

[54] **INTELLIGENT MULTIMEDIA SET-TOP CONTROL METHOD AND APPARATUS IN WHICH BILLING SIGNALS ARE COMMUNICATED TO AN INFORMATION NETWORK UPON PRESENTATION OF DOWNLOADED MEDIA PROGRAMS**

5,329,590 7/1994 Pond ..... 455/4.2 X  
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

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A method and apparatus for effectuating the reception and local storage of source information signals representative of a media program transmitted from a source information network preferably over a cable television channel on a pay-per-view basis is disclosed. A local intelligent set-top control unit communicates with a remote information network and a local storage device to coordinate the transmission of customer ordered media programs from the information network for storage on the local storage device. The local storage device is preferably a standard video cassette recorder (VCR) providing full VCR control functionality when presenting a stored media program on a television. A digital or optical data storage disk drive system may alternatively be employed to store source information signals downloaded from the remote information network. The intelligent set-top control unit communicates a pay-per-view billing signal to the information network upon playing of a downloaded media program, and provides protection against unauthorized copying. In an alternative configuration, a set-top control card is installed into a host computer system to coordinate the reception and local storage of downloaded media programs, and preferably provides a platform for interfacing with other home communication and electronic systems.

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[22] Filed: Dec. 29, 1994

[51] Int. Cl.<sup>6</sup> ..... H04N 7/10; H04N 7/14

[52] U.S. Cl. .... 348/12; 348/5; 348/10; 455/2; 455/5.1; 455/6.2; 455/6.3

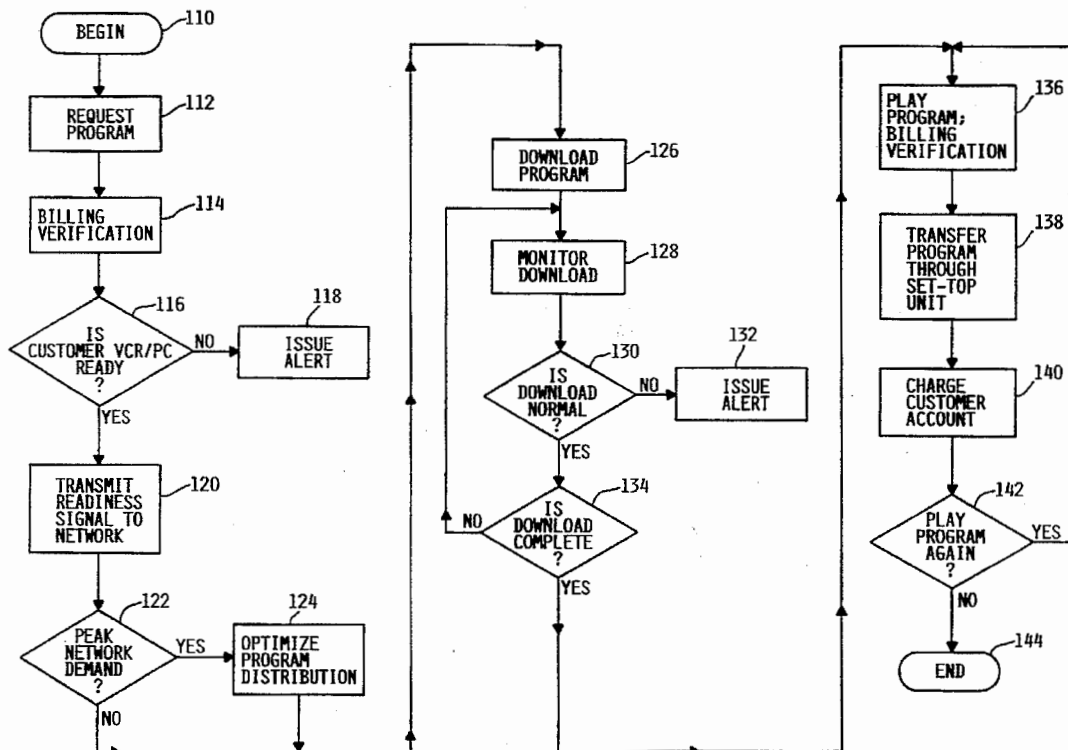
[58] Field of Search ..... 348/1, 3, 5, 7, 348/10, 12, 13, 6; 455/2, 4.1, 4.2, 5.1, 6.2, 6.3, 3.1, 6.1; H04N 7/10, 7/14

