

# OSCILLATORS

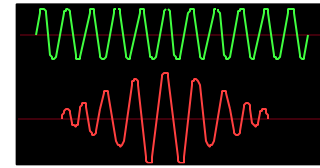
By Edgar Sánchez-Sinencio

- Oscillator is a system that is able to produce independently bounded and permanent oscillations of at least one of the variables that describe it.
- Types of Oscillators:
  - **Periodic.** This oscillator has an spectrum consisting of a fundamental frequency plus and infinite number of harmonics.
  - **Pseudo-periodic.** The spectrum consists of more than one frequencies not related to each other.
  - **Chaotic.** The spectrum of the response is flat. That is, it contains frequency components of all frequencies.

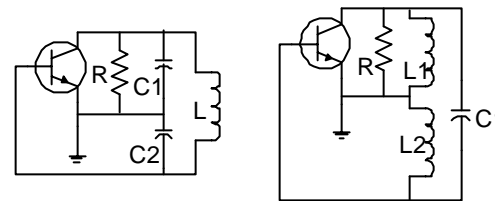
For sinusoidal oscillators a figure of merit is the distortion which is characterized by the Total Harmonic Distortion (THD)

- Oscillator Implementations
  - Ring Oscillators
  - LC Tuned
  - Crystal
  - Relaxation
  - Bandpass Filter- based
  - Quadrature
  - YIG Oscillators
  - Dielectric Resonance Oscillators
- An oscillator consists of three main components:
  - An active device that acts as an amplifier and
  - a feedback network to provide positive feedback in the system, and
  - a non-linear control mechanism to stabilize the amplitude
- Design Specs
  - Low Noise
  - High Efficiency
  - Temperature Stability
  - Bandwidth
  - Linear and Wideband Tunability
  - Low Cost
  - Reliability

# SINUSOIDAL OSCILLATORS



There are a number of circuit implementations of sinusoidal oscillators. In traditional communication circuits oscillators use one transistor, R's, C's and sometimes inductors. These filters were often used in RF circuits. Current RF oscillators used either ring oscillators or LC tuned oscillators. The last one consists of differential pairs and inductor(s) and capacitor(s)



In these notes we will first focus more on oscillators based on *state-variable structures* (SVS). We will discuss several implementations and the design procedures.

# ***SINUSOIDAL OSCILLATORS***

**A sinusoidal** oscillator is composed of:

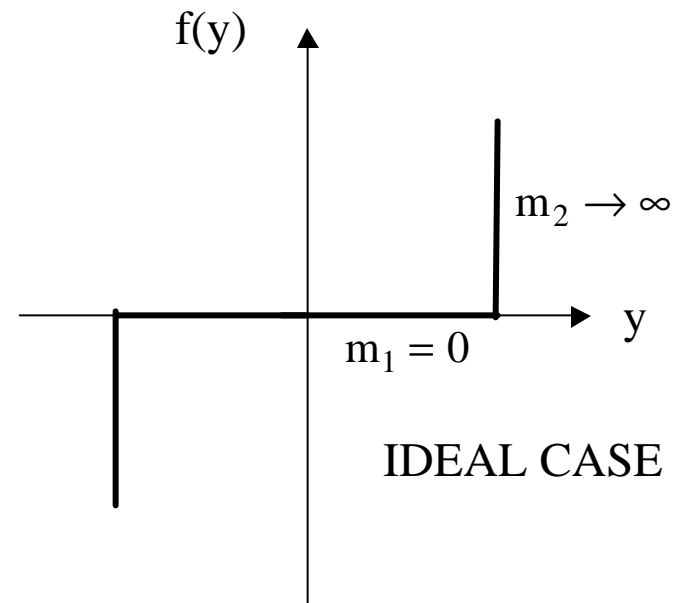
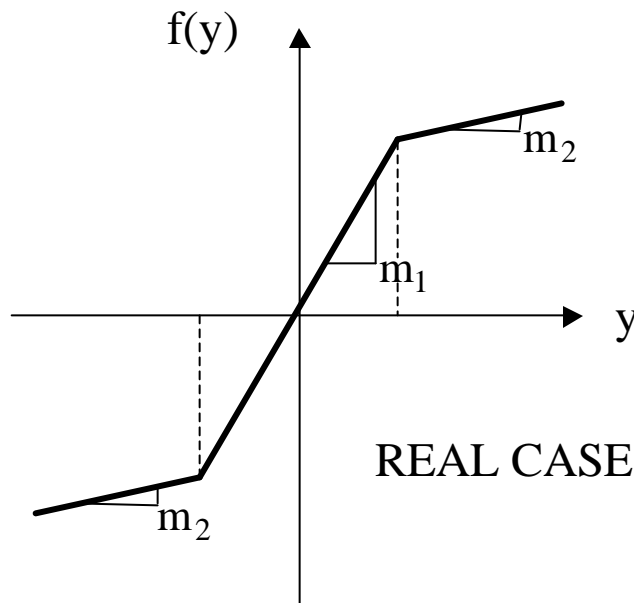
1. A linear circuit that sets the oscillation frequency.
2. An active element that gains power at the frequency of oscillation.
3. A nonlinear mechanism to stabilize the amplitude.

Nonlinear  
Mechanism

Static, when its input-output characteristic is fixed in time, as in a hard limiting device or an amplifier nonlinear gain.

Dynamic, when its characteristic changes in time as in an AGC.

# Examples of Nonlinear (static) Characteristics

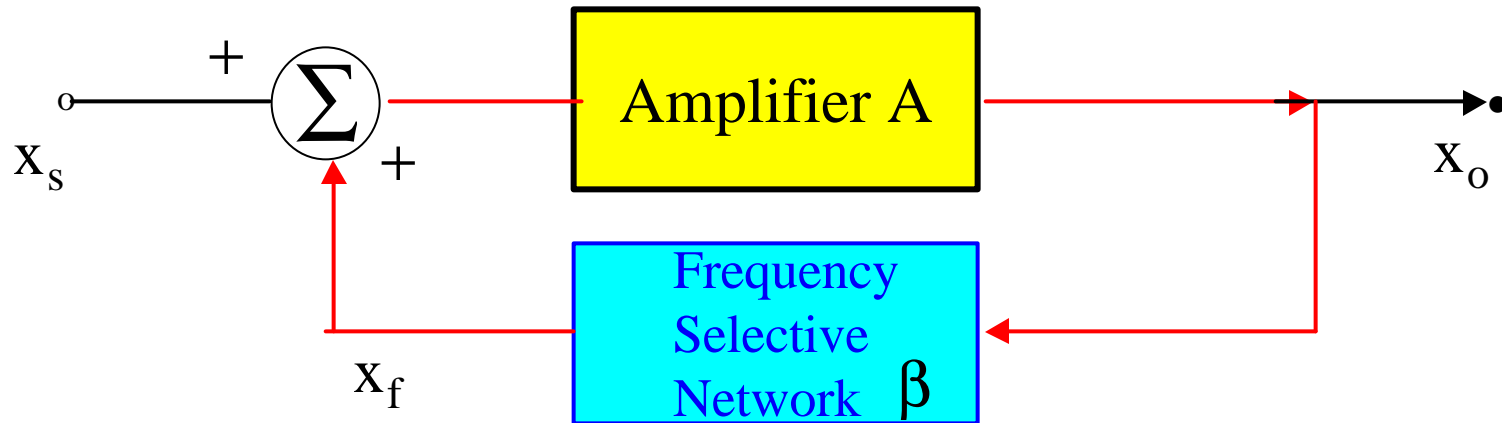


There are a number of topologies yielding sinusoidal oscillators. In our discussion we will first present two popular types in frequency ranges below hundreds of MHz:

- i) **Quadrature Oscillator**
- ii) **Bandpass - based**

# OSCILLATORS

Fundamentals. **Linear Aspects:** Oscillation conditions.



$$A_f = \frac{x_o}{x_s} = \frac{A}{1 - \beta A} = \frac{A(s)}{1 - \beta(s) A(s)}$$

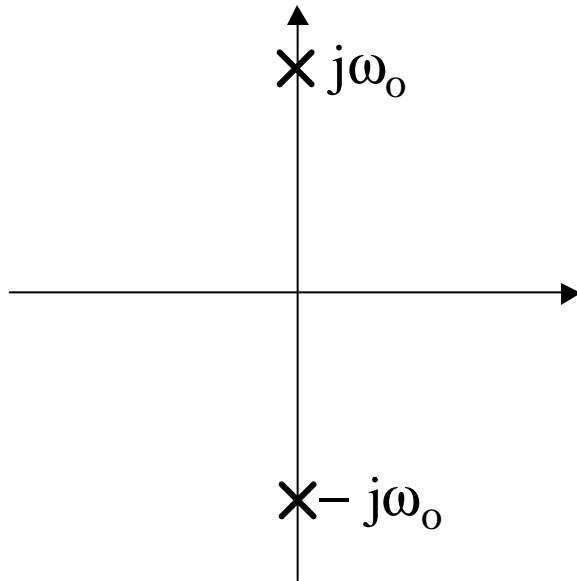
$$D(s) = 1 - \beta(s) A(s) = 1 - L(s)$$

$$L(j\omega_o) \triangleq A(j\omega_o) \beta(j\omega_o) = 1 \quad \text{Barkhausen Criteria}$$

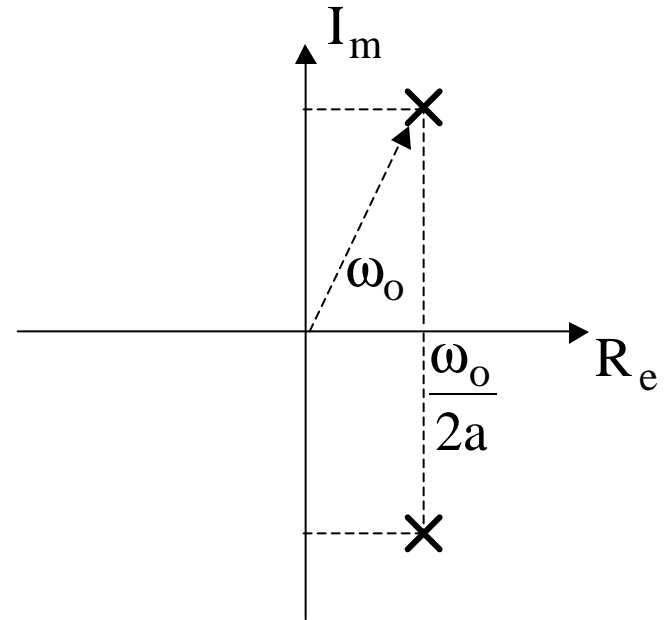
Note that for the circuit to oscillate at one frequency the oscillation criterion should be satisfied at one frequency only; otherwise the resulting waveform will not be a simple sinusoid.

# Need of Nonlinear Amplitude Control

Location of poles



Not practical  
why?

