

# PRACTICAL APPROACH TO TRANSISTOR AND VACUUM TUBE AMPLIFIERS

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PART 2 THE VACUUM TUBE AMPLIFIER



This is the second in a series of three articles offering a new approach to transistor and vacuum-tube amplifiers. This new approach is based on a simple DC analysis that incorporates the concepts of "transresistance" and the principles of Thévenin's Theorem.

Part 1, "The Transistor Amplifier", which appeared in the February, 1967 issue of SERVICE SCOPE considered the transistor amplifier as a simple DC model. This second article looks at the vacuum-tube amplifier in a similar light and sees some striking similarities in the two devices.

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In the previous article (Part I. "The Transistor Amplifier) of this series, it was shown that the gain of a linear transistor amplifier is set by external conditions. The same reasoning can also be applied to vacuum tubes. The equivalent circuit of a vacuum-tube amplifier is shown in Figure 9. The current that is produced in the plate circuit by the signal (Eg) acting on the grid is taken into account by postulating that the plate circuit can be replaced by a generator,  $-\mu E_R$  having an internal resistance (rp). We may also consider a vacuum-tube amplifier in terms of the constant-current form by replacing the voltage generator in the constant-voltage form with a current generator  $(gm E_g)$ shunting the internal resistance (rp).

These two approaches are valid in every respect but they do not convey much to us in the practical sense. Let us now consider a vacuum-tube amplifier from another approach.

In an amplifier which has its grid referenced to ground all plate-circuit impedances,  $R_L$  and rp, when viewed from the cathode are multiplied by the term

 $\frac{1}{\mu+1}$ . Also, by the same reasoning, the

cathode impedances when viewed from the plate circuit are multiplied by the term  $(\mu + 1)$ . Therefore, the impedance we see looking into the cathode must be

$$\frac{rp + R_L}{\mu + 1}$$
, where  $\mu$  equals the amplifica-

tion factor of the tube.

Hence it is reasonable to suppose that the voltage  $E_c$ , reference Figure 10, appears across this impedance we see looking into the cathode.





## The Triode Amplifier (Ground Cathode)

We will now look at a triode amplifier in terms related to our equivalent circuit. The common component is of course, the plate current. The change in this current due to the action of a control grid will determine the output voltage across the load impedance ( $R_L$ ).

Now 
$$E_g = E_c + E_k$$
 (19)

That is to say

$$E_{g} = I_{p} \left[ \frac{rp + R_{L}}{\mu + 1} \right] + I_{p}R_{k}$$
  
Or, 
$$E_{g} = I_{p} \left[ \left( \frac{rp + R_{L}}{\mu + 1} \right) + R_{k} \right] \qquad (20)$$

Also, 
$$E_{bb} = E_b + E_p + E_k$$
 (21)

or 
$$E_{b} = E_{bb} - E_{p} - E_{k}$$
 (22)

and 
$$E_p = -I_P R_L$$
 (23)

We define the voltage gain A(v) as

$$A_{(v)} = \frac{E_{p}}{E_{g}}$$
(24)

Then 
$$A_{(v)} = -\frac{I_{p}R_{L}}{I_{p}\left[\left(\frac{rp+R_{L}}{\mu+1}\right)+R_{k}\right]}$$
$$= -\frac{R_{L}}{\left(\frac{rp+R_{L}}{\mu+1}\right)+R_{k}}$$
(25)

We now have arrived at an equation for gain which is a ratio of impedances. The same approach may be applied to the grounded-grid configuration and we arrive at a similar result, except the sign is positive.

#### The Pentode Amplifier

In the triode amplifier all the cathode current will flow through the output load impedance ( $R_L$ ). However, in the case of the pentode and other multigrid tubes, some of this current is diverted into the screen. Equation (23) defines the output voltage in terms of the plate current. Therefore, to derive the actual gain figure we must determine the actual amount of cathode current which will finally reach the plate and become signal current. This figure can be arrived at from a graphical analysis of the mutual-conductance curves. In most cases, about 72% of the cathode current reaches the plate to become signal current. A typical example is a type 12BY7 pentode. However, this figure can be as high as 90% for some types—for example a 7788 pentode. The ratio of the plate current ( $I_p$ ) to the cathode current ( $I_k$ ) is the

plate efficiency factor, i.e., 
$$\eta = \frac{I_{\nu}}{I_{k}}$$
.

Now let is reexamine what effect this fact must have on the gain of a pentode amplifier as compared to a triode amplifier. The impedance we see looking into the cathode of a pentode is the same as for a triode.