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29 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



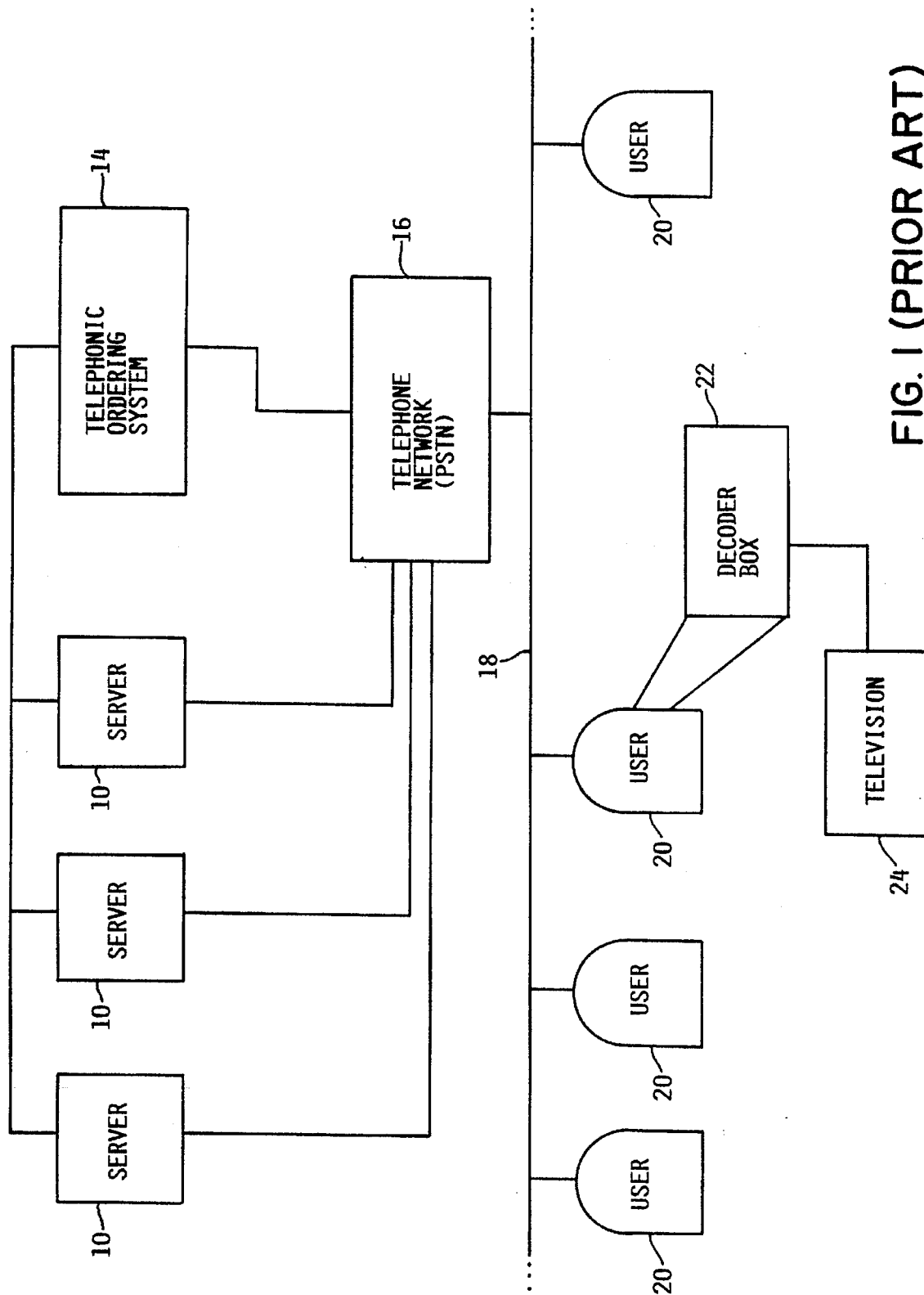


FIG. 1 (PRIOR ART)

