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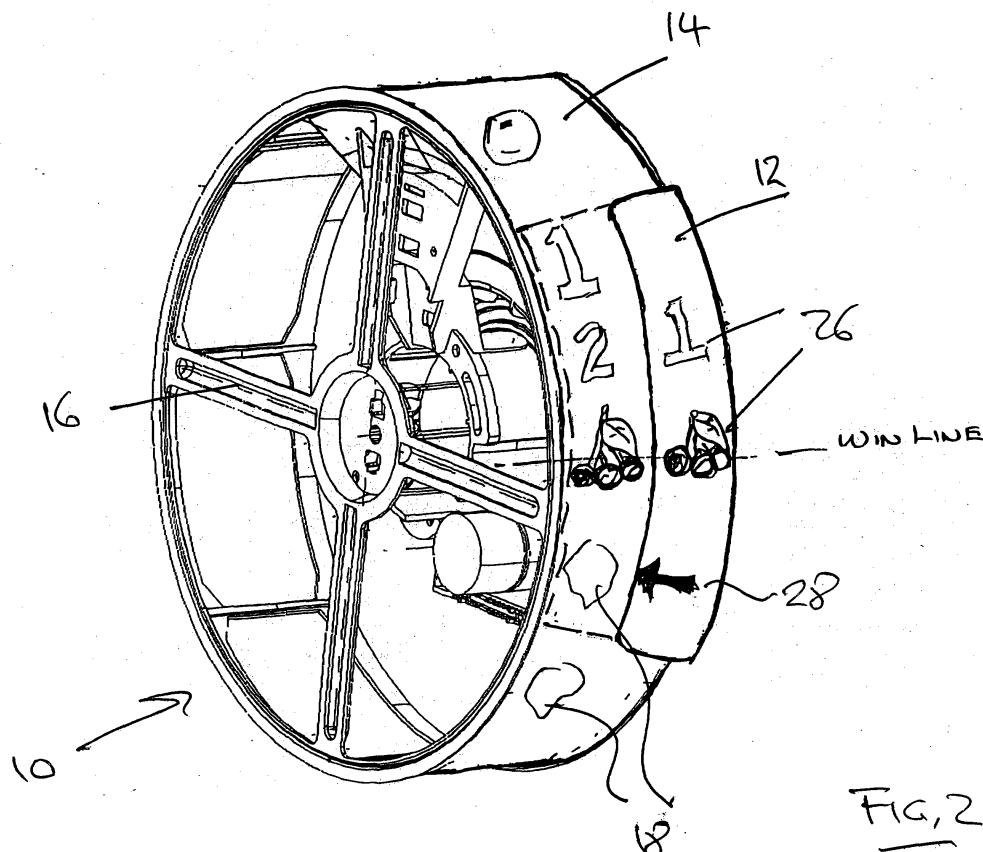
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(54) Reel mechanisms

(57) A reel mechanism (10) comprises a rotatable reel (16) of predetermined width, in a direction parallel to the axis of intended rotation of the rotatable reel (16), and a reel supplement (12) movable over the rotatable reel (16), characterised in that said movable reel sup-

plement (12) is arranged to cover only part of said width of said rotatable reel (16), or alternatively is arranged to cover at least part of said width of said rotatable reel (16), said rotatable reel (16) presenting a plurality of symbols (18) which remain visible whatever the position of said movable reel supplement (12).



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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to reel mechanisms and is especially, but not exclusively, concerned with reel mechanisms for use with gaming machines, sometimes referred to as fruit machines or amusement machines.

[0002] It is well known for gaming machines to include a number of adjacent reels marked around their circumferential surfaces with symbols such as fruit. During play, the reels are caused to spin about a common axis by pulling on a handle or pressing a button. When the reels come to a standstill, the positions of the symbols on the different reels in relation to one or more predetermined lines decide whether or not a player has won.

[0003] Each of the reels is typically formed from a strip presenting the symbols and a drum-like support carrying the strip.

[0004] The strips carried by the drum-like supports may be different from one another but more usually are identical to one another.

[0005] Each of the reels is typically arranged so that only a part of the strip associated therewith is visible to a player - when there are three reels, and when three symbols are visible on each reel, a total of nine symbols are visible to the player.

[0006] Various suggestions have been made for altering this "playing field" of nine symbols.

[0007] For example, it is known for one or more of the reels to be advanced by a so-called nudge button whereby one of the symbols on a reel is moved out of view at the same time as another symbol on the reel is moved into view.

[0008] Moreover, it is also known for a shutter to be provided to cover one or more of the symbols on a reel from view until such time as the shutter is removed either automatically by the machine or upon instruction by the player.

[0009] In each of these prior proposals, the "playing field" still remains as nine symbols.

