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(71) Applicant: **JVH Gaming Products B.V.**
5048 AB Tilburg (NL)

(72) Inventor: **Cobner, Jason Roy**
South Wales NP44 6HF (GB)

(74) Representative: **Valkonet, Rutger et al**
Algemeen Octrooi- en Merkenbureau
P.O. Box 645
5600 AP Eindhoven (NL)

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(54) **A system made up of two or more devices being in communication with each other for playing at least one game, as well as such a device for playing at least one game**

(57) The invention relates to a system made of two or more devices being in communication with each other for playing at least one game, each device comprising at least: player's credit means for storing a player's credit, starting means for starting respective game sessions, determining means for determining qualities of prizes to be won by playing the game, display means for displaying the quality of the prize that has been won as determined by the determining means after each game session, as well as payout means for paying out the prize the player may have won.

The invention also relates to such an individual de-

vice.

The object of the invention is to present an improved game concept, in which a large number of gaming devices can be played simultaneously. In order to accomplish that object, the system is according to the invention characterised in that each gaming device that forms part of the system is arranged for terminating a game session started by the starting means simultaneously with the other gaming devices on the basis of one or more activation signals delivered by the system and displaying the qualities of the prize that has been won as determined by the determining means.

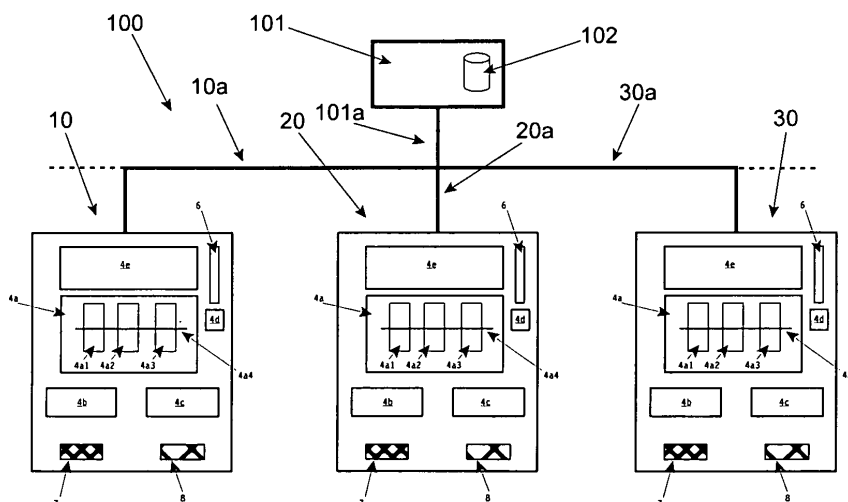


Fig. 2

Description

[0001] The invention relates to a system made of two or more devices being in communication with each other for playing at least one game, each device comprising at least: player's credit means for storing a player's credit, starting means for starting respective game sessions, determining means for determining qualities of prizes to be won by playing the game, display means for displaying the quality of the prize that has been won as determined by the determining means after each game session, as well as payout means for paying out the prize the player may have won.

[0002] The invention also relates to such an individual device.

[0003] A gaming device of this kind, which is generally known, is for example described in Dutch Patent Application No. 1015125. Such a gaming device is for example configured as a fruit machine comprising fruit reels and a control unit including a random number generator. Stepping motors are driven on the basis of a number generated by the random number generator, which stepping motors set the fruit reels rotating and stop them again.

[0004] A device of the kind referred to in the introduction may also be configured differently, however, i.e. the explanation of the invention hereinafter, which is based on a "fruit machine", is purely illustrative and must not be construed as being limitative to the invention.

[0005] The determining means comprise the random number generator in that case, and the display means comprise the fruit reels in combination with a winning plan. The prior art device furthermore comprises starting means including a start button for starting a single session of the game, after which the determining means determine the number of qualities (points) to be won by playing said single session of the game, and after said single session of the game the display means display the number of qualities (points) as determined by the determining means of the prize that has been won this time, which may or may take place in the form of a combination of fruits on the fruit reels. When the player presses the start button again, the above procedure is repeated, etc.

[0006] The prior art device may furthermore include player's credit storage means for storing the player's credit, for example in the form of a player's total number of qualities (points), which can be increased by inserting money and which can be decreased or increased by playing respective single sessions of the game. When the player's credit reaches value zero, he or she will have to insert money first before he or she can play one or more sessions of the game again.

