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(54) Title: PACKAGING APPARATUS AND METHOD

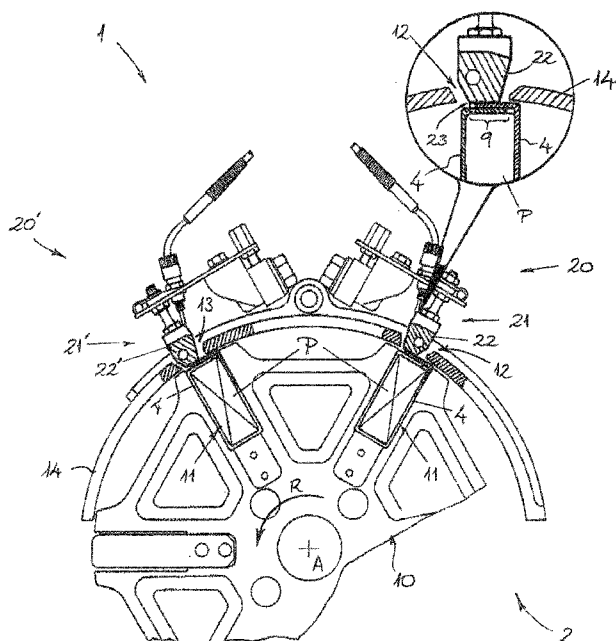


Fig. 2

(57) Abstract: The present invention provides a packaging apparatus (1), in particular for packaging smoking articles, having: a wrapping device (2) for wrapping a barrier film (4) around an item (P) to be packaged, such as a pack of smoking articles; and at least one sealing head (21, 21') having a contact surface (23, 23') for contacting the barrier film (4) wrapped around the item (P) and sealing the barrier film (4) along a seam (9, 9') to form a protective enclosure around the item (P). The contact surface (23, 23') of the sealing head (21, 21') is at least partially discontinuous to provide a non-sealing region (24, 24') in the sealing head (21, 21'). In this way, the non-sealing region (24, 24') can be positioned to at least partially, and preferably wholly, overlie a frangible part or strip (6, 7) provided in the barrier film (4). The invention also provides a corresponding method, as well as a packaged item (P) produced by an apparatus (1) or method.

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