

Circuit Seed Track & Hold Methodology

Phase noise describes the stability in the frequency domain while jitter describes the stability in the time domain. RF (Radio Frequency) engineers working in radar and base station design will be interested in phase noise since poor phase noise performance will affect up/down conversions and channel spacing. Digital engineers working in Time Division Multiplexing (telecom infrastructure) will be interested in jitter since poor jitter performance will result in network slips and excessive re-send traffic. As is well known, jitter is a dominant limiting parameter in QAM and other ADC signal processing procedures.

The measure of performance for a S/H system operating in a charge mode, the process is to accurately freeze and isolate an input voltage as charge Q_s on a sampling capacitor, which is cutoff at a precisely defined point in time, independent of signal amplitude and frequency content, and present this captured charge as a buffered voltage for subsequent analog signal processing. This capacitor is a flying capacitor with capacitively symmetrical transmission-gate switches preferably on both ends of the capacitance. The sampling capacitor needs to be a cordwood or fringe capacitor made out of IC interconnect wiring and the insulation between interconnect. The value of this native capacitance has a very low dependency on the charge it holds. Although not necessary due to the low typical capacitor value of $\sim 1\text{pf}$, IC process extension high-k MIM capacitors can be used if their capacitance does not vary with stored voltage. Jitter-free samples, independent of their signal amplitude, are required for QAM and other DSP signal processing.

The combination between series and parallel of multiple sampling capacitors can provide precise analog mathematical operations on sampled voltages. For instance, separate sampled analog voltages can be rearranged in series to double their subsequent presented value. Multiple samples of the same voltage can be integer multiplied when rearranged in series or in parallel around an OpAmp – ideal for an ADC or DAC. Offset voltage and noise can be down-sampled out of the operating signal frequencies.

This voltage manipulation methodology can be implemented with capacitors that use only interconnect metal and the insulator between them. It is available in any IC process including nanoscale process nodes as they are introduced. Generic cordwood or MIM (Metal-Insulator-Metal) interconnect capacitors possess the highest quality of any capacitor and scale nicely down into nanoscale IC process nodes. In addition to the generic interconnect wiring insulator, a high-k dielectric option is often available early on as process nodes incorporate process extensions, making these MIM capacitors more compact. Nanoscale gate oxides are a high-k dielectric, pointing to MIM high-k option inclusion.

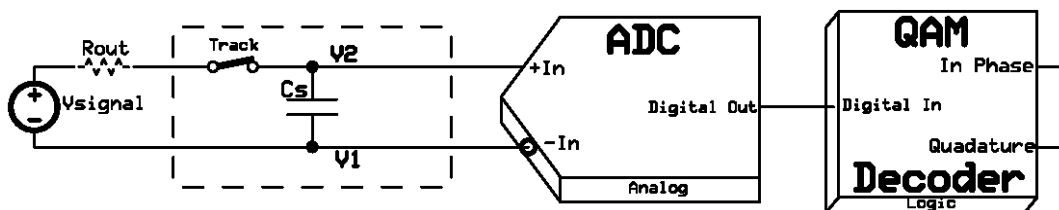


Figure 1 – Example Track & Hold application

Track & Hold circuits freeze their varying analog input voltage at a precisely logically defined time and hold the sample long enough to be digitized by an ADC for further digital signal processing.

