

Research article

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## CHANNEL SELECTION AT INPUT OF NARROWBAND DIRECT-CONVERSION RECEIVER BASED ON CURRENT-DRIVEN PASSIVE MIXER

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**Abstract.** Some issues when applying a Miller  $N$ -path filter to narrowband direct-conversion receiver (DCR) based on current-driven passive mixer and solutions to mitigate those issues are presented. The small impedances of the parallel LC circuit of low noise amplifier (LNA) at high frequencies cause undesirable effects: conversion gain reduction, noise figure increase and non-linear effects of the switches. A commutated network with the addition of resistors  $R_{FB1}$  and  $R_{FB2}$  is proposed to reduce the influence of those undesirable effects. The receiver is designed in the frequency range from 2.4 GHz to 2.6 GHz with 0.18  $\mu\text{m}$  CMOS UMC technology. When applying the Miller  $N$ -path filter, although the conversion gain decreased by 3 dB and the noise figure increased by 1 dB, the in-band linearity ( $P_{1dB}$  and IIP3) of the DCR increased by 6–9 dB compared to the DCR without the Miller  $N$ -path filter.

**Keywords:** narrowband direct-conversion receiver, current-driven passive mixer, Miller  $N$ -path filter, channel selection, low noise amplifier, commutated network

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## КАНАЛЬНАЯ ФИЛЬТРАЦИЯ НА ВХОДЕ УЗКОПОЛОСНОГО ПРИЕМНИКА ПРЯМОГО ПРЕОБРАЗОВАНИЯ НА ОСНОВЕ ПАССИВНОГО СМЕСИТЕЛЯ С УПРАВЛЕНИЕМ ПО ТОКУ

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассмотрены некоторые проблемы, возникающие при применении  $N$ -канального фильтра Миллера в узкополосном приемнике прямого преобразования (ППП) на основе пассивного смесителя с управлением по току, а также методы устранения этих проблем. Малые импедансы параллельного LC-контура малошумящего усилителя (МШУ) на высоких частотах приводят к таким нежелательным последствиям, как снижение коэффициента передачи, увеличение коэффициента шума и нелинейные эффекты в переключателях. Для уменьшения влияния этих нежелательных последствий предлагается коммутируемая схема с добавлением резисторов  $R_{FB1}$  и  $R_{FB2}$ . Приемник предназначен для работы в диапазоне частот от 2,4 ГГц до 2,6 ГГц с использованием 0,18 мкм КМОП-технологии компании УМС. При применении  $N$ -канального фильтра Миллера, хотя коэффициент передачи снизился на 3 дБ, а коэффициент шума увеличился на 1 дБ, внутриполосная линейность ( $P_{1dB}$  и ИПЗ) ППП увеличилась на 6–9 дБ по сравнению с приемником без применения  $N$ -канального фильтра Миллера.

**Ключевые слова:** узкополосный приемник прямого преобразования, пассивный смеситель с управлением по току,  $N$ -канальный фильтр Миллера, канальная фильтрация, малошумящий усилитель, коммутируемая схема

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### Introduction

Current-driven passive mixer is a suitable choice for modern direct-conversion receivers (DCR), because it has low flicker noise and high linearity [1–8]. For narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer, to achieve the maximum conversion gain of the receiver, the coupling capacitor needs to be nearly resonant with the inductor at the load of the low noise amplifier (LNA) [9–11]. This resonance not only suppresses out-of-band interferers, but also eliminates noise at the harmonics of local oscillator (LO) frequency that are not down-converted to the baseband at the mixer output, significantly reducing the noise figure of the receiver.