That is 
$$\frac{rp + R_L}{\mu + 1}$$

however  $rp >> R_{L}$  and therefore  $R_{L}$  can usually be neglected in this equation.

That is to say 
$$\frac{rp}{\mu+1} \approx \frac{1}{gm}$$

and since conductance is the reciprocal of resistance we will call this impedance  $r_k$ .

i.e. 
$$r_k = \frac{1}{gm}$$
 (26)

We have seen that the fain equation of the triode amplifier is defined in terms of the parameters  $\mu$  and rp. We should not lose sight of the fact that  $\mu$  and rp are related to the plate current and therefore when these parameters are transferred to cathode dimensions these terms must be multiplied by the plate efficiency factor ( $\eta$ ). That is to say the impedance we see looking into the cathode  $r_k$  must be multiplied by ( $\eta$ ). With these facts in mind let us now derive the gain equation for a pentode amplifier.

We recall that:

$$E_{b} \equiv E_{bb} - E_{p} - E_{k} \qquad (22)$$

and 
$$E_p = -I_p R_L$$
 (23)

also 
$$E_g = E_c + E_k$$
 (19)

$$= \eta \mathbf{r}_{\mathbf{k}} \mathbf{I}_{\mathbf{k}} + \mathbf{I}_{\mathbf{k}} \mathbf{R}_{\mathbf{k}}$$
(27)

but 
$$I_k = \frac{I_p}{\eta}$$
 (28)

Therefore substituting equation (28) in equation (27)

$$E_{g} = \frac{\eta r_{k} I_{p}}{\eta} + \frac{I_{p} R_{k}}{\eta}$$
$$= I_{p} \left( r_{k} + \frac{R_{k}}{\eta} \right) \qquad (29)$$

and since the voltage gain

$$A_{(v)} = \frac{E_{p}}{E_{g}}$$

$$= -\frac{I_{p}R_{L}}{I_{p}(r_{k} + \frac{R_{k})}{\eta}}$$

$$= -\frac{R_{L}}{r_{k} + \frac{R_{k}}{\eta}}$$
(30)

The same remarks we made about the external emitter resistor  $R_E$  (refer to Part No. 1, The Transistor Amplifier) apply equally as well to the cathode resistor,  $R_k$ ; namely,  $R_k$  will be that impedance in which the signal current will flow to the AC ground.

In the case of the grounded plate (the cathode follower) we do not need to consider the plate efficiency factor if the amplifier is triode connected, therefore, the "gain" can be considered in terms of a simple divider network which can never be greater than unity.

$$A_{(v)} = \frac{R_k}{R_k + r_k}$$
(31)

#### The Push-Pull Amplifier

We can view a push-pull amplifier in a similar light by recognizing the existence of a virtual AC ground point between the cathodes of  $V_{(1)}$  and  $V_{(2)}$  as shown in Figure 11. Therefore, the gain of a push-pull triode amplifier will be:

$$A_{(v)} = \frac{R_{L(1)} + R_{L(2)}}{r_{k(1)} + r_{k(2)} + R_{k(1)} + R_{k(2)}}$$
(32)

where subscripts (1) and (2) are associated with  $V_{(1)}$  and  $V_{(2)}$ .

And if:

$$R_{k(1)} = R_{k(2)}$$

and 
$$r_{k(1)} = r_{k(2)}$$

which is usually the case; then,

$$A_{(v)} = \frac{R_{L(t)} + R_{L(2)}}{2r_{k} + 2R_{k}}$$
(33)

Where 
$$r_k = \frac{r_p + R_L}{\mu + 1}$$
 (either V<sub>(1)</sub> or V<sub>(2)</sub>)

and 
$$R_k = R_{k(1)}$$
 or  $R_{k(2)}$ 

With a push-pull pentode amplifier we must consider the plate-efficiency factor  $(\eta)$ . Therefore, (34)

$$A_{(v)} \text{ pentode} = \frac{R_{L(t)} + R_{L(2)}}{2r_k + \frac{2R_k}{\eta}}$$

where 
$$r_k = \frac{1}{gm}$$
 either  $V_{(1)}$  or  $V_{(2)}$ 

 $R_k = R_{k(1)}$  or  $R_{k(2)}$ 

 $\eta = \text{plate-efficiency factor of either V}_{(1)} \text{ or V}_{(2)}.$ 

# The Cascode Amplifier

The cascode amplifier fundamentally consists of two tubes connected in series, see Figure 12. Normally we usually fix the grid of  $V_{(1)}$  at some positive voltage.

