INTRODUCTION

Two low-cost integrated circuits can be combined to create a simple digital frequency meter. The combination of a frequency-to-voltage converter (FVC) and a dual-slope, analog-to-digital display converter (ADC) makes a small 2-chip frequency meter that can be run from one 9-volt battery.

The ADC (TC7136) generates the voltage required by the FVC (TC9400) with internal regulators. The TEST output of the TC7136 is regulated to 5 volts below the positive battery terminal (V+) and the ANALOG COMMON output is regulated to 3V below V+. The TC7136 is designed to directly drive a 3-1/2 digit, non-multiplexed LCD display so no digital conversion is required.

The test voltage is used as the reference supply for the TC9400 and ANALOG COMMON serves as the "ground" for the comparator and the integrating amplifier.

TC7136 ANALOG-TO-DIGITAL CONVERTER

The TC7136 will have a maximum positive input of about 2V since the input is referenced to ANALOG COMMON which is only 3V below V+. The internal voltage swing of the integrator does not have the same limitation because a positive input results in a negative swing of the integration. A fully charged battery will give a range of about 6V. The integration components (R4 and C6) are selected, in conjunction with the oscillator frequency to have an integrator ramp amplitude of about –3V with a 2V input from the TC9400.

The oscillator is set up to run at 48kHz (R3 and C2) for maximum rejection of stray power-line pickup. This will result in the TC7136 running at 3 conversions per second.

TC9400 FREQUENCY-TO-VOLTAGE CONVERTER

The "non-standard" voltages or the TC9400 require some creativity be used in setting up the range for the frequency-to-voltage mode.

The gain (VOUT vs. FREQIN) of the TC9400 is determined by the charge-balance capacitor (C9) and the integrator feedback resistor (R10) which have been selected for an output of approximately +2V (referenced to ANALOG COMMON) with frequency input of 20kHz. The bias resistor (R9) determined the input threshold of the comparator and has been selected fro an input sensitivity range of 250mV to 10V pk-pk of a sine or square wave on the input of the FVC.

The input circuit is made up of a current limit resistor (R6), a DC blocking capacitor (C7), a clamping diode (D1), and a biasing resistor (R1). The diode acts as a soft clamp to prevent negative going transitions from latching the comparator input. R6 limits the current during the positive transitions.
FIGURE 3: Schematic: battery powered frequency meter (0 to 20kHz).
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WORLDWIDE SALES AND SERVICE

AMERICAS
Corporate Office
2335 West Chandler Blvd.
Chandler, AZ 85224-6199
Tel: 480-792-7200 Fax: 480-792-7277
Technical Support: 480-792-7627
Web Address: http://www.microchip.com

Rocky Mountain
2335 West Chandler Blvd.
Chandler, AZ 85224-6199
Tel: 480-792-7966 Fax: 480-792-7456

Atlanta
500 Sugar Mill Road, Suite 200B
Atlanta, GA 30350
Tel: 770-640-0034 Fax: 770-640-0307

Austin - Analog
13740 North Highway 183
Building J, Suite 4
Austin, TX 78750
Tel: 512-257-3370 Fax: 512-257-8526

Boston
2 Lan Drive, Suite 120
Westford, MA 01886
Tel: 978-692-3848 Fax: 978-692-3821

Dallas
4570 Westgrove Drive, Suite 160
Addison, TX 75001
Tel: 972-818-7423 Fax: 972-818-2924

Dayton
Two Prestige Place, Suite 130
Miamisburg, OH 45342
Tel: 937-291-1654 Fax: 937-291-9175

Detroit
Tri-Arco Office Building
32255 Northwestern Highway, Suite 190
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
Tel: 248-538-2250 Fax: 248-538-2260

Los Angeles
18201 Von Karman, Suite 1090
Irvine, CA 92812
Tel: 949-263-1888 Fax: 949-263-1338

New York
150 Motor Parkway, Suite 202
Hauppauge, NY 11788
Tel: 631-273-5305 Fax: 631-273-5335

San Jose
Microchip Technology Inc.
2107 North First Street, Suite 590
San Jose, CA 95131
Tel: 408-436-7950 Fax: 408-436-7955

Toronto
6285 Northam Drive, Suite 108
Mississauga, Ontario L4V 1X5, Canada
Tel: 905-673-0699 Fax: 905-673-6599

