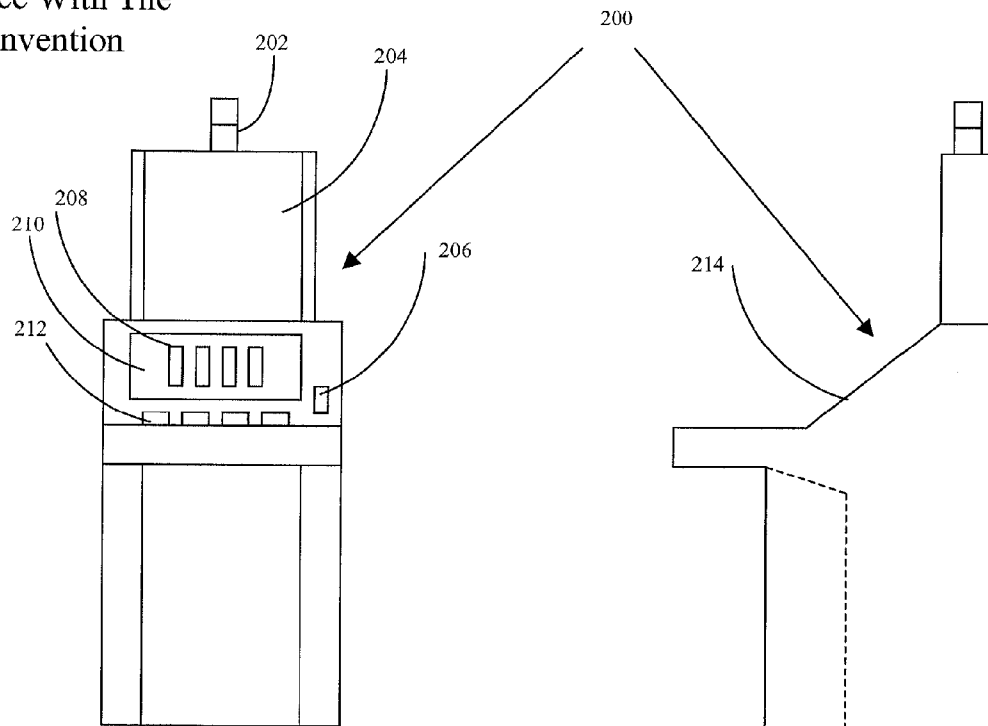
**EL Display Location
In Accordance With The
Present Invention**

