900 MHz low noise amplifier demoboard

Application report

900 MHz LOW NOISE AMPLIFIER DEMOBOARD

Summary: The performance of wideband transistors, BFG505 (BFG520, BFR505, BFR520) is demonstrated in a 900 MHz Low Noise Amplifier in the frontend of a subscriber handset. (i.e. Cordless phone, cellular phone) The transistors, as evaluated in this application note, are available in the SOT23, SOT323 (SC70) and SOT143 (3 versions) packages.

General characteristics of demoboard with BFG505:

Supply	2.5-3.6 V, 2 mA	
Gain	typ. 11 dB	
Noise Figure	F<1.5 dB	includes losses
In/Out return loss	S11,S22<-10 dB	
PCB size	10 x 10 mm	active area
Components	BFG505 resistors capacitors coils	SOT143 Philips 0603/0805 Philips 0603 air wounded int. diam 1.5 mm wire 0.4 mm Cu
Stability	stable when ter- minated with 50 Ohm at all frequencies	

Introduction

Several AC-parameters are of importance when designing an RF low noise amplifier. The main goal is to improve system sensitivity. An optimally designed Low Noise Amp will be a trade off between noise and gain. Furthermore, when using 50 Ohm designed bandpass filters, a mismatch can result in extra losses. Obtaining 50 Ohm matching is also an important design aspect. Other AC-parameters include isolation to reduce Local Oscillator radiation and linearity. This contributes less to system performance, as it is determined mostly by the mixer. Other design requirements are a small size and very low power consumption.

Meeting all these requirements will always result in a design that is a trade off. Philips' fourth generation bipolar wideband transistors can meet the required specifications as they offer outstanding performance at 900 MHz.

900 MHz low noise amplifier demoboard   Application report

Theory

A simplified formula valid for lower frequencies can learn us
what match we should present to the input port of the bipolar
transistor used in common emitter configuration to obtain
minimum Noise Figure.
The optimal source impedance for minimum noise $R_s\{opt\}$ is given
by:

$R_s\{opt\} = \sqrt{[\beta/s*(1/s+2*r_b)]}$ Ohm

while

$s= qI_c/kT$ and $\beta= H_{FE}(DC)$

This formula takes into account both shot noise and thermal
noise.
One can see that a low bias current results in farely high
impedances. (for the BFR505 X-tal at 2 mA follows: $R_s\{opt\}$= 270
 Ohm) For higher frequencies the optimum source impedances
must be more inductive to be able to tune out internal device
parasitics.The power match which gives optimum gain occurs
for: $R_s\{opt\}$= β/s+ R_b (1.4 kOhm)
It is easily seen that for low currents both
noise and gain match cannot be realised simultaneously.

The only way of obtaining noise and gain match simultaneously
is applying a feedback. This can be done by a series emitter
induction.
At 900 MHz, a few nH emitter induction can change the input
impedance considerably and it will bring noise and gain match
closer together at the cost of some gain (a few dB).
This makes a properly matched low noise design possible.
To show what trade-off can be reached figure 1 shows the re-
sults of Touchstone (R)[*] simulations based on the noise and
gain parameters from the Touchstone Data diskette[**].
Return losses at both input and output were below -10 dB.

As far as stability is concerned, it is impossible to design
the amplifier to be unconditionally stable for both input and
output for all source and load impedances at all frequencies.
Some damping at frequencies outside the 900 MHz band could be
necessary in some practical cases.
Negative feedback increases stability, postive feedback de-
creases stability.
Positive feedback can occur when the emitter is capacitively
loaded. As far as possible, we should avoid this in an RF
design.

[*] Touchstone is a registered trademark of Eesof
[**] Noise & s-parameter library surface mounted devices,
available at your local Philips Sales office.

900 MHz low noise amplifier demoboard   Application report

Practical circuit

The input and output match were realized with lumped elements
since they give the smallest size at 900 MHz. (see fig. 2)
Decoupling capacitors forming short circuit at 900 MHz are 27
pF. Power supply decoupling is done with a 1 nF capacitor.
The coils could be replaced by PCB-track inductors or SMD
inductors. Attention should be given to the value of the
emitter induction which can be realized through a few mm
track. A proper ground should be available. One should be
carefull in choosing capacitance and inductance especially at
the input since low Q elements give noise degradation.
The high impedance match at the input is not easy to realize
and is most sensitive to parameter spread of the passive
components. The PCB design was optimized for minimum noise.
Simulated component values for the different transistors can
be found in figures 3-6. Results of measurements are shown in
figures 7-9. Circuit layout can be seen in fig. 10. It was
build on a 1 mm FR4 epoxy substrate.
Theoretical component values may slightly differ from prac-
tical values due to layout parasitics.

