

# NOISE ANALYSIS AND OPTIMIZATION OF GENERAL OTA-C FILTERS

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## ABSTRACT

In the paper, a general approach to noise analysis in continuous-time OTA-C filters is presented. Recently an increasing interest in the design of continuous-time filters based on the transconductancecapacitor (OTA-C) technique has been observed. The operational transconductance amplifiers (OTAs) offer a higher bandwidth than their voltage-mode counterparts, can be easily tuned electronically, and have a better suitability for operating in reduced supply environment. Due to this, high frequency integrated filters are mostly realized as the OTA-C ones. Based on a matrix description of a general OTA-C filter topology, a universal formulas for evaluating the noise in any OTA-C filter are derived. The presented formulas can be easily implemented and used in computer-aided analysis/optimization software. The accuracy of the proposed method is confirmed by comparison with SPICE simulation. The example of application for finding the minimum-noise 5th order multiple-loop feedback filters implementing Butterworth and Bessel transfer functions is given.

**KEYWORDS:** *OTA-C filters, noise analysis, filter optimization.*

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## I. Introduction

Recently an increasing interest in the design of continuous-time filters based on the transconductance-capacitor (OTA-C) technique has been observed [1]-[3]. The operational transconductance amplifiers (OTAs) offer a higher bandwidth than their voltage-mode counterparts, can be easily tuned electronically, and have a better suitability for operating in reduced supply environment [4],[5]. Due to this, high frequency integrated filters are mostly realized as the OTA-C ones [6]. Although these filters offer excellent high frequency performance, their other properties in terms of low supply voltage, low power consumption, low sensitivity, low noise and large dynamic range, etc., still need improvements [5].

In this paper we deal with noise in OTA-C, which limits dynamic range of filters from below. It is important for filter design purposes to develop efficient tools for performing noise analysis of OTA-C filters. There have been several attempts to solve this problem described in the literature [7]-[10]. In this paper we propose a general approach to noise analysis in OTA-C filters based on the matrix description of OTA-C filters developed in [11]. The derived formulas can be applied to any know OTA-C filter architecture. They can also be easily implemented and used in computer-aided analysis/optimization software.

## II. General topology of OTA-C filter

Figure 1 shows a general structure of a voltage-mode OTA-C filter. The filter contains  $n$  internal nodes denoted as  $x_i$ ,  $i=1,\dots,n$ ,  $n$  input transconductors  $G_{mbi}$ , a set of internal feedback and feedforward transconductors  $G_{mij}$ , an output summer consisting of transconductors  $G_{mci}$  and  $-G_{mo}$  as well as a feedforward transconductor  $G_{md}$ . All transconductors form active network, while input capacitors  $C_{bi}$ ,  $i=1,\dots,n$  and capacitors  $C_{ij}$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq j \leq n$  form *passive network*. It is easily seen that any OTA-C filter is a particular case of the general structure in Figure 1. A general filter structure in Fig.1 can be described by the following matrix equations [11]:

$$sT_C X = GX + B^T u_i \quad u_o = CX + Du_i \quad (1)$$

where  $u_i$ ,  $u_o$  denote the input and output voltages, respectively,  $X$  is a vector of internal node voltages, and

$$\begin{aligned} T_C &= [T_{ij}]_{i,j=1}^n, \quad T_{ii} = C_{bi} + \sum_{j=1}^n C_{ij}, \quad i=1,\dots,n, \\ T_{ij} &= T_{ji} = -C_{ij}, \quad i,j=1,\dots,n, \quad i \neq j \\ G &= [G_{mij}]_{i,j=1}^n, \quad X = [x_1 \quad \dots \quad x_n]^T, \quad D = d = G_{md}/G_{mo} \\ C &= [c_1 \quad \dots \quad c_n], \quad c_i = G_{mci}/G_{mo}, \quad i=1,\dots,n \\ B &= [G_{mb1} + sC_{b1} \quad \dots \quad G_{mbn} + sC_{bn}] \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