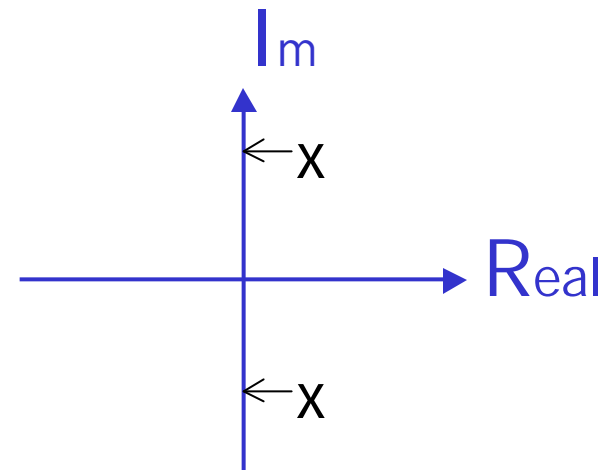


Practical.  
How do you push  
the poles into the  
 $j\omega$  axis?



In the ideal case this is easy to design, but in the real case there a lot of system parameters that can change the poles due to their physical characteristics.

Therefore, the poles should not lie on the imaginary axis. One should design the poles so that they lie in the right half of the s-plane. This creates positive feedback and guarantees that the circuit will oscillate. How far should we place the poles ?



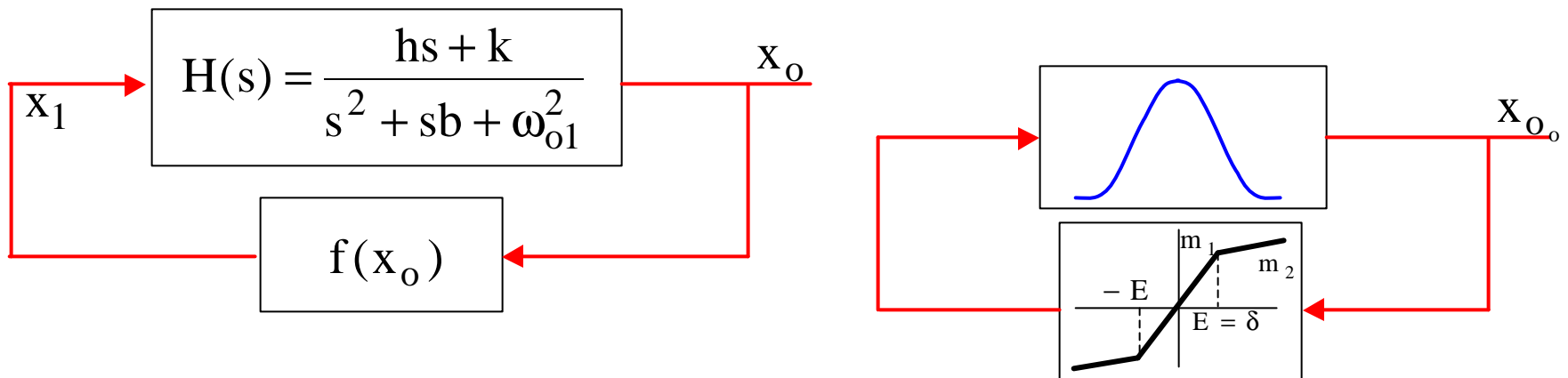


## Oscillation Criterion

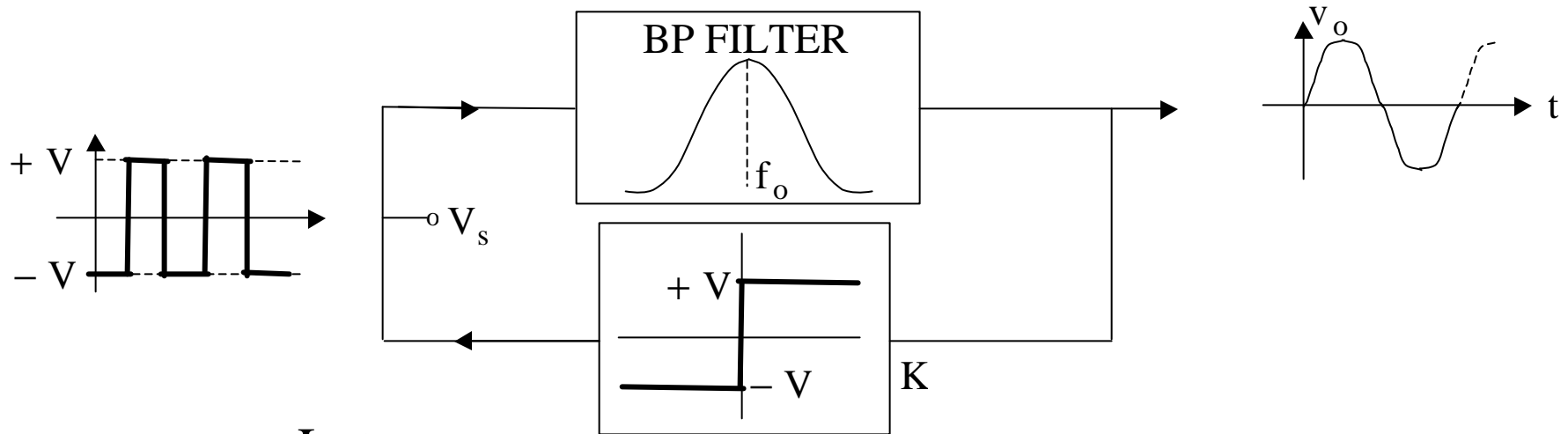
$$L(j\omega_o) \triangleq A(j\omega_o) \beta(j\omega_o) = 1$$

At  $\omega_o$  the phase of  $L(j\omega_o)$  should be zero. This is known as the Barkhausen Criterion

Next we describe the BP - based oscillator:



# BP Based Oscillator



Let

$$H_{BP}(s) = \frac{K_1 s}{s^2 + \frac{\omega_o}{Q} s + \omega_o^2}$$

$$D(s) = 1 - KH_{BP}(s)$$

$$\left( s^2 + \frac{\omega_o}{Q} s + \omega_o^2 \right) D(s) = s^2 + \frac{\omega_o}{Q} s + \omega_o^2 - KK_1 s$$

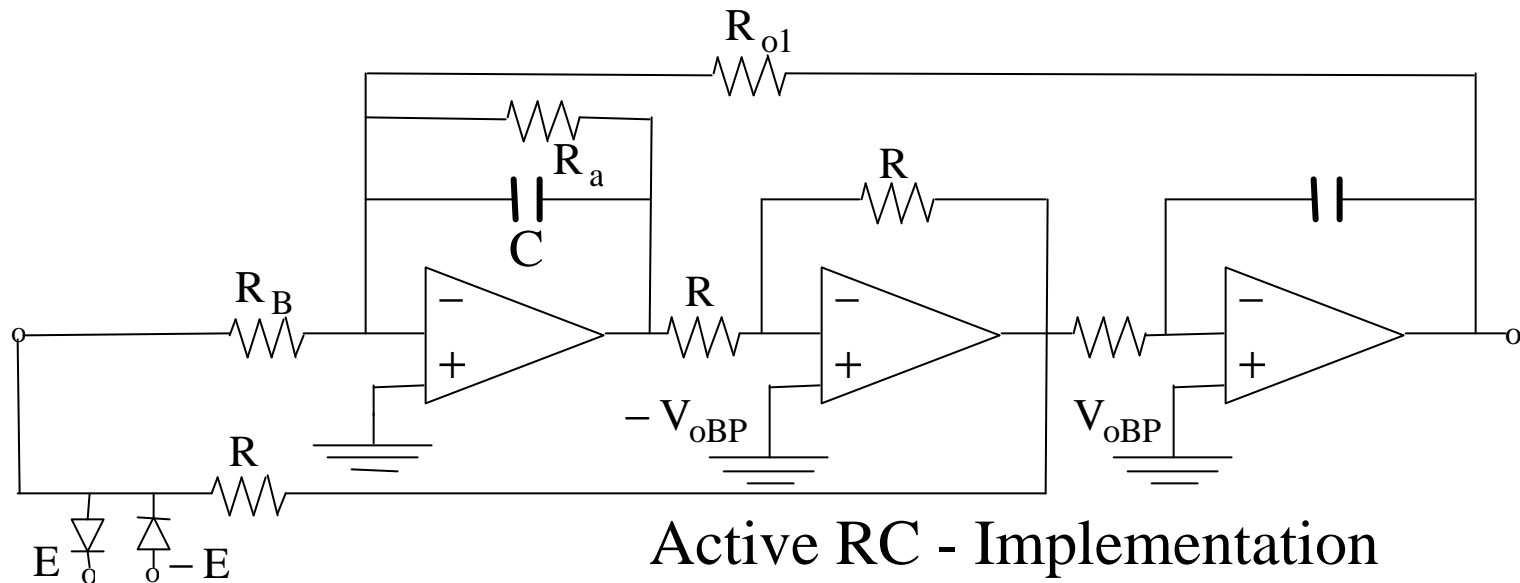
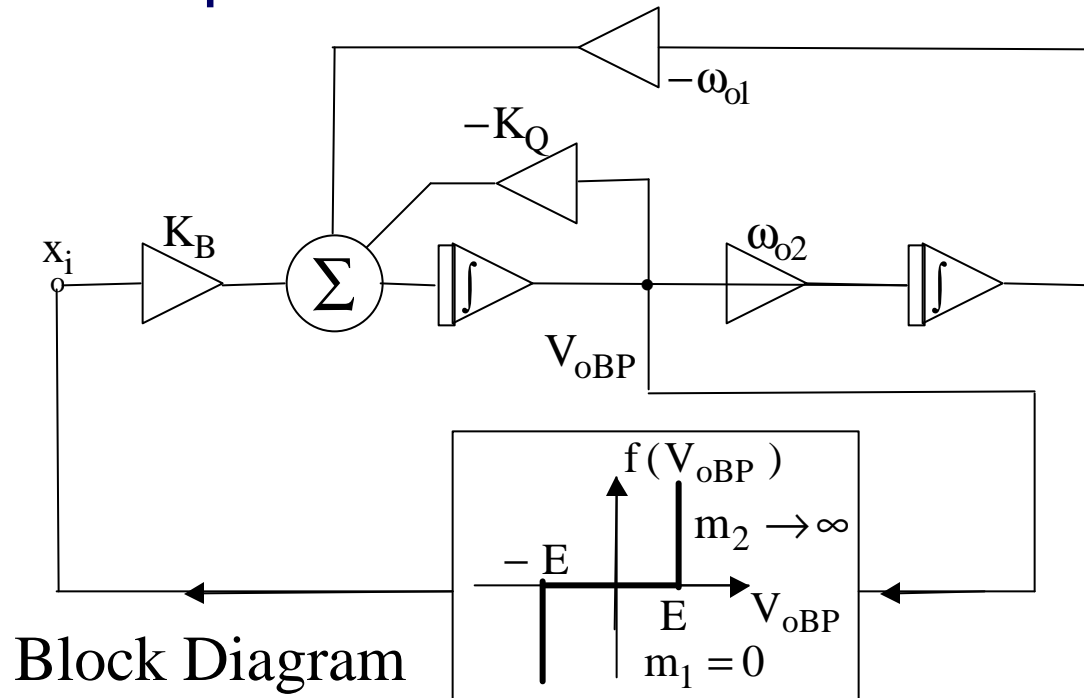
Characteristic Equation