Biasing considerations.
At 3V supply, stable biasing can be difficult.
To reduce the effects of H_{FE} spread a decoupled emitter resis-
tor is often necessary. This decouple capacitor increases the
risk for instability. Another solution, requiring a low cost
low frequency PNP transistor can be seen in fig.11.
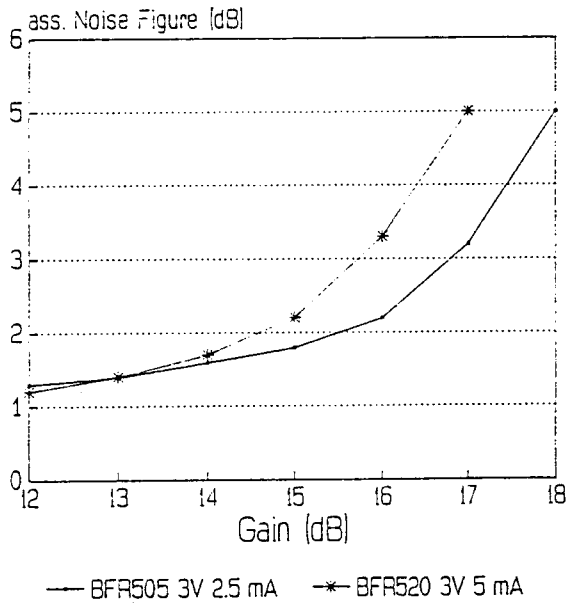This solution gives H_{FE} independent biasing in grounded emitter
configuration.

ass. Noise Figure [dB]

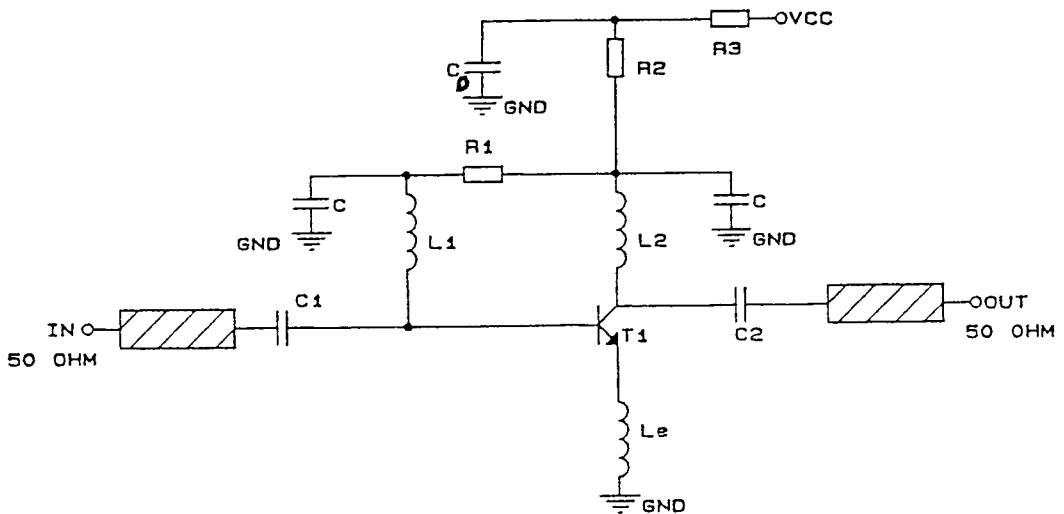Fig. 1 Gain and associated Noise Figure

Fig 2. Schematic circuit diagram

900 MHz low noise amplifier demoboard   Application report

Fig 3. BFG505 3V 2.5 mA values of components

C1 pF	2.3	2.5	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.4	1.7
L1 nH	14	12.5	11	9.5	8.4	7.1	7.0
Le nH	3.9	3.0	2.3	1.9	1.6	1.6	2.0
C2 pF	2.2	2.2	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.2	0.8
L2 nH	14	13.4	13.3	13.0	13.0	14.7	17.7
G dB	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
NF dB	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.9	2.3	3.3	5.1

Fig 4. BFR505 3V 2.5 mA values of components

C1 pF	2.4	3.1	3.1	3.0	1.5		
L1 nH	12.5	11.5	9.5	7.5	8.2		
Le nH	2.8	2.0	1.6	1.5	1.6		
C2 pF	2.9	2.5	2.2	1.7	1.1		
L2 pF	13	12.7	11.5	11.9	12.1		
G dB	11	12	13	14	15		
NF dB	1.4	1.6	1.9	2.6	4.4		

