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A NEW GENERATION OF VERY HIGH STABILITY BVA OSCILLATORS
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SUMMARY
A third generation of “Oscilloquartz” OCXO’s using the technique of housing a BVA SC-cut crystal resonator and
its associated oscillator components in double oven technology has been developed with the funding support of
European Space Operations Centre (E.S.O.C). The main purpose is to provide a local oscillator for high
performances ground clock [ref 1].

The main features targeted of that new “8607-C series” are to get significant improvements compared to the
classical “state of the art” 8607-B design in a better short term stability @ 1 sec in Allan variance, a better-low
phase noise and outstanding short term stability and a better-high isolation from “pressure and humidity”
variations.

1) INTRODUCTION: MAIN OBJECTIVES
BVA oscillators are mostly used as local oscillators in
ground atomic clocks (Cs fountain, primary
references...). Then the main goal in this application is
a phase noise lower than -130 dBc/Hz @ 1 Hz offset,
and sigma tau lower than 8 \times 10^{-14} @ 1 s, 5 \times 10^{-14} on
floor up to 30s.

For metrology purpose, our target is to get a phase
noise floor better than -160 dBc / Hz and thermal
stability better than 1.10^{-10} in -15°C to +60 °C
temperature range.

For specific application, medium term stability is a
strong requirement. In DORIS application, the goal is
to get, from a set of 90 samples (τ =10s) an average
slope (linear regression) better than 2 \times 10^{-13} per min,
with a residual noise (distribution around the average
slope) lower than 1 \times 10^{-13}. In such case, ageing
thermal stability and Allan variance must be at their
best level.

2) THERMO-MECHANICAL STRUCTURE
2.1) GENERAL PRINCIPLE
In order to satisfy new exigencies expressed in §1, we
have chosen an original thermo-mechanical structure
with the main following characteristics, described on
next graph:

a) A double oven structure placed at the neck and
inside a Dewar-glass
b) The “internal oven” housing both BVA resonator
and oscillator circuit hermetically sealed in order to
reduce “pressure & humidity” sensitivity
c) The “internal oven” is mechanically realized in a
heavy copper block to reduce the thermal transients
d) The Dewar-glass neck is closed by a temperature
controlled copper plate (external Oven)
e) Both “Ovens” are temperature controlled by 2
separated P.I loops circuits (proportional-integral type)
f) A rigid central “composite Beam” links the two ovens
together and fixes the double oven structure on the
external case
g) Due to the low thermal conductivity coefficient
(§2.4) of the beam material, there is no major thermal
link between the copper plate (at the neck of the
Dewar-glass) and the internal oven (at the extremity of
the beam)

2.2) INTERNAL OVEN
The “internal oven” is the most important piece
regarding thermal performances.
Its main features are:
- Perfect thermal homogeneity & high thermal inertia
- Hermetic enclosure & electrical links insured by
glass-beads
- Heating ensured by power transistors
- Must support a connexion PCB to drive the heating
transistors
Machined in a heavy copper block, the “internal oven”
mass is #370g, providing a thermal time constant of
the internal oven around 2000s.

2.3) EXTERNAL OVEN
The “external oven” function is mainly filtering the
external temperature variations by closing the “Dewar-
glass neck” by a quasi-isothermal cape.
In these conditions we have chosen a simple circular
cooler plate heated by a single power MOSFET
transistor.
Added to “Dewar-glass” natural insulation properties
and “Internal oven” large thermal inertia, the significant
reduction of the temperature variation magnitude seen
by the internal oven must allow to fulfill “static” and
“dynamic” high performances under temperature
gradients.

2.4) CENTRAL COMPOSITE BEAM
The first function of the central composite beam is to
fix strongly both “external” and “internal” ovens to
external structure.
The second function is to allow a high thermal
insulation between the 2 ovens to avoid thermal
leakage.
Two physical properties of the selected material are of
main interest in our application:
- The tensile modulus of elasticity: 18000 N/mm²
- The thermal conductivity: 0.30 W/K.m

2.5) COMPLETE THERMO-MECHANICAL STRUCTURE

The complete thermo-mechanical structure is presented on Fig 1.