FIGURE 1
Schematic TFEL Display Structure

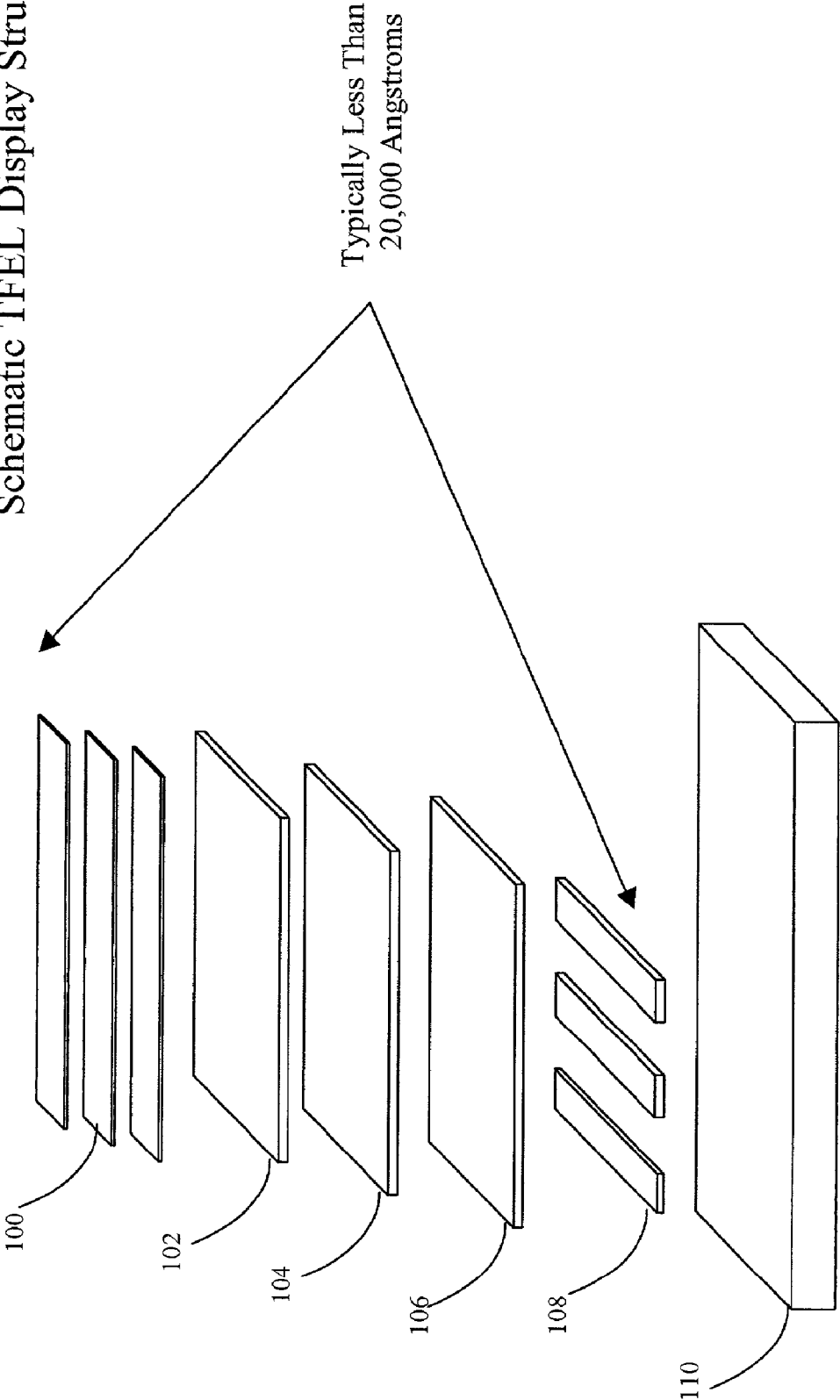


Figure 2
EL Display Location
In Accordance With The
Present Invention

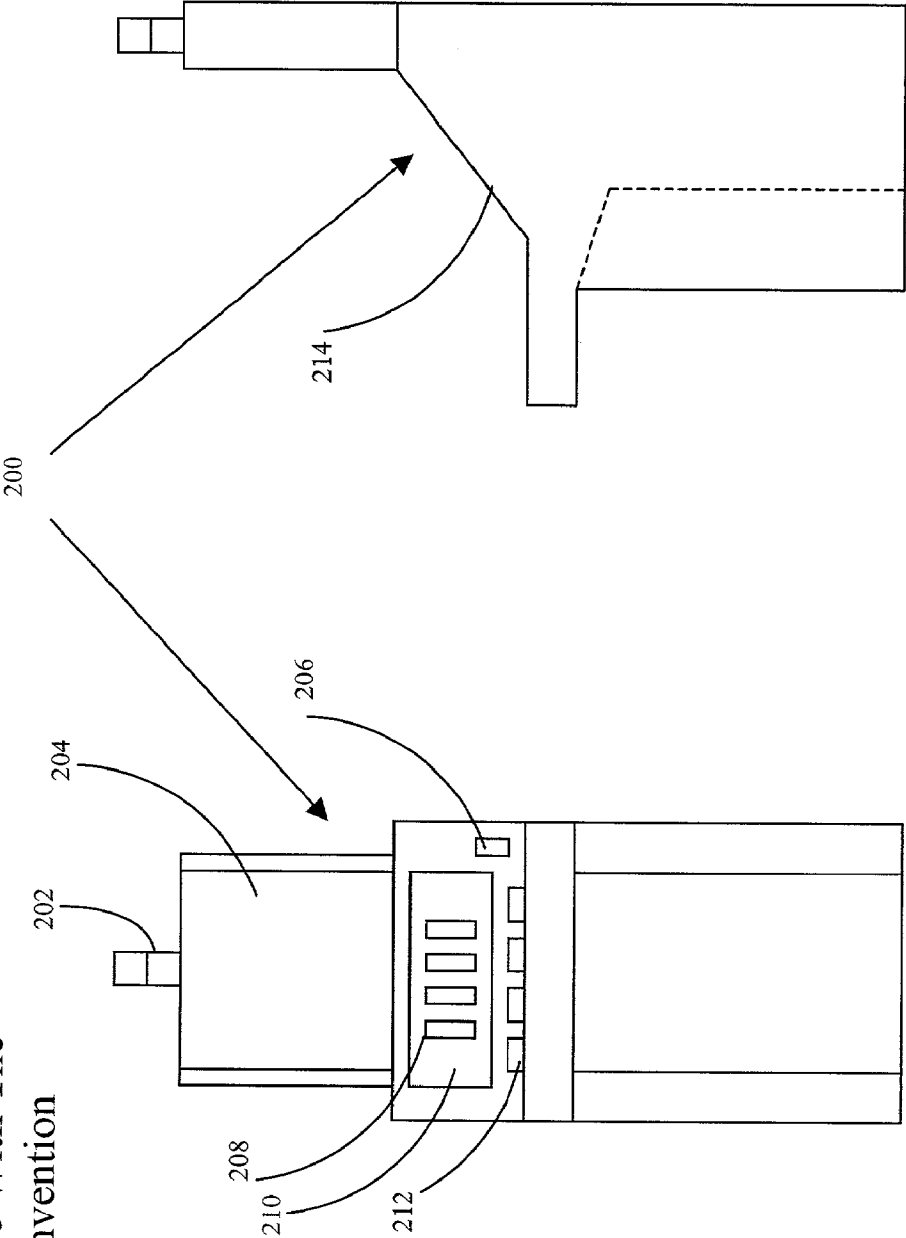
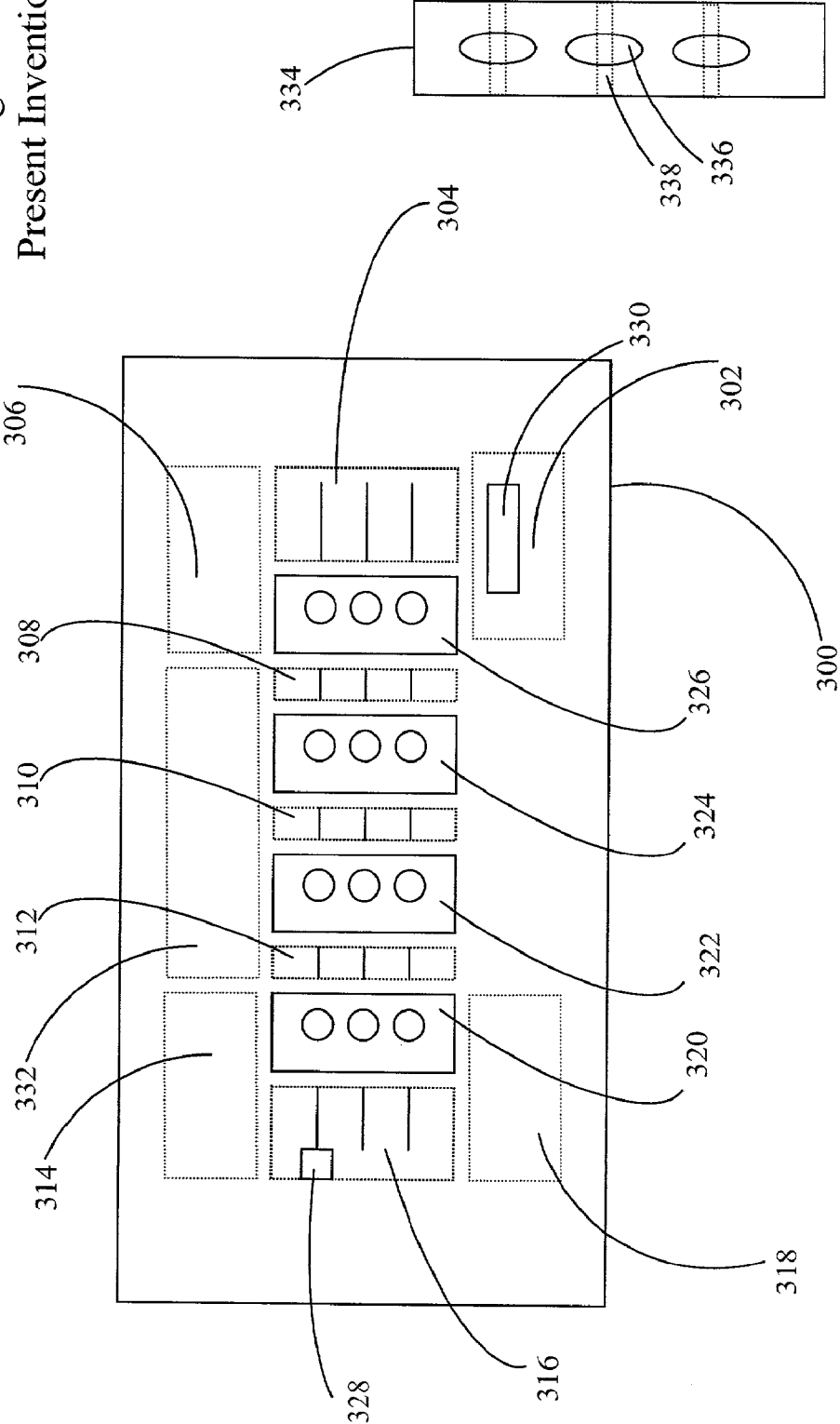


