

Lab Notes

Using BiFET and BiMOS op-amps

The availability of BiFET and BiMOS op-amps has revolutionised circuit design since they appeared on the scene five or so years ago. While we've used devices like the CA3140 op-amp in projects we've not got around to describing practical applications circuitry. This 'Lab Notes' fills that gap.

Brian Dance

THE AVAILABILITY of BiFET and BiMOS devices in various packages with one to four operational amplifiers per package has revolutionised the operational amplifier market. Apart from the relatively expensive hybrid FET input devices, other FET input operational amplifiers had been available for some considerable time, so why should BiFET and BiMOS devices be so important?

The first point to note is that amplifiers with FET input stages can offer far higher input impedances than devices with ordinary bipolar transistors in their input stages. For example, the well-known 741 has an input impedance

of the order of 1M and a maximum input bias current of 500 nA. The use of bipolar transistors to obtain a high input impedance has been pushed to the limit in devices such as the LM108, using supergain input devices to provide a typical input impedance of 70M and an input bias current of just under 1 nA. These values may be compared with those of some of the economical BiFET and BiMOS devices, where typical input impedances are of the order of 1 Terraohm (one million Megohms!) and input currents are some tens of picoamps (pA) at room temperature.

Thus if one connects the input of one of these BiFET or BiMOS amplifiers to

almost any circuit, it will impose a very small load on that circuit. This can be a vital consideration when one is designing such high-impedance circuits as those used in pH meters or in ionisation chamber smoke detector circuits, whose output current is inadequate to drive devices such as the 741.

If one considers the very early types of monolithic FET input operational amplifiers (such as the Fairchild μ A740), they do have the desired high input impedance, but their disadvantage is that their input offset voltage and its temperature coefficient are so high that they do not approach the high standard of performance required by the modern

INTRODUCTION TO THE BIMOS AND BIFET OP-AMP

The first BiFET products were announced by National Semiconductor in 1975 (the LF155, LF156 and LF157 series, where LF signifies Linear FET device). The main advantages of these products is that the junction FET devices used in their input stages are fabricated on the same silicon chip as the remainder of the operational amplifier. Although hybrid operational amplifiers with FET input stages had been available for some considerable time previously, all of these hybrid devices contained the junction FET devices fabricated on a separate silicon chip from the remainder of the operational amplifier. Such hybrid devices can be made to have a very good performance if adequate trouble is taken in their design, but the extra labour costs involved in the testing of the separate chips for appropriate matching characteristics and in connecting the two chips in a single hybrid package inevitably resulted in a price

tag far above that of modern BiFET devices. The general type of construction of a BiFET device is shown in Figure 1, the channel between the source and the drain electrodes of the FET input devices being fabricated by ion implantation.

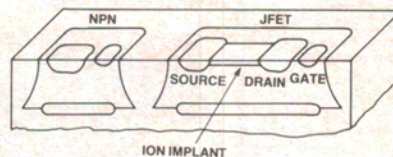


Figure 1. Construction of a BiFET device.

Although National Semiconductor produced the first BiFET products, it was not long before other manufacturers entered the BiFET market, and such products are now available from Advanced Micro Devices, Analog Devices, Fairchild, Harris

Semiconductor, Motorola, Intersil, Precision Monolithics, Raytheon and Texas Instruments, although National Semiconductor still offer the widest range of BiFET products, details of which can be found in their Linear Databook.

Very soon after National Semiconductor had announced the first BiFET products, RCA introduced their first BiMOS product, the economical CA3130 operational amplifier. This has some similarities to the BiFET amplifiers, but employs MOSFET transistors in the input stage rather than junction FET devices. RCA soon introduced further BiMOS devices, one of the best known type being the CA3140, which can be used as a pin-for-pin replacement for the 741 when a higher performance is required. More recently the CA080 series has been introduced as pin-for-pin replacements for the Texas Instruments series of TLO80 BiFET types.

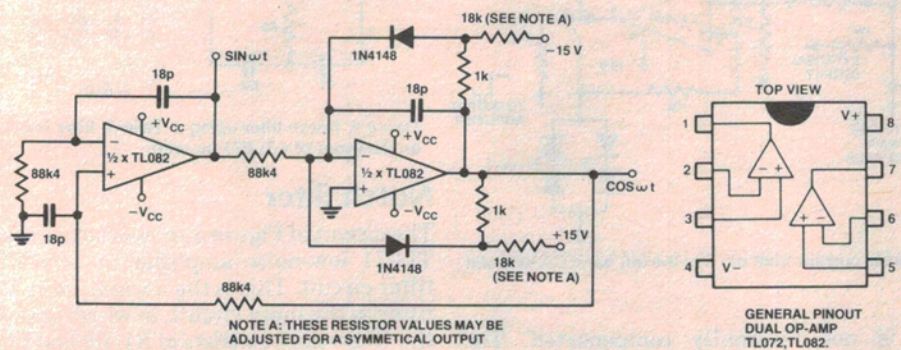


Figure 3. Quadrature oscillator producing two outputs 90° out of phase, using a TL082 dual op-amp — pinout at right.

professional engineer. Modern BiFET and BiMOS devices provide a very high input impedance with relatively good stability and temperature performance — although the input impedance of any of these devices at 25°C is much greater than over the full temperature range.

