APPLICATION OF FAST SWEEP SYNCHROSCOPE TO MEASUREMENT OF **RAPIDLY RISING PULSES**

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MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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APPLICATION OF FAST SWEEP SYNCHROSCOPE TO MEASUREIENT OF RAPIDLY RISING PULSES

by

D. F. Winter and 0. T. Fundingsland

Abstract

 $\sqrt{\epsilon}$ This report is concerned primarily with performance and applications of f the Fast Sweep Oscillescope (or Synchroscope) which was first described in M.I.T. Radiation Laboratory Report No. 2001 entitled "Winterscope or Fast Sweep Synchroscope". The salient features of the instrument are reviewed briefly. The sweepphasing circuit has been modified to reduce time jitter between the sweep voltage and the output trigger pulse. In the improved circuit, phasing is accomplished at high level (1000 volts) by means of a tapped delay network, thereby eliminating all electronic stages between the trigger voltage source, a biased blocking oscillator, and the points of utilization which are the sweep thyratron grid and the output trigger voltage./ ith this circuit the output trigger pulse has no observable jitter on the $75/n$./µsec sweep if the filament of the sweep thyratron is heated from a d-c supply. To demonstrate the utility of the Fast Sweep Synchroscope for studying magnetron starting behavior, a pulse generator has been built which produces an output pulse rising to 14 kv in less than 0.01 µsec on a 1000-ohm resistance load. A hydrogen thyratron driver is used with four 5D21's (tetrodes) to obtain this fast build-up of output pulse voltage. This pulser was used to modulate a 725A magnetron (3-cm wavelength) and the resulting plate current and plate voltage pulses were observed. Representative photographs are presented which show a form of magnetron instability indicated by time variations in plate current build-up. Other photographs show samples of individual successive voltage, current, and r-f envelope pulses from an unstable 10-cm magnetron. Also included are photographs of random noise generated in a 30-Mc/sec amplifier.

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APPLICATION OF FAST SWEEP SYNCHROSCOPE TO MEASUREMENT OF APIDLY RISING PULSES

1. Introduction

The Fast Sweep Synchroscope originally described in RL Report No. 1001, "Winterscope or Fast Sweep Synchroscope", was designed to study individual voltage transients in the millimicrosecond region. To demonstrate the utility of this synchroscope for studying magnetron starting behavior, it was necessary first to modify the sweep phasing circuit- to reduce time Jitter between the sweep voltage and the output trigger pulse, and second, to build a special pulse generator. The salient features of the synchroscope and certain. improvements which have been made in the sweep phasing circuit are covered in Sec. 2. Section 3 discusses the problems of designing a pulser circuit capable of generating rapidly rising high voltage pulses, synchronized precisely from the synchroscope output trigger pulse. Results are given in Sec. 4 in the form of photographs. Some of these show short, rapidly rising pulses obtained with both resistance and magnetron loads, while others illustrate additional applications including records of random noise generated in a 30-mc/sec amplifier.

2. The Oscilloscope

This oscilloscope is suitable for making photographic records of voltage transients in the millimicrosecond region. The time of transit of the electrons through the deflecting plates is computed to be between 2 and 3 \times 10⁻¹⁰ seconds which insures a signal amplitude reduction of less than 10 per cent at 1000 Mc/sec compared to a d-c deflecting voltage. Conventional low-voltage cathode-ray tubes are not satisfactory for measurements in this region as their transit times are in the range of 10^{-9} seconds or greater. Furthermore, the trace intensity of low-voltage tubes is not sufficient to record a single transient with a spot writing speed of more than 20 to 30 in./ μ sec. It can be shown (from consideration of spot size, deflection sensitivity, and time interval to be resolved) that ε spot writing speed of 200 in./ μ sec is desirable to record photographically millimicrosecond transients. A special tube (ype K1017) was designed for this oscilloscope by the A. B. Dumont Laboratory, Passaic, New Jersey. When operated with the cathode at -5 kv and the screen at +20 kv a signal of about 180 volts amplitude produces a deflection of ne inch on the screen. Careful electron optical design and post deflection acceleration results in a finely focused spot of high intensity. The tube has its horizontal and vertical deflecting plate systems isolated from one another. Electrical contact with each plate in the shielded deflecting chamber is made through co-axial connectors in the neck of the tube. This precaution effectively eliminates electrostatic coupling between the horizontal and vertical deflecting plates at 1000 Me/sec. Taking into account the spot size of this cathode-ray tube we find that a sweep speed greater than 50 in./ μ sec is needed to measure time intervals of 10⁻⁹ seconds to a precision of \pm 10 per cent.