Figure 3
Indicators
According To The
Present Invention



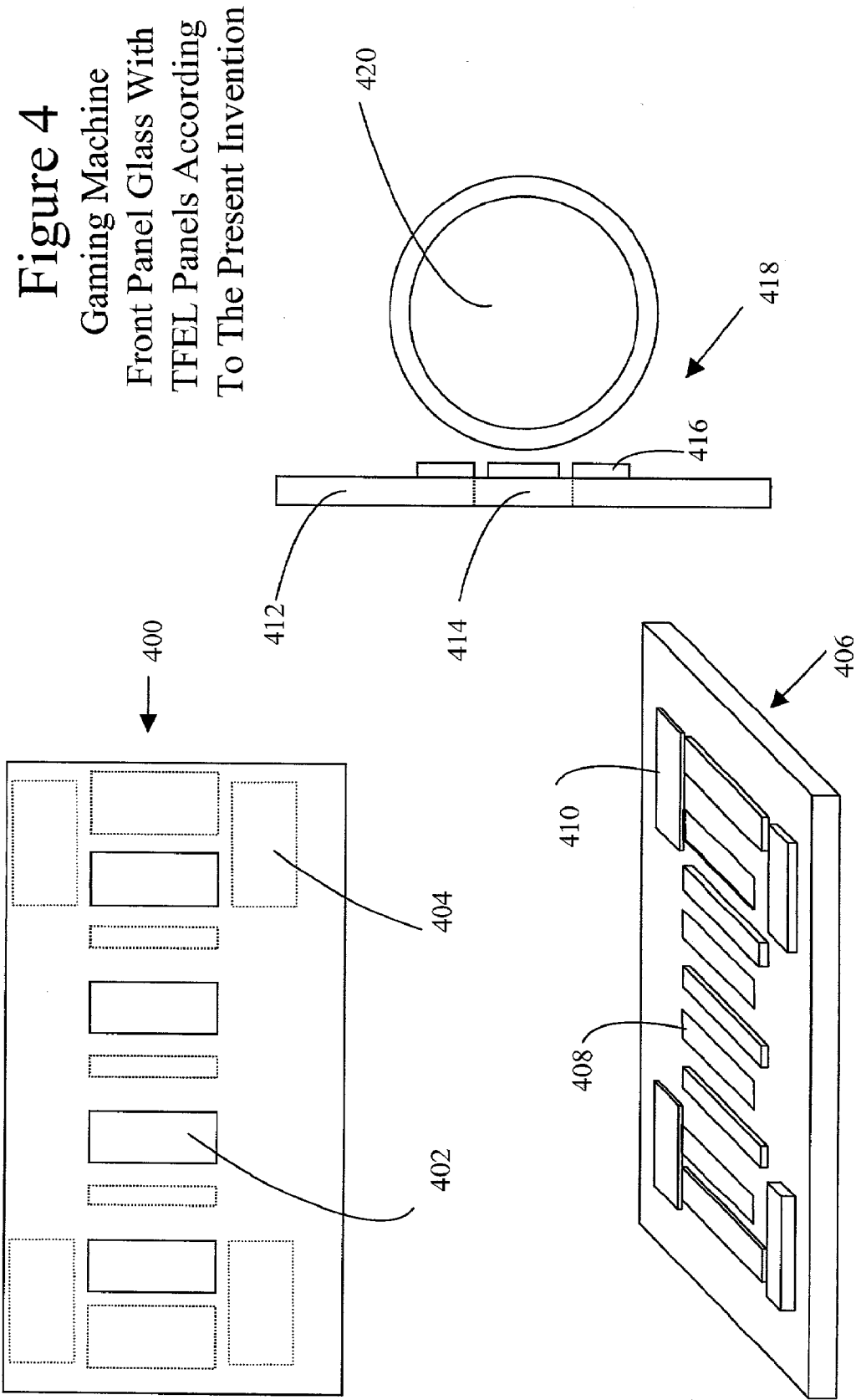


Figure 5
Paying Indicia Combinations
Using Electroluminescent Displays
According To The Present Invention

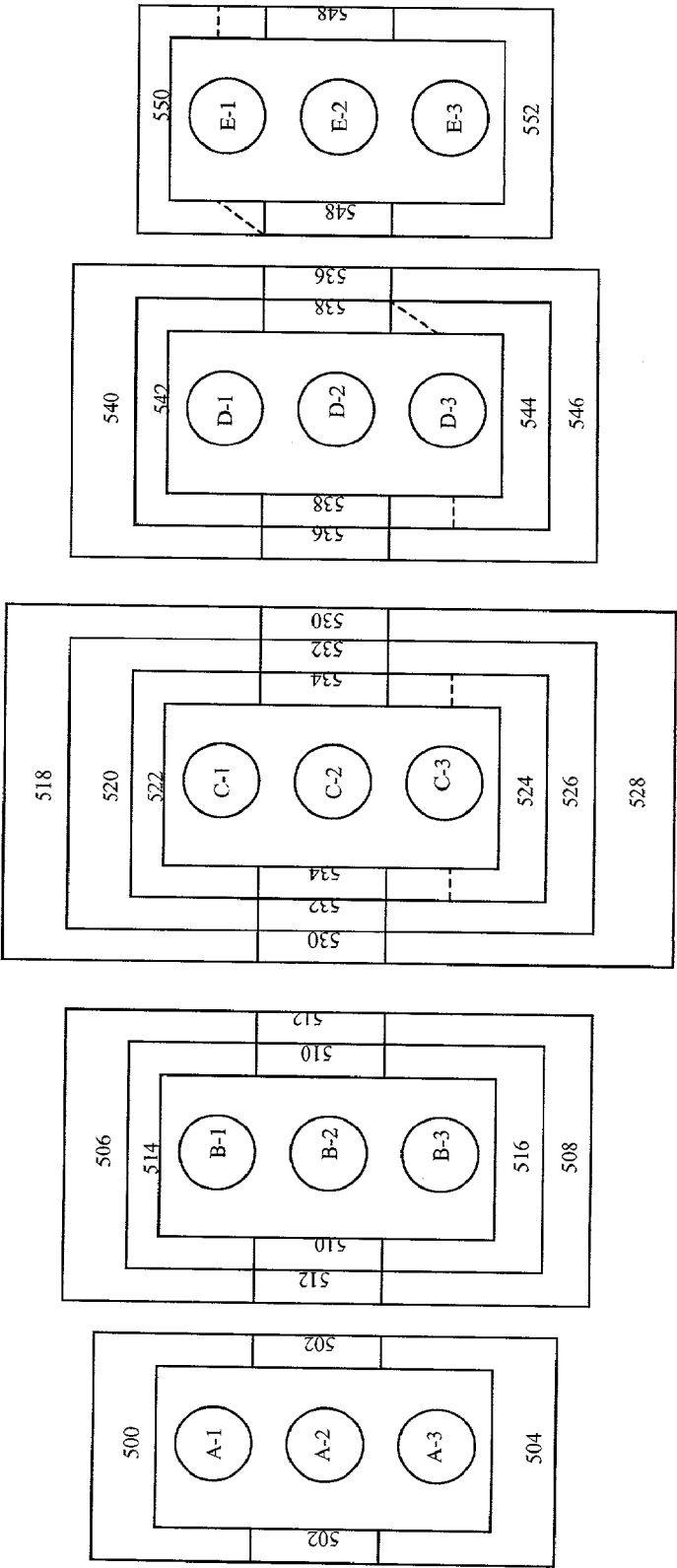


FIGURE 6
Method For Using Electroluminescent
Displays In A Gaming Machine.

