Analog Electronic Circuits - Project Quadrature Down Converter (QDC)

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Abstract—This project focuses on the design and implementation of a Quadrature Down Converter (QDC), a critical block in modern wireless communication systems such as Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and FM receivers. In environments with multiple interferers such as overlapping police, WLAN, and public spectrum bands, signals often suffer corruption during downconversion, especially when a strong interferer falls near the desired signal frequency. To mitigate this, the QDC employs quadrature downconversion, producing two signals with a 90° phase difference using sinusoidal and cosine oscillations. This architecture enables effective separation of baseband signals based on phase and prevents selfinterference in asymmetrically modulated signals. The complete system integrates three key modules: a Quadrature Oscillator, Mixer (Switch) Circuit, and RC Low Pass Filter. These blocks are designed, analyzed, and simulated individually, and then integrated into a functional prototype to demonstrate real-world applicability in interference-prone communication scenarios.

I. NEED OF DOWNCONVERSION

During the transmission of signals, the message signal is modulated using a high frequency carrier signal, to get a high frequency passband signal. This is done because a high frequency is advantageous for transmission due to reduced Antenna length and high signal power that decreases SNR (Signal to Noise Ratio).

However, in the reciving part of the communication network, we need to demodulate the signal, ie, convert it back into a low frequency baseband signal with our original message. This process of removing the high frequency carrier signal, is Downconversion, since it reduces the frequency of the input signal.

The need for Downconversion lies in the fact that we need to successfully remove this carrier signal to get our original message signal back.

II. QUADRATURE OSCILLATOR

A quadrature oscillator is a type of electronic oscillator that generates two sinusoidal signals of the same frequency, but with a 90-degree phase difference between them. These signals are known as the in-phase (I) and quadrature-phase (Q) components.

A. Circuit Diagram (Schematic)

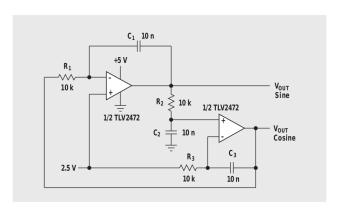


Fig. 1: Quadrature Oscillator Schematic

B. Working of the Circuit

The working principle of a quadrature oscillator involves creating an unstable feedback loop using active components, such as operational amplifiers (op-amps), to sustain oscillations.

- Feedback Network: The oscillator includes a feedback network made up of resistors, capacitors, and op-amps. This network provides the positive feedback needed to keep the oscillations going.
- 2) Phase Shift: To generate two signals 90 degrees apart, the circuit introduces a phase shift using reactive components such as capacitors or inductors in the feedback path.
- 3) Feedback Connection: The output of the second integrator is sent back to the input of the first integrator, but with the polarity inverted. This configuration helps establish the positive feedback loop that drives the oscillation.
- 4) **Barkhausen Criterion:** For the oscillator to work properly, the loop gain must be equal to one, and the total phase shift around the loop must be 360 degrees. This requirement, known as the Barkhausen criterion, ensures stable and sustained oscillations.
- 5) Output Signals: Once the circuit reaches a stable state, it produces two continuous sinusoidal signals that are exactly 90 degrees out of phase. These I and Q signals are widely used in communication systems, signal processing, and modulation schemes.

C. Parameter Values

- Oscillator Resistance, $R_{\rm osc} = 3.55 \, \rm k\Omega$
- Oscillator Capacitance, $C_{\rm osc} = 160\,{\rm pF}$
- Coupling Capacitors = 1 pF
- Load Resistor = $1 k\Omega$

D. Calculations

1) Gain Derivations: Deriving the gain when feedback is disconnected, we get:

$$V_{\text{osc}_i} = -\frac{1}{i\omega R_1 C_1} V_2,\tag{1}$$

$$A = -\frac{1}{j\omega R_1 C_1}. (2)$$

The gain obtained in the feedback network is:

$$V_1 = V_{\text{osc}_i} \frac{X_{C_2}}{X_{C_2} + R_2} = V_{\text{osc}_i} \frac{1}{1 + j\omega R_2 C_2},$$
 (3)

$$V_2 = V_1 \left(1 + \frac{X_{C_3}}{R_3} \right) = V_1 \left(1 + \frac{1}{i\omega R_3 C_3} \right),\tag{4}$$

$$B = \frac{V_2}{V_{\text{osc}}} = \frac{1}{1 + i\omega R_2 C_2} \left(1 + \frac{1}{i\omega R_3 C_3} \right).$$
 (5)