However, the large conversion gain of the receiver reduces its linearity. In practice, the 1 dB compression point ( $P_{1dB}$ ) and input third-order intercept point (ИПЗ) of the receiver are in the ranges of  $-26$  dBm to  $-23$  dBm and  $-14$  dBm to  $-10$  dBm, respectively. With such a low level of linearity, the conversion gain of the receiver will be drastically reduced when receiving in-band interference of not very high power, such as  $-15$  dBm. To suppress in-band interferences the Miller  $N$ -path filter was used as a channel selection filter. In these papers, LNA is designed to work over a wide frequency range [12–16]. Therefore, its output impedance is a resistance. On the other hand, for narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer, the LNA loads a parallel LC circuit. Therefore, when applying a Miller  $N$ -path filter to this receiver, some issues appear, such as conversion gain reduction, noise figure increase and non-linear effects of switches.

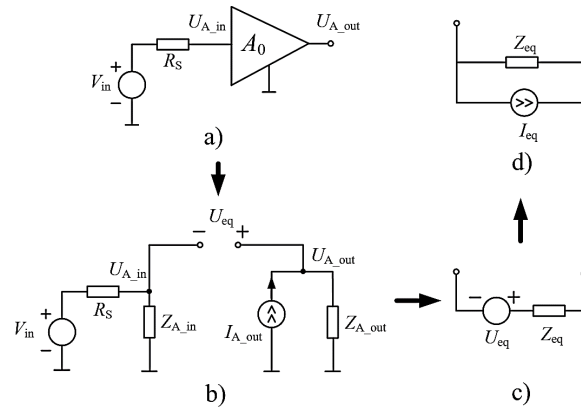


Fig. 1. LNA circuit with input source (a), equivalent circuit of LNA with input source (b), equivalent source between the input and output nodes of the LNA (Thevenin equivalent) (c, d)

This paper studies some issues when applying a Miller  $N$ -path filter to narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer and proposes solutions to mitigate those issues.

#### Some issues applying a Miller $N$ -path filter to narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer

When applying a Miller  $N$ -path filter to a narrowband DCR, it is necessary to connect a commutated network between the input and output nodes of the LNA as shown in [13]. Using Thevenin equivalent LNA together with input voltage source  $V_{in}(\omega)$  (Fig. 1a) and its impedance  $R_S = 50 \text{ Ohm}$  is equivalent to a circuit consisting of a voltage source  $U_{eq}(\omega)$  connected in series with impedance  $Z_{eq}(j\omega)$  (Fig. 1c) or a current source  $I_{eq}(\omega)$  in parallel with impedance  $Z_{eq}(j\omega)$  (Fig. 1d) calculated by the following formulas:

$$U_{eq}(\omega) = \frac{Z_{A\_in}(j\omega)V_{in}(\omega)[A_0(j\omega)-1]}{Z_{A\_in}(j\omega)+R_S},$$

$$Z_{eq}(j\omega) = \frac{Z_{A\_in}(j\omega)R_S[1-A_0(j\omega)]}{Z_{A\_in}(j\omega)+R_S} + Z_{A\_out}(j\omega), \quad (1)$$

$$I_{eq}(\omega) = \frac{U_{eq}(\omega)}{Z_{eq}(j\omega)},$$

where  $Z_{A\_in}(j\omega)$ ,  $Z_{A\_out}(j\omega)$  are input and output impedances of the LNA, respectively;  $A_0(j\omega)$  is the conversion gain of the LNA.

Then, when connecting the commutated network to the input and output nodes of the LNA, we obtain the circuit for the small-signal model in Fig. 2. Using the methodology presented in [17], the current  $I_{in1}(\omega)$  is calculated. Then, at  $0.8\omega_c < \omega < 1.2\omega_c$ , where  $\omega_c$  is the switching angular frequency, the voltage  $U_{eq1}(\omega)$  is calculated by the formula:

$$U_{eq1}(\omega) = [I_{eq}(\omega) - I_{in1}(\omega)]Z_{eq}(j\omega) =$$

$$= \left[ R_{SW} + Z_{CL}(j\omega) + \frac{c(\omega)Z_{eq}(j\omega)}{(1+g(\omega))Z(j\omega)} \right] \frac{I_{eq}(\omega)Z_{eq}(j\omega)}{Z(j\omega)} \approx \left[ R_{SW} + \frac{c(\omega)}{1+g(\omega)} \right] I_{eq}(\omega), \quad (2)$$