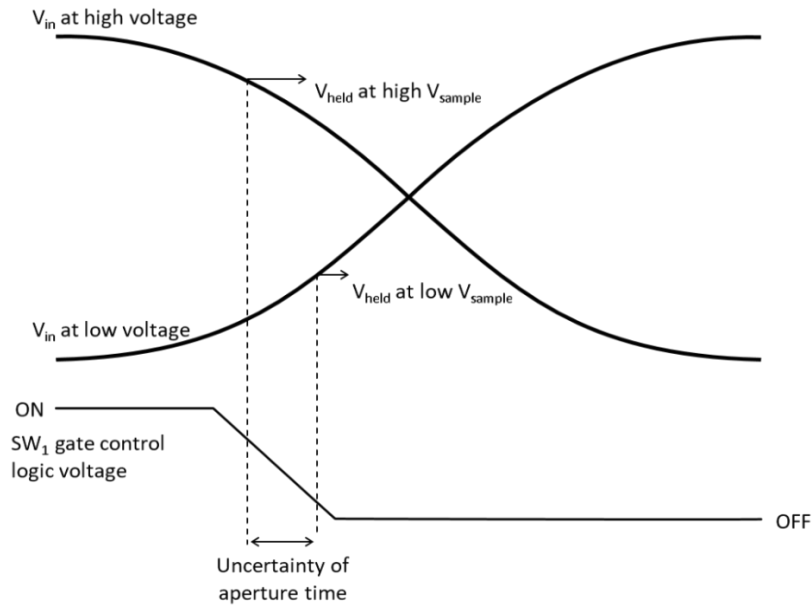


Figure 2.1 – Aperture time dependence on sampled signal voltage

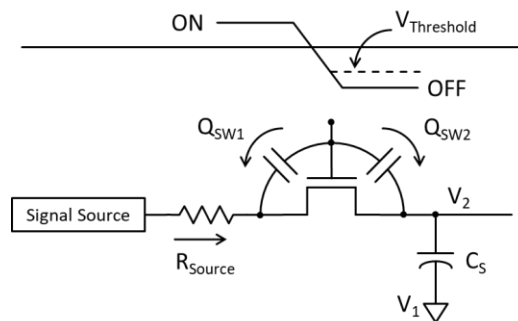


Figure 2.2 – MOSFET switch charge transfer capacitances at turnoff

The tracking switch turns off when its MOS gate voltage is a threshold away from the channel voltage. When channel voltage is high, the sample aperture time is different from when the channel voltage is low causing an uncertainty in aperture time seen as sampling jitter or phase noise. The solution was mitigated by switching the gate as fast as possible to shorten the range of uncertainty.

The purpose of the Circuit Seed Track & Hold is to freeze and isolate an input voltage as charge ($Q=CV$) on a sampling capacitor at a precisely defined point in time, independent of signal amplitude and frequency content, which up to now has impacted that precision. This captured charge serves as an instantaneous battery of voltage ($V = Q/C$) for subsequent signal processing. This type of tracking capacitor is often called a flying capacitor because both sides can be switched, and its capacitance is independent of applied voltage. By using multiple switches, the voltage of the tracked analog signal is captured as charge and isolated. The captured charge is flown (switched to another circuit where that sampled voltage is used) by transmission-gate switches on both ends of the flying

capacitor. Flying capacitors are constructed from on-chip interconnect fringe capacitance using cordwood stacked interconnect. Because of the high-quality insulator between interconnect, their capacitance does not change over the range of the applied voltage. Jitter-free samples, independent of their signal amplitude, are routinely produced down to the logic’s capability as illustrated in Figure 3.

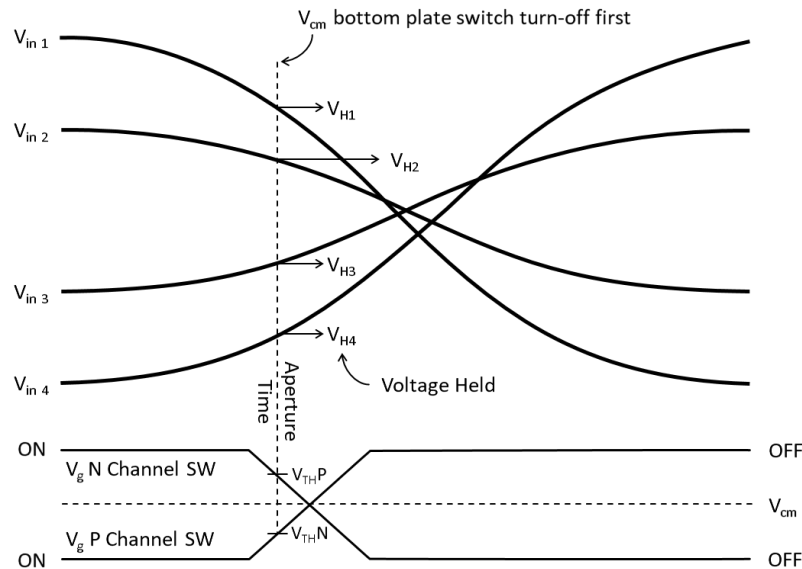


Figure 3.1 – Bottom-Plate disconnect freezes aperture time independent of analog voltage on top-plate when bottom-plate is operated at ~mid-logic analog V_{cm} ground

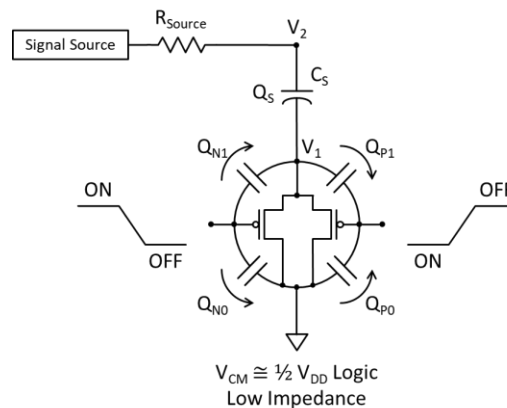


Figure 3.2 – Transmission-gate switch turnoff charge transfer capacitances

Relative transmission-gate AC termination impedances determine the charge transfer division; $(Q_{N1} - Q_{P1}) \leftrightarrow$ onto Q_5 creates an error on V_1 because Q_5 is DC isolated after switching. Q_{N0} & Q_{P0} are irrelevant because they transfer their charge into a low impedance.