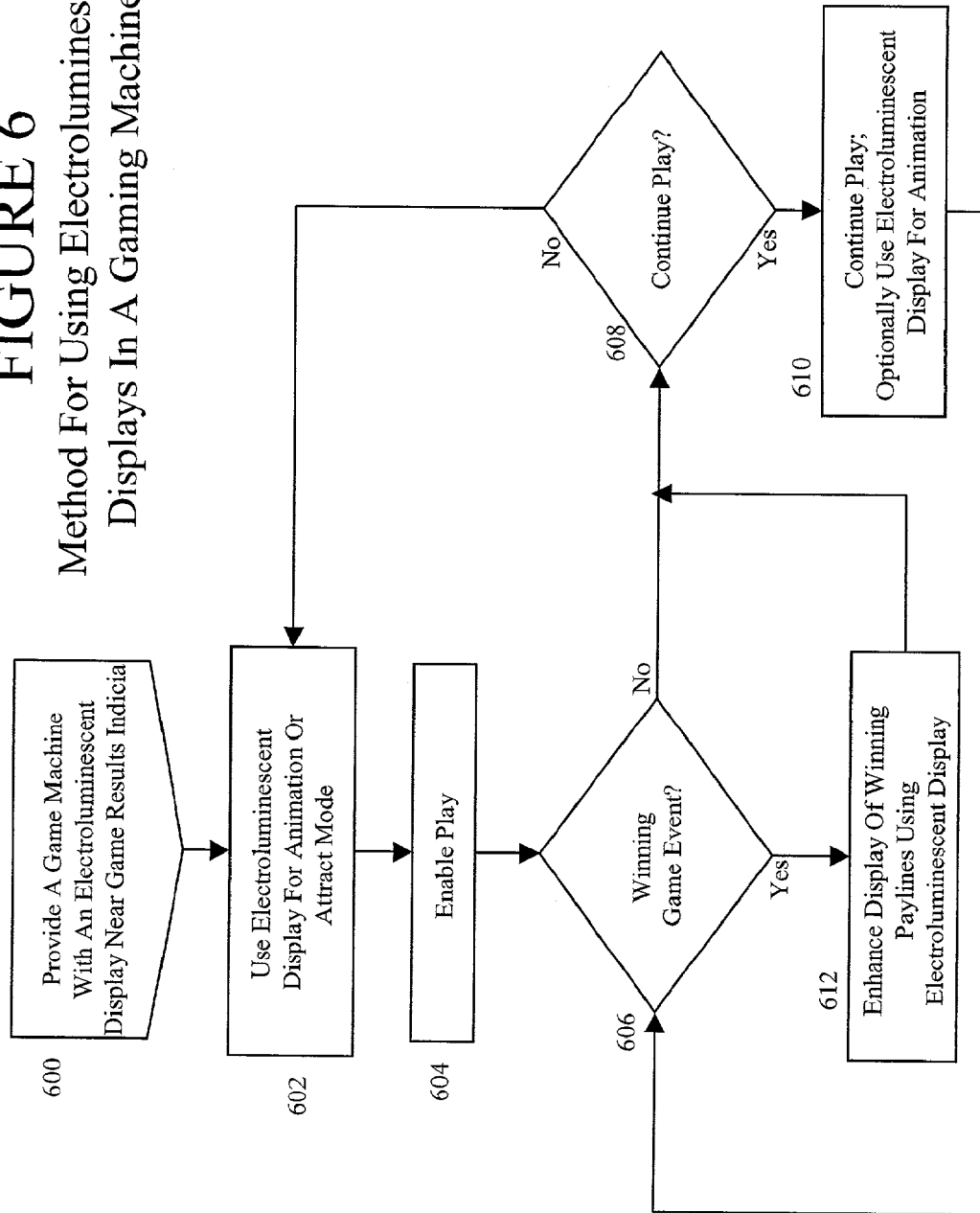
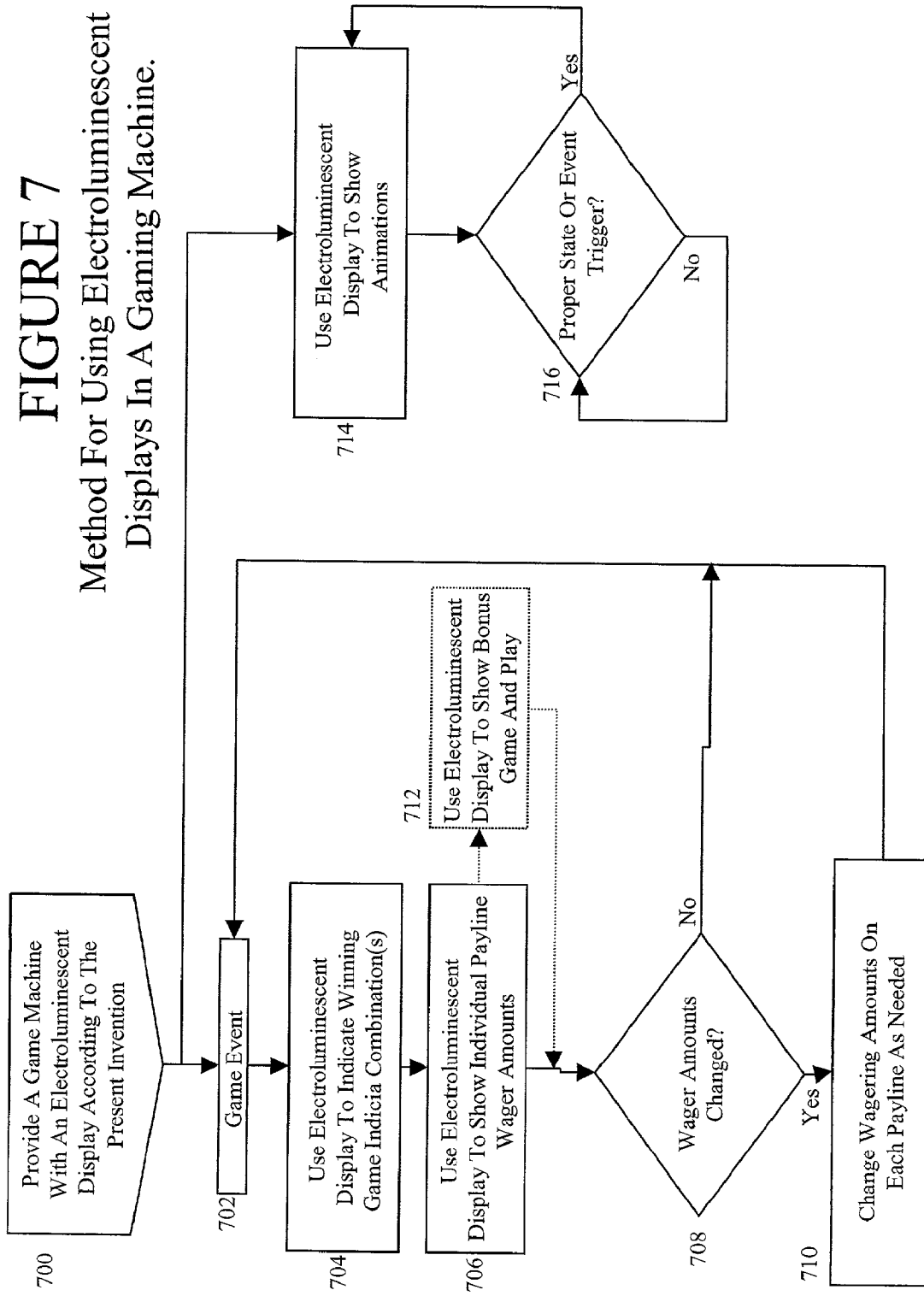


FIGURE 7
Method For Using Electroluminescent
Displays In A Gaming Machine.



