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November 10, 2011 | Nick Flaherty | 222910005



Plessey Semiconductors has developed a version of its Electric Potential Integrated Circuit (EPIC) sensor specifically tailored to detect movement for security, switching and gaming applications. By detecting changes in the electric field the EPIC sensor provides an output to a relay to act as a simple non-touch electric switch.

The \$1 sensor can be used in both proximity mode or to detect specific kinds of movement as a limited gesture recognition device. As the EPIC sensor does not need line of sight and can even detect movement through walls, it can also be used to replace, or as an adjunct to, a passive infra-red (PIR) sensor in a variety of applications including security motion detectors.

Samples of the sensor are now available, with the first products optimised for use as an ECG sensor and provide a resolution as good as or better than conventional electrodes. The latest EPIC sensor, part number PS25401, can be used in any electrical application as a simple switch including toys, electric appliances, smart lighting, gaming and security. This family of EPIC sensors has been engineered for higher volume applications allowing volume prices for the chip solution of around one-dollar US.

"We have been inundated with demand for samples of the EPIC sensor and have had our first design wins in ECG products for the health monitoring markets," said Derek Rye, Plessey Marketing Director. "We have also been working with a number of companies on movement sensing and gesture recognition applications. We believe we have an opportunity for some early revenue based on designs for proximity non-touch switches for consumer products."

"We have optimised the base layout of the EPIC sensor chip such that discrete movements of the human body can be detected, with a range of up to several metres," said Dr Keith Strickland, Plessey Technology Director. "For example, the sensor can be configured to detect the proximity of a hand or to detect specific hand motions depending on the chip variant and the appropriate selection of circuit components external to the EPIC sensor. Whilst these first applications for individual sensors are quite simple, they are paving the way for the next generation of sensor array devices that will change the way we address more sophisticated applications like writing on tablets and smart phones, the remote control of televisions and controller-less gaming applications."

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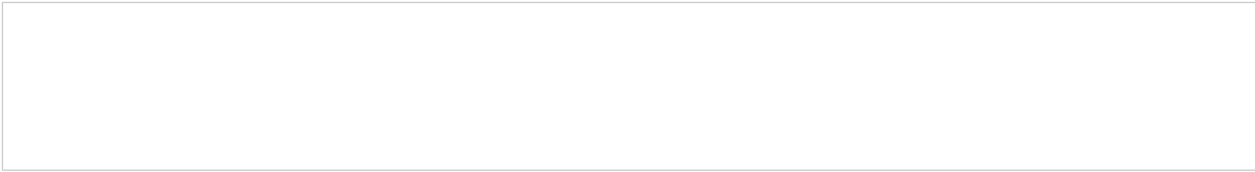
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