

The symbol drawn on each object that will land on one of the nine spots may be pre-determined using a pay-table and a random number generator in the same manner as a video slot game. The trajectories of the 3-D objects may be selected so that the objects with the pre-determined symbols land on the designated spots, such as **701**, **702** and **703**.

[**0188**] Other objects that do not correspond to the pre-determined symbols are given trajectories that fly past the designated spots. The 3-D objects that do not land on a designated spot may appear to fly off the screen or collide with other symbols and be destroyed. For example, an object with symbol **552** that originated at object source **705** appears to collide at location **720** with an object with symbol **456** that emerged from object source **715**. In another embodiment, the objects may bounce off of one another after a collision and then fly off the screen.

[**0189**] In **FIG. 6C**, one object source **705** is located so that the objects originating from the object source **705** appear to be off in the distance when they are rendered. The objects from this source may appear to grow larger as they approach the circle **706**. For instance, the box with symbol **451** from source **705** may increase in size as it approaches the designated spot **703**.

[**0190**] The other two object sources **710** and **715** are located so that the objects originating from them appear to be closer when rendered and viewed on the display screen. As these objects approach the circle **706** and move off into the distance they may appear to shrink in size. In one embodiment, the object sources may be located so that they are not apparent when rendered to the display as part of a game outcome presentation. In a particular embodiment, the object sources and the trajectory of the objects may be located in a single plane, such as a plane parallel to the view of the display screen. Thus, when the plane is parallel to the view of the display screen, the objects may not appear to shrink or grow in size and may appear to remain at the same distance when rendered to the display screen.

[**0191**] When all of the nine spots are filled, the nine symbols on the rectangular boxes in the designated spots may be used to indicate an award based on various combinations of symbols along a payline, such as payline **460**. The combinations of symbols and pay-offs for each combination may be derived and in analogous manner to a combination of symbols used in a slot game with 3 reels. For example, the positions of symbols, **455**, **453** and **451** may correspond to three symbols visible on a reel strip connected to a mechanical slot reel in a gaming machine and the other two columns may correspond to symbols that would be displayed on two additional slot reels. In other embodiments, symbol combinations may be derived from 5 reel slot games or other multi-reel slot games may be used.

[**0192**] In particular, the object sources are not limited to a particular location in the 3-D gaming environment and their location may vary with time. Further, one or more object sources may be used and the number of object sources may change with time. For example, objects with symbols mapped from three different virtual reel strips may appear to stream from object source **705**. As another example, each of three virtual reel strips may be mapped to one of the corresponding object sources, **705**, **710** and **715**. In another embodiment, the object source may appear to be an object rather than a point in space. For instance, object source **705**

may be drawn as a spinning reel with symbols. Rectangular boxes with the symbols may appear to be thrown off the wheel. These symbols may land at the designated spots or fly by the designated spots and off the screen.

[**0193**] In a particular embodiment, the rectangular boxes may be stacked to form columns. For instance, three games where 9 rectangular boxes are generated in each game may be stacked to form 9 columns each with three boxes. One column with three boxes with respective symbols **553**, **555**, **556** is shown in the figure. The symbols on the stacked boxes may be used to generate vertical paylines, such as **730**. In one embodiment, the outcomes from three games may be linked where the combination of symbols on a vertical payline may be used as bonus multipliers or to provide additional win opportunities.

[**0194**] In another embodiment, the columns may be built unevenly. For instance, a vertical column may only be created when certain symbols appear on a box and land on top of a stack of one or more boxes. Boxes with these "growth" symbols may appear at random and at different positions. Thus, the height of each column may be variable. When a column reaches a certain height, a bonus or an additional award may be won. Additionally, in a particular embodiment, boxes with other symbols may appear that knock over a column. In this case, an award or bonus is only awarded if a column reaches a set height before toppling. In this example, the bottom of each stack may correspond to the current game being played. Boxes for the current game may knock out the boxes at the bottom of each stack from the previous game with or without knocking over any stacks that are two or more boxes high.

[**0195**] In **FIGS. 6A-6C**, methods of displaying symbols from a virtual reel strip in a 3-D gaming environment are described. In a traditional video slot game, the symbols on each reel are drawn in two-dimensions. The symbols on each "reel" enter the screen from the top, travel in a straight vertical line and exit at the bottom. The present invention is not so limited. As described above, the entrance and exit points on the screen are not limited to a fixed spot on the top and bottom of the screen and may vary with time. Further, the number of entrance points may be varied. In addition, the symbols may be moved along linear and non-linear paths that vary with time and where symbols paths may be non-linear. Further, because the symbols are drawn in a 3-D gaming environment, the symbols, when rendered to the display screen, may appear to grow or shrink as if they were moving off into the distance or moving closer.

[**0196**] An advantage of these methods is that a more variable game outcome presentation may be provided to the user while utilizing paytables and symbols combinations derived for multi-reel video slot games. The variable game outcome presentations may be more interesting to a player over time and encourage additional game play. The ability to use paytables and symbol combinations derived for multi-reel video slot games may reduce software development costs for the game of chance.

[**0197**] Turning to **FIG. 7**, a video gaming machine **2** of the present invention is shown. Machine **2** includes a main cabinet **4**, which generally surrounds the machine interior (not shown) and is viewable by users. The main cabinet includes a main door **8** on the front of the machine, which opens to provide access to the interior of the machine.