

ing reels such that one or more visible reel symbols within said first subset of reel stops are expanded into one or more blank regions within one or more of said second subset of reel stops adjacent thereto, thereby reducing the amount of blank area within said second subset of reel stops.

2. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein each reel stop within both of said first and second subsets of reel stops comprises an identical amount of space.

3. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said configuration of said at least one simulated rotating reel includes resizing said one or more expanded visible reel symbols to a size that is larger than the original size therefor.

4. The gaming machine of claim 3, wherein said resizing involves stretching at least one existing reel symbol in a direction that extends said stretched reel symbol into one or both reel stops adjacent to the reel stop containing said stretched reel symbol.

5. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said simulated reel configurator is located within said master gaming controller.

6. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein the blank areas of substantially all of said second subset of reel stops are reduced in size via said expansion of said one or more visible reel symbols.

7. The gaming machine of claim 6, wherein each of said blank areas are reduced in size by about fifty percent.

8. The gaming machine of claim 1, wherein said simulated reel configurator is further adapted to reconfigure a preset virtual reel strip having preset dimensions for each reel stop, visible reel symbol and blank.

9. The gaming machine of claim 1, further including:

a storage device in communication with said simulated reel configurator, said storage device adapted to store a plurality of files with respect to resized or expanded reel symbols.

10. The gaming machine of claim 1, further including:

a network interface coupling said gaming machine to one or more remotely located networked components, said network interface adapted to facilitate the downloading of reel symbols, virtual reel strips or both to said gaming machine.

11. The gaming machine of claim 10, wherein said simulated reel configurator is further adapted to reconfigure a downloaded reel symbol such that said reconfigured reel symbol expands into one or more blank regions of an adjacent reel stop.

12. A gaming reel adapted for use in a wager-based gaming machine, comprising:

a display region distributed about an outer circumference of said reel;

a full set of reel stops arranged about said display region;

a plurality of visible reel symbols corresponding to a first subset of reel stops selected from said full set of reel stops, wherein each of said plurality of visible reel symbols corresponds to a single reel stop from said first subset of reel stops; and

a plurality of ghosts comprising blank regions corresponding to a second subset of reel stops selected from said full set of reel stops, wherein each of said plurality of ghosts corresponds to a single reel stop from said second subset of reel stops, and wherein one or more of said visible reel symbols within said first subset of reel stops are expanded into one or more blank regions within one or

more of said plurality of ghosts situated adjacent thereto, thereby reducing the amount of blank area within said second subset of reel stops.

13. The gaming reel of claim 12, wherein said gaming reel comprises a physical reel adapted for used in a mechanical or electromechanical gaming machine.

14. The gaming reel of claim 12, wherein said gaming reel comprises a virtual reel adapted for use on a display screen in a processor-based gaming machine.

15. The gaming reel of claim 12, wherein each reel stop within both of said first and second subsets of reel stops comprises an identical amount of space.

16. The gaming reel of claim 12, wherein the configuration of said gaming reel includes resizing at least one of said plurality of visible reel symbols to a size that is larger than an original size therefor.

17. The gaming reel of claim 16, wherein the size of said one or more resized reel symbols is larger than the size of its respective reel stop.

18. A method of presenting reel symbols on a reel-type wager-based gaming machine having blank reel stops, comprising:

selecting a gaming reel adapted for use in a wager-based game involving the rotation of a plurality of rotating gaming reels, said gaming reel including a full set of equally sized reel stops distributed about an outer circumference thereof, a plurality of visible reel symbols corresponding to a first subset of reel stops selected from said full set of reel stops, wherein each of said plurality of visible reel symbols corresponds to a single reel stop from said first subset of reel stops, and a plurality of ghosts comprising blank regions corresponding to a second subset of reel stops selected from said full set of reel stops, wherein each of said plurality of ghosts corresponds to a single reel stop from said second subset of reel stops;

determining which reel stops from said full set of reel stops depict visible reel symbols and which reel stops from said full set of reel stops depict ghosts; and

sizing two or more of said visible reel symbols that are adjacent to reel stops that depict ghosts, wherein said sizing results in the extension of said two or more visible reel symbols into one or more blank regions within one or more of said ghosts adjacent thereto, thereby reducing the amount of blank area within said ghosts.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein substantially all of said visible reel symbols that are adjacent to reel stops that depict ghosts are sized such that they extend into any adjacent blank regions.

20. A wager-based gaming machine, comprising:

an exterior housing arranged to contain a plurality of internal gaming machine components therein;

a display region adapted to present a plurality of mechanical or simulated rotating reels; and

a plurality of gaming reels adapted to be rotated about an axis, wherein at least one of said plurality of gaming reels includes:

a display surface distributed about an outer circumference thereof,

a full set of reel stops arranged about said display surface, and

a plurality of visible reel symbols corresponding to a first subset of reel stops selected from said full set of reel stops, wherein each of said plurality of visible reel sym-