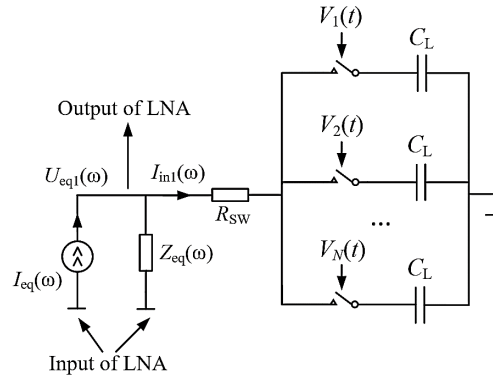


Fig. 2. Equivalent circuit for the small-signal model when connecting a commutated network to the input and output nodes of the LNA

$$\text{where } c(\omega) = \frac{N \sin\left(\left(\pi - \frac{\pi}{N}\right)\frac{\omega}{\omega_c}\right) \sin\left(\frac{\pi\omega}{N\omega_c}\right) Z_{CL}(j\omega_c)}{2\pi \sin\left(\left(\frac{\omega - \omega_c}{\omega_c}\right)\pi\right)}, \quad g(\omega) = \sum_{l=-\infty}^{+\infty} \frac{c(\omega)}{(1 + lN)^2 Z(j\omega + lNj\omega_c)},$$

$$Z(j\omega) = Z_{eq}(j\omega) + R_{SW} + Z_{CL}(j\omega) \approx Z_{eq}(j\omega), \quad Z_{CL}(j\omega) = \frac{1}{j\omega C_L}.$$

Firstly, let us consider the conversion gain reduction of the LNA. Now we calculate the output voltage  $|U_{eq1}(\omega)|$  of the LNA for the desired signal at the frequency  $\omega \approx \omega_c$ . In this case, the ratio  $(\omega - \omega_c)/\omega_c \approx 0$ , therefore  $|c(\omega)| \gg |Z_{eq}(j\omega)| \approx |Z(j\omega)|$ . Then formula (2) will take the form:

$$U_{eq1}(\omega) = \left[ R_{SW} + \frac{1}{\sum_{l=-\infty}^{+\infty} \frac{1}{(1 + lN)^2 Z_{eq}(j\omega + lNj\omega_c)}} \right] I_{eq}(\omega) \approx \frac{I_{eq}(\omega)}{\sum_{l=-\infty}^{+\infty} \frac{1}{(1 + lN)^2 Z_{eq}(j\omega + lNj\omega_c)}},$$

taking into account the following approximation:

$$R_{SW} \ll \left| \frac{1}{\sum_{l=-\infty}^{+\infty} \frac{1}{(1 + lN)^2 Z_{eq}(j\omega + lNj\omega_c)}} \right|.$$

As mentioned above [12–16],  $Z_{eq}(j\omega)$  is a resistor over a wide frequency range. Then we have:

$$U_{eq1}(\omega) = \frac{I_{eq}(\omega)}{\sum_{l=-\infty}^{+\infty} \frac{1}{(1 + lN)^2 Z_{eq}(j\omega + lNj\omega_c)}} \approx \frac{I_{eq}(\omega)}{1} = I_{eq}(\omega) Z_{eq}(j\omega) = U_{eq}(\omega).$$