In general BiFET and BiMOS economical devices offer a comparable performance. If anything, BiMOS devices tend to offer the lower input bias currents and BiFET products the lower noise levels. However, premium devices of both types are available with performances far above the average for the type of device concerned.

Half-Hertz oscillator

Figure 2 shows the use of the economical TL081 device in a simple 0.5 Hz square wave oscillator. The TL081 is a

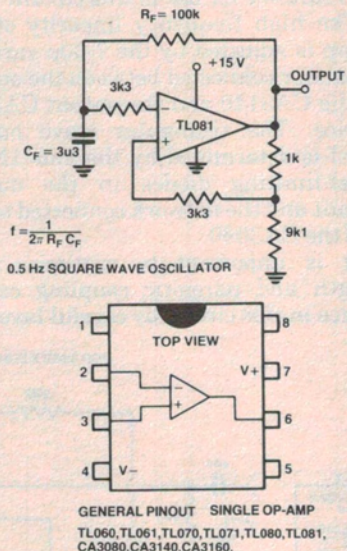
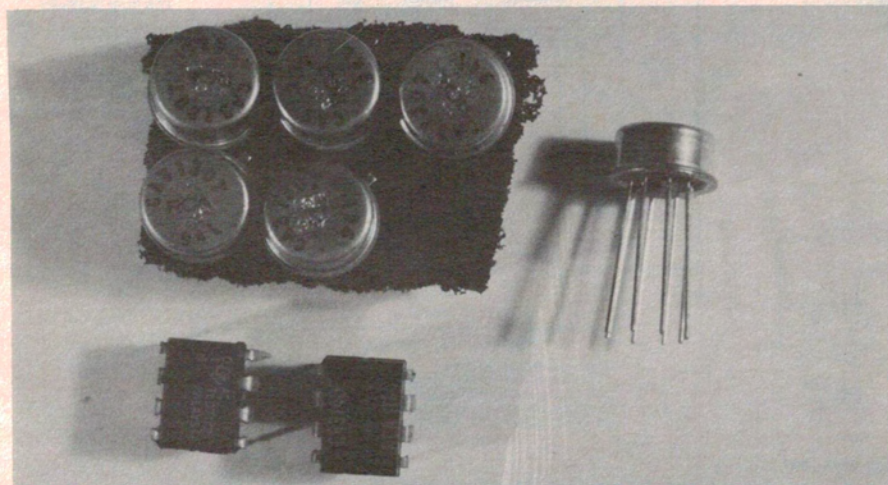


Figure 2. Half-Hertz oscillator using a TL081 — pinout below.



Modern BiMOS and BiFET op-amps come in both can and DIL packages.

single operational amplifier in a dual-in-line package with the connections shown in Figure 2; the pin connections are the same as those of the well-known 741 devices, internal frequency compensation being employed so that no external compensating capacitor is required. External offset adjustment can be made when required by means of an external variable resistor. The TL071 is a similar low-noise device with the same connections, and is quite suitable for use in this circuit, but its low-noise characteristics are not needed. The TL061 is a low-power device with the same connections.

The frequency of oscillation of the Figure 2 circuit is given by $f = 1/(2\pi R_F C_F)$, or about 0.5 Hz with the values shown. The high input impedance of the circuit enables a relatively high value of feedback resistor, R_F , to be employed, so the value of C_F can be reasonably small for a given frequency of operation. About nine-tenths of the output voltage is fed back to the non-inverting input to provide positive feedback to maintain oscillation. The capacitor C_F charges and discharges through R_F according to whether the state of the output voltage is 'high' or 'low' at the time concerned.

The circuit of Figure 2 generates square waves which are approximately symmetrical. However, if a circuit which generates waves with an unequal mark-to-space ratio is required, it is only necessary to connect a resistor of perhaps 10k to 50k in series with a diode across R_F . The direction in which the diode is connected determines whether the output spends the greater part of its time in the 'high' or in the 'low' state.

100 kHz oscillator

Figure 3 shows the circuit of a 100 kHz oscillator providing two outputs which are 90° out of phase with each other. Although the TL081 is perfectly satisfactory for use in this circuit, it is more convenient to use the dual TL082 device so that this one device is all that is needed. The connections of the 8-pin dual-in-line TL082 device are shown in Figure 3; it employs internal frequency compensation, but has no external offset adjustment facilities.

