Schematic and Layout Design Simulation Using Cadence Spectre

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The Cadence suite integrates various tools for schematic capture, simulation, layout, and post-layout verification, specifically tailored for analog design workflows and capable of handling a large number of devices. In this tutorial, Composer is utilized for schematic entry and test bench creation. The Analog Design Environment (ADE) is then configured to run simulations using Spectre, a powerful circuit simulator renowned for its accuracy and efficiency in analog and mixed-signal simulations.

Spectre performs detailed analysis by solving the circuit equations across a wide range of operating conditions, allowing for precise characterization of circuit behavior. It is particularly effective for tasks such as transient analysis, DC operating point analysis, and AC small-signal analysis, providing valuable insights into the circuit's performance.

The process detailed in this tutorial includes capturing the schematic of a CMOS inverter, creating its corresponding symbol, and setting up a test bench to evaluate its performance. Device models for the FETs are crafted using a text editor, after which simulations are configured and executed in ADE with Spectre, and results are plotted for analysis. To use a circuit simulator effectively, a thorough understanding of the circuit is essential. The simulator excels in handling numerous operating points but does not inherently grasp the circuit's behavior. Thus, it is crucial to interpret simulation data to identify trends and insights, rather than expecting exact matches to manual calculations.

This document aims to equip users with practical skills and insights for leveraging Cadence tools in circuit design and simulation. Additionally, the Calibre tool is employed for Design Rule Checking (DRC), Layout Versus Schematic (LVS) verification, and parasitic extraction, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the design.

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Simulation with Spectre

Spectre is a highly-regarded SPICE-class circuit simulator developed and distributed by Cadence Design Systems, a leader in electronic design automation. It offers a comprehensive suite of fundamental SPICE analyses and supports a wide range of component models. Additionally, Spectre is compatible with the Verilog-A modeling language, providing flexibility for advanced circuit modeling. With Spectre, engineers can perform a variety of detailed circuit analyses, including DC, AC, Transient, and Noise Analysis, enabling precise evaluation of circuit performance.

Here are some key points about using Spectre in Cadence:

1. **Setting Up Your Environment**:
   - **Create a New Library and Cell**: Start by creating a new library and cell in Cadence Virtuoso.
   - **Draw the Schematic**: Use the Virtuoso Schematic Editor to draw your circuit.
2. **Configuring the Simulation**:
   - **Add Simulation Parameters**: Set up the simulation parameters such as analysis type (e.g., DC, AC, transient).
   - **Include Models**: Ensure that the correct device models are included in your simulation setup.
3. **Running the Simulation**:
   - **Launch Spectre**: Use the Analog Design Environment (ADE) to configure and run the Spectre simulation.
   - **Analyze Results**: After the simulation, use the waveform viewer to analyze the results.

Start:

Start the Cadence Document Server from the command line by typing:

```
cdsdoc &
```

Alternatively, you can use:

```
source /path/to/your/eda-tools/tower.sh   > virtuoso
```

- Note: Replace **`/path/to/your/eda-tools/`** with the actual path where your EDA tools are installed. Ensure that **`virtuoso`** is the command that starts Cadence in your environment.

In the Command Interface Window (CIW), follow these steps to create a library for our Cadence work.:

- Click on **`Files > New > Library`**.
- Change to directory **`~/cds/libs`**. If necessary, create it in unix.
- Choose a library name.
- Click OK.

Create the Inverter Schematic and Symbols

➢ *Schematic*

- Click on **`Tools`** in the menu.
- Select **`Library Manager`**.
- Go to **`File > New > CellView.`**
- Enter the desired **`name`** for the new cell view.

❖ Note: Cadence has many keyboard shortcuts. Some useful commands for later use include:

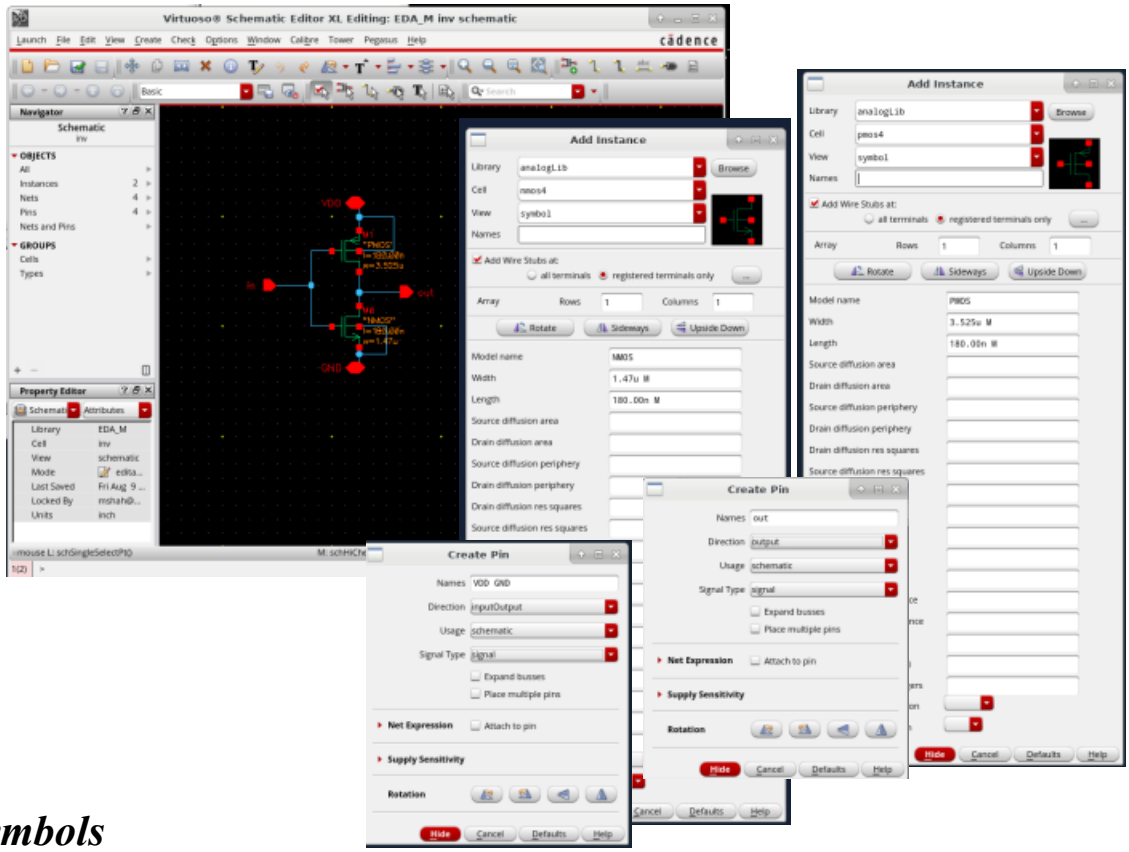
- **`i (instantiate)`**: Creates a new object in the schematic.
- **`p (pin)`**: Creates pins to allow signals to leave the schematic.
- **`c (copy)`**: Copies objects.
- **`m (move)`**: Moves objects and drags their wiring with them. Use a lowercase 'm' for this action.
- **`M (Move)`**: Moves objects after disconnecting their wires. Use an uppercase 'M' for this action.
- **`l (label)`**: Creates labels for wires to avoid default names.
- **`q (query)`**: Opens a dialog box showing object properties.
- **`w (wire)`**: Creates wires. Type 'w', left-click to start a wire, left-click to make a corner, and double left-click to end the wire.