Fig 5. BFR520 3V 5 mA value of components

C1 pF	5.7	7.2	8.5	9.5	10		
L1 nH	10.4	8.5	7	5.3	4		
Le nH.	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.05	0.0		
C2 pF	3.6	3.2	2.7	2.0	1.4		
L2 nH	10.5	9.5	9.0	9.5	11.5		
G dB	12	13	14	15	16		
NF dB	1.3	1.5	1.8	2.3	3.5		

Fig 6. BFG520 3V 5 mA values of components

C1 pF	5.2	10	27	33	33		
L1 nH	13.7	20	12	8	5.9		
Le nH	2.2	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.4		
C2 pF	3.2	3.7	3.3	2.9	2.1		
L2 nH	13.3	11.3	9.3	8.7	9.1		
G dB	12	14	15	16	17		
NF dB	1.2	1.3	1.6	2.1	2.8		

900 MHz low noise amplifier demoboard

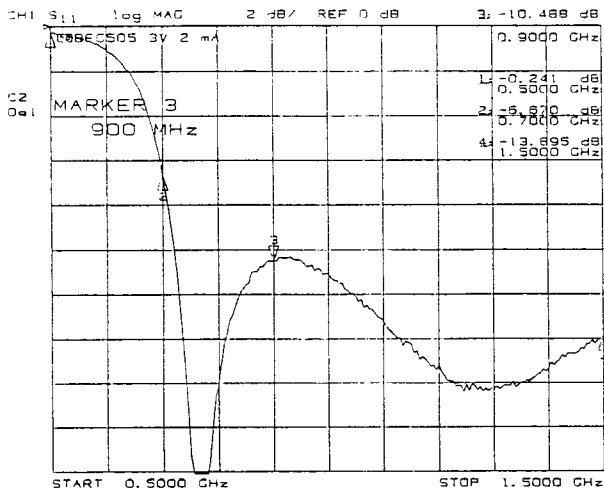Fig 7. Measured and simulated in/out match.

900 MHz low noise amplifier demoboard

CH1 S21 log MAG 2 dB/ REF 20 dB L -10.162 dB

BFC505 3V 2 mA   0.5000 GHz

C2   MARKER 1
Del   500 MHz

2. 10.417 dB
0.7000 GHz
3. 10.769 dB
0.9008 GHz
4. 6.060 dB
1.5000 GHz

START 0.5000 GHz   STOP 1.5000 GHz
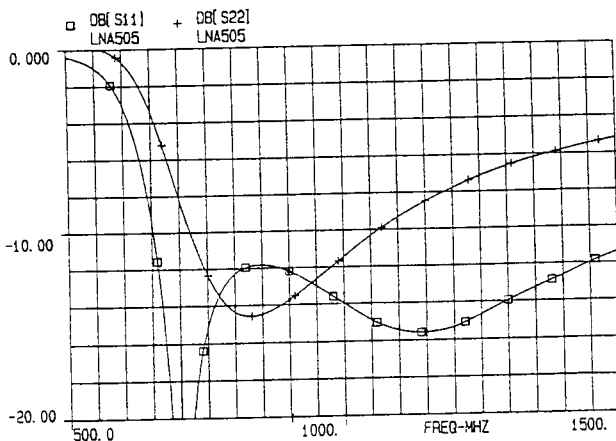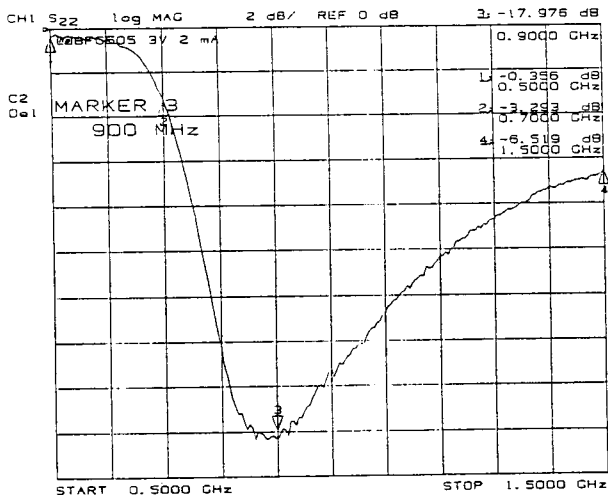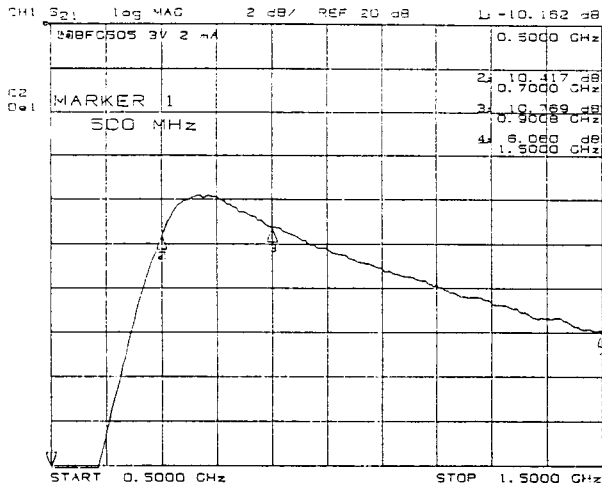
Fig.8 Measured
and simulated
gain.