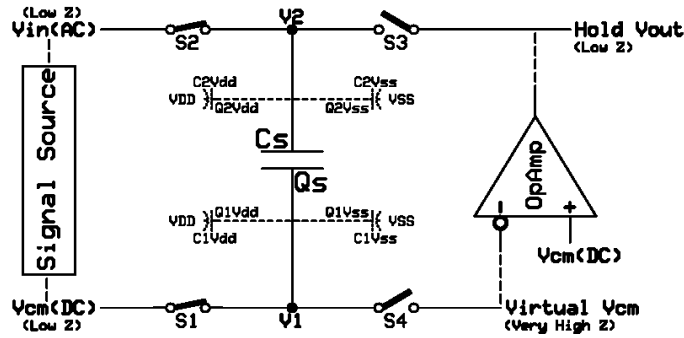


Figure 4 – Track and Hold – Fundamental Switch Operation with parasitic capacitances /charges

Sequential switch operation:

1. Switch **S1** opens first at the precise logically defined aperture time to fix the charge **Qs** on **Cs** by initiating a high series impedance on the bottom-plate of tracking capacitor **Cs** thus isolating its charge **Qs**. Note that this initial switch operation is independent of signal voltage because the turn-off threshold of **S1** is referenced to the DC common-mode analog signal ground **Vcm**, which is biased near $\frac{1}{2}$ of the logic supply voltage $(V_{dd}-V_{ss})/2$ so that the complementary advantages of transmission-gate switches can be embodied.
2. Next, switch **S2** opens at a logic buffer delay after **S1** is opened to disconnect **Vin** from the signal source. Any charge transfer to **Cs** slightly moves the **V1** to **V2** voltage across **Cs**, but because of the high series impedance on the bottom-plate referenced **Qs** is preserved with its initial respect to **Vcm** although **Cs** charge shares with **C1Vdd** and **C1Vss** parasitic capacitance. This **Vcm** referenced **Qs** isolated charge will be treated like a precision battery.
3. Switch **S3** is closed at a short logic-buffer delay after **S2** to prevent current spiking between the **VinAC** signal source and the **OpAmp** output. Because of maintaining a high series impedance on the bottom-plate of **Cs**, its sample charge **Qs** is preserved regardless of what happens on the **Cs** top-plate node **V2**. Top-plate parasitic capacitances **C2Vdd** and **C2Vss** may be altered through the low impedance **S2** and/or **S1** switches, but high series impedance at **S1** to the **Cs** bottom-plate preserves the **Qs** charge henceforth.
4. Switch **S4** follows shortly to close the loop around the **OpAmp**. Because the OpAmp input is biased at the same **Vcm** voltage that the bottom-plate was isolated from, **Cs** bottom-plate parasitics **C1Vdd** and **C1Vss** are returned to their sampled voltages, exactly re-establishing the sample voltage aperture values providing the hold output voltage which becomes valid as the **OpAmp** settles. The **OpAmp** offset voltage is the remaining significant error source which will be taken care of with CiFET-Amplifier and its offset correction techniques covered later in this document.

This method isolates and preserves the charge **Qs** on the tracking capacitor **Cs** and thus its hold voltage by maintaining a high impedance on at least one end of **Cs**. Also, when **Cs** bottom-plate is returned to a virtual **Vcm** when the hold voltage is utilized by handling **Cs/Qs** as if it is a precision battery.

Maintaining a series high-impedance on **Cs** and returning its bottom-plate to the cutoff **Vcm** voltage cancels out any parasitic bleeding of charge on **Cs** making **Cs** to appear as a battery that stores the sampled voltage. Also, any

leakage current on the bottom-plate tends to balance out at the mid-voltage used for **V_{cm}**, extending storage time decay significantly as it dominantly decays to where it needs to be: **V_{cm}**.

The use of a transmission-gate switch for **S1**, which is connected to the bottom plate of **C_s**, causes **S1** to turn off independently from the active analog signal voltage, as the transmission-gate switching threshold voltages are referenced to a mid-logic voltage and not the signal voltage that can be anywhere from a diode below the bottom rail to a diode above the top rail. An additional advantage of using a transmission-gate where the turn-off charge of the P-channel transmission-gate switch roughly cancels the N-channel's opposite going turn-off charge pass-through. Relative sizing, using nominal simulation model parameters, of these two switches match-cancels the pass-through charge transfers to minimize capacitor size requirements for a given accuracy target. In the CiFET CiAmp implementation Figure 6.3 and 6.4, both **S1a** and **S1c** are these balanced transmission gates. The minimum **C_s** capacitance value is then limited to the theoretical KT/C_s Boltzmann noise floor which is RMS related to the overall analog signal voltage range.