some commands, such as copy, move, and wire, have additional options available through dialog boxes. Press **`(F3)`** to display these dialog boxes. Additionally, Cadence commands use the bottom line of the window as an information bar. To create the inverter schematic, follow these steps:

- Press **`i`** to initiate the process.
- Click on **`Browse`**. Navigate to the **`analogLib`** library and select the **`nmos4`** cell. Click on the **`symbol view`**, then click **`Close`**. The **`nmos4`** is a 4-terminal device, meaning the bulk/well terminal is explicitly shown on the symbol.
- A form will appear displaying all the options for the **`nmos4`**.

In the same way, the process is repeated for PMOS, and the table is filled according to the target technology, which in this case is 180nm.

- Press **p** to initiate the process for the **VDD** and **GND** pins, setting them as inputOutput, and for the **in** and **out** pins as input and output, respectively.
- Press **w** to create wires to wire everything together.
- If you later want to inspect or modify those values of a device, select the device and press **`(q)`**. This action opens the **`Edit Instance Properties`** window, where the parameters of the device can be adjusted as needed.
- To save the schematic, press **X**. The inverter schematic is now complete.

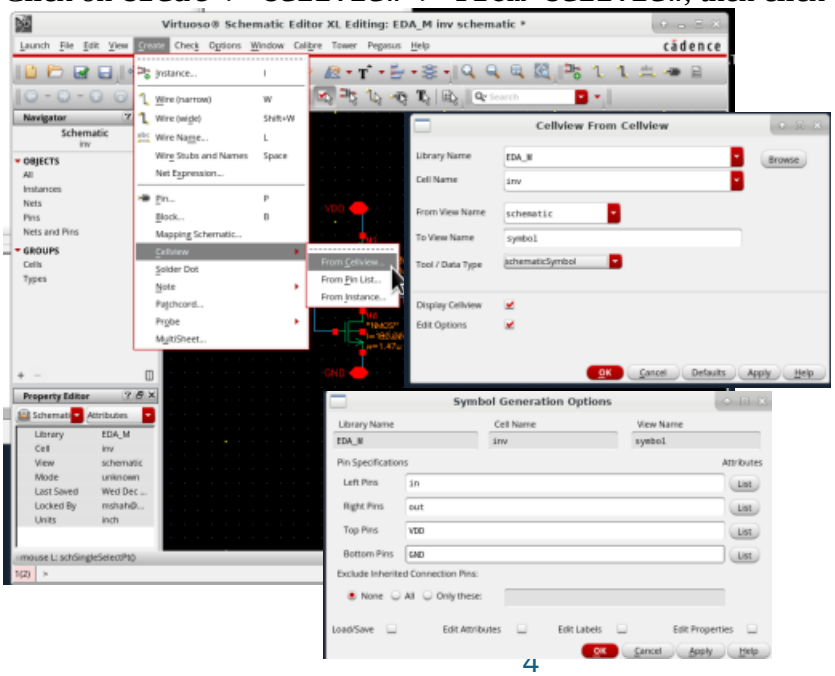


➢ *Symbols*

A symbol will be created to allow the inverter to be instantiated in other schematics without copying the entire schematic each time.

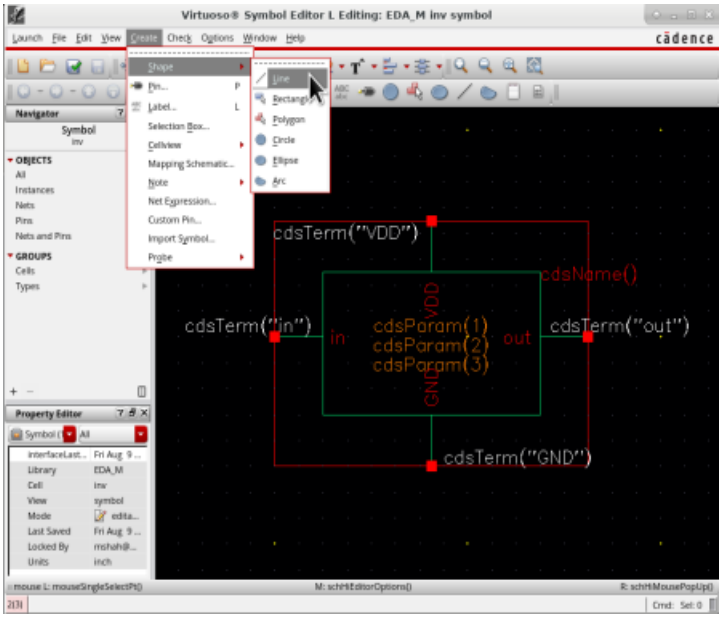
To proceed, follow these steps:

- Click on **`Creat > Cellview > From Cellview`**, then click OK.