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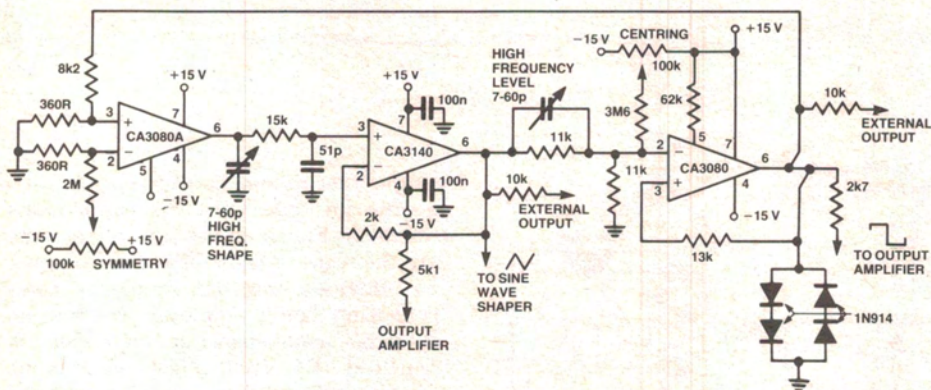


Figure 4. Function generator circuit. Sourcing or sinking current from pin 5 of the left hand CA3080 will vary the frequency.

BiMOS generator

A function generator which produces square and triangular waveforms is shown in Figure 4. It employs a CA3140 BiMOS device together with a CA3080A and CA3080. A particular feature of this circuit is that a frequency range of one million to one can be obtained by the use of a single variable resistor, or alternatively by the use of an auxiliary sweeping signal.

A CA3130 device may be employed instead of the CA3140 shown, but in this case a frequency compensating capacitor (about 56p) must be connected between pins 1 and 8, since the CA3130

is not internally compensated. The CA3160, which does not require any external frequency compensation, is also suitable for use in this circuit.

The high frequency linearity of the ramp is adjusted by the 7-60pF variable capacitor connected between the output of the CA3140 and the output CA3080 device. The triangular wave output level is determined by the four 1N914 level-limiting diodes in the output circuit and the network connected to pin 2 of the CA3080.

It is important to minimise lead length and parasitic coupling capacitance in this circuit by careful layout.

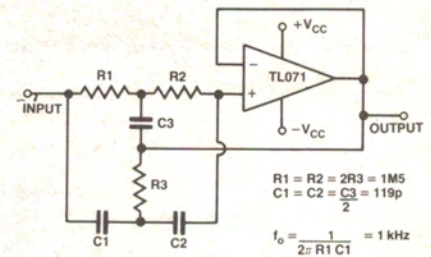


Figure 5. Notch filter using a 'Twin-T' filter section on the input of a TL071 op-amp.

Notch filter

The circuit of Figure 5 shows the use of a TL071 low-noise amplifier in a notch filter circuit. This is the normal 'twin-T' filter in the input circuit, in which one of the 'T' sections consists of R1, R2 and C3 and the other part of C1, C2 and R3. It is designed to reject signals of one particular frequency (the notch frequency), whilst passing signals of any other frequency virtually unattenuated.

For optimum performance, when a sharp notch in the frequency response is required, the components should have matched values (to within 1% or 2%). When the values shown are employed, the notch frequency occurs at approximately 1 kHz. An advantage of using a high input impedance device such as the TL071 is that relatively large values may be employed for R1, R2 and R3 and,