$$s^2 - s \left( KK_1 - \frac{\omega_o}{Q} \right) + \omega_o^2$$

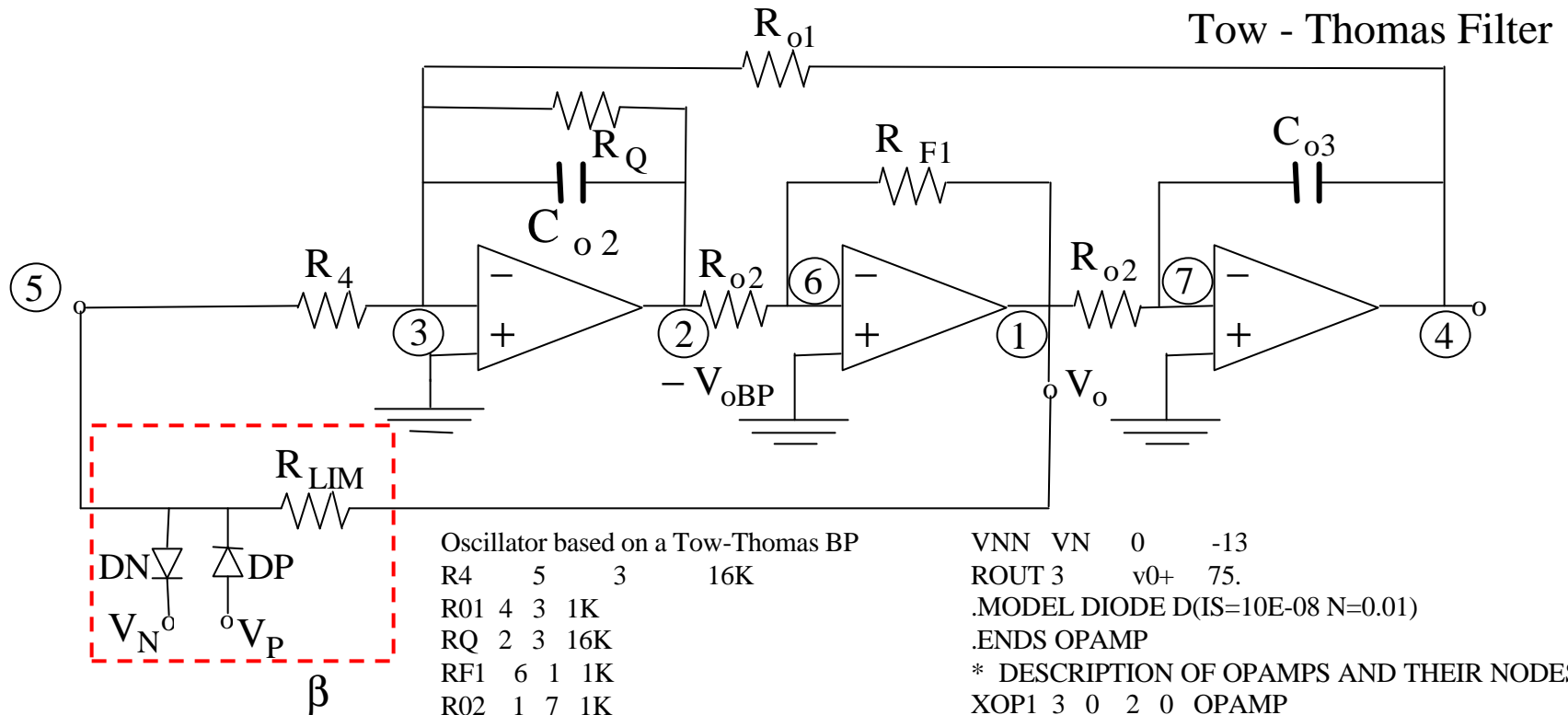
$$KK_1 > \frac{\omega_o}{Q}$$

i.e. positive feedback

# A bandpass based Sinusoidal Oscillator



# BP Oscillator

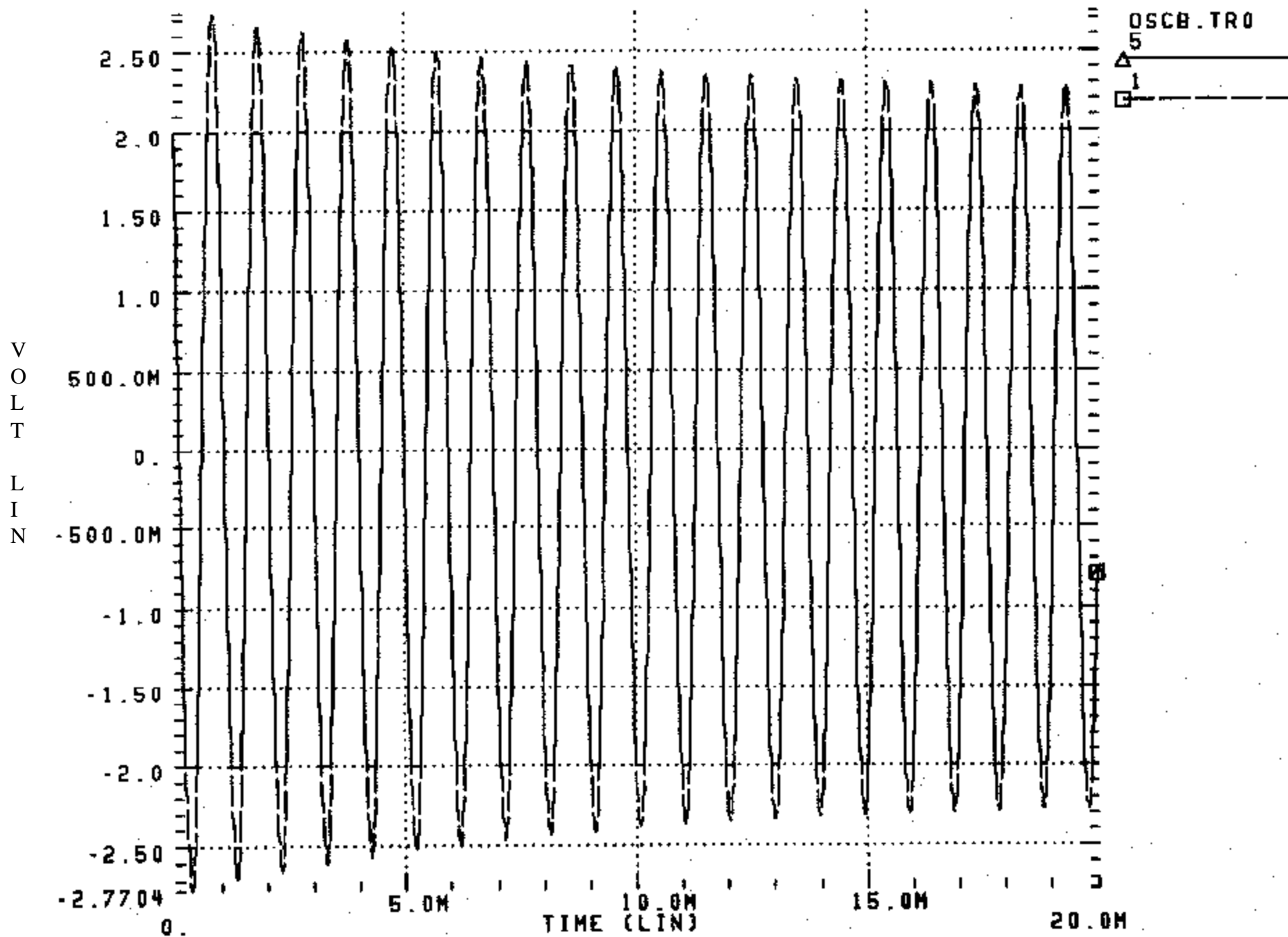


Oscillator based on a Tow-Thomas BP

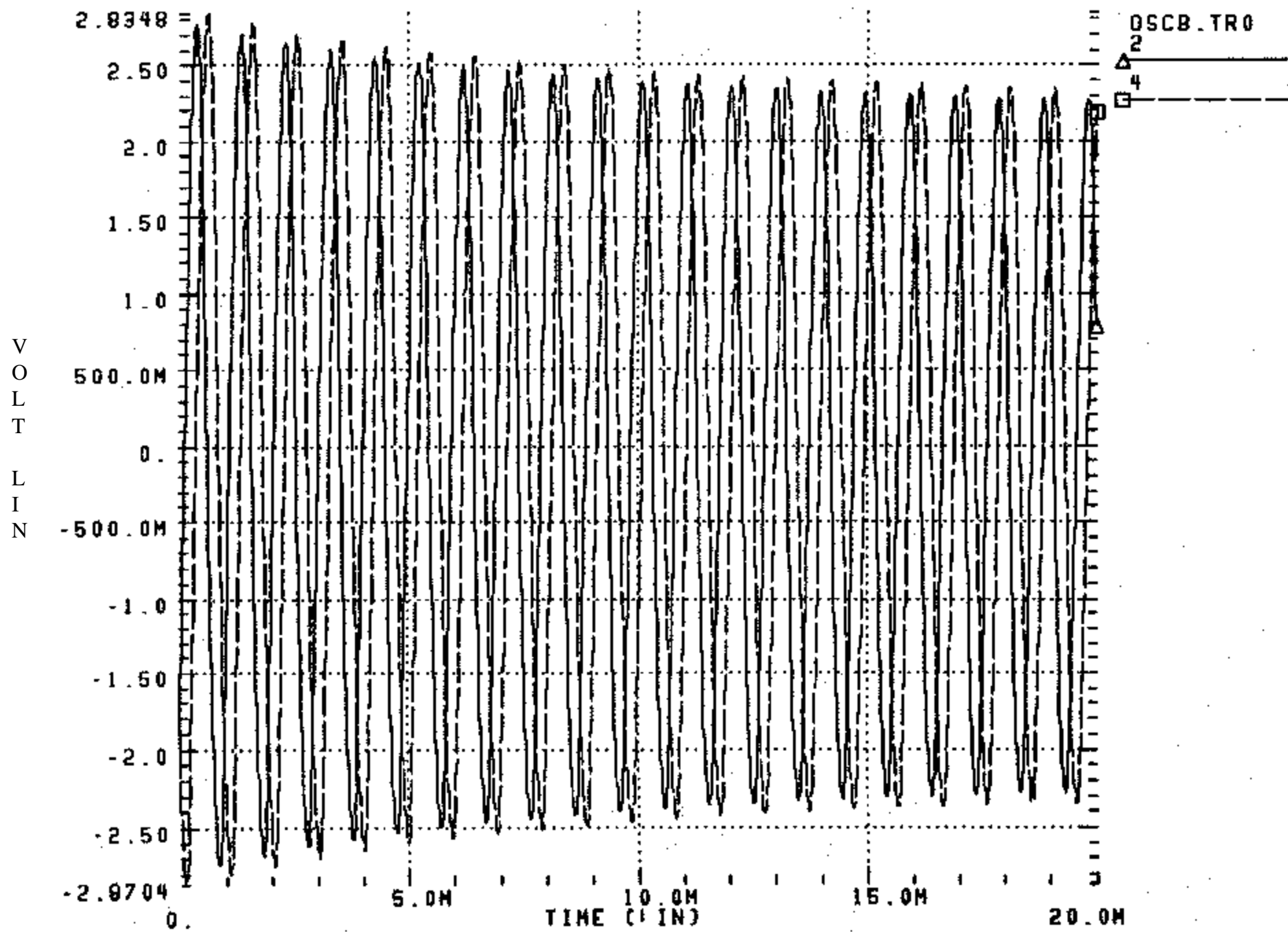
```
R4      5      3      16K
R01     4      3      1K
RQ      2      3      16K
RF1     6      1      1K
R02     1      7      1K
C02     3      2      0.1591549U
R03     2      6      1K
C03     7      4      0.1501549U
.SUBCKT OPAMP vi- vi+ v0+ v0-
*
*
RIN     vi-    vi+    10E6
EIN     1      0      vi+    vi-    2E05
R3DB    1      2      1K
C3DB    2      0      0.159E-04
EOUT    3      VO-    2      0      1
DP      2      VP      DIODE
DN      VN      2      DIODE
VPP     VP      0      13
```

```
VNN     VN      0      -13
ROUT    3      v0+    75.
.MODEL  DIODE D(IS=10E-08 N=0.01)
.ENDS OPAMP
* DESCRIPTION OF OPAMPS AND THEIR NODES
XOP1    3      0      2      0      OPAMP
XOP2    6      0      1      0      OPAMP
XOP3    7      0      4      0      OPAMP
*LIMITER CIRCUIT DESCRIPTION