General logic IC process implementation principals in the order of their significance:

1. Capacitors consume lots of IC real estate and settle relatively slow;
2. Switches are small and fast;
3. Transmission-gate switches can be easily balanced when operated with their channel voltage around $\frac{1}{2}$ of their logic supply;
4. Complementary circuitry tends to leak towards $\sim\frac{1}{2}$ their power supply where they are biased.

The **first** level of Track & Hold error source occurs at the time when the controlling gate logic voltage is a threshold away from the analog voltage in the channel, making the turnoff aperture time a function of the tracked voltage. As shown in Fig. 3 this uncertainty is eliminated by connecting the tracking capacitor bottom-plate to an analog common-mode voltage **V_{cm}** located near the mid-voltage of the logic supply voltage.

The **second** level of Track & Hold error source is caused by charge transfer from the switch gate control logic onto the analog channel terminating on the hold capacitor **C_s** in Fig 1.0. The solution to this problem simply adds a small capacitance to remove this charge error on the tracking capacitor **C_s** by coupling an opposing logic transition onto **C_s**. A dummy switch of half the size with opposing gate control logic has been used to control access to this trimming capacitor, but the small increase in complexity often adds additional things to go wrong as a Monte-Carlo analysis will reveal. These fixes vary with the tracked analog voltage. By using a complementary MOSFET transmission gate switch to open the analog ground **V_{cm}** on the bottom-plate switch enables capacitive symmetry cancellation. There are some other active charge-transfer methods which are often worse than just nominally balancing the transmission-gate switch charge transfers.

The **third** level, and last of the significant error source types of Track & Hold errors are caused by parasitic capacitances on both terminals of the tracking capacitor **C_s**. These capacitances are indicated by the two ghost capacitors in each of Figure 5 as **C1** and **C2**. In the Circuit Seed Track & Hold, this error is all but eliminated by maintaining a high-impedance on at least one end of the tracking capacitor **C_s** from tracking cutoff time period **T2** and returning the tracking capacitor **C_s** bottom-plate **V1** to analog ground **V_{cm}** during the time period **T5** when the "Hold-Voltage" is valid for use by the subsequent circuitry such as an ADC in Figure 1. Since the bottom-plate voltage **V1** is sampled at **V_{cm}**, and flown back to an equivalent virtual **V_{cm}** later in **T5**, while maintaining a high series impedance on the bottom plate offered by the OpAmp high-impedance input and open switch **S1**, the parasitic charge-sharing errors of **Q1V_{dd}** and **Q1V_{ss}** to alter the charge **Q1** on **C1** are nullified, thus zeroing out **Qs** charge sharing errors.

The top-plate parasitic capacitance ends up in parallel with the low impedance amplifier output along with any loading and as long as the other terminal of C_s remains in high impedance, this charge does not modify Q_s .

In isolating and maintaining a precise sampled charge Q_s , several considerations are sequentially applied to a track and hold switching sequence. An example logic clocking circuit that enacts this is included in Figure 10, where a differential S/H technique is shown. In Fig 2.0 the all-important switching sequence is outlined for each of five successive time increments $T_1 - T_5$. Each incremental time period must be long enough to provide the necessary number of time constants to settle to the specified precision. The significance of each of these 5 incremental time steps is defined by how their time windows are terminated. The state diagram of these 5 states is diagrammed in Figure 5 and Table 1:

As a walkthrough of the process from the analog signal *tracking* T_1 to that sample being presented for *utilization* T_5 , consider Figure 4 and 5 together. At a precise logically determined sample aperture time T_2 , which is accurate to logic jitter noise, the tracking capacitor's bottom-plate terminal is disconnected initially by opening Sw_1 before the top-plate terminal is disconnected in T_3 by Sw_2 at a logic buffer delay later. Sw_3 and Sw_4 are open at this time. As such, the tracking capacitor C_s traps an instantaneous aperture-time voltage sampled as charge Q_s . This charge is isolated in T_2 at the aperture time, when its bottom-plate parasitic capacitances C_{1Vdd} & C_{1Vss} were charged to V_{cm} . This analog signal input is then disconnected in T_2 to float the tracking capacitor C_s so that it can be rearranged to a different connection for T_3 and T_4 .