3) DOUBLE OVEN THERMAL REGULATION

Both ovens are "temperature controlled" by two separated P.I loops (proportional-integral). "Heating modules" are realized with MOSFET power transistors and "Temperature sensors" are "glass sealed" precision small size thermistors.

3.1) GENERAL P.I.D TRANSFER FUNCTION

The fig 2 and fig 3 show a general P.I.D (Proportional-Integral-Derivative) electrical scheme equivalent to our thermal loop and its equivalent transmittance. The internal oven is considered as equivalent to a "first order low pass filter" associated to a pure delay time ($\Delta t$ # 1s) with a very high time constant ($\tau$ # 2000s). The thermistor assembly is also equivalent to a "low pass filter" but with a small time constant ($\tau_{capt}$ # 6s). In a first approximation we can consider than the two "first order" filters are connected in tandem.

In our specific application, the "derivative function" will not be connected because not useful regarding the 8607's very long stabilisation times.

3.2) INTERNAL OVEN P.I THERMAL LOOP

Fig 4 shows the electrical scheme of the "internal oven P.I thermal loop".

In order to avoid frequency transients when the external power supply voltage is perturbed, the internal oven power chain is powered by a regulated "power supply" placed outside the Dewar-glass. Both Gain and Phase of equivalent "open loop thermal transmittance" are shown on fig 5.

The internal oven temperature reference will be adjusted at "ToT" (Resonator Turn over Temperature). For example, the average "ToT" for our BVA / 5MHz / SC cut (overtone 3) resonators is # 85°C. The "internal oven" real thermal gain (ratio between external temperature deviation & internal temperature deviation), must be $\geq$ 2500.
3.3) EXTERNAL OVEN P.I THERMAL LOOP

The same electrical scheme is used for “external oven” but with only one heating MOSFET transistor (instead of two in the internal oven).

The copper plate objective is to filter the external thermal perturbations at the neck of the “Dewar-glass”. The copper plate reference temperature “Tcp” will be given by the following expression:

\[ Tcp \leq ToT - (Rth \times Pint) \quad \text{with} \]

\[ Tcp : \text{Copper plate reference temperature (°C)} \]

\[ ToT : \text{Turn Over temperature (°C)} \]

\[ Rth : \text{Average thermal resistance (°C/W) inside the Dewar-glass} \]

\[ Pint : \text{Power dissipated inside the Dewar-glass (W)} \]

If \( Top \text{max} = \text{max operating temperature} \), the best solution is to have \( Tcp > Top \text{ max} \) in order to keep the 2 thermostats both operating even if the external temperature is at the maximum of the operating temperature range.

In our particular case, the internal temperature increasing due to internal dissipative power \( (Rth \times Pint) \) is about 10°C.

For example, when the max operating temperature is 50°C, then “Tcp” will be fixed ≥ 60°C.

Concerning the “external oven” real thermal gain and contrarily to § 3.2, this point is not critical and a low value is widely sufficient (e.g. ≥ 30)

**Remark:** The combination of “external oven” and “internal oven” placed in “tandem” must insure a total real thermal gain ≥ 75000.

E.g.: the maximum temperature variation measured on BVA resonator and oscillator circuit will be ≤ 0.001°C when external temperature is varying from -20°C to +50°C.