RLIM     1      5      200
DP        5      VP      DL
DN        VN      5      DL
.MODEL    DL      D (IS=10E-09 N=0.0001)
VNL       VN      0      -2
VPL       VP      0      2
.TRAN     5U      20m     UIC
.FOURIER          57      V(1)      V(2)      V(4)
.IC       V(1)=2 V(2)=-2 V(4)=-2 V(5)=2
.OPTIONS POST
.END
```

OSCILLATOR BASED ON A TOW-THOMAS BP  
95/04/22 15:41:53



OSCILLATOR BASED ON A TOW-THOMAS BP  
95/04/22 15:41:53



Oscillator based on a Tow-Thomas BP

R4 5 3 16K

R01 4 3 1K

RQ 2 3 16K

R 6 1 1K

R 1 7 1K

C02 3 2 0.1591549U

R03 2 6 1K

C03 7 4 0.1501549U

.SUBCKT OPAMP vi- vi+ v0+ v0-

\*

\*

RIN vi- vi+ 10E6

EIN 1 0 vi+ vi- 2E05

R3DB 1 2 1K

C3DB 2 0 0.159E-04

EOUT 3 V0- 2 0 1

DP 2 VP DIODE

DN VN 2 DIODE

VPP VP 0 13

VNN VN 0 -13

ROUT 3 v0+ 75.

.MODEL DIODE D(IS=10E-08 N=0.01)

.ENDS OPAMP

\* DESCRIPTION OF OPAMPS AND THEIR NODES

XOP1 3 0 2 0 OPAMP

XOP2 6 0 1 0 OPAMP

XOP3 7 0 4 0 OPAMP

\*LIMITER Hysteresis CIRCUIT DESCRIPTION

RH1 1 15 2K

RH2 15 5 13K

XOP4 0 15 5 0 OPAMP

\* DESIRED ANALYSIS RESPONSE

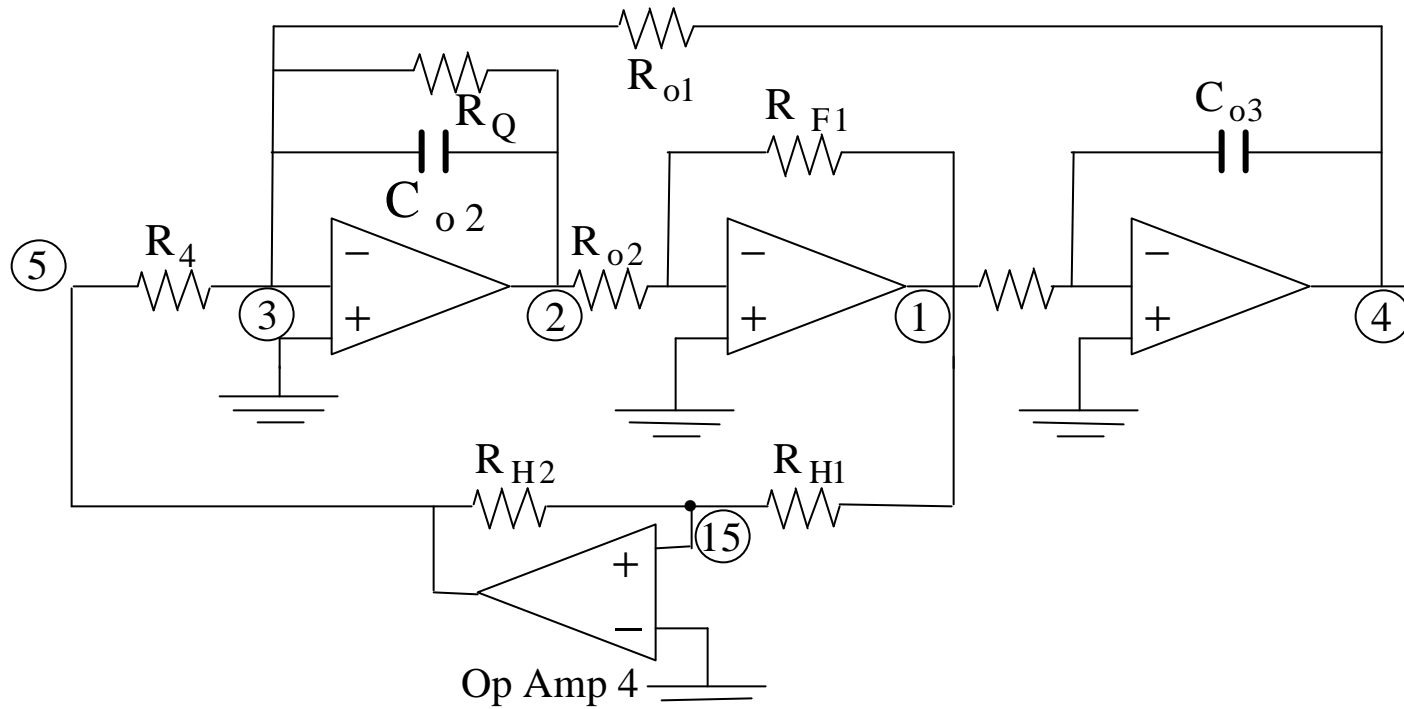
.TRAN 5U 20m UIC

.FOURIER 57 V(1) V(2) V(4)