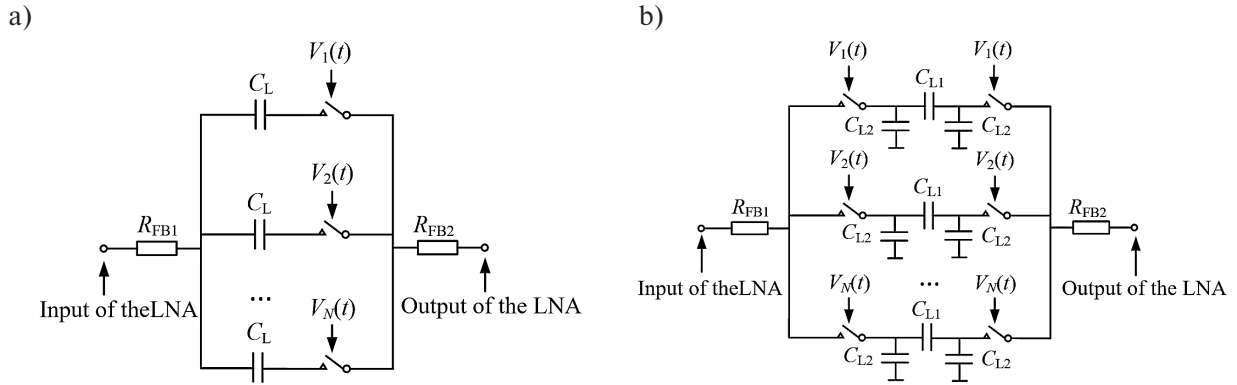


Fig. 3. Commutated network with resistors  $R_{FB1}$  and  $R_{FB2}$  (a); commutated network with increased filtering efficiency (b)

This means that the output voltage  $|U_{eq1}(\omega)|$  of the LNA with the commutated network for the desired signal at frequency  $\omega$  is approximately equal to the output voltage  $|U_{eq}(\omega)|$  of the LNA without the commutated network for the desired signal at frequency  $\omega$ . On the other hand, in a narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer,  $|A_0(j\omega)|$  and  $|Z_{A\_out}(j\omega)|$  are large only near the input frequency  $f_{in}$  and are very small at high frequencies due to the selectivity of the parallel LC circuit at the output of the LNA. Therefore, from (1) it is clear that  $|Z_{eq}(j\omega)|$  is large only near the input frequency  $f_{in}$  and is very small at high frequencies. Consequently, it is impossible to apply the following approximation:

$$U_{eq1}(\omega) = \frac{I_{eq}(\omega)}{\sum_{l=-\infty}^{+\infty} \frac{1}{(1+lN)^2 Z_{eq}(j\omega + lNj\omega_c)}} \approx \frac{I_{eq}(\omega)}{Z_{eq}(\omega)}$$

Then, small values of  $|Z_{eq}(j\omega + lNj\omega_c)|$  at high frequencies will significantly reduce  $|U_{eq1}(\omega)|$ . Consequently, the conversion gain of the LNA and receiver decreases.

Secondly, consider the noise figure increase of the LNA and receiver. Due to the conversion gain reduction of the LNA, the noise contribution of the LNA noise sources, the mixer, and subsequent stages will increase significantly, increasing the noise figure of the LNA and receiver.

Thirdly, when connecting transistors (switches) of the commutated network directly between the input and output nodes of the LNA, the voltage level at the transistor terminal is quite high, which causes nonlinear effects of the transistors.

### Solutions to mitigate indicated issues

The reason for the conversion gain reduction and the noise figure increase of the narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer is that  $|Z_{eq}(j\omega)|$  has very small values at high frequencies. To reduce these undesirable effects, it is necessary to increase  $|Z_{eq}(j\omega)|$  at high frequencies. For this purpose, resistors  $R_{FB1}$  and  $R_{FB2}$  are introduced, as shown in Fig. 3a. To further increase the filtering efficiency, a commutated network is used in [13], which is shown in Fig. 3b with the resistors  $R_{FB1}$  and  $R_{FB2}$ .

In addition, the resistor  $R_{FB2}$  isolates the terminal of the transistors (switches) of the commutated network from the output of the LNA, thereby reducing the voltage level at this terminal of the transistors and not causing nonlinear effects.