The key to understanding this type of circuit is to consider  $V_{(2)}$  as a voltage-activated current generator. All the current delivered by  $V_{(2)}$  passes through the output load impedance  $R_{L}$ . Any change in voltage appearing at the grid of  $V_{(2)}$  appears as a change in current across  $R_{L}$ . We can derive the gain equation in the same way as we did for a pentode amplifier. There is no need to consider  $(\eta)$  if both tubes are triodes.

$$A_{(v)} \text{ (stage)} = \frac{R_{L(1)}}{R_{k(2)} + r_{k(2)}}$$
(35)  
where  $r_{k(2)} = \frac{r_{p(2)}}{\mu_{(2)} + 1}$   
 $= \frac{1}{gm_{(2)}}$ 

where the subscripts (1) and (2) are associated with  $V_{(1)}$  and  $V_{(2)}$ .

One of the advantages of this type of circuit is that the internal impedance which shunts  $R_L$  is extremely high.

In this respect the triode cascode amplifier closely approximates a pentode amplifier. If we compare the plate-current versus plate-voltage curves of both devices we see a close resemblance.

# The Hybrid Cascode Amplifier

Figure 13 is a typical configuration consisting of a vacuum tube  $V_1$  and a transistor,  $Q_1$ , connected in series. We can apply much the same approach as we did for the cascode vacuum-tube amplifier. Let us assume the base to emitter junction of  $Q_1$  to be forward biased. The collector current of  $Q_1$  becomes the plate current of  $V_1$ . Therefore, any change occurring at the base of  $Q_1$  is reflected as a change in plate current in  $V_1$ .



Figure 11. A typical push-pull triode amplifier. We normally encounter two virtual AC ground points between the cathodes  $V_1$  and  $V_2$ . It may be necessary to consider the effect of the virtual AC ground point at the junction of  $R_1$  and  $R_2$ . If  $R_1$  or  $R_2$  is large in value compared respectively to  $R_{k(1)}$  or  $R_{k(2)}$  then we can neglect this virtual AC ground and consider  $R_k$  in terms of  $R_{k(1)}$  or  $R_{k(2)}$ . However, if this is not so,  $R_k$  will be the parallel combination of  $R_{k(1)}$  and  $R_1$  or  $R_{k(2)}$  and  $R_2$ .











Figure 8.









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We recall (Part 1, The Transistor Amplifier, Eq. 10) that the input impedance we see looking into the base of a transistor in the common-emitter configuration is:

$$R_{in} = \beta \left( R_{E} + R_{t} \right) \tag{10}$$

Now  $E_{in} = I_b R_{in}$ 

$$= I_{b} \beta(R_{E} + R_{t}) \qquad (36)$$
  
also  $\beta = \frac{I_{c}}{I_{b}}$ 

or 
$$I_c = \beta I_b$$
 (37)

therefore substituting equation (37) in equation (36)

$$E_{in} = I_e \left( R_E + R_t \right) \tag{38}$$

now the collector current  $Q_1$  becomes the plate current of  $V_1$ . Then,

$$E_{in} = I_p (R_E + R_t)$$
 since  $I_p = I_c$  (39)

also 
$$E_p = -I_p R_L$$
 (23)

and since

$$A_{(v)}$$
 (stage)  $= \frac{E_p}{E_{in}}$ 

then from equations (23) and (39)

$$A_{(v)} \text{ (stage)} = - \frac{I_{p}R_{L}}{I_{p} (R_{E} + R_{1})}$$
$$= - \frac{R_{L}}{R_{E} + R_{1}} \qquad (40)$$

If the vacuum tube is not a triode but some other multigrid tube such as a pentode, the gain equation will have to be multiplied by the plate efficiency factor  $(\eta)$ .

The same remarks concerning the output impedance of the vacuum-tube cascode amplifier can be applied to the hybrid counterpart.

#### Summary

We have shown that the gain of a linear amplifier, transistor or vacuum tube, is a ratio of impedances. We can, of course, derive the gain equations for both devices in terms of mutual conductance. In fact, if we compare the transfer curves of both devices, Figure 14, we see a striking similarity.  $V_{\rm BE}$  and  $E_{\rm g}$  can be thought of in the same terms and in like manner  $I_{\rm p}$  and  $I_{\rm e}$  perform identical functions. Our analysis of both devices has shown that this fact is not coincidence.

It is not unreasonable to say that when we compare the cathode-follower (groundedplate) against the common-collector configuration, Figure 15, we can think of both devices as being identical in operation differing only in concept. The same argument can be put forward about the com-







mon-base amplifier and the grounded-grid amplifier. So too, the common-emitter amplifier and the grounded-cathode amplifier if we chose to ignore the input impedances of both devices.