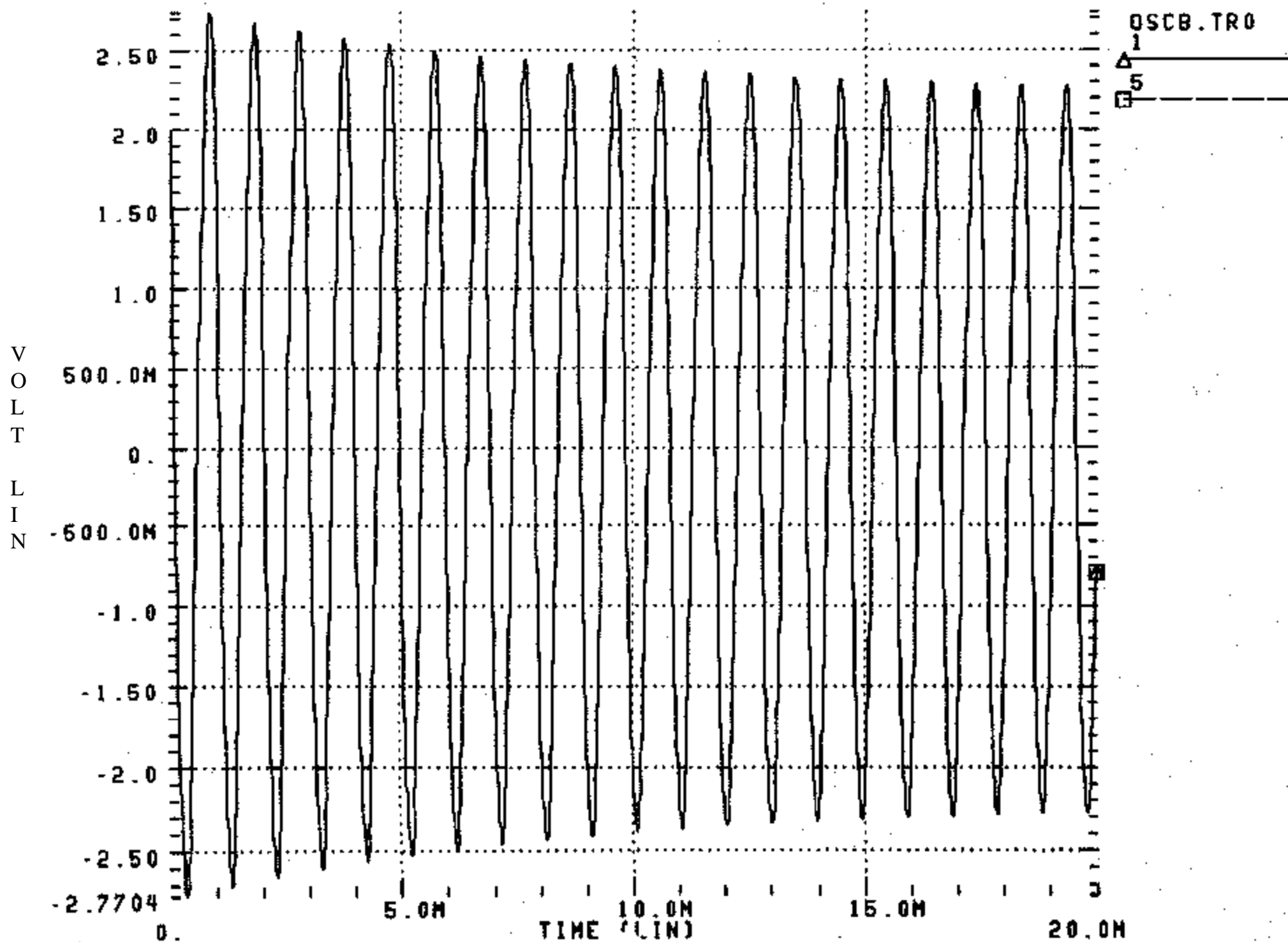
.IC V(1)=2 V(2)=-2 V(4)=-2 V(5)=2

.OPTIONS POST

.END

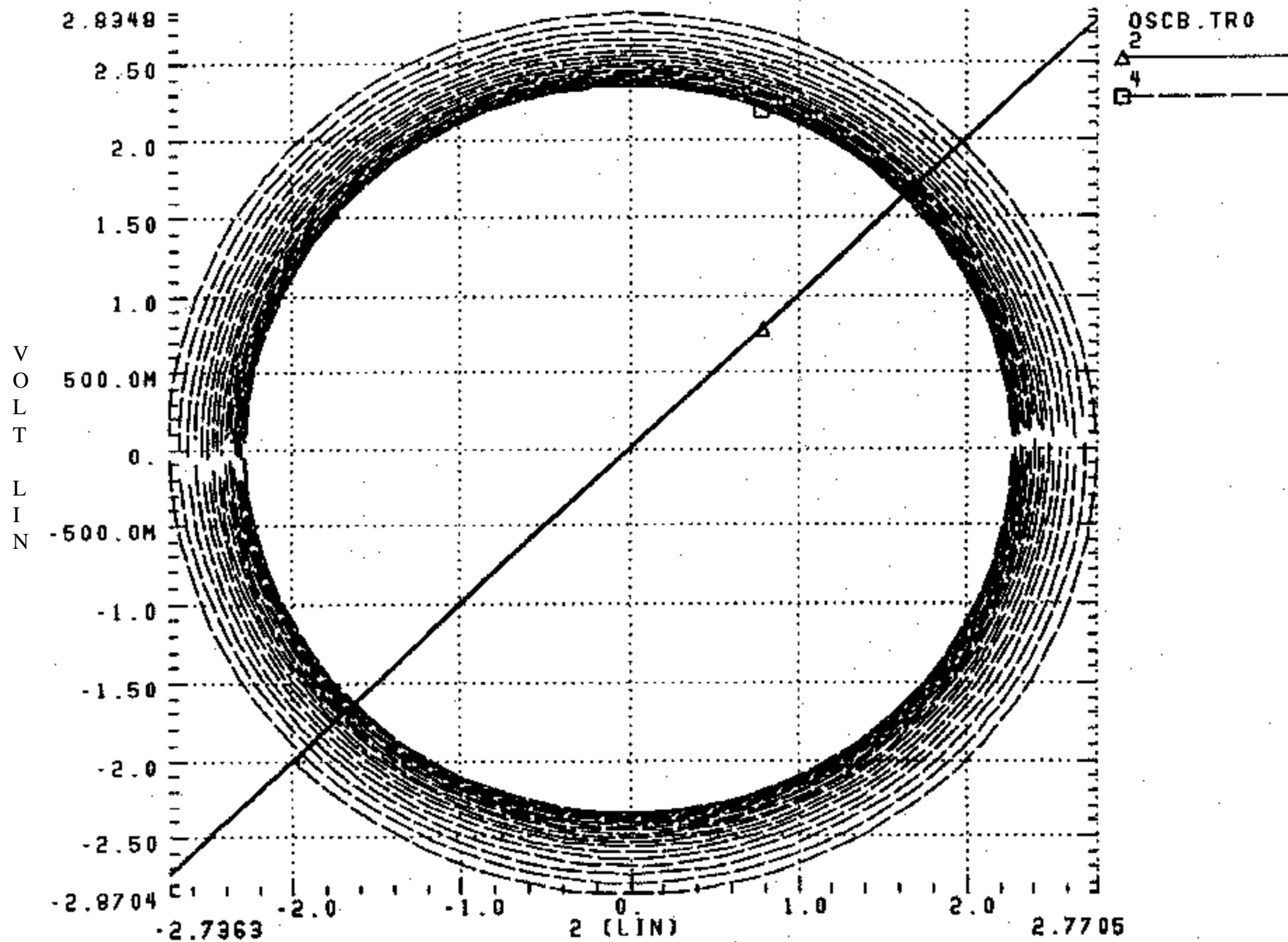


OSCILLATOR BASED ON A TOW-THOMAS BP  
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OSCILLATOR BASED ON A TOW-THOMAS BP  
95/04/22 15:41:53



Oscillator based on a Tow-Thomas BP

R4 5 3 35K

R01 4 3 1.4K

RQ 1 3 9.6K

R 6 1 1K

R 1 7 1K

C02 3 2 0.1591549U

R03 2 6 1K

C03 7 4 0.1501549U

.SUBCKT OPAMP vi- vi+ v0+ v0-

\*

\*

RIN vi- vi+ 10E6

EIN 1 0 vi+ vi- 2E05

R3DB 1 2 1K

C3DB 2 0 0.159E-04

EOUT 3 V0- 2 0 1

DP 2 VP DIODE

DN VN 2 DIODE

VPP VP 0 13

VNN VN 0 -13

ROUT 3 v0+ 75.

.MODEL DIODE D(IS=10E-08 N=0.01)

.ENDS OPAMP

\* DESCRIPTION OF OPAMPS AND THEIR NODES

XOP1 3 0 2 0 OPAMP

XOP2 6 0 1 0 OPAMP

XOP3 7 0 4 0 OPAMP

\*LIMITER Hysteresis CIRCUIT DESCRIPTION

RH1 1 15 2K

RH2 15 5 13K

XOP4 0 15 5 0 OPAMP

\* DESIRED ANALYSIS RESPONSE

.TRAN 5U 20m UIC

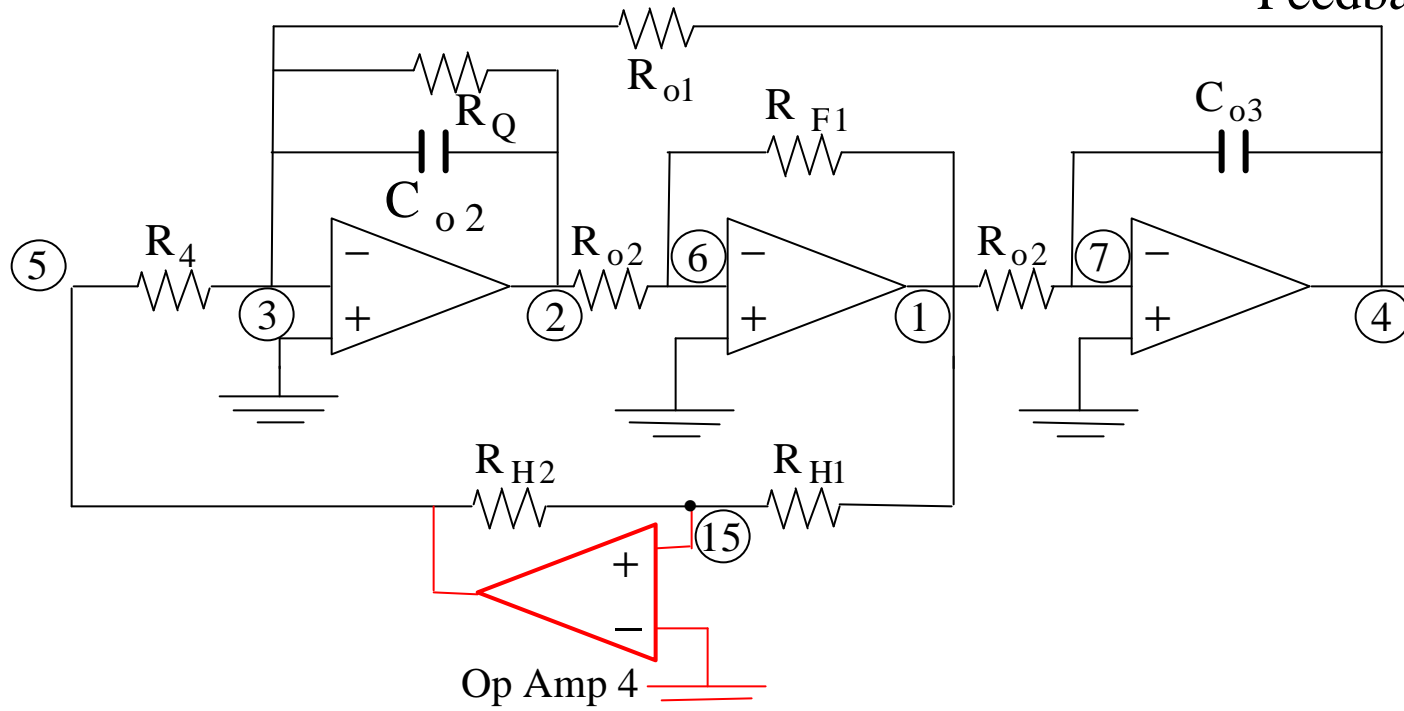
.FOURIER 57 V(1) V(2) V(4)

