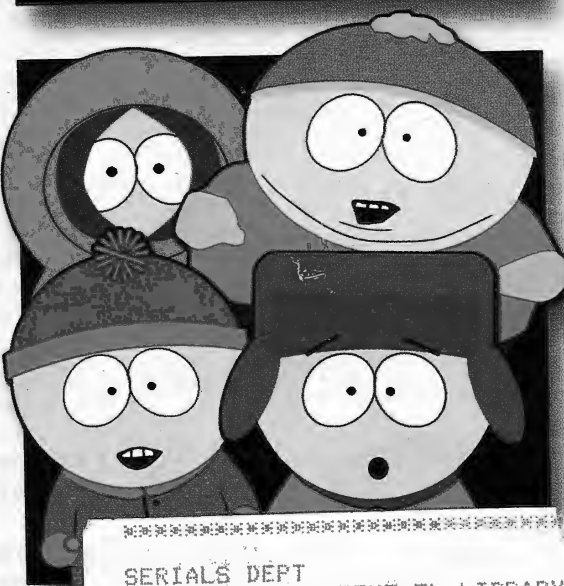
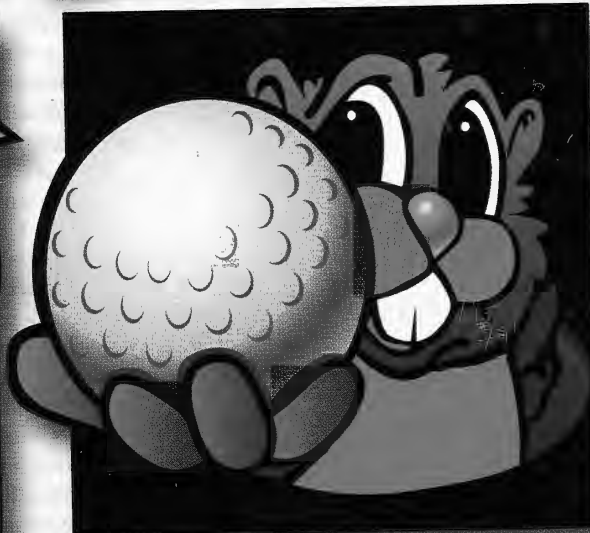


Small caps hit big time • The *new* New Frontier • Is Beau Rivage pumping up the Gulf Coast at its own expense?

Casino Journal

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World of Slots '99

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On the cover:

Representations of some of the innovative new games that will be introduced at the World Gaming Congress.

Clockwise: Silicon Gaming's "Strike It Rich," Mikohn Gaming's "Yahtzee," Aristocrat's "Chicken," Shuffle Master's "The Three Stooges," Williams/WMS's "Reel 'Em In Cast For Cash," IGT's "South Park," Sigma Gaming's "Free-N-Easy," and Bally Gaming's "Betty Boop." In the center, VLC's "Caddy Cash."

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A good time to be a casino

Welcome to *Casino Journal's* sixth annual World of Slots issue, where, once again, our resident slot expert, Frank Legato, offers you previews of the latest gaming machines, some for the very first time.

Frank's job gets harder every year, as the gaming machine manufacturers' attempts to outdo each other continue to produce more and more games



deserving of a place on his list.

All of this competition is making it a good time to be a player, with a wealth of options to choose from on the casino floor. The "New Video" runs the gamut, from slots that are so entertaining they almost make winning secondary to playing, to multiline video poker machines that appeal to the players who like a challenge.

One of the biggest trends you'll find this year is "branding." Survey any casino floor and you'll discover games based on the familiar icons of the last 30 years: Elvis, Monopoly, Let's Make a Deal, Wheel of Fortune. In the works are The Three Stooges, The Addams Family, The Munsters, the Pink Panther—even Yahtzee.

These are the games that are bringing in new players—those who may not have even intended to play, but are drawn in by the new games featuring the board games, television shows and movies of their youth.

Another noticeable trend is the advancement of what was once known simply as a "bonus round." These days,

bonus games are intricately woven into the overall story line of the game, offering players more entertainment value as well as more ways to win.

For those players who like to feel they have a role in their own destiny, the latest multiline video poker machines give them the option of playing one to several hands at once, with as little as one coin or as many as 200. These are the machines experienced gamblers like to play, attendants pointed out to a couple of us during a recent excursion to watch some of the newer games at work in a large Las Vegas locals casino.

It's also a good time to be a casino.

Casinos in competitive gaming jurisdictions are finding they have to have the new games to compete. And while it may be more costly to change out older slots with new ones, the investment pays off. Because if they have the machines the gambling public is clamoring for—and their neighbor doesn't—they have an edge.

And there's never been a better time to be a manufacturer. In the old days, the slot-replacement cycle was based on new properties, which meant the vendors had no control over demand.

Now they are creating their own demand by producing their own "must-have" machines. As a result, the replacement cycle has become a function of the product.

Unlike their predecessors, many of the new machines aren't available for casinos to purchase outright. They are offered, instead, on a revenue-sharing basis, which is helping to provide manufacturers with the recurring revenue they need to run more stable operations.

Yes, this year's crop of new games promises to be a boon for every aspect of the gaming industry. And if this is a sign of things to come, we can count on even more technological advancements in the new millennium, as gaming machine manufacturers continue their quest for new ways to enhance the gaming experience. ♣

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When everything is shiny and new

In the past year, there has been a spate of openings of new and spectacular casino resorts. Most of them have different themes, were opened by different companies, and are run by executives from different backgrounds. What they all have in common, however, is that their debuts were, in most cases, somewhat rough and troublesome.

Some of this is to be expected when new casinos open. After all, you have thousands of new employees who have never worked together as a unit, new construction that has never played host to the thousands of guests who suddenly converge on the property, new systems that are designed to be efficient but almost always have various bugs that need to be worked out.

I don't think I'm violating any confidences when I relate horror stories that I have heard from multiple sources about the problems encountered at Bellagio, Mandalay Bay, Beau Rivage and The

Venetian during the course of their opening weeks and months. And I certainly don't mean to be critical because we're talking about some of the finest companies in the industry, with some of the most experienced executives. Their expertise is extensive, and mine is not, so please don't interpret this as

fault-finding, either explicit or implied. My simple question is, however, if they can't open a property smoothly, who can?

There are always ongoing problems at every casino hotel, whether it's been open for 10 years or 10 days. Even the most perfect building, with the friendliest employees and the most efficient systems, can fall victim to operational problems. Some go uncovered because the immediate supervisors either ignore the problems or don't know about them for one reason or another.

Recently, I was staying at a major Las Vegas resort, open less than five years, and was confronted with any number of service problems that should have easily been rectified, but happened again and again with a variety of employees. It is mind-boggling that this hotel runs at a 95 percent-plus occupancy rate year round. But maybe that is the

problem. If executives really had to provide superior service to continue to attract repeat customers, then the problems might get addressed.

For a new property, the difficulties are inherent. There are supervisors who have never supervised, employees who may be doing new jobs, and guests who are expecting the bar to be raised. Expectations are always high for new properties, and when they aren't achieved, it can sometimes be a fatal mistake.

Experienced casino-goers know that a casino hotel needs at least three months before all the pieces hopefully fall into place. But why is that necessary when there is so much information and experience available on operating a successful casino hotel?

Training is always stressed by today's modern casino companies. Most companies devote large portions of their revenues to human resources and understand that it will be returned on the bottom line if their message gets across clearly and completely to the line employees. Pre-opening training is designed to be intensive and thorough in most cases. Everything is covered, from hospitality training to how to dress and groom yourself. So why is it so difficult to translate this training to results more quickly?

The truth is that the pre-opening period is often not used as efficiently as possible. After a few months, everyone is anxious to get the property open, and some of the training begins to deteriorate. Training should continue at the same pace from beginning to end, and possibly accelerate as the opening approaches. While teaching the new employees the company's overall philosophies may be acceptable and desirable, it's most important to drill employees on what is expected on their jobs, so that when the property finally opens, there will be no time or excuse for backsliding.

Supervisors should be made accountable long before opening so that their charges are up to speed at all times. This way, supervisors actually have supervision experience before the crush of opening begins.

The biggest problem I have with the new properties is that they open too soon. Soft openings have become a fact of life in the gaming industry, and with good reason. Soft openings allow the property to conduct a "shake-down cruise" with seemingly less pressure than if a lavish, grand opening celebration were to announce that the hotel and

casino are both open for business with all the bells and whistles. Soft openings are also important to the investment community, which is generally more anxious than the casino company about the casino's prospects for success.

But soft openings can also backfire. Yes, they kick-start the revenue process, but if a property is not prepared to deliver on the promises it makes, a soft opening can also damage the long-term credibility of the casino hotel. If guests don't receive the service and amenities advertised, they will not return. And don't forget the cardinal rule of marketing.

Word-of-mouth publicity about a bad experience is 10 times worse than about a good experience.

When properties open in an incomplete state, it should be embarrassing to the operators. When curtains partition off construction sites from guest areas, when duct tape is used to keep customers from tripping over extension cords, and when large expanses of the property remain off limits to visitors, you are probably opening too soon.

Openings should be coordinated so the vast majority of the property opens at the same time. Whether it's called a "soft opening" or a "grand opening," guests should not have to guess how great the property is going to be once all the amenities are in place and customer service reaches the acceptable level.

If a property is set to open in stages, the first stage should contain most of the features that will be present in the final version. For example, if the final plans call for a dozen restaurants, at least have the same scale, variety and quality ready when the first phase is complete. If there's going to be an extensive retail area, have some of these features available on Day One.

One thing that is inexcusable is the lack of quality service. Training and development should have all been completed during the pre-opening phase, so employees know exactly how to react to customers and their desires. There are no "phases" when it comes to courtesy.

I wish I had the answers to all these concerns. If I did, I'd become one of those ubiquitous "consultants" and guide every new casino through the opening process. Alas, I'm just a Monday Morning Quarterback who is very good at telling you what went wrong, but we can all think about how to prevent it. ♣

Roger Gros, senior editor, can be reached by e-mail at rgros@casinocenter.com.



Winning streaks jeopardized

"A house divided against itself cannot stand." —Abraham Lincoln

"The house always wins." —Gaming truism

As the casino industry continues to try to translate its success in business into political victories, Lincoln's timeless words ring ominously true. The house of gaming rarely loses on either front, but with fissures metastasizing and economic pressure mounting, both winning streaks are in jeopardy.

The industry can bask all it wants—and are the casinos ever basking—in a national gaming report neutered by skillful lobbying and the opposition's ineptitude. But while it may keep Frank Fahrenkopf and many lobbying firms in business for some time, the threats to the industry in Nevada and in Washington have not lessened. A flood of campaign contributions will continue to drench any attempts

to extract cash from the industry—Frank Wolf's efforts notwithstanding. But the industry's changing economic and political matrix, and the inability of a once-small and once-closely knit fraternity to coalesce behind a strategy could change the outlook at any moment.

I'm not talking about the Steve Wynn-Donald

of Paris, combined with all of Hilton's current holdings on and near the Strip, make him a potentially powerful political player. Does he want to be? The involvement of his lieutenant, Mark Dodson, in recent Nevada Resort Association intrigue, his appearance at the Nevada Legislature and his growing respect among his peers says something is afoot.

■ Gondolier Numero Uno Sheldon Adelson has become an emblem of what is happening in the gaming industry. Isolated politically and suffering economically (The Venetian is beset by problems that brought it unfortunate coverage in the *Wall Street Journal*), Adelson has become a pariah in the industry. Wynn once tried to coddle him, knowing that a disaster across the street from The Mirage might cross the Strip and affect his property. But these days, Wynn has problems of his own. And with Adelson intent on maintaining his political activities—including rumblings about anti-union initiatives next year—the only good news for his enemies is that his win-loss tally resembles that of the Chicago Cubs.

■ Nevada state Sen. Joe Neal's initiative for a gaming tax probably has only limited chances for success—the industry operatives are likely to put up competing initiatives that will have better funding and better grass-roots. But is anyone missing the potential significance here? This will be a national story. "Gaming industry, which hasn't had taxes raised since late '80s, fights to avoid tax man," the headlines will blare. It's just the kind of fodder Wolf & Co. will highlight in Washington and the gamers' political influence will become an issue. They

better hope that the same does not occur here, where resentment toward the industry always has been latent and could result in a tax ground swell.

■ The NRA's internecine warfare appears to have abated, but it's never far from the surface. Veterans Jim Mulhall and Richard Bunker appear to have survived coup rumbles, and perhaps grown even stronger—for now. But

with the disparate personalities in the organization, many of them willful and forceful, the halcyon days will not last long. If this becomes a power struggle between Wynn and Goldberg, those asked to choose up sides will not be very comfortable. And then what? Great material for commentators, but how will it affect the industry? My guess: Not in a salutary fashion.

■ The federal venue, despite the evisceration of the gambling study, continues to be problematic. Choose a subject: Taxes, Indian gaming, Treasury regulations. As long as the Republicans have control of Congress, the threat will be there. And if George W. Bush assumes the presidency, he is no friend of the industry. The industry does not contribute as much as other behemoths such as insurance and trial lawyers, but it has managed to garner a reasonable bang for its bucks. But with Wynn declaring war on the House Republicans, the problem is obvious. The other gamers can insist all they want that Wynn does not speak for them. But he will always have the loudest voice. The crescendo will begin as the GOP primary season escalates, where candidates probably will try to one-up each other in being anti-gaming. (Right now, Gary Bauer has the lead with his call for a moratorium.) But don't expect Bill Bradley or Al Gore to defend the industry—although, to his credit, Gore has indicated he believes the issue is one of states' rights. But if Gore becomes president, does anyone believe he will exclude gaming from consideration if he needs more revenue? Think again.

When he uttered those famous words at the 1858 GOP state convention, words that have become emblematic of the Civil War that nearly destroyed this country, Lincoln actually was echoing a passage from The Gospel According to Saint Luke. As they are applicable now to a house that has always won in the past, the gaming industry might do well to pray that when the inevitable post-millennial carnage occurs, they, too, can put their world back together. ♣

Jon Ralston, publisher of The Ralston Report, is a Nevada political commentator and columnist for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and Reno Gazette-Journal.



Trump follies, which are always entertaining, fixate the national media and allow both men to participate in a mutual needling society. That's entertainment, though, a comedy without import.

Much more serious is that even Wynn is having questions raised about the fiscal health of his company. And as others try to maintain performance and stock prices, cooperation is at an all-time nadir and competition has never been more cutthroat.

Call me Chicken Little—many have and will again—but the evidence is piling up. To wit:

■ The rivalry between Mirage Resorts' Wynn and Park Place Entertainment's Arthur Goldberg is destined to intensify in coming years. Goldberg's purchase of Caesars and the incipient opening

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UNO SHELDON ADELSON
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World of Slots '99

A Brave New World

The creativity of the world's slot manufacturers shows no sign of weakening as the time comes for the slot-makers to strut their stuff once again

By Frank Legato

Welcome to *Casino Journal's* sixth annual "World Of Slots" feature. For the first two years this feature existed, the manufacturers we highlighted numbered only a handful.

Beginning in 1996, the feature grew to include over a dozen manufacturers. This year, that number is 15.

Also in 1996, a burst of creativity began as manufacturers introduced new formats—multimedia slots with 3-D graphics generated by high-speed computers; multiline video slots with clever cartoon bonus games; hybrid slots combining reel-spinning with wheels, pinball machines, and just about everything else.

Each year, industry-watchers expect the numbers of totally new ideas in the slot market to dwindle. Yet, with each of the past three years, the slot manufacturers have dazzled everyone with a remarkable lineup of games, a continuous redefinition of what constitutes a slot machine.

This year is no different. Just when you thought you'd seen every great slot idea, you're humbled by the innovation that continues to pour forth from the manufacturers. The industry's engineers have developed an astounding collection of ideas that are unique, but there have been a few common threads—trends that indicate the direction in which the slot floor is going as we approach the new millennium.

One trend that has emerged this year is the "branding" craze. Slot manufacturers are now racing each other to secure licenses to create themes reflecting icons of popular culture,

from the second "Elvis" slot to new game-show themes to new board-game themes.

Multiline video continues to surge in popularity, with new multiline games from just about every major manufacturer. There are games taking up to 200 coins, games taking pennies and nickels—the multicoin trend that started a few years ago continues to gather steam, as manufacturers attempt to find the most simple way to offer the games in coin-free or cashless form.

However, this year, the low-end denomination in multiline video is accompanied by something new: multiline video for the high-end gambler. Aristocrat, Anchor Gaming and others are now producing multiline dollar slots—games with five pay lines (or even three) which accept one coin per line. It is the first attempt by slot manufacturers to lure dollar players to the multiline format—while letting them remain dollar players.

And the bonus games! The slot-makers are packing new games with multiple bonus features, from second

screens to third screens to free spins to jackpot multipliers.

As technology advances, players are collecting bonus awards in ways that are more entertaining than at any time in the history of the gaming industry.

A few examples:

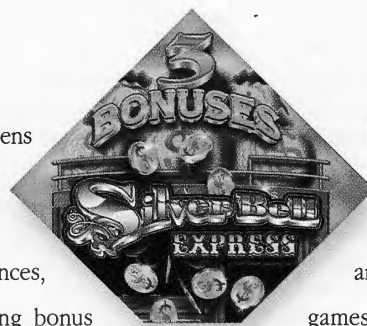
■ Silicon Gaming has teamed with Anchor Gaming to create a multimedia slot with a bowling bonus game. The bonus round is live action video, and the player uses a computer track ball to actually "lift" and "aim" the bowling ball toward pins on the screen.

■ Shuffle Master has teamed up with Acres Gaming and others to create "The Three Stooges," a bonus slot featuring the sights and sounds of the legendary comedy team.

■ Slot leader IGT is unveiling an incredible collection of machines carrying brands licensed from TV and movies of the 1960s—*The Addams Family*, *The Munsters*, *The Pink Panther*—and that's only a tiny portion of everything the manufacturer is introducing.

■ Williams/WMS Gaming is introducing a follow-up to its smash hit "Reel 'Em In," called "Cast For Cash." It's got two video screens, which are linked together—fishers in the top and fish in the bottom.

■ Aristocrat has developed what could be the next generation of bonusing systems—a combination of a "mystery jackpot"-type of bonus and a linked progressive system.



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■ Bally Gaming has a new Betty Boop slot, and several great new games for its "Game Magic" multimedia platform.

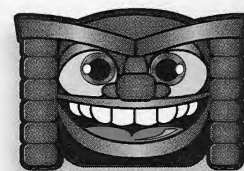
■ Silicon Gaming is coming out from the shadows of financial trouble with a lean, cost-efficient company and typically fantastic new games.

■ Mikohn Gaming has created "Yahtzee," a bonus game reflecting the legendary board game on top of base slots by Sigma Game.

■ Anchor Gaming and CDS have teamed up to create

a bank of slots that doubles as an entertainment attraction, called "Monkey Business." There is an interactive bonus display unlike anything players have seen before.

These examples just scratch the surface of what you'll find in the following pages. As in past years, many of the new slot games are detailed exclusively for the first time here. As in the past, we hope you use our annual feature as a guide to what is happening in the slot industry, a guide to the slot revolution.



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**No Reserve-ations
About the
Random Ejection Shuffler
from Casinovations.**

THE RESERVE
HOTEL CASINO

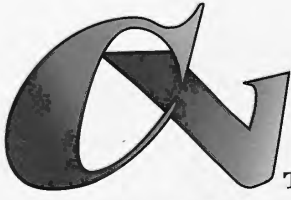
The Reserve's philosophy is an across-the-board commitment to providing a quality product, and our table games are no exception. So, when it came time to select a shuffler, we wanted it to accentuate our guests' gaming experience.