[0010] It is thus known for a reel mechanism to comprise a rotatable reel of predetermined width, in a direction parallel to the axis of intended rotation of the rotatable reel, and a reel supplement movable over the rotatable reel.

[0011] In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, however, said movable reel supplement is arranged to cover only part of said width of said rotatable reel.

[0012] The reel supplement may be opaque.

[0013] Preferably, the rotatable reel presents a plurality of symbols but with the symbols being arranged to remain uncovered whatever the position of the reel supplement.

[0014] Preferably, the reel supplement itself carries a plurality of symbols, such as three symbols, which are visible alongside the symbols carried by the rotatable reel when the reel supplement is moved over the rotat-

able reel.

[0015] In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, moreover, said movable reel supplement is arranged to cover at least part of said width of said rotatable reel, said rotatable reel presenting a plurality of symbols which remain visible whatever the position of said movable reel supplement.

[0016] The reel supplement may be translucent or transparent.

[0017] Preferably, the reel supplement itself carries a plurality of symbols, such as three symbols, which are visible alongside the symbols carried by the rotatable reel when the reel supplement is moved over the rotatable reel.

[0018] It will therefore be appreciated that, when there are three reels, and each of the reels has three symbols which are visible, and each of the reels has a movable reel supplement which has zero, one, two or three symbols visible, the "playing field" can now be anything between nine and eighteen separate symbols or, alternatively, can include up to nine double symbols.

[0019] A double symbol, in this context, could be a symbol in the form of a number 2 on the reel in combination with a symbol in the form of a number 1 on the reel supplement to give the appearance of the number 21 which could, for example, trigger a prize independently of any other prize winning combination.

[0020] In an alternative arrangement, the location of the win line or the nature of the winning symbol could be changed by driving the reel supplement to a new position, the reel supplement carrying a symbol in the form of an arrow or other indicator for indicating the new win line or the new winning symbol.

[0021] The symbols may be printed in accordance with known technology.

[0022] Preferably, the reel supplement is driven about the same axis as the intended axis of rotation of the rotatable reel by means of a supplementary motor.

[0023] As will be appreciated, the reel mechanism preferably forms part of a gaming machine.

[0024] A reel mechanism, in accordance with both aspects of the present invention, will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:-

Figure 1 is an exploded view showing various components of the reel mechanism; and

Figure 2 is a schematic view showing the assembled condition of the reel mechanism.

[0025] Apart from known constructional feature, which will not be described, the reel mechanism 10 incorporates a reel supplement 12.

[0026] The reel supplement 12 may be opaque and may extend across only part of the width of a reel strip 14 to be rotated by a reel 16.

[0027] It will be appreciated that symbols 18 carried by the reel strip 14 are located to just the "left" half of

the width of the reel strip 14 so that they remain uncovered whatever the position of the reel supplement 12.

[0028] In an alternative arrangement, indicated by broken lines, the reel supplement 12 could extend across the whole width of the strip 14, but here the reel supplement 12 would be at least partly translucent, or transparent, to allow the symbols 18 on the reel strip 14 to remain visible whatever the position of the reel supplement 12.

[0029] Naturally, the situation may be reversed so that the symbols 18 are on the "right" half of the width of the reel strip 14 and the reel supplement 12 is located to extend over the other half of the reel strip 14.

[0030] The reel supplement 12 can be driven, or pivoted, about the same axis as the intended axis of rotation of the reel 16, by means of a supplementary motor 20 which meshes with teeth 22 around part of a support arm 24 for the reel supplement 12.

[0031] As shown, the reel supplement 12 may be provided with a series of symbols 26 which are to be aligned alongside the symbols 18, at least in the win line position, to give "double symbols".

[0032] The or one of the symbols 26 may be an arrow 28 or other indicator.

or transparent.

6. A reel mechanism according to claim 3 or claim 5, **characterised in that** the reel supplement (12) itself carries a plurality of symbols (26) which are visible alongside the symbols (18) carried by the rotatable reel (16) when the reel supplement (12) is moved over the rotatable reel (16).
7. A reel mechanism according to any preceding claim, **characterised in that** the reel supplement (12) carries a symbol in the form of an arrow (28) or other indicator.
8. A reel mechanism according to any preceding claim, **characterised in that** the reel supplement (12) is driven about the same axis as the intended axis of rotation of the rotatable reel (16) by means of a supplementary motor (20).
9. A reel mechanism according to any preceding claim when forming part of a gaming machine.