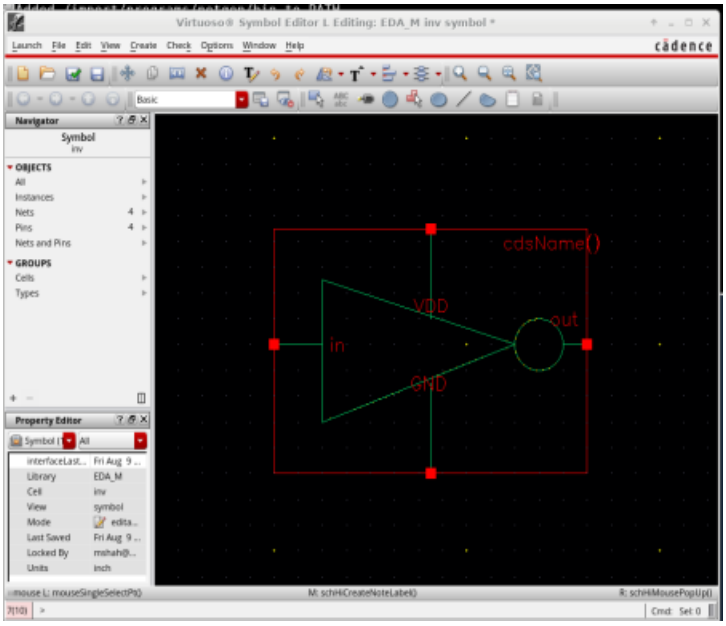


A symbol editor window will now open. The default symbol is sufficient, but if enhancement is desired, use the following commands:

- **`Create > Shape > Polygon`**
- **`Create > Shape > Line`**
- **`Create > Shape > Circle`**



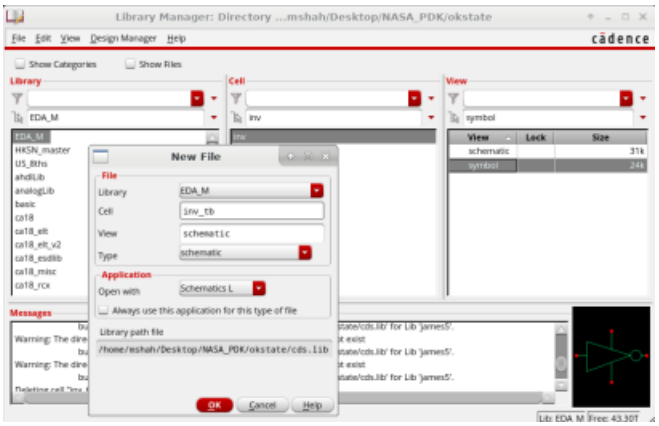
To create the symbol shown below, the original green box will need to be deleted. To do this, grab the edge, stretch it, click in the middle, and then delete it.Keep in mind the red bounding box defines the clickable area in higher-level schematics for selecting your inverter, so be careful not to delete it. Ensure the symbol is saved before exiting.



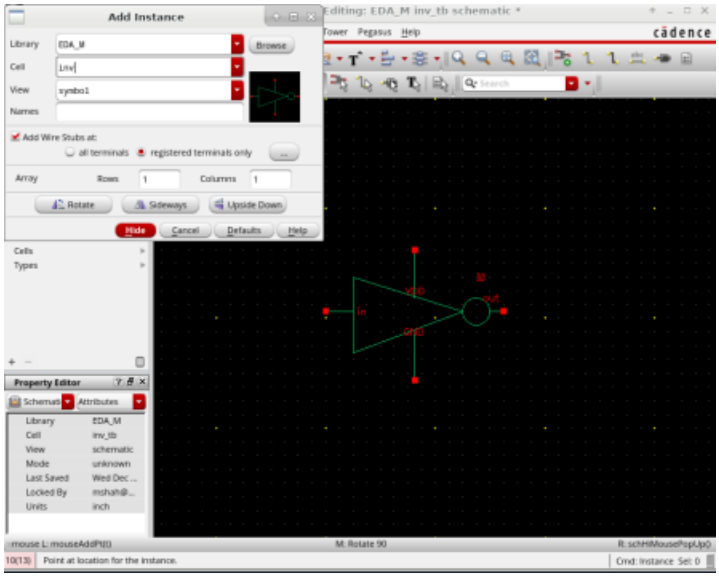
Create Test Bench

Now, it's time to test the inverter by creating a test bench to measure its DC transfer curve. For this, the necessary components need to be set up: a VDD supply for the inverter, an input signal, and an appropriate output load.

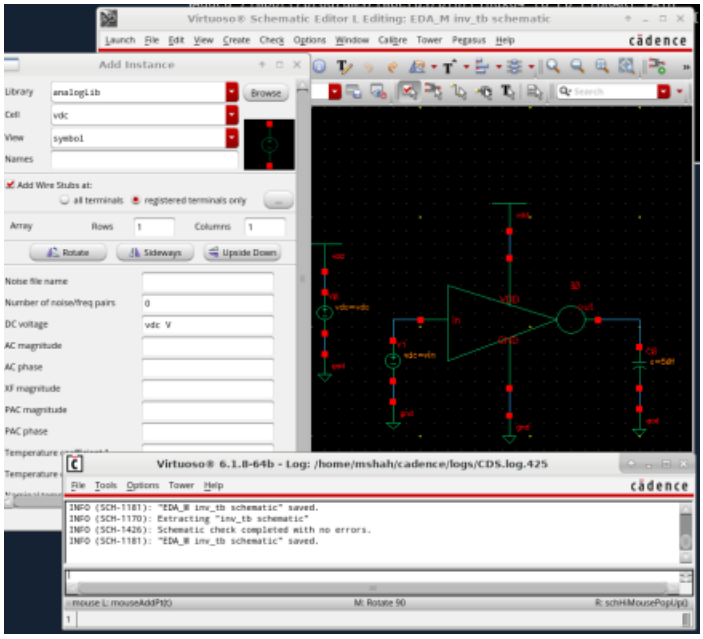
- Create a schematic named **`test_inverter or (inv_tb)`** within our library. In the Window (CIW), Click on **`Files > New > CellView`**



- In the Schematic Window, press **`(i)`**. Instead of working with analog parts, go to the library that we just created, then navigate to the cell where we made a symbol, and place this symbol inside the schematic.