To achieve this, our shuffler had to be absolutely random, fast and mechanically sound. After shopping the market for shufflers and putting each to the test, we found that the Random Ejection Shuffler from Casinovations could hold up to our standards.

To preserve the integrity of our table games and provide absolute fairness to our guests, we challenged an independent consultant to track the unit. He found the RES from Casinovations to be absolutely untrackable and completely random. Our own tests on the casino floor proved that the unit was fast, reliable and contributed to the smooth flow of play.

The payment plan is the most economical billing method that I've seen; it's based on the number of shuffles, which keeps our costs low so we can offer our guests more. Before finalizing our decision, we even tested Casinovations service time and found them to be both prompt and courteous. This is a great product and we wish them luck going into the new millenium.

Joe Totoro
Director of Casino Operations
The Reserve Hotel Casino



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World
of
Slots '99

A.C. Coin and Slot

Beyond the 'X-Series' with revolutionary new bonus platforms

Empire King is one of three slots in the new X-Series platform that will be introduced at the World Gaming Congress. The other two are an upgraded version of "Jungle King" and "Merlin," a completely new slot.



Innovation has become commonplace in the slot business. But innovation does not always translate into profitability.

That's why Pleasantville, N.J.-based A.C. Coin and Slot Service Co. has taken careful and calculated steps the past two years in branching out from its primary and traditional role as the sole East Coast distributor for the products of slot leader International Game Technology.

A.C. Coin remains IGT's Eastern distributor, under a contract so solid it was upheld in court last year. But the company has spent the past few years in another role as well—as a developer of proprietary bonus games to enhance those IGT slots. Its first effort, "Bonus Road Rally," flopped in its original form as a giant arcade-style bonus race attached to ten \$1 IGT slots at the Taj Mahal in Atlantic City, prompting the company to develop a scaled-down, five-machine quarter version of the game which has fared much better.

But even as the first Bonus Road Rally units were being developed, A.C. Coin was at work on a top-box bonus platform that would result in its first unqualified success as a game developer—the "X Series" line of three-reel slots, a variety of bonus games which converted S-Plus boxes into A.C. Coin games such as "Empire," "Isle of Pearls," "Chuck Wagon," "Beam Me Up" and "Jungle King."

The first issues of those games were all very similar—three reel slots with wild symbols, nudging bar symbols and a "climb" symbol that sent a miniature figure climbing toward a "bonus zone," the goal being to reach the highest of three bonus awards before a time clock expired. "Empire" was themed as the Empire State Building with a King Kong-style gorilla climbing toward the zone. In "Chuck Wagon," it was the player's Conestoga Wagon racing another wagon toward the bonus zone. It was Tarzan climbing a vine in "Jungle King," a diver heading for bonus pearls in "Isle of Pearls," and an astronaut heading toward his spaceship in "Beam Me Up."

As soon as those games were released two years ago, the careful approach again took over for A.C. Coin, which sent its R&D people out to talk to slot managers. What were the players saying? What did they like? What didn't they like?

"The operators have been a lot of help," says Mac Seelig, founder and president of A.C. Coin. "They talk to their players, so we talk to them. We then try different things to improve our products so they will be the most fun games in the market."

"The big slot manufacturers are major public companies," adds son Jason Seelig, who is sales and marketing manager for the company. "We don't have the budget to just throw a bunch of ideas against the wall and see which ones stick. We have to look at our players, and serve as a bridge between the

technology and our customers."

Earlier this year, players saw the first fruits of this research. According to Jason Seelig, one of the most frequent comments from players concerning the X-Series slots was that the bonus levels were too low—10, 15 and 25 coins in the first versions. Beginning with the Empire game, A.C. Coin released upgrades for all of the X-Series slots with the bonus levels reaching up to 100 coins (It was called "Empire Deluxe").

At this year's World Gaming Congress, the company unveils the second generation of the X-Series, beginning with a new version of Empire, called "Empire King."

Empire King

"The operators told us the X-Series games offered the best entertainment value on the floor," says Mac Seelig, "but that they lacked one important factor—the chance to make big money." He adds that players often became tired of the predictability of the bonus amounts—there were only three, listed right in front of the players, and they knew they were getting one of them.

"Empire King" is the first of a new version of X-Series game, and the new format addresses both of those issues. The new game makes the bonus round an integral part of the game. The base games themselves have been switched to more familiar programs such as "Double Diamond" and "Triple Diamond," and the math has been reworked to offer better hit frequency. The sound and graphics also have been improved.

But the real difference is in the bonus game: There are now two ways to achieve the bonus, and the bonus itself can be one of a dozen amounts, up to 1,000 coins.

The traditional bonus game is now accompanied by an "instant bonus" through an extra reel symbol. An "Empire King" symbol on the pay line shoots the gorilla directly to the top and triggers the bonus game, and the same chance of winning up to 1,000 coins.

Overall, the bonus event happens about twice as frequently in the new version as in the original, and players have the chance at the big payoff as well. "We kept the technology the customers like, but added the randomness and the chance for big money," says Mac Seelig.

According to Larry Crenshaw, A.C. Coin's director of R&D and product development, Empire King is one of three slots in the new X-Series platform that will be introduced at the World Gaming Congress. The other two are an upgraded version of "Jungle King" and "Merlin," a completely new slot.

"We will continue to improve on the X-Series platform," Crenshaw says. "We feel this slot line has a lot of resilience."

This year, however, A.C. Coin will accom-

pany the introduction of the improved X-Series with the unveiling of several new games on different, newly developed platforms—all of which, as the Seeligs are careful to point out, have patents pending.

"Previously, we had one technology with six different games," says Jason Seelig. "This year, we introduce several different platforms of technology. This is a first for A.C. Coin, made possible by the fact we now have R&D operations on the West Coast as well as in the East. We are able to work on four to five different fronts at once."

Slotto

One game the company is unveiling at the trade show is a radically designed slot called "Slotto." The bonus game is based on the lotto games run by state lotteries.

It is radical in design because of what sits on top—a big Plexiglas sphere with real numbered lotto balls blowing all around inside, resembling the lotto machine you see every evening when state lotteries televise the picking of the day's numbers. The colors, artwork and graphics of the machine itself reflect the typical colors of "official" lottery logos and signs, and the TV studio sets used when they pick the numbers. The overall effect is an obvious and immediate lottery-style atmosphere.

"We're tapping into a common theme, the thrill of playing lotto, and applying it to the slot machine," says Crenshaw. "This has been a long time in the making. Development of the equipment was very expensive, there was a long thought process, and there was a lot of talking with regulators concerning the form in which they would accept the game."

The base IGT S-Plus game includes a special reel symbol, triggering the lotto "pick." When the symbol lands, players hear authentic-sounding lottery music and the familiar sound of the quintessential local TV announcer telling them it's time to play the lotto. As the lotto balls swirl inside the sphere, the player hits a button and the machine picks one ball, which includes the player's bonus amount.

Stepping Star

A.C. Coin is introducing a new "game-within-a-game" bonus platform at the show as well—a top-box bonus game with an appearance as radical as that of Slotto, called "Stepping Star."

An S-Plus base is fitted with a huge top box with a central circle of moving, back-lit rings. Three concentric rings spin in opposite directions, forming a giant, moving display. The rings are each circled with symbols matching the symbols on the reels. There is a "pay line" going upward from the center to the top ring. The goal of the game is to get the contraption to stop with

the symbols lined up under the display's pay line matching the symbols on the three reels of the base game.

According to Grenshaw, the computer program running the game is very flexible, allowing the operator to choose when, and how often, the bonus spins occur. The prototype model is a "Red, White & Blue" base game with two separate pay tables—a normal schedule for regular reel combinations and a bonus schedule for reel combinations that match the combinations on the bonus spin.

The bonus game can be programmed to spin at random intervals, at regular intervals, or with every spin of the reels on the base game. It can be programmed to line up with the reel results often for lower amounts, rarely for super-high bonuses, or somewhere in between. "The rings can do whatever you tell them to," Grenshaw says. "It's up to the operator. This is a very intelligent machine."

3-Way Poker

A.C. Coin also is introducing a new video poker platform at the show. Called "3-Way Poker," it is a standard video poker program with three different opportunities to win on every hand.

There are three separate pay tables. At the beginning of play, the player picks a "lucky card." It can be any card from the 52-card deck. That card is displayed in the corner of the screen as play begins.

At the center of the screen are spaces for the five cards of the poker hand. The cards are dealt one at a time, and as they are dealt, the player presses a button to indicate the position, in sequential value, he thinks that card occupies in the hand. If the player makes an incorrect choice, all the cards automatically appear.

But if he gets all five sequential positions correct (e.g., "2-4-J-Q-A"), he is paid immediately for lining up the hand in sequence. If the player's "lucky card" is dealt or drawn, he is immediately paid from a separate pay table for drawing his lucky card. The remaining pay table is a standard video poker schedule; after the initial deal, the draw occurs as normal.

The sequential pay table is generous, rising according to the rank of the hand up to 8,000 coins for getting the sequence correct on a pat royal flush, which would be added to the normal 4,000-coin royal payoff. The "Lucky Card" pay table also rises according to hand rank.

"This is three different games in one," says Jason Seelig, "and it does not change the percentages of whatever regular draw, bonus or Joker poker it is placed on."

Bonus Platform

This year, A.C. Coin moves from individual game bonuses back to a bonus platform for a bank of games. However, the technology level of this bonus platform is the antithesis of the arcade-style Bonus Road Rally.

The new PC-based platform utilizes a 52-inch overhead liquid plasma video monitor, which interacts with individual LCD video monitors on each slot in the bank. The sophistication of the program permits images to leap from the big screen and jump to individual machines, to form continuous movement between the row of monitors in the individual screens, lighting up each monitor in sequence to give the appearance of movement, or to perform any number of other feats of technological wizardry.

The top box of each slot is virtually covered by a 17-inch video monitor, giving each player his own personal "movie" of bonus events. Through normal play, each game goes into its own individual bonus game on the screen, but the entire program can leap between individual games and bonus events common to the entire bank. If a common bonus event starts in the middle of a player's individual bonus game, the monitor even goes into a split screen so you can watch both.

A.C. Coin is introducing two games at the show in the new bonus platform. "Triple Stakes" is a horse-race game that was shown last year in prototype form with a dot-matrix display. "People were asking us last year if they could buy it as-is," says Mac Seelig. "But we wanted their feedback to develop it further. We wanted

to fully utilize the technology."

Basically, Triple Stakes is a bonus slot with a horse race as the bonus game, but there periodically is a common, interactive race between machines in the bank that runs both on the overhead screen and all individual screens.

"The Big Game" is a slot with a safari-themed board game as the bonus event. There are multiple levels of secondary bonus events on the individual games, the main one having the player move around a game board with squares such as "Advance to Rhino Stampede" (an instant 1,000 coins). The goal is to reach the "Lion's Den," after which the whole video screen transforms into the den while the bonus credits rack up.

The individual screens and the overhead screen are jumping with activity during the

entire game. In attract modes, a lion will "jump" from the large screen and cross all the individual monitors, or turn and look from the big screen toward one location in the bank, as if looking at one of the players.

All of the new platforms and new games may signal a new phase in the 20-year history of A.C. Coin, but the company's basic drive is still centered around the tried-and-true IGT S-Plus slot machine—or at least the S-Plus with lots of extras.

"In the end, entertainment, laughter and fun are what we are trying to give the customers," says Mac Seelig. "What we are doing is taking the basic S-Plus game and making it more fun." ♣

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Anchor Gaming

More new "game-within-game" ideas

Anchor Gaming's Randy Adams started the bonus slot craze almost single-handedly with "Wheel Of Gold" and "Wheel Of Fortune" in 1996. The latter game was a partnership between Anchor, for which Adams is marketing manager, and slot leader IGT.

Adams developed the wheel concept as one of several ideas to add secondary bonuses to reel-spinning slots—a concept which has since revolutionized the slot business. Every year since the Wheel, Anchor's competitors have watched the company's new releases, developed in partnership with one of several different slot manufacturers, to see if Adams' well of ideas has dried up.

And every year, Adams confounds them with innovation.

This has all been great for the slot business, bringing out the best in all the manufacturers as they one-up each other with new ideas.

This year, Anchor again lays down the gauntlet of challenge with a collection of innovative bonus games with themes reflecting a wide range of favorite American pastimes.

Pastimes like bowling.

Strike It Rich

Last year, Anchor introduced a bonus game called "Casino Bowling" that utilized an LED monitor in a bonus round of bowling frames. That game ultimately was pulled back by Anchor in favor of a better bowling game, on a better platform—the multimedia platform of Silicon Gaming's "Odyssey" slot.

The result is "Strike It Rich," a remarkable bonus slot that makes full use of the powerful computer capabilities of Silicon's Odyssey platform.

The base game is a 40-coin, three-reel buy-a-pay video slot featuring Silicon's unique configuration of eight pay lines—three horizontal, two diagonal and three vertical. The reel symbols are typical of the bowling-league culture—burgers, fries, beer and bowler characters.

"This is Anchor's first game in which the more you bet, the looser the game gets," says Adams. "As you bet more coins, you're buying the Strike Bonus, the Spare Bonus, diamond pays, corner pays and others."

"Diamond pays" and "corner pays" actually transform this into a ten-line slot; when they are activated, the player wins the pay table amount for combinations forming a diamond shape on the reels, or a combination on each of the top and bottom outside reels.

There are two main bonus games, triggered by lining up three "Strike Bonus" or "Spare Bonus" symbols on an active pay line. (The symbols are actually an "X" for a strike or a "/" for a spare, the bowling scorecard symbols.)

The screen then transforms into a live-action video representation of a bowling lane, from the perspective of a bowler standing behind the foul line ready to roll a frame. The player is given a "seed money" bonus, then three chances to make progressively harder spares, for progressively higher bonus amounts. For the first "roll," an easy spare is set up for the player. Just under the slot's button panel is a computer track-ball. The player uses the track-ball to actually lift the bowling ball on the video screen, aim and release it toward the pins.

The realism is incredible. Although the random number generator has already picked the bonus amount, the perception is that the player is controlling the ball. "If you roll it to the right, it hooks just as it would in reality," says Adams.

(He adds that Anchor petitioned Nevada regulators to permit modification of the game into a skill-based game. The request was denied on the basis that the payback percentage would vary according to how well a given player can bowl.)

If the player misses the spare, he is awarded the seed money and the screen switches back to the primary game. If he makes the spare, the seed money and first-level amount accumulate into the bonus award, and the video screen shows the mechanical pin sweeper and pin-setter come down to set up a more difficult spare, with a higher bonus amount.

If all three spares are made, the accumulated bonus award is tallied and the screen zooms in on the pin indicator (the display on a bowling lane on which dots indicate which pins are standing). The player is given the chance to gamble his winnings by picking one of the indicator dots for double or nothing. Half of the lights double winnings, half are "nothing."

Three "X" symbols on a lit pay line trigger the Strike Bonus round, which has the potential for the big bonus money. The RNG picks from three to seven frames in which the player can attempt to roll strikes. During this round, strikes are worth 20 coins apiece; any other roll gives the player one coin for every pin that falls.

At the end of the three-to-seven frame bonus round, the total score is tallied and the screen again zooms to the bowling lane's pin indicator board. The player is prompted to pick one of the dots, but this time they hide bonus multiplier amounts ranging from 5X to 25X. Thus, the top possible Strike Bonus is



3,500 coins—140 coins for seven strikes, with a 25X multiplier.

At press time,

the Strike It Rich game was already approved in Nevada, with approval pending in New Jersey and other jurisdictions.

Solitaire and Monkey Business

In addition to partnering with Silicon Gaming, Anchor has forged what could be a long-term relationship with Casino Data Systems. This partnership already has launched several slot games in Atlantic City, where CDS last year secured approval of its "Bandit Series" multimedia video platform.

The first joint-venture games, offered as conversion kits and introduced at Resorts Atlantic City, are multiline video slots called "Beach Party" and "Road Trip," and a new video poker game called "Solitaire."

This latter game offers an innovative new video poker platform. It is a nickel or quarter game, accepting bets of five to 25 coins. However, the bets are for the individual cards rather than the hands—one to five coins per card. The hand is dealt just as in normal video poker, and the player then chooses the best potential hand or hands from the five cards, separating the hand into stacks of cards to look like a Solitaire game.

For example, if a player was dealt Ac As Ad 3h 4h, he would make two stacks—the three Aces and the suited pair.

The player's per-card bet moves with the card. If the maximum five coins per card was wagered on the above example, the player would have 15 coins bet on the three Aces and 10 coins bet on the Three-Four combination after he stacked the cards.

The draw is then made to form complete five-card poker hands of the stacks. The draw is made from the remaining cards in a single 52-card deck (53 in the Joker version), and the player is paid separately for each hand. At press time, the Joker Wild version of the game was up and running at Resorts, and, according to Adams, a Bonus Poker version was soon to be released.

But the Anchor/CDS game perhaps destined to make the biggest splash this year is called "Monkey Business." It is a multiline video slot on the Bandit multimedia platform, available in an entire bank that forms what Adams calls a "complete slot environment."

The game, which was set to debut in August at Resorts and in Vegas shortly thereafter, is delivered in a "jungle environment" display. The bank of slots is surrounded by palm trees with transparent trunks holding

This year, Anchor again lays down the gauntlet of challenge with a collection of innovative bonus games with themes reflecting a wide range of favorite American pastimes.



bubbling water, and over the entire bank is a huge video screen that displays cartoon vignettes created in the DVD format. Adams says the casino can make this central display as elaborate as desired—Resorts is using two video-wall projection screens surrounded by regular television monitors.

The central video screen is designed to grab the attention of anyone within 50 yards or so. "We've created three different movies as an attract feature we run every five minutes," says Adams, "all in 3-D animation with sound through a \$1,000 speaker system." The animated movies appear on individual screens in the bank as well as the overhead display unit.

The attract-mode vignettes are hilarious. One is called "Swing Monkeys." It features a combo of monkey characters from the video slot game playing 60 seconds of "Monkey Swing" music. Another, called "Monkey Business," is a spoof of the movie *The Lion King*, with monkeys instead of lions. The third features monkey characters in a spoof of *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

The "Monkey Business" game itself is available as a nine-line video slot in nickel or quarter versions, or as a three-line video slot in dollar denomination. The nine-line nickel version takes up to five coins per line for a 45-coin maximum bet; the quarter and dollar versions accept one coin per line.

Above the video screen on each slot is a patented Anchor bonus wheel, including 12 spots. The spots on the wheel include eight bonus multiplier amounts ranging from 2X to 25X, three monkey symbols, and one "Witch Doctor" symbol. The monkey symbols match the monkey scatter symbol in the primary game. Three scattered monkeys on the reels with all pay lines lit trigger the bonus game.

The bonus round, however, is available to players with less than all pay lines lit—even with a single pay line. In this case, though, players have to line the monkey symbols up on a lit pay line rather than scattered.

Another unique twist is a "second chance" at the bonus round if you land only two monkey symbols. You get to spin the wheel to try for the third monkey—if the wheel stops on one of the monkey symbols, the bonus round is activated as if you had lined up three on the reels.

The bonus round has progressive levels during which the player can accumulate a huge award. First, the screen transforms to high-resolution video of the monkey characters, who pull out a game board made up of a four-by-four grid (16 spots). The player begins touching spots in an attempt to match three like symbols. A pay table on the screen lists bonus amounts for matching each of the various symbols—that table, and the jungle-themed symbols themselves, are different for each new bonus round.

There is a wild symbol somewhere on the board as well—its location is different for every game. And there is the Witch Doctor, who stops the bonus game. The object is to match three symbols before hitting the Witch Doctor.

If you hit the Witch Doctor, the character jumps over the game board in 3-D and returns your bet as a consolation prize. If you match three symbols, you win the corresponding

bonus coin amount and you get to spin the wheel to try to multiply it.

