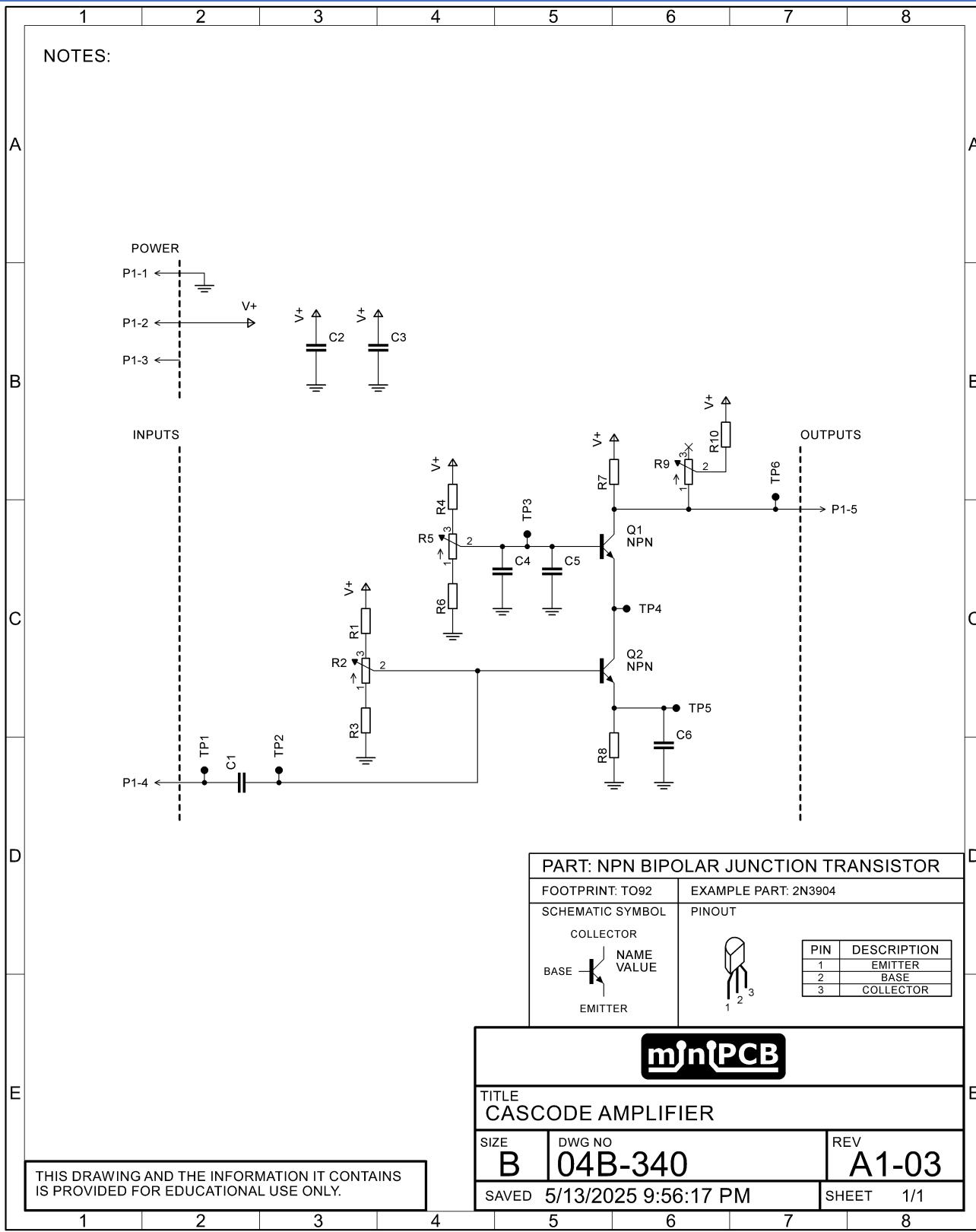
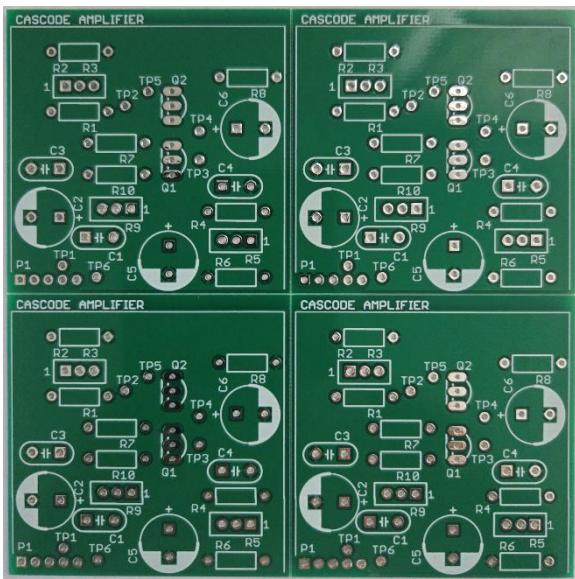