Figure 1 is a block diagram showing the component circuits of the oscilloscope. The most important features of these circuits are described in some detail below.

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Figure 1. Block diagram of High Speed Oscilloscope.

The circuit employed to develop linear sweep speeds of 50-100 in./ μ sec is shown in Fig. 2. With L = 0.8 R²C, the voltages of opposite sign at (A) and \odot will be linear functions within 5 per cent from $t = 0$ to $t = RG$. The value of the time constant RC is

Figure 2. Sweep and intensifier circuit.

determined by the sweep speed required, the voltage sensitivity of the cathode-ray tube, and the supply voltage E_0 . The voltage at \bigcircled{B} is a pulse of amplitude equal to $\frac{E_0}{2}$ which is coincident with the start of the sweep so that an appropriate portion may be used to gate the electron beam during the sweep. This pulse is applied to the cathode-ray tube grid and drives it almost to zero bias to obtain the maximum light output from the trace on the screen. After each sweep the circuit is recharged through the resonant choke and holdoff diode shown at the upper left. Linear sweeps from 0.1 to 100 in./usec have been generated with this circuit. Repetitive sweeps to 2000 per second (or higher) as wall as single sweeps can be obtained. (New Method and the space of the space of the space \mathcal{L} , $\$

To synchronize the sweep and the voltage transient being studied, two trigger voltages are needed which are free of time Jitter with respect to one another. In the

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experimental model of the synchroscope the phasing of these two trigger pulses was accomplished at low level. After being phased these two pulses triggered two independent, biased blocking oscillators, one to supply a voltage pulse to the sweep thyratron and the other to supply an output trigger pulse to initiate the transient. It was found necessary to reduce the time itter in this scheme and after testing several other methods we decided to use a one-pulse source and do the phasing at high level by means of a tapped delay network. Figure 3 shows a 1500-volt biased blocking oscillator which may be run repetitively or used for a single pulse. The output of the transformer is fed into a lumped constant

Figure 3. Sweep-phasing circuit.

delay network which has a 0.25 -µsec delay per section. The pulse coming out of the right end triggers the thyratron in the sweep circuit. The pulse reaching the left end is fed into a continuously wound delay line having a total delay of 0.8 usec. The sliding contact on the continuously wound line, together with the switch on the lumped network, allow the two pulses to be continuously varied \pm 5 µsec with respect to one another. High level phasing eliminates the difficulties of bias ripple, heater pickup, etc., which are present in electronic phasing schemes. With the circuit shown in Fig. 3 there is no observable time jitter between the sweep and the synchroscope output trigger pulse on a 75 -in./ μ sec sweep, if d-c heater power is used on the sweep thyratron. For a-c thyratron heater power there is a small time variation,due to heater or cathode conditions,which amounts to about 1 or 2×10^{-9} seconds. Ł.

 -2 are $\frac{1}{2}$ pictures of the completed oscilloscope are-shown in Figs. 13 and $\frac{14}{4}$ and a complete circuit diagram is shown in Fig. 15. Photographic records are obtained on 35-mm Eastman Orthochromatic film No. 5211 by means of an fl.5 coated lens. Individual successive traces are obtained by running the film continuously and thus obtaining a record every time the beam is on. (The decay time constant of the screen is about 10^{-5} seconds and there is practically no smearing of the trace for the film speed needed to record 500 pulses per second). If it is desired to show two or more pulses superimposed, the camera can be momentarily stopped. The sample photographs shown in Figs. 7 through 12 have been enlarged from the 35-mm film; Eastman Kodabromide F5 paper was used to obtain maximum contrast.

This synchroscope may be used to study transient voltages which occur at repetition frequencies up to 2000 per second or it may be used for single transients as well. A

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s'x-position internal audio oscillator is provided as well as connections for an external oscillator and/or trigger pulse. There are four sweep speeds: $(1) \approx 1.3$ in./ μ sec. $(2) \approx 7$ in./ μ sec, $(3) \approx 17$ in./ μ sec, and $(4) \approx 75$ in./ μ sec. With new film and new cathoderay tubes, single trace writing speeds up to 300 inches per usec have been recorded.

3. Experimental Pulser

The need for a suitable instrument to study the starting behavior of a pulsed magnetron and the interaction between modulator and magnetron constituted the original mottration for the design and construction of the Fast Sweep Synchroscope described above. in order to demonstrate the utlifty of this synchroscope for observing magnetron starting leharior and for other applications involving measurements in the millimicrosecond region, we decided to build a pulser capable of generating high voltage pulses (= 12 ky) having a leading dge which approaches an ideal step function. Specifically, we heped to obtain a pulse having a rise time \$ 0.01 usec, with a linear rising edge and a sharp leading corner and with spurious ripples and other irregularities reduced to a minimum, Expediency dictated the use of a pulser switch which could be synchronized precisely from the synchroscopé trigger pulse and a circuit as near to conventional design as practicable.