Figure 16 (see page 5) summarizes the results of our analysis of the grounded cathode, grounded grid, and grounded plate amplifiers. Opposite this Figure we have reprinted Figure No. 8 from the previous article (Part I, The Transistor Amplifier) which summarized the results of the analysis on the three types of transistor amplifiers. These two charts will assist you to follow more closely our analysis of the 545B vertical amplifier (appearing in the next issue of SERVICE SCOPE) and to make a comparison between transistor and vacuum tube amplifiers.

It is not surprising we sometime find ourselves explaining one device in terms of another. Nature has a charming way of making most things interdependent upon one another. Recognize this fact and most tasks become a little easier

The third and concluding article in this series will appear in the June, 1967 issue of SERVICE SCOPE. That article will present an analysis of a typical Tektronix hybrid circuit—a Type 545B Oscilloscope's vertical amplifier.

The analysis will be based on conclusions reached in Part 1 (February, 1967 issue) and Part 2 (this issue) of the series of articles.

# ERRATA

We call your attention to a typographical error in the caption under Figure 7 in the February issue of SERVICE SCOPE. The Figure referred to in the last line of this caption should be Figure 8---not Figure 7.

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1—Type 132 Power Supply; 1—Type O Operational Amplifier. Contact: Dr. Neil Moore, Comparative Cardio Vascular Studies Unit, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104. Telephone: 594-8897.

1—Type 310A Portable Oscilloscope. Instrument is about 2 years old. Contact: Richard Cosgrove, 717 Brent Road, Rockville, Maryland.

l-Type 561A Oscilloscope. Almost new. Contact: Dr. S. Diamond, Clin-Neurophysiology Department, Mt. Sinai Hospital, Madison Avenue & 100 Street, New York, New York.

1—Type 567 Oscilloscope, sn 000440; 1—Type 6R1 Plug-In, sn 000103; 1—Type 3S3 Sampling Plug-In Unit, sn 000122; 1—Type 3T77 Sampling Time-Base Plug-In Unit, sn 000420. These units have been continuously serviced at the Tektronix, Inc. Repair Center. Will consider sale of the Type 567/6R1 separately. Contact: Walt Farnum, Borg-Warner Controls, 3300 South Halladay Avenue, Santa Ana, California 92702. Telephone: 714—545-5581.

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1—Type 575 Transistor-Curve Tracer, sn 003682. This instrument disappeared from the owner's premises on or about February 16, 1967. It is believed to be stolen. Contact: Cal-Power Company, 140 Kansas Street, El Segundo, California 90245. Telephone: SP 2-2171.

1—Type 453 Portable Oscilloscope, sn 2298. This instrument, which is presumed to be stolen, is in need of a new crt. It was taken from the University of Calgary in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The instrument is owned by: Alan Crawford Associates, 65 Martin Ross Road, Downsview, Ontario, Canada. 1-Type 545B Oscilloscope, sn 198 (Honeywell I.D.  $\pm$ 4-255), 1-Type 53/54 C Dual-Trace Plug-In Unit, sn 1344 (Honeywell I.D.  $\pm$ 330). Mr. Robert Hough is the man to contact at Honeywell if you have information regarding these instruments. His telephone: 301-587-1712. The address is Honeywell, Inc., Computer Control Division, 8121 Georgia Avenue, Silver Springs, Maryland.

1-Type 564 Oscilloscope, sn 3969; 1-Type 3A74 Four-Trace Amplifier Unit, sn 1032; 1-Type 2B67 Time-Base Unit, sn 13230. These instruments were reported as missing and believed stolen by: Mr. Pete Vanderhelft, Robotron Corporation, 21300 West Eight Mile Road, Detroit, Michigan 48219.

1—Type 321 Portable Oscilloscope, sn 002388, (Hughes Aircraft Company ID #H-103842). This instrument was shipped via Emery Air Freight and is reported as "missing in transit." Information regarding the instrument should be referred to Hughes Aircraft Company, Fullerton, California.

1-Type 310 Portable Oscilloscope, sn 10050. Missing from General Electric X-Ray Company, Denver, Colorado. 1-Type 532 Oscilloscope, sn 560; and 1-Type 53/54 B Plug-In Unit, sn 8876. These instruments were removed from an unmanned radar site near New Preston, Connecticut sometime between July 28, 1966 and August 1, 1966. They are presumed to be stolen since their removal was not sanctioned by any of the authorized personnel of the 656th Radar Group to which the instruments were issued. Information on the wherebaouts of these instruments should be reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, New Haven, Connecticut.

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