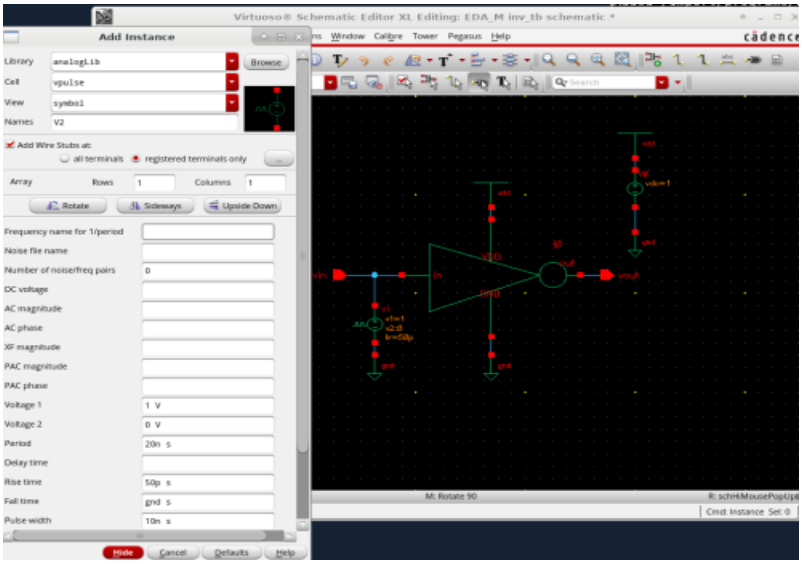


- Use **`(q)`** to set the voltage of the power supply to **`vdc`**, the input supply to **`vin`**, and the load capacitor to the appropriate value. Setting the power supply and input supply to the variables **`vdc`** and **`vin`** means that they will be configured in the simulator. This is a powerful technique to simulate many scenarios without changing your schematic each time. It can be used with most fields of most symbols.



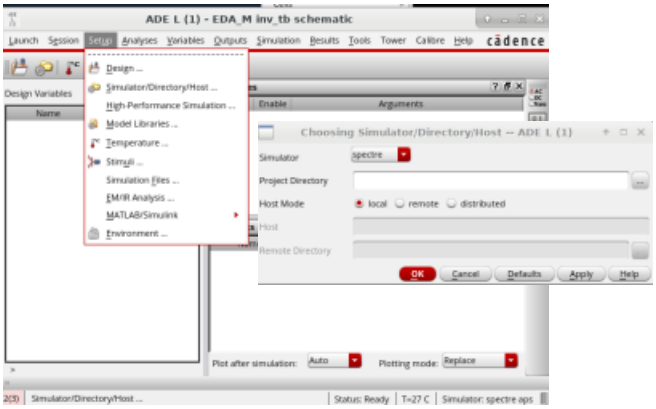
- To create a pulse input, set the input signal parameters by selecting the instance and pressing **`(q)`**. In the **`'Voltage 1'`** and **`'Voltage 2'`** fields, input the desired low and high voltage levels for the pulse. Set the **`'Rise Time'`**, **`'Fall Time'`**, **`'Pulse Width'`**, and **`'Period'`** to define the shape and timing of the pulse. This setup will allow you to generate a time-varying input signal for your simulation.
- Label the wires using the **`(l)`** command, if needed.
- Check and save **`(x)`**.

Additionally, note that Cadence's built-in scripting language, Skill, allows defining complex equations and automating processes, providing significant flexibility in simulations.Once completed, the schematic should resemble the example provided.

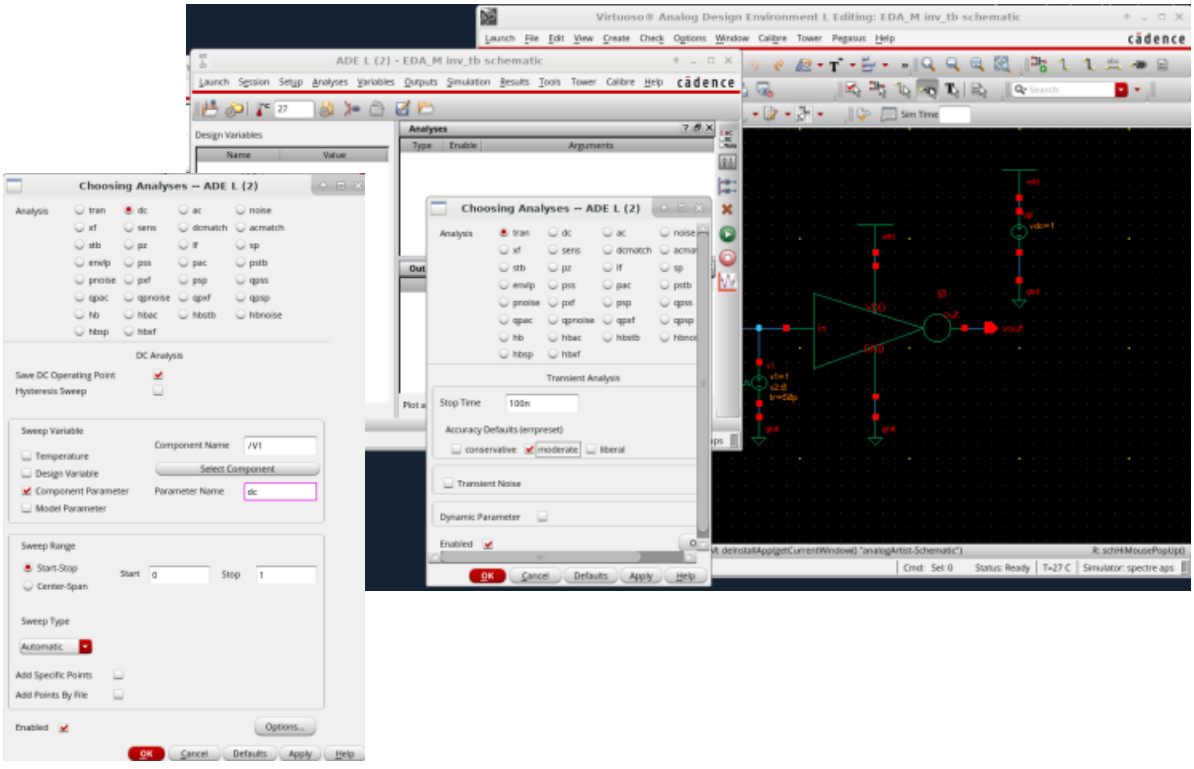


Running Simulations with Spectre

Now, to simulate using **`Spectre`**, select **`Setup`** to configure your simulation environment. Under **`Setup`**, configure the necessary parameters such as analysis type, output variables, and any additional settings required for your simulation. After configuring, run the simulation and then use the **`Results`** tab to plot the output signal and analyze the performance of your circuit



- Click **`Launch > ADE L > Setup > Simulator > Spectre > Apply`**
- Click **`Setup > Temperature`** and change the temperature to **`25 degrees >`** OK.