.IC V(1)=2 V(2)=-2 V(4)=-2 V(5)=2

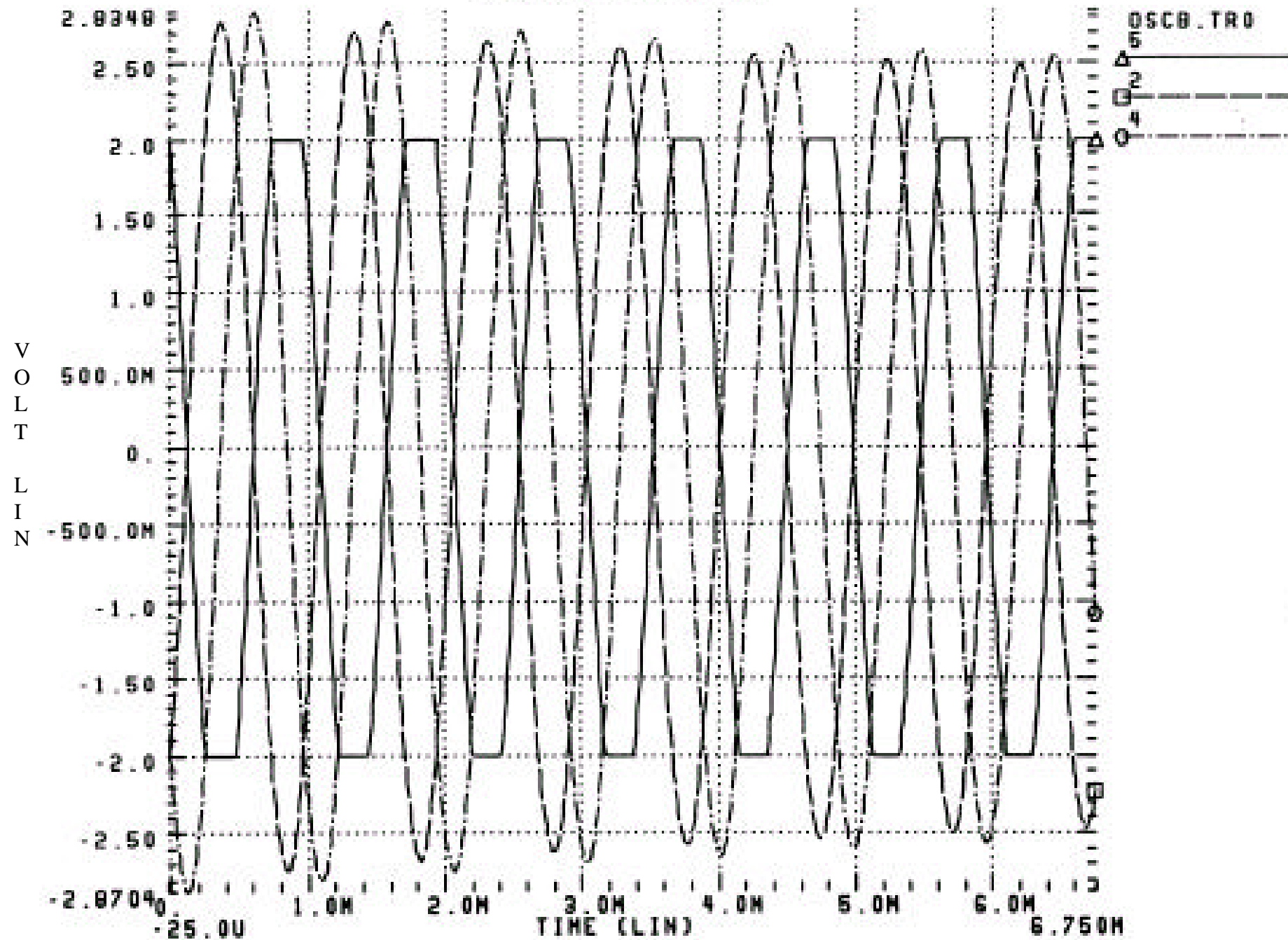
.OPTIONS POST

.END

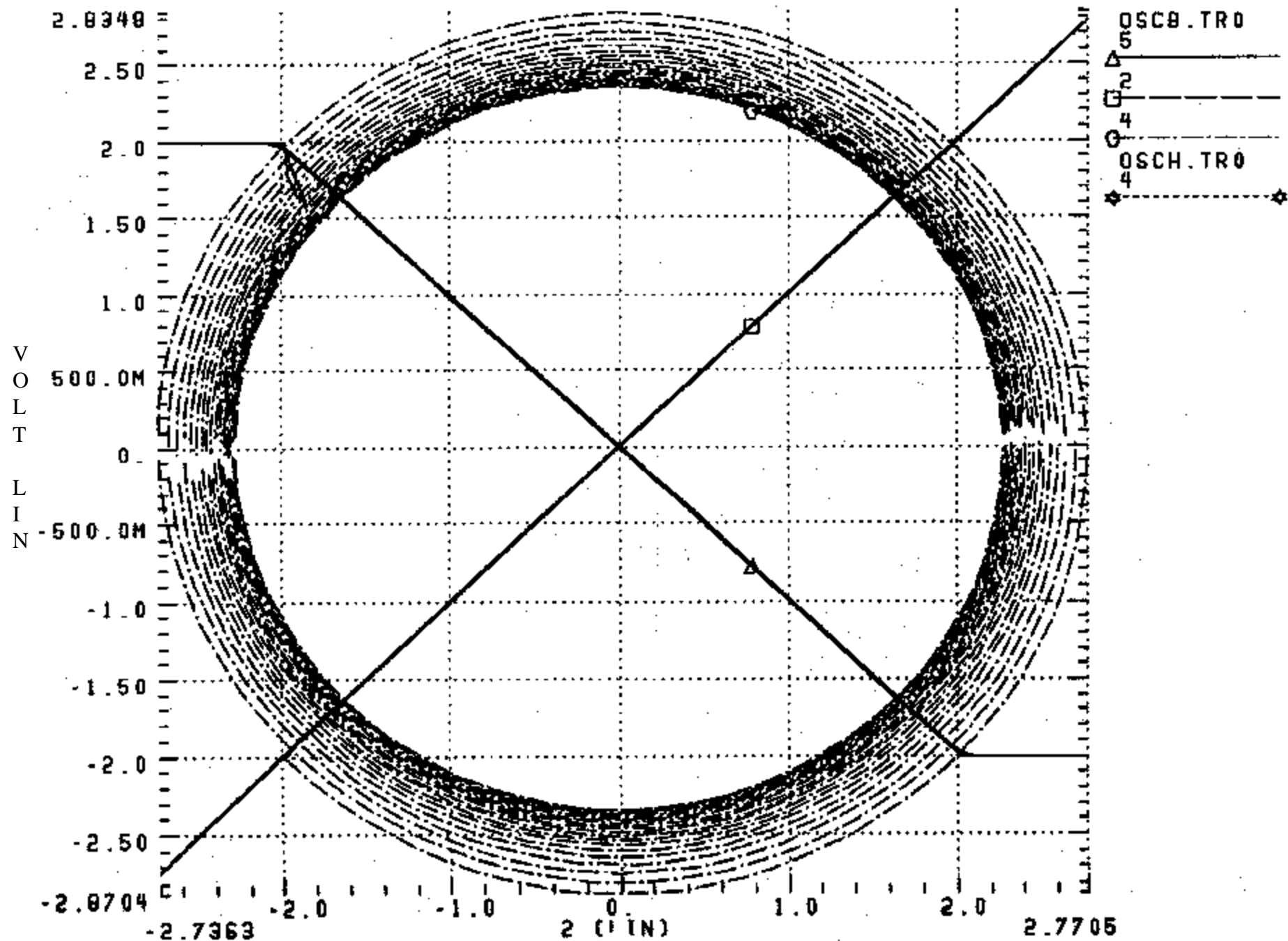
Double Positive  
Feedback

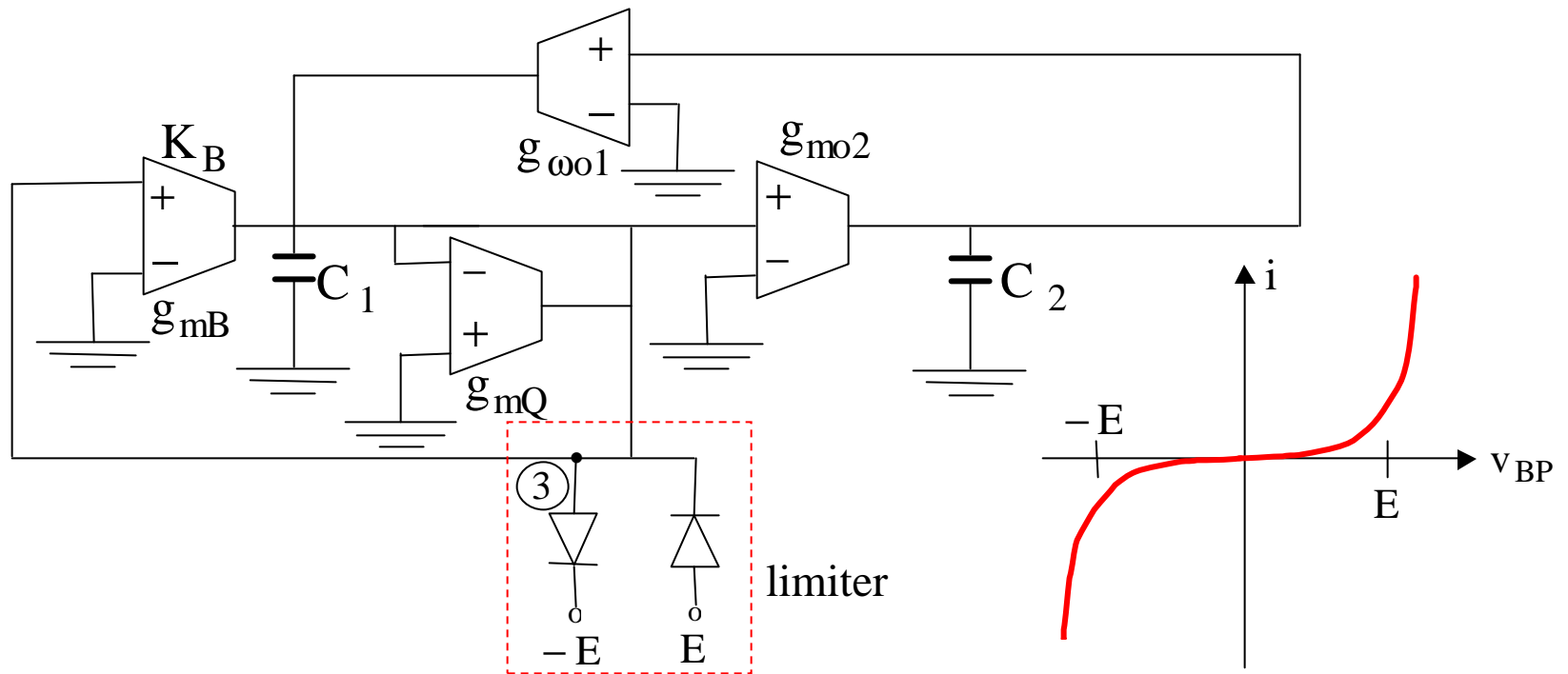


OSCILLATOR BASED ON A TOW-THOMAS BP  
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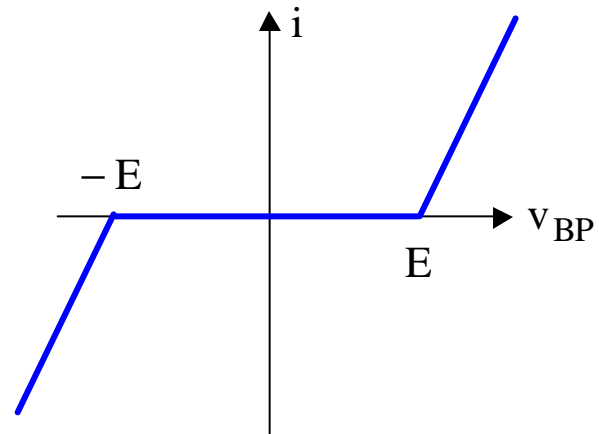
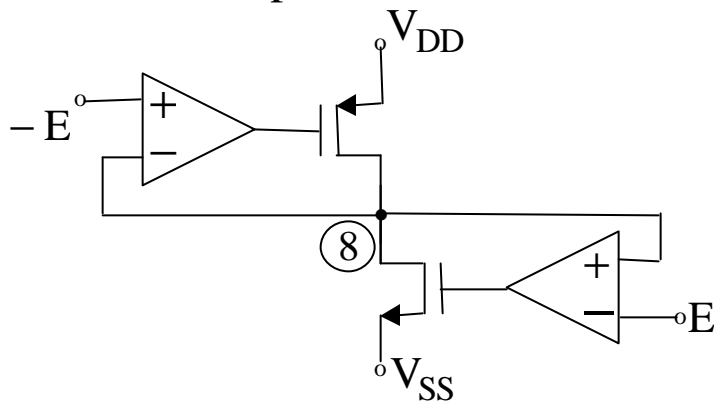
OSCILLATOR BASED ON A TOW-THOMAS BP  
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## OTA - C Bandpass Based Oscillator

