

Universal Precision Op Amp Evaluation Board in SOIC Package

by Giampaolo Marino and Soufiane Bendaoud

INTRODUCTION

The EVAL-PRAOPAMP-1R is an evaluation board which accommodates single op amps in SOIC packages. It is meant to provide the user with multiple choices and extensive flexibility for different applications circuits and configurations. This board is not intended to be used with high frequency components or high speed amplifiers. However, it provides the user with many combinations for various circuit types including active filters, differential amplifiers, and external frequency compensation circuits. A few examples of application circuits are given in this application note.

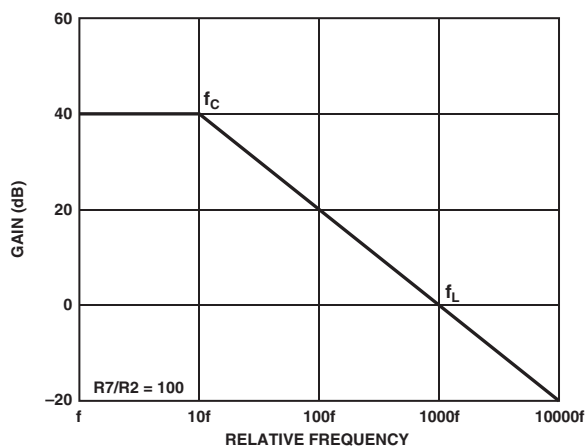
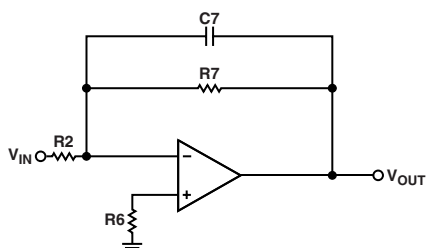


Figure 1. Simple Low-Pass Filter

LOW-PASS FILTER

Figure 1 is a typical representation of a first-order low-pass filter. This circuit has a 6 dB per octave roll-off after a close-loop -3 dB point defined by f_c . Gain below this frequency is defined as the magnitude of R7 to R2. The circuit might be considered as an ac integrator for frequencies well above f_c ; however, the time domain response is that of a single RC, rather than an integral.

$$f_c = 1/(2\pi \times R7 \times C7); -3 \text{ dB frequency}$$

$$f_L = 1/(2\pi \times R2 \times C7); \text{unity gain frequency}$$

$$A_{cl} = -(R7/R2); \text{close loop gain}$$

R6 should be chosen equal to the parallel combination between R7 and R2 in order to minimize errors due to bias currents.

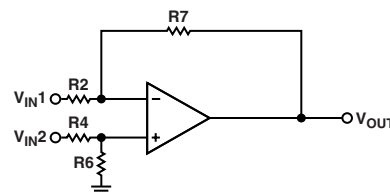


Figure 2. Difference Amplifier

DIFFERENCE AMPLIFIER AND PERFORMANCE OPTIMIZATION

Figure 2 shows an op amp configured as a difference amplifier. The difference amplifier is the complement of the summing amplifier, and allows the subtraction of two voltages or the cancellation of a signal common to both inputs. The circuit shown in Figure 2 is useful as a computational amplifier in making a differential to single-ended conversion or in rejecting a common-mode signal. The output voltage V_{OUT} is comprised of two separate components:

1. A component V_{OUT1} due to V_{IN1} acting alone (V_{IN2} short circuited to ground.)
2. A component V_{OUT2} due to V_{IN2} acting alone (V_{IN1} short circuited to ground.)

The algebraic sum of these two components should be equal to V_{OUT} . By applying the principles expressed in the output voltage V_{OUT} components, and by letting $R4 = R2$ and $R7 = R6$, then:

$$V_{OUT1} = V_{IN1} R7/R2$$

$$V_{OUT2} = -V_{IN2} R7/R2$$

$$V_{OUT} = V_{OUT1} + V_{OUT2} = (V_{IN1} - V_{IN2}) R7/R2$$

Difference amplifiers are commonly used in high accuracy circuits to improve the common-mode rejection ratio, typically known as CMRR.

For this type of application, CMRR depends upon how tightly matched resistors are used; poorly matched resistors result in a low value of CMRR.