- right-click on the **`Analyses`** window and select **`Edit.(or Analyses > choose)`**
- Click on **`tran`**, select **`moderate`**, and then click **`Apply`**. You should see one analysis loaded.

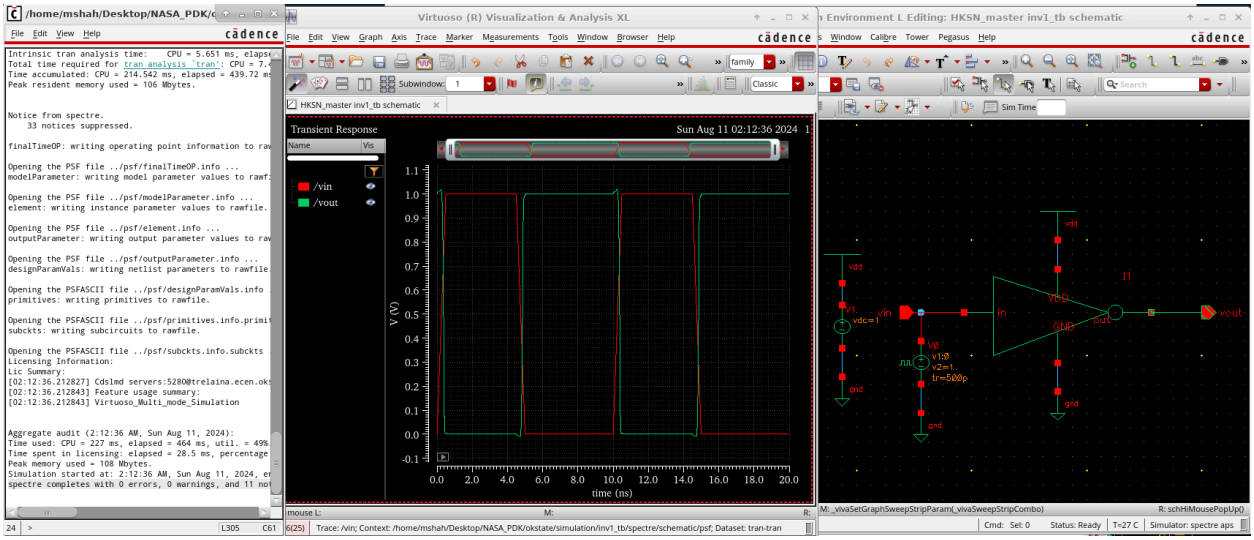
Next, we will set up a DC simulation where the input voltage is swept from 0 to 5 volts.

- Click on **dc**, check **Save DC Operating Point**, then go to **Component Parameter** and click **Select Component**.
- Manually create the Netlist. You usually only need to do this step if something odd is happening or you need to hand tweak the netlist. Click **Simulation > Netlist > Create**. Look at the netlist. (If you are happy with your simulation setup then save it.)
- Click **output > to be plotted > select on schematic.(vin,vout)**
- Click **Simulation > Netlist and Run**. Or Click the green stoplight.

Transient Analysis (tran): This type of analysis is used to examine the time-dependent behavior of a circuit. In other words, it shows how the circuit responds to a time-varying input (such as a pulse or a sinusoidal signal). Transient analysis helps you observe the circuit's behavior over time and see how voltages and currents change at every moment.

DC Analysis (dc): This analysis is used to examine the operating points and the circuit's behavior in a steady state. For example, DC analysis allows you to check the voltages and currents in the circuit under fixed DC conditions (such as a DC power supply). It's also used to evaluate the operating parameters of components (like transistors) at different operating points.

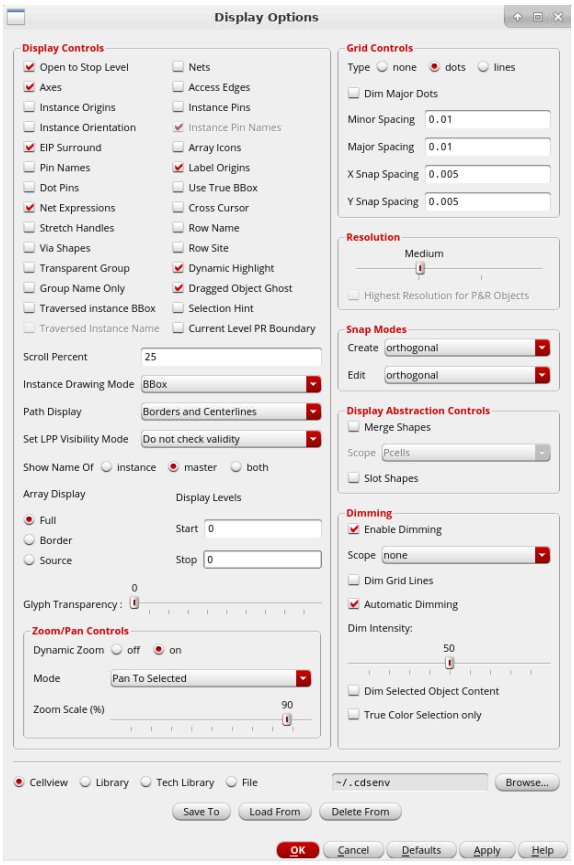
Combining these two types of analysis allows you to examine both the transient behavior of the circuit and its behavior under fixed DC conditions, providing important and complementary information about the overall performance of the circuit.



Create the Inverter Layout

In the schematic window, select **Launch > Layout** to begin designing the layout for the inverter. Choose the option to create a new layout automatically, or manually create a new one, then press **OK** to open the layout window.

Once the layout window is open, this is where the design process begins. Before starting, it is important to adjust the grid snapping resolution, which controls how the mouse snaps from one grid point to another. To set the resolution, press **(e)** or navigate to **`Options > Display`**. Set the **`X Snap Spacing`** and **`Y Snap Spacing`** to 0.005 for finer control, and press **OK** to confirm.