On the basis of (1) we can calculate the filter transfer function:

$$H(s) = \frac{u_o(s)}{u_i(s)} = C(sT_C - G)^{-1} B^T + D \quad (3)$$

Now, let us denote adjoint matrix of  $sT_C - G$  as  $\tilde{A}$  where

$$\tilde{A}(s) = \text{adj}(sT_C - G) = [\tilde{A}_{ij}(s)]_{i,j=1}^n \quad (4)$$

This allows us to rewrite  $H$  in the form:

$$H(s) = [\det(sT_C - G)]^{-1} \sum_{i,j=1}^n c_i (G_{mbj} + sC_{bj}) \tilde{A}_{ij}(s) + d \quad (5)$$

Note that many filter structures have only one input transconductor (i.e. no input signal distribution), a trivial output summer (i.e. one of the internal nodes is the output of the filter), and no input capacitors. This means that  $B = [0 \dots 0 \quad G_{mbk} \quad 0 \dots 0]$ ,  $C = [0 \dots 0 \quad 1 \dots 0]$  - 1 at  $l$ -th position and  $C_{bi} = 0$  for  $i=0,1,\dots,n$ . Then, (5) reduces to the form of:

$$H(s) = \frac{G_{mbk} \tilde{A}_{lk}(s)}{\det(sT_C - G)} \quad (6)$$

Similar expression can be written for more general cases [11]. On the basis of the above expressions one can easily calculate the transmittance of any structure of OTA-C filter.

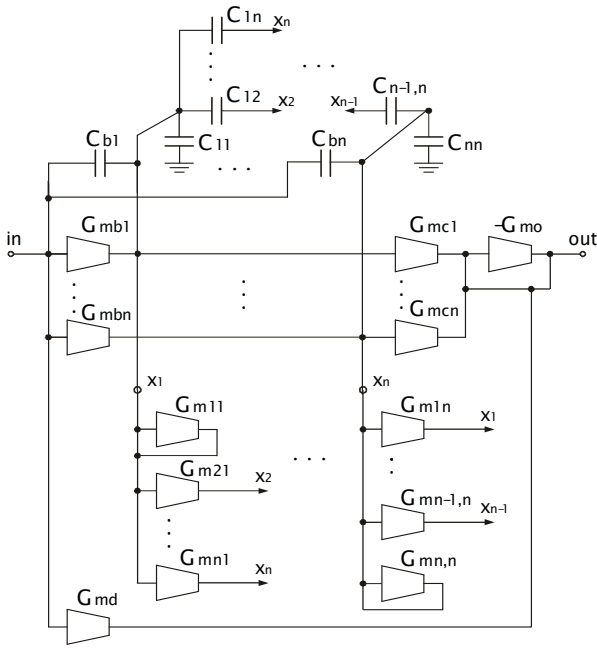


Fig. 1. General structure of voltage-mode OTA-C filter

### III. Noise analysis of OTA-C filter

The output noise of any  $G_m$ -C filter is a combination of the noise contributions of its all transconductors. The noise in CMOS amplifier with transconductance  $g_m$  can be described in terms of an equivalent input referred noise voltage source  $v_n$  as shown in Figure 2.

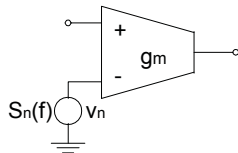


Fig. 2. Input noise source representation of noise in OTA

Spectral density  $S_n(f)$  of the noise source can be modeled as [7]:

$$S_n(f) = S_t/g_m + S_f/f \quad (8)$$

where both  $S_t$  (thermal noise component) and  $S_f$  (flicker noise component) depend on amplifier topology. We shall assume that noise sources associated to different OTAs are statistically independent.