Assuming $R_1C_1 = R_2C_2 = R_3C_3 = RC$, the loop gain is:

$$AB = -\frac{1}{j\omega RC} \frac{1}{1 + j\omega RC} \left(1 + \frac{1}{j\omega RC}\right).$$

Applying the magnitude condition gives oscillation at:

$$|AB| = 1 \implies \omega = \frac{1}{RC}.$$

We need a frequency of 100 KHz. Let us assume a Capacitance value of C = 160 pF

$$\Rightarrow \ 2\pi (100kHz) = \frac{1}{R \cdot 160pF} \Rightarrow \ R = 9.94K\Omega$$

However we found that in practice $3.55K\Omega$ was needed to realise this frequency due to opamp's upper cutoff frequency.

2) Phase Derivation.

$$\angle AB = \angle (-1) + \angle \frac{1}{j\omega RC} + \angle \frac{1}{1+j\omega RC} + \angle \left(1 + \frac{1}{j\omega RC}\right)$$

$$= \pi - \frac{\pi}{2} - \tan^{-1}(\omega RC) - \tan^{-1}\left(\frac{1}{\omega RC}\right)$$

$$= \frac{\pi}{2} - \left[\tan^{-1}(\omega RC) + \tan^{-1}\left(\frac{1}{\omega RC}\right)\right]$$

$$= \frac{\pi}{2} - \frac{\pi}{2} = 0.$$

3) Quadrature (90°) Phase Difference: At the oscillation frequency $\omega=1/RC$, split the feedback network into two parts:

$$H_{\mathrm{LP}}(j\omega) = \frac{1}{1 + i\omega RC}, \quad H_{\mathrm{HP}}(j\omega) = \frac{j\omega RC}{1 + i\omega RC}$$

Their phases are:

$$\angle H_{\rm LP} = -\tan^{-1}(\omega RC) = -\frac{\pi}{4},$$
$$\angle H_{\rm HP} = \frac{\pi}{2} - \tan^{-1}(\omega RC) = +\frac{\pi}{4}$$

Thus, the phase difference is:

$$\angle H_{\rm HP} - \angle H_{\rm LP} = \frac{\pi}{4} - \left(-\frac{\pi}{4}\right) = \frac{\pi}{2}$$

i.e., 90°.

E. LT Spice Schematic

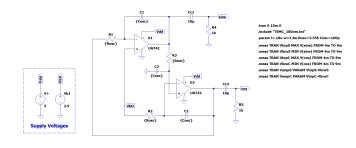


Fig. 2: LTSpice Schematic for Quadrature Oscillator

F. Observations

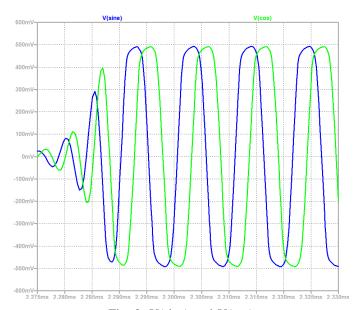


Fig. 3: V(sine) and V(cos)

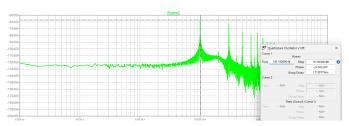


Fig. 4: V(sine) FFT with Phase $\approx -27^{\circ}$ and Frequency Measured as 100.15 kHz

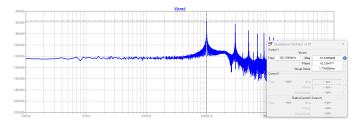


Fig. 5: V(cos) FFT with Phase $\approx 62^{\circ}$ and Frequency Measured as 100.15 kHz

We get the Phase Difference between the 2 generated sinusoids as $\approx 62^{\circ} - (-27^{\circ}) = 90^{\circ}$

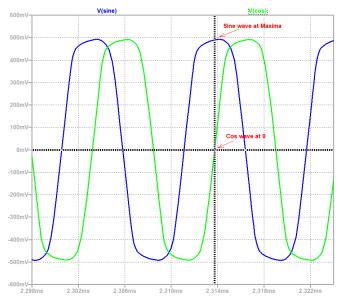


Fig. 6: Annotations Expressing the Phase Difference between V(cos) and V(sine)

VtopS: MAX(V(sine))=0.49267026782 FROM 0.004 TO 0.009 VlowS: MIN(V(sine))=-0.492460310459 FROM 0.004 TO 0.009 VtopC: MAX(V(cos))=0.491819649935 FROM 0.004 TO 0.009 VlowC: MIN(V(cos))=-0.492444634438 FROM 0.004 TO 0.009 VampS: VtopS-VlowS=0.985130578279 VampC: VtopC-VlowC=0.984264284372

Fig. 7: Amplitude Measurement of V(cos) and V(sine)

G. Inference

We see that our Oscillator is able to produce 2 sinusoids with a phase difference approximately 90 degrees, with an amplitude of 1 volt peak to peak.

