

## GAMING MACHINE

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

#### [0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a slot machine, a pachinko machine, and other gaming machines equipped with variable display means which variably displays patterns required for a game, and control means such as microcomputer or the like which controls the variable displays.

#### [0003] 2. Related Art

[0004] Conventionally, for example, a slot machine equipped with stopping means, the so-called "pachislo (pin-ball machine fitted with a slot machine mechanism)" gaming machine, is known as a gaming machine of this kind. FIG. 42 illustrates a common pachislo gaming machine X.

[0005] This pachislo gaming machine X arranges a plurality of three rotation reels 104-106 which variably display a plurality of patterns within display windows 101-103 arranged in a front panel 100 and has a variable display device comprising reel stop buttons 107-109 which stop these rotation reels 104-106. Then, a reward is given to a player when a combination of predetermined patterns matches this variable display device.

[0006] In addition, corresponding to nine patterns comprising 3 columns×3 rows displayed through said display windows 101-103, a center prize-winning line 111 for one-medal use which becomes effective by loading one medal, two prize-winning lines 112a and 112b for two medal use which become additionally effective by loading two medals, and prize-winning-lines 113a and 113b for three-medal use which become additionally effective by loading three medals are printed on a front side of the front panel 100, respectively. In the view, reference numeral 114 is a slot for game media (medal or coin) and reference numeral 115 is a start lever for starting a game, in addition, in the above-mentioned variable display device, other than a mechanical configuration type using the above-mentioned rotation reels 104-106, there is another type which can variably display the patterns on a liquid crystal display or the like.

[0007] To play the game, first, the game is started by loading the game media into the above-mentioned slot 114. Then, patterns are variably displayed by the control means which drives and controls the variable display device, and rotates each of the reels 104-106 by operation of the start lever 115 by the player.

[0008] The varied patterns stop the rotation of each of the reels 104-106 automatically after a fixed period of time or by the stop operation of the reel stop buttons 107-109 by the player. Then, when the patterns of each of the reels 104-106 which have appeared in the display window 101-103 constitute a specific combination (prize-winning pattern), a reward will be given to the player by disbursing the game media.

[0009] Such a pachislo gaming machine X has a plurality of types of prize-winning modes. Particularly, there are some machines which not only disburse the medals at one time, but also set a better game mode than the normal game mode for a predetermined period when prize-winning of a predetermined prize-winning-combination is achieved. As such prize-winning-combinations, there is a prize-winning-

combination (called a "big bonus" and hereinafter referred to as "BB") wherein games, which give the player a relatively large reward, can be played a predetermined number of times, and a prize-winning-combination (called a "regular bonus" and hereinafter referred to as "RB") wherein games, which give a player a relatively small reward, can be played a predetermined number of times.

[0010] In addition, in the pachislo gaming machine X, the combination of patterns which are stopped and displayed along a line (hereinafter referred to as "effective line") validated among said prize-winning lines 111-113 is determined by performing an internal lottery process (referred to as "internal lottery") and is then based on this lottery result and a stop operation timing of the reel stop buttons 107-109 by the player. That is, in order to achieve the prize-winning that disburses the medals, coins or the like, it is required that the player achieves the prize-winning-combination according to the above-mentioned internal lottery process (hereinafter referred to as "internal-win"), and performs a stop operation at a timing when the pattern combination, which indicates the prize-winning achievement of the prize-winning-combination internally achieved (referred to as "internal-win-combination"), is stopped on the effective line.

[0011] That is, since the prize-winning cannot be achieved when the timing of the stop operation by the player is incorrect even if the internal-win could be achieved, a gaming machine which requires a technique for performing the stop operation with desirable timing (the technical intercurrency called "meoshi (pushing a button by identifying patterns using one's own eyes)" is relatively high in importance) has been in use until now.

[0012] In such gaming machines, various techniques for displaying said prize-winning lines 111-113 and patterns, and the idea of placing some features on the front panel 100 have been recently proposed in order to increase playability and make it easier for prize-winning to be distinguished.

[0013] The Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication No. Hei-4-220276 discloses a gaming machine wherein three sets of liquid crystal shutters are arranged in the shape of a column at the front side of the display window corresponding to the three rotation reels and, when the game is over, only the prize-winning combination patterns are displayed through a pattern display window, while three prize-winning combination patterns are displayed on the display window by changing the liquid crystal shutter corresponding to the remaining six patterns, which are not prize-winning, to be opaque.

[0014] The Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication No. 2000-350805 discloses a gaming machine which comprises an information display panel with optical transparency equipped with a so-called matrix display section which can be displayed by dot patterns through dots of a plurality of rows and a plurality of columns on the rear surface or near the rear surface of the front panel, and further displays optically transparent characters, patterns or the like with the dot patterns on the information display panel by configuring the information display panel using a transparent EL (electroluminescence) panel.

[0015] However, in the gaming machine (Japanese Unexamined Patent Publication No. Hei-4-220276) equipped with the liquid crystal shutter mentioned above, although it