placed between the panel **14** and the display **12**. Alternatively, graphics may be highlighted by brightening portions of the video display **12** underlying the graphics. If there is more than one pay line, the pay lines may be successively highlighted as they are activated.

[**0025**] The flat panel **14** may utilize a number of different technologies to vary the optical transmissivity of different portions of the panel **14**. In a preferred embodiment, the panel **14** is permanently imprinted with non-transmissive or low transmissive material encompassing and forming the various transmissive windows using a digital imaging or screen printing process. In one alternative embodiment, the panel **14** itself is a transmissive liquid crystal display (LCD) of the type commercially available from LG. Phillips LCD Co., Ltd. of Seoul, Korea. In another alternative embodiment, the panel **14** is a suspended particle device (SPD) of the type commercially available from Research Frontiers, Inc. A suspended particle device uses either a liquid suspension or a film within which droplets of liquid suspension are distributed. Light-absorbing microscopic particles are dispersed within the liquid suspension. The liquid suspension or film is then enclosed between two glass or plastic plates coated with a transparent conductive material. When an electrical voltage is applied to the suspension via the coatings, the particles are forced to align. This allows a range of transparency where light transmission can be rapidly varied to any degree desired depending upon the voltage applied. In a further alternative embodiment, the panel **14** includes polarizing layers in those areas where variation in optical transmissivity is desired.

[**0026**] **FIG. 6** is a front view of the flat panel **14** mounted over the video display **12** with the video display **12** depicting a basic slot game. The discrete transmissive windows **40**, **42**, and **44** on the flat panel **14** reveal the respective animated reels **16**, **18**, and **20** on the video display **12**. The horizontal pay line **22** on the flat panel **14** extents through a middle symbol on each of the reels. Although only the single pay line **22** is illustrated, the number of pay lines may be increased and may have various configurations other than a straight horizontal line. The discrete transmissive windows **46**, **48**, and **50** on the flat panel **14** reveal the respective credit meters **24**, **26**, and **28** on the video display **12**. The discrete transmissive window **52** on the flat panel **14** reveals the coin denomination **29** (e.g., 25 cents) on the video display **12**. As noted above, instead of showing the credit meters **24**, **26**, and **28** and the coin denomination **29** on the video display **12**, these items may be shown on miniature seven-segment LED displays mounted behind the appropriate transmissive windows of the flat panel **14**.

[**0027**] Referring to **FIGS. 1 and 6**, to play the basic slot game, a player inserts money provided by coins, bills, tickets, coupons, cards, etc. The "credit" meter **24** depicts a number of credits corresponding to the amount of inserted money. The player then chooses a number of credits to wager by pressing a "Bet" or "Max Bet" push-button on the button panel **30**. The "bet" meter **28** depicts the number of credits wagered for the most recent play of the slot machine. After placing a wager, the animated reels **16**, **18**, and **20** may be set in motion by pressing a "Spin Reels" push-button or pulling the handle **32**. The CPU uses a random number generator to select a basic game outcome corresponding to a particular set of reel "stop positions." The CPU then causes each of the animated reels to stop at the appropriate stop position. The reel symbols graphically illustrate the reel stop positions and indicate whether the stop positions of the reels represent a winning outcome.

[**0028**] Winning outcomes (e.g., symbol combinations resulting in payment of coins or credits) are identifiable to the player by a pay table. The pay table is preferably printed on an upper or lower glass panel affixed to the slot machine cabinet. A winning outcome occurs when the symbols appearing on the stopped reels **16**, **18**, and **20** along the pay line **22** correspond to one of the winning combinations on the pay table. A winning combination, for example, could be three matching symbols along the pay line **22**. If the displayed symbols stop in a winning combination, the CPU credits the player an amount corresponding to the award in the pay table for that combination and number of credits wagered. The "win" or "paid" meter **26** depicts the number of awarded credits. The player may collect an amount of money corresponding to any credits remaining on the "credit" meter **24** by pressing a "Collect" push-button on the button panel **30**.

[**0029**] In one embodiment, some of the losing basic game outcomes are "near miss" outcomes. A "near miss" outcome occurs when a "winning" symbol combination is visible on the stopped reels but at least one of the symbols of the winning combination is not along the pay line **22** such that the symbol combination along the pay line **22** represents a losing outcome. The basic game outcome in **FIG. 6** is a "near miss" outcome because the "winning" symbol combination of three MERMAID symbols is visible on the stopped reels but the MERMAID symbols on reels **16** and **20** are one position away from the pay line **22**.

[**0030**] **FIG. 7** is a front view of the flat panel **14** mounted over the video display **12** with the video display **12** depicting a bonus game. The bonus game is triggered by a start-bonus outcome in the basic slot game. The start-bonus outcome may, for example, be three MERMAID symbols along the pay line **22**. Upon triggering the bonus game, the video display **12** no longer depicts the animated reels behind the respective transmissive windows **40**, **42**, and **44**. Rather, treasure chests of gold, silver and bronze with random coin amounts appear behind the respective windows. The treasure chests then hinge close and swirl around. Using the push-buttons or touch screen (if provided), the player selects one of the treasure chests and is awarded the associated coin amount. Upon completion of the bonus game, the CPU shifts operation back to the basic slot game. In an alternative embodiment, the video display **12** is dedicated to the basic slot game, and the bonus game is depicted on a separate video display mounted in the slot machine cabinet above the main display **12**.

[**0031**] The hybrid slot machine **10** offers a number of advantages. First, the video-based hybrid slot machine **10** looks like a mechanical slot machine and, therefore, would appeal to players of mechanical slot machines. As a result, the hybrid slot machine **10** would act as a steppingstone from mechanical to video-based slot machines. Second, the hybrid slot machine **10** can offer games that are difficult or impossible to implement on mechanical slot machines. For example, the video display **12** can depict first and second screen bonuses using animation that cannot be done on mechanical slot machines. Such bonuses can be interactive or non-interactive. Third, the hybrid slot machine **10** facili-