III. MIXER (SWITCH) CIRCUIT

A mixer circuit is used to shift the frequency of signals, typically by multiplying an input signal with a local oscillator signal. In a switch-type mixer, mosfet act as on/off switches controlled by the oscillating signal, enabling frequency translation without linear multiplication. The output contains both the sum and difference frequencies of the inputs. This principle is fundamental in radio receivers for downconversion to an intermediate frequency (IF).

A. Circuit Diagram (Schematic)

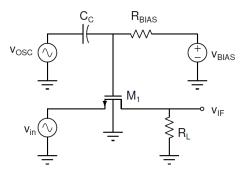


Figure 2

Fig. 8: Mixer Circuit Schematic

B. Working of the Circuit

The mixer circuit utilizes a MOSFET operating as a switch, controlled by an oscillator signal V_{osc} applied to the gate. The input signal V_{in} is connected to the drain, while a bias resistor R_{bias} is placed between the drain and supply to establish proper DC operation. The source is connected to a DC bias voltage V_{bias} , and the output is taken across the source as V_{out} .

When V_{osc} is sufficiently high, the gate-source voltage $V_{GS} = V_{osc} - V_{bias}$ exceeds the threshold, turning the MOSFET ON and allowing V_{in} to pass to the output. When V_{osc} is low, V_{GS} falls below threshold, turning the MOSFET OFF and blocking the signal path.

This periodic switching action effectively multiplies the input signal V_{in} with the control signal V_{osc} , generating output frequency components at the sum and difference of the input and control signal frequencies, and also their harmonics. These components form the basis of frequency translation in mixer circuits.

C. Parameter Values

- $R_{bias} = 10 \text{ M}\Omega$
- $V_{bias} = 0.52 \text{ V}$
- $C_c = 10 \ \mu \text{F}$
- $V_{in} = 100 \text{ mV}$ sine wave of frequency f_{in}
- $R_L = 1 \text{ k}\Omega$

D. Calculations

In a switching mixer, the MOSFET alternates between cutoff and linear region (negligible time is spent in saturation), as per the frequency of the Local Oscillator Signal $v_{LO}(t)$. E. LT Spice Schematic From the Schematic, we observe that,

$$V_{out} - I_d R_L = 0 (6)$$

$$\implies I_d = \frac{V_{out}}{R_L} \tag{7}$$

$$V_{GS} = V_{osc} + V_{bias} - V_{out} \tag{8}$$

$$\approx V_{osc} + V_{bias}$$
 (9)

$$V_{DS} = V_{in} - V_{out} \approx V_{in} \tag{10}$$

We know that for a MOSFET in linear region,

$$I_d = \frac{1}{2}K_n(2(V_{GS} - V_{TH})V_{DS} - V_{DS}^2)$$
 (11)

$$\implies V_{out} = \frac{R_L}{2} K_n (2(V_{osc} + V_{bias} - V_{TH}) V_{in} - V_{in}^2$$
 (12)

(13)

If we take $V_{bias} \approx V_{TH}$, and assume that V_{in} is small,

$$V_{out} = \frac{R_L K_n}{2} (2V_{osc} V_{in}) \tag{14}$$

$$V_{out} = R_L K_n V_{osc} V_{in} \tag{15}$$

At cutoff, we know that $V_{out} = 0$. Taking in this result as well, we get out final output signal as,

$$V_{out} = \begin{cases} R_L K_n V_{osc} V_{in} & V_{osc} > 0\\ 0 & V_{osc} \le 0 \end{cases}$$
 (16)

$$\implies V_{out}(t) = R_L K_n V_{osc}(t) V_{in}(t) s(t) \tag{17}$$

Where s(t) is a square wave, alternating between 1 and 0 with the same frequency as V_{osc} . Since in this expression $V_{osc}t$ only matters if it is positive, we can approximate it to s(t). (Square Wave Approximation).