Another possible limiter can be:



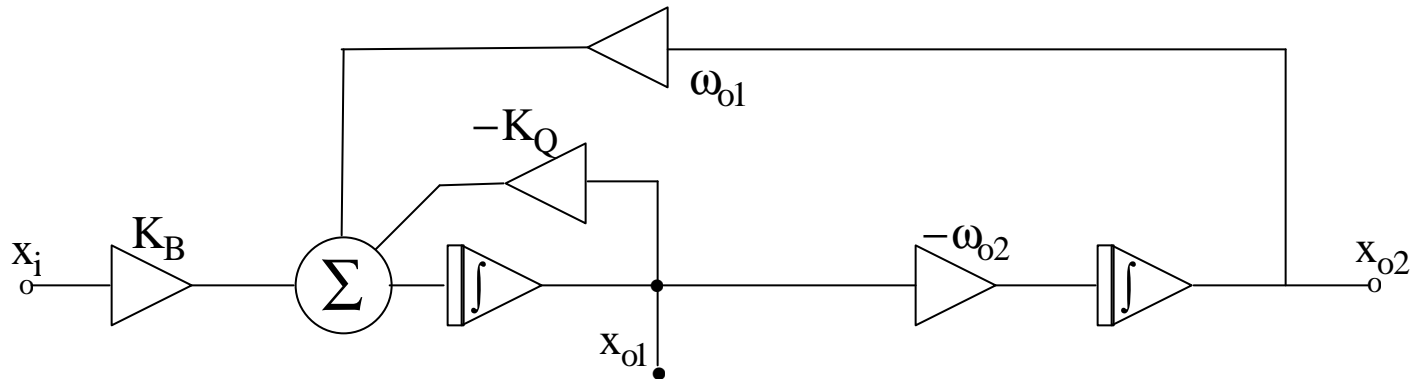
## Simulations

### Active-Filter Tuned Oscillator

#### Hints

- First design a band pass filter
  - High Q
  - Gain
- Next decide on type of limiter
- Finally be sure the path from the band pass output through the limiter to the input is positive feedback.

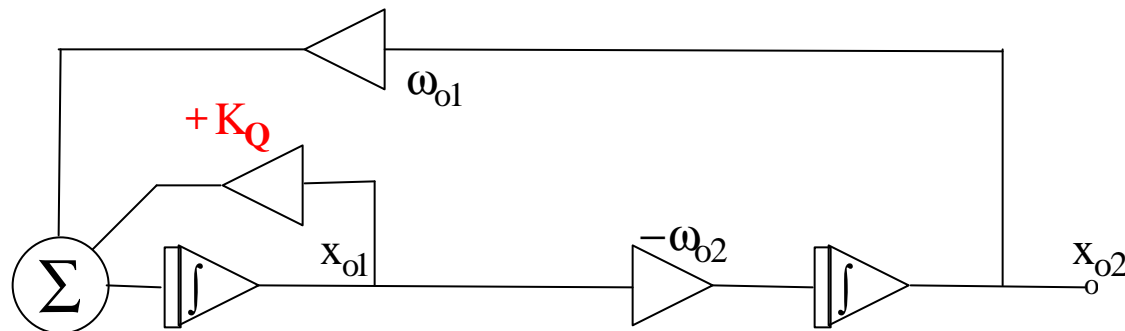
# Quadrature Oscillator



Two Integrator Loop Filter

$$H_1(s) = \frac{x_{o1}(s)}{x_i(s)} = \frac{\frac{K_B}{s}}{1 + \frac{K_Q}{s} + \frac{\omega_{o1} \cdot \omega_{o2}}{s^2}} = \frac{K_B s}{s^2 + K_Q s + \omega_{o1} \omega_{o2}}$$

$H_1(s)$  is a second-order bandpass. The topology of this integrator loop can be modified to yield a *quadrature oscillator*.



*Quadrature Oscillator Architecture*

Observe that the characteristic equation yields:

$$1 - \frac{K_Q}{s} + \frac{\omega_{o1}\omega_{o2}}{s^2} = 0$$

or

$$s^2 - K_Q s + \omega_{o1}\omega_{o2} = 0$$

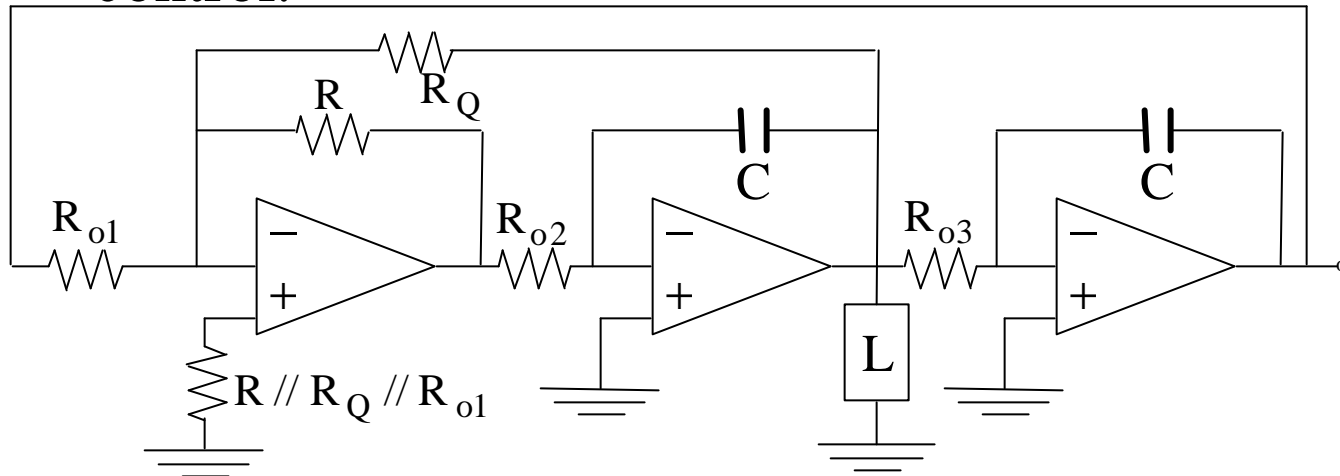
The roots are placed at

$$s_{1,2} = \frac{K_Q \pm \sqrt{K_Q^2 - 4\omega_{o1}\omega_{o2}}}{2} \quad \left| \quad \begin{array}{l} = \frac{K_Q}{2} \pm \frac{j}{2} \sqrt{4\omega_{o1}\omega_{o2} - K_Q^2} \\ K_Q^2 < 4\omega_{o1}\omega_{o2} \end{array} \right.$$

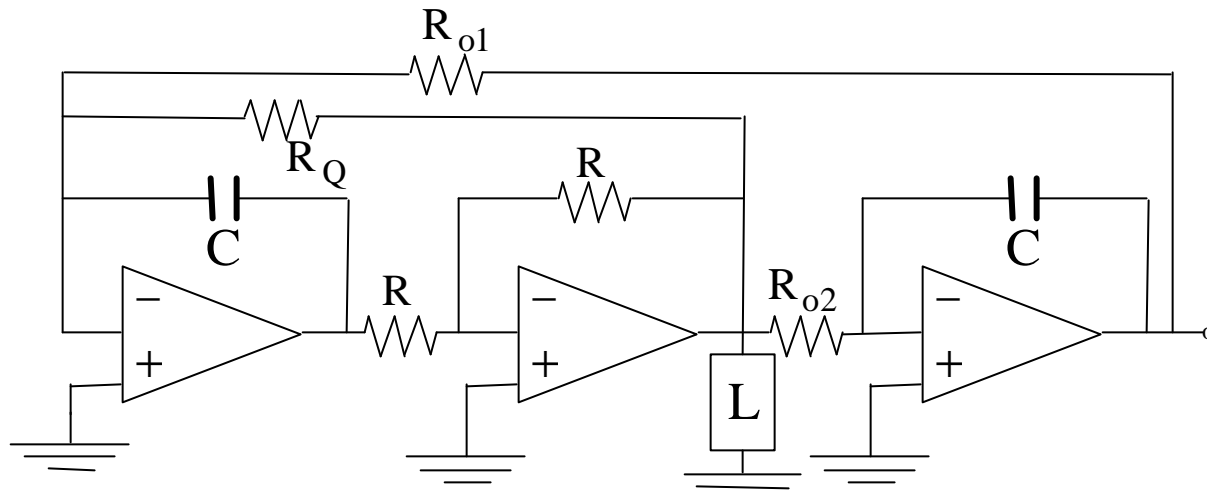


To provide sustained oscillations we need to locate the poles on the  $j\omega$  axis, this requires:

- i)  $K_Q = E$  small positive value
- ii) To limit the output by means of a nonlinear gain control.



One possible Quadrature Oscillator Structure



Oscillator at component level simulation

RO1 4 3 220K

RQ 1 3 510K

RF1 3 2 310K

RO2 2 6 100K

CO2 6 1 0.01U

RO3 1 7 100K

CO3 7 4 0.001U

.SUBCKT OPAMP vi- vi+ v0+ v0-

\*

\*

RIN vi- vi+ 10E6

BIN 1 0 vi+ vi- 2E05

R3DB 1 2 1K

C3DB 2 0 0.159E-04

BOUT 3 V0- 2 0 1

DP 2 VP DIODE

DN VN 2 DIODE

VPP VP 0 13

VNN VN 0 -13

ROOT 3 v0+ 75.