The wheel multiplier game is accompanied by yet another bonus screen. If players match three symbols in the board game, one of the monkey characters cracks a coconut bearing the bonus award into three parts, and the player has the opportunity to spin the wheel to multiply each smaller amount. If the wheel stops on a multiplier, the smaller amount is multiplied by up to 10 and that amount is added to the bonus award.

If it stops on a monkey, the nonmultiplied amount is added to the award. If it stops on a monkey all three times, a big-money random bonus award is added to the total. The Witch Doctor stops the game, but the player collects all bonuses accumulated to that point.

Dual Video

At the World Gaming Congress, Anchor is introducing two new dedicated multiline video slots produced in partnership with IGT. According to Adams, the programs are identical with different themes and names—"Hillbilly Feud" and "Superstar Wrestling."

The base games are IGT i-Game Plus multiline video slots in slant-top configuration, with graphics designed by Anchor. On top of each base is a top box incorporating a second, 14-inch LCD color video screen, powered by a separate, Anchor Gaming dedicated PC-based video system.

Each game has three separate bonus events. One is an accumulating bonus—a bonus jackpot accrues during normal play, until a special reel symbol lands and the player collects the bonus.

The other two bonus games are linked together. A reel trigger transforms the main video screen into a second-screen bonus game. Six locations on the screen hide bonus awards. The player chooses five spots.

Five of the locations hide bonus coin amounts, and one activates the third bonus game. If the player chooses that spot, the LCD screen transforms into a themed board game.

In "Hillbilly Feud," it's a race between the Hatfields and the McCoys. Characters from each family are paired off in a race toward the "still," collecting bonus coins along the way.

In "Superstar Wrestling," it's the male wrestlers vs. the female wrestlers, racing toward the championship belt.

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Aristocrat

Unveiling a unique on-line bonusing system—and the first 20-line slots for Americans

Australia's Aristocrat Leisure Industries has been America's teacher in the world of multiline video.

Four years go, the first multiline Aristocrat games intrigued U.S. gaming patrons, challenging them to learn something new to them in a slot machine for the first time in the modern casino era. They were up to the challenge, first learning the benefits of five pay lines, then nine pay lines, gradually increasing the per-line bets to as much as 10. Players are now accustomed to betting 90 nickels per spin on a nine-line game.

The Australian dean of multiline video also taught Americans about second-screen bonus games—first with "Caribbean Gold" and most recently with "Chicken," a hilarious game that reaffirmed the Aussies' mastery of the genre in the face of American second-screen games like "Reel 'Em In."

This year, Aristocrat is administering its next lesson in multiline with the first 20-line games in the U.S., headed by "Jumpin' Joeys," the first of several games available with 20 pay lines and total bets of up to 200 coins.

Aristocrat will display several new games in 20-line and other configurations at the World Gaming Congress. However, individual games will not be the star of the manufacturer's show this year. The star will be a new bonusing system developed by the manufacturer, a system unlike any current bonusing setup on the market, called "Hyperlink."

Aristocrat is administering its next lesson in multiline with the first 20-line games in the U.S., headed by "Jumpin' Joeys," the first of several games available with 20 pay lines and total bets of up to 200 coins.

Hyperlink

Hyperlink is a unique combination of a linked progressive jackpot and random bonus award. It has been up and running in Australia for nearly two years. This system links one of two multiline video games to four progressive jackpots, ranging from a "mini-jackpot" that resets at \$20 to a "grand jackpot" that resets at \$25,000. With 20 machines linked to the system, a random jackpot is awarded every minute or two to one of the machines.

But it's not simply awarded. When the random number generator picks a machine, that slot goes into a second-screen game—five spin-

ning reels are represented on the screen, and the player stops each reel on a number—the total of the five numbers determines which of the four progressive jackpots you win.

According to Stuart Bull, Aristocrat's director of marketing, players in Australia are flocking to the Hyperlink system because of the unprecedented frequency of the progressive prizes. "Often, progressive jackpot prizes offer a 'change of lifestyle' to players who participate on the link," he says. "Wide-area progressive systems use the critical mass of multiple sites or whole states to generate higher prize limits. These prize limits are reaching phenomenal levels. However, players are becoming cynical of such systems, as they feel their chances of winning are very small.

"Because Hyperlink is an in-house jackpot system, the excitement of the link is contained within the immediate link's environment. As such, players feel their chances of winning are much greater, compared with wide-area progressive systems."

At the World Gaming Congress, Hyperlink will be displayed in two different game formats—a multiline video version called "Cash Express" and a keno version called "Carnival Keno."

Cash Express will be shown linked to modified versions of Aristocrat's popular "Penguin Pays" game and one new game, "Queen of the Nile." The common element between the stand-alone versions of the two games is that the bonus feature appears on the primary screen; neither game has a second-screen bonus game.

Hyperlink adds a common second-screen bonus game to all machines in the link. In a "mystery jackpot"-style setup, machines in the link are chosen randomly to launch second-screen bonus games. Players compete with each other to win one of the four jackpots before someone else in the bank wins it, at which point it resets to its lowest level. "You see a betting frenzy," Bull says, "because the more coins you bet, the better your chances are of triggering the bonus screen. Once in the second screen, you're guaranteed to win one of the four progressive prizes. Then, you're competing with other players of the prizes."

Carnival Keno is a 10-column, 100-coin keno game which adds the same common second-screen game for the progressive prizes. Both are being offered to casinos as packages including machines, stools, signage, installation and service.

Bull says the amount of the progressive



prizes is determined by the casino, based on the number of machines in the link. (The minimum number is 12, which Bull says will generate a progressive jackpot every five minutes or so.)

New Games

Although Hyperlink will be the feature attraction, Aristocrat will be displaying all of its new games this fall, many in the 20-line configuration. "Jumpin' Joeys," which recently was approved in the Native American casino jurisdictions, is available in either a 20-line or nine-line configuration that reprises the popular bonus feature first seen in "Penguin Pays."

"Queen of the Nile" is a Cleopatra-themed game with two separate bonus features. First, the Cleopatra symbol is wild and doubles any jackpot in which it lands. Second, three or more scattered Pyramid symbols send the game into 15 free spins, during which all jackpots are tripled. An interesting twist to this feature is that three or more Pyramids during free spin mode adds another 15 free spins.

Other new games to be introduced at the show include "Dolphin Treasure," "Cash Chameleon," "Black Panther" and "Wild Amazon."

Many of the new games will be displayed for the first time in Aristocrat's new MVP slant-top cabinet. Also for the first time, the manufacturer is displaying its games in configurations set up for high-end slot players: "Black Panther" and "Wild Amazon" will be shown in three-line, nine-coin dollar units.

According to Bull, the company is using this year's World Gaming Congress to introduce its company to Nevada, where its license is still pending, as much as a showcase of new products for its existing markets.

"This year's show will be Aristocrat's most important show during the company's lengthy presence in the U.S. gaming market," he says. "Not only does the company have a number of innovative and exciting new products to showcase, but the show will also mark the first step in Aristocrat's preparation to enter the lucrative Nevada gaming market."

"The product on display at this year's event certainly shows that Aristocrat is more than prepared, and that the company will not disappoint either the Nevada market or its existing, loyal customer base throughout the U.S. and South America as we move into the 21st century." ♣



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World of Slots '99



Focusing on "market demand for new features"

Ever since Atronic Americas LLC released its first group of 3-D video slots in U.S. casinos, American slot players have been anticipating the release of a hopefully large batch of brand-new Atronic games. The company's slots feature beautifully intricate graphics, clever second-screen bonuses and consistently high hit frequency.

However, while the company will display some new games this fall, its priority for the past two years has been establishing its existing products on solid ground in all the major North American jurisdictions.

"We have new games ready to go, but we are focused, more importantly, on market demand for new features," says Atronic president and chief operating officer Dick Vink. "We are making sure our slots are ready for ticket printers, coupon redemption, cashless wagering—so all of our new games are integrated with these features. Application software is at a high level of priority so our new games will have the features operators are asking for."

Atronic is now licensed to sell slots in all North American jurisdictions except Louisiana, and Vink says the process already is under way in that state.

The company received Nevada approval of its first game seven months ago, and Vink says the company is initially taking a "low key" approach to that market. "Our goal was to be in 100 locations with a representative bank within six months," he says. "We did that in four and a half months. That mission was accomplished to get good feedback from as many operators as possible."

According to Atronic marketing manager Jason Stage, the feedback has been very positive so far. "Against WMS products, we've been very successful," Stage says. "The slot managers definitely have embraced our games. They are comparing us to Williams, and our expectation is to out-perform Williams."

So far, Stage adds, the strongest Atronic games in Nevada have been "Sphinx,"

"Volcano Island," "Diver's Dream" and "Secrets of India." "Our games are really beginning to gather steam in the state," he says.

"Pirate's Cove" and "Fireworks" were both released in July, and Stage says initial results for those two games are positive as well. The company is in the process of making improvements to "Desperado," which did not fare well initially in the market.

Vink notes that Desperado, with its cowboy theme, actually has fared better in the Dominican Republic and elsewhere in Latin America than in the western United States.

Old and New

At this year's World Gaming Congress, Atronic will display several new games, but also will display the newest versions of all its established video slots. "We'll be showing our game library," says Stage. "In many jurisdictions, our library is still relatively new. We haven't seen saturation with our current library in any of the jurisdictions."

Besides being displayed with application software in place for coin-free play, all of the current Atronic games will be shown in the company's new slant-top cabinet. Also, Atronic will display games in a Bertha-sized cabinet called "The Giant," which was developed by Rhode Island-based Top Gun Gaming, a company co-founded by former Atronic executive Troy Parrott.

"It is an Atronic game in a giant cabinet, 3 feet wide by 7 feet tall," says Parrott, who is a partner in Top Gun Gaming. "Any game Atronic has approved can be placed in this format." Vink estimates initial approval from the GLI lab should be secured by the time of the trade show.

Meanwhile, final touches are being placed on the new Atronic games to be displayed at the show. "Break The Spell" is a multiline video slot with a medieval-wizard theme, available in five- or nine-line configuration. "We have expanded the 3-D graphic presentation to the symbols on the reels themselves," Stage says. "We have three-dimensional, animated symbols on the reels in this game. Reels 2, 3 and 4 each contain a lizard symbol that is wild for the entire reel. When it lands, it animates and flies off the reel. 'Merlin' then changes the other symbols on the reel to the wild symbol."

Stage says Atronic also has improved

the mathematics over its previous multiline games to make top jackpots more frequent. "You don't see the phenomenon of a true top jackpot on these types of slots because of the video reels and the long cycle," Stage

says. "We've programmed this game to give frequent true top awards to the player. We combine a high hit frequency on the base game with a very high amount in the scatter pay, along with our proven second-screen philosophy."

The second-screen bonus game in Break The Spell takes the player into a castle courtyard, where a wizard stands near five frogs. "You select one of the frogs, and the wizard 'breaks the spell' with his wand," says Stage. "What follows is one of several humorous animated sequences in which the player is rewarded with a bonus amount. The player can win from three to 75 times his total bet in the bonus round."

Among the animated sequences: A frog dances after being touched by the wand. Another blows up like a balloon. Or turns into a chicken. The highest bonus award is granted if—you guessed it—the frog turns into a prince.

Stage says several other new Atronic multiline games are currently under development, which may result in "a few surprises" for trade show attendees.

"We're trying to do some unique things in video, expanding the market for quarter and dollar denominations," says Stage. "Casinos are hungry for new dollar products right now. We'll offer five-line dollar games at a single coin per line. We've already had success with them in Nevada, and we're interested in taking more time with operators who are interested in courting this market."

Video Poker

One type of Atronic game new to the U.S. market is video poker. The company has sold games on its proprietary video poker format in international jurisdictions for years, and, according to Stage, the company is ready to unveil the "Hot Hand Poker Series" at the World Gaming Congress.

"The series includes all the popular video poker games we've had in the international markets, all with Atronic's 3-D animation," he says. "We will have several versions displayed at the show."

One video poker product sure to make a splash at the gaming show is "Royal Flush



"We are making sure our slots are ready for ticket printers, coupon redemption, cashless wagering—so all of our new games are integrated with these features. Application software is at a high level of priority so our new games will have the features operators are asking for."

—Dick Vink, Atronic president/CEO



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Atronic is in the process of making improvements to its "Desperado" games, shown above.



Challenge," an interactive, progressive video poker game on Atronic's "Action Jackpots" bonusing system.

"This is the first interactive progressive concept for video poker players," Stage says. "The progressive amount is funded from the players, and when the bonus event occurs, everyone on the bank of machines who qualifies will receive a portion of the jackpot, based on their strategy and on the outcome of the bonus round." (To qualify, the player has to have been playing and participating before the event occurs.)

According to Stage, the casino sets a threshold "window" during which the bonus event occurs randomly—a predetermined jackpot and coin-in level. Lights and sound effects herald the beginning of the "Action Jackpot Royal Flush Challenge" for everyone in the bank. "The screen on each individual machine changes, and the player is now in a challenge with the other poker players on the bank to collect as many royal flushes as possible within a certain time period," Stage explains.

In the "Challenge" mode, the program switches to a 20-card deck containing only Tens and higher, and the player continues to draw to the same hand, trying to collect more royal flushes than anyone else. "You get 0.2 points for each card toward the royal," he says. "the higher the score, the more of the jackpot you win."

Stage says Atronic is watching the marketplace closely before moving into other formats for its games. For instance, the company's parent company, the Gauselmann Group of Germany, has been a leader in Europe's AWP (Amusement With Prizes) market for years—the same type of game which slot leader IGT is currently converting to casino slots through its Barcrest subsidiary.

"We were pioneers in the world market for AWP features in reel slot games," says Stage. "We have had them for over six years. We've chosen to focus our efforts in the U.S. on the video market, where we see the greatest strength. But we have some of the top-performing games in the AWP market. We'll be watching IGT's Barcrest sales very closely, because we have all the technology available to produce those types of machines."

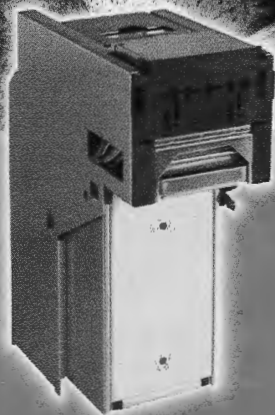
The company also produces multigame units for the skill market in North Carolina and elsewhere, but Stage says the company has no plan to introduce them in major casino jurisdictions because the computer memory would be spread too thin to maintain the quality of current games. "We wouldn't want to compromise the graphics of our games just for a multigame unit," he says. "You're sacrificing speed and graphics, and going up in cost. At this time, we don't want to go above the \$10,000 price point."

For the future, Vink says plans are to spread the Atronic name into Canada and further penetrate Latin America. "We're building on our successful initial acceptance there," he says, adding that Atronic is ready to move with the trends in slot operations. "Our current platform allows us to handle all the requirements of the market today. And like everyone else, we are already developing a bigger and better platform." ♣

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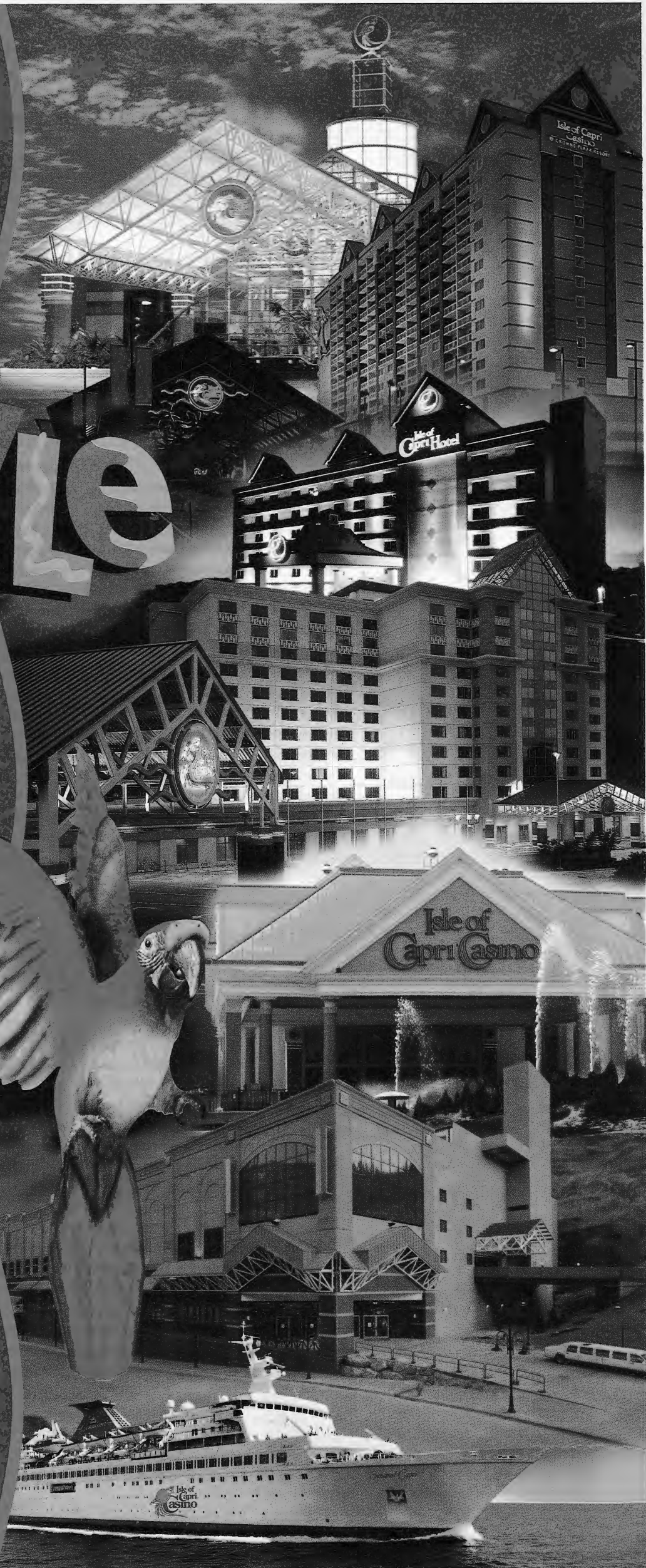
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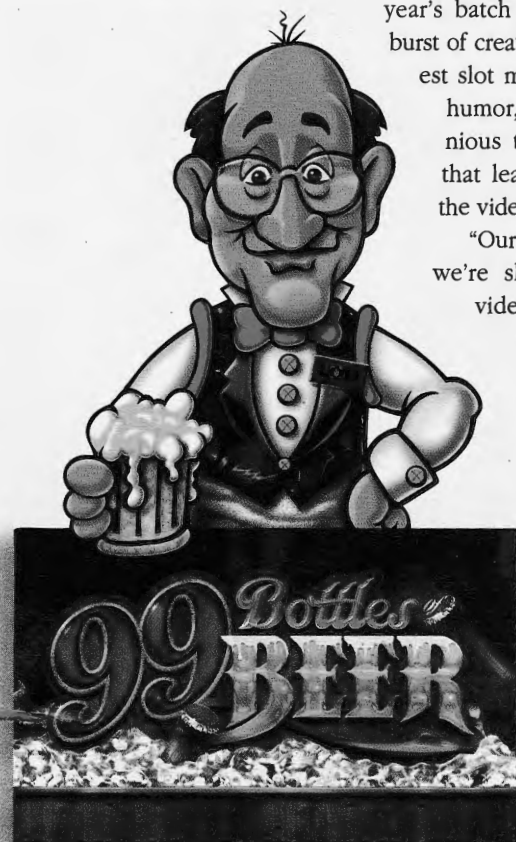


World
of
Slots '99

Bally Gaming

Making magic: humor and creativity in a parade of new games

**Bally Gaming entered 1999
with established platforms on
which to place new slot games
of practically any style, shape
or form. That accomplished,
the company turned to what it
does best—game design
and development.**



For a good part of this decade, the Bally Gaming unit of Alliance Gaming Inc. worked to establish new slot platforms for its games.