4) OSCILLATOR & BUFFER TOPOLOGY

4.1) GENERAL PRINCIPLE

The Leeson’s equation takes into account significant parameters [see remark hereunder] that determine the oscillator’s single-sided phase noise density (including the “flicker corner” \( (fc) \) of the active component) like expressed hereunder:

\[
L(f_m) = 10 \log_{10} \left( \frac{F K T}{2 P_{av}} \left[ 1 + \frac{f_m}{f_c} + \left( \frac{f_0}{2 f_m Q_l} \right)^2 \right] + \frac{f_m}{f_c} \right)
\]

Where:

- \( L(f_m) \) = Phase noise (in dBc/Hz)
- \( Q_l \) = Loaded Q
- \( f_m \) = Carrier offset frequency (Hz)
- \( f_c \) = Flicker corner frequency of the active device (Hz)
- \( f_0 \) = Carrier center frequency (Hz)
- \( T \) = Temperature (K)
- \( P_{av} \) = Average power trough the resonator (W)
- \( F \) = Noise factor of the active device (\( F=N_{out}/(G*N_{in}) \))
- \( K \) = Boltzman constant (J/K)

**Remark:** Even if “fc” term can be considered as large enough and general, it is not obvious to integer in this model some added noise (proper to XO’s) like the intrinsic crystal’s “flicker noise”.

Some other “deterministic” additional noise types caused by external phenomenon’s like:

- The OCXO’s thermal and pressure sensitivity
- The dynamic thermal behaviour proper to the “Crystal Cut” (AT or SC) are not taken into account.

In these conditions, the real measurements must be theoretically worst than those given by the Leeson’s model especially for long integration times (e.g. ≤ 0.1Hz offset frequencies).
4.4) SIMULATIONS AND PROTOTYPES MEASUREMENTS

We have plotted on the same graph (Fig 8) the results issued from:

- "ADS" software simulations,
- LEESON’s model computations,
- N2-A prototype (8607-C) real measurements,
- Nr 144 5MHz OSA reference (previous design).

The “ADS” simulations results are given for:

\[ R_q = 55 \Omega; \quad L_q = 4.3H; \quad C_q = 2.36E-16F; \quad P_q = 100\mu W; \quad KF = 3E-15 \] (Ebers-Moll model Noise Figure / §4.2)

In that particular graph, the computed “frequency domain” is limited @ 1Hz for low “offset frequencies”.

The LEESON’s model computation results are given for:

\[ F = 2.2 (NF = 3.5dB); \quad K = 1.38E-23(J/°K); \quad T = 358°K; \quad P_{avs} = 100\mu W; \quad fc = 1000Hz; \quad fo = 5MHz; \quad Q_l = 1.5E+6 \] (hypothesis: Q_l # 0.6*Q and Q # 2.5E6 for std BVA)

For information, the first “8607-C” prototype’s real measurements have been obtained between N2-A and N3-A units.

It is easy to see that the N2-A real measurements are in good correlation with the ADS simulations results above 2Hz offset, but the model becomes not correct below 2Hz. The little difference on the floor is only due to the excitation level difference.

The comparison with Leeson’s model shows a good correlation with the OSA reference144 (8607-B previous design) up to 100Hz even if the low excitation level applied in that oscillator can explain a significant floor level difference.

An important gap can be observed with the N2-A prototype in the 2Hz---1000Hz offset range where the real results are significantly better showing a clear improvement.

In our particular case, it is necessary to reduce \( fc \@ 280Hz \) (instead of 1kHz ?...) to obtain a good correlation with our prototype’s real measurements, showing a significant “flicker noise” reduction in the “2Hz---1000Hz” bandwidth. Even if “fc” can’t be considered as a relevant physical parameter [ref 2], it’s obvious that such theoretical value seems not physically realistic.

To view this questioning, the Fig 9 shows the results issued from:

- LEESON’s model computations (but with fc reduced to 280Hz)
- N2-A prototype (8607-C) real measurements
- Nr 144 5MHz OSA reference (previous design).