$$V_{out}(t) = R_L K_n V_{in}(t) (s(t))^2 = R_L K_n V_{in}(t) s(t)$$
 (18)

We know that the Fourier Series Representation of a square wave is $s(t) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{k} \sin(2\pi k f_{osc} t)$, where k ranges over all the odd Natural numbers. Therefore, our output signal, if we take $V_{in} = A_{in} \cos(2\pi f_{in} t)$,

$$V_{out}(t) = R_L K_n A_{in} \sum_{k} \frac{1}{k} \sin(2\pi k f_{osc} t) \cos(2\pi f_{in} t)$$
 (19)

$$\implies V_{out}(t) = \frac{R_L K_N A_{in}}{2} \sum_{k} [\sin(2\pi (k f_{osc} - f_{in})t)$$
 (20)

$$+sin(2\pi(kf_{osc}+f_{in})t)]$$
 (21)

Since we need only the $f_{osc} - f_{in}$ component (Goal Of the Downconversion Process), we can pass the output signal through a low pass filter, which results in our output signal as,

$$V_{out}(t) = \frac{R_L K_N A_{in}}{2} \sin(2\pi (f_{osc} - f_{in})t) \qquad (22)$$

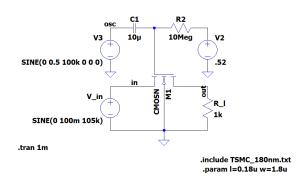


Fig. 9: LTSpice Simulation of Mixer Circuit

F. Observations

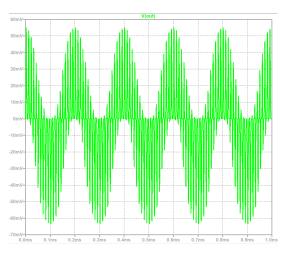


Fig. 10: Output of Mixer at 95khz Input

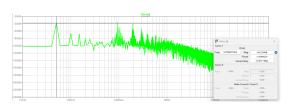


Fig. 11: FFT of Output of Mixer at 95khz, showing a peak at approx 5kHz

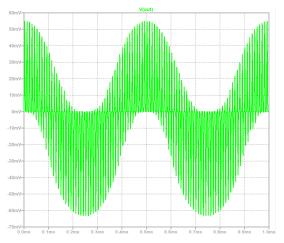


Fig. 12: Output of Mixer at 98khz Input

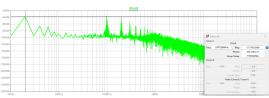
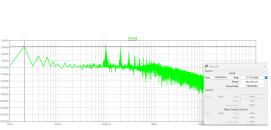


Fig. 13: FFT of Output of Mixer at 98khz, showing a peak at approx 2kHz



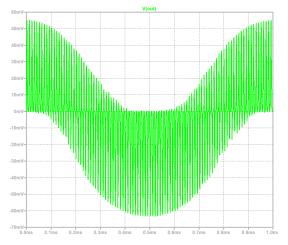


Fig. 14: Output of Mixer at 99khz Input

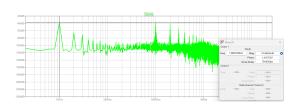


Fig. 15: FFT of Output of Mixer at 99khz, showing a peak at approx 1kHz

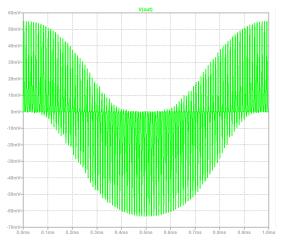


Fig. 16: Output of Mixer at 99khz Input

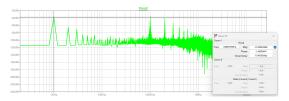


Fig. 17: FFT of Output of Mixer at 101khz, showing a peak at approx 1kHz

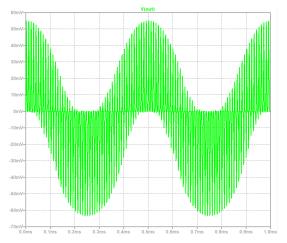


Fig. 18: Output of Mixer at 102khz Input

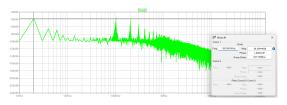


Fig. 19: FFT of Output of Mixer at 102khz, showing a peak at approx 2kHz

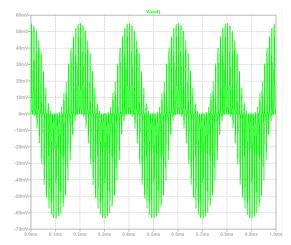


Fig. 20: Output of Mixer at 105khz Input

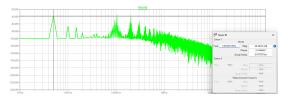


Fig. 21: FFT of Output of Mixer at 105khz, showing a peak at approx 5kHz

G. Inference

We see that we get our first prominent peak, in the FFTs of the output, at approximately $|f_{osc} - f_{in}|$, which matches with our expected values.

