

SLOT MACHINE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates to a slot machine.

[0002] A slot machine usually comprises three reels, three reel stop buttons assigned to the respective reels, and a start lever to be used for starting a game. When a player lowers the start lever, all reels start spinning simultaneously. At timings at which the player has pressed the reel stop buttons, the reels come to a halt. Among combinations of symbols aligned with a payline while the reels remain stationary, a combination of symbols which imparts a gaming value is called a winning combination. When a combination of symbols that constitutes a winning combination is aligned with a valid payline, a win arises. Upon occurrence of a win, a player can acquire tokens in a number determined on the basis of the winning combination by which the win has been determined.

[0003] Here, a win is determined in two steps. A first step is called internal lottery. In relation to internal lottery, random number selection is performed at a timing at which the start lever is actuated, to thereby determine a prize group in which a win is to be determined or a failure. Internal lottery information showing a result of random number selection is generated. Namely, a one-to-one correspondence arises between a prize group and a winning combination, or a plurality of winning combinations may correspond to one prize group.

[0004] In a second step, positions at which reels are to be stopped are controlled in accordance with actuation of the reel stop buttons. In a case where the internal lottery information represents a failure, even when a player has actuated reel stop buttons at a timing when symbols that would constitute a certain winning combination approach a valid payline, a control operation is performed such that timings at which the reels are to be stopped are delayed, to thereby hinder the symbols from coming to a halt along the valid payline.

[0005] In contrast, in a case where a win has been determined for a certain prize group through internal lottery, even when the player has actuated the reel stop buttons at slightly earlier timings, a draw-in control operation is performed such that symbols that would constitute a winning combination corresponding to a prize group come to a halt at a payline. However, when the reel stop buttons are actuated at greatly-shifted timings, a win does not arise. In other words, in order to acquire a win, the player must acquire a win for a certain prize group and align, along a valid payline, symbols that constitute a winning combination corresponding to the thus-determined prize group.

[0006] In a certain type of slot machine, a gaming status is shifted to a big bonus when certain symbols are aligned. Here, a big bonus means a series of games which enable a player to acquire a larger payout than in a basic game. A prize group corresponding to a big bonus is called a BB prize.

[0007] Incidentally, a slot machine performs a presentation by utilization of internal lottery information. Typical presentation is to display on a liquid-crystal display device or display an animation representing occurrence of a win for a BB prize, such that characters representing a prize group

for which a win has been determined on the basis of internal lottery information are displayed on the liquid-crystal display device. Another typical presentation is to display various kinds of characters on mechanical reels, to thereby spin the reels. In short, the way of presentation is different according to the type of a slot machine. Moreover, the way of presentation tends to be complicated for grabbing a player's attention.

[0008] However, when a player first plays a game on an unfamiliar slot machine, in many cases the player does not understand the meaning of a presentation even when elaborate presentation is offered. In other words, rules of a game are not clearly linked to the presentation, thereby creating confusion for the player. Particularly, a beginner who has played a few games on a slot machine becomes bewildered when viewing the presentation.

[0009] Even when having realized a prize group for which a win has been determined through internal lottery, the player will not achieve a win if he or she has failed to actuate the reel stop buttons at predetermined timings. For this reason, in order to acquire a win, the player is required to have the skill of determining symbols on spinning reels.

[0010] However, spinning symbols appear to roll down for a less-skilled player, thus posing difficulty in determining individual symbols. Consequently, even when having realized a prize group for which a win has been determined, a less-skilled player cannot acquire a win.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] It is therefore an object of the invention to provide a slot machine which enables a player to clearly ascertain rules of a game and which enables a less-skilled player to enjoy playing games.

[0012] In order to achieve the above object, according to the invention, there is provided a slot machine, comprising:

[0013] a plurality of reels, each provided with a plurality of symbols including at least one special symbol;

[0014] at least one payline, extending across the reels;

[0015] at least one electro-optical panel, including a first transparent substrate and a second transparent substrate which sandwiches an electro-optical substance therebetween, at least one of the first transparent substrate and the second transparent substrate formed with at least one bored portion having a shape substantially coincident with an contour of the special symbol, the electro-optical panel disposed in front of each of the reels such that the bored portion is placed on the payline; and

[0016] a controller, which controls a state of the electro-optical substance in accordance with a predetermined rule to adjust a transparency of the electro-optical panel.

[0017] In such a configuration, when the transparency of the electro-optical panel is adjusted, a non-mask area is formed by the bored portion, whereas non-bored portion forms a mask area. Since the non-mask area coincident with the contour of the special symbol is situated on the payline,