Our immediate goal is to obtain the explicit formula for output (and/or input) noise spectrum of the general OTA-C filter in Fig.1. In order to do this, one has to consider what is the contribution of the noise of each individual transconductance amplifier to the output noise spectrum of the filter. This can be modeled as shown in Fig.3. Let  $G_{mx}$  denote one of the filter transconductors (e.g.  $G_{mbi}$ ,  $G_{mij}$ , etc.), which is connected to one of the nodes, say  $x_i$  (if the filter contains non-trivial output summer then it has additional output node which will be denoted as  $x_0$ ). Denote by  $v_x$  the input referred noise voltage of the noise source corresponding to  $G_{mx}$ , whose spectral density is  $S_{vx}(f)$ . Transconductor  $G_{mx}$  injects its noise current  $i_x = v_x G_{mx}$  into the node  $x_i$ . Spectral density  $S_{ix}(f)$  of this current is given by

$$S_{ix}(f) = G_{mx}^2 S_{vx}(f) \quad (9)$$

The corresponding output noise voltage  $v_{ox}$  can be calculated as [7],[8]:

$$v_{ox} = i_x H_i = G_{mx} H_i v_x \quad (10)$$

where  $H_i$  is the current-to-voltage transfer function from node  $x_i$  to the output of the filter. Corresponding spectral density  $S_{vox}(f)$  is given by the formula:

$$S_{vox}(f) = S_{ix}(f) |H_i(j2\pi f)|^2 = G_{mx}^2 S_{vx}(f) |H_i(j2\pi f)|^2 \quad (11)$$

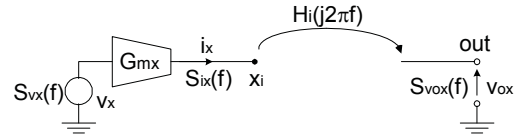


Fig. 3. Noise contribution of individual filter transconductor to the total output noise of the filter

It can be easily shown using the matrix equation (1) that the transfer functions  $H_i(s)$ ,  $i=1,2,\dots,n$  are components of the  $1 \times n$  vector  $\mathbf{H}_{cv}$  defined as follows

$$\mathbf{H}(s) = \mathbf{C}(s\mathbf{T} - \mathbf{G})^{-1} \quad (12)$$

If non-trivial output summer is present (cf. Fig.1) then we need also the current-to-voltage transfer function from output node to itself, which is

$$H_0 = G_{mo}^{-1} \quad (13)$$

Thus, each filter transconductor injects its noise current into one of the internal nodes of the filter (or directly into the output node if the filter possesses nontrivial output summer). Subsequently, this current is converted into output noise voltage according to (11). In order to calculate the total output noise voltage of the filter we add noise spectra due to all transconductors. In general, the outputs of one input transconductor  $G_{mbi}$ , and  $n$  transconductors  $G_{mij}$ ,  $j=1, \dots, n$  are connected to each internal node  $x_i$ . In the presence of non-trivial output summer we have an additional node  $x_0$  with outputs of transconductors  $G_{mej}$ ,  $j=1, \dots, n$ ,  $G_{md}$ , and  $G_{mo}$  connected to it. Let us define auxiliary matrices

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{S}_t &= [S_{t,ij}]_{i,j=1}^n, \quad \mathbf{S}_f = [S_{f,ij}]_{i,j=1}^n, \\ \mathbf{S}_{tb} &= [S_{tb,1} \quad \dots \quad S_{tb,n}]^T, \quad \mathbf{S}_{fb} = [S_{fb,1} \quad \dots \quad S_{fb,n}]^T, \\ \mathbf{S}_{tc} &= [S_{tc,1} \quad \dots \quad S_{tc,n}], \quad \mathbf{S}_{fc} = [S_{fc,1} \quad \dots \quad S_{fc,n}], \\ \mathbf{S}_{td} &= S_{td}, \quad \mathbf{S}_{fd} = S_{fd}, \quad \mathbf{S}_{to} = S_{to}, \quad \mathbf{S}_{fo} = S_{fo} \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

representing the thermal noise (subscript  $t$ ) and  $1/f$  noise (subscript  $f$ ) of transconductors  $G_{mij}$ ,  $G_{mbi}$ ,  $G_{mci}$ ,  $G_{md}$  and  $G_{mo}$ , respectively. Let us introduce the following notation:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{G} &= [G_{mij}]_{i,j=1}^n, \quad \mathbf{B} = [G_{mb1} \quad \dots \quad G_{mbn}]^T, \\ \overline{\mathbf{C}} &= [G_{mc1} \quad \dots \quad G_{mcn}], \quad \overline{\mathbf{D}} = G_{md}, \quad \overline{\mathbf{O}} = G_{mo} \end{aligned} \quad (15)$$