In that particular case, according to previous remark, all the parameter’s values applied in Leeson’s model remain the same except “fc” (280Hz):
4.5) FIRST PROTOTYPES NOISE; A PHYSICAL TENTATIVE INTERPRETATION

According to noise theory it is easy to write the noise frequency spectrum as the sum of some physical types:

\[ S_n(f) = \sum_{a}^{6} b_a f^{-a} \]

A well known relationship allows expressing the phase noise spectrum as:

\[ S_{\phi}(f) = \frac{1}{2} \int S_n(f) \, df \]

And it is possible simplifying by using \( b_a \) coefficients as:

\[ S_{\phi}(f) = \sum_{a}^{6} b_a \, f^{-a} \]

In these conditions a simple measurement of \( f^{-a} \) intercept point with the 1Hz axis gives directly the \( b_a \) value.

According to E.Rubiola theory [ref 2] a fine graphical analysis shows some interesting improvements in term of flicker phase noise (see table below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noise Type</th>
<th>Freq slope</th>
<th>Ref 144 S(\phi)(1Hz)</th>
<th>N2-A proto. S(\phi)(1Hz)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P.white</td>
<td>f0</td>
<td>-155</td>
<td>3.2 e-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.flicker</td>
<td>f-1</td>
<td>-131.5</td>
<td>7.1 e-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.flicker</td>
<td>f-3</td>
<td>-127.5</td>
<td>1.8 e-13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to graphical observations we can deduce the main physical characteristics:
- The apparent loaded Q is relatively high \# 1.5E6 (Ql # Qx60% according to design)
- The sustaining amplifier “Noise Factor” is \# 2.2 (3.5dB)
- The parametric “flicker noise” contribution specially generated by Output Buffers is \# 6dB with probably a 3dB potential improvement margin.
- The intrinsic “flicker noise” contribution generated by resonator only can be estimated at 4dB.
- The potential electronic performance for such oscillator without any other design improvements is \# -134dBc/Hz @ 1Hz offset (in compliance with §4.4).
- The ultimate electronic performance (assuming -3dB flicker noise Output Buffers improvements) can be estimated \# -137dBc/Hz @ 1Hz offset (in compliance with ADS simulations).

5) CHOICE OF BVA RESONATOR’S DESIGN

In many oscillators phase noise measurements, the results obtained by exchanging only “electrically equivalent resonators” can show significant differences (up to 10dB @ 1Hz).

The same observation has been made at Femto-ST Institute with the passive method (§6) on resonators only.

This problem widely discussed in some theoretical works [ref 2] is probably due to resonator’s “intrinsic flicker noise” generally not known and not measured before utilization in oscillators.

In these conditions, an important work has been started to optimise “BVA design or manufacturing process parameters” able to reduce the crystal’s intrinsic flicker noise.

In parallel, measurements methods allowing knowing quickly resonator’s intrinsic noise performances (before utilization in oscillators) must be developed to evaluate “design or process” progress.

In order to get directions to discussion’s supports, we have compared in the scope of this work two different BVA SC 3rd Overtone resonators. The idea behind is, one hand to optimise design maximising the Q value (assuming that the Q\(^4\) law derived by F Walls, JJ Gagnepain & all. [Ref 3] is still valid), and on the other hand to get resonators with similar Q while slightly different C1 parameter, in order trying to quantify the electronic contribution.

Typical characteristics are summarized in the next table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noise Type</th>
<th>R (Ω)</th>
<th>L(H)</th>
<th>C(μF)</th>
<th>Q (10^6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Std</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>specific</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) RESONATOR CHARACTERIZATION BY PASSIVE METHOD

6.1) SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE PASSIVE METHOD

The intrinsic flicker frequency noise of quartz crystal resonators can be measured by means of passive methods. In this case, the resonator noise is observed in term of phase noise without the noise usually associated with an active oscillator. In 1975, the first technique using passive measuring system was developed by Walls and Wainwright [Ref 4]. We will call it “simple bridge method”. Two crystals as identical as possible are driven through a \( \pi \) transmission network by a unique low-noise source and amplified. Then, both signals are mixed with 90° phase difference by a double balanced mixer (DBM). The DBM output, used as a phase detector produces a DC voltage which is proportional to the instantaneous phase difference between the two signals. A good balancing of each arm in term of resonator loaded Q’s and resonant frequencies gives a DBM output signal insensitive to the source noise. The reduction of the source noise authorizes the noise detection of both resonators. This kind of measurement system is well adapted for numbers of resonators but the noise floor of the system is limited about -140 dBc/Hz @ 1 Hz carrier offset. This is due to the added flicker noise of the amplifier needed to increase the resonator signals before the DBM. Thus, the detection of inherent resonator noise of the best crystal is not possible (Pair measurement).

