

mm-Wave Silicon Power Amplifiers and Transmitters

Build high-performance, spectrally clean, energy-efficient mm-wave power amplifiers and transmitters with this cutting-edge guide to designing, modeling, analyzing, implementing, and testing new mm-wave systems.

Suitable for students, researchers, and practicing engineers, this self-contained guide provides in-depth coverage of state-of-the-art semiconductor devices and technologies; linear and nonlinear power amplifier technologies; efficient power combining systems, circuit concepts, system architectures, packaging, and system-on-a-chip realizations.

The world's foremost experts from industry and academia cover all aspects of the design process, from device technologies to system architectures. Accompanied by numerous case studies highlighting practical design techniques, trade-offs, and pitfalls, this is a superb resource for those working with high-frequency systems.

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Contents

	<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>page</i> ix
	<i>Preface</i>	xi
1	Introduction	1
	<i>Hossein Hashemi and Sanjay Raman</i>	
	1.1 Why mm-waves?	1
	1.2 Why silicon?	3
	1.3 Wireless communication basics	4
	1.4 Wireless transmitter architectures	6
	1.5 Power amplifier basics	7
	1.6 Examples of commercial mm-wave applications	8
	1.7 Examples of military mm-wave applications and initiatives	9
	1.8 Conclusions	13
	Acknowledgments	13
	References	13
2	Characteristics, performance, modeling, and reliability of SiGe HBT technologies for mm-wave power amplifiers	17
	<i>David Hareme, Vibhor Jain, and Renata Camillo Castillo</i>	
	2.1 Introduction	17
	2.2 Bipolar device physics	18
	2.3 SiGe HBT processing and structures	27
	2.4 Key circuit design metrics	37
	2.5 BiCMOS passive devices and features	47
	2.6 SiGe HBT modeling and characterization	52
	2.7 Reliability	58
	2.8 Performance limits of SiGe HBTs	64
	2.9 Summary and conclusions	66
	References	68
3	Characteristics, performance, modeling, and reliability of CMOS technologies for mm-wave power amplifiers	77
	<i>Antonino Scuderi and Egidio Ragonese</i>	
	3.1 Introduction	77
	3.2 Materials for high frequency: CMOS and its evolution	78

vi	Contents	
	3.3 CMOS active devices	79
	3.4 Nonlinearities	91
	3.5 Noise	98
	3.6 Thermal effect	102
	3.7 Large-signal performance degradation and reliability	105
	3.8 CMOS passive devices	114
	3.9 Measurement and modeling issues	118
	3.10 CMOS trends: SOI	121
	3.11 Conclusions	132
	Acknowledgment	133
	References	133
4	Linear-mode mm-wave silicon power amplifiers	139
	<i>James Buckwalter</i>	
	4.1 Why linear?	139
	4.2 Linear amplifier design: large-signal device characterization	142
	4.3 Gain of mm-wave amplifiers	148
	4.4 Linear classes of operation	155
	4.5 Optimization of mm-wave amplifiers: why linear?	162
	4.6 Case study: Q-band SiGe power amplifier	166
	4.7 Doherty amplifiers	170
	4.8 Case study: a Q-band Doherty power amplifier	175
	4.9 Summary	177
	References	178
5	Switch-mode mm-wave silicon power amplifiers	180
	<i>Harish Krishnaswamy, Hossein Hashemi, Anandaroop Chakrabarti, and Kunal Datta</i>	
	5.1 Introduction to switching power amplifiers	180
	5.2 Design issues for CMOS mm-wave switching power amplifiers	181
	5.3 Design issues for SiGe HBT mm-wave switching power amplifiers	187
	5.4 Linearizing architectures for switch-mode power amplifiers	200
	5.5 Conclusions	203
	References	204
6	Stacked-transistor mm-wave power amplifiers	207
	<i>Peter Asbeck and Harish Krishnaswamy</i>	
	6.1 Introduction	207
	6.2 Motivation for stacking	207
	6.3 Principles of transistor stacking	211
	6.4 Transistor stacking for switch-mode operation	216
	6.5 Application of stacking at microwave frequencies	218
	6.6 Si device technology for stacked designs	223
	6.7 Stacked FET mm-wave design	226

	Contents	vii
	6.8 Design of mm-wave stacked-FET switching power amplifiers	232
	6.9 Stacking versus passive power-enhancement techniques	238
	6.10 Harmonic matching in stacked structures	240
	6.11 Active drive for stacked structures	240
	6.12 Case studies and experimental demonstrations	241
	6.13 Summary and conclusions	253
	6.14 Acknowledgments	254
	References	254
7	On-chip power-combining techniques for mm-wave silicon power amplifiers	257
	<i>Tian-Wei Huang, Jeng-Han Tsai, and Jin-Fu Yeh</i>	
	7.1 On-chip power-combining techniques	257
	7.2 Direct-shunt power combining	262
	7.3 2D power combining	265
	7.4 3D power-combining technique	282
	7.5 Conclusion	297
	References	298
8	Outphasing mm-wave silicon transmitters	302
	<i>Patrick Reynaert and Dixian Zhao</i>	
	8.1 Introduction	302
	8.2 Outphasing basics	304
	8.3 Outphasing signal generation	307
	8.4 Outphasing signal combining	313
	8.5 Outphasing non-idealities	317
	8.6 Case study: 60-GHz outphasing transmitter	321
	8.7 Conclusions	329
	References	331
9	Digital mm-wave silicon transmitters	334
	<i>Ali M. Niknejad and Sorin P. Voinigescu</i>	
	9.1 Motivation	334
	9.2 Architectures for high efficiency/linearity	337
	9.3 Digital mm-wave transmitter architectures with on-chip power combining	344
	9.4 Digital antenna modulation	356
	9.5 Conclusion	371
	References	373
10	System-on-a-chip mm-wave silicon transmitters	376
	<i>Brian Floyd and Arun Natarajan</i>	
	10.1 Introduction	376
	10.2 Multi-Gb/s wireless links at mm-wave frequencies	376