ASIA/PACIFIC

Australia
Microchip Technology Australia Pty Ltd
Suite 22, 41 Rawson Street
Epping 2121, NSW
Australia
Tel: 61-2-9868-6733 Fax: 61-2-9868-6755

China - Beijing
Microchip Technology Consulting (Shanghai) Co., Ltd., Beijing Liaison Office
Unit 915
Bei Hai Wan Tai Bldg.
No. 6 Chaoyangmen Beidajie
Beijing, 100027, No. China
Tel: 86-10-85282100 Fax: 86-10-85282104

China - Chengdu
Microchip Technology Consulting (Shanghai) Co., Ltd., Chengdu Liaison Office
Rm. 2401, 24th Floor,
Ming Xing Financial Tower
No. 88 TIDU Street
Chengdu 610016, China
Tel: 86-28-6766200 Fax: 86-28-6766599

China - Fuzhou
Microchip Technology Consulting (Shanghai) Co., Ltd., Fuzhou Liaison Office
Rm. 531, North Building
Fujian Foreign Trade Center Hotel
73 Wusi Road
Fuzhou 350001, China
Tel: 86-591-7557563 Fax: 86-591-7557572

China - Shanghai
Microchip Technology Consulting (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.
Room 701, Bldg. B
Far East International Plaza
No. 317 Xian Xia Road
Shanghai, 200051
Tel: 86-21-6275-5700 Fax: 86-21-6275-5060

China - Shenzhen
Microchip Technology Consulting (Shanghai) Co., Ltd., Shenzhen Liaison Office
Rm. 1315, 13/F., Shenzhen Kerry Centre,
Renninan Lu
Shenzhen 518001, China
Tel: 86-755-2350361 Fax: 86-755-2366086

Hong Kong
Microchip Technology Hong Kong Ltd.
Unit 901-6, Tower 2, Metropolis
223 Hing Fong Road
Kwai Fong, N.T., Hong Kong
Tel: 852-2401-1200 Fax: 852-2401-3431

India
Microchip Technology Inc.
India Liaison Office
Divyasree Chambers
1 Floor, Wing A (A3/A4)
No. 11, C. G. Raman Bldg.
Bangalore, 560 025, India
Tel: 91-80-2290061 Fax: 91-80-2290062

Japan
Microchip Technology Japan K.K.
Benex S-1 6F
3-18-20, Shin-Yokohama
Kohoku-Ku, Yokohama-shi
Katagawa, 222-0033, Japan
Tel: 81-45-471-6166 Fax: 81-45-471-6122

Korea
Microchip Technology Korea
168-1, Youngbo Bldg. 3 Floor
Samsung-Dong, Kangnam-Ku
Seoul, Korea 135-882
Tel: 82-2-554-7200 Fax: 82-2-558-5934

Singapore
Microchip Technology Singapore Pte Ltd.
200 Middle Road
#07-02 Prime Centre
Singapore, 188980
Tel: 65-334-8870 Fax: 65-334-8850

Taiwan
Microchip Technology Taiwan
11F-3, No. 207
Tung Hua North Road
Taipei, 105, Taiwan
Tel: 886-2-2717-7175 Fax: 886-2-2545-0139

EUROPE

Denmark
Microchip Technology Denmark ApS
Regus Business Centre
Lastrup høj 1-3
Ballerup DK-2750 Denmark
Tel: 45 4420 9895 Fax: 45 4420 9910

France
Arizona Microchip Technology SARL
Parc d’Activité du Moulin de Massy
43 Rue du Saule Trapu
Batiment A - ler Etage
91300 Massy, France
Tel: 33-1-69-53-63-20 Fax: 33-1-69-30-90-79

Germany
Arizona Microchip Technology GmbH
Gustav-Heinemann-Ring 125
D-81739 Munich, Germany
Tel: 49-89-627-144 0 Fax: 49-89-627-144-44

Germany - Analog
Lochhamer Strasse 13
D-82152 Martinsried, Germany
Tel: 49-89-895650-0 Fax: 49-89-895650-22

Italy
Arizona Microchip Technology SRL
Centro Direzionale Colonne
Piazza Taurus I V. Le Colonne 1
20041 Agrate Brianza
Milan, Italy
Tel: 39-039-65791-1 Fax: 39-039-6899883

United Kingdom
Arizona Microchip Technology Ltd.
505 Eskdale Road
Winnersh Triangle
Wokingham
Berksire, England RG4 1ST
Tel: 44 118 921 5869 Fax: 44-118 921-5820

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