Denote by  $\circ$  the Hadamard product of two matrices, i.e. for  $\mathbf{P} = [p_{ij}]_{i,j=1}^n$  and  $\mathbf{Q} = [q_{ij}]_{i,j=1}^n$  we have  $\mathbf{P} \circ \mathbf{Q} = [p_{ij}q_{ij}]_{i,j=1}^n$  (the same definition holds, with obvious changes for  $n \times 1$ ,  $1 \times n$  and  $1 \times 1$  matrices). Let  $\hat{\mathbf{I}} = [1 \quad \dots \quad 1]^T$  be  $n \times 1$  vector. Define function  $F(\mathbf{P}, \mathbf{Q}, \mathbf{R})(x)$ , where  $\mathbf{P}$ ,  $\mathbf{Q}$ , and  $\mathbf{R}$  are matrices of the same dimension and  $x$  is a real variable:

$$F(\mathbf{P}, \mathbf{Q}, \mathbf{R})(x) = \mathbf{P} \circ (\mathbf{Q} + (2\pi/x)\mathbf{P} \circ \mathbf{R}) \quad (16)$$

It follows from (8) and (9) that spectral densities  $S_i(\omega)$  of the total noise current injected into the nodes  $x_i$ ,  $i=1, \dots, n$  can be expressed, using (16), as components of the current spectral density vector  $\mathbf{S}$ , given by the formula

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{S}(\omega) &= [S_1(\omega) \quad \dots \quad S_n(\omega)]^T = \\ &= F(\overline{\mathbf{G}}, \mathbf{S}_t, \mathbf{S}_f)(\omega) \cdot \hat{\mathbf{I}} + F(\overline{\mathbf{B}}, \mathbf{S}_{tb}, \mathbf{S}_{fb})(\omega) \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

Spectral density  $S_0(\omega)$  of the noise current injected into the node  $x_0$  (if output summer is present) is given by

$$\begin{aligned} S_0(\omega) &= F(\overline{\mathbf{C}}, \mathbf{S}_{tc}, \mathbf{S}_{fc})(\omega) \cdot \hat{\mathbf{I}} + \\ &+ F(\overline{\mathbf{D}}, \mathbf{S}_{td}, \mathbf{S}_{fd})(\omega) + F(\overline{\mathbf{O}}, \mathbf{S}_{to}, \mathbf{S}_{fo})(\omega) \end{aligned} \quad (18)$$

The spectrum density  $S_{no}(\omega)$  of the total output noise voltage  $u_{no}$  can be then calculated as

$$S_{no}(\omega) = |H_{cv}(\omega)|^2 \mathbf{S}(\omega) + H_0^2 S_0(\omega) \quad (19)$$

where  $|H_{cv}(\omega)|^2 = H_{cv}(j\omega) \circ H_{cv}(-j\omega)$ , with  $H_{cv}$  and  $H_0$  given by (12) and (13), respectively. In general,  $S_o(\omega)$  is a rational function of  $\omega$  with numerator and denominator of order not larger than  $2n-1$  and  $2n+1$ , respectively. Formula (19) allows us to calculate the output noise spectrum of any OTA-C filter. In order to get the output noise voltage one needs to integrate (19) over the suitable frequency range. The equivalent input noise spectrum  $S_{ni}(\omega)$  can be obtained by dividing (19) by the square of the transfer function of the filter given by (3). It is worth noting that because of matrix formulation, the presented formulas are particularly convenient to be implemented in a computer program which will allow us to carry out the noise analysis of arbitrary OTA-C filter.