The basic problem in the design of a pulser for generating a fast rising voltage pulse is to obtain high current immediately after closing the switch, in order to charge the output capacitance to full value within the desired time of rise. Intrinsic limitations of the switch are therefore the first consideration. Spark gap switches generally Cannot Le Guillet of The Catholic Contents. To the best of our knowledge, enclosed triggered gaps cannot be synchronized to less than 0.01 usec. Hydrogen thyratrons can be synchronized satisfactorily but have an inherent ionization time of the order of 0.02 usec. Ionization time is also a limitation of spark gap switches but probably to a lesser extent An those of the open-air non-synchronous type. The objections to the above types of Mewitches, the pulse-shaping limitations of lumped parameter pulse-forming networks (with a *Simite* number of sections), and the imperfect response of iron core pulse transformers are significant factors which precluded the use of a line-type pulser for our purpose.

A conventional hard tube pulser¹ output circuit consisting of a high voltage storage espacitor and a vacuum tube switch (preferably a tetrode) proved to be suitable. The chief limitations of this type of switch for obtaining rapidly rising pulses are that the tube cannot be turned on instantly with any practically designed driver circuit, and that the plate current obtainable from the tube cannot exceed a certain maximum value.

If, as a first approximation, we assume that the switch can be turned on instantly to full current, the value of the current required for a given rise time of the output pulse can be estimated from the relation

$$
T \approx \frac{CV}{t} + \frac{Y}{2R} \tag{1}
$$

G. N. Glasoe and J. V. Lebacqz, "Pulse Generators", MIT RL Series, Vol. 5, McGraw-Hill, 1947.

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where $C =$ the output shunt capacitance (including that of the load)

- $R =$ the load resistance
- $V =$ the maximum pulse voltage across the load
- t = the time of rise.

For example, with C reduced to a minimum of say 30 μ m and R = 1000 ohms, the current required for a rise time of 0.01 µsec and maximum voltage of 12 kv is approximately

$$
I \approx \frac{30 \times 10^{-12} \times 12 \times 10^3 + 12 \times 10^3}{10^{-8}}
$$

2 × 10³

$$
\approx 42 \text{ amp.}
$$

The rate of build-up of plate current, however, depends directly upon the rate of. rise of grid voltage which in turn is determined by the instantaneous power delivered from the driver circuit to the grid input conductance and susceptance of the switch tube. During the positive swing of grid voltage the grid current may become excessive, thus requiring a driving voltage source with very low internal impedance to maintain a rapid rise of grid voltage. In a practical circuit the time required for the plate current to build up may be comparable to the rise time desired for the load voltage pulse. Hence, the actual current required in the output circuit to give a specified time of rise is greater than the value indicated by Eq. (1) , the correction factor depending upon the characteristics of the driver and the equivalent input circuit of the vacuum tube switch.

Because of this high current requirement and other considerations we decided to build a hard-tube pulser, using several 5D21 tubes in parallel for the pulser switch. With the 5D21's biased considerably beyond cut-off only a small fraction of the driver pulse amplitude is effective in producing positive grid swing on that part of the e_{g}^{-1} p characteristic which corresponds to the steep rise of plate current $(i.e.$ where $\frac{5}{68}$ is high), hence the total time of rise of the driver pulse may be appreciably greater than the rise time of the output pulse to the load.

For our driver circuit, we therefore decided to use a line-type pulser circuit with a 3045 hydrogen thyratron switch. To avoid the use of a pulse transformer a positive pulse was obtained from a 1000-ohm resistor connected between ground and the thyratron cathode which was capacity coupled to the 5D21 grids. The choice of optimum number of output switch tubes depends upon several factors;

(1) For these short times, the instantaneous current needed to charge the distributed capacity of the load is more than one tube can supply.

(2) Adding more tubes to obtain more output current necessarily increases the loading of the driver by the grid input circuit of the 5D21's.

(3) The exact nature of the $e_g - i_p$ curves for these short pulses is not known and one can only extrapolate from data obtained with longer pulses.

(4) The variation of thyratron impedance as a function of time is not known accurately, and most reasonable assumptions add a non-linear element to the circuit problem.