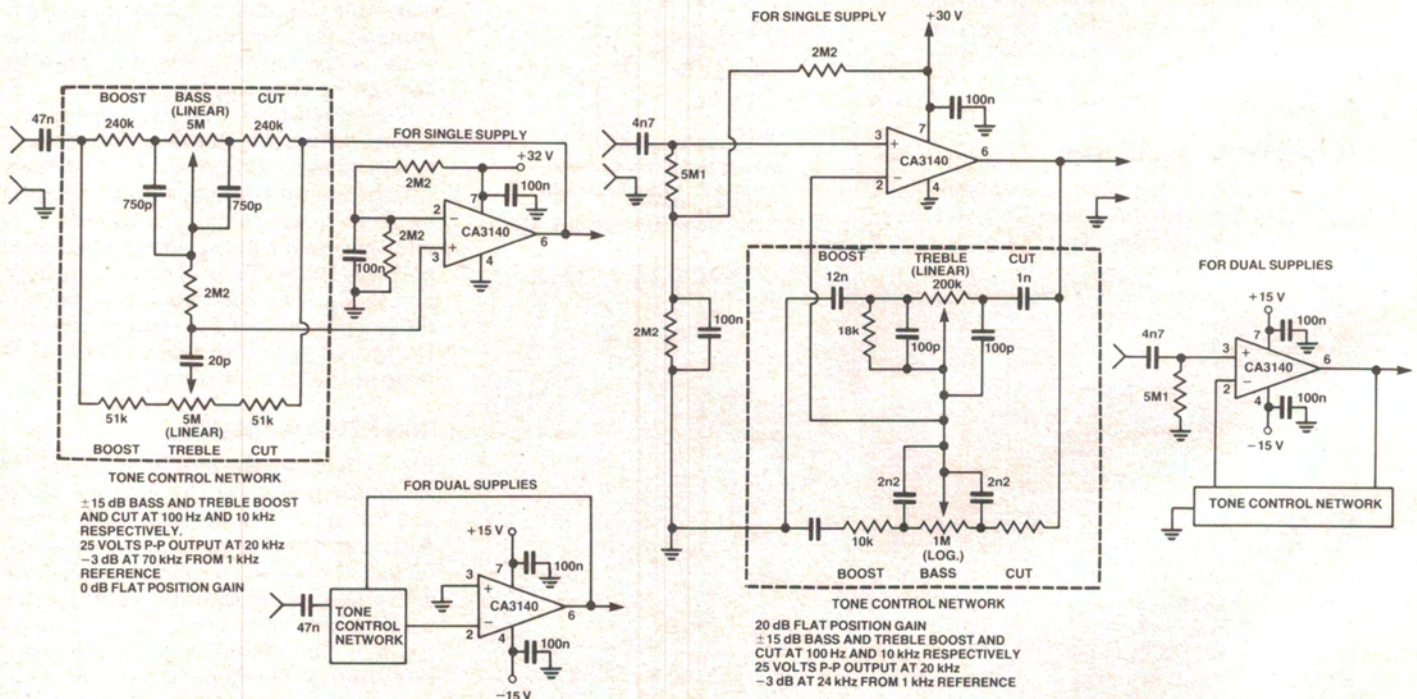


Figure 6. Baxandall type tone control circuitry, with unity gain (flat position).

Figure 7. Tone control circuit with 20 dB of gain, flat position.

therefore, for any given frequency, C1, C2 and C3 can have a relatively low value. Large value, close tolerance capacitors are expensive, so the ability to employ devices of low value is important.

Tone controls

Two tone control circuits using the CA3140 are shown in Figures 6 and 7. Figure 6 is of the Baxandall type, which provides a gain of unity at the mid-frequencies and uses standard linear potentiometers. The high input impedance of the CA3140 enables low-value (and therefore cheap) capacitors to be employed in a circuit which has an impedance great enough to avoid excessive loading of the stage feeding this circuit.

Bass/treble boost or cut are about ± 15 dB at 100 Hz and 10 kHz respectively. Full peak-to-peak audio output is available up to at least 20 kHz, since the CA3140 has a relatively high slew rate (about 7 V/us). The gain falls by about 3 dB at a frequency of around 70 kHz.

The circuit of Figure 7 provides similar boost and cut facilities, but the gain of this circuit is about eleven. The input impedance is basically equal to the resistor from pin 3 to ground.

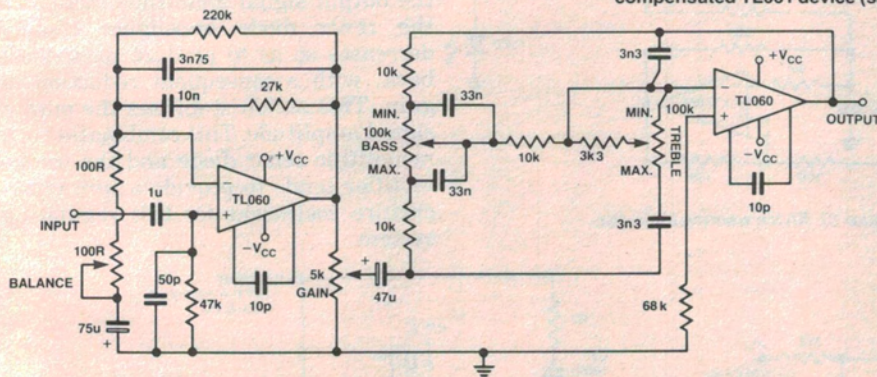


Figure 8. A two-stage tone control circuit using TL060 devices. (Same pinout as TL070).

A tone control circuit using the TL060 low-noise BiFET devices is shown in Figure 8. The TL060 is not internally compensated and therefore requires the 10p external frequency compensation capacitor shown connected in the circuit of each device. Similar circuits can, of course, be made using the TL080 devices at the expense of a higher power level. A further alternative is the use of TL066 programmable BiFET device without any compensating capacitors, but with a suitable value of the programming resistor between pin 8 and the negative line (about 1k, depending on the trade-

off between bandwidth and power consumption which is required). Figure 9 shows the response of the Figure 8 circuit.

