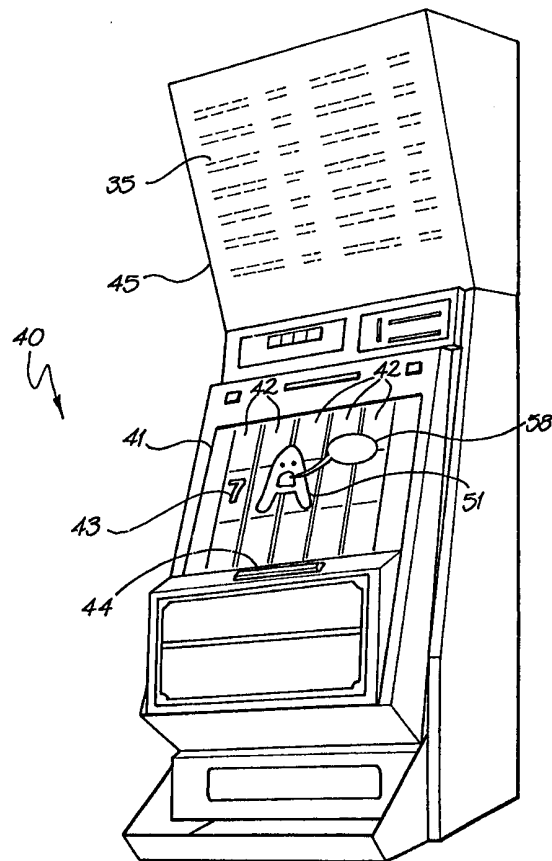


## INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

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**(54) Title:** PLAYER INFORMATION DELIVERY**(57) Abstract**

A console is described, having display means, and game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game in which one or more symbols are randomly selected as a combination of symbols and displayed on the display means. If a winning combination results, the machine awards a prize. In some circumstances, the console will display an animated character to communicate information to the player. The character is independent of and appears asynchronously with respect to the game being played and is arranged to appear super imposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed.



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## *Player information delivery*

### **Introduction**

The present invention relates to gaming consoles or gaming machines of the type known as slot machines arranged to play a large variety of card  
5 related and other gambling games and in particular the invention provides an improvement to a game played on such a machine or console.

Players who regularly play gaming machines quickly tire of particular games and therefore it is necessary for manufacturers of these machines to come up with innovative game features that add interest to the games  
10 provided on such machines in order to keep the players amused and therefore willing to continue playing the game.

### **Description of the Prior Art**

Gaming or poker machines have been well known in some jurisdictions such as the state of New South Wales in Australia and Nevada  
15 in the United States for many years and more recently such machines have gained considerable popularity in a growing number of new jurisdictions with quite substantial amounts of money wagered on these machines. There is a growing tendency for State Governments to legalize the use of gaming machines by licensing operators, with resulting revenue gains through  
20 license fees and taxation of monies invested. The licensed operation of gaming machines is the subject of State legislation and regulation. This regulation most always dictates a minimum percentage payout for a gaming machine. For example, in New South Wales a minimum of 85% of monies invested must be returned as winnings, and manufacturers of gaming  
25 machines therefore must design their machines around these regulatory controls.

With the growth that has occurred in the gaming machine market there is intense competition between manufacturers to supply the various existing and new venues. When selecting a supplier of gaming machines, the  
30 operator of a venue will often pay close attention to the popularity of various games with their patrons. Therefore, gaming machine manufacturers are keen to devise games which are popular with players, as a mechanism for improving sales.

Many various strategies have been tried in the past to make games  
35 more enticing to players, including the commonly known double-up feature, whereby, if a player wins a particular game, they can then risk the winnings

of that game in a double-or-nothing mode in which they gamble on a subsequent, and often different, game such as whether a red or black card will be the next card drawn.

Other techniques adopted in the past have been to provide complexity  
5 in the numbering and combinations of indicia which would result in a win, thereby hoping to convince the player that there is a greater chance of winning and to keep their interest in a particular game.

Throughout this specification and claims when the term "morph" is used, it is intended to indicate a transformation or metamorphosis from a  
10 current image or character to a new image or character.

### **Summary of the Invention**

According to a first aspect the present invention provides a gaming console having display means, and game control means arranged to control images displayed on the display means, the game control means being  
15 arranged to play a game wherein one or more random events are caused to be displayed on the display means and, if a predefined winning event or combination of events results, the machine awards a prize, the console being characterized in that an animated character is periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, the character being arranged to  
20 appear super imposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed, the character appearing to award a bonus prize awarded from a bonus prize pool and the character appearing to dispense or control the dispensing of the prize.

Preferably, in embodiments of the invention, a generic character, such  
25 as a coin with glasses, top hat, legs and arms will be used as the animated character (known as Mr. Cashman). The animated character is preferably used to indicate to the player any game and feature prizes won as a result of playing the respective game in addition to the bonus prizes.

Preferably also, the triggering of the appearance of the character being  
30 independent of the outcome of the current game.

In some embodiments the character (i.e. Mr. Cashman) will occasionally randomly appear, entering the game screen, and awarding a variable random bonus prize. In preferred embodiments, the prize may be displayed in a number of ways such as by the character kicking the win  
35 meter, throwing coins at the win meter, pulling the prize out of his hat,

picking up a digit and carrying it over to add in front of the win meter or similar.

According to a second aspect the present invention provides a gaming console having display means, and game control means arranged to control  
5 images displayed on the display means, the game control means being arranged to play a game bought by a player wherein after the player buys a game by committing a wager, one or more random events are caused to be displayed on the display means and, if a predefined winning event or combination of events results, the machine awards a prize, the console being  
10 characterized in that an animated character is periodically displayed to communicate information to the player, the character being arranged to appear super imposed over any game screen currently displayed at the time the character is displayed, the character appearing to award a bonus game or a bonus feature, where the bonus game or bonus feature has an outcome  
15 which is at least partially independent of the outcome of the current game bought by the player.

In one embodiment, an animated spinning reel bonus game is provided in which the character (e.g. Mr. Cashman) causes one or more of a plurality of simulated reels to randomly spin . If more than one reel is spun, they will  
20 preferably be spun in random order. In different embodiments, the animation of the reel spinning may include the character kicking the reels, tapping them with his walking stick, pushing them, leaning on them, throwing an object at them etc. After the reels stop spinning, the player will be paid any wins that are associated with the symbol combination displayed  
25 on the stopped reels.

In another embodiment, a feature is provided in which the character offers a selection between two or more options with different offers of hidden prizes or bonus games being associated with each option such that when the player chooses one of the options the hidden offer associated with the  
30 selected option is revealed and awarded to the player. In one particularly preferred embodiment, a feature referred to as "The Money or the Box" is provided in which the character (i.e. Mr. Cashman) will be holding (for example) a bag of coins and a wad of dollar bills. This feature will be displayed as a second-screen feature after the end of the main game. The  
35 player will be asked to choose one or the other of the bag of coins or the wad of notes. If the bag is chosen, it will reveal that the player has been awarded

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