After a dismal decade for the manufacturer during the 1980s, Bally worked to identify where the market was going so its creative staff could restore some of the former glory of the one-time king of the slot floor.

Company officials first detected that the market was ripe for a multigame video slot, releasing the "Game Maker" platform and finding customers eager to gobble up the video-lottery-style format. Not long after that, when multiline video slots first became the rage, the company launched its successful "Feature Frenzy" line. When Anchor Gaming showed the value of the "game-within-a-game" concept, Bally produced "Roll The Dice" and "Bell Ringer." After Silicon Gaming's Odyssey unveiled a large market for computerized game functions with intricate 3-D graphics, Bally launched its "Game Magic" platform.

Bally Gaming entered 1999 with established platforms on which to place new slot games of practically any style, shape or form. That accomplished, the company turned to what it does best—game design and development.

Bally will treat this year's World Gaming Congress to a flood of new games in its various slot styles. This year's batch of new games reveals a burst of creativity from the world's oldest slot maker. The games employ humor, clever characters, ingenious themes—and a collection that leans rather heavily toward the video side.

"Our numbers are showing that we're shipping more and more video and less and less reel-spinners," says Morry Goldstein, president and CEO of Alliance Gaming. "I don't think the number of reel-spinners will ever be zero, but it's not the dog food people want to eat right now."

Thrillions

This evaluation, of course, does not necessarily include reel-spinners in the multi-site progressive mode,

particularly for Bally Gaming. The company's "Thrillions" progressive system got off to a great start earlier this year with the "Betty Boop" line of reel-spinners.

The Betty Boop slots themselves have been popular for players because of a high hit frequency that all but makes up for the typically low payback percentage of a big-money progressive.

"We built the map [for Thrillions Betty Boop] around the premise that the jackpot would hit once every two or three weeks, for about \$200,000. That 200 grand—or at least \$100,000, the reset amount—is paid in one lump, too—no annuities. It's quite different than other progressive products out there," says Goldstein.

The first batch of games carrying the Betty Boop name includes three reel-spinners based on some of Bally's most popular "ProSeries" slot machines. "Betty Boop's Big Hit" is similar to "Stars and Stripes," with Betty's figure placed on red, white and blue 7s. "Betty Boop's Double Jackpot" is based on "Double Jackpot Blazing 7s," and "Betty Boop's Roaring 20s" is based on the stand-alone Roaring 20s game.

At the World Gaming Congress, a new Betty Boop Thrillions game will be added to the line, called "Born To Boop," a reel-spinner featuring a free-spin bonus round.

One more Betty Boop slot will be unveiled at the trade show also—a version which may or may not eventually be placed on the Thrillions network, called "Betty Boop's Love Meter."

The slot itself is a redesigned version of "Bell Ringer," the "game-within-a-game" slot introduced a year ago that features a bonus round set up like a "test-your-strength" carnival game. The meter that would, in the carnival, tell you whether you're a weakling or a strongman contains progressively larger bonus amounts.

The idea of applying the Betty Boop brand to this slot came from Top Gun Gaming, a slot-design company currently working with Atronic and other manufacturers. According to co-owner Troy Parrott, Top Gun designed the concept and cabinet for the Love Meter and



worked with Bally to co-develop it.

"We worked with a sculptor to get a 3-foot sculpture of Betty, and got a lady from Hollywood to do the voices and sing the

songs," Parrott says. "The game is based on the Betty Boop Love Meter game that was in the old arcades."

"Picture the Bell Ringer game with Betty Boop wrapped around it," says Goldstein. "The bonus meter contains lots of color, with the molded plastic body of Betty Boop wrapped around it. It's getting very good play in Nevada, and it will probably do even better in New Jersey—we just received approval from the Division of Gaming Enforcement on the Thrillions platform. The first game there will be the Betty Boop's Big Hit series."

In Betty Boop's Love Meter, a reel trigger symbol sends the game into a bonus round in which the player presses a button to send the lights of the "Love Meter" flashing until they stop on a bonus level ranging from 10 coins—"huggable"—to 2,000 coins—if you hit that, Betty rates you as a "Love Machine." Bonus levels in between include levels like 60 coins for "steamy," 100 coins for "volcano" and 500 coins for "inferno."

Game Magic

The Game Magic multimedia platform has proven to be a perfect platform in which the creativity of Bally's game developers can flourish. Last year's big introduction, the "Let's Make A Deal" joint-venture game produced with Shuffle Master, has been refined over the year, and Goldstein says it is now garnering sizable orders.

This year, one prominently featured game in the Game Magic platform will be "99 Bottles of Beer."

It is a multiline video with a second-screen bonus game depicting a three-dimensional image of a bar, manned by the cartoon character "Lou the Bartender." Another cartoon character on the screen is seated at the bar, representing the player. Lou slides mugs of beer down the bar toward the other character, and the player presses a button to "catch" the mug and chug the beer. "You

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accumulate bonus payments for every beer you catch and chug," says Goldstein. "If they fall to the floor, you don't get anything. It's a lot of fun to play this game."

Bally also is introducing a new video poker game in the Game Magic platform, its 3-D graphics accompanied by an intriguing new twist. Called "Super Bonus Poker," the game features four separate hands of bonus poker, with bets of up to 10 coins per hand. The twist is that the pay tables get progressively better as you activate each hand—pay table 2 is better than pay table 1, and the fourth pay table pays an optimal 103 percent.

According to Bally Gaming marketing director Marcus Prater, the best payback does not require max coin. "Just activate the four hands with four coins and you get the full advantage of the pay tables," Prater says. "This game takes advantage of the high-coin poker arena with a one-of-a-kind game."

Game Maker

Bally's burst of comic creativity can also be found this year in the Game Maker multigame video platform. One new multiline game is called "Baby Boomers." The nine-line game features reel symbols like pacifiers, building blocks, teddy bears and

a Gerber-style, smiling baby.

Three "Diaper Pins" trigger the second screen, a lineup of five babies with diapers on. The player picks three of the five diapers for bonus payments—when you pick one, it flies off the baby to reveal the bonus amount.

For another multiline game, Bally has actually created a cartoon character called the "Y2K bug." The little Millennium Bug is the featured character on the game "Y2K." According to Goldstein, the object is to line up three Y2K bugs on a lit pay line to trigger a second screen depicting a clock that doesn't work, an ATM machine that doesn't work, or some other electronic item. "You get the bonus if they *don't* work," he says.

(Goldstein happily concedes that this particular game may only have a shelf life of about six months or so.)

"Boxcar Bonus" is a more traditional multiline game on the Game Maker platform. It is a five-line game with an Old West theme, its reel symbols things like trains, stagecoaches and gold prospectors. Three train symbols in any position trigger the bonus game with animation of a train chugging off screen. A second screen appears, depicting three boxcars. The player picks one for a bonus prize ranging from 10 times to 100 times the total bet.

Bally's burst of comic creativity can also be found this year in the Game Maker multigame video platform. One new multiline game is called "Baby Boomers."

The nine-line game features reel symbols like pacifiers, building blocks, teddy bears and a Gerber-style, smiling baby.



According to Goldstein, Bally also plans to show a collection of system devices in a series called "Less Cash"—demonstrating systems such as smart cards, system printers, the "Coupon Cashless" system, the CashCage bill acceptor/dispenser and other equipment designed to reduce the cash necessary to run a slot.

Aside from that, Bally's trade show this year will be a showcase of creativity in game development. "It's a little different

than in the past," Goldstein says, "because all of our platforms are pretty well stabilized. What we're doing now is creating loads of new games for all of them." ♣



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Casino Data Systems

"Bandit Series" as the platform of the future

Bingo Bonus provides a great representation of live bingo. The 20-inch rectangular screen displays three-dimensional reels on the top and a huge bingo card seemingly angled toward the player on the bottom.

Two years ago Casino Data Systems had its debutante ball as a slot manufacturer. The Las Vegas-based company had spent most of the 1990s as a leading provider of player tracking and slot accounting systems before applying its computer expertise to software design, and in 1997, the company rolled out several lines of slots in a wide variety of formats.

In its first full year as a slot manufacturer, CDS scored a couple of hits, a couple of misses.

There was "Reel Deal," the clever series of video poker games with three-reel bonus games—bridging the chasm between video poker and slot play in a game style that is still gaining steam. In fact, it is the star of the CDS poker lineup.

There was "Safe Buster," the giant hybrid slot bearing a safe dial which, with every losing spin on the reels, twirled toward deciphering a combination to "unlock" a bonus prize. And there was the "XTreme Series" multiline video games, slots with sharp graphics and funny themes that held their own alongside the phenomenal Nevada success of Williams' "Reel 'Em In."

All in all, it was a fairly decent showing for what was essentially a startup slot manufacturer in a mature market. But one other format introduced in 1997 had yet to be approved by any regulatory jurisdiction. And it was a format that would signal the official arrival of CDS as a slot manufacturer: the "Bandit Series."

The Bandit Series is the company's multimedia platform—slots with huge, rectangular video screens displaying breathtaking 3-D graphics powered by a high-speed Pentium processor. It was the first slot to offer the kind of video histrionics introduced in 1996 by Silicon Gaming, whose "Odyssey" multigame slots were already placed around Nevada by the time of its introduction.

But the breakthrough for the CDS Bandit Series would not come in the compa-

ny's Nevada backyard. It would come in what was traditionally an unlikely location for the launch of new slot platforms—Atlantic City.

Bingo!

While Silicon Gaming's groundbreaking Odyssey slot achieved approval in Nevada and some other jurisdictions with relative ease, that startup company ran into a brick wall at first in the much more stringent New Jersey regulatory environment. The state's regulators had immediate problems with Silicon's hard-drive format, resulting in the prototype being sent back for modification repeatedly. Each time modifications were made, the game went back into the queue for testing at the regulatory lab.

This left the New Jersey market wide open for CDS and the Bandit Series. The major difference between the Bandit Series and Odyssey is that Silicon's hard-drive processor controls all game functions as well as the graphics and sound. The Bandit Series Pentium processor controls graphics and sound only.

The actual game functions are EPROM-based through proprietary CDS technology. The New Jersey regulators were well-acustomed to EPROM technology. As a result, the Bandit platform breezed through the testing lab, achieving approval and licensing while Silicon was still struggling with modifications.

It was a first in a number of ways. It was the first time a completely new slot platform achieved approval in New Jersey before Nevada. It was the first approval anywhere for the Bandit Series. It was a rare Atlantic City launch of a brand-new slot.

CDS would make the most of the opportunity.

As it turns out, Steve Weiss, CEO and chief technology officer of CDS, had a particular Bandit slot in mind for the New Jersey market all along—the "Bingo Bonus" slot. The game of bingo had long been an institution in the East. For decades, Friday night bingo at the local church or fire hall had been a way of life for women in Eastern suburbia—and a tried-and-true way to generate revenue for the coffers of local charitable organizations.

That's why, in deference to their local constituencies, state legislators left bingo off the list of casino games to be legalized when gaming was approved by New Jersey voters



in 1976. While bingo parlors are a staple of casinos in the West, Atlantic City casino patrons play

the game only in promotional events staged by slot clubs.

Bingo in a video gaming machine was nothing new; EPROM-based video bingo games from several manufacturers were already in the marketplace. What *was* new was a video bingo game that offered the look and feel of a live bingo game. CDS placed the bingo game functions in the EPROM program like other manufacturers, but used the Pentium-powered graphics and sound to create a masterful presentation.

Bingo Bonus provides a great representation of live bingo. The 20-inch rectangular screen displays three-dimensional reels on the top and a huge bingo card seemingly angled toward the player on the bottom. At the beginning of play, the player selects a bingo configuration, from "Any Way" to "Cover All." The more difficult the pattern, the higher the range of bonus awards when the player achieves bingo.

Any time a numbered bingo ball appears on a lit pay line that matches one of the numbers on the bingo card, the ball pops out and flies down to the bottom half of the screen, "daubing" the card. When bingo is achieved, the screen transforms into floating bingo balls. The player picks one, which bursts to reveal the bonus amount.

Bingo Bonus slots debuted at the Showboat in Atlantic City in February, and were an immediate hit. Weiss credits Showboat for supporting the company's licensing efforts and making a major commitment to the game when it was approved, placing the units in big numbers. "The Showboat people made [the Atlantic City debut] possible," he says. "The Bingo games have been well-received in that marketplace, and are now being installed in other casinos."

As the year progressed, CDS won over more allies, both in Atlantic City and in its own slot-manufacturing sector. The newly renovated Resorts Atlantic City is rapidly becoming a CDS showcase, debuting several of the manufacturer's new Bandit Series slots—including the first fruits of a partnership between CDS and Anchor Gaming that has resulted in some of the most entertaining games in the market.

Anchor and the Bandit

CDS and Anchor have joined forces to



develop several slot ideas—one of which is a new, high-tech version of a former CDS game and several others which Anchor Gaming marketing manager Randy Adams brought to CDS for final development in the Bandit platform.

Last year, CDS introduced a game called "Monkey Business" in its "Wheel Appeal" line of games, a combination of the Xtreme Video multiline platform and an Anchor Gaming-style wheel-spinning bonus round. "We weren't happy about how it was packaged," says Weiss. "We agreed with Randy to move it over to the Bandit platform, in a slant cabinet with a 19-inch monitor mounted horizontally."

The result is the new Bandit Series version of "Monkey Business," a game offering a dazzling array of multiple, interconnected bonus events. Just as dazzling is its presentation. CDS has a very successful interior signage division, a fact that came in handy in creating a slot product that also is an entertainment attraction. CDS Signs created a jungle display for Monkey Business that includes palm trees with bubbling water inside, elaborate lighting, and the central feature—an overhead video display featuring animated vignettes related to the game characters—such as "Swing Monkeys," a movie presenting a combo of monkeys playing cool swing music.

The "Monkey Business" game itself is a multiline video slot with an Anchor bonus wheel that includes a variety of bonus multiplier amounts, plus monkey characters and a "Witch Doctor" character that ends the bonus round. There are two ways to get to the bonus round, and three different bonus events.

"The game is a kick to play," says Weiss, "not just for the three levels of bonuses, the Witch Doctor and other characters, or Anchor's patented wheel technology. We've talked a long time about wanting to deliver not only games, but attractions to the floor. The sign package being built for this game by CDS Signs has many unique elements—the Plexiglas palm trees with bubbling water, and 35-inch monitors built into the sign, playing animated movies we produced at CDS."

"The logo is designed to grab attention, combined with 15-second short movies that are funny and one-minute movies that are really well-produced."

Weiss says CDS intends to use its sign division, as well as the software and electronics capabilities that have been a central feature of the company in its player-tracking business, to forge ahead in the slot market. "We have a view of the evolution of the slot as an attraction on the floor," he says. "With our tracking system technology, which we can use to perhaps link multiple properties, CDS has a unique position in the marketplace for this effort. When you play Monkey Business, you'll feel the quality of that effort."

Other joint ventures between Anchor and CDS include the multiline video slots "Beach Party" and "Road Trip," and a new video poker game called "Solitaire," featuring an innovative platform that allows the player to split his initial five cards into separate hands and draw to those separate hands, all

from one deck.

At press time, all of the joint-venture products except Monkey Business were up and running at Resorts Atlantic City, and Monkey Business was expected to be active during August.

"[Vice president of gaming] Kerry Smith at Resorts has given us an exciting opportunity," Weiss says, noting that Resorts has already purchased over 500 of the company's games, and will be purchasing more after Monkey Business is up and running.

More Bandits

At the World Gaming Congress, CDS plans to showcase the Bandit Series, displaying a total of five games that are now or will be available for purchase by that point. ("Our plan this year is that we're not showing any-

thing we can't sell you that day," says Weiss.)

The games will include Monkey Business, Bingo Bonus, "Reel Racers" and "Baseball," all of which have been released to the market over the past year, plus one new game, called "Easy Street."

Easy Street is a nine-line, 45-coin game in the Bandit platform with a bonus round themed as a board game, with a character called "Chance the Dog" working his way down "Easy Street" to win big money.

Meanwhile, Weiss says CDS has submitted new software for Bingo Bonus to the regulatory labs, with an improved sound package and a better pay structure to make the bonus amounts more attractive. Other new features include modifications to the bonus round (you'll be able to see the bonus amounts on the balls you did not choose now) and the

ability to cancel the bingo configuration that was being used by the last player when you start. "Someone may have been playing a four-corners game and maybe you don't want to," says Weiss. "Now you'll be able to cancel it and play another version."

But according to Weiss, the main focus of CDS in the near term will be to further develop the Bandit Series and to use CDS Signs to bring its games to market as entertaining packages.

"The brunt of our new games will be in the Bandit technology," he says. "The reason for that is simple. We believe we're delivering more entertainment value for the player. That's what we believe players want—greater entertainment value and a realistic chance to win money. All of our game designs are based on those two principles." ♣

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Innovative Gaming

Customized and interactive

Innovative Gaming Corp. of America had a niche carved for itself years ago in the casino industry. IGCA was the company with the multiplayer machines simulating table games. This year, the company began forging a new identity.

It's not that it needed to branch out for survival—while automated table game slots do comprise a finite market, IGCA has achieved fabulous success with its "Power Pit" series of games, filling huge orders for casinos in jurisdictions that do not permit table games. Moreover, the traditional casino market, where the games can be played to learn table games in a non-intimidating manner, has barely been tapped.

But the Reno-based company chose to branch out last year with its first single-player offering, an innovative series of bonus games called "Bonus Streak." These are large top-box games for placement on IGT S-Plus slant-top bases. Designed to run on a dedicated microprocessor, the games are displayed on a 17-inch, high-resolution LCD screen. The first game in the series, simply called Bonus Streak, displays an interactive "bonus card." Triggered by a reel symbol, the bonus game presents a 52-card deck. The player collects bonus coin amounts with every card drawn without making a pair. The bonus round ends when a card is matched.

A second game, called "Cascade of Diamonds," displays a jewel box on the bonus screen and prompts the player to push a button, after which nine diamonds fall from the top of the screen. Some land in the box and some do not. The player gets a bonus amount for each diamond that lands in the box.

At around the same time the first Bonus Streak game was unveiled, the company introduced "Mythical Reels," the first slot to use a High Definition Volumetric Display (HDVD)—a hologram. The reels look like they are floating outside the cabinet.

Shortly before IGCA delivered the first units of Mythical Reels to Caesars Palace and the Luxor in Las Vegas last March, the company submitted another new video slot plat-

form for licensing in Nevada. According to Rex Stock, the company's vice president of sales and marketing, the software platform is for a series of single-player video slots using a proprietary "Intelligent Input/Output Board" (IIOB) and a Linux operating system, which is lower in cost and more powerful than real-time operating systems.

But the greatest advantage of the game platform, Stock says, is a modular software structure that enables graphics, video artwork—the theme of a game—to be changed rapidly without affecting game functions.

"This is a multiline, multicoin format with math similar to the top Australian-style games on the market, but I can customize it without having to go in and rewrite the code," Stock says. "For example, you can't take the cars in the Aristocrat game 'Top Gear' and make them into Indy cars, or put the casino's logo on them. But in this format, you'd be able to make them into Harrah's cars or Mirage cars."

The same goes for the reel symbols, game title, lettering—everything in the game can be made to reflect the name and theme of the casino.

The company will display the first two games in the platform, called "Monster Money" and "Tiki Treasure," at the World Gaming Congress. Both are multiline video slots with a wild symbol which appears on the fifth reel. According to Stock, this adds volatility to the typically high hit frequency inherent in Australian-style games.