Mic preamp

A moving-coil microphone preamplifier with tone control is shown in Figure 10. A TL061 low-power device which is internally compensated is employed in this circuit.

Distribution amp

The Texas Instruments series of BiFET devices is also available with four separate amplifiers in a single 14-pin dual-in-line package. Figure 11 shows the connections of the TL064 low-power BiFET quad amplifier, together with a

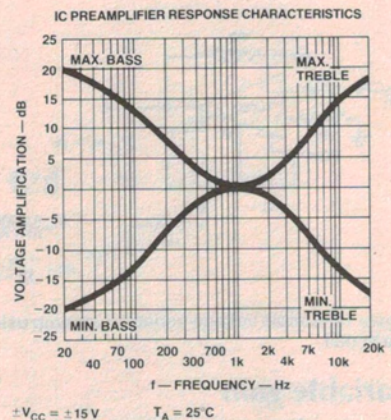


Figure 9. Response characteristics of the Figure 8 circuit.

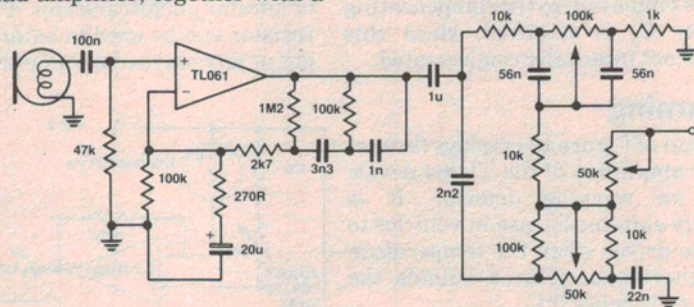


Figure 10. Moving-coil mic preamp with tone controls, using an internally compensated TL061 device (same pinout as TL071).

circuit for an audio distribution amplifier using one of these quad devices. The input stage acts as an input buffer and the other three stages act as output buffers, so that no signal from output A finds its way into any of the other outputs.

The TL084 and the low-noise TL074 have the same pin connections (which are the same as those of the LM324 type of device), whereas the TL085 and the low-noise TL075 devices are quad types with connections similar to the RC4136. There is no TL065 at present.

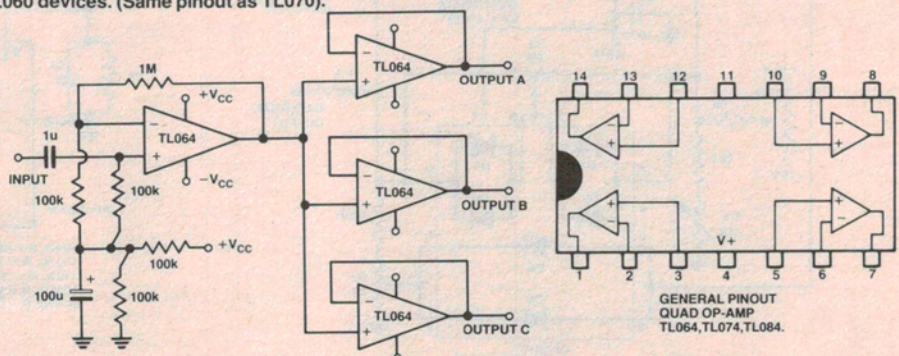


Figure 11. An audio 'distribution' amplifier for 'slaving' several pieces of equipment from a single source. Pinout for the quad op-amp is shown at right.

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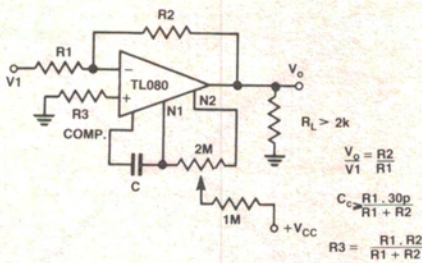


Figure 12. Simple voltage-variable gain amp using the TL080.

Variable gain

The simple circuit of Figure 12 is an amplifier which provides a variable gain set by the potentiometer. A TL080 device is employed, so the compensating capacitor C_c is required, since this device is not internally compensated.

Ice warning

The circuit of Figure 13 employs three of the four amplifiers of the TL084 device in an ice warning detector. It is especially suitable for use in vehicles to warn the driver when the temperature of the thermistor (placed outside the vehicle) falls below 0°C.

When the temperature of the thermistor falls, its resistance rises and the current flowing through the thermistor decreases. Thus the inverting input of the TL084 connected to this thermistor receives less current from the positive supply line and its output voltage tends to rise. This output voltage is fed to the TL084 output amplifier and produces a voltage across the LED, which lights, providing the required warning.