[0007] In addition to that, the prior art gaming device comprises payout means, which are arranged for paying out the player's credit stored in the players' credit storage means to the player in the form of a prize (for example in the form of tokens or money) associated with said player's credit.

[0008] Usually, such gaming devices are used independently, and the devices are used or played independently of each other by individual players.

[0009] The object of the invention is to present an improved game concept, in which a large number of gaming devices can be played simultaneously. In order to accomplish that object, the system is according to the invention characterised in that each gaming device that forms part of the system is arranged for terminating a game session started by the starting means simultaneously with the other gaming devices on the basis of one or more activation signals delivered by the system and displaying the qualities of the prize that has been won as determined by the determining means.

[0010] With these aspects of the invention, a novel game concept is presented, wherein the termination of individual game sessions is carried out by each gaming device individually, to be true, but wherein this is above all initiated or controlled by the system. In this way it is possible to realise a more efficient utilisation of the various gaming devices in, for example, an amusement arcade.

[0011] More specifically, the system comprises central control means, which central control means are arranged for delivering the activation signal to the various gaming devices. In this way a centralised control of the various gaming devices can be realised.

[0012] In a functional embodiment, said central control means are arranged for delivering the activation signal at predetermined points in time, the system will thus be largely autonomous, wherein all the gaming devices that are being played (or being active) at that point in time can be controlled by the central control means.

[0013] In another embodiment, the central control means may furthermore be arranged for delivering the activation signal only to those active gaming devices whose starting means have been activated by the player in question. This makes it possible to control only those gaming devices which have been "activated", i.e. which are being used by a player. Any "dormant" or "non-active" gaming devices are ignored, which has a positive effect on the system performance.

[0014] The system may comprise establishing means, which are arranged for establishing the number of active gaming devices in the system.

[0015] The invention will now be explained in more detail with reference to a drawing, in which:

Figure 1 shows a gaming device according to the prior art;

Figure 2 shows an embodiment of the invention made up of a system of several gaming devices according to the invention;

Figure 3 is a block diagram showing the steps of the game according to the invention.

[0016] Figure 1 schematically shows the principle of the game to be played with a device according to the

prior art, for example playing a fruit machine. A player activates the prior art device for playing the game a first time, with the player and generally playing for money or points. In the known embodiment, the player must activate the prior art device by inserting money via an insertion slot 6. As a result, the player's credit T of the device increases, which player's credit T is for example displayed on the display means 4c.

[0017] The player starts a single game session by pressing the start button 8. The player's credit decreases accordingly, for example by a predetermined amount. The fruit reels 4a1-4a2 and 4a3 of the display means 4a start to rotate, as they are driven by stepping motors, which are in turn controlled by a control unit. Furthermore, a number generated by a number generator (for example a random number generator) is delivered, on the basis of which number the fruit reels are driven and randomly stopped.

[0018] There are also other ways of realising an outcome of a game, however.

[0019] In a simple embodiment of the prior art device, the winning line of the fruit reels 4a1, 4a2, 4a3 may be indicated by the line 4a4. The reels 4a1-4a3 stop and display a losing combination or a winning combination along the line 4a4, in which latter case the winning combination will light up on the winning plan 4e. In said winning plan 4e, all the winning combinations of the fruit reels 4a1-4a3 are shown, together with the prize or qualities X associated with the winning combination in question.

[0020] In another embodiment, the fruit reels 4a1, 4a2, 4a3 may be controlled by electronic means, with the final outcome being presented to the player in the form of figures, icons or other picture elements.

[0021] Then the winning prize or the game result X will be dealt with, that is, in the standard version of the prior art gaming device the winning prize X is added to the game result credit T, which new game result credit is shown to the player by the display means 4d. In the situation where the winning prize X equals zero, the device will return to a rest position, from which the player can reactivate the device by pressing the start button 8. In the situation that the player's credit T equals zero after the game session, the player will first have to deposit money again via the insertion slot 6 to top up his player's credit T again.

[0022] On the other hand, the player may press a payout button 7 after certain games after which the number of qualities displayed by the display means 4c is paid out to the player in the form of money, tokens or another feature or physical product associated with the amount of qualities being displayed.