REEL-BASED GAMING MACHINE WITH MULTIPLE OVERLAID DISPLAYS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application is a continuation of co-pending application Ser. No. 10/119,324, filing date Apr. 8, 2002, which is a continuation-in-part of application Ser. No. 10/045,192 having filing date Oct. 18, 2001 and entitled "Electroluminescent Display For Gaming Machines".

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] 1. Field of the Invention

[0004] The field of the invention relates to gaming machines and methods, and more specifically to gaming machines and methods using electro-mechanical or video reels and multiple overlaid displays.

[0005] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0006] Traditional Las Vegas style slot machines are generally well known. In particular, the slot machines have a display area visible to a player that allows viewing of either physical slot reels, reel strips, or video displays showing pseudo-reels. The reels either spin or appear to spin, stopping with various game indicia visible to the user through a viewing area or display. A typical display will show a set of individual indicia in a matrix (column×row) format. A typical slot may have one of many typical indicia patterns visible to a player, such as 3 indicia vertically and 3 indicia horizontally (3×3) for a total of 9 indicia showing, 3 vertical and 4 horizontal (3×4) for a total of 12 indicia showing, and so forth. If the gaming machine uses slots or reel strips, methods of indicating winning paylines to a player have been limited due to the physical construction of the display area. Playable paylines are typically made part of the game glass that sits over the visible game indicia. In these cases, the possible paylines are simply colored pointers or lines that a player uses to determine for themselves (depending on the wager) if they have won or not, after the reels stop. They provide little in the way of helping a player recognize winning paylines; payline recognition must be done by the player.

[0007] Some games have been fitted with a single overlaid display, but these have various limitation, such as being able to display a single video image.

[0008] Players often enjoy seeing various special effects associated with a gaming machine. Thus, there continues to be a need for a more robust display area where various images may be presented to a player prior to, during, and after base and/or feature game play. Such imagery may include showing multiple images over and about one or more of the reels, better methods of showing potential paylines to a player and

providing player attract modes in the gaming machine area immediately around the visible game indicia.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] In accordance with the invention/s, gaming machines and methods are provided that provide an improved game display and effects to a player through the overlay of two or more displays over a display area corresponding to a set of reels or tape.

[0010] Multiple electroluminescent displays are operably attached to, and connected within, a gaming machine to produce an overlay effect over and/or about the displayed portions of the reels. The overlaid displays may present fixed or video images and the images and may have cut-out or clear portions enabling one or more reels to remain visible. The overlaid video images may interact with the reels and/or to present a portion of a base or bonus game. Internally, an electroluminescent (EL) driver is operably connected between a CPU within the gaming machine and the EL display, the EL driver actually being used determined by the particular implementation. Software running in the game machine's CPU and memory will create images to display on the EL display in a manner similar to other display devices in the sense that EL displays enable pixel addressing. This allows the known engineering solutions used for other pixel addressable displays to be used with EL displays.

[0011] Other features and numerous advantages of the various embodiments will become apparent from the following detailed description when viewed in conjunction with the corresponding drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] FIG. 1 shows a schematic diagram of a TFEL display's structure in accordance with the present invention.

[0013] FIG. 2 shows the location of an electroluminescent display area in a gaming machine accordance with the present invention.

[0014] FIG. 3 illustrates payline indicators in accordance with the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 3 illustrates a gaming machine front panel with TFEL panels according to the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 5 illustrates game symbol combination indicators using color at least partially surrounding individual game symbols, in accordance with the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 6 is a block diagram showing a method for using electroluminescent displays in a gaming machine, in accordance with the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 7 is a block diagram showing a further method for using electroluminescent displays in a gaming machine, in accordance with the present invention.

[0019] Persons of ordinary skill in the art and with the benefit of the present disclosure will realize that the following description of the present invention is illustrative only, and is not limiting. Other embodiments of the invention will readily suggest themselves when such skilled persons have the benefit of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0020] Referring now to the drawings, for illustrative purposes the present invention is shown embodied in FIGS. 1 through 7. It will be appreciated that the apparatus may vary as to configuration and as to details of the parts without

departing from the inventive concepts disclosed herein. The methods may vary as to details, partitioning, repetition, step inclusion, and the order of the acts, without departing from the inventive concepts disclosed herein.

[0021] FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of an TFEL display (thin film electroluminescent display). Layers **100** through **108**, making up the primary layers of a TFEL, are deposited on a glass substrate **110** (clearly the illustrated thicknesses are not scale). There are electrodes **100**, insulator **102**, phosphor layer(s) **104**, another insulator layer **106**, and another electrode layer **108**. This would be typical for a monochrome display; color displays would have an 15 additional filtering layer (RGB filters) between the display glass (viewing direction) and the first layer of electrodes. The specifics of TFEL display making and driving are known in the TFEL art; important TFEL characteristics for the purposes of the present disclosure are discussed below.

[0022] One key property of TFELs is their thin construction. All the layers applied to a substrate have a typical combined thickness of 20K Angstroms or less, even when color filters are added to FIG. 1. As an Angstrom is 10⁻⁸ centimeters, the entire display may be less than 2×10⁻⁴ centimeters thick (this will depend on phosphor layer(s) used and any additional ROB filters for color displays, but the order of magnitude is the important part for purposes of this disclosure). Even adding the glass substrate together with the control structures needed for a standard commercial electroluminescent display package, the entire display panel may be in the range of 4 mm to 20 mm in total thickness (approximately 0.2 to 0.8 inches). Compared to the rest of the mechanisms in a reel gaming machine or reel tape gaming machine, this thinness allows the placement of the display panels virtually anywhere, as they will not interfere with the reel mechanisms. In addition, electroluminescent panels may be used in conjunction with a video display by placing electroluminescent panels around the boundaries of the video display. This allows TFEL (thin film electroluminescent) displays, mounted on the front panel of a gaming machine and visible to a player, to be placed literally anyplace on the display area that does not obstruct they player's view of the game indicia (reels, reel tape, or video display). This is new, allowing dynamic displays in physical areas on gaming machines, particularly reel and reel tape machines, not previously possible.

[0023] FIG. 2 shows a typical location for one or more electroluminescent displays visible to a player. A gaming machine **200** is shown in front and side views. Illustrated is a slant-top configuration, but the cabinet shape is for illustrative purposes only. Gaming machine **200** has the normal accoutrements, such as top candle **202**, an upper (typically static) display **204**, a plurality of player input/output devices, typically buttons, shown generally as **212**, and an input slot **206**. Input slot **206** may be a bill acceptor, voucher reader, player ID reader, or several of these in combination, as configured in any particular casino. Finally, the visible game indicia are shown as a series of four player visible areas, in this case slots **208**, surrounding by game indicia display area **210**. Display area **214** shows where game indicia area **210** would be located (approximately) when the gaming machine is viewed from the side. Note that the four slots **208** are representative only; there may be any number of slots or areas, or the game indicia area may be a single rectangle (or other shape), such as found on video-based gaming machines. In all cases, there will be an area **210** visually close to the game indicia area. It is intended that area **210** be considered as two functional areas. The first

functional area is such that when playing a gaming machine, the electroluminescent displays are placed so that a player, when viewing the images shown on electroluminescent displays, visually associates at least one image with a game indicia. The second functional area is close to the game indicia (still mounted on the reel panel of the gaming machine), but with enough visual separation such that images displayed are seen as applying to more than one game indicia.