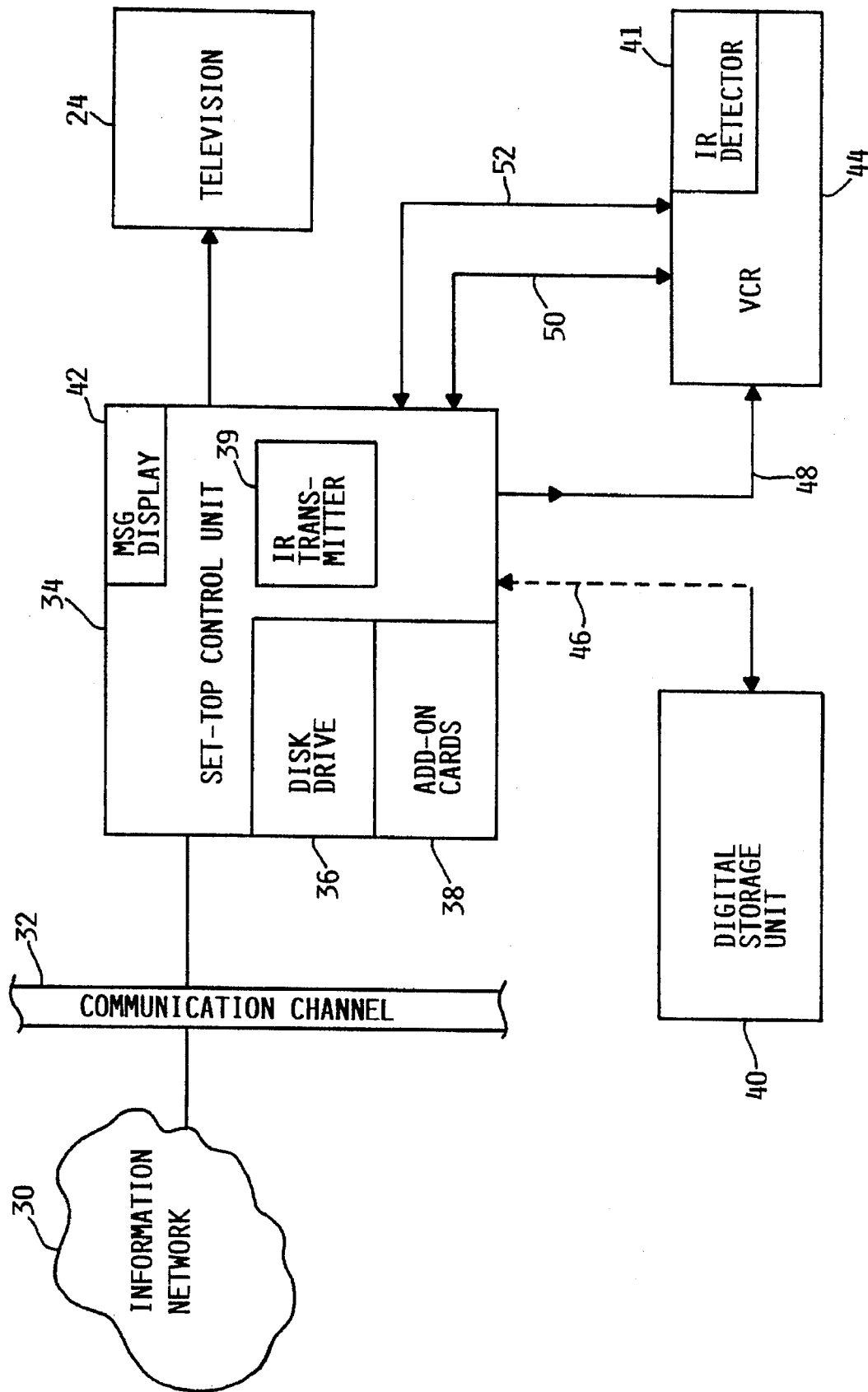


FIG. 2

