machine **10**. The video display **12** may be a CRT, LCD, dot matrix, LED, electro-luminescent, or other type of video display known in the art.

[**0017**] The video display **12** is operable to depict a plurality of symbol-bearing, animated reels **16**, **18**, and **20**. In response to a wager, the animated reels are rotated and stopped to randomly place symbols on the reels in visual association with at least one pay line **22**. If a combination of symbols along the pay line **22** represents a winning combination, the player is awarded a payout identified on a pay table for that winning combination. The flat panel **14** is selectively transmissive to reveal the video reels **16**, **18**, and **20**, credit meters **24**, **26**, and **28**, and coin denomination **29** shown on the video display **12**. Alternatively, 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 between the flat panel **14** and the underlying video display **12**. Such LED displays are often employed in mechanical slot machines and, therefore, may assist in making the hybrid slot machine **10** appear like a mechanical slot machine.

[**0018**] The slot machine **10** includes a plurality of push-buttons on a button panel **30** for operating the slot machine. In addition, a touch screen may be mounted by adhesive, tape, or the like over a front surface of the flat panel **14**. The touch screen contains soft touch keys denoted by graphics on the underlying flat panel **14** and/or video display **12** and used to operate the slot machine **10**. The touch keys may be used to implement the same functions as the push-buttons, as well as additional functions depending upon the level of player interaction demanded by the slot game. A player can then enable a desired function either by touching the touch screen at an appropriate touch key or by pressing an appropriate push-button on the button panel **30**.

[**0019**] In addition to a touch screen over the flat panel **14**, another touch screen may be mounted over a front surface of the video display **12**. The touch screen contains soft touch keys denoted by graphics on the underlying video display **12** and used by service or maintenance personnel to access and perform diagnostics/tests on the slot machine. The flat panel **14** is mounted to a door of the slot machine, while the video display **12** is mounted inside the slot machine cabinet. When the door is closed, the flat panel **14** covers the video display **12** such that any touch screen over the video display **12** is inaccessible. Therefore, to operate the touch screen over the video display **12** for the purpose of performing diagnostics/tests on the slot machine, the door is opened to move the flat panel **14** out of the way and provide access to the touch screen over the video display **12**.

[**0020**] **FIG. 3** is a block diagram of a control system suitable for operating the gaming machine **10**. Money/credit detector **32** signals a central processing unit (CPU) **34** when a player has inserted money or played a number of credits. The money may be provided by coins, bills, tickets, coupons, cards, etc. Then, the CPU **34** operates to execute a game program that causes the video display **12** to depict three animated symbol-bearing reels. The player may select an amount to wager and start game play via the push-buttons **30** or touch screen (if provided), causing the CPU **34** to set the reels in motion, randomly select a game outcome, and then stop the reels to display symbols corresponding to the pre-selected game outcome. In one embodiment, one of the basic game outcomes triggers a bonus game.

[**0021**] A system memory **36** stores control software, operational instructions and data associated with the gaming machine **10**. In one embodiment, the system memory **36** comprises a separate read-only memory (ROM) and battery-backed random-access memory (RAM). However, it will be appreciated that the system memory **36** may be implemented on any of several alternative types of memory structures or may be implemented on a single memory structure. A payoff mechanism **38** is operable in response to instructions from the CPU **34** to award a payoff to the player in response to certain winning outcomes that might occur in the basic game or the bonus game. The payoff may be provided in the form of coins, bills, tickets, coupons, cards, etc. The payoff amounts are determined by one or more pay tables stored in the system memory **36**.

[**0022**] **FIG. 4** is a front view of the video display **12** by itself, i.e., without the flat panel **14** mounted over it. The video display **12** depicts the plurality of animated reels **16**, **18**, and **20**, the numbers on the credit meters **24**, **26**, and **28**, and the coin denomination **29** (e.g., 25 cents). Although three animated reels are illustrated, the number of animated reels may be varied, for example, to include one or more additional reels. Also, instead of each column of symbols being associated with a single animated reel, each individual symbol may be associated with a single reel such that a 3×3 symbol array of nine symbols is associated with nine distinct animated reels.

[**0023**] **FIG. 5** is a front view of the flat panel **14** by itself, i.e., without the video display **12** behind it. The flat panel **14** is preferably composed of glass or plastic and is highly transmissive (i.e., transparent or translucent) of light in discrete areas to clearly reveal the video reels, credit meters, and coin denomination shown on the video display. Specifically, the flat panel **14** includes three large discrete transmissive windows **40**, **42**, and **44** for revealing the respective reels, three smaller discrete transmissive windows **46**, **48**, and **50** for revealing the respective credit meters, and a discrete transmissive window **52** for revealing coin denomination. By isolating and revealing the animated reels **16**, **18**, and **20** with the respective transmissive windows **40**, **42**, and **44** in the flat panel **14**, the animated reels **16**, **18**, and **20** are made to appear like mechanical reels. The various discrete transmissive windows are preferably solid portions of the panel **14**, but may alternatively be openings or apertures in the panel **14**.

[**0024**] The remainder of the flat panel **14** is mostly non-transmissive, i.e., opaque, or substantially less transmissive than the discrete transmissive windows to emphasize graphics printed thereon and focus a player's attention toward the animated reels on the underlying video display. The graphics printed on the panel **14** show the pay line **22**, miscellaneous textual information, instructions, trademarks, and credit meter labels. Some of these graphics (e.g., pay line **22**, "TILT", "INSERT COIN" and "COIN ACCEPTED") are fairly transmissive and can be selectively highlighted with miniature lamps (e.g., light-emitting diodes) mounted to a backside of the flat panel **14** inside of a plastic or metal shadowbox. If necessary, the distance between the flat panel **14** and the underlying video display **12** may be increased to accommodate such lamps or other devices that may be