"Having both high hit frequency and volatility in a game is not an easy thing to accomplish," he says. "Lots of little pays may keep the player interested, but the bottom line is that you've got to be able to win some money. Some games have fallen by the wayside because they have this huge spike on the low end, but their designers haven't figured out how to pay the 250-coin, 500-coin or 1,000-coin hits."

Both of the games can be customized by the casino, and Stock says IGCA will offer package deals to casinos that include game customization.

According to Stock, the game program itself was developed after studying the program math of multiline games produced by several other manufacturers. "We bow to the expertise of the people who invented this type of game," he says. "We looked at the Aristocrat math, we looked at WMS and Atronic. We then formulated the program and made adjustments to give it both hit fre-

quency and a little volatility."

He says IGCA plans to release at least a game a month in the new video series over the next year, in

four separate game programs.

IGCA also has developed a tournament program for the series, which Stock says will be offered to customers for a nominal fee.

More Specialties

IGCA is set to introduce another game in the Bonus Streak series, called "Bonus Dice." According to Stock, the game works basically in the same way as Cascade of Diamonds, with a video roll of the dice determining the bonus amount.

The company also is developing another specialty slot, called "Revolving Rings." It incorporates a patented bonus device consisting of three concentric, counter-rotating rings. In the bonus round, a pinball is shot into the playing field and travels around the circumference of the outer ring. The player hits a "stop" button and the ball falls to the rotating surface of the first ring. There are holes on the inside of the rings, and the ball either drops into a hole or is kicked to the other ring. If it falls from this ring, it drops into a hole at the bottom of the device. The earlier the ball drops into a hole, the higher the bonus.

Meanwhile, sales continue to be strong for the company's table-game machines, "B.J. Blitz," "21 Stud," "Hot Shot Dice" and "Lightning Strike Roulette." The games are sold in units seating three, five or six players. On the blackjack and stud poker games, each player has an individual monitor and a large monitor in the center of the bank of player stations contains live-action video of the dealer. In the craps and roulette games, players stand around the large game with the dealer video at one end.

Stock says the company markets the game in Nevada and other jurisdictions with live gaming as well as places like North Carolina, where upward of 50 Power Pit units were installed two years ago at the Harrah's Cherokee Mountain casino.

"Nevada and other live gaming jurisdictions should have more of these games," he says. "Casino people complain that games like craps and roulette are dying, but without considering these games, they're missing a good way to teach the games to new players—and get decent revenue and a good return on investment besides. Video craps is very fun to play, and voice-over instructions make it easy to learn. Positioned properly, they will become a viable part of any casino floor." ♣



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Argosy Casino
Baton Rouge

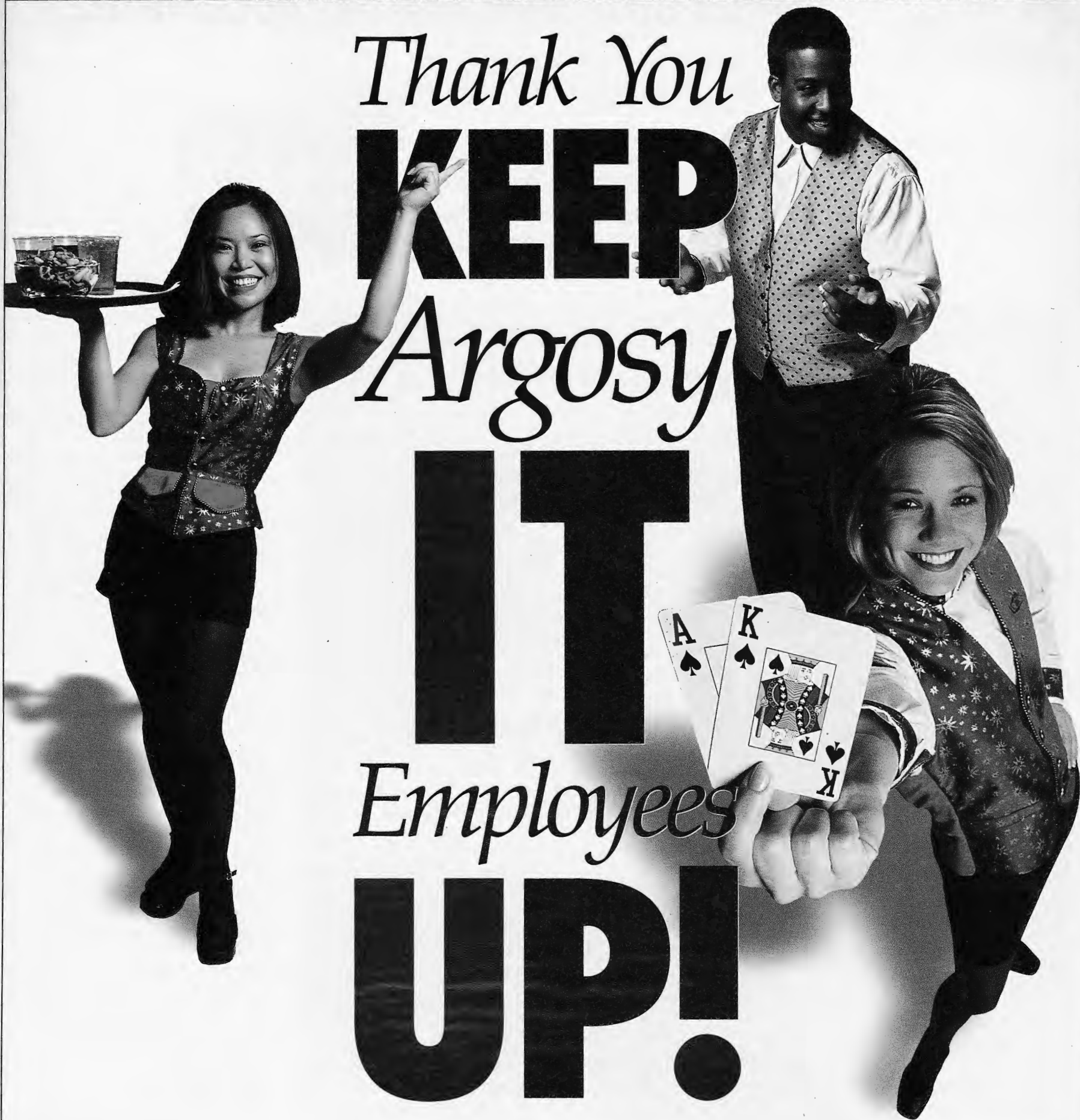
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World
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Slots '99

International Game Technology

Branding bonanza

Want to know where trends in slot manufacturing are going? It's always good to look at the top company in the industry.

If anything has become clear over the past two years, it is that the hot format in slots is multiline video, and the hottest themes are those with licensed brands reflecting some icon of popular culture.

This year, both of those trends reach a crescendo at the trade show booth of the world slot leader, International Game Technology.

IGT started the branding craze four years ago with "Wheel Of Fortune" and "Jeopardy!" Last year, Williams/WMS got everyone's attention with the "Monopoly" series. Other manufacturers are now chiming in with their own branded slots, from Mikohn's "Yahtzee" to Shuffle Master's "The Three Stooges."

But IGT is hoping to upstage them all with a remarkable collection of licensed brands in several different slot formats—all aimed directly at the vast Baby Boomer market by recalling television series and films of the 1960s.

"Hold onto your boots; this is pretty amazing," says Joe Kaminkow, IGT's vice president of engineering. "IGT, I personally believe, is presenting the most sensational line of new products the industry

has ever seen. Our engineering staff has been working around the clock."

TV Magic

How about a slot that has Gomez, Morticia, Lurch and Uncle Fester?

In the Super MegaJackpot line of multi-site progressive slots, IGT's featured "category-killer" at the World Gaming Congress will be two versions of "The Addams Family" slot machine.

The debut of this line will feature one reel-spinning "Vision Series" progressive slot and one video slot in IGT's "i-Game" line.

"These new Addams Family games are designed to be great fun for the player," Kaminkow says. "There are spectacular sights and sounds, featuring John Astin's ('Gomez') custom speech and licensed music from Vic Mizzy." (Astin, in fact, is scheduled to be at the World Gaming Congress to promote the slots—presumably, properly attired in Gomez garb.)

The games also feature sculptures of Uncle Fester and Lurch that will draw any Baby Boomer from across the casino. One has Uncle Fester on top with a light bulb in his mouth (a popular bit from the TV show) and the other has Lurch seated at his harpsichord. Both are nearly 10 feet tall.

"The game is spectacular," says Kaminkow. "There are bonus screens like 'Wake the Dead.' There is one bonus feature recalling one of the train wrecks Gomez would cause with his model trains. If two trains line up on opposing reels, they will crash in the middle for an instant win. On the Vision Series version, you ring a doorbell in the bonus round and one of the characters answers. You get to play 'Rock, Scissors, Paper' with 'Thing.' It is incredibly imaginative."

Of course, if you watched "The Addams Family" television show during the 1960s, it's a good bet you also watched "The Munsters."

IGT is covering that base as well. "The Munsters" is a 125-coin, 25-line video slot in the i-Game series featuring reel symbols recalling each member of the TV show's original cast. Other reel symbols are pictures of more icons from the show—the "Raven" cuckoo clock (it said "Nevermore!" on the hour), the Munster Koach car, the "Dragula" car, the spider in its web.

The game has a "Wild Bat" symbol



that animates and turns into Grampa Munster, appearing on all three spots of the reel. Five "Munster Match Coin" scatter symbols trigger a

second-screen "Munster Match Bonus" game in which the player picks squares to reveal Munster family members, each with an accumulating bonus amount, until you match three of the symbols. If "Cousin Marylin" appears before you match the symbols, the bonus win is doubled.

Another second-screen bonus event is "Grandpa's Lab Bonus," triggered with three or more scattered "Mystic Potion Beakers." The player chooses one of five beakers in the lab to reveal a bonus multiplier. A third bonus event gives the player an instant award when three fire-breathing dragon scatter symbols appear. It's called the "Open the Staircase Instant Winner Bonus."

When the player hits a big jackpot, Herman Munster appears on the screen, jumping up and down and shouting, "I'm rich! I'm rich!"

Turning the 1960s TV dial again, IGT is introducing "I Dream of Jeannie," another multiline video, in an upright hot pink cabinet with a top-box bonus—the rocking Genie bottle is perched on top. IGT enlisted Jeannie herself—Barbara Eden—to do the voice-overs for the game, and, according to Kaminkow, she also will be at the trade show to help launch the slot.

The Jeannie slot is being offered in two initial versions—one with a hot pink "Spin the Bottle" bonus button that allows the player to wager three additional coins per line for a chance at the "spinning bottle" bonus game in the top box. The other version features a "Pick Genie Bottles from the Beach" bonus.

Pink Panther

Going from TV to movies, IGT has developed a complete line of slots based on the "Pink Panther" series of movies. There are three initial versions of the Vision Series reel-spinner, featuring characters from the movie like Inspector Clouseau and the animated panther title character.

Each of the three versions of the "Pink Panther" slot has its own unique bonus game. In "Pick a Panther," 12 Pink Panthers in various disguises, and two Inspectors, appear on the Vision LCD

IGT is hoping to upstage them all with a remarkable collection of licensed brands in several different slot formats—all aimed directly at the vast Baby Boomer market by recalling television series and films of the 1960s.



bonus screen. Each of the characters appears in a different window, pulling the shade down to reveal the bonus coin amount. The bonus round continues until a shade bearing a picture of the Panther character is pulled down.

The "Panther Bucks" version of the slot features a bonus game depicting 10 different bills, with values from five coins to 1,000 coins. Each bill bears a picture of the Panther as president. From one to four bills light up randomly, and the player collects the accumulated value or gambles the amount for a shot at a different combination of bills.

The bonus game on "Pink Slip" depicts the Panther walking through a construction site, eluding the Inspector. At each turn, the player collects accumulating bonus amounts—until the Inspector catches him.

Like the Jeannie game, the cabinet for "Pink Panther" is colored hot pink.

Brand Barrage

Several other branded IGT slots are slated for introduction at the World Gaming Congress. There is "Richard Petty's Driving Experience," a nine-line video slot featuring actual sounds and film footage of professional stock car racing. Machine colors and graphics reflect those of the official Petty race car, and Petty himself does the voice-over comments during play. The bonus round gives the player "virtual control" of Petty's race car, maneuvering around a track and passing other cars to earn bonus credits at the finish line.

There is "Dick Clark's Rockin' New Year's Eve," a nickel, five-reel Vision Series game with a bonus round in which the player tries to get the ball in Times Square down to zero.

Other new i-Game slots include "South Park," "Phantom of the Opera," and "Titanic."

IGT will complement these branded slots with other titles in all of the manufacturer's formats—some of the titles include "Five Line Double Diamond Mine," "Shooting Gallery," "Magic Wish," "Texas Tea," "Double Diamond 2000," "Fortune Cookie" (choose your bonus cookie), "Little Green Men" (an "Area 51" theme), "Elephant King," "Leopard Spots," "Neon Nights," and the "Chicken Game"—a bonus slot with a mechanical dancing chicken on top.

New video poker games include "Spin Poker," "Neon Poker," "Upper Hand Poker" and "50 Hand Triple Play Poker." New Barcrest bonus slots include "Psycho Cash Beast," "Good Times," "Razzle Dazzle," "Jester" and "Take Your Pick."

IGT also will show new versions of the first branded slots, "Wheel Of Fortune" and "Jeopardy." The new version of each incorporates elements of the actual TV game show. One video version of Wheel Of Fortune features a bonus game in which the player chooses from among envelopes to spell the word "WHEEL." Another spins the video wheel to win bonus amounts for each letter in the phrase "Wheel Of



"Little Green Men" is a new IGT branded slot with an "Area 51" theme.

Fortune." Each letter has a bonus amount, and just as in the TV show, the player collects that amount for each occurrence of the letter in the phrase.

The new "Jeopardy!" slot features a bonus game that presents categories and actual questions to the player. The player

selects from three possible hidden answers for the bonus (two are correct; one is not).

In all, it is an incredible collection of new products for the leading slot manufacturer, the sheer variety of which ensures the company's trade show booth will be packed.

"There's been a culture change at IGT," says Kaminkow. "We are really excited about where the company is headed."

"Players will notice the hard work and passion that went into the design of all of these products." ♣

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Our Clients. Our Responsibility.

Mikohn Gaming

Moving toward the mainstream

Mikohn began 1999 with a new game-development team, and a new mission—to shift gears in the slot market by introducing high-profile, branded slot products.



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For Mikohn Gaming, developing slot machines was always near the bottom of an arm's-length list of activities.

Since the Las Vegas-based company went public in the early '90s, its core business has always been interior signage, followed closely by exterior signs. Slots were among a collection of acquired businesses that also included player tracking systems and surveillance equipment.

Mikohn's Games Division made its name developing "niche" or "novelty" slots to augment the products it inherited with the acquisition of the former Games Of Nevada, such as "Flip-It" and "Bertha"-style giant slots. Over the past two years, the company released a multi-game video slot, a unique game called "X-Spot," and the multiline "Dragon Hunt," all of which have been moderately successful as niche games, and all of which have positioned Mikohn as a novelty-game supplier.

This year, everything changes.

"We've seen what the industry has seen happening in the slot market," comments Carolan Pepin, the company's director of marketing. "People have embraced these branded products."

For Mikohn to succeed in creating a branded product to compete with the heavy hitters of the slot market—who had a major head start with products like "Monopoly" and "Wheel Of Fortune"—it would have to retool its game development staff. That effort began around a year ago when Olaf Vancura joined Mikohn as director of gaming products. Vancura, who holds a Ph.D. in physics from Johns Hopkins, is an expert on casino gaming who taught a course on the subject for several years at Tufts University, where he also did research on computer-learning of the game of 21. He is also the author of *Smart Casino Gambling* and *Knock-Out Blackjack*, two widely acclaimed books on gambling.

Vancura would oversee a newly formed development team split into five different product groups, one group being slots. To head up the slot development team, he brought in veteran slot operations executive Mike Caloiaro as product manager—games. Caloiaro had worked as a slot director for 15 years in Sparks, Nev., Las Vegas and Mississippi.

Caloiaro took charge of a slot-development group which, as part of Mikohn Gaming Corp., was already equipped with many of the resources needed to develop the software and electronics for the creation of a major new slot bonus game. "Mikohn has been a solutions provider to the indus-

try for years," says Vancura, "and with the acquisition last year of Progressive Games Inc., the company had already moved into systems." (Progressive Games is the creator of the popular Caribbean Stud table game, with its patented electronic progressive jackpot.)

"Another of the unique strengths Mikohn has is expertise in visual technology," adds Pepin. "Signage and graphics technology are at the core of our business."

With its mission clear, the new product development team set out to secure licensing for a brand that would make a big splash in the slot market. It would have to be a brand that would easily translate into a slot, and into a game that was familiar and easy to play.

The search led the Mikohn team to the same company Williams/WMS Gaming had struck a deal with two years earlier—Hasbro, Inc., the board-game conglomerate which had licensed the "Monopoly" brand to Williams. It was a logical choice, since Hasbro had long ago acquired not only Monopoly creator Parker Bros., but that former company's major rival, Milton Bradley Co.

The game Mikohn would ultimately license is as familiar to the Baby Boomer generation as "Monopoly" has been to several generations. Everyone played "Monopoly" as a kid, but when you didn't want the hassle of lugging out the game board, separating the cardboard deeds, and messing with tokens, play money and dice, you went with a much less complicated game: "Yahtzee."

All you needed to play Yahtzee was five dice, a shaker and a score card. You could even dispense with the "official" shaker and score card if you knew how to keep score and could find five dice, a cup and a piece of paper. The game was invented by a wealthy Canadian couple, who would play it aboard their yacht. In 1956, the couple sold the rights to Edwin S. Lowe for a few copies of the game. The couple had simply called it the "Yacht Game." Lowe changed it to "Yahtzee" and made millions. Milton Bradley acquired the E.S. Lowe Co. and the game in 1973.

As a slot bonus game, Yahtzee is a natural. In the board game, you shake up the dice and roll them, add up the total, and mark down your score according to a point table—a point for each spot on each die, plus extra for the total values of three of a kind or four of a kind, of all five dice if nothing matches (a "Chance"), 25 points for a full house, 30 points for a "small straight" (four in a row), 40 for a "large straight" (five in a row), or 50 for



"Yahtzee"—five of a kind. You get bonus points if your roll totals 63 or more.

To translate this into a slot bonus game, Mikohn simply converted the point table into a pay table. Mikohn

tapped Sigma Game to manufacture the base slots for Yahtzee, using several different game varieties in its "Treasure Series" reel-spinning platform ("Treasure Wheel," "Treasure Tunnel"). The initial two Yahtzee products, to be displayed at the World Gaming Congress, are called "Yahtzee Bonus" and "Yahtzee Take A Chance." Both are being offered to casinos on a revenue-participation basis.

Yahtzee Bonus

Yahtzee Bonus is a three-coin, three-reel buy-a-feature slot with a Sigma base game which, according to Caloiaro, has been reworked to increase hit frequency. Hit frequency can range from 15 percent to 30 percent, with hold percentages ranging from 5.5 percent to as much as 11 percent, depending on the program chosen by the casino. A "Yahtzee" symbol on the third reel triggers the bonus game, landing approximately every 60 spins.

In the top box is a chamber holding five oversized, mechanical dice hooked to a computerized stepper motor. The player presses a button to spin the dice for the Yahtzee score, to a background of festive sound effects and an announcer's voice.

Mikohn could have left the bonus game with only this luck-based scenario, dice results decided by the computer's random number generator. However, Caloiaro says, the development team noted the similarity of the bonus game to video poker—five values forming poker hands corresponding to a pay table—and decided to add a video poker-style skill factor to the game.

