Idealized Operation of Third-Harmonic-Peaking Class-Ef Power Amplifier with Extended Maximum Operating Frequency


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Abstract — A new variant of Class-EF power amplifier (PA), the so-called third-harmonic-peaking Class-EF, is presented. It inherits a soft-switching operation from the Class-E PA and a low peak switch voltage from the Class-F PA. More importantly, the new topology allows operations at higher frequencies and permits deployment of large transistors which is normally prohibited since they are always accompanied with high output capacitances. Using a simple transmission-line load network, the PA is synthesized to satisfy Class-EF impedances at fundamental frequency, third harmonic, and all even harmonics as well as to simultaneously provide an impedance matching to 50Ω load.

Index Terms — Class-E, Class-EF, Class-F, power amplifier, third-harmonic-peaking, transmission line.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Class-EF PA recently introduced in [1]-[4] offers a low peak switch voltage of 2×VDC as in the Class-F as well as soft-switching operation as in the Class-E, see Fig. 1. However, the total series inductance $L + L_0$ is typically of large value. This large inductance is accompanied with (i) large electrical series resistance (ESR) which leads to efficiency degradation and (ii) low self-resonance frequency which restricts high-frequency implementations. Another major challenge in the Class-EF PA design is that for a given output power and DC supply voltage, the maximum operating frequency ($f_{\text{MAX}}$) is constrained by $C_{\text{OUT}}$, i.e., at high frequencies the value of $C_{\text{OUT}}$ is typically larger than the required $C$ value resulted from the Class-EF synthesis. The fact that large devices with high-power-handling capability are always accompanied with high $C_{\text{OUT}}$ would render the Class-EF PA topology unsuitable for high power applications.

In order to address the aforementioned issues, we introduce a new variant of Class-EF PA, namely third-harmonic-peaking Class-EF PA, Fig. 2. Synthesized in the frequency domain, this PA employs a simple transmission-line load network and most importantly it allows operation at higher $f_{\text{MAX}}$. The PA is designed to satisfy the Class-EF impedances at fundamental frequency, third harmonic, and all even harmonics as well as to simultaneously provide an impedance matching to 50Ω load thus dispensing the need for an additional output matching circuit (i.e. unlike the PA in Fig. 1). In addition, the new PA employs novel λ/8 open and shorted stubs which replace the traditional λ/4 transmission line (TL). These combined two stubs offer a number of practical advantages due to their unique ability to independently control open and short circuit terminations at the collector of the transistor which would in turn improve the PA’s efficiency.

![Fig. 1. Class-EF PA with lumped-element load network.](image1)

![Fig. 2. Proposed third-harmonic-peaking Class-EF PA with extended maximum operating frequency.](image2)

II. OPTIMUM IMPEDANCES OF CLASS-EF PA

The circuit schematic of the Class-EF PA with lumped-element load network is illustrated in Fig. 1. The shunt capacitance $C$ may entirely or partially furnish the transistor output capacitance $C_{\text{OUT}}$ and its value can be determined using (1). By substituting $C = C_{\text{OUT}}$ into (1), the expression for $f_{\text{MAX}}$, (2), can be obtained. The optimum load impedances, $Z_{\text{OPT}}$, seen by the device at fundamental frequency and higher harmonics are given in (3). The load network will present $R$ in series with $L$ at $f_0$, a short circuit at all even harmonics, and an open circuit at all odd harmonics. For prescribed output power ($P_0$), DC supply voltage ($V_{\text{DC}}$), and operating frequency ($f_0$), the optimum load resistance $R$ and series inductance $L$ can be calculated using (4) and (5).