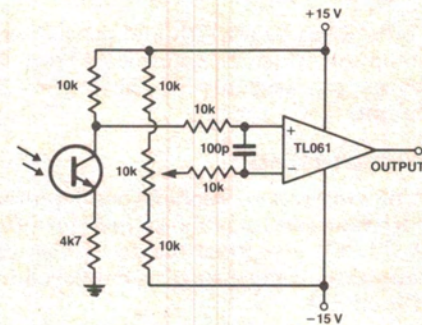


Figure 14. Low-level light detector using FPT100 or similar phototransistor.

Light detector

The circuit of Figure 14 is a low-level light detector preamplifier using the low-power TL061 device with a TIL601 or similar phototransistor. The variable resistor can be used to balance the output at any particular value of light level.

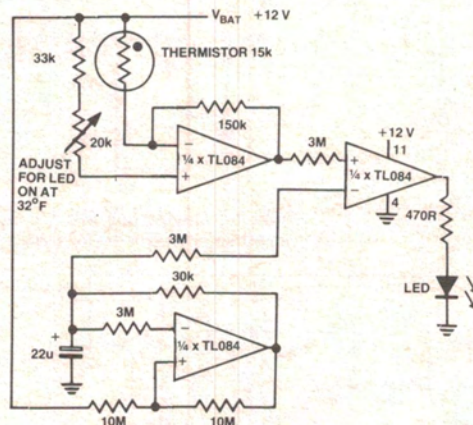


Figure 13. An ice warning indicator.

Sine shaper

The circuit shown in Figure 15 uses a CA3140 as a voltage follower device in combination with diodes from the CA3019 array to convert the triangular signal from a function generator into a sinewave output, which has typically less than 2% harmonic distortion.

The circuit is best adjusted using a distortion analyser, but a fairly good adjustment can be made by comparing its output signal on an oscilloscope with that from a good sinewave signal generator. The initial slope is adjusted by R1, followed by an adjustment of R2. The final slope is established by adjusting R3, thereby adding additional segments that are contributed by these diodes. Repetition of the adjustments may be necessary, since there is some interaction between the adjusting potentiometers.

Wien bridge

A CA3140 BiMOS amplifier is used in the circuit of Figure 16, together with a CA3019 diode array, to form a Wien bridge oscillator. The zener diode shunts the 75k feedback resistor and, as the output signal amplitude increases, the zener diode impedance rapidly decreases so as to produce more feedback, with a consequent reduction in gain. This action stabilises the output signal amplitude. This combination of a monolithic zener diode and the bridge rectifier tends to provide a zero temperature coefficient for this regulating system.

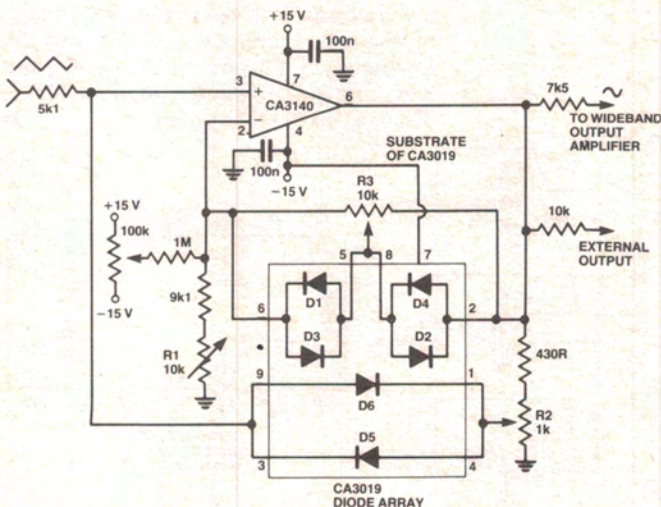


Figure 15. A triangle-to-sine waveshaping circuit employing a CA3140 op-amp and a CA3019 diode array.

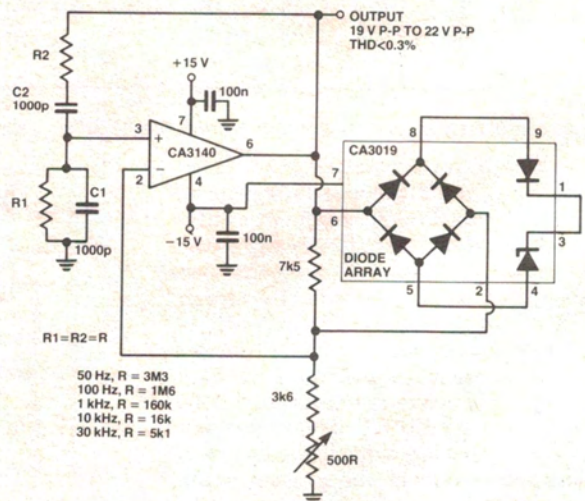


Figure 16. A Wien bridge oscillator featuring amplitude stabilisation via the zener action from the CA3019 diode array.