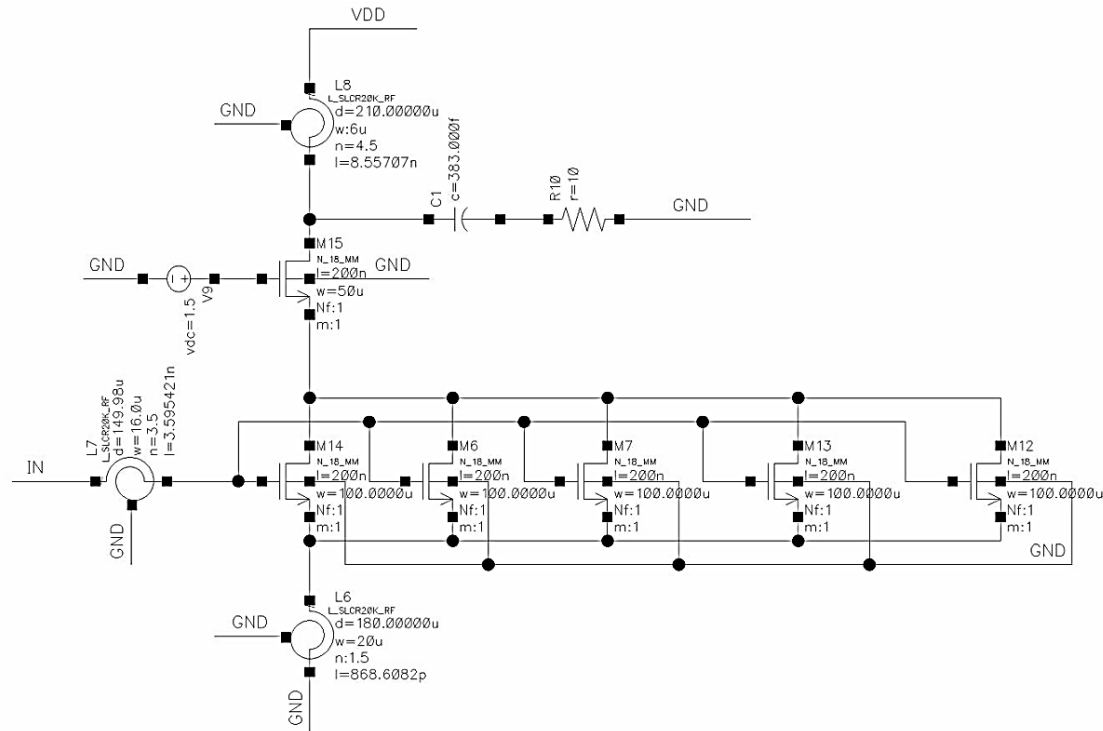


Fig. 4. The schematic of the LNA

### Design of narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer

The schematic of the narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer is presented in [9]. The receiver is designed in the frequency range from 2.4 GHz to 2.6 GHz (desired frequency band) with 0.18  $\mu\text{m}$  CMOS UMC technology. Fig. 4 shows the schematic of the LNA based on inductively-degenerated cascode common-source topology [18]. In this circuit,  $C$  is the coupling capacitor between the LNA and the mixer and is calculated using the method in [9]. The resistor  $R = 10$  Ohm at the output of the LNA is the input impedance of the subsequent stages: mixer and transimpedance amplifier (TIA). This resistance needs to be small enough to ensure the switches work in current mode and not worsen the quality factor of the inductor  $L$  of the LNA. In the desired frequency band, the performances of LNA according to simulation results are:  $|A_0| = 22.3$  dB; noise figure  $NF = 2.1$  dB; transconductance  $G = 77.5$  mA/V, which is determined by the ratio of the current flowing through the coupling capacitor  $C$  to the input voltage  $V_{in}$  of the LNA.

The schematic of the TIA is shown in Fig. 5. The TIA is designed using a common gate circuit to ensure its minimum input impedance. According to the simulation results, its input impedance is a parallel  $RC$ -circuit with  $R_{BB} = 82$  Ohm and  $C_{BB} = 20$  pF.