The short-circuit requirement at even harmonics will be enforced by a λ/4 transmission line that is connected at the collector of the transistor. The relationship between the parameter $\tau_0$ in (1)-(5) and duty ratio $D$ is given by $D = 0.5 - \frac{\tau_0}{(2\pi)}$. For example, $\tau_0 = \pi/2$ rad or 90° corresponds to $D = 0.25$ meaning that the transistor will be switched ON only for a 25% period of the full cycle.
\[ C = \frac{\pi}{2} \left( \frac{\sin \tau_o}{1 + \cos \tau_o} \right) \left( \frac{P_o}{\omega L V_{dc}} \right)^3 \]  
\[ f_{\text{MAX}} = \frac{1}{4} \left( \frac{\sin \tau_o}{1 + \cos \tau_o} \right)^2 \left( \frac{P_o}{C_{\text{opt}} V_{dc}} \right)^2 \]  
\[ Z_{\text{opt}} = \begin{cases} R + j\omega L & \text{at } f_0 \\ 0 & \text{at } 2nf_o, \ n = 1,2,3,\ldots \\ \infty & \text{at } (2n+1)f_o, \ n = 1,2,3,\ldots \end{cases} \]  
\[ R = \frac{2 (1 + \cos \tau_o)^{\frac{V_{dc}^2}{P_o}}}{\pi^2} \]  
\[ L = \frac{\tau_o - 0.5 \sin(2\tau_o)}{\sin^2 \tau_o} \frac{R}{\alpha_o} \]  

III. ANALYSIS OF THIRD-HARMONIC-PEAKING CLASS-EF PA

A new Class-EF PA circuit topology with transmission-line load network is depicted in Fig. 2. In practice, it is impossible to realize a transmission-line load network that would satisfy Class-EF impedance requirements at fundamental frequency as well as all even and odd harmonics, (3), since that would require an infinite number of transmission lines. However, as will be shown shortly, a good approximation to the idealized Class-EF operation can be achieved by satisfying the required impedances at \( f_0 \), all odd harmonics, and only the first few odd harmonics. Here, a third-harmonic-peaking Class-EF PA is proposed with the open-circuit requirement satisfied at \( 3f_0 \) alone. The circuit is also analyzed to simultaneously provide an impedance matching to 50-Ω load.

An extra capacitance \( C_X \) is added to the circuit and, as a result, the device output capacitance \( C_{\text{OUT}} \) now increases to \( C + C_X \). This translates into higher \( f_{\text{MAX}} \) expressed in (6) where \( C_X \) is defined as \( kC \) (\( k > 0 \)).

\[ f_{\text{MAX}} = \frac{1}{4} \left( \frac{\sin \tau_o}{1 + \cos \tau_o} \right) (1 + k) \left( \frac{P_o}{C_{\text{opt}} V_{dc}} \right)^2 \]  

The electrical length of the open-circuit stub TL_{3o} in Fig. 2 is 90° at \( 3f_0 \) (i.e. 30° at \( f_0 \)) and therefore it provides a short-circuit termination to the series line TL_{1}. This shorted series line behaves like an inductance \( (L_s) \). This inductance must be resonated with \( C_X \) in order to provide the required Class-EF open circuit at \( 3f_0 \), from which we can derive (7).

\[ \alpha C_s \tan(3\theta) = Y_{s} \]  

At fundamental frequency, the 50 Ω load resistance \( (R_l) \) is transformed by TL_{1} and TL_{2} to an admittance of \( 1/Z_{\text{OPT}} - j\alpha_0 C_s \) where \( Z_{\text{OPT}} \) is given in (3). This results in:

\[ G_{\text{opt}} = \frac{Y_s - B_s \tan \theta}{(Y_s - B_s \tan \theta)^2 + G_s' \tan^2 \theta} \]  

\[ B_{\text{opt}} = \alpha_0 C_s \left( \frac{(Y_s \tan \theta + B_s) (Y_s - B_s \tan \theta) - G_s' \tan \theta}{(Y_s - B_s \tan \theta)^2 + G_s' \tan^2 \theta} \right) \]  

\[ G_{\text{opt}} = \frac{R}{R^2 + (\alpha_0 L)^2} \]  

\[ B_{\text{opt}} = -\frac{\alpha_0 L}{R^2 + (\alpha_0 L)^2} \]

IV. ANALYSIS OF λ/8 OPEN AND SHORTED STUBS

Novel λ/8 open and shorted stubs depicted in Figs. 2-3 are proposed to replace the traditional λ/4 line, Fig. 1. The λ/8 open stub will short circuit the collector of the transistor at \((4n-2)^{th}\) harmonics whereas the λ/8 shorted stub will short circuit the collector of the transistor at \(4m^{th}\) harmonics where \( m = 1, 2, 3, \) etc. Together they will facilitate a short-circuit termination at all even harmonics. At fundamental frequency, the λ/8 shorted stub behaves like an inductance \( (L_s) \) while the λ/8 open stub behaves like a capacitance \( (C_s) \). This parallel \( L_s/C_s \) circuit should resonate at \( f_0 \) (17).

