

be mounted to a surface on the gaming machine. The light-emitting elements used in the interface displays may be provided from electro-luminescent elements, organic light emitting diode (OLED) elements and combinations thereof. The thin light-emitting interface displays may be used to input and output gaming information on the gaming machine. The gaming information that is input and output via the interface display may be used to provide: 1) a game of chance played on the gaming machine, 2) player tracking services, 3) game services available on the gaming machine and 4) attract features. In one embodiment, a game input interface display is provided with a plurality of input buttons where a number and a format of the input buttons are dynamically configurable for different types of games of chance played on the gaming machine.

[0012] A first aspect of the present invention provides an interface display for inputting and outputting gaming information on a gaming machine. The interface display may be generally characterized as comprising: 1) a substrate, 2) a plurality of electro-luminescent elements formed in a light emitting layer on the substrate for outputting gaming information; 3) a plurality of input areas for inputting gaming information that are illuminated by one or more of the electro-luminescent elements; 4) a plurality of sensors for detecting selections of the input areas; and 5) one or more controllers for controlling the plurality of electro-luminescent elements and for controlling the plurality of sensors. The plurality of sensors may be formed in a sensor layer and may be activated by at least one of contact with an object and a proximity of an object, such as a finger or a stylus. The sensor layer is at least one of a capacitive touch screen, a resistive touch screen, a wave touch screen and combinations thereof.

[0013] The interface display may be mounted to an exterior surface of the gaming machine such as an exterior face of a player tracking unit on the gaming machine. Further, the interface display may be integrated into an exterior surface of the gaming machine. Using the electro-luminescent elements in the interface display, gaming information may be conveyed using one or more of a light intensity, a color pattern, a light pattern and a flash rate. The light intensity of each electro-luminescent element may be controlled by an amount of current supplied to each electro-luminescent element.

[0014] In particular embodiments, the thickness of the interface display may be less than about 3 mm and the thickness of the light emitting layer may be less than about 1 micron. The substrate may be formed from a flexible material such as a plastic film or a metal foil. The substrate may also be glass.

[0015] In other embodiments, the one or more of the electro-luminescent elements may be formed in a shape of a pattern, such as a symbol, an icon, a logo, an alpha-numeric text symbol and a word. The plurality of electro-luminescent elements may be arranged in a plurality of stacked layers where the electro-luminescent elements in each of the stacked layers are arranged in different patterns. In one embodiment, a first pattern may be displayed by activating the electro-luminescent elements in a first layer of the stacked layers and then a second pattern may be displayed by activating the electro-luminescent elements in a second layer of the stacked layers.

[0016] A portion of the electro-luminescent elements may be a matrix of organic light emitting diodes (OLEDs) where each OLED forms a pixel in the matrix. The OLED pixels in the matrix may be controlled in an active matrix, a passive matrix and combinations thereof. Groups of OLED pixels may be controlled to display symbols, icons, logo, alpha-numeric text and video frame data.

[0017] A plurality of patterns may be formed in a graphics layer where the plurality of patterns are illuminated by one or more of the electro-luminescent elements. A portion of the patterns may be used to display gaming information. A shape of the patterns may be selected from the group consisting of a symbol, an icon, a logo, a word and an alpha-numeric text symbol. Further, the one or more of the patterns is located in the input areas.

[0018] The interface display may be operable to vary a number of input areas, a shape of an input area, a size of an input area, a color of an input area and combinations thereof. A matrix of electro-luminescent elements may be located in one or more of the input areas. The matrix of electro-luminescent elements may be used to generate a plurality of patterns in the one or more input areas. In one embodiment, a first pattern generated by the matrix of electro-luminescent elements in a first input area may be used to display a first type of gaming information and a second pattern generated by the matrix of electro-luminescent elements in the first input area may be used to display a second type of gaming information. In another embodiment, a first pattern generated by the matrix of electro-luminescent elements in a first input area may be used to display a first type of gaming information in a first language and a second pattern generated by the matrix of electro-luminescent elements in the first input area may be used to display the first type of gaming information in a second language.

[0019] The one or more of the input areas may be used for inputting player tracking information. In another embodiment, a portion of the input areas may be used for inputting gaming information for playing a game of chance on the gaming machine. The portion of the input areas for inputting gaming information for playing the game of chance may be dynamically configurable to display different input selections used by different types of games of chance played on the gaming machine. In yet another embodiment, a portion of the input areas are used to input gaming information may be used for providing a game service on the gaming machine. The game service is selected from the group consisting of i) viewing account information, ii) performing account transactions iii) receiving operating instructions for the gaming machine, iv) redeeming prizes or comps, v) making entertainment service reservations, vi) participating in casino promotions, vii) selecting entertainment choices for output via video and audio output mechanisms on the gaming machine, viii) playing games and bonus games, ix) performing numerical calculations, x) accessing diagnostic menus, xi) displaying player tracking unit status information, xii) displaying gaming machine status information, xiii) accessing gaming machine metering information and xiv) displaying player status information.

[0020] Another aspect of the present invention provides a gaming machine. The gaming machine may be generally characterized as comprising: 1) a gaming machine cabinet;