The width  $W_{mix}$  of the transistors (switches) of the current-driven passive mixer is chosen so that its resistance  $R_{SW}$  is small enough and its parasitic capacitance does not significantly reduce the conversion gain of the receiver. The optimal value is  $W_{mix} = 120$   $\mu\text{m}$  with “the number of fingers” being two. Then  $R_{SW} = 5$  Ohm.

### Simulation results when applying Miller $N$ -path filter

The LNA circuit with the commutated network in Fig. 3b when  $C_{L1} = C_{L2} = 2$  pF was simulated using the Cadence software platform for the 0.18  $\mu\text{m}$  CMOS UMC technology. For a fixed width  $W = 10$   $\mu\text{m}$  with “the number of fingers” being one of the switches, the dependence of the LNA performances on  $R_{FB1}$  and  $R_{FB2}$  is presented in Table 1.

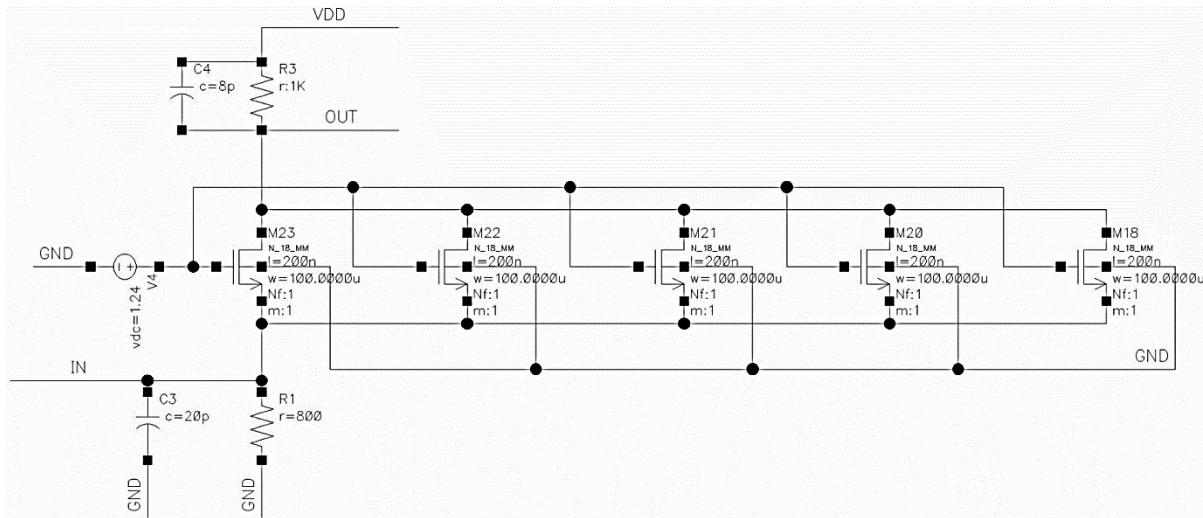


Fig. 5. Schematic of the TIA

Table 1

**Dependence of the LNA performances on  $R_{FB1}$  and  $R_{FB2}$**

$R_{FB1}$ , Ohm	0	50	100	200	200	300
$R_{FB2}$ , Ohm	0	150	300	400	600	700
$G$ , mA/V	32.1	52.2	58.8	60.9	63.5	64
$K_S$ , dB	16.8	11.2	7.9	6.3	5.2	4.3
$NF$ , dB	3.40	3.03	2.86	2.70	2.69	2.61

where  $K_S$  is the in-band interference suppression coefficient, which is determined by the ratio transconductance  $G$  of the LNA for the desired signal to  $G$  for in-band interference;  $NF$  is the noise figure of the LNA.