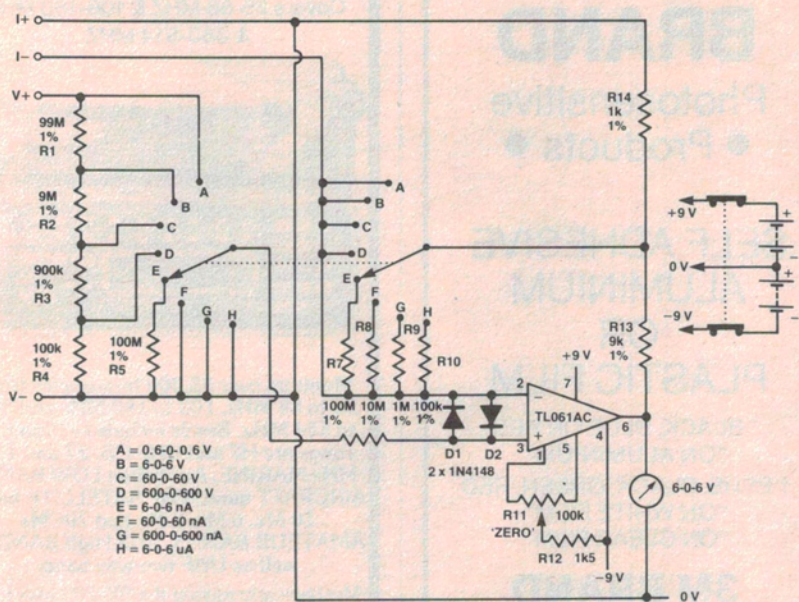


Figure 17. A multi-range voltmeter with high impedance input plus multi-range low-current meter.

As the output circuit contains no RC time constant, there is no lower frequency limit for operation. If $C1 = C2 = 1\mu$ (polycarbonate) and $R1 = R2 = 22M$, the operating frequency can be about 0.007 Hz. At high frequencies, as the frequency is increased the amplitude of the signal must be reduced to prevent slew rate limiting from taking place. An output frequency of about 180 kHz will reach a slew rate of about 9 V/us when the output voltage amplitude is about 16 V peak-to-peak.

Meter

The high input impedance of BiFET and BiMOS devices has led to their use in many voltmeters of high input resistance and also in meters to measure very small currents.

The circuit of Figure 17 was designed by Texas Instruments for the measurement of voltages in the range ± 0.6 V to ± 600 V, where the source resistance may be quite high, and to measure currents from 6 nA to 6 μ A. The instrument was required to accept inputs of either polarity and be inexpensive, robust and reliable. It also had to have a long battery life, so a TL061 low-power operational amplifier device was selected. An inexpensive centre zero meter is considerably cheaper than a liquid crystal display and would provide adequate accuracy for the purpose.

When the switch is in one of the positions A to D inclusive, the instrument is set for the measurement of voltages.

The amplifier has a non-inverting gain of 10 and range selection is achieved by a simple potential divider network with a fixed input impedance of 1000 megohm. A panel-mounted 'centre zero' control is included in the circuit to facilitate corrections for the mechanical movement of the meter zero and for the change in the operational amplifier input voltage offset (for example, with temperature).

In the current measuring mode of switch positions E to H inclusive, the amplifier operates as a current-to-voltage converter. For the most sensitive range of 6 nA, a transimpedance of 1 Gigaohm is required to produce a full-scale deflection of the meter. Rather than use a resistor of such a high value, a resistance multiplier arrangement was devised with a 100M feedback resistor for the most sensitive range.

The two diodes across the input of the operational amplifier in conjunction with R6 provide protection against any

gross overloading of the instrument. A suitable arrangement incorporating a fullwave rectifier into this circuit would allow alternating input signals to be measured, but arrangements would have to be made to allow for frequency roll-off of the response at high frequencies.

3 pA meter

A CA3160 and a CA3140 are used in the circuit of Figure 18 to construct a picoammeter with ± 3 pA full scale deflection (one picoamp = 10^{-12} amps). Pins 2 and 4 of the CA3160 are connected to ground, so the input pin 3 between them is effectively 'guarded'. If slight leakage resistance is present between terminals 3 and 2 or 3 and 4, there would be zero voltage across this leakage resistance and this would reduce the leakage current by a large factor.

It is preferable to operate the CA3160 with its output pin 6 near the ground potential, so as to reduce the dissipation by reducing the device supply current. The CA3140 serves as a x100 gain stage to provide the required plus and minus output voltage swing for the meter and feedback network. A 100:1 voltage divider network consisting of a 9k9 resistor in series with a 100 ohm resistor sets the voltage at the 10 kMohm resistor to ± 30 mV full-scale deflection. This 30 mV signal results from ± 3 V appearing at the top of the voltage divider network, which also drives the meter circuitry.