DB[S21]
LNA505
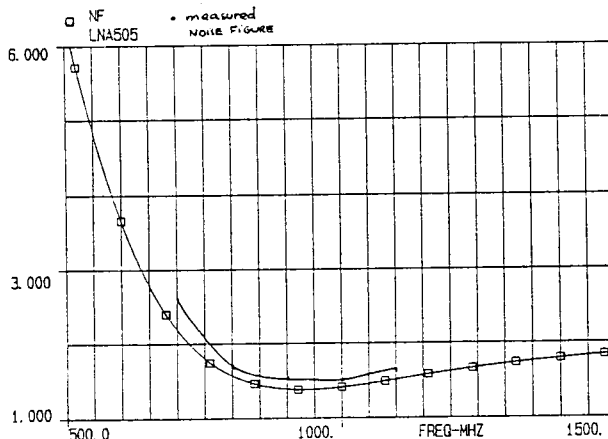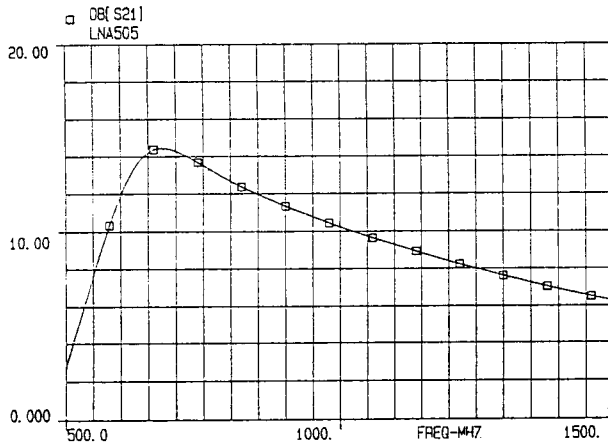
Fig.9 Measured
and simulated
Noise Figure

900 MHz low noise amplifier demoboard

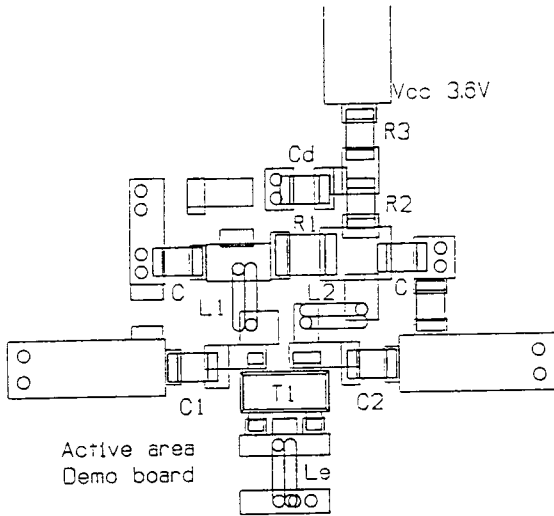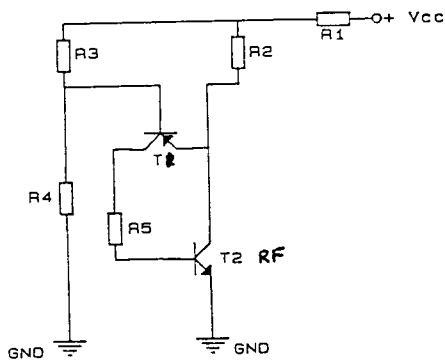<div align="right">Application report</div>

Fig. 10 Active Area Demoboard

Fig. 11 schematic diagram biasing circuit