On the slot panel are five "hold" buttons, just as in video poker. The big difference here is you get two "draws." "After your initial Yahtzee roll, you can press buttons to hold any or all of the dice," Caloiaro explains. "You re-roll, and get a chance to hold any or all of the dice again, and do a final roll for the bonus." The player is paid his bonus according to the following pay table: "Chance"—30 coins; small straight—45 coins; three of a kind—50 coins; full house—70 coins; four of a kind—80 coins; large straight—90 coins; and progressively higher payouts for each of the six Yahtzee rolls, ranging from 200 coins for five Ones to 1,000 coins for five Sixes.

"This is the first bonus game that includes an element of strategy," says Vancura. "The

Continued on page 154

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL GAMING INDUSTRY ■ SEPTEMBER 6, 1999

PARIS-LAS VEGAS OPENS SMOOTHLY ON THE STRIP

Analysis *beats at Park Place's*
online opening and 'frugal'
budget, while tourists appreciate
French twist

Good luck and planning smoothed the opening of Park Place Entertainment Corp.'s \$785 million Paris-Las Vegas megaresort (on the Strip) last week.

The pre-opening details were virtually complete, to the point the most of the 4,000 staffers got the day of 40 hours before opening. "We're down to roosting a fable tree, adding a little touch there," said Park president Paul Preston. "The first impression is so important."

The weather was what resort managers made for while temperatures

stayed in the '90s, a bizarre flag (the French and US flags outside hotel casino and situated away risky broke that had drilled

"Our forecast is bullish Vegas for the remainder of 1998, with room prices likely to keep rising," says the Strip's "Mr. Moneybags," Steve Stearns, president of Las Vegas-based Stearns & Associates. He expects overall visitation to Vegas to increase 10 percent to 12.7 million in 1999. Paris should help drive the surge in visitation there.

News writers and other observers made a point of Paris' *Le Monde* on page 1.

Gray Day and more 40 billion, plus reached tentative agreement last week on a proposed constitutional amendment allowing the states to fund their gambling, except in the single Supreme Court ruling mandating prohibition.

Gray, Bush, Clinton, and the Clinton vice-presidential campaign are the confirmed or friendly mandated gaming coalition, which Clinton is attempting to add to the other, together with the proposed constitutional amendment, as a package.

Clinton, through the efforts of public relations, will undoubtedly largely but cannot in most states, possibly as required by the amended constitution in California.

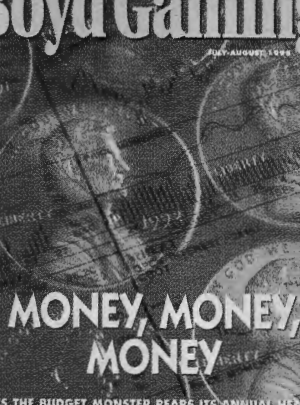
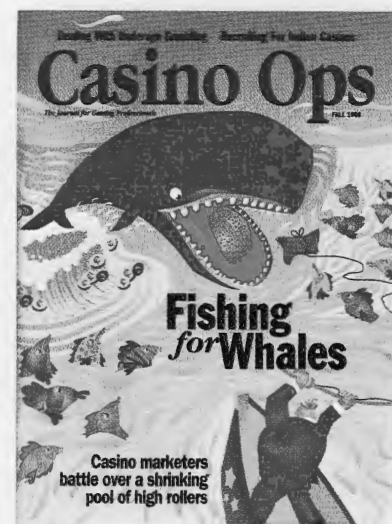
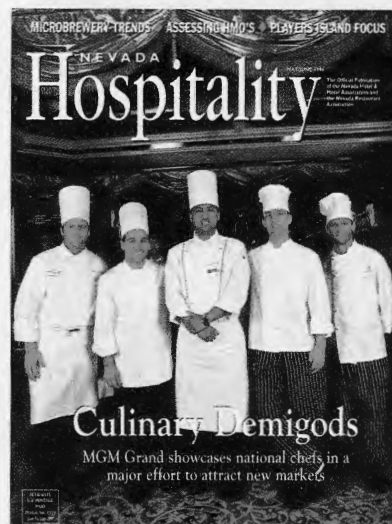
Gray and his backers are not very clear about how he will be perceived with this, and that is why it is not the law of gambling. "It is a question," he said last week to be a large expansion of gambling in California, but he did not make a modest expansion in order, but rather "not making more than."

Gray, with the backing of Senate President Tim Wainwright,

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agreed to be the latter group's exclusive right to operate the new slot-type video machines. Lottery games and those based on card games, such as blackjack, remained under Proposition 13. At the same time, Davis considers the transitional arrangements on the two sides, agreeing to all details leads to the stage of post-auction gaming in operation levels.

The problem is that, in time for any agreement, at least under the terms submitted by Clinton, is quickly running out. The votes are needed a deadline to submit signature petitions that will qualify their own proposed amendments for the March 2000 ballot.



Boyd Gaming

JULY/AUGUST 1999

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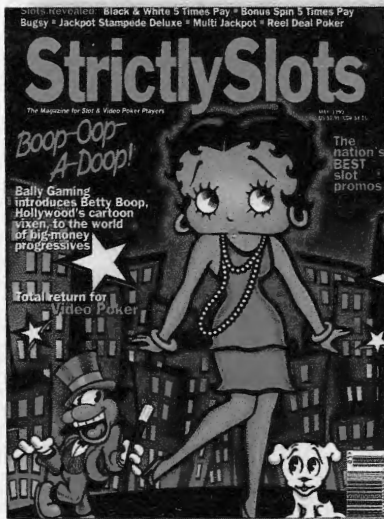
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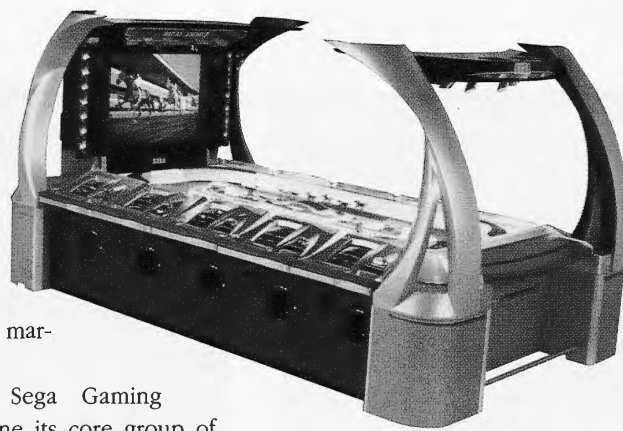
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World
of
Slots '99

Sega Gaming

On to Nevada



Two years ago, international amusement-game powerhouse Sega of Japan began the process of spinning off the division of its company that had supplied multiplayer electronic casino games to international markets.

The company had already been successful in selling its products in several international gaming jurisdictions in Europe and Asia. But selling games in North America would require a marketing presence, and a manufacturing facility closer to American gaming markets than the manufacturer's Japan headquarters.

After a group of investors arranged a leveraged buyout of Sega's gaming division, creating Sega Gaming Technology Inc., the newly independent, Las Vegas-based company set out to license its products in North America.

Today, that process is still unfolding, with Sega gaming products placed in Native American casinos in Michigan, Minnesota and New Mexico. Licensing is pending in Arizona, and, according to Sega Gaming president and co-chief executive Doug Sanderson, the company is preparing to apply for licensing in Indiana and New Jersey.

But throughout this entire effort, Sanderson and other Sega officials have been anticipating the company's most important U.S. license, in Nevada. "Our original estimate was 18 months for Nevada licensing," Sanderson says.

"We're in the 13th month right now, so we're somewhat on par.

Because of the criteria formulated for the management buyout, we are in a very unique situation."

Meanwhile, though, he says the good news is that Sega's international sales continue to boom, and the "Royal Ascot" multiplayer racing game has been

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received in the Native American markets.

Meanwhile, Sega Gaming continues to refine its core group of products—high-quality, multiplayer gaming machines which simulate the most popular table games.

According to Sanderson, the company plans to unveil improved versions of three of its top international sellers at this year's World Gaming Congress—beginning with its top-seller, the Royal Ascot horse-race game.

At last year's trade show, Sega's booth was often packed with attendees who swarmed around the computer-controlled racing game. According to Sanderson, this year those attendees will be introduced to "Royal Ascot II," which he says is the "latest, greatest enhanced version" of the company's best-selling product.

"The new version has enhanced features for the traditional U.S. gaming market, such as touch-screen operation, bill acceptors, and an improved graphics system," he says. "We have employed the latest technological upgrades available."

The company also will unveil the first version of its "Roulette Club" electromechanical roulette game to be developed and manufactured totally in the U.S. by Sega Gaming. It is an improved version of the circular, eight-player roulette game formerly produced by Sega of Japan, which achieved phenomenal success last year in Europe, South America, Canada and Australia.

Roulette Club uses a real roulette wheel, with a compressor firing the ball. The outcome of each spin depends on the outcome of the roll, just as in real roulette. There is automated betting at each player station, and an automated payout system. The new version also uses touch-screen technology at the betting station, and the signage has been enhanced. But the actual way winners are determined is no different than live roulette (apart from the fact a compressor replaces the dealer).

"This is the first SGTI production of Roulette Club," says Sanderson. "We're excited about that, because one of our requirements for licensing is that we produce our own machines."

The popular Sega of Japan blackjack game "Golden Knight 21" will be replaced in the U.S. by Sega Gaming's introduction of "Sega Blackjack," which is

one of the most realistic duplications of live blackjack to be found anywhere. One new feature of the multiplayer unit, which uses a video dealer to prompt players and often seems to interact with them, is a new technology called "Player Hand Action."

Players signal whether they want to hit or stand using the same gestures as in the live game—when you flick your fingers against the table for a hit, your hand moves across sensors which communicate the move to the computer. Different sensors are activated if you wave your hand to stand.

The PC-based video of the dealers also has been improved—there are actually several different dealers, who take breaks and relieve each other periodically just as live dealers do. There also are several backgrounds in the video now, reflecting different casino locations such as Las Vegas or Monte Carlo.

"We showed this blackjack game at a Canadian trade show, and it was the hit of the show," Sanderson says. "It also was a hit at the ICE in London and at the NIGA show."

Other Sega products at the World Gaming Congress will include the same games that have been popular for years in international markets, such as "SuperDice," a multiplayer craps game, and the 12-player "Bingo Party."

Sanderson notes that the presentation of Sega Gaming multiplayer units is what makes them unique—circular configurations that allow players to look at each other, to interact while playing, and to celebrate winning. He says this element, as much as the painstaking simulation of the live games, has made SGTI's products instantly popular wherever they have been placed.

To see if the bulk of American casino patrons feel the same way, Sanderson will have to continue to be patient while Sega Gaming continues the process of becoming licensed in the other U.S. jurisdictions. "We're continuing along the same lines as last year," says Sanderson. "Our mission is to produce our own equipment, to get our company self-contained and self-sufficient, and to get our licenses." ♣

After a group of investors arranged a leveraged buyout of Sega's gaming division, creating Sega Gaming Technology Inc., the newly independent, Las Vegas-based company set out to license its products in North America.





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Shuffle Master Gaming

Stooge power

The industry will be introduced to the Stooge slot at this year's World Gaming Congress... with an improved version of last year's big introduction, "Let's Make A Deal," the Stooges game will be Shuffle Master's featured attraction at the show.



Picture inserting a coin into a slot machine and hearing "Hello, hello, hello," sung in a familiar three-part harmony. You spin reels hoping to land "nyuk-nyuk" wild symbols, or to line up three "woob-woob-woob" symbols, or the ultimate goal—three "Bonus Moe," "Bonus Larry" or "Bonus Curly" symbols to send you into the bonus round.

If you're already laughing, you have an idea of the entertainment potential of the newest slot venture of Las Vegas-based Shuffle Master Gaming, a conversion kit for IGT S-Plus or Bally ProSeries slots that transforms them into "Three Stooges" bonus slots.

The industry will be introduced to the Stooge slot at this year's World Gaming Congress by Moe, Larry and Curly themselves—well, at least look-alikes of the legendary slapstick comedy team. Along with an improved version of last year's big introduction, "Let's Make A Deal," the Stooges game will be Shuffle Master's featured attraction at the show.

It is the young company's second foray into the world of branded slot games, part of a major R&D effort that will include many more branded slots to come.

Shuffle Master's push toward major brand licensing in new slots is all the more notable when one considers the company does not manufacture slot machines. The company produces software, and must partner with other companies to get machines built.

In fact, the company only entered the slot market four years ago. Shuffle Master Inc., the parent company, gained prominence after founder John Breeding (who has since left the company) revolutionized the table game side of the industry by inventing the automatic shuffler, and subsequently created one of the first successful new table games in the modern casino era, "Let It Ride."

With Shuffle Master shufflers and Let It Ride table games placed in casinos around the world, the company turned to software development to establish a new product base. The first game would be a video version of Let It Ride. Software developer Mark Yoseloff was retained to refine the software program for that product, and was hired as executive vice president. He brought a library of video game software with him, and Shuffle Master Gaming was born.

Several slot product introductions followed, including the "Five Deck

Frenzy" and "Five Deck Poker" video poker games, "Video Mah Jong" and

"MultiBingo." Then last year the company partnered with Bally Gaming to unveil "Let's Make A Deal," a slot themed as the legendary game show with longtime host Monty Hall consulting, and even recording the voice-overs for the game.

But landing the license to create a "Three Stooges" brand of slot is a coup that could boost Shuffle Master into the big-leagues of slot-makers. According to Brooke Dunn, the company's vice president of marketing, making the Stooges slot a reality involved much more than just securing the license to use the name and images of the comedy team. The game would be developed through a four-way partnership.

Licensing was secured from C3 Entertainment Inc., which owns rights to the name, images and sounds of The Three Stooges. Dunn says C3 was "involved completely" in the development effort, approving various aspects of the game. The technology used for the slot's bonus game was provided by Acres Gaming, and film clips of Three Stooges shorts were provided by Columbia Pictures, which owns all of the team's two-reelers from the '30s, '40s and '50s.

Shuffle Master worked with its three partners to create the software for the game, developed as a conversion kit to eliminate the need for a fifth partner to manufacture the machines.

The first Stooge slot is a three-reel, three-coin multiplier (with a "buy-a-feature" bonus game). "We went with a three-reeler because that style of game is still popular, and is still the dominant style of game," Dunn says. "We hope to use the power of the Stooges, one of the most famous comedy teams of all time, to get people back to reel games, which have been overshadowed recently by multiline video slots."

Dunn adds that another goal of the slot game is to bring more men back to the slots, which are now played by women more than men by a 60-40 ratio. But even though Stooge-mania is largely a "guy thing," Dunn says focus groups have shown that women love the game as well. "Women may not sit through an entire movie, but they'll laugh when Curly gets his eyes poked," he says.



The kit completely transforms a "Double Diamond" or "Red, White and

Blue"-style program—there are several such games produced by both IGT and Bally—into a Three Stooges Bonus slot. Besides addition of the bonus game, the primary game is converted to the new name and theme, right down to the symbols on the reel strips.

The reel strips, belly glass and top box are all black and white, "which we think will stand out extremely well amid all the masses of color," says Dunn. "Everybody knows the Stooges are in black and white!"

A video monitor is added to the top box of the slot, which displays film clips simultaneous to a huge overhead liquid plasma display—essentially a movie screen—that goes over an entire bank of slots.

Every aspect of the game is packed with Stooge symbols and sound effects, including voices of "C3 Entertainment-approved" sound-alikes mimicking all the familiar Stooge catch-phrases. "They're very good impressionists," Dunn says. "You can't tell the difference from the voices of the real Stooges."

Normal reel-spinning during the primary game is punctuated with sound effects. You hear a Stooge voice and Stooge expression for practically everything that happens. Put a 50-dollar bill into the acceptor and you hear Larry Fine saying "fiftyfiftyfifty," auctioneer-style. When the change light goes on or the hopper is empty, you hear Moe Howard shout, "Hey, how about some soivice?" Cash out and Curly Howard says, "Hey, where's my half?"

You also hear Stooge wisecracks when the game is idle for a period, when you have a certain number of spins without a winning combination, and in numerous other situations. According to Dunn, there are enough random expressions programmed in so you don't hear the same expression each time an event happens.

The special Stooge reel symbols also are accompanied by sound effects when they land on the pay line. Land on the multiplying "nyuk nyuk" wild symbol and you hear Curly's famous laugh. The same goes for the "woob-woob-woob" jackpot symbol.

Images of each of The Three Stooges serve as jackpot symbols for primary game combinations, and the same images with the word "Bonus" on them trigger the bonus game. According to Dunn, any three "Bonus Stooge" symbols on the pay line with three coins bet send the game into the bonus round.

And that's when the real fun begins.

The overhead plasma display, which can be seen from across the casino, comes alive with music and motion, and you hear one of the Stooges say, "It's bonus time!" The player uses the button panel to pick one of the Stooges for the bonus round—on the video screen, they're all saying things like "Pick me!" and "I got my hair done for the occasion!"

When you pick a Stooge, the big screen and the screen in the machine go into a film clip from one of the Stooges' Columbia two-reelers. The longer the film clip runs, the higher the bonus becomes. "A pie in the face is one of the short ones—maybe 20 coins," says Dunn. "But the longer clips—full of seltzer battles, hair pulls, eye pokes—mean larger bonuses. You can win anywhere from 15 coins to 1,000 coins in the bonus round." As the credits rack up on your meter, you see the Stooges in a celebration dance on the screen.

Dunn notes that unlike most new slots, the Stooge game will debut to a public that already includes an enormous number of devoted fans. "We're getting calls from all the fan clubs," he says. "There's no Let It Ride fan club or Double Diamond fan club. These people have conventions and sell merchandise all over the place. The Stooges have been tested over time, and they have a following that is unbelievable."

One look at the volume of Stooges merchandise currently available confirms that fact. There is a Three Stooges Beer (each bottle says, "We *all* put the yeast in!"). There are Stooge calendars, Stooge computer screen-savers, Stooge computer mouse pads, Stooge comics—even a Three Stooges game in the Maryland State Lottery.

The Three Stooges slot introduction will also come in the middle of what Shuffle Master hopes will be a new resurgence in the team's popularity this fall. According to Dunn, C3 Entertainment is putting the old two-reelers back on television in the fall, restored to their original movie-theater length (they had been edited extensively over the years to fit into short TV time slots). Also, movie star Mel Gibson—himself a big Stooge-o-phile—will be hosting a television documentary on the comedy team.

While Shuffle Master is sticking to the reel-based game for now, Dunn notes that the Stooges theme affords plenty of room for growth into other platforms, such as multiline, second-screen video, touch-screen monitors and so on. He says he also foresees growth within the game itself with the addition of different themes, film

clips, and even characters—"There are a lot of Shemp fans out there too!"

Shuffle Master has two more new branded slots on the front burner, but he says the company will likely keep them both under wraps until after the trade show to avoid stealing the thunder from the Stooge slot and Let's Make A Deal, which has been among the top earners where it's installed. That slot is currently approved in Nevada with applications submitted in New Jersey and the GLI jurisdictions. By the end of the fiscal year, Dunn projects the installed base of that game to pass 1,000 in Nevada.

By the time of the trade show, Dunn

Last year the company partnered with Bally Gaming to unveil "Let's Make A Deal," a slot themed as the legendary game show with longtime host Monty Hall consulting.

says, the Three Stooges slot game should be approved for field trial in Nevada and already placed at test locations.

And Dunn predicts the slot's success is, er, a "soitenty."

Shemp fans? Really? ♣



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Sigma Game

Something for everyone

As one of the smaller manufacturers in a fiercely competitive market, Las Vegas-based Sigma Game does not have the kinds of resources it takes to introduce massive numbers of new products every year.