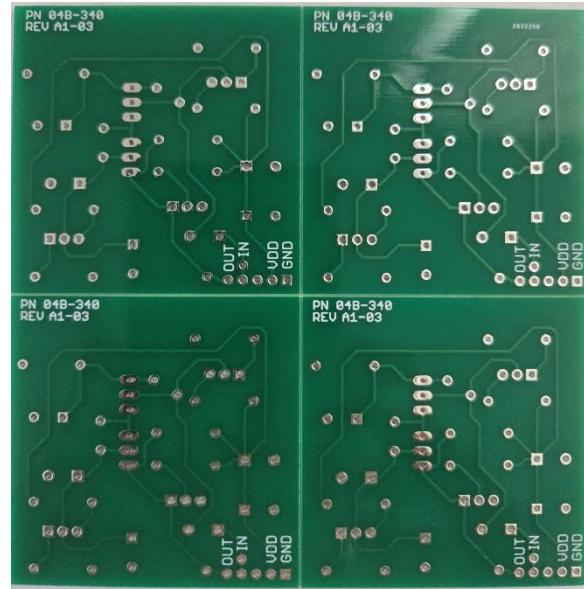
Cascode Amplifier



Date Printed: 02 December 2025



Front Side



Back Side

miniPCB Part Number

| PART NO | TITLE | PIECES PER PANEL |
|---------|-------------------|------------------|
| 04B-340 | Cascode Amplifier | 4 |

miniPCB Revision History

| REV | DESCRIPTION | DATE |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| A1-01 | Initial Release | 25OCT2023 |
| A1-02 | Updated PCB outline. Removed logo. | 03DEC2024 |
| A1-03 | Added test points. | 13MAY2025 |
| | | |

Circuit Description

This miniPCB implements a single-stage cascode amplifier using two discrete NPN bipolar junction transistors (Q1 and Q2) in a stacked configuration. The design can optionally accommodate N-channel MOSFETs in place of BJTs for comparative testing. The cascode topology combines a common emitter (Q2) and common base (Q1) stage to achieve high voltage gain, increased bandwidth, and improved isolation between input and output. This circuit is ideal for demonstrating the performance advantages of cascode operation, including reduced Miller effect and enhanced high-frequency response.

Input Coupling and Biasing – Q2 Stage

The AC input signal is coupled to the circuit through C1, a DC blocking capacitor that prevents source bias from interfering with the transistor's base. The input transistor Q2 is biased via a voltage divider consisting of R1, R2 (a multturn trimmer), and R3, allowing precise adjustment of the base voltage and establishing the correct quiescent current. TP2 allows direct measurement of Q2's base voltage, while TP1 monitors the input signal level.

Power Supply Filtering

C2 and C3 are supply rail filtering capacitors that stabilize the positive voltage rail and suppress high-frequency noise. These components improve power integrity for both gain stages.

