[0055] Also shown in FIG. **3** are the plurality slot reels **68** that are independently rotatable, with each of the reels **68** having a plurality of reel images disposed thereon. Each mechanical reel **68** may further include a light element (not shown), such as an electroluminescent light element, to illuminate the reel images or other portions of the mechanical reels **68**. The mechanical reels **68** may comprise a reel strip manufactured from a translucent material, such as plastic, with a light element disposed behind the reel strip. When activated, the light element illuminates the reel strip from behind, allowing all or part of the mechanical reel to be illuminated. An example of a mechanical reel having a light element is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,027,115 which is expressly incorporated by reference herein.

[0056] While shown in FIG. **2**, but not shown here, one or more electronic display units **70** may be disposed behind the panel **67** and the light valve **69** so that the electronic display units line up with and are visible through the light valve **69**, as well as the openings **86***a* and **86***b*. The one or more electronic display units may be, for example, a cathode ray tube (CRT) display, a flat panel display (FPD), a front projection display, or a rear projection display. Moreover, additional mechanically moveable members may also be disposed behind the light valve **69**, proximate the slot reels **68**.

[0057] The light valve **69** may be disposed between the transparent display **67** and the slot reels **68**. Various devices may be utilized for the light valve **69**, including, but not limited to, suspended particle devices (SPD), electrochromic devices, polymer dispersed liquid crystal (PDLC) devices, etc. Generally, the light valve **69** may switch between being transparent, and being opaque (or translucent), depending on whether a current is applied or not. For example, SPDs and PDLC devices become transparent when applied with a first voltage and become opaque or translucent when a second voltage is applied, with the second voltage being very low or approximately zero. On the other hand, electrochromic devices become opaque when applied with a voltage, and transparent when little or no voltage is applied. Additionally, the light valve **69** may attain varying levels of translucency and opaqueness. For example, while a PDLC device is generally either transparent or opaque, suspended particle devices and electrochromic devices allow for varying degrees of transparency, opaqueness or translucency, depending on the applied voltage level.

[0058] When the light valve **69** is opaque, or substantially opaque, a player's view of the slot reels **68** may be obscured (or blocked). The light valve **69** may also be translucent and provide varying degrees of visibility of the slot reels **68** through the openings **87***a*, **87***b*, and **87***c*, thereby varying the visibility of the slot reels **68** (e.g., gradually "dimming" or "brightening" the visibility of the slot reels **68**). Varying the translucency of the light valve **69** may cause the visibility of the slot reels **68** to range from allowing the player to view and recognize the images on the slot reels **68** to merely allowing light and color through without being able to distinguish the images.

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[0059] FIG. **4** is an exemplary schematic diagram of the light valve **69**. The light valve **69** is controlled with the use of a controller **100** that is coupled to a solid state relay device **88**. The controller **100** causes the relay device **88** to turn on and off as needed by the gaming apparatus **20**. In doing so, the AC voltage is turned on and off the light valve **69**. A transformer **89** is used to isolate a 120 VAC input voltage from the light valve **69** and to change the potential from 120 VAC to about 50 VAC. The controller **100** causes the relay device **88** to turn on and off. A high level sent from the controller **100** on line **90** turns on the relay device **88**, causing the light valve **69** to become substantially transparent. A low level sent from the controller **100** on line **90** turns off the relay device **88**, causing the light valve **69** to become opaque. The relay device **88** may be solid state optronic SP**646** and the light valve **69** may be a SPD, model APD-Gray that is manufactured by InspecTech Aeroservice, Inc. from Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

[0060] It should be noted that while the light valve **69** shown in FIG. **4** is operatively coupled to the controller **100**, the light valve **69** may be coupled directly to a power source so that the function of the light valve **69** is based solely on the presence of power applied to the light valve **69**. In other words, whenever the gaming unit **20** has power, the light valve **69** could be made transparent. But when power to the light valve **69** is interrupted, the light valve **69** would become opaque and block the view of any components disposed within the housing **50** that are behind the light valve **69**.

[0061] FIG. **5** is a block diagram of a number of components that may be incorporated in the gaming unit **20**. Referring to FIG. **5**, the gaming unit **20** may include a controller **100** that may comprise a program memory **102**, a microcontroller or microprocessor (MP) **104**, a random-access memory (RAM) **106** and an input/output (I/O) circuit **108**, all of which may be interconnected via an address/data bus **110**. It should be appreciated that although only one microprocessor **104** is shown, the controller **100** may include multiple microprocessors **104**. Similarly, the memory of the controller **100** may include multiple RAMs **106** and multiple program memories **102**. Although the I/O circuit **108** is shown as a single block, it should be appreciated that the I/O circuit **108** may include a number of different types of I/O circuits. The RAM(s) **104** and program memories **102** may be implemented as semiconductor memories, magnetically readable memories, and/or optically readable memories, for example.

[0062] Although the program memory **102** is shown in FIG. **5** as a read-only memory (ROM) **102**, the program memory of the controller **100** may be a read/write or alterable memory, such as a hard disk. In the event a hard disk is used as a program memory, the address/data bus **110** shown schematically in FIG. **5** may comprise multiple address/data buses, which may be of different types, and there may be an I/O circuit disposed between the address/data buses.

[0063] FIG. **5** illustrates that the control panel **66**, the electronic display unit **70**, the coin acceptor **52**, the bill acceptor **54**, the card reader **58**, the ticket reader/printer **56**, the mechanically rotatable reels **68**, the mechanically moveable member **71**, and the light valve **69** may be operatively coupled to the I/O circuit **108**, each of those components being so coupled by either a unidirectional or bidirectional, single-line or multiple-line data link, which may depend on the design of the component that is used. The speaker(s) **62**