To see how this works, consider a hypothetical source of error for resistor $R7$ ($1 - \text{error}$). Using the superposition principle and letting $R4 = R2$ and $R7 = R6$, the output voltage would be as follows:

$$V_{OUT} = \left[\frac{\left[\frac{R7}{R2} \left(1 - \frac{R2 + 2R7}{R2 + R7} \right) \times \frac{\text{error}}{2} \right]}{VD + \left(\frac{R7}{R2 + R7} \times \text{error} \right)} \right]$$

$$V_{DD} = V_{IN2} - V_{IN1}$$

From this equation, A_{CM} and A_{DM} can be defined as follows:

$$A_{CM} = R7/(R7 - R2) \times \text{error}$$

$$A_{DM} = R7/R2 \times \{1 - [(R2 + 2R7/R2 + R7) \times \text{error}/2]\}$$

These equations demonstrate that when there is not an error in the resistor values, the $A_{CM} = 0$ and the amplifier responds only to the differential voltage being applied to its inputs; under these conditions, the CMRR of the circuit becomes highly dependent on the CMRR of the amplifier selected for this job.

As mentioned above, errors introduced by resistor mismatch can be a big drawback of discrete differential amplifiers, but there are different ways to optimize this circuit configuration:

1. The differential gain is directly related to the ratio $R7/R2$; therefore, one way to optimize the performance of this circuit is to place the amplifier in a high gain configuration. When larger values for resistors $R7$ and $R6$ and smaller values for resistor $R2$ and $R4$ are selected, the higher the gain, the higher the CMRR. For example, when $R7 = R6 = 10 \text{ k}\Omega$, and $R2 = R4 = 1 \text{ k}\Omega$, and error = 0.1%, CMRR improves to better than 80 dB. For high gain configuration, select amplifiers with very low I_b and very high gain (such as the AD8551, AD8571, AD8603, and AD8605) to reduce errors.
2. Select resistors that have much tighter tolerance and accuracy. The more closely they are matched, the better the CMRR. For example, if a CMRR of 90 dB is needed, then match resistors to approximately 0.02%.

CURRENT-TO-VOLTAGE CONVERTER

Current may be measured in two ways with an operational amplifier. Current can be converted to a voltage with a resistor and then amplified or injected directly into a summing node.

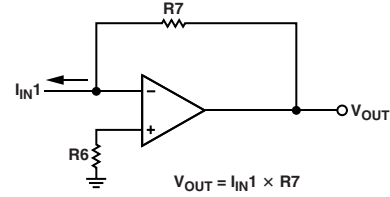


Figure 3. Current-to-Voltage Converter

Figure 3 is a typical representation of a current-to-voltage transducer. The input current is fed directly into the summing node and the amplifier output voltage changes to exactly the same current from the summing node through $R7$. The scale factor of this circuit is $R7$ volts per amps. The only conversion error in this circuit is I_{BIAS} , which is summed algebraically with I_{IN} .

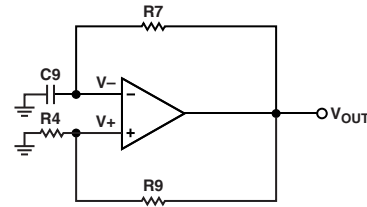


Figure 4a. Bistable Multivibrator

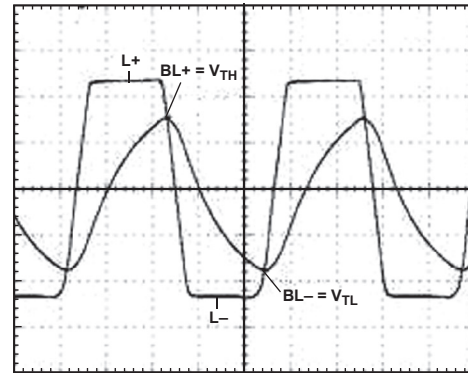


Figure 4b. Output Response

GENERATION OF SQUARE WAVEFORMS USING A BISTABLE MULTIVIBRATOR

A square waveform can be simply generated by arranging the amplifier for a bistable multivibrator to switch states periodically as Figure 4b shows.

Once the output of the amplifier reaches one of two possible levels, such as $L+$, capacitor $C9$ charges toward this level through resistor $R7$. The voltage across $C9$, which is applied to the negative input terminal of the amplifier denoted as $V-$, then rises exponentially toward $L+$ with a time constant $\tau = C9R7$. Meanwhile, the voltage

at the positive input terminal of the amplifier, denoted as $V_+ = BL_+$. This continues until the capacitor voltage reaches the positive threshold V_{TH} , at which point the bistable multivibrator switches to the other stable state in which $V_O = L_-$ and $V_+ = BL_-$. This is shown in Figure 4b.

The capacitor then begins to discharge, and its voltage, V_- , decreases exponentially toward L_- . This continues until V_- reaches the negative threshold V_{TL} , at which time the bistable multivibrator switches to the positive output state, and the cycle repeats itself.