IV. RC Low Pass Filter

An RC low pass filter allows signals with frequencies lower than a certain cutoff to pass through while attenuating higher frequencies. It consists of a resistor (R) and capacitor (C) connected in series, with the output taken across the capacitor. This filter smoothens high-frequency noise and is commonly used after mixing to extract the baseband signal. Its cutoff frequency is determined by the values of R and C.

A. Circuit Diagram (Schematic)

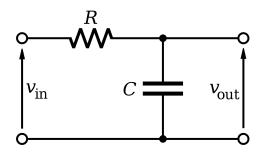


Fig. 22: RC Low Pass Filter Schematic

B. Working of the Circuit

This filtering behavior arises due to the frequency-dependent reactance of the capacitor, given by $X_C = \frac{1}{2\pi fC}$. At low frequencies, X_C is high, so the capacitor blocks current flow and the signal appears across the output. At high frequencies, X_C is low, allowing the capacitor to short the signal to ground. As a result, high-frequency components are attenuated, and low-frequency signals pass through, making it a low-pass filter.

C. Parameter Values

- $R = 10 \text{ k}\Omega$
- C = 2.65 pF

D. Calculations

When the frequency of the input waveform increases the capacitive reactance given by $Z_C = \frac{1}{\omega C} = \frac{1}{2 \cdot \pi \cdot f_{\text{in}} \cdot C}$ decreases. V_{OUT} is given by the expression

$$V_{\text{OUT}} = \frac{\frac{1}{j\omega C} \cdot V_{\text{in}}}{\frac{1}{j\omega C} + R}$$

Which simplifies to

$$V_{\rm OUT} = \frac{V_{\rm in}}{1 + j\omega RC}$$

Taking Magnitude we get,

$$|V_{
m OUT}| = rac{V_{
m in}}{\sqrt{1 + (\omega RC)^2}}$$

The cutoff frequency for the above circuit is defined as the frequency at which the output amplitude becomes $\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}$ the input amplitude AC signal.

Thus, We find the cutoff frequency of the above circuit to be $f_c = \frac{1}{2\pi RC}$. For a 3dB frequency of 6kHz and choosing a reasonable value of R say $10\mathrm{k}\Omega$, we find C to be