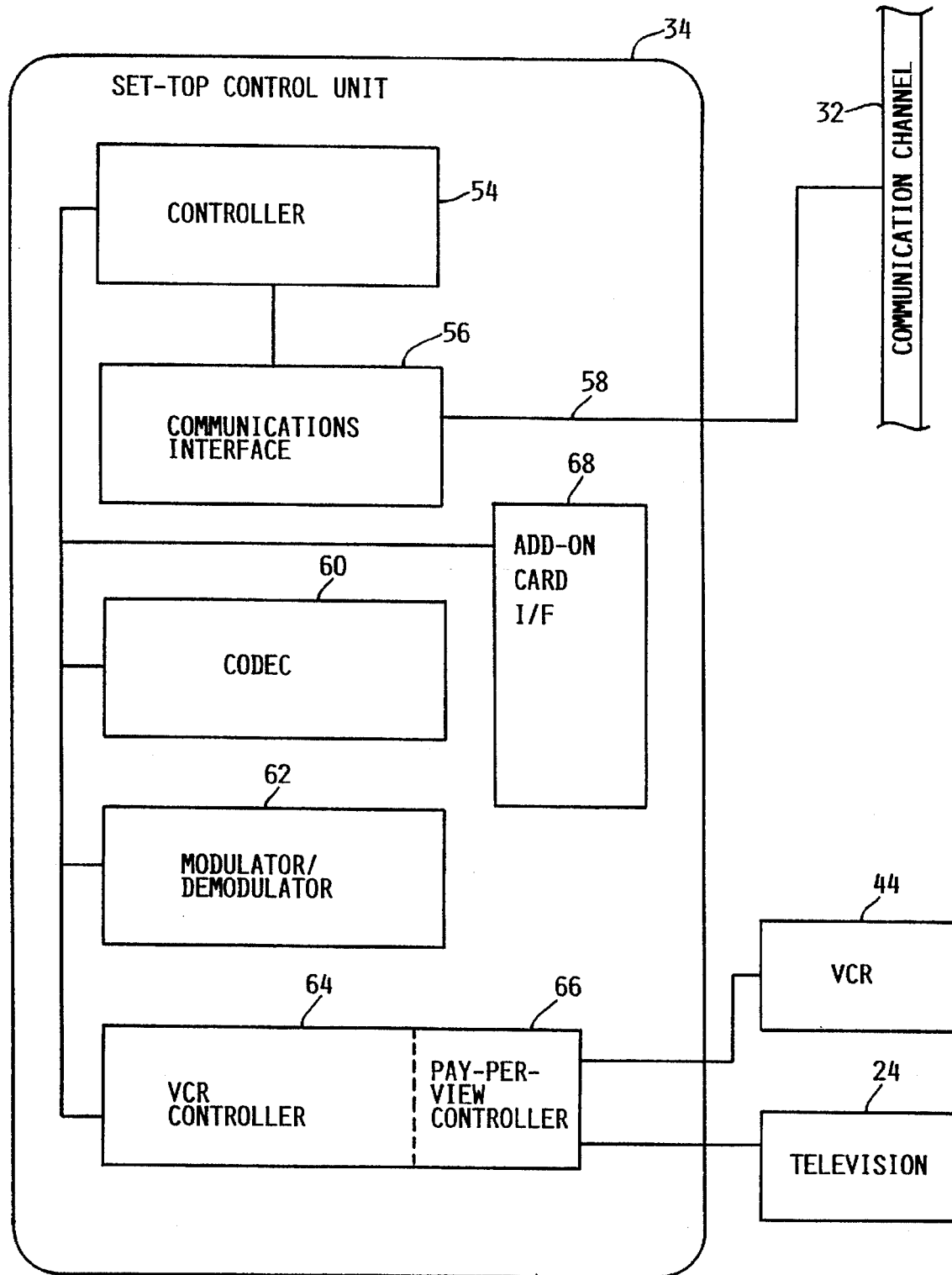


FIG. 3

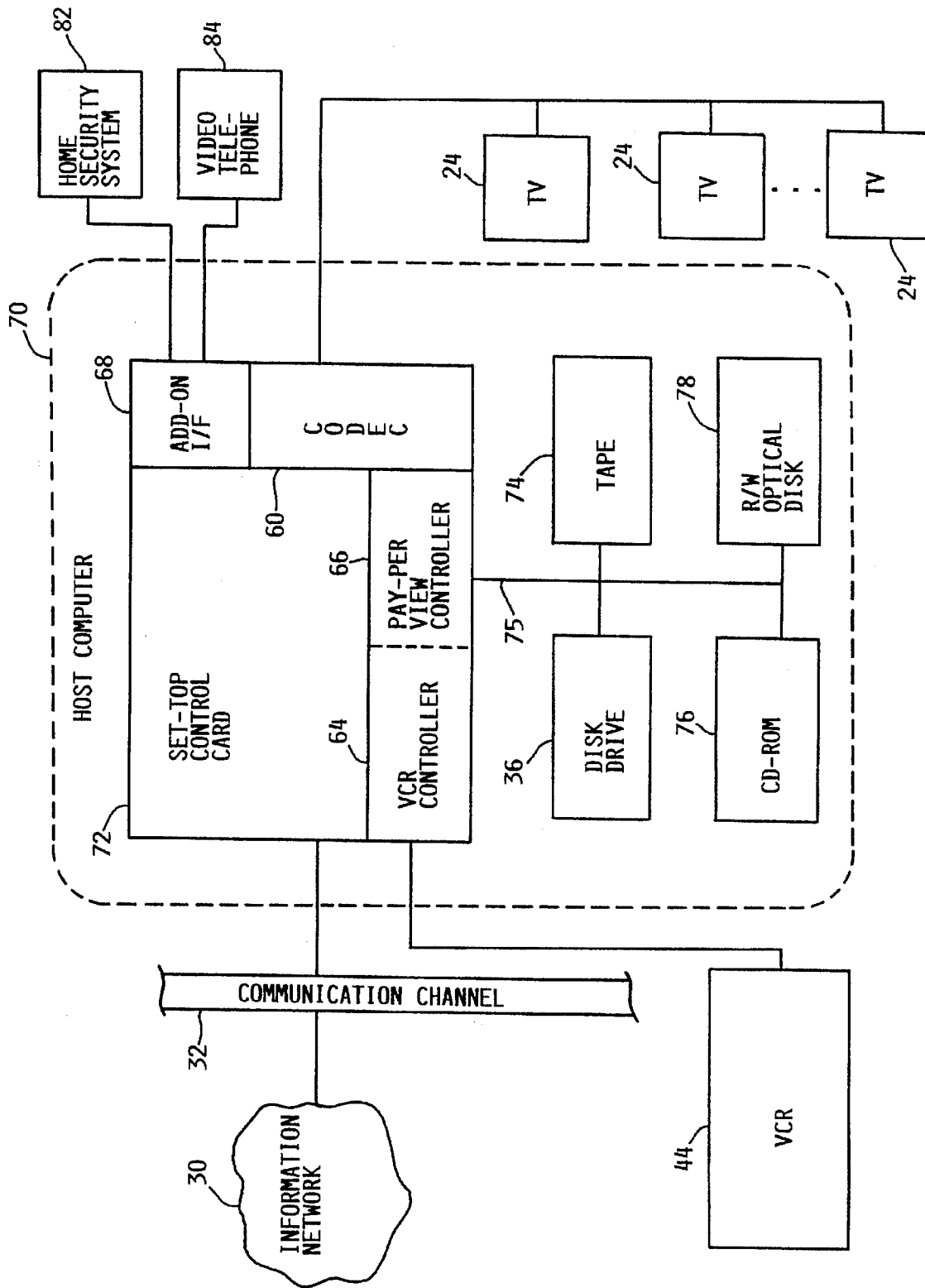


FIG. 4

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