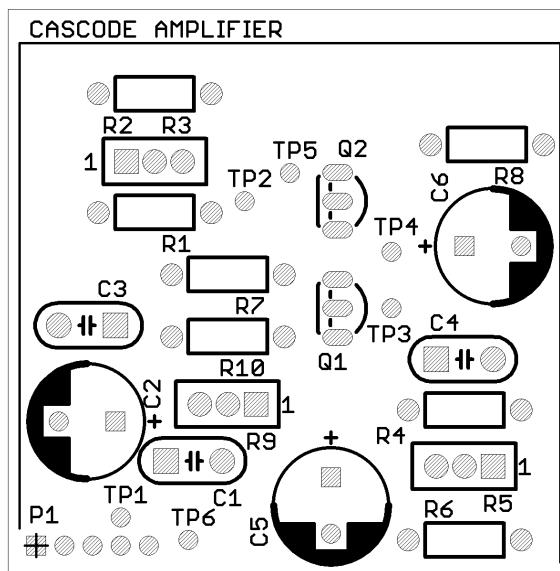


Figure 1 - Single Board, Component Outlines

Biassing of Q1 – Common Base Stage

The base of the output transistor Q1 is held at a fixed voltage determined by a voltage divider formed by R4, R5 (a multturn trimmer), and R6. This sets the operating point for the common base stage. C4 and C5 are connected in parallel with the base bias node to stabilize the voltage and filter out noise or ripple, ensuring stable operation. TP3 allows direct probing of Q1's base voltage.

Collector and Interstage Connection

Q2's collector is directly connected to the emitter of Q1, forming the critical cascode connection between stages. TP4 is placed at this node to measure the intermediate collector-emitter junction between the two transistors. This connection minimizes voltage variation at Q2's collector, significantly reducing Miller capacitance and improving high-frequency gain.

Emitter Network – Q2 Stage

The emitter of Q2 is connected to ground through R8, providing a path for emitter current, while C6 is placed in parallel to allow AC signals to bypass the resistor and maintain high gain at signal frequencies. TP5 enables direct measurement of Q2's emitter voltage for DC bias or signal monitoring.

Output Stage – Q1 Collector

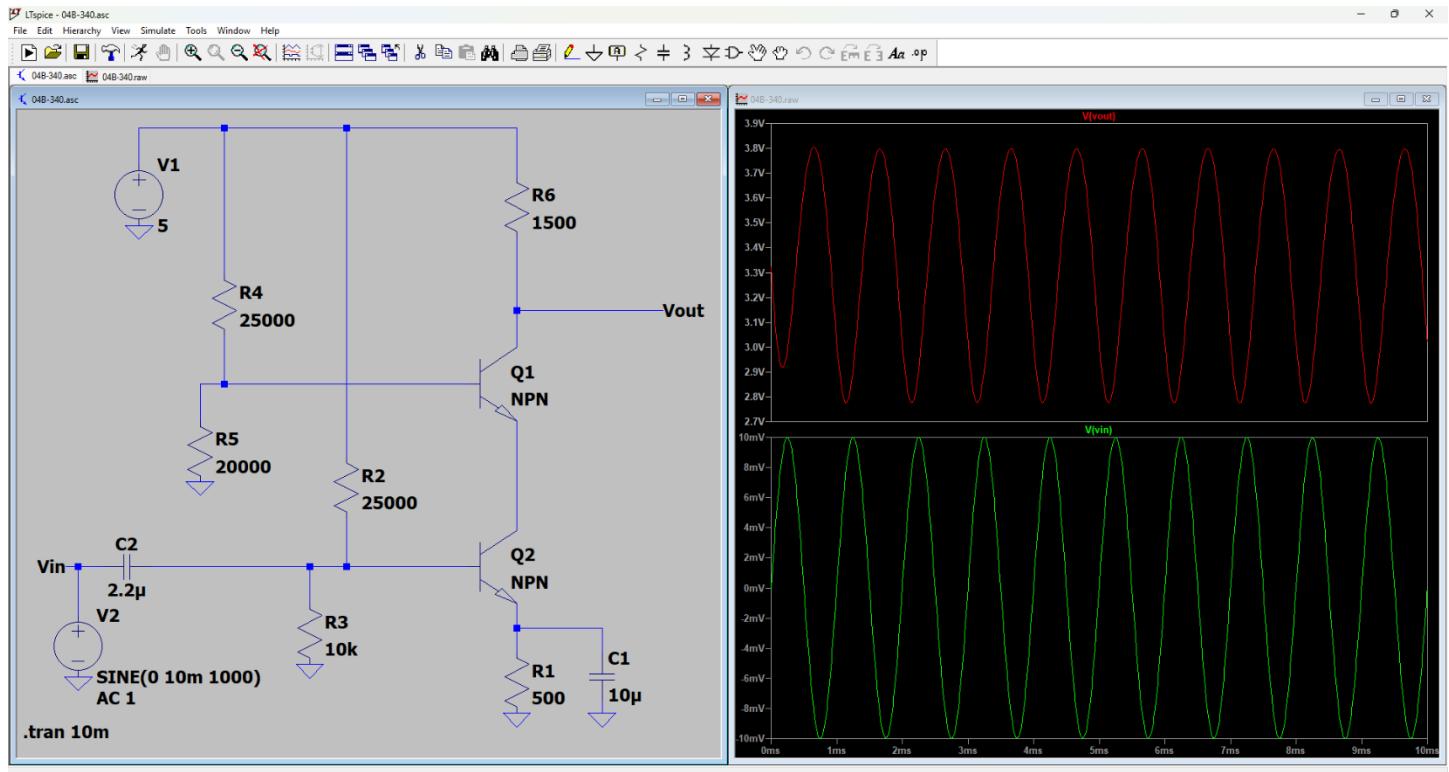
The collector of Q1 forms the output of the amplifier and is connected through a resistive load composed of R7, R9 (a multturn trimmer), and R10. This network determines the output voltage swing and affects overall gain. Fine-tuning via R9 allows adjustment of the output bias point. TP6 allows measurement of Q1's collector voltage, which represents the final output signal of the amplifier.