[0024] A typical TFEL installation in a gaming machine will use either custom made or commercially available TFEL panels mounted on the underside of the gaming machine's display area glass **210**, also called the reel panel for reel gaming machines (it is also possible to mount electroluminescent displays on top of the front panel area glass, but this is not expected to be the most popular configuration). There may be one or several individual panels, depending on the specifics of the images to be displayed and the gaming machines' current mechanisms. Further, a plurality of electroluminescent displays may be physical configured (attached in relationship to each other and the display area art) to appear as a single display to a player. Since electroluminescent panels comprise displays were individual illumination points are addressable as pixels, the software engineering techniques used to create and send images to TFEL panels is a known task (the same as other pixel devices). The software generating the images is run on a graphics processor or general purpose processor and associated RAM in the gaming machine, together with the appropriate TFEL display driver or drivers for the specific application, which will result in an image visible to a player (these components not illustrated). The same techniques used for a single electroluminescent display are applicable to more than one display panel as well; the overall image or image(s) being managed by the same software.

[0025] FIG. 3 shows one embodiment of the present invention. Shown generally is game indicia display area **300**, typically the front game panel or front panel glass (also called the reel display glass, reel panel, or reel display area glass). Typically this panel will be made of glass with opaque artwork covering the surface of the glass except for the "windows", or areas left, transparent to allow player viewing of the reels (or reel tape) underneath the front panel, and the TFEL panels. In this example, there are four reel windows allowing a player to view underlying reels shown as **320**, **322**, **324**, and **326**. Each window allows a player to view 3 game indicia per reel, resulting in a 3×4 display (individual indicia shown generically as circles). Electroluminescent panels **302**, **304**, **306**, **308**, **310**, **312**, **314**, **316** and **318** have been placed in close proximity to the four game indicia display areas. Although shown as a collection of 9 panels, the actual number of panels will depend on the implementation. For example, there may be two end panels (**302**, **304** and **306** replaced with one panel "c" shaped panel, and similarly on the other end) and three intermediate panels. Note further that the panels may be installed on a common substrate, the unit then installed on a gaming machine. All such variations in the actual installation and implementation of electroluminescent panels is within the inventive scope of the present invention.

[0026] Since the electroluminescent displays are addressable in pixels, they are usable to shown paylines in a dynamic manner. Shown as solid lines within dotted-line electroluminescent display boxes **316**, **312**, **310**, **308**, and **304** are three of the possible paylines that may be enabled by a player using a gaming machine having the display area of FIG. 3. These

three are shown to keep the illustration from becoming cluttered; any paylines connecting a plurality of game indicia may be shown to a player using the electroluminescent displays, and they may be in any configuration—they need not even go from edge to edge or cross all four reels. In addition, the present invention allows for the portion of the electroluminescent display shown as box **328** to contain the wagering amount currently being played; there would be an equivalent display area having wager amounts per payline. This enables not only the wagering amount in general to be shown, but further enables the amount wagered per line to vary; varying wagering per line has not previously been possible because there was no way to indicate individual payline wagering amount differences to the player. Now, it may be indicated by the color of the paylines or other methods, in addition to the wager-per-payline box **328** (there would be an equivalent box for each payline).

[0027] Another preferred embodiment will use small electroluminescent displays, similar to strips but actually long rectangles, to allow payline indicators to appear as if they cross game indicia. This is illustrated in window **334**, having three game indicia **336** visible and each game indicia having in front of it (mounted on the window glass) a thin electroluminescent strip **338**. In the illustrated case, the pixels in the thin rectangular TFEL panels in front of the reels may be illuminated at will. The illumination may occur upon a winning event; it may be used in conjunction with a “help screen” (teaching mode) to show a player what paylines correspond to what bet amounts or what paylines a player may choose; or, they may be illuminated as a player makes wagering choices during game play. Since color is used in a preferred embodiment, the illuminated paylines may be further distinguished by using different colors for different paylines or wagering amounts. This is expected to be helpful during payout events and initial wagering. Upon the occurrence of winning game indicia after a game play (meaning that the reels stop with game indicia in a specified physical relationship to each other, that combination of indicia and location defined as a winning combination; in old reel games this was limited to a set of three symbols in a line), the winning combinations of individual game indicia may now be illustrated to the player in real time and dynamically. This was not previously possible with reel or reel tape machines. In addition to the per-payline wagering amounts being displayed as discussed above, a preferred embodiment will further use an area of an electroluminescent display shown as box **330** to show the player their current game status which may include but is not limited to current amount wagered, amount won, credits, varying pay table options, and other useful data. Note that a further use of electroluminescent displays **314**, **306**, **318**, and **302** are as additional player attract mode displays. This becomes especially useful with the addition of a further electroluminescent display located between **314** and **306**, shown as **332**. In these displays, images may be generated showing promotions, new games, extra winning jackpot events, shows in the casinos, player tracking awards, and generally fun stuff like miniature cartoons.

[0028] Displays **314**, **332**, and **306** may further be used to show a complete bonus or secondary game. One preferred embodiment of such a game is to show a static display of numbers (the numbers would be part of the art on the front of the panel glass) which are bonus multipliers. The numbers are distributed across the glass under which displays **314**, **332**, and **306** are installed. During bonus play, the electrolumines-

cent displays are used to illuminate each number in a backlit fashion using different colors, each number in quick succession. The bonus round consists of the bonus multiplier numbers being momentarily backlit until lighting stays constant underneath one number; that is the player's winning bonus. Further bonus plays or games are readily constructible using images that may be displayed directly through the front panel glass, as well backlighting art on the glass. For example, an animated version of a pachinko game could be used as a bonus game on the displays; or, a series of numbers (bonus multipliers or bonus win amounts) appearing to “come out at the player” in quick succession until a winning multiplier “freezes” (number stops changing) could be used; or, other animated sequences resulting in the display of a winning bonus number can be displayed. The present invention enables an unending plethora of visually attractive bonus games or bonus rounds in all their chimeratic splendor to be incorporated directly into the front panel area of reel (or reel tape) gaming machines, not heretofore possible.

[0029] FIG. 4 shows views of an example embodiment of the present invention on front panel glass. Front panel **400** corresponds to the front panel discussed in FIG. 3 (**300**). Dotted-line boxes indicated by **404** represent electroluminescent displays mounted underneath the front panel glass; solid-line boxes **402** represent reel viewing windows. If a front panel similar to panel **400** is tipped such that the underside (the side away from the player) of the panel is visible, a view such as panel **406** results. Four reel viewing windows **408** are visible, as are mounted electroluminescent displays **410** which correspond to the dotted-line boxes shown on panel **400**. These displays will stand slightly proud of the front panel glass; depending on the displays used in a specific game a typical range would be between 0.2" and 0.8". When installed in a reel game, a view similar to **418** results. A set of reels **420** rotate behind front panel glass **412**, the front panel **412** having viewing windows **414** allowing a view of each reel (typically one reel through one window). The viewing area is limited to show a specific number of game indicia, the game indicia being printed on the outer circumference of the wheel. Electroluminescent panels **416** may be placed on the backside of front panel **412**, as they do not interfere with reels **420**. Reels **420** may be physically located where they need to be, namely, close enough to the front panel such that a player can view the game indicia on the reels' circumference, and further with 15 each reel mounted close to the other reels in order to form an easily viewable gaming area.