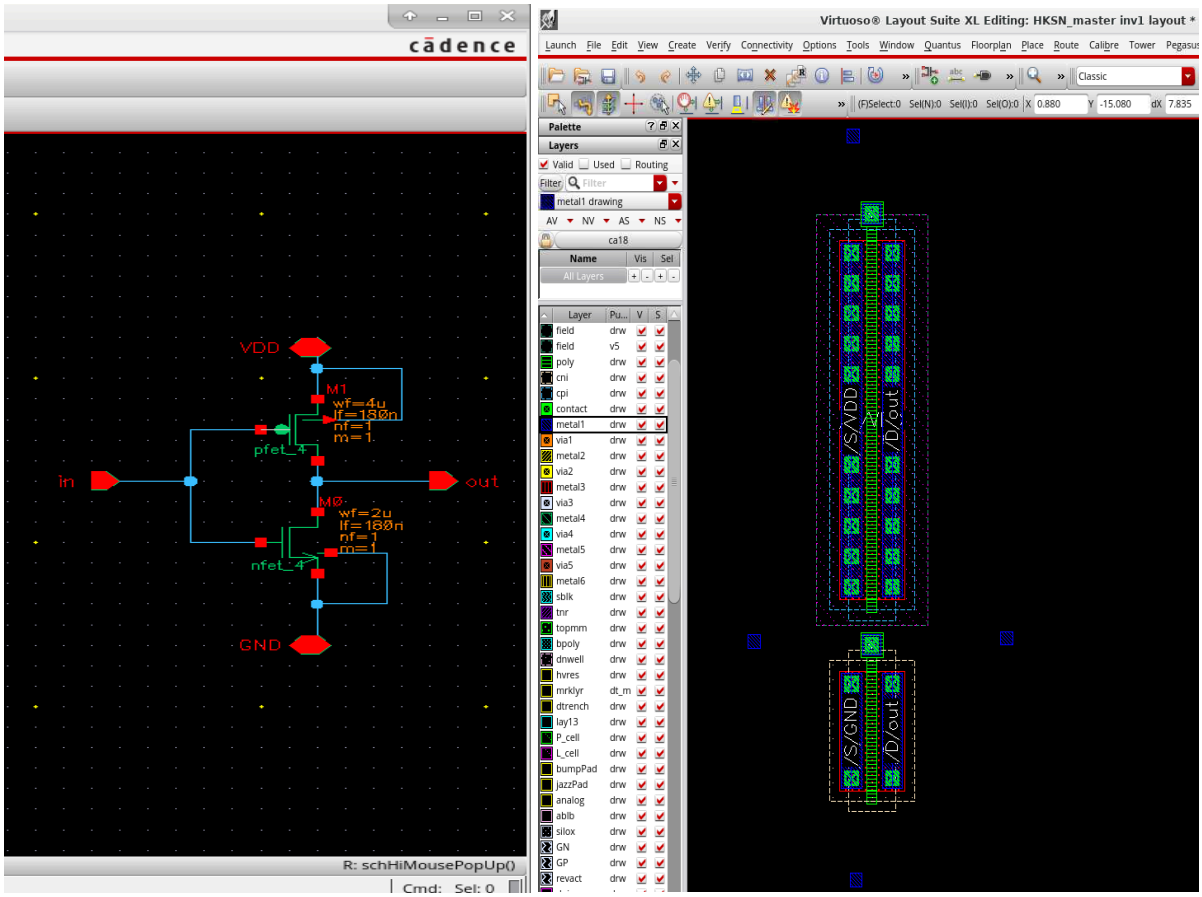
In the layout window, **`Connectivity > Generate > All From Source`** command in is used. This command ensures that connections and details designed in the schematic are automatically reflected in the layout. It generates pins, connections, and other related elements directly from the schematic to the layout.

The main advantages of using this command include:

- **Automatic Information Transfer:** Pins and connections defined in the schematic are seamlessly transferred to the layout, reducing the risk of manual errors.
- **Schematic-Layout Synchronization:** Ensures that the layout stays in sync with the schematic, reflecting any changes made and preventing issues in later design stages.
- **Time Efficiency:** Significantly reduces the time required for layout design by automating many steps.
- **Error Prevention:** Lowers the chances of DRC (Design Rule Check) and LVS (Layout vs. Schematic) errors by ensuring that the layout is correctly generated from the schematic.

These commands are essential for precise and efficient synchronization between schematic and layout, optimizing the design process.

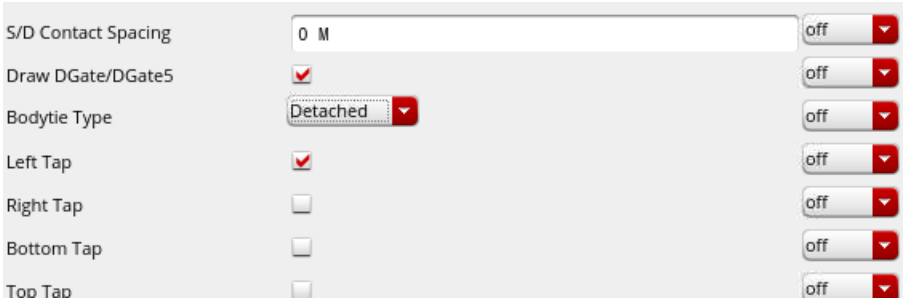
If the placed devices are not immediately visible, press **`Shift + F`** to refresh the view and make the devices visible.