Another technique is now available to solve this problem. At the end of nineties, crystal resonators testers were designed to assist in the PM noise characterization of quartz crystal resonators in the 1 to 200 MHz domain. These units use carrier suppression based on the bridge technique [Ref 6-8]. The noise floor of these systems obtained by means of resistors is \# -155 dBc/Hz for a 70 µW carrier power.
We will call this method “carrier suppression technique”. Recently, FEMTO-ST Institute has developed an improved carrier suppression system in order to find the origin of intrinsic flicker noise of acoustic wave resonators [Ref 9].

6.2) MEASUREMENTS PRINCIPLE

Fig. 10 shows the principle of the carrier suppression technique.

![Carrier suppression principle](image)

The DUT’s bridge is quasi identical to the simple bridge method. The carrier signal of the source is splitted into equal parts to drive both devices under test (DUT). The DUT’s can be resistors to measure the noise floor of the system or crystal resonator pairs to measure their inherent phase noise. The resonant frequency of each arm of the bridge is tuned to the source frequency with a serial capacitor. The difference between both methods is that the crystal output signals are not 90° mixed together but combined 180° out of phase. In this case, the carrier signal is subtracted. Since phase noise is defined relative to the carrier power, reducing the carrier level has the effect of amplifying the phase noise of the DUT. The combiner output signal is increase by about 60 dB by the HF amplifier and then mixed by the phase noise detector with a 90° phase shift parts of the carrier signal. Then, the LF amplifier pushes the output signal to a level compatible with the Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) analyzer. Thus, the carrier suppression technique gives a better gain than the simple bridge method. Moreover the flicker noise of the HF amplifier is very low because of the low carrier level.

Calibration of the measurement system is obtained by injecting a known side band signal or a known white noise source (KNS) on one of the arms of the bridge. The noise of the DUT, as seen on the FFT analyzer, is corrected using the calibration factor determined with the side band or the KNS.

The resonator noise is given through the single sideband power spectral density of phase fluctuations \( L(f) \). The measured noise is attributed to both resonators if they can be considered identical \( S_n(1 \text{ Hz}) = L(f) \). If one resonator noise is known and significantly better, the measured noise can be attributed to only one resonator \( S_n(1 \text{ Hz}) = L(f) + 3 \text{dB} \). Fig. 11 gives an example of \( L(f) \) measurement @ 60 \( \mu \text{W} \) for BVA 4304 029 36 and BVA 4304 027 47.

\[
\sigma_y(\tau) = \sqrt{2 \ln(2) \left( \frac{1}{2Q_n} \right)^2 L_n(1\text{Hz})}
\]

\( Q_n = \nu_0 / 2f_L \) is computed from the Leeson cut-off frequency \( f_L \). \( f_L \) represent the f -1 to f -3 slope change of the \( L(f) \) curve. But, more precision is usually given on \( f_L \) by a measure from the transfer function of the resonator obtained with the KNS source. In the case of Fig. 11, \( f_L \) is equal to 1.8 Hz. Thus, if the BVA 4304 029 36 is considered as the reference, we have:

\[
\sigma_y(\tau) = \sqrt{2 \ln(2) \left( \frac{1.8}{5 \times 10^{-6}} \right)^2 10^{-13} / 10^6} = 1.34 \times 10^{-13}
\]

The Allan standard deviation calculated this way represents the Allan standard deviation of an oscillator using this resonator in which the only source of flicker frequency noise is the resonator under test. Thus, a correspondence between this value and the classical measurement of the oscillator flicker floor gives the proof that the resonator noise limits the oscillator.