In a special case when all transconductors in the filter are the same, each of the matrices  $\mathbf{S}$  in (14) is proportional to the unit matrix (i.e. with all entries equal to 1)  $\tilde{\mathbf{I}}$  of the suitable dimension, e.g. we have  $\mathbf{S}_t = S_t \tilde{\mathbf{I}}$ ,  $\mathbf{S}_f = S_f \tilde{\mathbf{I}}$ , where  $S_t$ ,  $S_f$  are noise parameter of transconductor and  $\tilde{\mathbf{I}}$  is  $n \times n$  unit matrix. Then, equations (17) and (18) take the form

$$\mathbf{S}(\omega) = (\overline{\mathbf{G}}\hat{\mathbf{I}} + \overline{\mathbf{B}})S_t + \frac{2\pi}{\omega} (\overline{\mathbf{G}} \circ \overline{\mathbf{G}}\hat{\mathbf{I}} + \overline{\mathbf{B}} \circ \overline{\mathbf{B}})S_f \quad (20)$$

$$S_0(\omega) = \frac{\overline{\mathbf{C}}}{\hat{\mathbf{I}} + \overline{\mathbf{D}} + \overline{\mathbf{O}}} S_t + \frac{2\pi}{\omega} (\overline{\mathbf{C}} \circ \overline{\mathbf{C}}\hat{\mathbf{I}} + \overline{\mathbf{D}} \circ \overline{\mathbf{D}} + \overline{\mathbf{O}} \circ \overline{\mathbf{O}}) S_f \quad (21)$$

#### IV. Verification and application example

In this section we discuss an application example of the OTA-C filter noise analysis presented in Section III. Due to its generality and matrix formulation, the presented approach can be used to solve many optimization tasks such as proper choice of filter topology with respect to optimal noise performance or direct optimization of filter noise performance in various settings.

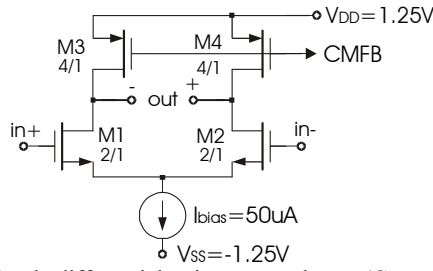


Fig.5. Simple differential-pair transistor (Common-Mode Feedback circuit not shown)

We start from a verification of the presented approach by comparing the theoretical results of Section III to the SPICE simulation. For our comparison we use a simple differential-pair transistor shown in Fig.5. The circuit was implemented in standard 0.35 $\mu$ m AMS technology. The OTA noise parameters (see (8)) extracted from the simulations are  $S_f=5.2 \cdot 10^{-16}$  V $\cdot$ A/Hz, and  $S_f=2.3 \cdot 10^{-10}$  V $^2$ . Transconductance of the circuit equals  $g_m=100\mu$ A/V.

The OTA circuit in Fig.5 was used to implement two Butterworth low-pass filters in a leap-frog (LF) structure: third- and eight-order ones. Fig.6 shows a general structure of  $n^{\text{th}}$  order LF structure. Actual filters were implemented in fully differential structures. 3dB frequency of the filters is 10MHz. Figs.7 and 8 show input and output noise spectrum versus frequency for 3 $^{\text{rd}}$  order and 8 $^{\text{th}}$  order filter respectively. The agreement between theoretical results (line) and SPICE simulation results (point) is very good. The little discrepancy for output noise spectrum in Fig.8 follows not from the limited accuracy of the model but from the fact of finite DC gain of the OTA (in this case about 35dB) which gives DC gain of the filter equal to -1.3dB (instead of ideal value of 0dB)

