

[0093] Player selectable game options may also include which three-dimensional reel positions are “staked” (i.e., which reel positions the player would like to wager money on). For example, in a video slot machine, the player may place a transparent stake indicator over one or more reel positions. FIG. 17 is a symbolic diagram illustrating an exemplary three-dimensional play mode where a player may customize game play by covering one or more reel positions 1702 with transparent selectors 1704. Using these selectors 1704, a player may choose to play only selected reel positions 1702 in the third dimension. The player may move the selectors 1704 using a touch screen device or any other user input device. The selectors 1704 may be moved to any reel position 1702. Multiple selectors 1704 may be placed on a single reel, and/or multiple reel positions may be covered by a single selector. A selector 1704 may be positioned by dragging the selector 1704 along a positioning bar 1706. Selectors 1704 may be positioned by dragging the selectors 1704 from the side of the game display, and/or selectors 1704 may be pulled down from the reel top and placed in any reel position 1702. Selectors 1704 may cover an entire reel, and/or selectors 1704 may be individually placed. In addition, one or more selectors 1704 may dynamically “chase” a certain symbol according to player selected options.

[0094] The player selected game options may determine one or more game evaluation methods and display modes. For example, the player may choose whether “Z” layer reels are to be played separate from other layers, linearly combined with other layers, non-linearly combined with other layers, only used for free game opportunities, only used for bonus multipliers, only used for progressives, etc. After one or more random numbers are generated, the outcome of the game is displayed three-dimensionally to the player based on the selected game evaluation methods and display modes. Many different game evaluation methods (described in detail below) are possible with the addition of “Z” layers.

[0095] FIG. 18 is a more detailed flowchart of the “update 3D data” routine 485 shown schematically in FIG. 12. The routine 485 may be embodied in a software program which is stored in the program memory 102 of a gaming unit 20 and executed by the microprocessor 104 in a well known manner. However, some or all of the blocks of the routine 485 may be performed manually and/or by another device. Although the routine 485 is described with reference to the flowchart illustrated in FIG. 18, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that many other methods of performing the acts associated with routine 485 may be used. For example, the order of many of the blocks may be changed without departing from the scope or spirit of the present invention. In addition, many of the blocks described are optional. Although this description focuses on a video slot machine, a person of ordinary skill in the art will readily appreciate that the teachings described herein may be applied to any type of gaming unit 20 without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention.

[0096] Generally, the routine 485 causes the gaming unit 20 to allow a player to select one or more game options. These game options include three-dimensional options such as how many “Z” layers to include in the game in addition to the “base layer” and which reel positions are “staked.” A “base layer” is a game surface depicted on a video display in a well known manner. For example, a typical video slot machine depicts a single game surface which includes five

reels. A “Z” layer is an additional game surface depicted on a video display in a way that makes the additional game surface appear on a different plane from the plane of the base layer. The player’s selections determine one or more game evaluation methods and display modes. For example, the player may choose to put money on a particular pay line which includes one or more “Z” layers (i.e., the player may “stake” a three-dimensional pay line). After one or more random numbers are generated, the outcome of the game is displayed to the player based on the selected game evaluation methods and display modes. Many different game evaluation methods (described in detail below) are possible with the addition of “Z” layers.

[0097] The routine 485 begins when the player selects one or more play options (block 1802). For example, the player may select a number of play layers. Play layers include the base layer and any “Z” layers. For example, by selecting one play layer, the player is indicating he wishes to play a typical (e.g., 5x3) reel layout (i.e., just the base layer). By selecting two play layers, the player is indicating that he would like to play with one “base” layer and one “Z” layer. Similarly, by selecting three play layers, the player is indicating that he would like to play with one “base” layer and two “Z” layers. In addition, the player may choose various three-dimensional payout options. For example, the player may choose whether “Z” layer reels are to be played separate from other layers, linearly combined with other layers, non-linearly combined with other layers, only used for free game opportunities, only used for bonus multipliers, only used for progressives, etc. These three-dimensional payout options are described in detail below.

[0098] After the player selects one or more play options, the video slot machine controller 100 checks any three-dimensional selections for allowability (block 1804). For example, at a one dollar slot machine with three play layers selected, the option to play each layer separately selected, and the option to linearly combine the three play layers selected, the player may be required to have at least four dollars in the machine. If the three-dimensional selections are allowable (block 1806), the controller 100 checks if the player has enough credits wagered to play the selected options (block 1808). In the example above, the player must wager four dollars. If the player has enough credits wagered (block 1810), the controller 100 waits for an input from the player to initiate play (block 1812). For example, the player may pull a traditional slot machine lever or push a button to initiate play.

[0099] Subsequently, the slot machine controller 100 determines the “Z” interaction types from the player selections. In this embodiment, the controller begins this sub-process by initializing a “Z” variable (e.g., Zflag=0000) (block 1814). Next, the controller 100 may determine if any “Z” layer options were selected by the player (block 1816). If at least one “Z” layer option was selected by the player, the controller 100 determines if the player selected an option which includes interaction between the base layer and one or more “Z” layers (block 1818). For example, the player may choose to play three completely independent layers with no interaction between the single base layer and the two “Z” layers. Alternatively, the player may select an option which includes pay lines that cross through different play layers (e.g., three of a kind with one matching symbol in each layer).