6.3) RESULTS with 5MHz “STANDARDS” BVA

The measurements results (table hereunder) are obtained with “passive method” @ 60\( \mu \text{W} \) by using BVA 4304 029 36 as noise reference (no correction).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BVA 4304 029 36</th>
<th>BVA 4304 029 14</th>
<th>BVA 4304 027 47</th>
<th>BVA 4304 027 57</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( L(f) ) (dBc/Hz @ 1Hz)</td>
<td>(-132,5)</td>
<td>(-133)</td>
<td>(-132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( S_n(\text{rad}^2/\text{Hz}) )</td>
<td>(-129,5)</td>
<td>(-130)</td>
<td>(-129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( Q (10^6) )</td>
<td>(2.97)</td>
<td>(2.3)</td>
<td>(2.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( Q_n/Q )</td>
<td>(1.19)</td>
<td>(1.39)</td>
<td>(1.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( Q_n/QL )</td>
<td>(2.57)</td>
<td>(2.37)</td>
<td>(2.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \sigma_y(\tau) ) (E-13)</td>
<td>(1.12\times10^{-13})</td>
<td>(1.16\times10^{-13})</td>
<td>(1.25\times10^{-13})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \sigma_y(\tau) ) (E-13)</td>
<td>(1.25)</td>
<td>(1.39)</td>
<td>(1.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( \sigma_y(\tau) ) (E-13)</td>
<td>(1.25)</td>
<td>(1.39)</td>
<td>(1.33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These homogeneous results can be considered as representative of the standard 5MHz BVA design.

6.4) RESULTS with 5MHz “SPECIFIC” BVA

The measurements results (Table hereunder) are obtained with “passive method” @ 60\( \mu \text{W} \) by using BVA 4304 035 27 as noise reference (no correction). Other tests are in progress @ 100\( \mu \text{W} \) to evaluate the excitation level impact.
As opposed to previous standard design (§6.3), these first “specific” BVA show an important dispersion in term of phase noise (e.g.: up to 13dB @ 1Hz between Nr 28 and 29 pieces).

That significant difference isn’t explainable by the quasi-identical motional parameters and seems demonstrate a wide intrinsic phase noise level dispersion.

Another interesting point is the very low noise level measured on resonators Nr 4304 035 27 & 4304 035 28 (cy = 8.8E-14).

By applying a “0.707” correction factor (assuming that the two pieces are strictly identical), the average Allan variance @1s for one piece is remarkable # 6.23E-14 (+/- 2E-14)!

7) FIRST OSCILLATORS PROTOTYPES RESULTS (ACTIVE METHOD)

7.1) PHASE NOISE RESULTS (5 MHz Standards BVA)

In order to avoid any “error risks” particularly for very low offset frequencies (inside the PLL bandwidth) all phase noise measurements are issued from 2 different systems:

In Frequency domain (>1Hz): PN9000-Phase noise measurement system / Aeroflex

In Time domain (>1s): 5110A-Time interval analyser system / Timing Solutions

Remark: The “References pieces” Nr 144 & 303 are 5MHz “noise references” in use @ “Oscilloquartz S.A” (previous 8607-B type).

Pieces “N1-A2”, “N2-A” and “N3-A” are the 3 first prototypes @ 5MHz (“New Generation” 8607-C Type).

The measurements results show the phase noise improvement obtained with the new design compared to the actual state of the art. Despite the values measured at one Hz, around – 128 dBc/ Hz, which are a little bit disappointing regarding the Allan variance target at 1 Hz, we can notice the significant improvement, # -4 dB, around 10 and 100 Hz.

The noise floor improvement was expected by design, but the flicker contribution improvement is a prime result.