At T_3 , the disconnected top-plate of C_s is flown to the **OpAmp** output by closing switch S_3 while maintaining a high series resistance path to C_s . At a logic buffer delay T_4 , the bottom-plate of C_s is connected to the high-impedance **OpAmp** input which is actively biased at a virtual V_{cm} . This virtual V_{cm} reconnect restores any charge sharing errors bled off on C_{1Vdd} and C_{1Vss} , and a high C_s series resistance maintains the voltage ($V_s=Q_s/C_s$). Thus, in T_5 , the buffered analog hold voltage is presented to an external utilization circuit such as an ADC.

Once that voltage is utilized, the switches revert to the position where the analog input voltage is tracked T_1 , and the switching sequence can again occur to produce another hold voltage sample to be presented to the subsequent analog signal processing circuitry a cycle time later. High series impedance is maintained on at least one side of the sample capacitor to isolate its charge, and thus the capacitor with its stored charge becomes a stored voltage.

During tracking, the parasitic capacitance related to the tracking capacitor C_s bottom-plate was hard-referenced to V_{cm} by a switch Sw_1 , which is located near $\frac{1}{2}$ of the logic power supply voltage, and then re-referenced to V_{cm} by the OpAmp inputs biased around the same virtual ground for utilization.

A Track & Hold circuit simply tracks an analog input voltage and freezes its instantaneous value under logic command and buffers the hold voltage for subsequent analog processing circuitry. The delay variability from the logic hold command to freezing the analog voltage defines its jitter, which must be substantially independent of instantaneous signal magnitude or frequency content.

Circuit-Seed Track & Hold implementations achieve this objective by focusing on charge Q_s stored on the tracking capacitor C_s . At sample aperture time, the sampled charge Q_s on the tracking capacitor C_s is isolated from analog ground and preserved throughout the remainder of the Track & Hold period by maintaining high impedance on at least one end of the tracking capacitor C_s .

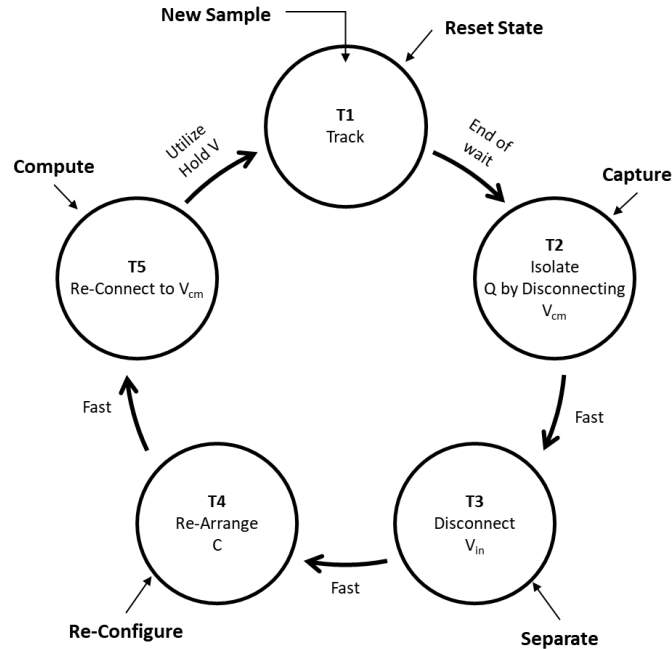


Figure 5 – Track & Hold state diagram

This sequence from track to hold, as is broken up into five logically timed event windows summarized in Table 1:

Time	Switch 1	Switch 2	Switch 3	Switch 4	Operation
Period	Common Mode	Signal Input	Amp Output	Amp Input	
T1	Closed	Closed	Open	Open	Track input voltage onto capacitor
T2	Open	Closed	Open	Open	Isolate capacitor from analog ground (V_{cm})
T3	Open	Open	Open	Open	Disconnect capacitor from input voltage
T4	Open	Open	Closed	Open	Connect input side of capacitor to amplifier output
T5	Open	Open	Closed	Closed	Connect ground side of capacitor to V_{cm} biased amplifier input

Table 1 – Track & Hold state summary

The four switches of Table 1 are identified in Figure 6 as **S1**, **S2**, **S3**, and **S4** in their tracking mode **T1** position along with tracking capacitor **Cs** having a charge **Qs**, a signal source, with a differential OpAmp biased around analog ground **Vcm**. Node **V1** and **V2** parasitic capacitances **Cp1** and **Cp2** charge-share with tracking capacitor **Cs**. Capacitor connections with their charge are stacked in Figure 6.2 and a single-ended CiFET OpAmp implementation example of the track & hold circuit is Figure 6.3. For a numerical feel, the tracking capacitor may be about 10pf and the parasitic Cp1 and Cp2 have values of about 100fF.

