

September 1975

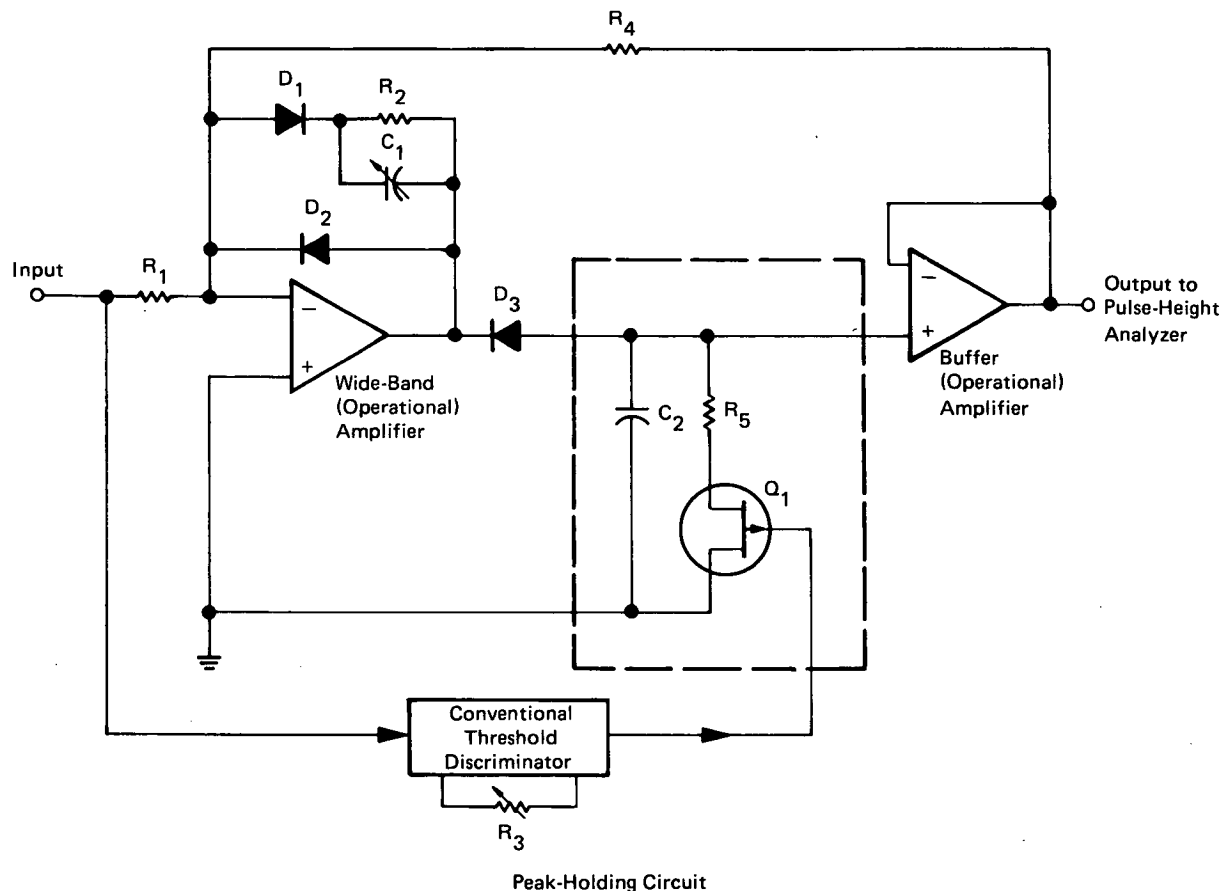
NASA TECH BRIEF

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center



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Peak-Holding Circuit for Extremely Narrow Pulses



The problem:

Present nuclear-pulse-height analyzers cannot analyze narrow pulse widths (50 to 3200 ns) without the aid of pulse-stretching circuits. Conventional pulse-stretching circuits, however, introduce varying frequency responses into the output signal. These responses are caused by the varying time constant of the blocking diode connecting the amplifiers on the charging capacitor. Elimination of this frequency dependence often leads to ex-

cessive frequency compensation which, in turn, reduces sensitivity of the entire circuit to very narrow pulses.

The solution:

A peak-holding circuit was developed which can stretch pulses in the 50- to 3200-ns range to make them acceptable for pulse-height analyzers. The circuit uses a high-speed wide-band amplifier, does not need excessive frequency compensation, and can handle pulses one-tenth of the width normally required by pulse analyzers.

(continued overleaf)

How it's done:

The circuit (see figure), designed to operate with positive input pulses, comprises a high-speed, wide-band operational amplifier connected in a fast-charge configuration, a holding circuit, and a second operational amplifier serving as a buffer. The output of the wide-band amplifier is connected to a coupling diode, D_3 , and a clamping diode, D_2 . A frequency-compensating feedback network comprises a parallel combination of resistor R_2 and variable capacitor C_1 . Diode D_1 is used to compensate for nonlinearities of D_3 . The holding circuit includes capacitor C_2 connected in parallel with a discharging network consisting of resistor R_5 and a FET (Field-Effect Transistor) device, Q_1 .

When a positive signal is fed into the input terminal, the wide-band amplifier inverts the signal, forward biasing diode D_3 . This allows C_2 to charge to voltage proportional to the peak input-signal voltage.

The extent of pulse stretching is determined by the manual setting of variable resistor R_3 in the threshold discriminator. When the input-signal pulse is stretched to proper width, the discriminator generates a "dump" pulse, turning on the FET which shorts C_2 to ground through R_5 . The stretched pulse is then fed through the unity-gain buffer amplifier.

The output of the buffer amplifier is also fed back to the wide-band amplifier through resistor R_4 . Gain of the entire circuit is approximately equal to:

$$\frac{R_2 R_4}{(R_1) (R_2 + R_4)}$$

Normally R_2 is ten times as large as R_4 to reduce the effect of nonlinearities in D_1 and D_3 . Nonlinearities less than 0.015% are possible by choice of proper components.

Note:

Requests for further information may be directed to:
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Reference: TSP73-10317

Patent status:

This invention is owned by NASA, and a patent application has been filed. Inquiries concerning non-exclusive or exclusive license for its commercial development should be addressed to:

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Lockheed Aircraft Corp.
under contract to
Johnson Space Center
(MSC-14129)