As an example of noise optimization we shall consider the optimal choice of the multiple-loop feedback topology for the fifth-order low-pass filter. Fig.9 shows the general structure of  $n$ -th order all-pole canonical low-pass  $G_m$ -C filter. The feedback signal at node  $x_i$  can be taken from node  $x_{k_j}$ , where  $k_j \in \{i+1, \dots, n\}$  for  $i < n$ , and  $kn=n$ . Two most popular multiple-loop feedback topologies - leap-frog (LF) and inverse follow-the-leader (IFLF) can be considered as two 'extreme' canonical structures of all-pole filters [11]. In particular, for LF structure the feedback signal at node  $x_i$  is taken from the node  $x_{i+1}$ ,  $i=1, 2, \dots, n-1$  and the node  $x_n$  has the inner feedback loop. In IFLF structure all feedback signals at nodes  $x_i$ ,  $i=1, 2, \dots, n$  are taken from the node  $x_n$ . In general, the feedback signal emerging at node  $x_i$  can be taken from node  $x_j$ , where  $j=i+1, \dots, n$ . Thus, we have in total  $(n-1)!$  multiple-loop feedback structures of order  $n$ . The matrix approach proposed in Section III makes it possible to perform an exhaustive search through all topologies since it is very fast and can be easily automated.

To simplify further description, we introduce the following notation: let  $F_{n|j_1, j_2, \dots, j_n}$  denote the canonical all-pole low-pass structure of  $n$ -th order, for which the feedback signal emerging at node  $x_i$  is taken from node  $x_{j_i}$ . For example,  $n$ -th order LF structure will be denoted

as  $F_{n|2,3,4, \dots, n, n}$ , while  $n$ -th order IFLF structure as  $F_{n|n, n, \dots, n}$ .

Here, we will consider 5 $^{\text{th}}$  order Butterworth and Bessel filters. According to the discussion above, there are 24 different canonical structures that realize this transfer function. They are implemented with the same value of transconductance (equal to 100 $\mu$ A/V) for all filter transconductors. Table 1 shows integrated input noise for all the structures and both approximations. The noise is integrated over 3dB bandwidth and normalized to the noise of LF filter. Only thermal noise has been considered in this example. It follows from the results in Table 1 that the difference of integrated noise between best and worst topology is as large as 7dB for Butterworth filters and 4.3dB for Bessel filters. This difference tells us about the improvement in noise performance we can get by proper choice of the filter topology.

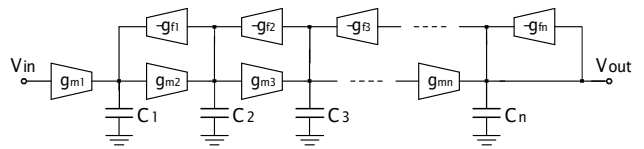


Fig.6. Diagram of  $n^{\text{th}}$  order LF filter

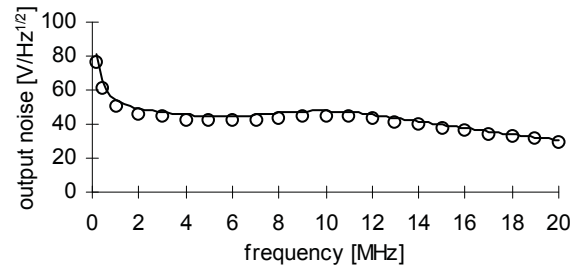
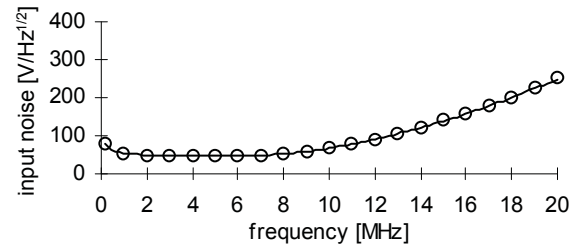


Fig.7. Input and output noise spectrum vs. frequency for 3 $^{\text{rd}}$  order Butterworth filter; theory (line) and simulation (points)