Sequencing through the five **T1** through **T5** track & hold states, operates the individual switches in accordance with Table 1 as illustrated in Figures 6 to 9. The important time of each **Tn** state is their termination. The duration of the **Tn** period of time is the settling time from entering their state from the previous state.

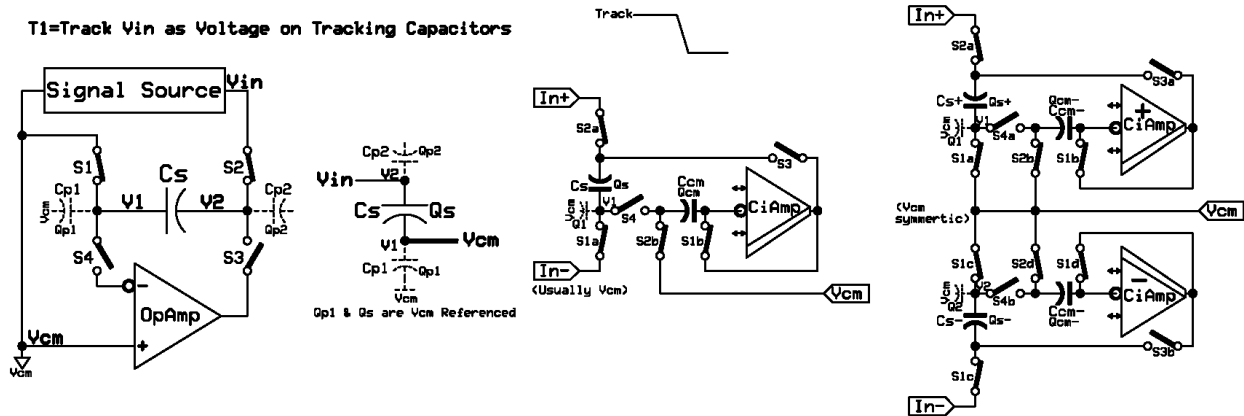


Figure 6.1 - 6.4 – State **T1** = Track signal source voltage

Figure 6 represents the tracking state switch positions.

Figure 6.1 is a high-level OpAmp circuit description of the Track & Hold circuit. Figure 6.2 is an operative capacitor simplification that includes the parasitic capacitances C_{p1} and C_{p2} . Figure 6.3 is a mapping of the track & hold circuit onto a single-ended CiFET OpAmp (CiAmp) implementation including additional switches for offset and 1/f noise correction using capacitor C_{cm} . Fig 6.4 is a replica-differential CiFET OpAmp S/H implementation.

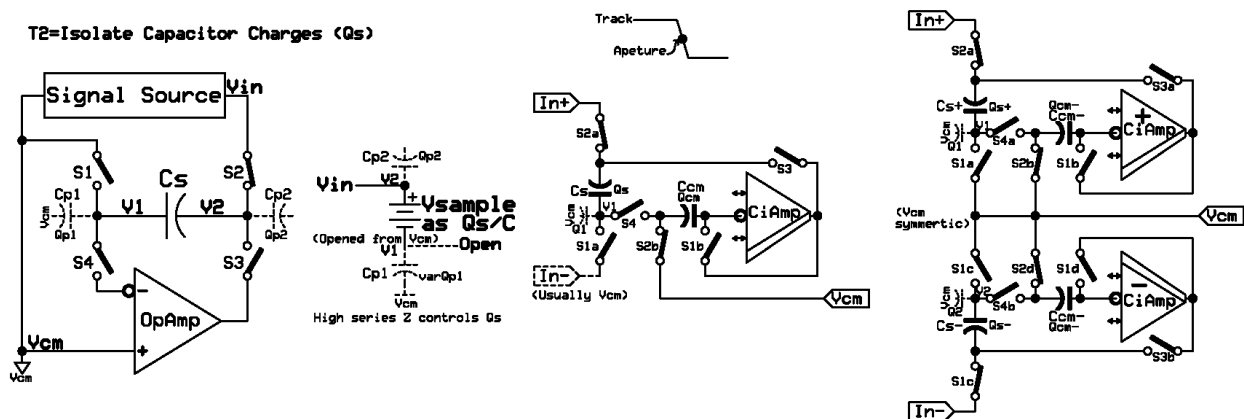


Figure 7.1 – 7.4 – State **T2** = Isolate tracking capacitor(s) from analog ground (V_{cm}) first

Figure 7 illustrates the sample aperture cutoff time switch positions.

Figure 7 illustrates track & hold aperture termination of a **T1** tracking period. The analog ground (V_{cm}) is disconnected first at the end of **T1**, making this aperture time independent of the analog voltage which is still connected to the signal source node of the tracking capacitor C_s . In all states after **T1**, the sampling capacitor has at least one maintained in a high impedance so that its sampled charge Q_s is locked on C_s and thus the voltage ($V_2 - V_1$) across C_s is maintained.