$$C = \frac{1}{2\pi R f_{\text{cutoff}}}$$

Substituting the values we have

$$C = \frac{1}{2\pi \cdot 10k\Omega \cdot 6kHz} \approx 2.65nF$$

E. LT Spice Schematic

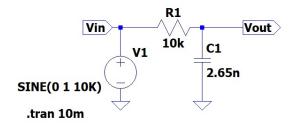


Fig. 23: LTSpice Simulation of Low Pass Filter

F. Observations

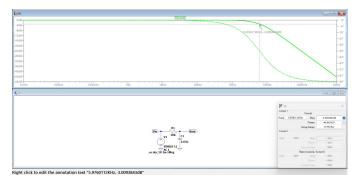


Fig. 24: Frequency Response

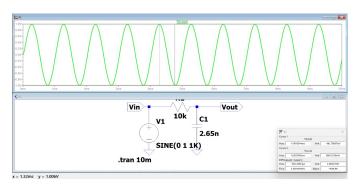


Fig. 25: Transient Response for f=1kHz

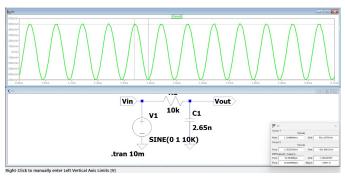


Fig. 26: Transient Response for f=10kHz

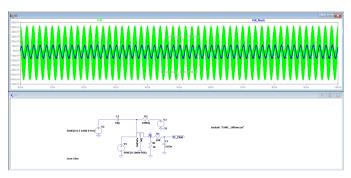


Fig. 27: Mixer with LowPass Transient Response at 95KHz

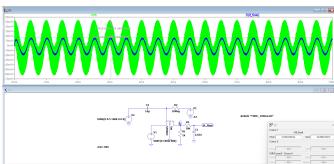


Fig. 28: Mixer with LowPass Transient Response at 98KHz

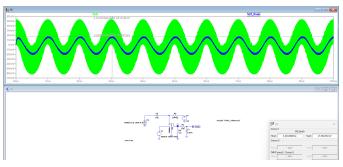


Fig. 29: Mixer with LowPass Transient Response at $f_{in} = 99 \mathrm{KHz}$

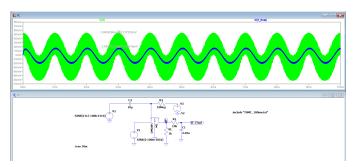


Fig. 30: Mixer with LowPass Transient Response at $f_{in}=101 \mathrm{KHz}$

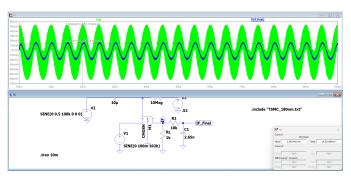


Fig. 31: Mixer with LowPass Transient Response at $f_{in}=102\mathrm{KHz}$

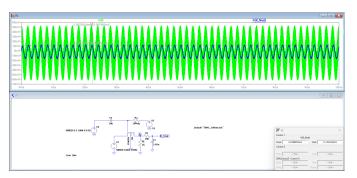


Fig. 32: Mixer with LowPass Transient Response at $f_{in} = 105 \text{KHz}$

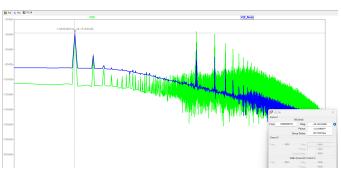


Fig. 35: Mixer with LowPass FFT at f_{in} =99KHz, getting First Harmonic Peak at $\approx 1kHz$, and Final Output(blue)'s Higher Harmonics begin attenuated

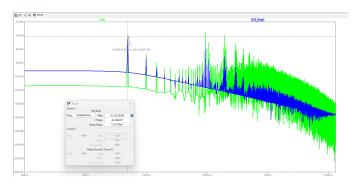


Fig. 33: Mixer with LowPass FFT at f_{in} =95KHz, getting First Harmonic Peak at $\approx 5kHz$, and Final Output(blue)'s Higher Harmonics begin attenuated

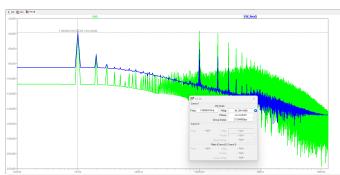


Fig. 36: Mixer with LowPass FFT at $f_{in}=101 \mathrm{KHz}$, getting First Harmonic Peak at $\approx 1kHz$, and Final Output(blue)'s Higher Harmonics begin attenuated

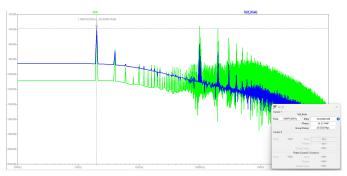


Fig. 34: Mixer with LowPass FFT at f_{in} =98KHz, getting First Harmonic Peak at $\approx 2kHz$, and Final Output(blue)'s Higher Harmonics begin attenuated

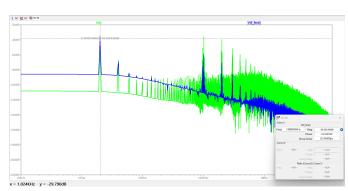


Fig. 37: Mixer with LowPass FFT at $f_{in}=102 \mathrm{KHz}$, getting First Harmonic Peak at $\approx 2kHz$, and Final Output(blue)'s Higher Harmonics begin attenuated

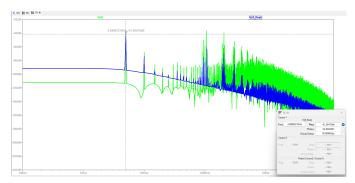


Fig. 38: Mixer with LowPass FFT at f_{in} =105KHz,, getting First Harmonic Peak at $\approx 5kHz$, and Final Output(blue)'s Higher Harmonics begin attenuated

G. Inference

We observe negligible attenuation for the 1kHz signal (since it is below the cutoff frequency) and significant attenuation for the 10kHz signal, (since it is lying above the cutoff frequency of the filter, 6kHz), matching with our expected output.