It is important to note that the frequency of the square wave being generated, f_O , depends only on the external components being used. Any variation in L_+ will cause V_+ to vary in proportion, ensuring the same transition time and the same oscillation frequency. The maximum operating frequency is determined by the amplifier speed, which can be increased significantly by using faster devices.

The lowest operating frequency depends on the practical upper limits set by R7 and C9.

Using the name convention outlined on the PRA OPAMP evaluation board, the following circuit should be connected as follows:

$B = R_4 / (R_4 + R_9)$; feedback factor (noninverting input)

$T = 2R_7 \times C_9 \times \ln((1 + B)/(1 - B))$; period of oscillation

$f_O = 1/T$; oscillation frequency

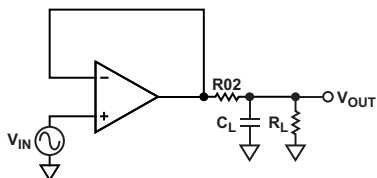


Figure 5a. Series Resistor Compensation

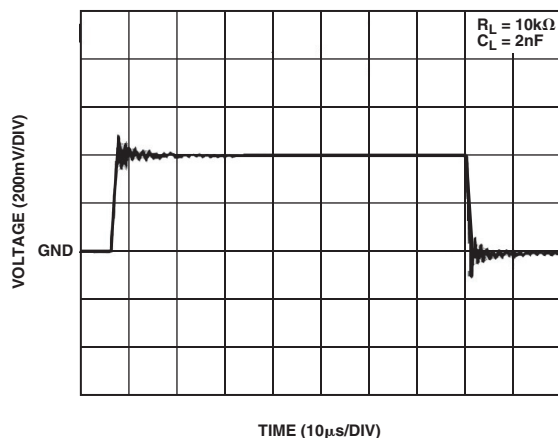


Figure 5b. Capacitive Load Drive without Resistor

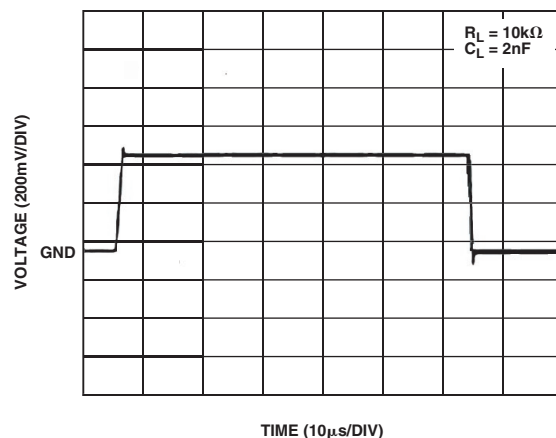


Figure 5c. Capacitive Load Drive with Resistor

EXTERNAL COMPENSATION TECHNIQUES

Series Resistor Compensation

The use of external compensation networks may be required to optimize certain applications. Figure 5a is a typical representation of a series resistor compensation for stabilizing an op amp driving capacitive load. The stabilizing effect of the series resistor isolates the op amp output and the feedback network from the capacitive load. The required amount of series resistance depends on the part used, but values of $5\ \Omega$ to $50\ \Omega$ are usually sufficient to prevent local resonance. The disadvantages of this technique are a reduction in gain accuracy and extra distortion when driving nonlinear loads.