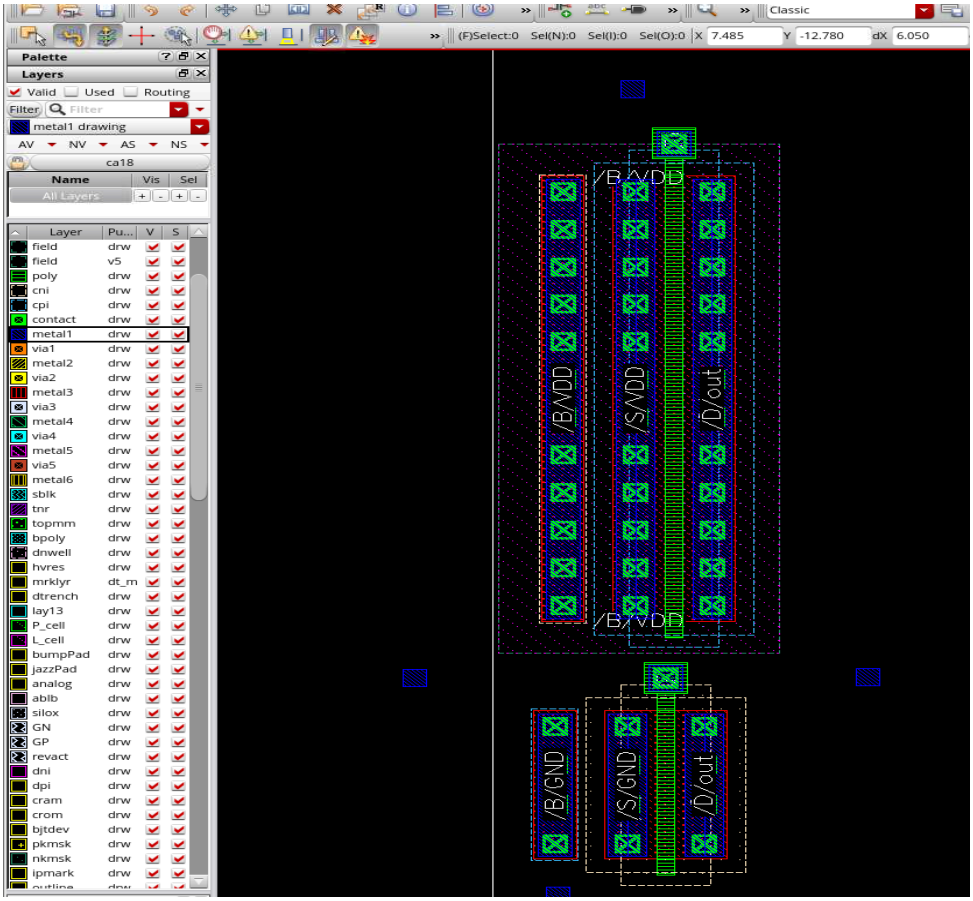
At this point, it's necessary to briefly return to the schematic window, select the transistor, press **`(q)`**, and change the **`Bodytie Type`** from "none" to "detached" if it's not already set. This adjustment is essential because, in MOSFETs, the body is typically connected to a reference potential to prevent unwanted effects.

- **`"none"`**: When this option is selected, the transistor's body is not connected to any reference potential. This setting is generally used in circuits where body connection isn't required or is managed externally in higher layers.

- **`"detached":`** Switching the body to "detached" allows for manual connection to a specific potential, such as ground or VDD, enhancing transistor performance and mitigating unwanted effects like leakage currents. Ultimately, this change is made to improve control and precision in circuit design.



Then, repeat the steps **Connectivity > Generate > All From Source**.



- **Connecting Gates and Adjusting Layout Size**

To connect the gates of two devices, select the **`poly`** layer, which is the polysilicon layer. Then, press **`(r)`** to draw a rectangular shape or (create > shape > Rectangle). As you zoom in, you'll notice that the mouse snaps to grid points. Start drawing the layer by typing **`(r)`** and then pressing **`Escape (ESC)`** to exit the drawing mode. In some environments of Cadence Virtuoso, the **`P`** key is used to create a “Wire” or “Path”. By pressing the **`P`** key, you can draw a route or wiring between two points in your circuit. Additionally, while drawing the path, you can adjust parameters such as “Wire Width, Layer, and Orientation”.

After drawing the rectangle, you might observe that it is slightly larger than the gate of the devices. This discrepancy could lead to a **`DRC (Design Rule Check)`** error. To match the rectangle to the gate size (e.g., 180 nanometers), a slight adjustment or stretching is required.

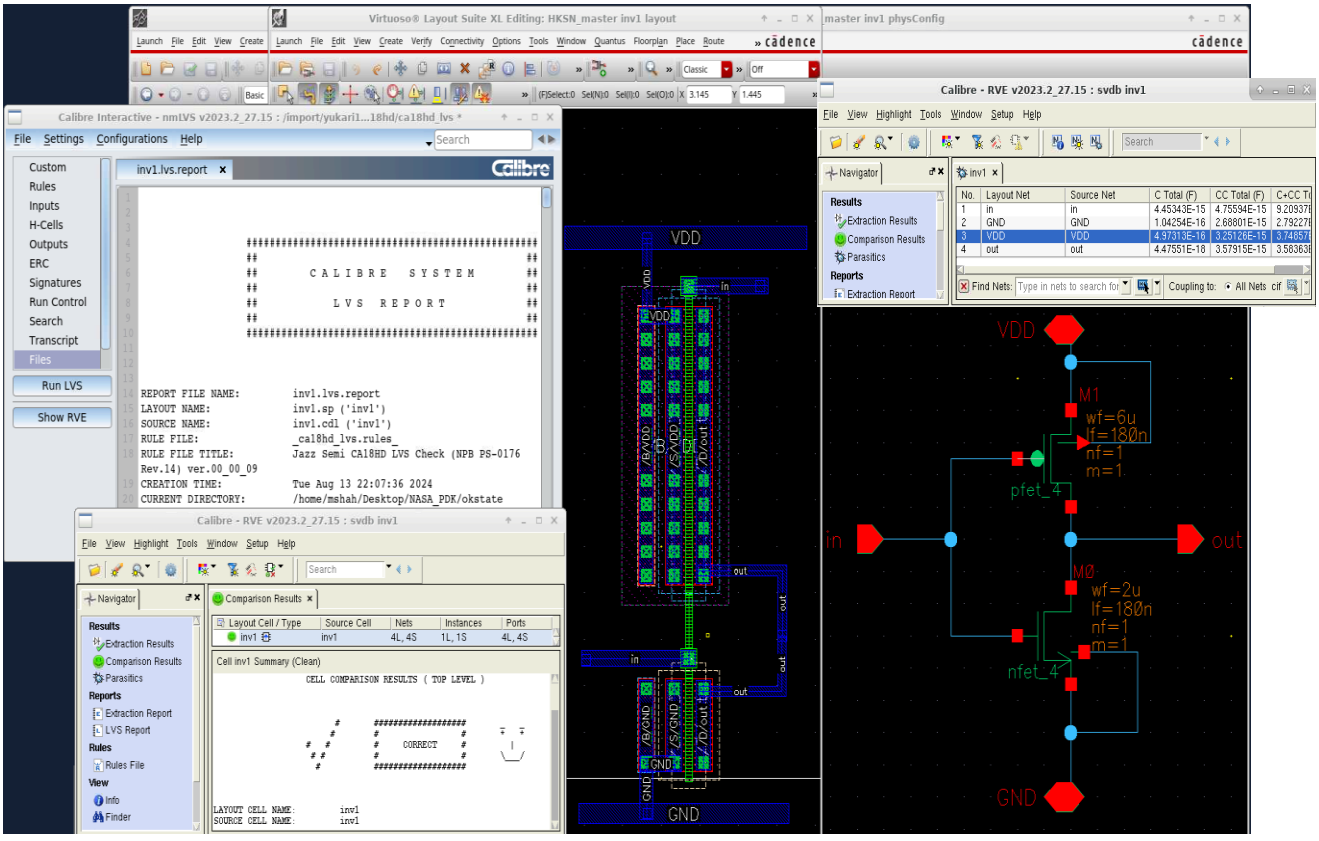
To stretch the rectangle, click on a blank area to ensure no objects are selected. Then, right-click and choose **`Stretch`** from the context menu, or simply press **`(s)`** for the shortcut. When using the stretch, hover near the edge of the rectangle you've drawn. The edge will highlight, indicating it is ready to be modified. Click on the highlighted edge and move the mouse to adjust the size, aligning it with the gate of the PMOS device.