In the Mixer + Low Pass Circuits, all the higher harmonics are attenuated and the $|f_{osc}-f_{in}|$ passes through with minimal attenuation. The attenuation is a bit higher for $f_{in}=95kHz$ and $f_{in}=105kHz$, since they are closer to the cutoff frequency of the Low Pass Filter (6kHz).

V. FINAL CIRCUIT

By connecting all the building blocks — the oscillator, mixer, and filter — the complete circuit is formed. This final setup generates two output signals: IF Final (in-phase) and QF Final (quadrature), which represent the in-phase and quadrature components of the input signal. These two signals are sinusoidal and maintain a 90 degree phase difference between them.

A. Block Diagram

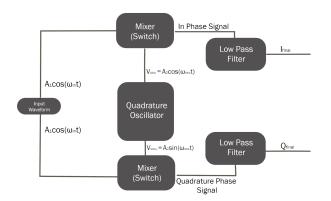


Fig. 39: Block Diagram

B. Working of the Circuit

The final circuit comprises three main components: a quadrature oscillator, mixers, and low-pass filters. Each plays a crucial role in generating the in-phase (IF Final) and

quadrature-phase (QF Final) components of the intermediate frequency (IF and QF) signal. The working is as follows:

- Quadrature Oscillator: The circuit begins with a quadrature oscillator that generates two sinusoidal signals of the same frequency but with a 90° phase difference. These signals are referred to as the local oscillator (LO) signals: LO_I (in-phase) and LO_O (quadrature-phase).
- 2) Mixing Stage: The incoming radio frequency (RF) signal is fed into two mixers. Each mixer multiplies the RF signal with one of the LO signals:
 - Mixer 1 multiplies RF with LO_I, producing a signal containing sum and difference frequency components.
 - Mixer 2 multiplies RF with LO_Q, also producing sum and difference frequency components. (QF)
- 3) Low-Pass Filtering: The outputs of the two mixers are then passed through low-pass filters. These filters remove the high-frequency components (sum frequencies and their harmonics), leaving behind only the difference frequencies — the desired intermediate frequency (IF Final and QF Final) components.
 - The output of Mixer 1, after filtering, becomes IF Final
 the in-phase component of the IF signal.
 - The output of Mixer 2, after filtering, becomes QF
 Final the quadrature-phase component.
- 4) **Final Output:** The final output consists of the IF Final and QF Final signals. These are two sinusoidal waveforms of the same frequency, $|f_{osc} f_{in}|$ with a constant phase difference of 90°, making this circuit ideal for ,in this case, demodulation

C. LT Spice Schematic

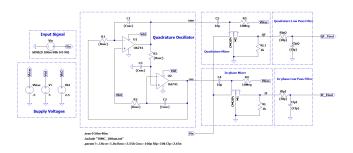


Fig. 40: LT Spice Simulation of Final Circuit

D. Parameters

• Oscillator Frequency:

Theoretical: 280.202 kHzObserved: 100.20792 kHz

• Oscillator Amplitude:

Quadrature Component: 0.9857 VIn-phase Component: 0.9845 V

- III-phase Component. 0.96

• Input Signal:

- Frequency: 98 Hz

- Amplitude: 200 mV (peak-to-peak)

• Supply Voltages:

– Positive Supply for Op-Amps (V_{DD}) : 5 V

Oscillator Bias: 2.5 VMixer Bias: 0.5 V

• Coupling Capacitances: 10 μF

• Low-Pass Filter Cutoff Frequency: 6 kHz

E. Observations

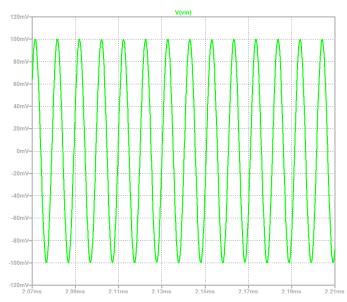


Fig. 41: Input Signal

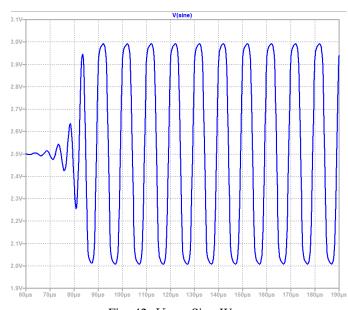


Fig. 42: V_{osc_Q} Sine Wave

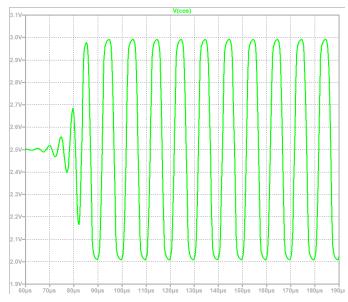


Fig. 43: V_{osc_I} Cos Wave

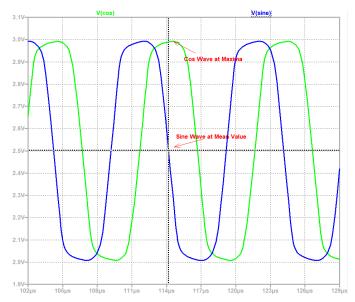


Fig. 44: Phase Comparison for V_{osc_Q} and V_{osc_I}

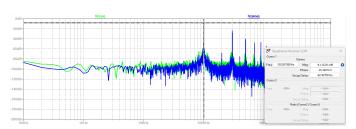


Fig. 45: FFT for Frequency Measurement of V_{osc_Q} and V_{osc_I}

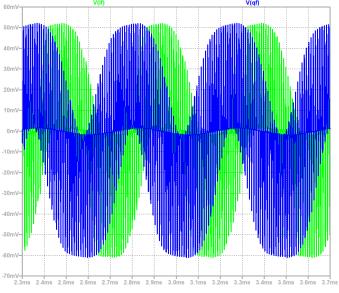


Fig. 46: IF vs QF

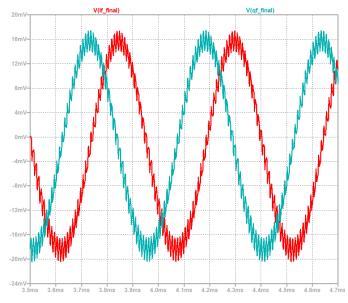


Fig. 49: IF Final vs QF Final

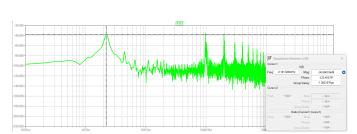


Fig. 47: IF FFT with Phase $\approx -125.402^{\circ}$ and First Harmonic Peak at 2.191kHz

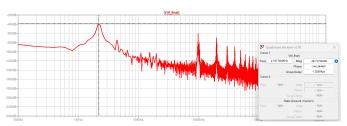


Fig. 50: IF Final FFT with Phase $\approx -146^{\circ}$ and First Harmonic Peak at 2.191kHz

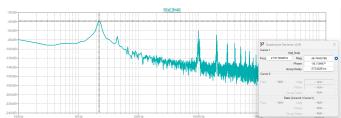


Fig. 51: QF Final with Phase $\approx -56^{\circ}$ and First Harmonic Peak at 2.191kHz

Phase Difference $\approx -146^{\circ} - (-56^{\circ}) = -90^{\circ}$

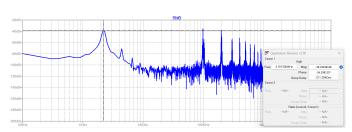


Fig. 48: QF FFT with Phase $\approx -36.298^{\circ}$ and First Harmonic Peak at 2.191kHz

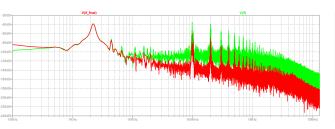


Fig. 52: IF vs IF Final

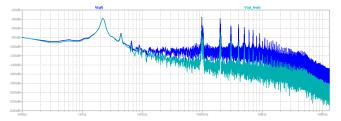


Fig. 53: QF vs QF Final

VtopS: MAX(V(sine))=2.99278068542 FROM 0.004 TO 0.009 VlowS: MIN(V(sine))=2.00710940361 FROM 0.004 TO 0.009 VtopC: MAX(V(cos))=2.99228453636 FROM 0.004 TO 0.009 VlowC: MIN(V(cos))=2.00780248642 FROM 0.004 TO 0.009 VampS: VtopS-VlowS=0.985671281815

Vamps: Vtops-Vlows=0.985671281815 Vampc: Vtopc-Vlowc=0.984482049942

Fig. 54: Measured Amplitudes

F. Inference

We see that our IF Final and QF Final, have a phase difference of about 90° and a fundamental frequency equal to $|f_{osc}-f_{in}|$. Therefore, we are able to successfully downconvert our input signal into a lower frequency signal, satisfying our objective.

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