But Sigma Game has succeeded over the years by pinpointing what it does best, refining the technology, and injecting that technology with ingenious new ideas. When a product is a hit, Sigma Game is arguably better than any other manufacturer at exploiting its own success by translating the ideas behind the hit into completely new products.

The "Treasure Series" line of reel-spinning slots is a perfect example of this ability. One of the manufacturer's greatest success stories, the line started with two bonus slot machines—"Treasure Wheel" and "Treasure Tunnel"—with high-hitting base games and a wild-symbol reel trigger which, in a winning combination, activates a bonus round that multiplies the jackpot of the combination.

A year after those two slots were introduced, the "Treasure" concept appeared in several new games—new versions of the originals with higher multipliers and extra features, and a video poker version that randomly went into "Treasure Time," 15 seconds or so in which the payoff for the next winning hand would activate the bonus wheel to be multiplied up to five times.

This year, according to Sigma Game president and CEO Jim Jackson, the company's biggest success has been another offshoot of the Treasure Series called "Free-N-Easy." The games are Sigma's top standard reel-spinning slots equipped with the Treasure Wheel or Treasure Tunnel bonus technology. "We used the same look and feel of the Treasure Series, the same distinctive top design and the wheel or tunnel feature, only with a twist," says Jackson. "Instead of winning a jackpot multiplier, you win free games."

In the Free-N-Easy versions of "Smokin' 7s" and "Wild Patriot," a "Free-N-Easy Free Spin" symbol on the third reel activates the Bonus Tunnel, on which concentric circles of neon flash between various numbers of free spins—five, 10, 15 and 25. The player hits the spin button once and the machine goes into its free spins automatically. But these aren't normal spins. First, the jackpot for every winning combination in free-spin mode is doubled. Second, every losing combination on the reels pays three coins.

"Free-N-Easy has worked very well in both quarters and

dollars," Jackson says. "One quarter car giveaway we did was very successful. If you light up the top award during regular play, you win a car, but if you hit it in free-play mode, you win the car plus \$10,000 in cash."

At the World Gaming Congress, Sigma Game will introduce three new Free-N-Easy models which are versions of other popular Sigma reel-spinners, "Double Jackpot," "Wild Cherries" and "Sun, Moon & Stars."

Also at the show, Sigma will introduce a new Treasure Series slot for the high-end player. "I challenged the guys to come up with a 'Smokin' 7s' buy-a-pay Treasure game aimed at the dollar player," says Jackson. "There's been a lack of innovation, or anything new, for the dollar-slot player."

The new version of Treasure Wheel Smokin' 7s incorporates a stand-alone progressive jackpot resetting at \$1,000, and applies the Treasure Wheel bonus game to the primary game's multiple "7" combinations. "Any 'single 7s' or 'mixed 7s' hit activates the wheel for at least double the value," Jackson explains.

The primary game pays 60 coins for mixed 7s and 120 coins for single 7s. The wheel goes from 2X to 5X, enabling a jackpot of up to \$300 for the comparatively frequent mixed-7 combination, and up to \$1,000 for single 7s. "It's an interesting twist to the 'Blazing 7s'-style game, and we think it will add some excitement to the floor for the dollar player," Jackson says.

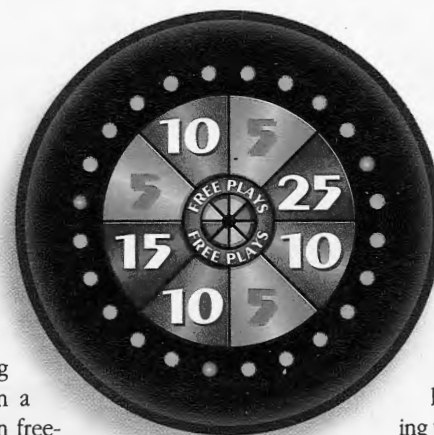
Other dollar slots being introduced at the show include a game Sigma developed in conjunction with graphics specialist The Idea Center called "Show Me The Money," a reel-spinner with multiplying wild symbols; and "Line 'Em Up," a slant-top with a giant wheel feature in the top box that incorporates colored coins or tokens in a carnival-style game.

In this latter game, a bonus trigger symbol activates the wheel, which mixes up the coins or tokens, carries them to the top and drops them onto a game board with three slots. The object is to line up three same-colored coins for either a bonus amount or a jackpot multiplier.

Multiline Video

Sigma Game also is introducing new slots in its group of multiline video slots, which the company has dubbed the "Millennium Series." The company introduced its first multiline video, "Where's Henry?," last year. That game recently went on line with its first installation in Atlantic City's Trump Taj Mahal.

According to Jackson, Sigma will be



showing the "Where's Henry?" game in both slant-top and upright models. He says the company's engineers have been busy improving the game program for the slot since its initial unveiling last

year. "We've increased the likelihood of getting to the bonus game," he says. "The bonus feature now occurs once every 21 spins, which is the highest of any second-screen bonus game. The pay table is now designed more around the second screen than the base game."

The newer version of "Where's Henry?" is what has been installed at the Taj in Atlantic City. In the original version, three scattered "Henry" symbols (Henry is a cartoon fugitive) on the first, third and fifth reels trigger the second screen, five buildings in "Henryville" from which the player chooses two in an attempt to find Henry. Each location hides a bonus multiplier amount, up to 10 times the player's total bet. But if the player finds Henry, the multiplier for that location is doubled.

In the newer version, there are two triggers for the second screen. Two Henry symbols, on the first and third reel, trigger the second screen and give the player one chance to find Henry. The multiplier amounts on this secondary bonus are 2X to 6X.

According to Jackson, the company will introduce another enhancement to the second-screen bonus game at the trade show—an animated version of the bloodhound reel-symbol character, which will sniff around for Henry during the bonus round.

The "Where's Henry?" game also will be displayed at the World Gaming Congress in mini-Bertha size, with a 40-inch plasma screen—another collaboration between Sigma and Idea Center.

Sigma Game will introduce three new multiline video slots at the World Gaming Congress, all on the same "Millennium Series" platform.

"Polar Party," themed around a cartoon polar-bear character, is a nine-line video base game with a mechanical top-box bonus game. It incorporates a proprietary "Multiline Multibonus" feature. According to Jackson, the bonus game will be available to the player even if a single coin is bet and a single pay line activated, but the number of lines lit determines the number of chances the player gets in the bonus game.

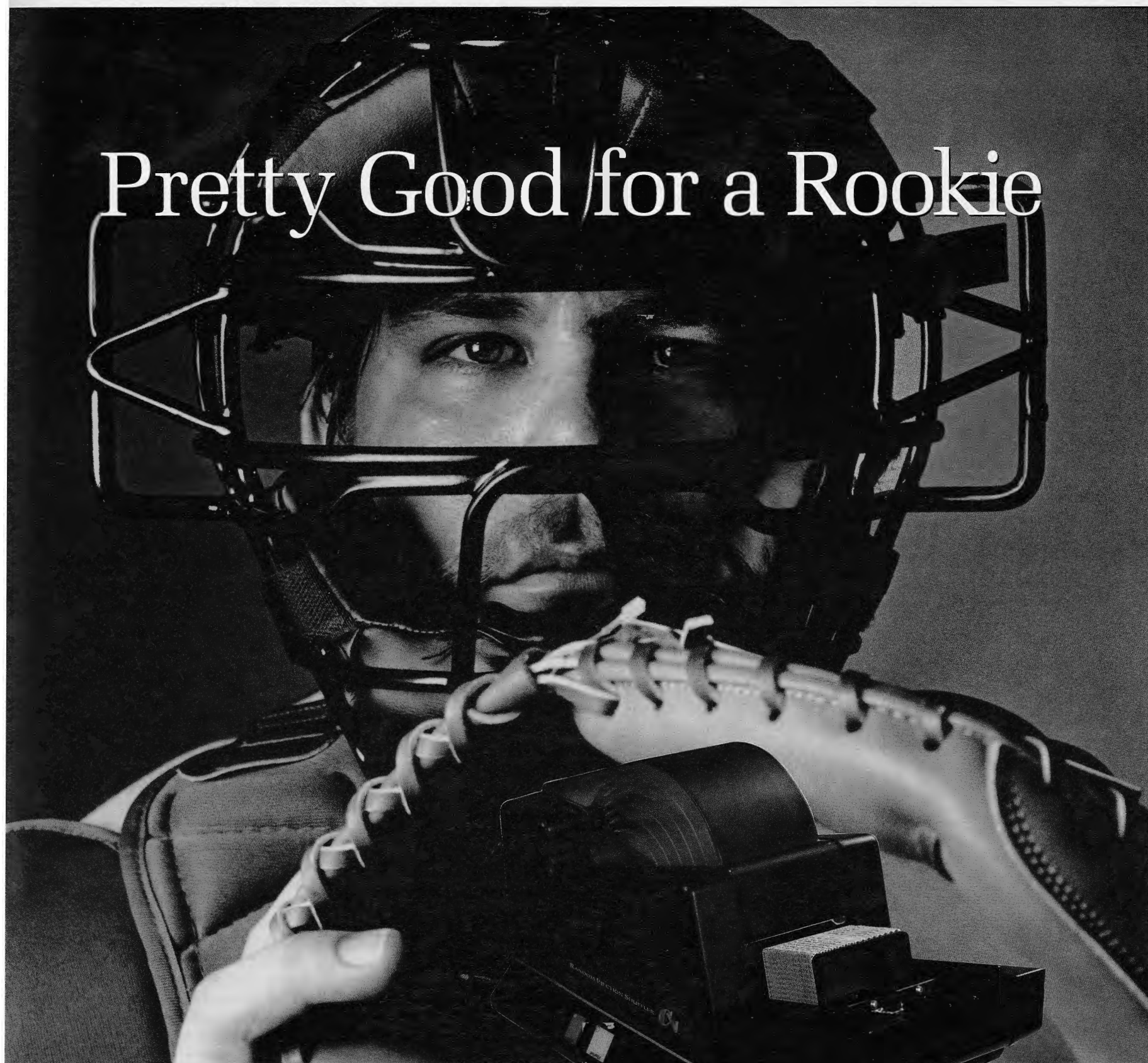
In the "Bonus Dance" of the polar-bear characters, lights flash at 10 locations in the slot's top box. The player hits the button to stop the flashing on one location for a bonus amount. The player continues to hit the button for a bonus amount for the number of

Continued on page 154

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Pretty Good for a Rookie



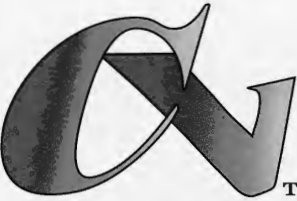
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Silicon Gaming

Lean and mean

When Silicon Gaming released its initial public offering in 1996, many of the industry's heavy-hitters rushed to purchase stock at the opening price of over \$10 a share.

They had seen the product—a fascinating marriage of Hollywood and the Silicon Valley, a multimedia video slot like none before it. Each game on the new "Odyssey" multigame unit was an entire production in three-dimensional video, powered by a high-speed, hard-drive computer.

Three years after the offering, Silicon's stock was trading for pennies as the company announced it was going to miss an interest payment on its debt while negotiating with bondholders.

What happened in those three years?

It certainly wasn't an inferior product—the Odyssey game was a hit with players in Nevada and many other jurisdictions, and is gaining new converts in Atlantic City, where it was finally approved a few months ago. Indeed, the slot product was a masterpiece, including a suite of masterpiece games.

What happened, according to Silicon Gaming president and CEO Andrew Pascal, was too many brushstrokes for each masterpiece, and an organization set up to meet unrealistic sales goals.

Silicon was originally set up as a maze of individual development groups. Each game went successively through each fully staffed department—from software development to graphics to audio studio to final game refinement, and so on. What this company organization led to was a mountain of up-front cost.

Around five months ago, Silicon's board changed the leadership of the company, putting Pascal, then executive vice president, at the helm as president and CEO. Pascal was charged with turning Silicon's balance sheet around and generating the kinds of profits that would restore investor confidence.

"The board realized that while we had created a lot of value with a wildly creative development group, we weren't leveraging that value effectively," Pascal says. "We had created an extensive infrastructure instead of creating a great amount of product. How do we stabilize the business and prove to the public we are a viable company?"

Pascal put together a near-term plan to completely restructure the operational side of Silicon's business. First on the agenda was to reduce the size of the manufacturing operation. "We were configured to distribute 30,000 units to the market-

place every year," says Pascal. "No one distributes anywhere close to that number, except IGT. We needed to re-invent the company so we could focus on things that would bring value to the market."

The company closed its 30,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Palo Alto, Calif., and transferred assembly operations to its new headquarters in Las Vegas. "We went from a very big development organization where we managed every discrete discipline to a team-oriented approach," Pascal says. "Teams now take over full development of every product. We also streamlined our general and administrative functions."

The company reduced its use of its Palo Alto headquarters, formerly the site of all R&D, software development and specialized departments such as audio, to a quarter of the space in the building. It leases the remaining space for additional revenue.

The result of these actions, according to Pascal, has been a reduction of overall operating expenses by a whopping 65 percent. This has enabled the company to reduce the price of Odyssey by several thousand dollars, to under \$10,000 per unit. "It's now a competitive product in terms of price, and more than competitive in its capabilities," Pascal says.

In late July, Silicon announced that it had reached agreement with bondholders for a consensual restructuring of debt, which converted a significant amount of debt into equity and raised an additional \$5 million in funding. "We now have the resources we need to execute our plan to achieve long-term profitability," says Pascal. "We were a highly leveraged company, with high debt and high interest payments on that debt. We are getting our costs in line with our revenues, and getting our balance sheet in order."

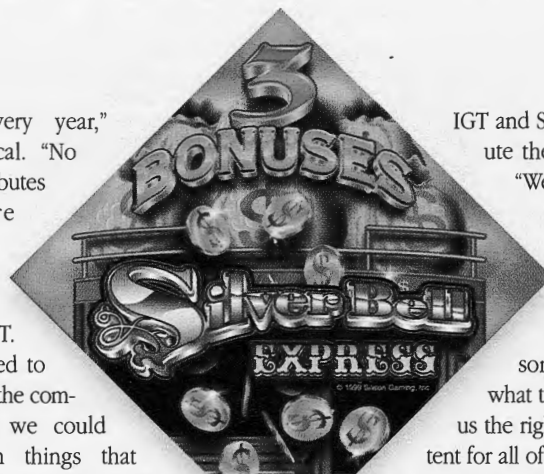
To reduce costs further, Silicon has begun to partner with other manufacturers—and in fact, the company turned a potentially big liability into a potentially profitable alliance in its handling of a dispute with IGT over Silicon's "Lucky Draw Poker" multihand video poker game.

IGT, through its own alliance with Triple Play Poker inventor Ernest Moody, owns patent rights to multideck video poker. When IGT threatened a lawsuit over Lucky Draw, which is very similar to Triple Play, Silicon officials sat down and negotiated rather than hunkering down for a costly legal battle.

"Silicon is now the exclusive sublicenser of multideck poker programs, meaning only

IGT and Silicon have rights to distribute these products," Pascal says.

"We took that dispute and turned it into a positive development. We also cross-licensed our own intellectual property. We gave IGT the right to use some of our technologies in what they're doing, and they gave us the right to develop software content for all of their platforms."



New Products

Silicon's rough waters have not affected the quality of its product or the creativity of its game developers. The collection of Silicon games slated for introduction this fall is packed with the company's remarkable knack for innovation.

The biggest splash may come from the first slot game co-developed by Silicon and another manufacturer, Anchor Gaming. The bonus game called "Casino Bowling" developed by Anchor last year, which was introduced with a bowling bonus game played out on an LED display, was a flop. Anchor Gaming partnered with Silicon to create "Strike It Rich," which is a combination of Anchor's concept and Silicon's technology.

The result is an incredible bonus slot machine with two separate bonus rounds. Matching "strike" or "spare" symbols on the reels (an "X" or a "/") switch Silicon's 26-inch screen to a live-action video scene of a bowling lane, seen from the bowler's perspective. Using a computer track ball on the console, the player actually "lifts" a bowling ball on the screen, aims it and releases it toward the pins. Strikes and spares rack up bonus points.

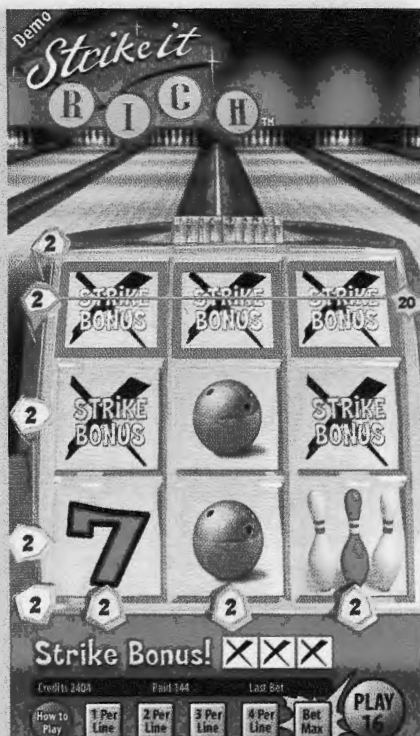
"This is the first game we've done with a real perceived skill content," says Pascal. "By using the track ball, the player gets to line up the bowling ball on the screen; the input they make seems to affect the outcome. This really takes advantage of our capabilities, and shows the marketplace that we can apply this technology in a way that excites players."

Meanwhile, Pascal says Silicon has done a lot of research to improve its multiline video product. "After we put 'Vacation USA' in the marketplace, we learned a lot," he says. "We learned a great deal from that product, and we were able to improve all of our multiline slots."

At the World Gaming Congress, Silicon will display improved versions of previously introduced games. One is "Eureka," a multiline video slot with a gold-mine theme.

The primary game's reels are presented as suspended in air over the background of a gold mine. When the player lines up three or more bonus symbols, the front of the mine is blown off, and the screen shifts to the player's view from a railroad cart on a wild ride through the mine's interior, ending in one of two mine shafts.

Silicon's rough waters have not affected the quality of its product or the creativity of its game developers. The collection of Silicon games slated for introduction this fall is packed with the company's remarkable knack for innovation.



One shaft contains the "Boom Wall Bonus," in which the player selects from several sticks of dynamite, exploding them against the wall for bonus payments. The other shaft prompts the player to pick a gold nugget out of a mine cart and send it cascading down a wall to one of several carts beneath for a bonus payment.

One of the improvements made to the game resulting from player research is a control on the touch-screen that enables the player to bypass the entire video sequence of the cart sailing through the mine and go immediately to the bonus game. "After players see that sequence several times, it loses much of its entertainment value," says Pascal. "Now the player can touch the screen and bypass that sequence."

The other improved game is "Silver Belle Express," with its ingenious bonus round depicting the player's view from a Pullman railroad car as it travels between various "Bonus Depots." Originally introduced as a three-reel video slot, the game has been reworked into a multiline, multicoin game. "One of the things we've learned is that doing traditional three-reel video slots is tough to break into," Pascal says. "We're offering this game in the more traditional five-reel, five-line configuration." He says the company also is introducing a multiline version of the popular "Banana Rama" game.

Pascal's identification of the "traditional" multiline configuration is necessary because many of Silicon's multiline games—including "Strike It Rich"—feature a unique eight-pay-line configuration, with three horizontal pay lines, three vertical pay lines and two diagonal. Strike It Rich also includes a diamond-shaped pay line and a four-corner pay line, activated if all eight regular pay lines are lit.

Completely new Silicon games to be introduced at the show include slot games "Hitsville," "Stroke Of Luck" and "Cash Cruise," and a new video poker game called "Stock Cards."

"Hitsville" is themed to reflect the culture of 1960s Motown music. The multiline video reels are set against a background scene placing the player in the balcony at the Apollo Theater (or at least a theater that looks like the Apollo). While you play the primary game, spotlights appear on the stage over silhouetted forms of "stylized caricatures" of Motown stars such as Diana Ross or the Temptations.