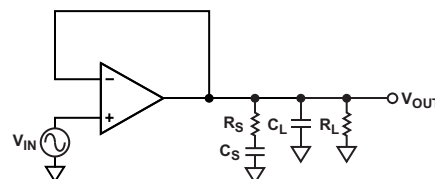


Figure 6a. Snubber Network

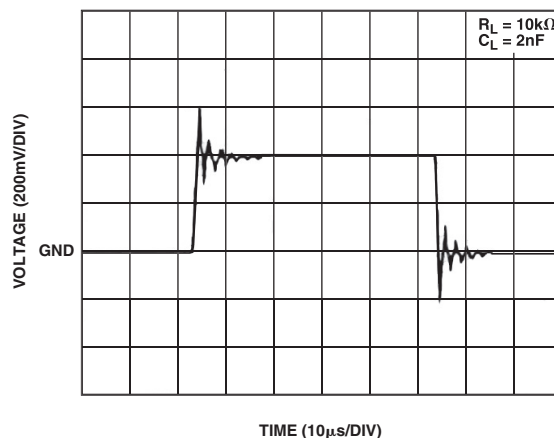


Figure 6b. Capacitive Load Drive without Snubber

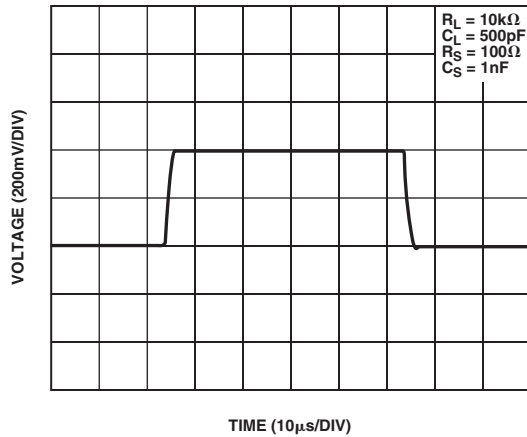


Figure 6c. Capacitive Load Drive with the Snubber

Snubber Network

Another way to stabilize an op amp driving a capacitive load is with the use of a snubber, as shown in Figure 6a. This method presents the significant advantage of not reducing the output swing because there is not any isolation resistor in the signal path. Also, the use of the snubber does not degrade the gain accuracy or cause extra distortion when driving a nonlinear load. The exact R_S and C_S combinations can be determined experimentally.

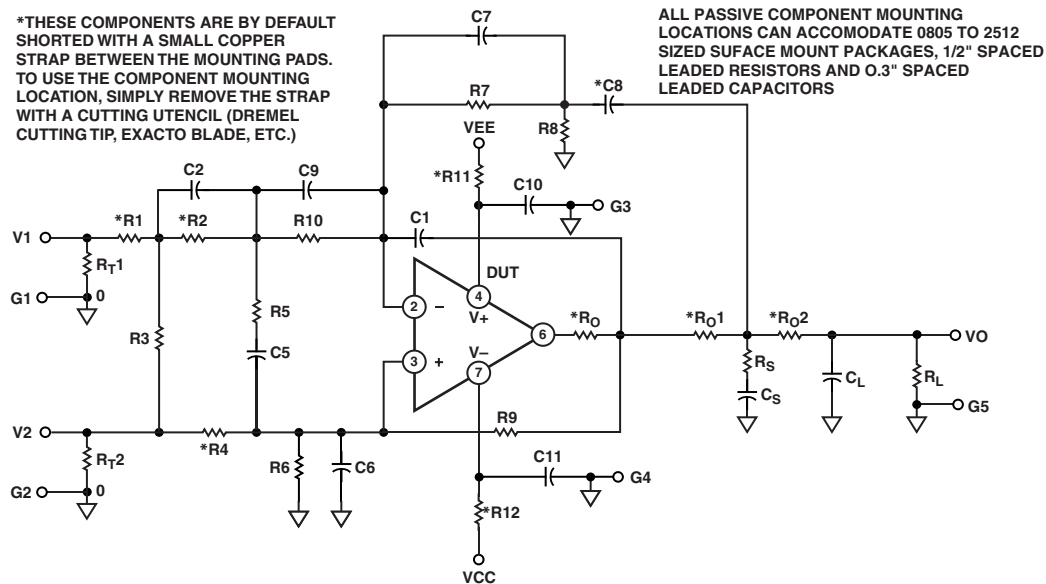


Figure 7. EVAL-PRAOPAMP-1R Electrical Schematic

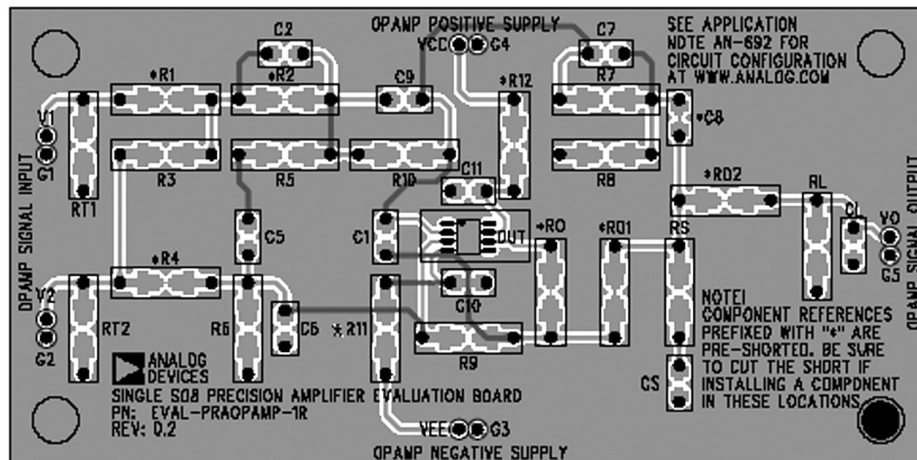


Figure 8. EVAL-PRAOPAMP-1R Board Layout Patterns