

**New Technologies Driving
Decade-Bandwidth Radio Astronomy:**

**Quad-Ridged Flared Horn
&
Compound-Semiconductor LNAs**

Thesis by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy



California Institute of Technology
Pasadena, California

2013

(Defended April 19, 2013)

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Acknowledgments

For the last three and one half years, I have had the privilege and honor of working with Dr. Sander Weinreb, my research advisor. I have learned so much from his unparalleled technical knowledge, his research philosophy, and his incredible humility, generosity, and kindness. I thank him for patiently listening to me—whether the subject matter was technical or not—and sharing his insight. I consider myself extremely lucky to have known such a technical pioneer and a wonderful person, yet at the same time I am saddened to be closing this chapter of my life. I am forever indebted to Dr. Sander Weinreb, a one-of-a-kind advisor, mentor, and confidant.

To Dr. William Imbriale: I thank him for his invaluable help and useful feedback throughout my PhD research and also for finding the time to serve on my thesis committee. I would also like to express my gratitude to the other members of my thesis committee, Prof. Ali Hajimiri, Prof. David Rutledge, and Prof. Jonas Zmuidzinas, who found the time in their busy schedules to review my work and provide valuable feedback. I extend a special note of appreciation to Prof. Ali Hajimiri for allowing me to borrow test equipment from his laboratory. I would also like to thank Prof. Anthony Readhead for serving as my academic advisor.

To Stephen Smith, I am especially grateful for the daily discussions and his invaluable feedback on both topics of my research, his patience in listening to me on everything related to microwave engineering and beyond, and his willingness to share his in-depth technical knowledge and insight on technical and non-technical topics alike. His friendship will be dearly missed.

I would like to thank Hector Navarette for assembly of the low-noise amplifiers and discrete transistors described in the second part of this thesis. I also appreciate the expert machining work of Mike Martin-Vegue, who fabricated all of the quad-ridged flared horns presented herein.

To Christopher Beaudoin, I thank him very much for carrying out the first on-telescope tests of the quad-ridged horn on a very long baseline interferometry antenna and demonstrating to the wider radio astronomy community its potential. He is not only our most loyal customer of the quad-ridged flared horns, but also a close collaborator with whom I enjoyed working.

A large portion of the second part of this thesis would not have been possible without the generosity of Dr. M. Rocchi of OMMIC. I am grateful to him for letting us evaluate our low-noise amplifier designs and discrete transistors on OMMIC's process. I also thank R. Leblanc of OMMIC

for patiently answering my questions, providing documentation and helping with layouts of our amplifiers.

To Dr. Daniel Hoppe: I am grateful for his support both before and during my PhD tenure at Caltech. I have benefited much from his deep technical expertise and his personal advice.

I have sincerely enjoyed being the teaching assistant of the Caltech microwave class for two years and I thank Dr. Dimitrios Antsos for the opportunity, as well as the useful discussions we had on my PhD research. The students, who took the class in these two years, are also much appreciated for what I hope were mutually beneficial discussions and office hour sessions.

I would like to thank my peers at Caltech (and some who have since left) from whom I learned much, namely G. Jones (Columbia University), Prof. J. Bardin (University of Massachusetts Amherst), R. Reeves, K. Cleary, R. Gawande, A. Pai, K. Dasgupta, Prof. K. Sengupta (Princeton University), S. Bowers, J. Schleeh (Chalmers University of Technology), S. Romanenko, A. Safaripour, B. Abiri, F. Aflatouni, and P. Pal.

A special thank you to the administrative assistants who helped me so much throughout my time at Caltech: T. Owen, L. Acosta, S. Slattery.

For financial support, I thank the California Institute of Technology. The quad-ridged horn research was funded in part by the National Science Foundation.

My dream of obtaining a PhD would be so much harder if it were not for the constant support I received from my parents. I cannot thank them enough for all they have given me. I am also deeply indebted to my parents-in-law who have always supported us, this would all be much more difficult without their help.

Last but certainly not the least, I would like to thank my precious family. To Ayşe Zeynep and Ömer Taha, thank you for somehow managing to brighten every day of my life. And to my wonderful wife Banu, I thank her for the encouragement and sacrifice during the last few years. Many people questioned my wisdom in pursuing a PhD with two children; she deserves much of the credit. I hope to return the favor in the following years.

Abstract

Among the branches of astronomy, radio astronomy is unique in that it spans the largest portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, e.g., from about 10 MHz to 300 GHz. On the other hand, due to scientific priorities as well as technological limitations, radio astronomy receivers have traditionally covered only about an octave bandwidth. This approach of “one specialized receiver for one primary science goal” is, however, not only becoming too expensive for next-generation radio telescopes comprising thousands of small antennas, but also is inadequate to answer some of the scientific questions of today which require simultaneous coverage of very large bandwidths.

This thesis presents significant improvements on the state of the art of two key receiver components in pursuit of decade-bandwidth radio astronomy: 1) reflector feed antennas; 2) low-noise amplifiers on compound-semiconductor technologies.

The first part of this thesis introduces the quadruple-ridged flared horn, a flexible, dual linear-polarization reflector feed antenna that achieves 5:1–7:1 frequency bandwidths while maintaining near-constant beamwidth. The horn is unique in that it is the only wideband feed antenna suitable for radio astronomy that: 1) can be designed to have nominal 10 dB beamwidth between 30 and 150 degrees; 2) requires one single-ended 50 Ω low-noise amplifier per polarization. Design, analysis, and measurements of several quad-ridged horns are presented to demonstrate its feasibility and flexibility.

The second part of the thesis focuses on modeling and measurements of discrete high-electron mobility transistors (HEMTs) and their applications in wideband, extremely low-noise amplifiers. The transistors and microwave monolithic integrated circuit low-noise amplifiers described herein have been fabricated on two state-of-the-art HEMT processes: 1) 35 nm indium phosphide; 2) 70 nm gallium arsenide. DC and microwave performance of transistors from both processes at room and cryogenic temperatures are included, as well as first-reported measurements of detailed noise characterization of the sub-micron HEMTs at both temperatures. Design and measurements of two low-noise amplifiers covering 1–20 and 8–50 GHz fabricated on both processes are also provided, which show that the 1–20 GHz amplifier improves the state of the art in cryogenic noise and bandwidth, while the 8–50 GHz amplifier achieves noise performance only slightly worse than the best published results but does so with nearly a decade bandwidth.

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