viii	Contents	
	10.3 On-chip mm-wave transmitter architectures	380
	10.4 Single-element transmitters	386
	10.5 Phased-array transmitters	387
	10.6 Millimeter-wave transmitter examples	398
	10.7 Conclusion	415
	References	416
11	Self-healing for silicon-based mm-wave power amplifiers	419
	<i>Steven M. Bowers, Kaushik Sengupta, Kaushik Dasgupta, and Ali Hajimiri</i>	
	11.1 Background	419
	11.2 Introduction to self-healing	421
	11.3 Sensing: detecting critical performance metrics	426
	11.4 Actuation: countering performance degradation	433
	11.5 Data converters: interfacing with the digital core	439
	11.6 Algorithms: setting the actuators based on sensor data	442
	11.7 System measurements of a fully integrated self-healing PA	445
	11.8 Conclusions	453
	Acknowledgment	453
	References	453
	<i>Index</i>	457

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Preface

Silicon has become the uncontested technology of choice for commercial radio-frequency integrated systems such as those in smartphones, tablets, and televisions. Research over the past decade has demonstrated the feasibility of realizing complex silicon integrated systems at millimeter frequencies. There is little doubt that operation at millimeter waves not only offers advantages, but also is necessary in many commercial and noncommercial applications. Millimeter-wave integrated circuits for automotive radars and high-speed wireless connectivity are already in the market. The fifth-generation wireless standards will include millimeter-wave operation as an essential component to increase the overall capacity. The volume of millimeter-wave integrated systems may soon exceed billions of units per year.

Millimeter-wave operation has a long history. Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose demonstrated transmission and reception of 60 GHz electromagnetic waves over a distance of 23 m in 1895. The application of solid-state devices in the millimeter-wave range started in the second half of the twentieth century. In the 1970s, solid-state transceivers at 60 GHz were demonstrated primarily by using diodes for signal generation, frequency conversion, and amplification. Monolithic millimeter-wave receivers and transmitters were reported in the 1980s using III–V transistors capable of providing power gain well into the millimeter-wave region. Applicability of silicon technologies, including CMOS, for radio-frequency applications was established in the 1990s. Complex silicon integrated systems at millimeter waves were reported in the 2000s, and commercial products started entering the market shortly after.

Throughout history, technology has always been a limiting factor in the amount of radio-frequency signal power that can be generated. In the absence of devices that can provide power gain, generating electromagnetic signals will be power inefficient. Early demonstrations of electromagnetic signal generation at higher frequencies typically involve nonlinear processes such as harmonic signal generation. These approaches are gradually replaced with more linear amplification approaches once supporting technologies become available. In other words, efficient high-power electromagnetic signal generation and amplification oftentimes lags the demonstration and even deployment of wireless systems operating at those frequencies. It is hence natural to see that efficient high-power generation of millimeter-wave signals using silicon technologies is an ongoing research topic nearly a decade after the early demonstrations of complex silicon millimeter-wave integrated systems.

Not too long ago, silicon was considered to be incapable of serving as a proper technology for the realization of power amplifiers even at radio frequencies. In fact,

the viability of CMOS in certain commercial RF wireless systems is still a debated topic. In 2009, the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) postulated that watt-level transmitter output power can be achieved in silicon technologies with efficiencies significantly beyond the state-of-the-art and these transmitters could be linearized on-chip to support high-order digitally modulated waveforms. This led to the launching of the Efficient Linearized All-Silicon Transmitters ICs (ELASTx) program, of which we were both key players (Sanjay as founding program manager, Hossein as leader of one of the key performer teams). In June 2012, we organized a workshop at the IEEE Radio Frequency Integrated Circuits (RFIC) Symposium with an ambitious title of “Towards Watt-Level mm-Wave Efficient Silicon Power Amplifiers.” The workshop included talks by prominent individuals from academia and industry, including several ELASTx team members, covering challenges and research efforts around this topic. The enthusiasm from speakers and participants was accompanied by realistic skepticism about the viability of such an outrageous proposition in the near future. It is extremely gratifying to witness watt-level silicon power amplifiers and transmitters generating millimeter-wave signals efficiently from various research groups across the world a few short years after the workshop.

The seeds of this book were planted at the same IEEE RFIC Workshop. Cambridge University Press, led by Dr Julie Lancashire, concurred with our vision that a book on the topic of silicon millimeter-wave transmitters and power amplifiers is timely. We did not want the book to be a mere collection of research results that have appeared as papers over the past few years. The intent was to draft a book that includes technology, challenges, theory, and a systematic approach towards realization of silicon millimeter-wave power amplifiers and transmitters with research results offered as proof-of-concept case studies. Most chapters of the book are written in an advanced textbook style suitable for graduate students and practicing engineers. Many graphs and tables include comprehensive data about the relevant technologies, devices, and circuits, and serve as complete up-to-date references for researchers and developers. Maintaining consistency and flow across various chapters is a challenge in a multi-authored book. The authors have been very cooperative in drafting and revising their chapters in this spirit. It has been a pleasure to work with the world’s top individuals in the area of silicon millimeter-wave integrated circuits for this project. We hope that all readers learn from reading this book as much as we did.

Editing a multi-authored book, especially when the authors are all prominent busy individuals, is not an easy task. It requires great patience and support. We have been lucky to work with the wonderful team at the Cambridge University Press on this project. Dr Julie Lancashire was nothing but graciously supportive and understanding over the past two years. Elizabeth Horne and Heather Brolly provided wonderful assistance. Thank you all!