Transistor Configuration

Both Q1 and Q2 are mounted in TO-92 footprints with a standard C-B-E (Collector–Base–Emitter) pinout. The layout is optimized for NPN BJTs, though many N-channel MOSFETs with matching pinouts are also compatible and can be used for substitution and experimentation. Most JFETs are not drop-in compatible due to differing pinouts and biasing requirements. This flexible design allows users to explore the advantages and tradeoffs of different transistor types within the cascode configuration.

Simulation in LTspice

LTspice was used to verify that selected component values produced reasonable amplifier behavior before assembling physical boards. The simulation helped confirm that the circuit was biased correctly, the signal was amplified, and the overall configuration functioned as expected with a voltage gain around 50. While the analysis wasn't exhaustive, the simulation served as a practical check to ensure the design was sound and worth building.



Example Parts List

| REF DES | PART TYPE | VALUE / DESCRIPTION |
|---------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| C1 | CAPACITOR | 2.2uF |
| C2 | CAPACITOR | 10uF |
| C3 | CAPACITOR | 0.1uF |
| C4 | CAPACITOR | 0.1uF |
| C5 | CAPACITOR | 10uF |
| C6 | CAPACITOR | 10uF |
| R1 | RESISTOR | 15kΩ |
| R2 | RESISTOR (TRIMMER) | 25kΩ |
| R3 | RESISTOR | 10kΩ |
| R4 | RESISTOR | 10kΩ |
| R5 | RESISTOR (TRIMMER) | 25kΩ |
| R6 | RESISTOR | 15kΩ |
| R7 | RESISTOR | 3.3kΩ |
| R8 | RESISTOR | 500Ω |
| R9 | RESISTOR (TRIMMER) | 1kΩ |
| R10 | RESISTOR | 2.2kΩ |
| Q1 | TRANSISTOR | 2N3904 |
| TP1-TP6 | TEST POINT | KEYSTONE ELECTRONICS SERIES 5000 |
| P1 | HEADER PINS | 5POS, 2.54mm PITCH, RA |

Parts List Form

| REF DES | PART TYPE | VALUE / DESCRIPTION |
|---------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| C1 | CAPACITOR | |
| C2 | CAPACITOR | |
| C3 | CAPACITOR | |
| C4 | CAPACITOR | |
| C5 | CAPACITOR | |
| C6 | CAPACITOR | |
| R1 | RESISTOR | |
| R2 | RESISTOR (TRIMMER) | |
| R3 | RESISTOR | |
| R4 | RESISTOR | |
| R5 | RESISTOR (TRIMMER) | |
| R6 | RESISTOR | |
| R7 | RESISTOR | |
| R8 | RESISTOR | |
| R9 | RESISTOR (TRIMMER) | |
| R10 | RESISTOR | |
| Q1 | TRANSISTOR | |
| TP1-TP6 | TEST POINT | KEYSTONE ELECTRONICS SERIES 5000 |
| P1 | HEADER PINS | 5POS, 2.54mm PITCH, RA |

Build

NEED TO ADD

Testing

NEED TO ADD

Industry Feedback

Send your feedback to nolan@minipcba.com.

References

- <https://www.minipcb.com/04B/04B-340.html>
- <https://www.youtube.com/@minipcb>

Revision History

| REV | DESCRIPTION | DATE |
|-----|-----------------|------|
| A | Initial Release | |
| | | |