7.2) ALLAN VARIANCE DEVIATION (5 MHz Standards BVA)

“Allan variance deviation” measurements are issued from a “5110A Time Interval Analyser” (Timing Solutions).

Remark: The results presented hereunder are given as the sum of two pieces. A correction factor equivalent @ 0.707 can be applied in the specific case where the two pieces can be considered as strictly equivalent.

In the first line, the grey case (3.59 N.C) shows a “not correct” measurement caused by a beat frequency pollution problem.

8) COMPARISON BETWEEN PASSIVE AND ACTIVE METHOD

We have reprinted on the same table the results obtained with the same BVA resonators measured with the two methods (Passive and Active).

Except for “N1-A prototype” where instabilities seen on oscillator get the measurements not significant, a good correlation can be observed between the two methods on the 3 other pieces.

9) CONCLUSION

The results obtained with the “New Design 8607-C” first prototypes shows that our oscillator’s electrical scheme allows significant progress in term of phase noise above 1Hz offset frequencies (up to -5dBc/Hz @ 100Hz compared to previous 8607-B design).

Below 1Hz, the noise performances are mainly given by the resonator.

The important works started in collaboration with Femto-ST Institute show a good correlation between results obtained on the resonator only (passive method) then on oscillator (active method).

The phase noise measurements differences, always included in the “error margin”, show a “not significant”
contribution of the oscillator’s electronic (at least very close of the “Passive Method” residual contribution).

In order to still progress and reach noise performances widely better than -130dBc/Hz @ 1Hz (objective §4.4: -134dBc/Hz), an important effort must be done in term of resonator’s design or manufacturing process to reduce their intrinsic flicker noise.

Even if all the works aren’t yet finished, the first “noise measurements” obtained on pieces 4304 035 27 & 4304 035 28 (§6.4) with the last “Specific BVA” resonators are a stimulating factor which merits to be continued.

Another interesting result to be signalled concerns our last series of standard BVA resonators for which a particular manufacturing process has been applied. The following table shows exceptional “Allan variance deviations” measured on series 34 (active method):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (s)</th>
<th>τ</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>20</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>200</th>
<th>1k</th>
<th>2k</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>144 / 460</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.41</td>
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**Remark:** In this batch the best results obtained between 10s and 20s averaging time are near of 6.8E-14 (average value for one piece after application of the 0.707 correction factor) showing a clear progress in the manufacturing process.

A first outcome of this work is the successful comparison between passive and active method of noise characterisation even if the results are still obtained with a little number of resonators.

A second outcome of this work is the good sensitivity of the passive method (still to be confirmed on oscillator) showing a remarkable “6 10^-14 @ 1s” Allan variance.

A third main outcome is the successful attempt to drastically reduce the flicker noise on the active oscillator, between 10Hz and 1kHz with an electronic flicker noise limitation estimated at -134dBc/Hz @ 1Hz offset. A new “tests campaign” with the most performing resonators recently characterised will be started to approach that potential limit.

The excellent results obtained with 2 specific BVA resonators (pieces 4304 035 27 & 4304 035 28) and with the last pieces of series 34 show that it’s possible to reduce significantly “intrinsic noise” by design and manufacturing process even if the physical mechanisms behind aren’t yet known and if the reproducibility is still far to be insured.

In the next steps, understanding the crystal’s intrinsic noise physical mechanism could be an interesting subject to be studied with the funding support of Femto-ST Institute [Ref 5].

Concerning the oscillator and buffer noise contributions, E.Rubiola theoretical and graphical approach seems a good way understanding and identifying noise sources in order improving electronic performances.

Some other works concerning thermal and humidity characterisation remain to be done before starting the pre-serial phase.

**REFERENCES:**

[Ref 1]: European Space Operations Centre (ESOC) Contract N° 18571/04/D/SW; Development of 5MHz Highly stable USOs and 100MHz crystals (Nov. 2004).

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