

## APPARATUS FOR REVEALING A HIDDEN VISUAL ELEMENT IN A GAMING UNIT

### BACKGROUND

[0001] The present disclosure relates to gaming units and, more particularly, to an apparatus for revealing a hidden visual element in a gaming unit.

[0002] Conventional gaming units are typically provided with a cabinet and a gaming display mounted inside the cabinet. The gaming display may be mechanical, such as a series of stepper wheels, may be electronic such as a video display that is capable of generating video images, or may be a combination of the two, such as a stepper wheel with an electronic video display attached thereto. Whether mechanical, electronic, or combination, the gaming display of conventional gaming units has generated images associated with a gaming system, such as poker, blackjack, slots, keno, or bingo.

[0003] While the gaming display is the primary functional component, some gaming units include secondary displays to provide additional game information to a player. Such secondary display elements include, for example, the use of additional video screens and/or the use of additional electro-mechanical devices. In some gaming machines, the secondary display is hidden from the player until the game requires the use of the secondary display, at which time the display is revealed to the player. To hide the secondary display, these gaming machines have utilized mechanical masks, such as mechanical doors that open to reveal the secondary display.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] The invention is directed to a gaming apparatus that may comprise a display unit capable of generating video images, a value input device, a second display unit, and a light valve. The gaming unit controller may comprise a processor and a memory, and may be programmed to allow a person to wager on the outcome of a video poker, video blackjack, video slots, video keno or video bingo game. The gaming unit controller may be further programmed to display gaming indicia on the second display unit and hide the indicia via the use of the light valve. The controller may control the transparency of the light valve to either hide or reveal the indicia as desired.

[0005] Additional aspects of the invention are defined by the claims of this patent.

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0006] FIG. 1 is a block diagram of an embodiment of a gaming system in accordance with the invention;

[0007] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of an embodiment of one of the gaming units shown schematically in FIG. 1;

[0008] FIG. 2A illustrates an embodiment of a control panel for a gaming unit;

[0009] FIG. 2B illustrates an embodiment of a light valve in a substantially transparent configuration;

[0010] FIG. 2C illustrates an embodiment of a light valve in a semi-opaque configuration;

[0011] FIG. 2D illustrates an embodiment of a light valve in a substantially opaque configuration;

[0012] FIG. 3 is a block diagram of the electronic components of the gaming unit of FIG. 2;

[0013] FIGS. 3A-3C illustrate an embodiment of the components of a light valve for a gaming unit;

[0014] FIG. 4 is a top-front perspective view of an embodiment of a secondary display unit employing two rollers and an award display belt in tension with such rollers;

[0015] FIG. 5 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a main routine that may be performed during operation of one or more of the gaming units;

[0016] FIG. 6 is a flowchart of an alternative embodiment of a main routine that may be performed during operation of one or more of the gaming units;

[0017] FIG. 7 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the video poker routine of FIG. 8;

[0018] FIG. 8 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a video poker routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

[0019] FIG. 9 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the video blackjack routine of FIG. 10;

[0020] FIG. 10 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a video blackjack routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

[0021] FIG. 11 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the slots routine of FIG. 12;

[0022] FIG. 12 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a slots routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

[0023] FIG. 13 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the video keno routine of FIG. 14;

[0024] FIG. 14 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a video keno routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units;

[0025] FIG. 15 is an illustration of an embodiment of a visual display that may be displayed during performance of the video bingo routine of FIG. 16;

[0026] FIG. 16 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a video bingo routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units; and

[0027] FIG. 17 is a flowchart of an embodiment of a hidden element reveal operating routine that may be performed by one or more of the gaming units.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF VARIOUS EMBODIMENTS

[0028] Although the following text sets forth a detailed description of numerous different embodiments of the invention, it should be understood that the legal scope of the invention is defined by the words of the claims set forth at the end of this patent. The detailed description is to be construed as exemplary only and does not describe every possible embodiment of the invention since describing every