It is possible to switch the 9k9 and 100 ohm network in the output circuit so that current ranges from 3 pA to 1 nA can be handled using the single 10kM resistor.

The writer has seen circuits using BiMOS devices published for use in measuring currents down to 100 femtoamps (0.1 pA), but obviously extreme care is required to ensure the insulation is adequate when such small currents are being measured. ▶

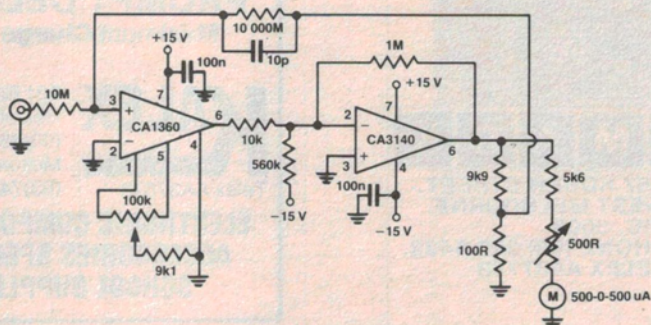


Figure 18. This circuit will measure very low currents — full-scale deflection is \pm three picoamps!

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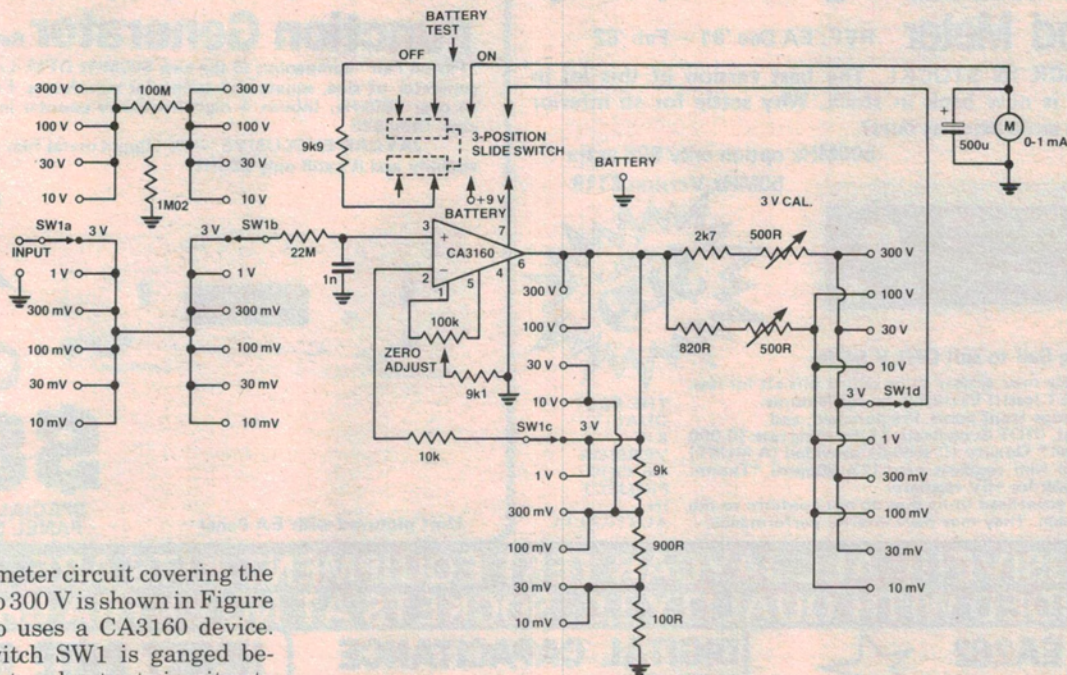


Figure 19. Example of a multi-range voltmeter measuring from 10 mV to 300 V.

Voltmeter

A further voltmeter circuit covering the range 10 mV to 300 V is shown in Figure 19, which also uses a CA3160 device. The range switch SW1 is ganged between the input and output circuitry to enable the proper output voltage for feedback to terminal 2 through the 10k resistor to be selected.

This circuit is powered by a single 8.4 V mercury battery, the power supply current being somewhat less than 500 uA plus the meter current required to indicate a given voltage. Thus the supply current rises to about 1.5 mA at full-scale deflection.

Any readers who experience problems

in obtaining a CA3160 may use a CA3130 with a frequency compensation capacitor of about 56p between pins 1 and 8.

The aim of this article has not been to introduce readers to all the latest

BiFET and BiMOS devices (of which there are large numbers), but rather to give an indication of the wide selection of circuits that can be made with just a few of the standard types of device which are readily available. ●