

with respect to a player of the wager-based game. The first, second and third stops can comprise reel stops for virtual reels or wheel stops for virtual wheels. Further, the three-dimensional payline can be displayed on a wager-based gaming machine having a multi-layer display.

[0018] Other methods, features and advantages of the invention will be or will become apparent to one with skill in the art upon examination of the following figures and detailed description. It is intended that all such additional methods, features and advantages be included within this description, be within the scope of the invention, and be protected by the accompanying claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0019] The included drawings are for illustrative purposes and serve only to provide examples of possible structures and process steps for the disclosed inventive three-dimensional paylines and methods of presentation therefor.

[0020] FIG. 1 illustrates in perspective view an exemplary gaming machine.

[0021] FIG. 2 illustrates in block diagram format an exemplary network infrastructure for providing a gaming system having one or more gaming machines.

[0022] FIG. 3A illustrates in screen shot format an exemplary game outcome for a standard slots or reel type game having a single payline.

[0023] FIG. 3B illustrates in screen shot format another exemplary game outcome for a similar standard slots or reel type game having three paylines.

[0024] FIG. 4 illustrates in screen shot format yet another exemplary game outcome for a different slots or reel type game having ten paylines.

[0025] FIG. 5 illustrates in partial perspective and cut-away view an exemplary processor-based gaming machine having a multi-layer display according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0026] FIG. 6A illustrates in partially exploded front elevation view a simulated display of an exemplary three-dimensional payline having a horizontal component and a depth component according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0027] FIG. 6B illustrates in partially exploded front elevation view a simulated display of an alternative exemplary three-dimensional payline having horizontal, vertical and depth components according to another embodiment of the present invention.

[0028] FIG. 7A illustrates in partially exploded front elevation view a simulated display of three exemplary composite reel symbols having symbol portions on separate display screens according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0029] FIG. 7B illustrates an exemplary set of partial front screen, back screen and resulting combination screen presentations that can be used to form the shining "lucky 7" composite reel symbol of FIG. 7A.

[0030] FIG. 7C illustrates one exemplary set of front screen, back screen and resulting combination screen presentations that can be used to form an alternative simulated display of virtual gaming reels that are used in conjunction with additional game designations on a separate display screen according to another embodiment of the present invention.

[0031] FIG. 8 illustrates a flowchart illustrating one exemplary method of presenting a three-dimensional payline on a processor-based gaming machine according to one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0032] Exemplary applications of apparatuses and methods according to the present invention are described as follows. These examples are being provided solely to add context and aid in the understanding of the invention. It will be apparent to one skilled in the art that the present invention may be practiced without some or all of these specific details. In other instances, well known process steps have not been described in detail in order to avoid unnecessarily obscuring the present invention. Other applications are possible, such that the following examples should not be taken as definitive or limiting in scope or setting. Although these examples are described in sufficient detail to enable one skilled in the art to practice the invention, it will be understood that they are not limiting, such that other embodiments may be used and changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

[0033] Described herein are various processor-based gaming machines and systems that present simulated spinning or rotating reels in a manner such that three-dimensional paylines can be created and used with such reels. It will be understood, however, that such three-dimensional paylines can be used with other gaming devices and arrangements other than rotating reels. For example, a plurality of spinning wheels may be used instead of or in conjunction with rotating reels. Such a plurality of spinning wheels may overlap and/or be concentric, and paylines across such a plurality of spinning wheels may also be made three-dimensional. In general, while the use of a rotating gaming reel tends to involve the sideways presentation of the reel, such that its outer edge is viewed, the use of a spinning gaming wheel tends to involve a frontal presentation of the wheel, such that a wheel face is viewed. Thus, while reel symbols or designations on a rotating gaming reel generally appear to move in a linear direction with respect to the player, wheel symbols or designations on a spinning gaming wheel generally appear to move in a circular direction with respect to the player. Other suitable applications of three-dimensional paylines may also be used, as will be readily appreciated from the following description and accompanying figures.

Gaming Machines

[0034] Referring first to FIG. 1, an exemplary processor-based gaming machine is illustrated in perspective view. Gaming machine 10 includes a top box 11 and a main cabinet 12, which generally surrounds the machine interior (not shown) and is viewable by users. This top box and/or main cabinet can together or separately form an exterior housing adapted to contain a plurality of internal gaming machine components therein. Main cabinet 12 includes a main door 20 on the front of the gaming machine, which preferably opens to provide access to the gaming machine interior. Attached to the main door are typically one or more player-input switches or buttons 21, which collectively form a button panel, one or more money or credit acceptors, such as a coin acceptor 22 and a bill or ticket validator 23, a coin tray 24, and a belly glass 25. Viewable through main door 20 is a primary video display monitor 26 adapted to present a game and one or more infor-