\[ j\alpha_0 L_s = jZ_s \tan 45° = jZ_s \]  

\[ j\alpha_0 C_s = jY_s \tan 45° = jY_s \]  

\[ \alpha_0 L_s C_s = 1 \]  

Substitutions of (15) and (16) into (17) would result in \( Z_s = Z_s \). By setting \( Z_s \) equal to \( Z_s \), it can be proven that this stub arrangement will provide an open circuit not only at \( f_0 \) but also at all odd harmonics. The characteristics of the λ/8 open and shorted stubs at \( f_0 \), even and odd harmonics are compared with the λ/4 line in Fig. 4. It can be observed that the former offers wider rejection band but narrower pass band than the latter.

The bypass capacitor \( C_b \) in Fig. 1 should in theory provide a short circuit at the fundamental frequency as well as at all even and odd harmonics. However, in practice, one capacitor can only be used to provide low impedance (~1 Ω) at a single frequency. For example, in order to provide a short circuit at \( f_0 \), \( 2f_0 \), \( 3f_0 \), six capacitors of different values connected in parallel are needed. In contrast, the PAs in Figs. 2-3 only need \( 4 \) capacitors since the short-circuit terminations at the collector at \( 2f_0 \) and \( 6f_0 \) are enforced by the λ/8 open stub and therefore
no capacitors are required. Another practical advantage is that the \( \lambda/8 \) open stub will present lower impedance (close to 0 \( \Omega \)) at the collector resulting in better 2\(^{nd}\) and 6\(^{th}\) harmonics suppressions than the case when a \( \lambda/4 \) TL and \( C_b \) are used, i.e., due to the ESR of \( C_b \).

V. DESIGN PROCEDURES AND SIMULATION RESULTS

To validate the theoretical synthesis treated in Sections III-IV, a design example of the third-harmonic-peaking Class-EF PAs with extended \( f_{MAX} \) (Figs. 2-3) is given here. The design specifications are \( f_0 = 2.5 \text{GHz}, \ V_{DC} = 5 \text{V}, \ P_O = 0.5 \text{W}. \ \tau_D = 48.5^\circ \) is chosen so as the \( P_{MAX} \) is 35\% higher than the Class-E’s [3].

**Step 1:** Calculate the values of \( C, R \) and \( L \) using (1), (4) and (5) respectively.

**Step 2:** Calculate \( C_X = C_{OUT} - C \). \( C_{OUT} \) can be obtained from the device manufacturer catalogues, device model simulations, or from device sample measurements.

**Step 3:** Calculate the transmission-line parameter values \( Z_1, \theta_1 \) and \( Z_2 \) using (7)-(13).

**Step 4:** Calculate the characteristic impedances \( Z_{2A} \) and \( Z_{2B} \) using (14).

**Step 5:** Following the derivation and discussion in Section IV, \( Z_1 \) and \( Z_2 \) should be set equal and their values should be selected as high as the practical implementation would allow.

The optimal circuit component values for the case when \( f_{MAX} \) is increased by 25\% \( (k = 0.25) \) are given in Table I. The steady-state waveforms and the output power spectra obtained using the harmonic balance simulations in Agilent Advanced Design Systems (ADS) are illustrated in Figs. 5-6. Aligned with the theory, the peak switch voltage is \( 2 \times V_{DC} = 10 \) V and clean output power spectra is achieved up to as high as sixth harmonic, i.e., 2\(^{nd}\) and 6\(^{th}\) harmonics are suppressed by the \( \lambda/8 \) open stub, 4\(^{th}\) harmonic is suppressed by the \( \lambda/8 \) shorted stub, 3\(^{rd}\) and 5\(^{th}\) harmonics are suppressed by \( TL_{2A} \) and \( TL_{2B}. \) As a result, an undistorted sine wave was obtained at the output.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis and design of the third-harmonic-peaking Class-EF PA including the method to increase the PA’s maximum operating frequency have been presented. The validity of the analytical derivation has been confirmed through harmonic-balance simulations.

**REFERENCES**