[0030] FIG. 5 illustrates another preferred embodiment of the present invention. The ability to use electroluminescent displays immediately surrounding game indicia allows a more colorful method of indicating paylines, while enabling visual winning game indicia indicators not previously known.

[0031] FIG. 5 illustrates a gaming machine having 5 reels or reel tapes, with 5 game indicia viewing areas (displays). Each of the game indicia areas allows a player to see 3 individual game indicia. Shown is a 5x3 display. The columns 5 are designated as A through E, and the rows 1 through 3. Thus, the designation B2 refers to the individual game indicia in column B, second row (middle row, in this case). Surrounding the 5 slot display areas are electroluminescent displays. For the purposes of this embodiment, the pixels in the electroluminescent displays are grouped into the areas shown in FIG. 5. Each of the visible game indicia has at least one set (defined as a contiguous area as shown in the figure) of pixels on a portion of an TFEL panel associated with it; some have

more. On the end rows (end reels), there is one set of pixels in the immediate vicinity of each game indicia. For column A, A-1 has the area **500** in its immediate visual vicinity, A-2 has the two areas shown as **502** in its immediate visual vicinity, and A-3 has area **504** in its immediate visual vicinity. The same layout holds true for the last column, column E. Column B has the indicators discussed as in column A, from B-1 to B-3 being **514, 510, and 516**, but in addition has an additional visual indicator (area) for each game indicia. Thus, each individual game indicia in column B has two indicators. In addition to indicators **514, 501, and 516**, the B column also has the indicators **506** for B-1, **512** for B-2, and **508** for B-3. Column D is configured similarly to column B, where D-1 has indicators **540** and **542**, D-2 has indicators **536** and **538**, and D-3 has indicators **544** and **546**. The center column, column C, is the most complex. Each individual visible game indicia in column C has three indicators. Game indicia C-1 has indicators **522, 520, and 518**; game indicia C-2 has indicators **534, 532, and 530**; and game indicia C-3 has indicators **524, 526, and 528**. This complex and visually interesting form of indicators is enabled by the use of electroluminescent displays placed around each reel (or reel tape) display.

[0032] The game is played when a player makes wagers which enable different numbers of paylines. In one preferred embodiment, shown in FIG. 5, the paylines are very interesting as they are all 3 game indicia paylines. The availability of 5 reels (5 columns of game indicia) means that new combinations of 3 winning 15 indicia may be found and indicated to the player, using the indicators discussed above, creating unique combinations of game indicia not previously available. The game shown in FIG. 5 may be understood as a combination of 3 different 3×3 matrices, each having 3 columns and 3 rows. A first matrix comprises columns A, B, and C; a second matrix comprises B, C, and D; and a third matrix comprises C, D, and E. Any 3 game indicia that would comprise a winning payline in a standalone 3×3 matrix game comprises a winning payline when found in anyone of the 3 matrices of the present game. Thus, when designated game indicia show up in designated positions, a winning event based on 3 game indicia is illuminated. As there are 3 sets of columns, there may be winning paylines in any of the 3 column sets (any of the three 3×3 matrices). Examples of winning game indicia 5 combinations include, but are not limited to, A-1, B-1, and C-1; C-3, D-2, and E-1; B-2, C-2, and E-2; B-3, C-2, and D-1; B-1, C-2, and D-1. Since a typical 3×3 matrix game can yield anywhere from 3 paylines (three straight horizontal paylines from right to left) to 27 paylines (including paylines such as A-2, B-3, C-1), the illustrated game, having three 3×3 matrices rather than just one 3×3 may be configured with over 5000 winning combinations. This creates far more excitement for the player, in addition to enabling the casino to choose certain pay table entries for the occasional large win. In each of the winning payline examples in the last paragraph, the winning payline is shown to the player by using the areas surrounding the game indicia with color indicators to show a winning combination. Thus, column C has three indicators for each individual game indicia (C-1, C-2, C-3) as each game indicia in C has the possibility of being in winning combinations corresponding to each of the three 3×3 matrices visible to a player; columns B and D may each be in two, and columns A and E may be in one. For each logical 3×3 matrix, winning combinations will be flashed or otherwise indicated to the player using a same color.

[0033] In one preferred embodiment, the paylines available to a player will be limited to horizontal, 3 game indicia paylines only (i.e., B-3, C-3, and E-3). In this embodiment the winning combinations may be permanently lit while the player watches until the start of the next game event or game play. Each winning game indicia combination may be indicated using a different color. An example having one winning payline from each of the three matrices is: a first win at A-1, B-1, C-1; a second win at B-1, C-1, D-1, and a third win at C-3, D-3, and E-1. If matrix A, B, C is indicated by red, matrix B, C, D indicated by green, and matrix C, D, E is indicated by yellow, then areas **500, 514 and 522** could be red; area **506, 520, and 540** could be green, and areas **524, 544, and 550** could be yellow. This visually indicates to a player, using the surrounding TFEL displays, where the winning combinations are. The player simply looks to see which game indicia have like colors in the areas near them.

[0034] In more complex games allowing complex paylines, a preferred embodiment will be to use a combination of indicators as shown in FIGS. 3 and 5; that is, both the individual paylines shown in FIG. 3 and the areas shown in FIG. 5. After a game event in a game configured as in FIG. 5, a color will be used to represent one 3×3 matrix, with a payline within the color showing the actual payline. Thus, if green were used for the 3×3 matrix comprising columns C, D, and E, then a payline of C-3, B-3 and E-1 would be shown by lighting areas **550, 544, and 524** with green, and further having a black (or other contrasting color) line in the area crossing or connecting the winning game indicia areas. This is shown using the dotted lines in the listed areas.

[0035] FIG. 6 illustrates a method for using electroluminescent displays in a gaming machine. Starting box **600** is the initial starting point, the actions corresponding to this box being to provide a gaming machine having at least one electroluminescent panel operably disposed within the gaming machine and visually near the game results display area. Further, the panel must be positioned such that a player can make a visual association between images displayed on the panel and at least one of the visible game indicia. In one preferred embodiment there will be a visual association between anyone game indicia and at least one portion of at least one panel. Box **600** is left and box **602** entered. The actions associated with box **602** are to use the electroluminescent display for player enjoyment and player attract mode. This includes but is not limited to displaying possible rewards and benefits of the game, promotions of other events in the casino, news, stock market displays, jokes, cartoons, and generally fun stuff to watch. Box **602** is left and box **604** is entered when play is enabled. The actions corresponding to box **604** include a player enabling the game for play. This may be the presentation of a voucher to an player I/O device, cash input to the gaming machine, EFT transfer, or any other means of establishing game play credits on the gaming machine. Further, game play starts in box **604**. Diamond **606** is now entered. The decision corresponding to diamond **606** is to determine if a game winning event has occurred. This could be any game winning event as defined by the game itself; typically this will include a set of game indicia having a certain special relationship to each other defining a winning payline thereby. If there is a winning event, diamond **606** is left via the "YES" exit to box **612**. The actions corresponding to box **612** include enhancing player recognition of any and/or all paylines using all available electroluminescent displays operable within the gaming machine having visual proximity

to the game indicia. This includes showing paylines by using actual lines, color indicia, or other visual means, over that available in the machine without the display(s). Box 612 is left for diamond 608. The decision corresponding to diamond 608 are the player continuing to play or leaving the game. If the player decides to leave the game, the "NO" exit is taken from diamond 608 and box 602 is re-entered, continuing the process with the actions corresponding to that box. If the player wishes to continue to play, the "YES" exit is taken to box 610. The actions corresponding to box 610 include the player continuing play by invoking a next game event, and, optionally, using the electroluminescent display(s) for player amusement and attract mode. As soon as a player has triggered a next game event, box 610 is left and diamond 606 is re-entered. Returning to diamond 606 from above and taking a different exit path, if the game event had no winning event then the "NO" exit is taken to diamond 608. The actions corresponding to diamond 608 are explained immediately above; the player decides to keep playing or not.

