

[0017] In further embodiments, various methods of presenting reel symbols on a reel-type wager-based gaming machine having blank reel stops may also be provided. Such methods can include the steps of selecting a gaming reel adapted for use in a wager-based game, determining which reel stops on the selected gaming reel depict visible reel symbols and which reel stops depict ghosts, and sizing two or more of the visible reel symbols that are adjacent to reel stops that depict ghosts such that the sizing results in the extension of the visible reel symbols into blank regions within the adjacent ghosts, thereby reducing the amount of blank area within the ghosts. As in some of the foregoing embodiments, the selected gaming reel can be adapted for a game involving the rotation of a plurality of rotating gaming reels, and/or the gaming reel can include a full set of equally sized reel stops distributed about an outer circumference thereof, with a plurality of visible reel symbols corresponding to a first subset of reel stops from said full set of reel stops, and with a plurality of ghosts comprising blank regions corresponding to a second subset of reel stops from said full set of reel stops. Each of the visible reel symbols and each of the ghosts can correspond to a single reel stop on the gaming reel. In some embodiments, substantially all of the visible reel symbols that are adjacent to reel stops that depict ghosts can be sized such that they extend into any adjacent blank regions.

[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 gaming reels 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 partial perspective view three exemplary adjacent rotating reels adapted for use in a gaming machine.

[0023] FIG. 3B illustrates a screenshot in front elevation view of five exemplary adjacent virtual rotating reels adapted for use in a processor-based gaming machine.

[0024] FIG. 4 illustrates in block diagram format various components of an exemplary processor-based gaming machine adapted to resize reel symbols according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0025] FIGS. 5A through 5C illustrate in perspective view various exemplary rotating reels having reel symbols that are resized according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0026] FIG. 6A illustrates a screenshot in front elevation view of three exemplary adjacent virtual rotating reels adapted for use in a processor-based gaming machine.

[0027] FIG. 6B illustrates a screenshot in front elevation view of the three exemplary reels of FIG. 6A after the visible reel symbols thereon have been resized according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[0028] FIG. 7 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.

[0029] FIG. 8 illustrates a flowchart illustrating an exemplary method of presenting reel symbols on a reel-type wager-based gaming machine having blank reel stops according to one embodiment of the present invention.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0030] 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 thus 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.

[0031] Described herein are various mechanical and electronic reel-based gaming machines adapted to present gaming reels having one or more blank reel stops. In particular, various processor-based gaming machines that emulate a mechanical reel wager-based slot machine are presented. These gaming machines can include a number of realistic adaptations, such as audio, video and/or physical adaptations, where each contributes to the perception of a mechanically driven reel slot machine. Although much of this detailed description is devoted to describing such embodiments with respect to electronic or processor-based gaming machines, it will be understood that many of the reel symbol resizing features and embodiments presented herein can be adapted for use with gaming machines having physical mechanical reels and reel strips. For example, such features and embodiments can be implemented with respect to the creation of a physical reel strip having reel symbols.

#### Gaming Machines

[0032] 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 information panels 27. The primary video display monitor 26 will typically be a cathode ray tube, high resolution flat-panel