[0023] According to the invention, a system 100 comprises several gaming devices 10-20-30-..., with the various gaming devices 10-20-30 being in communication with central control means 101 (via the signal line 101 a) by means of lines of communication 10a-20a-30a. The central control means 101 are arranged to deliver an ac-

tivation signal to the various gaming devices 10-20-30, on the basis of which activation signal the game sessions being played on the individual gaming devices 10, 20, 30 are terminated and the outcomes associated with the game in question as determined by the determining means of each device are more or less simultaneously presented to the players. The outcome of each gaming device that is being presented to the player in question may be a win outcome, of course, but also a loss outcome.

[0024] To enable an adequate control of the system, the central control means are arranged for delivering the activation signal to the gaming devices in question at predetermined points in time. This implies that each gaming device waits for the receipt of the respective activation signal and terminates the game session in question simultaneously with the other gaming devices being actively played on the basis of said activation signal, presenting the outcome of the game (win or loss) to the players in question more or less simultaneously with the other gaming devices.

[0025] In this way a synchronisation between the various gaming devices is effected, which devices may all play the same game but also different games that comprise a chance aspect.

[0026] In this embodiment the central control means are slightly passive, they only deliver one or more activation signals at predetermined points in time. The activation signal may in fact be a simple electric signal, intended to interrupt the device while a game is being played and finally present the outcome as determined by the determining means with the random number generator to the player in question.

[0027] More specifically, the system comprises establishing means 102, which are arranged for establishing the number of active gaming devices in the system. Said establishing means communicate with the various gaming devices 10-20-30-... via the various lines of communication and establish whether the gaming device in question is being played by a player and is thus activated. One possibility of establishing this via the establishing means 102 is to briefly contact the various gaming devices via the lines of communication and establish whether the starting means of the gaming device in question have been activated by a player. The activated gaming device in question will in that case have to be controlled accordingly by the central control means 101 as regards terminating the game session simultaneously with the other active gaming devices and presenting the outcome of the game (win or loss) to the player in question.

[0028] The procedure followed by the establishing means 102 for establishing whether one or more of the gaming devices 10-20-30-... in the system have been activated by a player may take place in the form of an exchange of information via the signal lines.

[0029] As is also shown in Figure 3, which is a block diagram of the steps of the game according to the invention, one of the gaming devices 10-20-30-... is activated

by a player by the insertion of money or tokens, which is stored as player's credit in the player's credit storage means. Said many or tokens is (are) to be inserted via the insertion slot 6.

[0030] The moment the player presses the start button 8 (step A in Figure 3), the determining means of the gaming device in question will deliver a number through a random number generator, on the basis of which number the fruit reels 4a1-4a2-4a3 are driven and stopped at random (as explained in the foregoing). The fruit reels may be mechanical fruit reels, as in the known, old-fashioned gaming devices, but they may also be displayed in digital form on a screen 4a. On the other hand, the game concept of the gaming device may be a game other than the generally known fruit machine game, such as "noughts and crosses", a card game (such as poker or blackjack) etc.

[0031] Now that a game session has been started on one or more gaming devices by the respective players (see step B in Figure 3), the game session will according to the invention be automatically terminated on the basis of one or more activation signals delivered by the central control means 101. To that end, the respective gaming device 10 will communicate its "active state" to the establishing means 102 in step C of Figure 3 and ask for an activation signal for terminating the game session. To that end, the central control means 101 deliver one or more activation or stop signals in step D of Figure 3, which signals are time-dependent.

[0032] This means that the central control means 101 deliver one or more stop signals at specific points in time, on the basis of which stop signal the gaming devices being played at that moment terminate the ongoing game session and immediately display the outcome thereof (as determined by the determining means) on the display means 4a. This latter step is step E in Figure 3.

Claims

1. A system made of two or more devices being in communication with each other for playing at least one game, each device comprising at least: player's credit means for storing a player's credit, starting means for starting respective game sessions, determining means for determining qualities of prizes to be won by playing the game, display means for displaying the quality of the prize that has been won as determined by the determining means after each game session, as well as payout means for paying out the prize the player may have won, **characterised in that** each gaming device that forms part of the system is arranged for terminating a game session started by the starting means simultaneously with the other gaming devices on the basis of one or more activation signals delivered by the system and displaying the qualities of the prize that has been won as determined by the determining means.
2. A system according to claim 1, **characterised in that** the system comprises central control means, which central control means are arranged for delivering the activation signal to the various gaming devices.
3. A system according to claim 1 or 2, **characterised in that** said central control means are arranged for delivering the activation signal at predetermined points in time.
4. A system according to any one of the claims 1-3, **characterised in that** the central control means are arranged for delivering the activation signal only to those active gaming devices whose starting means have been activated by the player in question.
5. A system according to claim 4, **characterised in that** the system comprises establishing means, which are arranged for establishing the number of active gaming devices in the system.
6. A device for playing a game according to any one or more of the preceding claims.