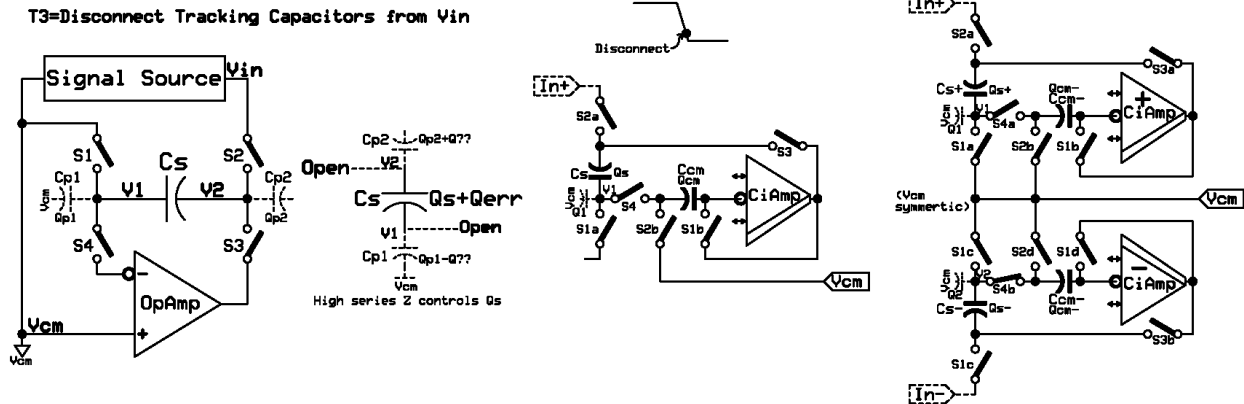


Figure 8.1 - 8.4 – State **T3** = Disconnect V_{in} from signal source

Figure 8 shows the disconnect input switch positions.

Figure 8 illustrates track & hold in its **T3** state in which C_s is disconnected from the signal source. Here the sampling capacitor is completely disconnected and floats or flies-to briefly before its reconnection around the Amplifier as Sw_3 is first closed and then Sw_4 is closed finally in state **T5**.

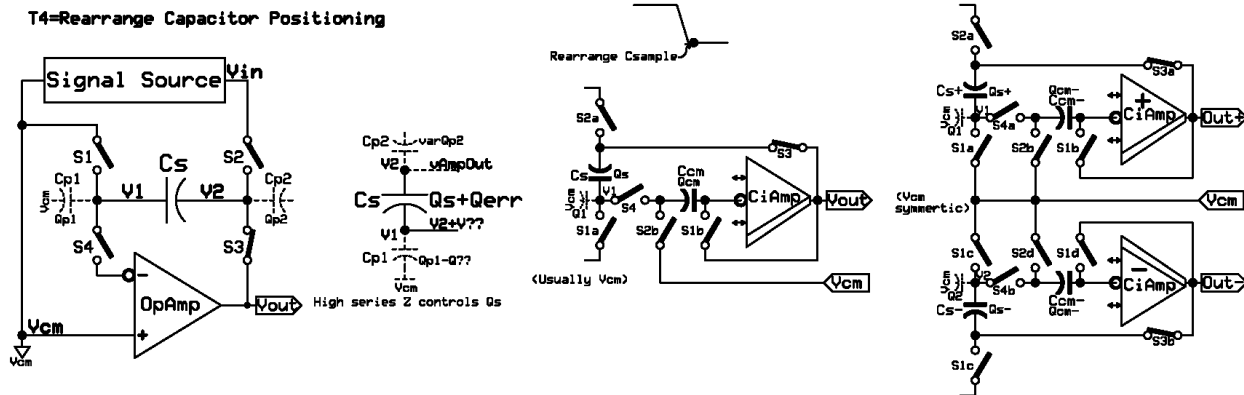
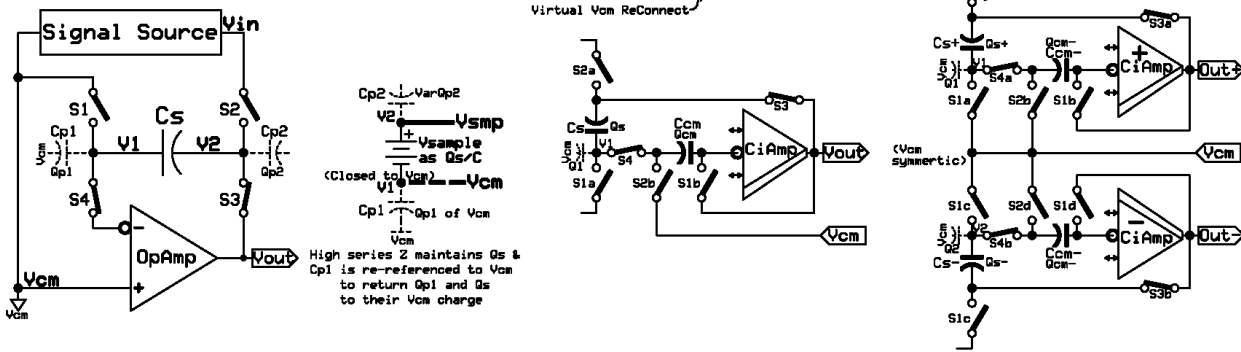


