

players may find moving between several machines inconvenient and ergonomically difficult, particularly when a player desires to engage in an increased rate of play. Second, during peak hours, players on multiple machines may prohibit other casino patrons from partaking in and enjoying games of chance on those “partially” occupied machines. Third, from a casino operator’s point of view, multiple machines used for concurrent, but naturally slower play by a single player may take up valuable floor space that could otherwise be used to optimize revenues.

[0012] U.S. Pat. No. 5,890,962 to Takemoto (“Takemoto”) attempts to solve certain of the aforementioned disadvantages by disclosing a video slot machine display having multiple individual display parts which each make up a 3×3 display of indicia (each display part have nine symbols arranged to simulate three reels). In one exemplary embodiment, each of the display parts has five available paylines. Takemoto discloses that a player can select one or more individual display parts and any number of available paylines for simultaneous play. Takemoto also discloses betting lines extending to symbols spanning across two or more selected individual display. In a further embodiment, Takemoto discloses a method of play that may result in a “big [win].]win,” wherein each of a predetermined number of continuous display parts in the horizontal, vertical, or diagonal direction are determined to have individual wins. While advantageously providing new types of games and reducing floor space that might otherwise be used for multiple play by a single player, the disclosure of Takemoto is somewhat limited in terms of display options, player options, and in methods of play. For example, the device of Takemoto is restricted to slot machine play; all simulated reels are taught to be activated simultaneously; and the individual display parts are taught to be in fixed positions in an array on the gaming machine display.

[0013] In U.S. Pat. No. 6,159,095 to Frohm et al. (“Frohm”), simultaneous multiple game play is extended to a variety of casino games, including video poker, bingo, keno, and reel slot machines. In one embodiment, multiple games of the same type are electronically shown on game boards arranged in a stack and displayed on a touch screen. The number of game boards to be played in the stack is selectable by a player, and winning game boards appear to pop-up from the stack in “cash-register-like fashion.” Frohm teaches that the face of any particular game board is viewable by a player upon touching the game board on the touch screen display; when the game board is touched, it slides out from the stack to expose its face.

[0014] In another embodiment taught by Frohm, gaming machines for playing reel-type slots or video poker are disclosed which include multiple visual display sections (i.e., multiple areas on the gaming machine each display a game of chance). In the slot machine device of this embodiment, Frohm teaches that each visual display section includes its own set of rotatable reels[,] and that each of the reel sets are simultaneously placed in motion upon pushing a “play” button or pulling a lever. A microprocessor then selects game outcomes for the reels and determines whether a winning combination has been achieved. Frohm further teaches that a primary set of reels on a first display may be stopped first in time[,] and that a winning outcome of less than five symbols from the primary reel set may be automatically carried over to a second or third set of reels, etc.[]

to give a player the opportunity to improve on a winning combination. In this embodiment, Frohm teaches that symbols from a winning combination are applied to a second reel set[,] and that the remaining reels of the second reel set are thereafter stopped and a game outcome determined from the combination of the carried-over symbols and the remaining symbols of the second reel.

[0015] A similar scheme of multiple displays and carried-over game elements is disclosed by Frohm for the play of video poker. Similarly to Takemoto, the electronic gaming devices of Frohm provide new types of games and [multi-play]multiplay enhancements while making use of a minimal amount of casino floor space. Frohm, however, is also somewhat limited in the scope of games offered[,] and in available player and display options. In particular, Frohm does not disclose mutually concurrent play of a plurality of differing games of chance on a single screen display.

[0016] U.S. Pat. No. 6,203,428 to Giobbi et al. also teaches an electronic gaming machine for playing multiple games of the same type substantially at the same time. Like one embodiment of Frohm, Giobbi et al. employs pop up game boards, each representing an individual game.

[0017] Various other electronic games and their methods and apparatus for use are also [well known]well-known in the art. Electronic games include games of chance, games of skill, and games involving both skill and chance. Examples of several patents describing games of chance include U.S. Pat. No. 5,833,536 to Davids et al. (electronic card games), the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference, U.S. Pat. No. 5,769,716 to Saffari et al. (“falling symbol” game), U.S. Pat. No. 5,820,460 to Fulton (video poker game), and U.S. Pat. No. 5,947,820 to Morro et al. (slot machine-puzzle game combination).

[0018] In order to maintain a casino patron’s interest in games of chance, there is a continuing need for gaming machine manufacturers to produce interesting and exciting game variations and attractive enhancements. In addition, casino operators constantly strive to increase profits by maximizing available floor space. Accordingly, there exists a need in the art for new gaming machines permitting concurrent play of multiple games on a single gaming device.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0019] The present invention includes a gaming device configured for mutually concurrent play of a plurality of independently operable games of chance, the games of chance being mutually concurrently displayable on a single display screen. At least some of the independently operable games of chance may be the same game[,] or same type or class of games such as, for example, different poker games.

[0020] In one aspect of the invention, at least some of the independently operable games of chance are mutually concurrently displayable in a plurality of graphically distinct windows on the single display screen. In accordance with another aspect of the invention, the graphically distinct windows can be adjusted by a player in terms of window size and location. In accordance with yet another aspect of the invention, the gaming device is configured to be linked to a network of other gaming machines[,] and further configured to play a tournament game of chance mutually