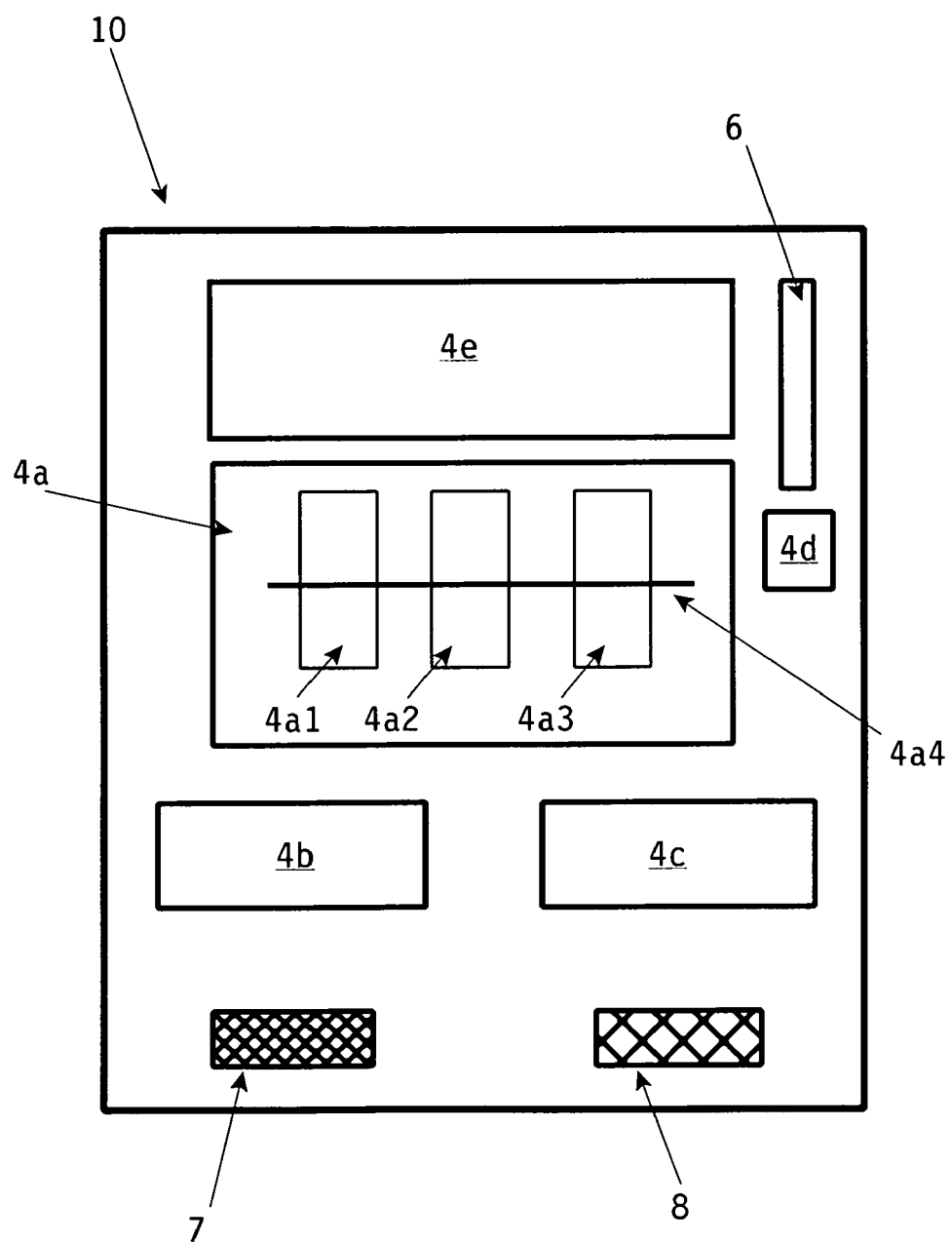


Fig. 1

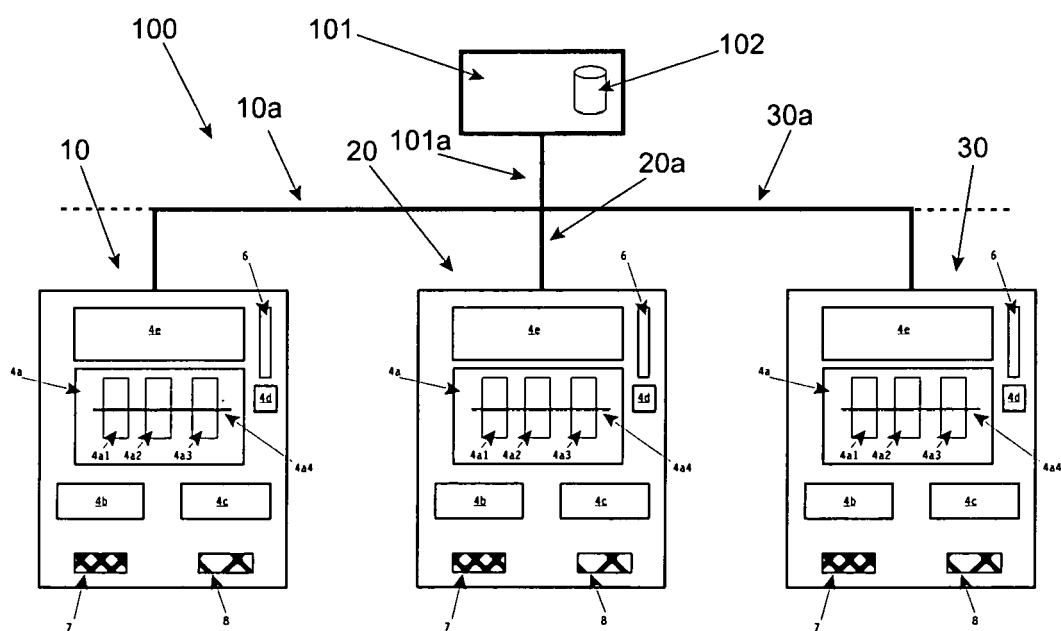


Fig. 2

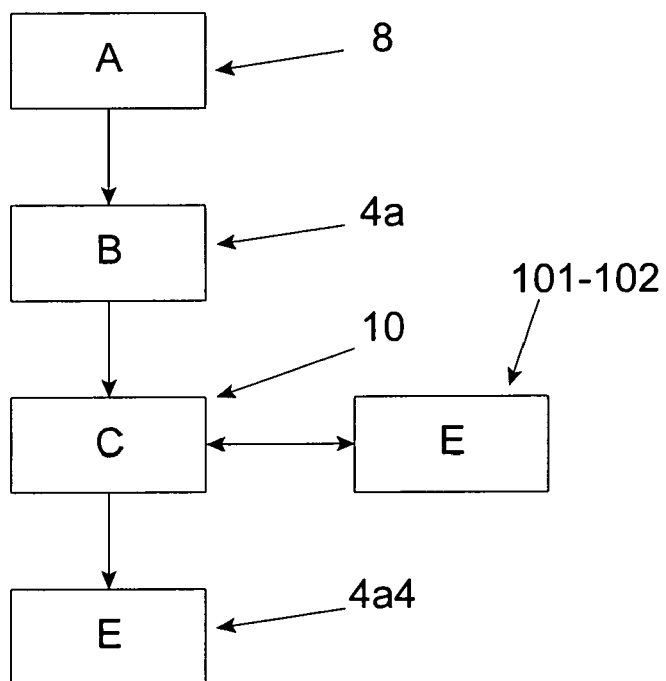


Fig. 3



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 07 07 5189

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
X	US 2003/228901 A1 (WALKER JAY S [US] ET AL) 11 December 2003 (2003-12-11) * abstract * * paragraph [0213] - paragraph [0218] * -----	1-6	INV. G07F17/32
X	US 2006/046821 A1 (KAMINKOW JOSEPH E [US] ET AL) 2 March 2006 (2006-03-02) * abstract * -----	1-6	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
			G07F
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 4 May 2007	Examiner Van Dop, Erik
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

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**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 07 07 5189

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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04-05-2007

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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US 2006046821	A1	02-03-2006	NONE
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REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

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