Figure 9.1 - 9.4 – State **T4** = Rearrange capacitor(s) around amplifier output

Figure 9 illustrates capacitor connection to OpAmp output, but not yet the capacitor input connected.

Figure 9 above illustrates track & hold in its **T4** state where the sampling capacitor top plate is connected to the amplifier output which is low impedance. Here, the bottom plate is at high impedance as this high impedance holds the sampled Q_s and any small charge error from Q_2 on the bottom plate parasitic capacitance.

T5=Connect OpAmp Input for Valid Output Voltage



Figure

10.1 - 10.4 – State T5 = Sw4 closes and finishes the flying capacitors reconnection to Vcm biased amplifier input.

Figure 10 above illustrates track & hold in its T5 state which re-established the bottom plate to Vcm, thus removing Q2 charge shared error on Cs. The amplifier input maintains high impedance which has maintained Qs charge eliminating sampled voltage errors. A capacitively symmetric transmission gate switch with its complementary gate drives of Figure 11 below is used for the final reconnect switch S4.

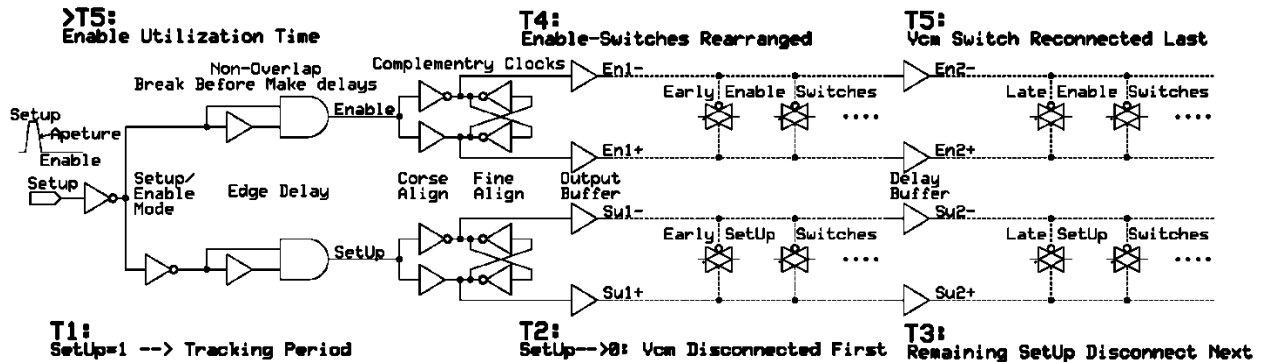


Figure 11 – Transmission-gate switch control logic shaping and alignment buffer

A single logic input “Setup” controls the entire switch sequence. High logic input maintains the Track & Hold circuit in an input voltage tracking mode of operation T1 where the analog input voltage is applied across the tracking capacitor Cs which occurs at essentially at the midpoint of the Setup logic’s falling edge. This is where the switching circuit has its most precise resolution in time. Here, the bottom-plate of the tracking capacitor Cs is disconnected from Vcm using a capacitively symmetric (~equal capacitive coupling from the control logic gates to the analog conducting channel) transmission gate switch. The lower path of the clock driver logic circuit performs this timing to Su1+ and Su1- providing a midpoint complementary gate drive pair of signals to the early setup disconnection switch S1 to end the tracking time period at the end of T1. The charge Qs is established by this early step and Qs is maintained throughout the rest of the hold time by maintaining a high series resistance with at least one end of Cs at all times. There is some temporary charge sharing of Qs with its surrounding parasitic capacitances, but Qs charge shared errors are brought back to their initial Vcm starting point cutoff voltage when the valid hold output is established in T5. A logic buffer delay later, Su2+ and Su2- gate logic control signals symmetrically disconnect the top plate of the sampling capacitor Cs to isolate it from the analog input signal source. Any change in top plate voltage pulls the bottom plate along with it as the sampling capacitor is acting like a battery throughout the rest of the tack & hold cycle.



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