It is difficult to establish criteria for determining experimentally the optimum number of switch tubes. For example, a very rapidly rising pulse can be obtained with two or three tubes when the grid drive is excessive. The leading corner of the pulse is not

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square, however, but has a spike of about 10-20 per cent amplitude and several millimicroseconds' duration. If a flat top pulse is desired, the grid drive must be reduced, and a slower rising pulse results. Depending on the particular shape desired, the optimum number of tubes is somewhere between two and six.

After some preliminary tests with one and two 5D21 tubes on a breadboard model, the circuit shown in Pig. 4 seemed satisfactory, and we decided to construct a large unit with provision to use a maximum of eight 5D21's in parallel, with a single 3045 driver. It should be pointed out that the various circuit constants indicated in the figure are not necessarily considered to be optimum values. We did not pursue analysis and experimentation with the circuit more than was necessary to meet our design objectives, and we were not particularly concerned with economy in power and other engineering refinements which are of secondary importance in a temporary laboratory unit.

Figure 4. Pulser circuit.

The driver is enclosed in a separate copper housing to insure adequate shielding against "pick-up" in the viewing system. Several pulse-forming networks were tried. For long pulses best results were obtained with a length of Federal Telephone and Radio cable RG71/U with a small capacitance connected in parallel with the cable output. For very short (\approx 0.01 µsec) pulses we used a capacitance of 100-500 µmf connected in series with a parallel L-R corrective network^{z}.

Inductance of connecting leads is minimized by the symmetrical arrangement

^{2.} 0. T. Fundingsland and G. J. Wheeler, "Constant Current Circuits", Electronics, 19, pp. 130-133, November 1946.

illustrated in the sketch of Fig. 5. The control grids of the 5D21 tubes are connected through individual small resistors to a common "drive" ring. The screen grids are likewise connected to a common ring and a mica capacitor bypasses each screen to cathode as close to the tube as possible. The plates are all connected to a single conductor which supports the output high voltage capacitor.

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Figure 5. Pulse generator and load.

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The resistance load consists of two 500-ohm WE six-inch tubular carbon-ceramic resistors in series with a 25-ohm BTL coaxial "current-viewing" resistor 3 .

A similar coaxial current-viewing resistor is connected in series with the ground return of the magnetron. When the magnetron is connected the resistance load also serves as a voltage divider for viewing the magnetron voltage.

The pulses are transmitted to the synchroscope through three-foot lengths of shielded coaxial cable (Federal Telephone and Radio RG71/U). The signal delay in such a cable is comparable to the rise times to be measured. Therefore, in order to avoid undesirable reflections, it was necessary to match closely the characteristic impedance of the cable, by means of a shunt resistance at the cathode-ray tube. The cable impedance measured under pulse conditions was found to be 95 ± 1 ohms.

4. Experimental Results

Figure 6 shows a 15-kv pulse obtained with two 5021 tubes operating into a MT fadelian refere 1000-ohm resistance load. This pulse was viewed on a_A Model 5 symchroscope which had been modified to produce a sweep speed of about 9 in./usec. The rise time appears to be less than 0.005 µsec (measured from 10 per cent to 90 per cent amplitude) and the duration at 90 per cent amplitude is about 0.01 μ sec. The pulse repetition frequency was 2000 per second. This photograph, however, may not be a true representation of the actual pulse

Figure 6. Voltage pulse on 1000-ohm load (leading edge retraced because of low intensity of trace on Model 5 synchroscope).

because we were crowding the upper frequency limit for which low voltage cathode-ray tubes are considered satisfactory. For example, there may have been high frequency oscillations or other irregularities on the actual pulse which were smoothed out in this presentation. Furthermore, the coupling between signal plates and sweep plates on the cathode-ray tube may be sufficient to affect the apparent rate of rise of the pulse even though no **gross** "cross talk" involving backward motion of the sweep is obvious.

3. Glasoe and Lebacqz, op. cit., Appendix A.

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A 725A magnetron (3-cm band) was connected in parallel with the resistance load without otherwise changing the circuit or the operating voltages. The added capacitance of the magnetron and its filament transformer caused some decrease in the voltage rate-ofrise, but the magnetron failed to "fire"; i.e. no conduction current flowed and no $r-f$ output radiation was detectable. Apparently the magnetron behaved only as a capacitance. The only observable current was proportional to the rate-of-rise of applied voltage and when the amplitude of the applied voltage was varied the current did not change in accordance with the dynamic impedance characteristic for normal, conduction current during oscillation. Even with appreciably higher voltage than is normally applied to the tube it was necessary to increase the pulse duration to more than 0.02 μ sec at 90 per cent amplitude before a true conduction current appeared and r-f radiation was detectable.