[0036] FIG. 7 further elaborates the use of electroluminescent displays in indicating paylines and in the use of attract modes. Starting at block 700, a gaming machine having electroluminescent panels in accordance with the present invention is supplied or present. Block 700 is left and block 702 entered. The actions corresponding to block 702 are to wait until a game event occurs. A game event means a game play, a game play occurring after a player has enabled game play by using credits, vouchers, EFT, chips, etc. Further note that after leaving block 700, there is an arrow going to block 714. This shows a concurrent event. The process represented by block 714 and diamond 716 is triggered, looping until the game is shut off. The actions corresponding to block 714 are to use any available electroluminescent panels to show an animation, used as an attract mode feature. Upon the gaming machine being powered up and before the first game event is triggered, this loop will be started. One preferred embodiment will use the electroluminescent panels to show fixed-sequence animations; this is an action corresponding to block 714. Fixed-sequence animations are animations that use a series of pre-defined images, typically very few (from as few as 3 to perhaps a dozen), and by showing the images on the display, in sequence, give the appearance of an animated picture. Thus, the actions corresponding to block 714 include sending a sequence of pre-defined images to the display or displays, creating an attract-mode animation sequence thereby. Once completed, block 714 is left for diamond 716. The decision corresponding to diamond 716 is to check the current state of the gaming machine, and if a specified state or trigger event has occurred, take the "YES" exit back to 714, thus triggering another animated display. If the state of the machine is such that an animation sequence should not be started (for example, a player involved in a bonus game using the electroluminescent displays), or if a triggering event has not been set (i.e., a "do animation" bit in a status word is set to 0), then the "NO" exit is taken, looping back into diamond 716 which repeats its checks until a game state or triggering event is found. The loop continues as long as the gaming machine is powered up. Note that this loop contains the ability to enable multiple animation sequences, triggered by different states or flags. For example, if there is an animation sequence designed to be played after a player wins a bonus round of play, then the "event trigger" may comprise the setting of designated bits in a word, which when checked (as part of a regular polling process) by the software looping in

716, will then invoke a particular animation sequence. The use of a plurality of bits for the trigger enables not only the invocation of an animation sequence, but the ability to choose amongst several choices of animation sequences. Returning to block 702, after the occurrence of a game event block 704 is entered. The actions corresponding to block 704 are to use the electroluminescent display(s) to show any winning game indicia combinations. There may not be any. In a typical reel game, such combinations are called paylines, but may be defined in any way that makes the game interesting to players (since the combinations may now be identified to the player in a better manner than previously). For example, it may be that a player may win something if a "block" of cherries occurs, where a "block" is any four cherry game indicia that form a 2x2 matrix, anywhere on the games display. The game indicia forming a winning combination may be illuminated using lines, colors, boundary colors, and for multiple winning combinations may be shown in a sequential manner in order to allow the player to cognize each winning group.

[0037] After indicating the winning combinations in some manner, block 704 is left and block 706 is entered. The action corresponding to block 706 are those of one preferred embodiment; note that there are other preferred embodiments which will not make use of 706, 708, 710, and 712 (704 would loop back to 702). In block 706, the actions include showing an amount wagered per paylines, or an amount wagered for each particular payline, at one end of each payline. Dotted-line box 712 mayor may not be entered, depending on the implementation of bonus rounds in the particular game in use. If there are bonus rounds a player may win on the game in use, and if a bonus round has been triggered, then box 712 is entered. The actions corresponding to box 712 are to invoke the bonus game and use the electroluminescent display(s) to show the entire bonus round (no other gaming apparatus is needed, for example, no top box is needed). After the completion of the bonus round (if any), and/or the completion of the actions 706, diamond 708 is entered.

[0038] The decision corresponding to diamond 708 is to see if the player has changed any wagering amounts. If so, then the "YES" exit is taken to block 710, where the wagering amounts shown at the end of each payline, or the affected paylines, is changed accordingly. After that, block 712 is left block 702 re-entered. If there is no change in wagering amounts, then the "NO" exit is taken out of diamond 708, leading directly back to block 702.

[0039] The use of electroluminescent displays has been described primarily for the use in gaming machines, located in close visual proximity to the gaming machine's game indicia. It is fully contemplated that the above discussed displays will readily be usable in prize kiosks and other electronic devices found in casinos. The present invention has been partially described using a flow diagram.

[0040] As will be understood by a person of ordinary skill in the art and with the benefit of the present disclosure, steps described in the flow diagram can vary as to order, content, allocation of resources between steps, times repeated, and similar variations while staying fully within the inventive concepts disclosed herein.

[0041] Accordingly, it will be seen that this invention provides a system and method for providing a unique three overlapping matrix game using electroluminescent displays in a gaming machine in close visual proximity to the game indicia area. Although the description above contains certain specificity, the described embodiments should not be con-

strued indicating the scope of the invention; the descriptions given are providing an illustration of certain preferred embodiments of the invention. The scope of this invention is determined by the appended claims and their legal equivalents.

[0042] The foregoing description, for purposes of explanation, uses specific nomenclature and formula to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. It should be apparent to those of skill in the art that the specific details are not required in order to practice the invention. The embodiments have been chosen and described to best explain the principles of the invention and its practical application, thereby enabling others of skill in the art to utilize the invention, and various embodiments with various modifications as are suited to the particular use contemplated. Thus, the foregoing disclosure is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise forms disclosed, and those of skill in the art recognize that many modifications and variations are possible in view of the above teachings.

What is claimed is:

1. A gaming machine, the gaming machine comprising:
 - a set of reels arranged in parallel;
 - a reel display area having at least one window through which indicia from each of the reels may be viewed,
 - at least one electroluminescent panel operably and visibly attached to said gaming machine proximate to said reel display area such that a player may make a visual association between each individual game indicia and at least one portion of said at least one electroluminescent panel;
 - and,

where said at least one electroluminescent panel is further configured such that said window 1 and window 5 have at least one visually associative area for each visible game indicia, window 2 and window 4 have at least two visually associative areas for each visible game indicia, and, window 3 has at least three visually associative areas for each visible game indicia.

2. A gaming machine including
 - a set of reels;
 - a primary game operable on the gaming machine and interactive with the set of reels;
 - multiple displays overlaying the reels;
 - two or more of the displays providing images associated with each other, the primary reels, and the primary game;
 - a portion of one or more of the reels visible along with the images.
3. 2. A gaming machine including
 - a set of reels;
 - a primary game operable on the gaming machine and interactive with the set of reels;
 - a feature game operable upon one or more outcomes associated with the primary game;
 - multiple displays overlaying the reels;
 - two or more of the displays providing images associated with each other and the feature game;
 - a portion of one or more of the reels visible along with the images.

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