

screens or display areas on computer screens or television screens. The front panel **50b** thereby acts as a framework for the front of the gaming unit **20** by overlaying and covering those portions of the video display unit **70** that may not have graphics while allowing the player to view those portions of the display unit that have graphics (i.e., display areas **70a**, **70b**, **70c**). In effect, the openings **71a**, **71b**, **71c** of the front panel **50b** and the display areas **70a**, **70b**, **70c** of the video display unit **70** together end up representing display panels without using a naked display, yet may allow each display panel to include active video images with fewer display units.

[0045] As with the display areas **70a**, **70b**, **70c**, the openings **71a**, **71b**, **71c** may vary in shapes, placement and dimensions with respect to other openings in the front panel **50b** or with respect to openings of other front panels just as the video display unit **70** may be apportioned into display areas of varying shapes, placement and dimensions. The openings **71a**, **71b**, **71c** may further include a transparent material such as glass, plexiglass, plastic, etc. to protect the display unit **70** yet permit the player to view the images. The gaming unit **20** may be updated in its appearance and/or game routine(s) by merely programming the controller with the graphics software of the new game routine(s) and replacing the removable front panel **50b** with a new front panel corresponding to the new game routine(s). The gaming unit **20** may be reprogrammed locally or via the download of the new game routine(s), which may be accomplished from the network computer **22**, **32**, the network **40** or another remote location. Therefore, an entire gaming unit can be transformed into a different gaming unit with relative ease.

[0046] Alternatively, in the case of multiple video display units **70**, two or more of the openings **71a**, **71b**, **71c** may overlay a single video display unit **70** as described above, while other openings may correspond to individual video display units **70**. The graphics software may program each video display unit **70** to display video images corresponding to the one or more areas that the video display unit **70** represents.

[0047] The video images for each opening or video display unit **70** may vary among each display area **70a**, **70b**, **70c**. For example, the primary display area **70a** may include video images relating to the performance of the game routine, whereas the top display area **70b** may display video images of payout tables relating to the game routine. Alternatively, the top display area **70b** may display video images representing a bonus game or game instructions. The bottom display **70c** may display other video images or illustrations relating to the game routine. Examples of video images relating to the performance of the game routines such as video poker, video slots, video blackjack, video keno and video bingo are described in further detail below. In a further example, the display areas **70a**, **70b**, **70c** together could display a single, continuous image where the top display area **70b** displays the top of the image, the primary display area **70a** displays the middle of the image and the bottom display area **70c** displays the bottom of the image. The video images described above are merely examples and are not limited in type or to any particular display area. Each of the video images may be either static, active (e.g., multimedia video) or a combination of both. Furthermore, the video images may be in either color or grayscale. Each of the

display areas **70a**, **70b**, **70c** may display various images as part of an attraction sequence when the game routine is not performed. An example of an attraction sequence is further described below.

Control Panel

[0048] FIG. 4 illustrates one possible embodiment of the control panel **66**, which may be used where the gaming unit **20** is a slot machine having a plurality of mechanical or "virtual" reels. Referring to FIG. 4, the control panel **66** may include a "See Pays" button **72** that, when activated, causes the video display unit **70** to generate one or more display screens showing the odds or payout information for the game or games provided by the gaming unit **20**. As used herein, the term "button" is intended to encompass any device that allows a player to make an input, such as an input device that must be depressed to make an input selection or a display area that a player may simply touch. The control panel **66** may include a "Cash Out" button **74** that may be activated when a player decides to terminate play on the gaming unit **20**, in which case the gaming unit **20** may return value to the player, such as by returning a number of coins to the player via the payout tray **64**.

[0049] If the gaming unit **20** provides a slots game having a plurality of reels and a plurality of paylines which define winning combinations of reel symbols, the control panel **66** may be provided with a plurality of selection buttons **76**, each of which allows the player to select a different number of paylines prior to spinning the reels. For example, five buttons **76** may be provided, each of which may allow a player to select one, three, five, seven or nine paylines.

[0050] If the gaming unit **20** provides a slots game having a plurality of reels, the control panel **66** may be provided with a plurality of selection buttons **78** each of which allows a player to specify a wager amount for each payline selected. For example, if the smallest wager accepted by the gaming unit **20** is a quarter (\$0.25), the gaming unit **20** may be provided with five selection buttons **78**, each of which may allow a player to select one, two, three, four or five quarters to wager for each payline selected. In that case, if a player were to activate the "5" button **76** (meaning that five paylines were to be played on the next spin of the reels) and then activate the "3" button **78** (meaning that three coins per payline were to be wagered), the total wager would be \$3.75 (assuming the minimum bet was \$0.25).

[0051] The control panel **66** may include a "Max Bet" button **80** to allow a player to make the maximum wager allowable for a game. In the above example, where up to nine paylines were provided and up to five quarters could be wagered for each payline selected, the maximum wager would be 45 quarters, or \$11.25. The control panel **66** may include a spin button **82** to allow the player to initiate spinning of the reels of a slots game after a wager has been made.

[0052] In FIG. 4, a rectangle is shown around the buttons **72**, **74**, **76**, **78**, **80**, **82**. It should be understood that that rectangle simply designates, for ease of reference, an area in which the buttons **72**, **74**, **76**, **78**, **80**, **82** may be located. Consequently, the term "control panel" should not be construed to imply that a panel or plate separate from the housing **50** of the gaming unit **20** is required, and the term "control panel" may encompass a plurality or grouping of player activatable buttons.