The simulation results in Table 1 show that when resistors  $R_{FB1}$  and  $R_{FB2}$  are absent, although high in-band interference suppression  $K_S = 16.8$  dB is achieved, the transconductance  $G$  and noise figure  $NF$  of the LNA are deteriorated by 7.7 dB and 1.3 dB compared to the case without the commutated network. With an increase in  $R_{FB1}$  and  $R_{FB2}$  causing  $|Z_{eq}(j\omega)|$  to increase at high frequencies, these deteriorations are reduced. For  $R_{FB1} = 200$  Ohm and  $R_{FB2} = 400$  Ohm, the dependence of the LNA performances on the width  $W$  with “the number of fingers” being one of the switches is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

**Dependence of LNA performances on the width  $W$  of the switches when  $R_{FB1} = 200$  Ohm and  $R_{FB2} = 400$  Ohm**

$W$ , $\mu\text{m}$	2	5	10	15	20	30
$G$ , mA/V	71	66.5	60.9	56.5	53	47.7
$K$ , dB	5.2	6.3	6.3	5.9	5.5	4.8
$NF$ , dB	2.34	2.52	2.70	2.85	2.97	3.17

The simulation results in Table 2 show that with increasing width  $W$  of the switches the transconductance  $G$  and noise figure  $NF$  of the LNA deteriorate due to the increase in the total parasitic capacitance of the switches. Since these parasitic capacitances reduce  $|Z_{A_{in}}(j\omega)|$  and  $|Z_{A_{out}}(j\omega)|$  (and consequently

$|Z_{eq}(j\omega)|$ ) at high frequencies. Based on the simulation result in Tables 1 and 2,  $W = 10 \mu\text{m}$  with “the number of fingers” being one,  $R_{FB1} = 200 \text{ Ohm}$  and  $R_{FB2} = 400 \text{ Ohm}$  are selected. In this case, the simulation results of the LNA show that although the conversion gain and the noise figure of the LNA are deteriorated by 2.1 dB and 0.6 dB, respectively, its linearity increased by 8–10 dB.

The narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer was simulated with  $R_{sw} = 5 \text{ Ohm}$  for two cases: with and without commutated network. Its performances are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

### Performances of DCR

	DRC with commutated network	DRC without commutated network
$K_G$ , dB	23.5	26.5
$NF$ , dB	3.42	2.45
$P_{1dB}$ , dBm	from $-14$ to $-10$	from $-20$ to $-18.5$
IIP3, dBm	from $-1$ to $+3$	from $-9$ to $-4$

where  $K_G$  is the conversion gain of the DRC, which is calculated by the ratio of the differential output voltage of DRC to its input voltage.

The simulation results in Table 3 indicate that when using commutated network (applying Miller  $N$ -path filter), although the conversion gain  $K_G$  decreased by 3 dB and the noise figure  $NF$  increased by 1 dB, the in-band linearity ( $P_{1dB}$  and IIP3) of the DRC increased by 6–9 dB compared to the DRC without commutated network.

### Conclusion

The issues when applying a Miller  $N$ -path filter to narrowband DCR based on current-driven passive mixer are considered: conversion gain reduction, noise figure increase and non-linear effects of switches. The reason for these issues lies in the small impedances of the parallel LC circuit at high frequencies. Due to these imperfections, when using the commutated network, the conversion gain and the noise figure of the LNA are deteriorated by 7.7 dB and 1.3 dB, respectively. A commutated network with the addition of resistors  $R_{FB1}$  and  $R_{FB2}$  is proposed to reduce the influence of imperfections. Based on the simulation result,  $W = 10 \mu\text{m}$  with “the number of fingers” being one,  $R_{FB1} = 200 \text{ Ohm}$  and  $R_{FB2} = 400 \text{ Ohm}$  are selected. When using commutated network, although the conversion gain decreased by 3 dB and the noise figure increased by 1 dB, the in-band linearity ( $P_{1dB}$  and IIP3) of the DRC increased by 6–9 dB compared to the DRC without commutated network.

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