Claims

1. A reel mechanism (10) comprising a rotatable reel (16) of predetermined width, in a direction parallel to the axis of intended rotation of the rotatable reel (16), and a reel supplement (12) movable over the rotatable reel (16), **characterised in that** said movable reel supplement (12) is arranged to cover only part of said width of said rotatable reel (16).
2. A reel mechanism according to claim 1, **characterised in that** the reel supplement (12) is opaque.
3. A reel mechanism according to claim 1 or claim 2, **characterised in that** the rotatable reel (16) presents a plurality of symbols (18) which remain uncovered whatever the position of the reel supplement (12).
4. A reel mechanism (10) comprising a rotatable reel (16) of predetermined width, in a direction parallel to the axis of intended rotation of the rotatable reel (16), and a reel supplement (12) movable over the rotatable reel (16), **characterised in that** said movable reel supplement (12) is arranged to cover at least part of said width of said rotatable reel (16), said rotatable reel (16) presenting a plurality of symbols (18) which remain visible whatever the position of said movable reel supplement (12).
5. A reel mechanism according to claim 4, **characterised in that** the reel supplement (12) is translucent

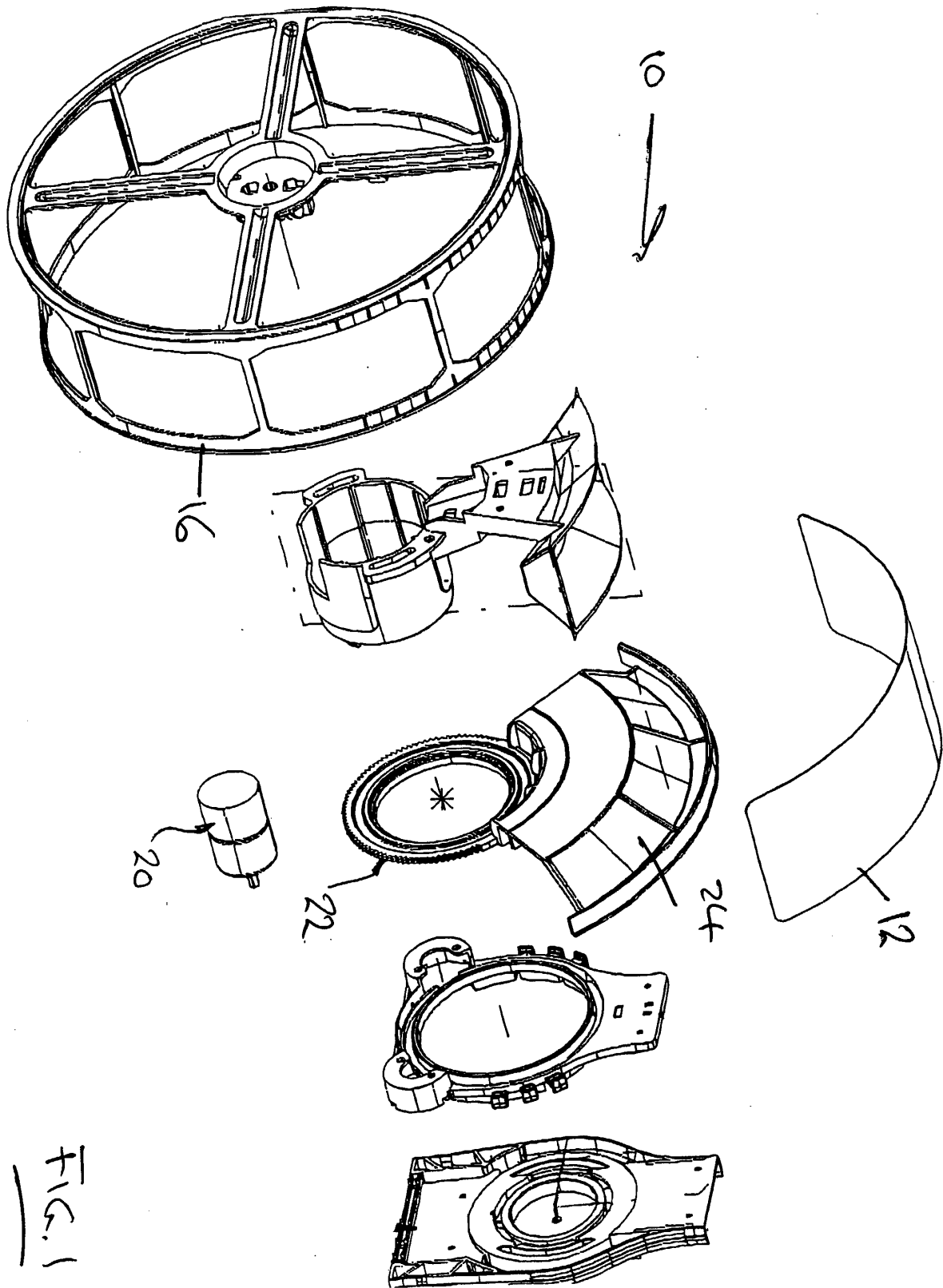


FIG. 1