The remaining photographs (Figs. 7 through 12) were obtained with the fast sweep synchroscope. The pulser was adjusted to produce pulses of longer duration to insure normal magnetron operation. Figure 7 shows the voltage pulse with the resistance load only, on both slow and fast sweeps. The pulse repetition frequency was 60 per second.

Figure 7. Voltage pulse on 1000-olm load.

Figure 8 shows corresponding magnetron current and voltage pulses with the same circuit condition. The amplitudes and rise times are indicated on the photographs. Measurements were made from full size prints with the aid of a drafting machine.

Reducing the grid drive effected a slower rising pulse, and induced the magnetron instability illustrated in Fig. 9. This instability does not appear to be mode Jumping, because the final amplitudes of voltage and current are the same on all pulses. However, it is clear that the main build-up of conduction current occurs at two distinct times on different cycles, with reference to the applied voltage pulse. The lower left photograph of this figure gives a much better resolution of the fine stricture in the region where the current differs on different cycles. Small variations in the leading corner of the voltage pulse are also apparent. Other forms of magnetron instability were observed when the circuit conditions were varied over a wider range.

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Figure 8. Pulses on 725A magnetron load.

Figure 9. Pulses on 725A magnetron load with reduced grid drive.

Figure 10 is a sample of records of individual successive pulses from a modified line-type pulser applied to a 10-cm magnetron. Pulses shown in Columns 1 and 3 are magnetron plate current, those in Column 2 are magnetron plate voltage, and those in Column 4 are 10-cm radio-frequency envelopes. These pulses recur at 3300-microsecond intervals. Marked differences in plate voltage and current due to sparking and variations in $r-f$ build-up are apparent. Les re vontez est line d'avec les processes d'avec les group et the messine des Aptoratory of Brothend

Figure 10. Pulses on HK7 magnetron load.

Figure 11 shows how the output of a 30-Mc/sec amplifier is affected by random noise generated in the first stage. The 30-Mc/sec equipment was supplied by G. E. Duvall(mit Remarch Laboratory of belle termina

amplifier is in constant operation and the sweep was run at a 60-cycle/sec repetition frequency.

Figure 11. Output of a 30-Mc/sec amplifier modulated by random noise,

This oscilloscope can also be used to study repetitive transients which occur at irregular intervals. Figure 12 shows several sweeps on which no signal appears and only two where the transient happened to occur during the sweep interval. These pictures were obtained from a capacitor which was discharged by a mechanical switch into a resistance load. The oscilloscope sweep and mechanical switch were run from the same 600-cycle source but the mechanical switch had an inherent time jitter of \pm 2 μ sec.

5. Conclusion

The photographs of voltage transients presented here serve as an indication of some of the types of problems which can be studied with the aid of the Fast Sweep Synchroscope. While the primary objective in the design of the synchroscope was to

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Figure 12. Non-synchronous pulses (condenser discharged by a mechanical switch)

provide a method of recording high speed voltage transients such as those encountered in radar transmitters, an attempt has been made to make this instrument as flexible as possible and already several applications outside of the original field have been made. Provisionsfor direct access to the cathode-ray tube deflecting plates and control grids make possible a wide variety of applications where sweep voltages other than those already available might be used.

In their present form, the synchroscopes show some trace defocussing at sweep repetition frequencies above 2000 per second. This difficulty can probably be eliminated by readjusting time constants of circuits associated with the control grid. There is a small amount of vertical centering modulation (0.01 to 0.03 in.) at 60 cycles whose source we have been unable to determine.

Although the calculated transit time is small enough to give a 95 per cent response to a 1000-Hc signal, we have not tested the synchroscope to its limit of time resolution in pulse measurements because of the inherent limitations of pulse generators and auxillary pulse-viewing equipment. Specifically no video amplifier has yet been designed with a 1000-Mc bandwidth for amplifying low voltage signals, and in order to construct high voltage pulse attenuators with adequate frequency response (balanced time constants), it would be necessary to design special high voltage resistors and capacitors which have small physical size and whose distributed inductance and capacitance are made negligibly small. Other considerations include the viewing cable frequency characteristics and the impedance-matching problem. Our experiments have demonstrated satisfactory performance of the Fast Sweep Synchroscope within the limitations of the auxiliary apparatus described in this report and conventional pulse-viewing systems.

The assistance of Mr. L. A. Hartis in the development of the sweep-phasing circuit and the work of Messrs. S. R. Ames and A. M. Belinski in the construction and testing of these two synchroscopes are gratefully acknowledged. We also wish to express our appreciation of the friendly interest of many others both inside and outside the Research Laboratory of Electronics.

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Figure 13. Fast Sweep Synchroscope, front view.

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Figure 14. Fast Sweep Synchroscope, top and rear views.

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