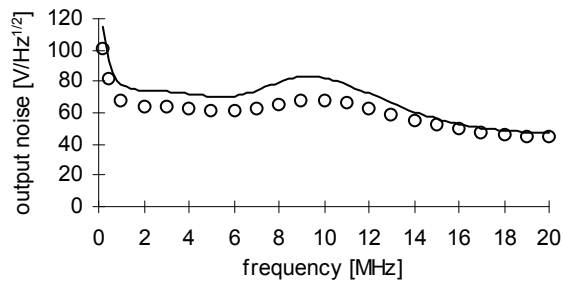
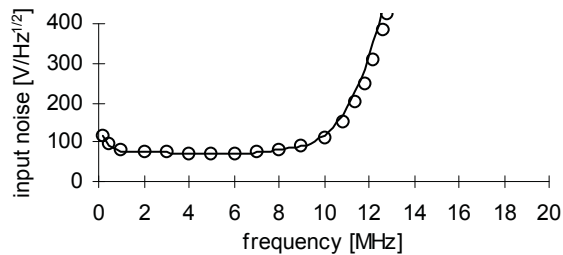


Fig. 8. Input and output noise spectrum vs. frequency for 8<sup>th</sup> order Butterworth filter; theory (line) and simulation (points)

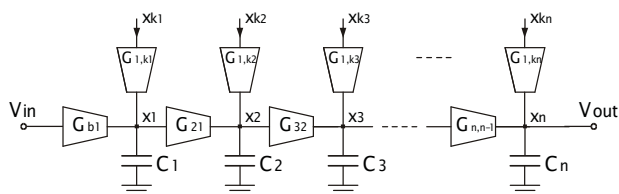


Fig. 9. A general structure of an  $n$ -th order all-pole canonical low-pass OTA-C filter

Table 1. Integrated input noise comparison for 5<sup>th</sup> order all-pole low-pass Butterworth and Bessel filters; best and worst topologies denoted by \* and #, respectively

Filter structure	Normalized noise [dB]		Filter structure	Normalized noise [dB]	
	Butterworth	Bessel		Butterworth	Bessel
$F_{5 2,3,4,5,5}$	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	$F_{5 4,3,4,5,5}$	<b>2.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>
$F_{5 2,3,5,5,5}$	<b>-0.2*</b>	<b>-0.4</b>	$F_{5 4,3,5,5,5}$	<b>3.2</b>	<b>1.3</b>
$F_{5 2,4,4,5,5}$	<b>2.4</b>	<b>0.4</b>	$F_{5 4,4,4,5,5}$	<b>5.7</b>	<b>2.4</b>
$F_{5 2,4,5,5,5}$	<b>2.9</b>	<b>-0.1</b>	$F_{5 4,4,5,5,5}$	<b>7.1</b>	<b>3.0</b>
$F_{5 2,5,4,5,5}$	<b>2.4</b>	<b>-0.5</b>	$F_{5 4,5,4,5,5}$	<b>5.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>
$F_{5 2,5,5,5,5}$	<b>3.0</b>	<b>-1.2*</b>	$F_{5 4,5,5,5,5}$	<b>6.8#</b>	<b>2.1</b>
$F_{5 3,3,4,5,5}$	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.8</b>	$F_{5 5,3,4,5,5}$	<b>3.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>
$F_{5 3,3,5,5,5}$	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1.2</b>	$F_{5 5,3,5,5,5}$	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.0</b>
$F_{5 3,4,4,5,5}$	<b>6.0</b>	<b>3.1#</b>	$F_{5 5,4,4,5,5}$	<b>6.2</b>	<b>2.9</b>
$F_{5 3,4,5,5,5}$	<b>6.7</b>	<b>2.8</b>	$F_{5 5,4,5,5,5}$	<b>6.7</b>	<b>2.5</b>
$F_{5 3,5,4,5,5}$	<b>5.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>	$F_{5 5,5,4,5,5}$	<b>5.9</b>	<b>1.9</b>
$F_{5 3,5,5,5,5}$	<b>6.2</b>	<b>1.7</b>	$F_{5 5,5,5,5,5}$	<b>6.3</b>	<b>1.3</b>

## V. Conclusions

In the paper, an efficient procedure for evaluating noise in general OTA-C filter has been proposed. It has been verified by comparing with SPICE simulation proving its accuracy. The derived formulas can be applied to any know OTA-C filter architecture and can be easily implemented and used in computer-aided analysis/optimization software.

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