For zooming into a specific area, right-click and drag to focus on the desired section. To frame the entire view, press **(f)**. These shortcut options are highly useful for efficient layout design.

- **Connecting PMOS and NMOS Drains**

In this step, we'll connect the drain of the PMOS device to the drain of the NMOS device using the **`Metal 1`** layer. To do this, select **`Metal 1`** and press **`(r)`** to draw the connection. After positioning the connection, press **`(ESC)`** to exit the drawing mode. Once the connection is completed, both drains will be properly linked.

After completing all the connections, save the design and check it with DRC (Design Rule Check) and LVS (Layout Versus Schematic). Begin by running these checks to ensure the design adheres to the required fabrication standards.



Design Rule Check (DRC):

DRC verifies that the physical layout of the design meets all the manufacturing constraints set by the foundry, such as minimum metal widths, spacing between components, and layer densities. Any violation of these rules could result in a non-functional or difficult-to-manufacture chip.

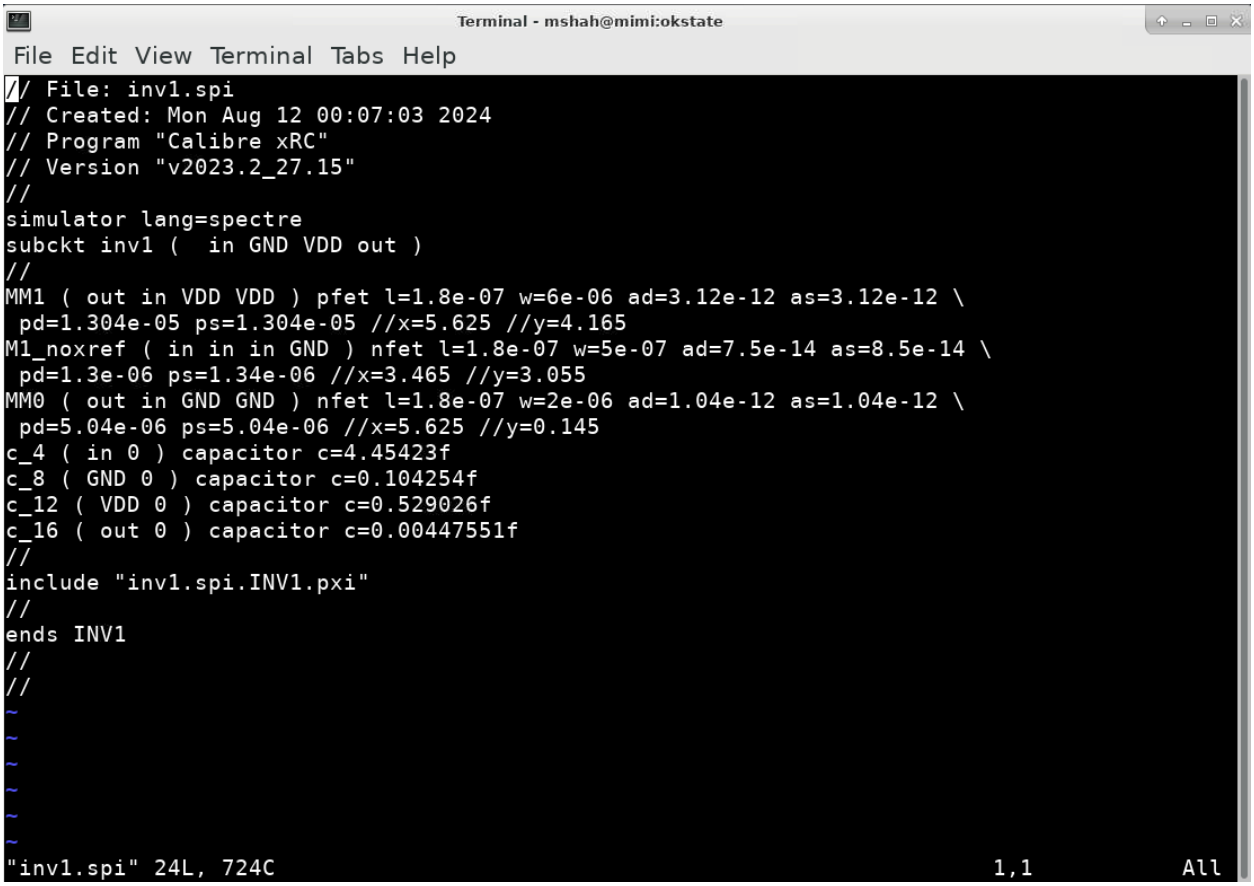
Layout Versus Schematic (LVS):

LVS ensures that the layout accurately reflects the schematic, verifying that all electrical connections and component placements match the intended design. This check is crucial for confirming that the final fabricated chip will perform as expected.

These steps are essential to validate the design's integrity and manufacturability before proceeding to the fabrication process.

Extracted Resistance and Capacitance (xRC):

Now, the parasitic resistances and capacitances need to be extracted; therefore, using the **Calibre xRC** tool for this extraction.



xRC plays a critical role in the post-layout verification process by accurately modeling parasitic resistances and capacitances that arise during the physical implementation of circuits. These parasitic elements can significantly affect the performance, timing, and power consumption of integrated circuits, making xRC extraction an essential step in ensuring that the final design meets all specifications. By incorporating xRC into the design flow, engineers can perform detailed analyses that account for these parasitics, leading to more reliable and efficient designs. The ability to accurately predict the behavior of circuits under real-world conditions helps avoid costly iterations and ensures that the final product performs as intended. In essence, xRC serves as a bridge between theoretical design and practical implementation, making it an indispensable tool in modern electronic design automation (EDA).