Three bonus symbols send the game to its second screen—nine spotlights including silhouettes of nine members of a band, such as a singer, drummer or saxophonist. The player is prompted to select musicians to build his own band. As each member is selected, he or she begins to play as a bonus amount appears. The player accumulates bonuses until a "collect" symbol comes out of one of the instruments.

Pascal says that although silhouettes suggesting certain stars and parodies of Motown songs were used initially to avoid licensing fees, he does not rule out licensing a few "signature" Motown tunes for inclusion in future versions of the game.

"Stroke Of Luck" carries a miniature golf theme. In the bonus round of this multiline game, the player selects one of three golf balls to tee up for a typical miniature golf hole of a castle with a moat. The player hits a "stroke button" to send the ball into the castle, where it clangs around before shooting out of the castle onto one of several islands with greens and holes, where the ball falls to reveal either a bonus amount or a multiplier of the player's

bet. (Alternatively, the ball can land in the moat, which sends the player back to the "clubhouse.")

During this entire sequence, the player hears ESPN color commentary, in the typical whispering golf-announcer voice.

"Cash Cruise" features a bonus game placing the player on a cruise vessel that travels between various "ports of call." The primary game features jackpot symbols relating to various cruise destinations. Three or more "bonus destinations" on a lit pay line trigger the "Bonus Cruise," prompting the player to select from three destination islands for a multiplier of the total bet.

"Stock Cards" is a video poker game themed as a stock car race, with normal play surrounded by visions of various racing scenes. At the World Gaming Congress, Silicon

also will display the first slant-top version of the Odyssey slot, which recently was approved in Nevada. "We're excited about having an altogether different package, quite generic in its appearance," says Pascal. "People will evaluate it solely on game content."

The game content in all of Silicon's new products reflects the quality and ingenuity that have been the young company's trademark. Only now, says Pascal, the creativity of the games is backed by a financially sound and efficient mode of operation.

"We haven't been really visible for the past five months, because we needed to clean things up and reintroduce ourselves to the industry," he says. "We are now team-focused, our balance sheet is solid, and we are well-positioned to execute our plan and achieve the success we had all hoped for." ♣



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World of Slots '99

VLC

Branching out

Montana-based VLC Inc. is a company that has reinvented itself many times over the past two decades. First, VLC was the pioneer of multigame video slots. VLC was the company which, in the 1980s, had developed the multigame format out of necessity, to offer some variety to players of Montana's video lottery machines and video poker games, which were confined to small spaces in bars.

Back then, the company was known as VLT—for Video Lottery Technologies. Besides being a game developer, the company became known as a system developer, manufacturing the first centralized computer control system for video lottery terminals across a state.

In the early 1990s, the spread of casino gaming prompted the company's first major shift in identity as VLC Inc., a subsidiary of VLT formed to adapt the company's multigame lottery terminals for sale to casinos. At first, the "Winning Touch" multigame unit achieved success in Native American casinos in basically the same format as it had existed for years in the video lotteries.

But when the old format didn't play well on the Las Vegas Strip, it was time for another reinvention: The "Power Series" version of Winning Touch, unveiled two years ago, featured sharp, high-resolution graphics, a top-notch sound package and clever new games. It was a hit in Vegas as well as VLC's other jurisdictions.

By the time VLT went public as Powerhouse Technologies, the VLC gaming machine subsidiary had again reinvented its equipment with innovation, becoming the first American manufacturer to offer coin-free gaming machines to Nevada casinos—multiline video slots accepting hundreds of credits per spin, in penny, 2-cent and multiple-denomination setups which accepted bills but printed cash-redeemable vouchers when the player cashed out.

The Next Step

This year, the continuing reinvention of VLC Inc. continues on several fronts. First, the company is making its "Coin-Free" line of slots more user-friendly both

for casinos and players. At the World Gaming Congress, VLC will introduce the Coin-Free Gateway System,

a hardware and software package that automatically transmits all accounting, maintenance and marketing information from Coin-Free vouchers to the widely used Bally SDS/6000 online slot system.

For the players, VLC is introducing the Coin-Free Redemption Center. It is an ATM-like, 24-hour kiosk for players to redeem Coin-Free vouchers. The futuristic stainless-steel kiosk performs all the functions of a coin-booth cashier. It redeems Coin-Free vouchers for the exact dollar-and-cent amount; turns bills into coins, or into combinations of smaller bills and coins; turns coins into bills or bills and change; or turns bills into Coin-Free vouchers that can be used in the slots.

According to Nichols, the Redemption Center kiosks will be marketed to casinos for placement at various locations near banks of VLC Coin-Free Slots.

PowerPlay Poker

VLC plans to show several new games at the World Gaming Congress, but some of these games will be like nothing the company has yet introduced.

New multiline video slots will include "Gold Strike," "Mouse Trap" and the nine-line, golf-themed "Caddy Cash."

But the company also will display its first multihand video poker game. Produced through a strategic alliance with Kadlic Gaming, it is called the "PowerPlay" video poker series. The first game in the series, "PowerPlay Bonus Poker," is scheduled for release during the fourth quarter.

In the PowerPlay format, four hands are dealt on a dedicated touch-screen monitor, each with the first two cards face-up. The player has the option to select two preferred cards out of the eight face-up cards. These become the first two cards in all four hands, and the draw is then made from four separate decks. If none of the eight cards is preferable, the player has the option to draw five cards from each deck for new hands.

According to Mick Roemer, VLC's vice president of gaming, PowerPlay is one of many Kadlic game ideas VLC plans to co-develop and release. "We are very excited about the PowerPlay series and the other Kadlic games," Roemer says. "Tom Kadlic and his team of development engineers have an uncanny knack for taking traditional games like poker and making them incredibly new and entertaining."

"With PowerPlay, all hands come up



more often. In traditional video poker, a royal flush comes up once every 43,000 hands. With PowerPlay, a royal comes up once every 18,600 hands. Players play longer,

and have more fun."

Top Spin

An even bigger change for VLC lies in the near future—a new line of reel-spinning slots called "Top Spin."

"VLC is entering the reel-spinning stepper slot market, but the difference between Top Spin and others is that these are all multiline, multicoin reel-spinning games with bonus features," Nichols says. "Players can get to the bonus feature without max-coin bet; you don't have to buy the feature. You can bet up to 100 coins per spin on some of the games."

According to Nichols, one slot in the new line takes bets of up to 99 coins per line, a first for a reel-spinning slot. "The denominations are practically unlimited, from pennies up to \$100 bills," he says. "It looks like a reel game but it incorporates multiline reel technology previously available only in video games."

He adds that each game in the Top Spin series will incorporate a top-box bonus event, which will occur very frequently—every six or seven minutes for a potential top jackpot of 100,000 coins.

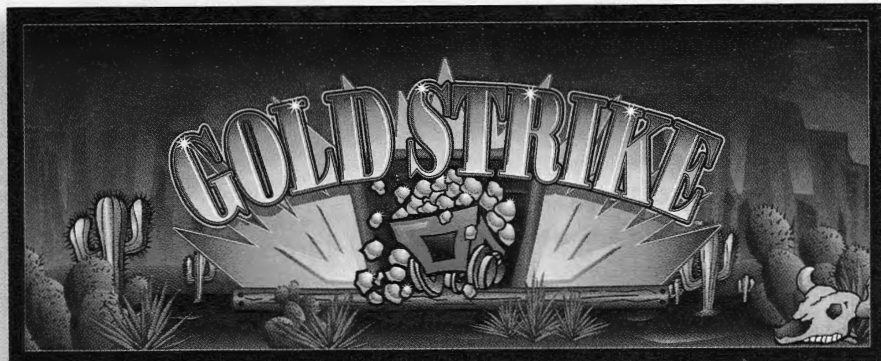
The multiline format and the big portion of payback in the bonus game made it possible for VLC to develop the Top Spin series as a traditional, *non-virtual-reel* slot machine. Each game will have from 20 to 24 physical reel stops, meaning more frequent top awards and more frequent bonus payouts.

(A physical-reel game, of course, also allows VLC to avoid paying royalties to IGT on the Telnaus virtual-reel patent, a feat accomplished so far only by WMS Gaming with its proprietary virtual-reel technology.)

"We feel the reel-spinning player has largely been ignored over the past couple of years," Nichols says. "We think there's still a big market in the U.S. for that type of player."

So as VLC again reinvents itself, the company's officials look forward to reinventing the reel-spinning slot—a reinvention going back to its former technology, only this time with all of the features that have made multiline video the hottest slot genre of the day. ♣

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World
Slots '99

Williams/WMS Gaming

Video futures

Four years ago, multiline video was still viewed as "Australian." But in what seems like an eternity since the first Australian video "pokies" appeared in the Indian casinos, Williams/WMS Gaming has made the multiline genre as American as apple pie.

Multiline video is, in fact, the fastest-growing, most popular style of slot machine in this country. And WMS, the Chicago-based manufacturer formerly known only for pin-ball machines and arcade games, has had no small part in this development.

While Australian manufacturer Aristocrat was the company that introduced multiline video slots to the United States, Williams/WMS was the company that picked up the ball and ran with it, noticing the value of the genre early on and exploiting that value in Nevada, where Aristocrat was not licensed.

When Williams developed its first multiline video slot for Nevada, the market was so wide open that the company could have succeeded by simply copying the tried-and-true formula used by Aristocrat, IGT and other slot-makers in the Australian market. But WMS would ultimately Americanize the multiline video slot with three words: "Reel 'Em In."

Reel 'Em In was designed for the U.S. market with an all-American theme, a hilarious cartoon second-screen bonus game, funny sound effects and other entertainment elements which made the most of the inherently strong multiline format. Today, there are more Reel 'Em In games on U.S. casino floors than any other video slot. In fact, although WMS got on the slot-branding bandwagon in a big way last year with "Monopoly," Reel 'Em In has become a beloved "brand" of slot machine in its own right.

The Monopoly slot has been fabulously successful, and the manufacturer will be introducing new versions of the game this fall.

But the big news from Williams at this year's World Gaming Congress will be the second major event in what is now the "Reel 'Em In brand" of slots—the official follow-up to that groundbreaking game, called "Reel 'Em In Cast For Cash."

Cast For Cash

A follow-up to such a monumentally innovative game was not such an easy thing to accomplish.

"We've spent a lot of time looking into franchising the loyalty built into that game," says WMS chief operating officer Kevin Verner.

But just as WMS opted not to copy established Australian-style slots four years ago, "Cast For Cash" is definitely *not* a Reel 'Em In knock-off. In fact, it is unlike any slot machine currently on the market.

This latter fact is obvious at first glance: There are two video screens. There's the regular monitor where the reels are represented, and there is a second, flat-screen color monitor imbedded in the top box. They are linked together. The primary game is a nine-line video slot (Reel 'Em In is five-line). When the reel trigger enacts the bonus round, the two monitors become one. The familiar fisher-characters (plus some not-so-familiar ones) are portrayed in their boats in the top-box monitor, their fishing lines entering the water and trailing off the bottom of the screen to reappear in the bottom monitor, where players see all the fish swimming around.

The bonus game itself is based on the original Reel 'Em In—the player chooses one of the characters in the fishing boats, who, to the beat of a musical background, lowers the line into the water to "fish" for the player's bonus coin amount. However, many improvements have been made over the original. "We kept the popular original characters, and added more," Verner says. "We improved the banter between the fishers as well."

That banter is one of the most entertaining aspects of the original game—Chicago-accented guys saying things like, "Oh, dat's a big one!" or "Aww, just a minnow!" In Cast For Cash, they may be making their wisecracks in one of a variety of accents: The player gets to choose "where" to fish for his bonus. He could be fishing in Paris or Canada, for instance, and the characters in the bonus game—including the fish—change accordingly. If the player is fishing in Paris, the fish will be swimming around with berets on their heads. In Canada, they'll be the "Royal Canadian Mounted Fish."

Other added attractions in the dual-screen bonus game on Cast For Cash are based on random events that offer intriguing twists. "Sometimes, when your fisher-person starts to reel in the fish and it's a small one, a big fish will come along and eat the small fish just before it gets to the boat," Verner explains. "The bonus amount will jack up suddenly."

Another random event in the bonus game is a "gamble" feature—the player is

occasionally given the opportunity to "throw his fish back" and try for a bigger one. It may be a bigger fish with a bigger bonus amount; it

may be smaller.

"All of this is possible because of the two separate screens which are linked together," Verner says. "We consider this a big-hitter for us. There are literally thousands of Reel 'Em In games on the floors; it's become a staple of video, a must-have for operators. Because of the enduring appeal of that game, we've been able to take it to the next level and build on what is, without a doubt, the highest number of installations in casinos for multiline video."

New Monopoly

While WMS engineers were busy preparing for the launch of Cast For Cash, they also were examining the results of the first year of operation for last year's big game, the "Monopoly" series. The result this fall will be the introduction of a new game for the Monopoly line, available in both video and reel-spinning versions. It's called "Chairman Of The Board."

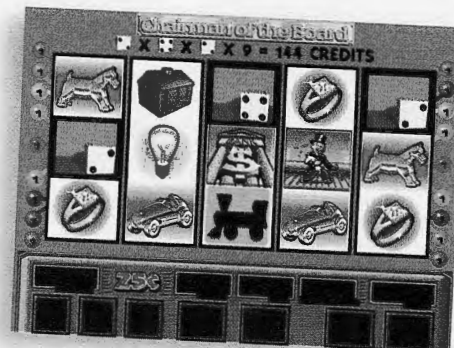
"We're very excited about this game because it allows us to leverage a lot of what people liked about Monopoly in the third series of the game," says Verner. "Something we learned from 'Once Around' [in the first Monopoly series] is that people enjoyed being able to participate in the game."

In the case of Once Around, that participation was through "purchasing" houses and hotels to place on properties at the start of the bonus round, to increase the bonuses for landing on the properties. In Chairman Of The Board, players participate by selecting properties with the goal of building a "Monopoly," by choosing from a series of tiles on the video screen or LED "Dotmation" bonus board (reel version).

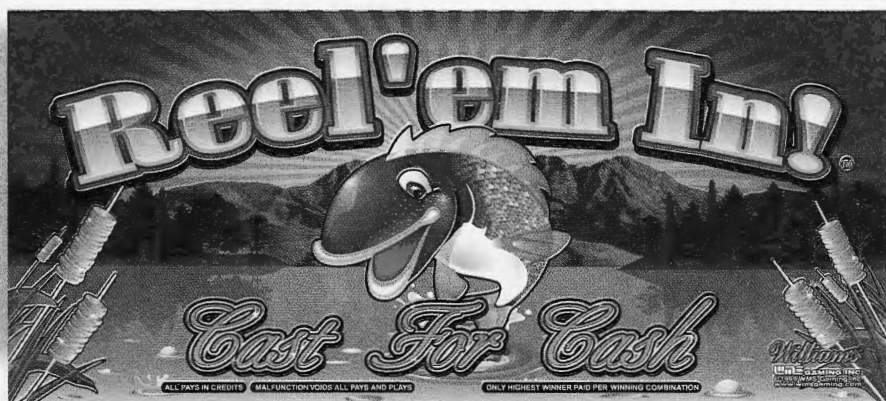
It is similar to "Jackpot Party," another popular WMS game. The player is shown a grid of tiles, and selects from them to accumulate bonus amounts. Under each tile is a property deed with a bonus amount. The player accumulates the bonus until selecting "Go To Jail."

If players select tiles revealing all properties of a like color—a "Monopoly"—extra bonus amounts are awarded. Just as in the board game, there are sizable bonuses for collecting all four railroads, both utilities, and of course, the "high-end" monopoly of Boardwalk and Park Place.

Another great feature of the bonus game is a "Get Out Of Jail Free" card under one of the tiles. If you select that space, you hold the card until the bonus round would



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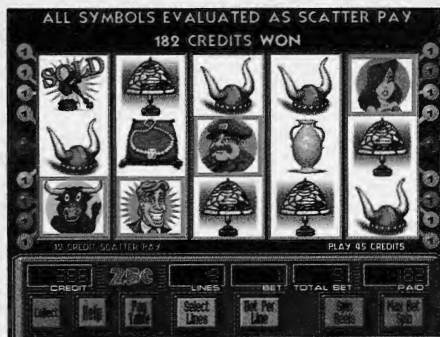
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Winning Bid is a multiline video slot with a second-screen bonus game themed as an auction.



normally end—when you select the tile revealing “Go To Jail.” If you’ve got the card, you use it and continue the bonus round.

The reel-spinning version of Chairman Of The Board is a three-coin buy-a-feature game, as opposed to the current four-coin Monopoly games. According to Verner, both

the video and reel versions will be available not only in slant-top configuration as the original series, but in standard upright cabinets. “We’ve enhanced the top box to bring it down to between 7 and a half and 8 feet,” he says. “The original was over 9 feet tall. There are riverboats and other venues that will

open up to us as a result of that.”

WMS is making enhancements to other games in the Monopoly series as well. The company is adding a dual progressive jackpot to the “Advance To Boardwalk” Monopoly game. What makes this unique is that the player does not have to get the top reel combination to hit the progressive.

The progressive is won in the bonus round. If the player lands on Boardwalk, he gets the top progressive prize, which will reset at \$5,000. If he lands on Free Parking, a secondary progressive prize is awarded, which resets at \$1,000. It is the first progressive jackpot built into a bonus round.

More Video

Williams also is introducing a collection of new multiline video games at the World Gaming Congress. The company had a hit

earlier this year with “Instant Winner,” a multiline video slot with a clever instant lottery theme. Verner says the company is still filling orders for that game while putting the finishing touches on the follow-up video slots to be introduced in the fall.

The new multiline games to be introduced at the trade show include “Winning Bid,” “Whodunnit?” and “Something For Nothing.”

Winning Bid is a multiline video slot with a second-screen bonus game themed as an auction. The player selects a “bidder” at the auction, and comical characters then auction off a collection of bizarre items. The winning bid for each item determines a bonus coin amount, which accumulates until the “auction” is over.

“One of the things that will appeal to players is the anticipation of not knowing when the bidding will stop on each item,” says Verner. “That type of anticipation is very important to the player. Our experience has been that players get tired of picking something or having something spin or turn to reveal their prize. We’re trying to add value to the playing experience.”

Winning Bid, which Verner says will be available to casinos just prior to the World Gaming Congress, will be followed by Whodunnit?—a detective game with a bonus round that has the player guess the perpetrator of a crime. The player selects from a list of stolen items, and then picks from a collection of characters (typically comical WMS characters) to find the thief. The sooner you find the character “whodunnit,” the larger the bonus amount.

Verner says the use of cartoon characters in both these games is intended to garner player loyalty. “We know from games like Reel ‘Em In that players develop their own favorite characters,” he says, “characters they perceive as lucky.”

“Something For Nothing” is an ingenious non-second-screen multiline video slot. The secondary bonus comes in a totally random event on primary game spins in which the player wins, as the title suggests, nothing. “When you get reel combinations that are total losers, you get a potentially big bonus—something for nothing,” Verner says. “People will like the unpredictability of this type of award. People watch the reels as they’re stopping and formulate the pays in their minds. People who play often have a good idea of when a spin is turning up a loser. This adds anticipation to that event.”

WMS is also introducing nine-line versions of “Jackpot Party” and the “Reel Estate” Monopoly game, both currently available only in five-line configuration.

While the collection of new games in the WMS lineup does include a few reel-spinners, Verner says the company’s major focus will remain in multiline video for the foreseeable future. “Video is what put us where we are today,” he says. “We continue to develop reel-spinning games because that will continue to be a strong part of the floor, particularly in tourist locations. But we see the growth sector of the category in the multiline video genres.”

As Verner notes, this growth in multiline video is being driven in no small way by WMS itself. ♣



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