SINGLE SOURCE VISUAL IMAGE DISPLAY DISTRIBUTION ON A GAMING MACHINE

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates generally to gaming machines and systems, and more specifically to the display of visual images and video on or about gaming machines and systems.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Casinos and other forms of gaming comprise a growing multi-billion dollar industry wherein floor space is at a premium, such that newer, more popular and increasingly sophisticated games and machines are preferred over older and less popular ones. For example, the casino and gaming industries have experienced a marked shift over the past few decades not only from the prevalence of table games to gaming machines, but also from the use of fully mechanical gaming machines to electronic and microprocessor based gaming machines. In a typical gaming machine, such as a video poker or slot machine, a game play is first initiated through a player wager of money or credit, whereupon the gaming machine determines a game outcome, presents the game outcome to the player and then potentially dispenses an award of some type, including a monetary award, depending on the game outcome. Although this process is generally true for both mechanical and electronic gaming machines, electronic machines tend to be more popular with players and thus more lucrative for casinos for a number of reasons, such as increased game varieties, more attractive and dynamic presentations and the ability to award larger jackpots.

[0003] Electronic and microprocessor based gaming machines can include a number of hardware and software components to provide a wide variety of game types and game playing capabilities, with such hardware and software components being generally well known in the art. A typical electronic gaming machine comprises a central processing unit ("CPU") or master gaming controller ("MGC") that controls various combinations of hardware and software devices and components that encourage game play, allow a player to play a game on the gaming machine and control payouts and other awards. Software components can include, for example, boot and initialization routines, various game play programs and subroutines, credit and payout routines, image and audio generation programs, various component modules and a random number generator, among others. Exemplary hardware devices can include bill validators, coin acceptors, card readers, keypads, buttons, levers, touch screens, coin hoppers, ticket printers, player tracking units and the like.

[0004] In addition, each gaming machine can have various audio and visual display components that can include, for example, speakers, display panels, belly and top glasses, exterior cabinet artwork, lights, and top box dioramas, as well as any number of video displays of various types to show game play and other assorted information, with such video display types including, for example, a cathode ray tube ("CRT"), a liquid crystal display ("LCD"), a light emitting diode ("LED"), a flat panel display and a plasma display, among others. Apparatuses and methods for providing displays in gaming machines and/or within a casino are generally well known, and instances of such apparatuses and methods can be found in, for example, U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,971,271; 6,135,884; 6,251,014; and 6,503,147, all of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety and for all purposes.

[0005] Various methods of gaining and maintaining interest in game play include designing and providing gaming machines with intriguing and different themes, game types, artwork, visual displays, sounds and the like. One attractive feature for many players is the use of three dimensional graphics or displays in a gaming machine, particularly where such displays are integrated with game play and/or other pertinent presentations to a game player. Such displays and presentations tend to be relatively dramatic, appealing and eye catching for players, prospective players and passers by alike. As in the case of many image, video and graphical displays in the electronic age, appealing yet complex three-dimensional renderings can be programmed for generation and display by many different advanced processors and accompanying devices. Preferable devices can include high resolution LCDs, as well as flat panel and plasma displays, among others, as will be readily appreciated.

[0006] Unfortunately, many forms of three-dimensional graphics or renderings and other similarly complex graphics are extremely demanding with respect to the amounts of electronic storage space, processing power and state of the art high resolution display devices required. Accordingly, many gaming machines do not provide such three-dimensional displays or other complex graphical renderings, and those that do tend to be rather expensive when compared to typical electronic gaming machines. Other issues that arise where complex displays may be required or desired for a particular gaming machine or line of gaming machines include the ability to run multiple views of one or more games simultaneously within a single gaming machine, a corresponding need or desire for multiple display devices within or about a single gaming machine, as well as increased needs for cooling and space, such as where many displays and other power consuming devices are used in one gaming machine.

[0007] While existing systems and methods for displaying visual images and/or video at gaming machine have been satisfactory, improvements are usually welcomed and encouraged. It is thus desirable that new and improved gaming machine display systems and methods have inexpensive yet appealing and innovative visual displays.

SUMMARY

[0008] It is an advantage of the present invention to provide improved systems and methods for presenting visual displays in or about a gaming machine or gaming system. This is accomplished in many embodiments by providing within or about the gaming machine or gaming system at least one "reversible" visual display device that is adapted to present multiple visual images from a single source, such as an LCD cell or other core display component. Such visual images can be repeated or "static" images and/or video streams, as will be readily appreciated. In this manner, multiple visual displays can be provided in or about a gaming machine or gaming system without requiring a separate CRT, LCD, flat panel display, plasma display or other conventional display device for each such visual display.