.MODEL DIODE D (IS=10E-0S N=0.001)

.ENDS OPAMP

\* DESCRIPTION OF OPAMPS AND THEIR NOOES

XOP1 3 0 2 0 OPAMP

XOP2 6 0 1 0 OPAMP

XOP3 7 0 4 0 OPAMP

.TRAN 10U 40m UIC

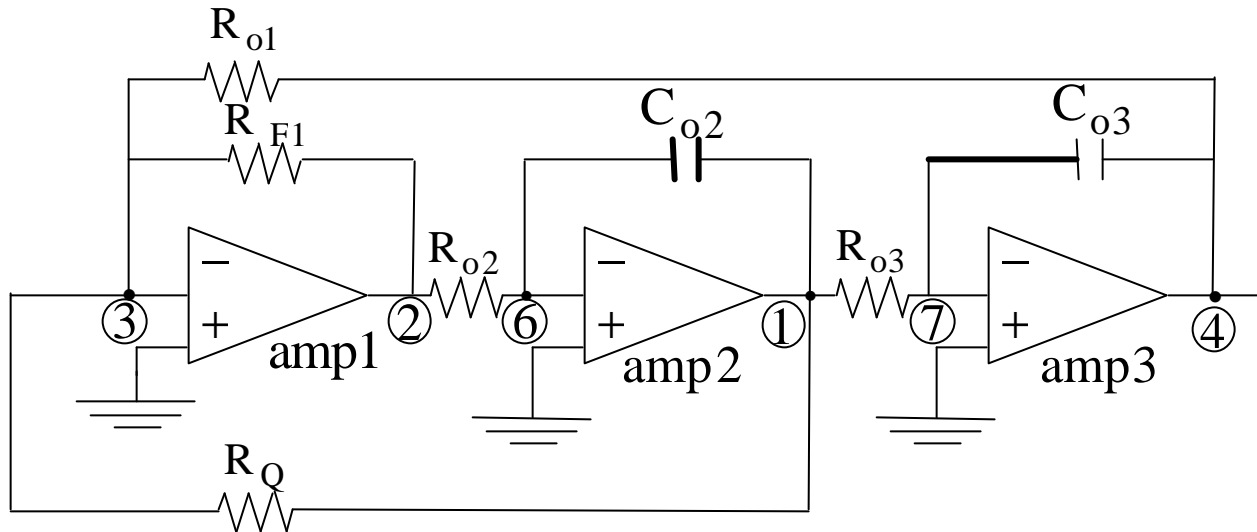
.FOURIER 57 V(1) V(2) V(4)

.IC V(1)=.2 V(2)=-.2 V(4)=-.2

.OPTIONS POST

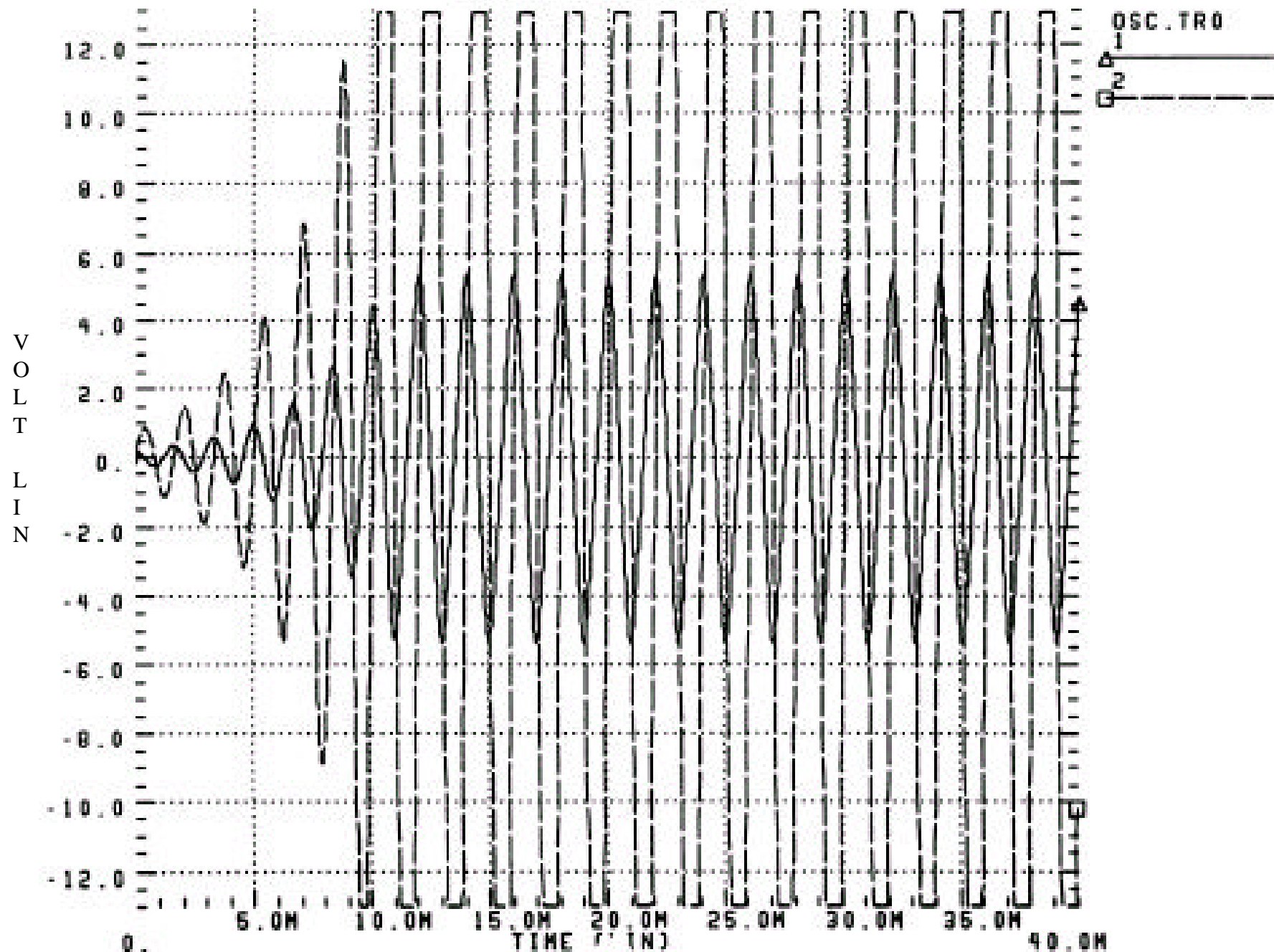
.OP .08

.END

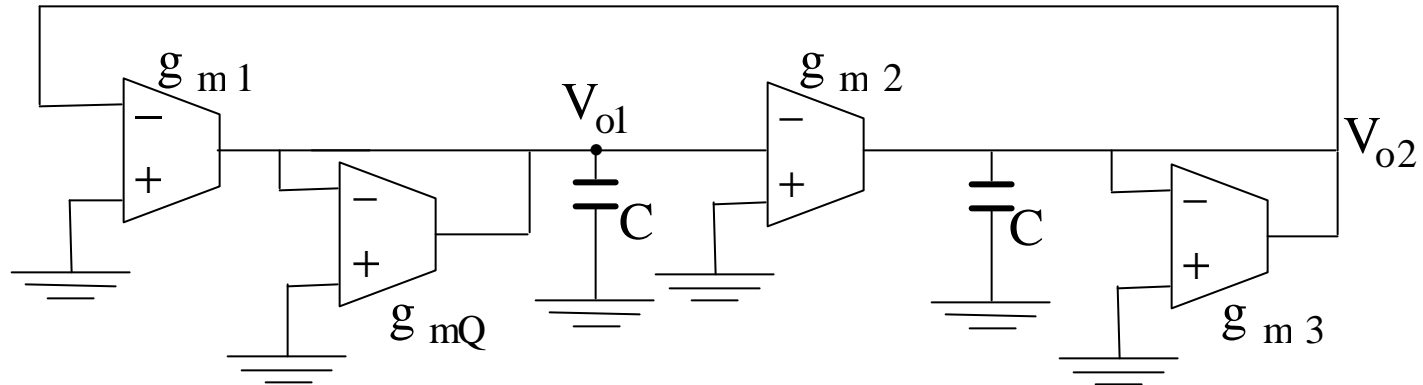


QUADRATURE OSCILLATOR  
(NO EXTERNAL LIMITER)

OSCILLATOR AT COMPONENT LEVEL SIMULATION  
95/04/22 11:53:54



# OTA-C QUADRATURE OSCILLATOR



Structure 1. Note the positive feedback in the main loop

$$V_{o1} = \frac{g_{m1} V_{o2}}{g_{mQ} + sC} \quad (1)$$

$$V_{o2} = \frac{g_{m2} V_{o1}}{g_{m3} + sC} \quad (2)$$

C.E

$$1 - \frac{g_{m1}}{g_{mQ} + sC} \frac{g_{m2}}{g_{m3} + sC} = 0$$

or

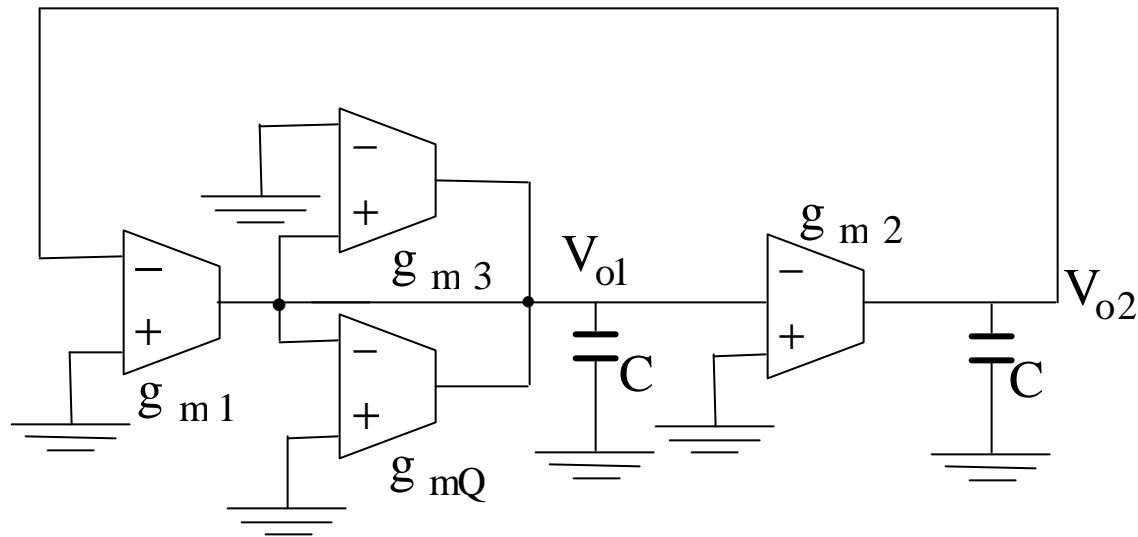
$$s^2 - K_Q s + \omega_{o1} \omega_{o2} = 0$$

Where

$$K_Q = \frac{g_{mQ} - g_{m3}}{C}$$

$$\omega_o^2 = \frac{g_{m1} g_{m2} - g_{mQ} g_{m3}}{C^2}$$

An alternative structure is considered next



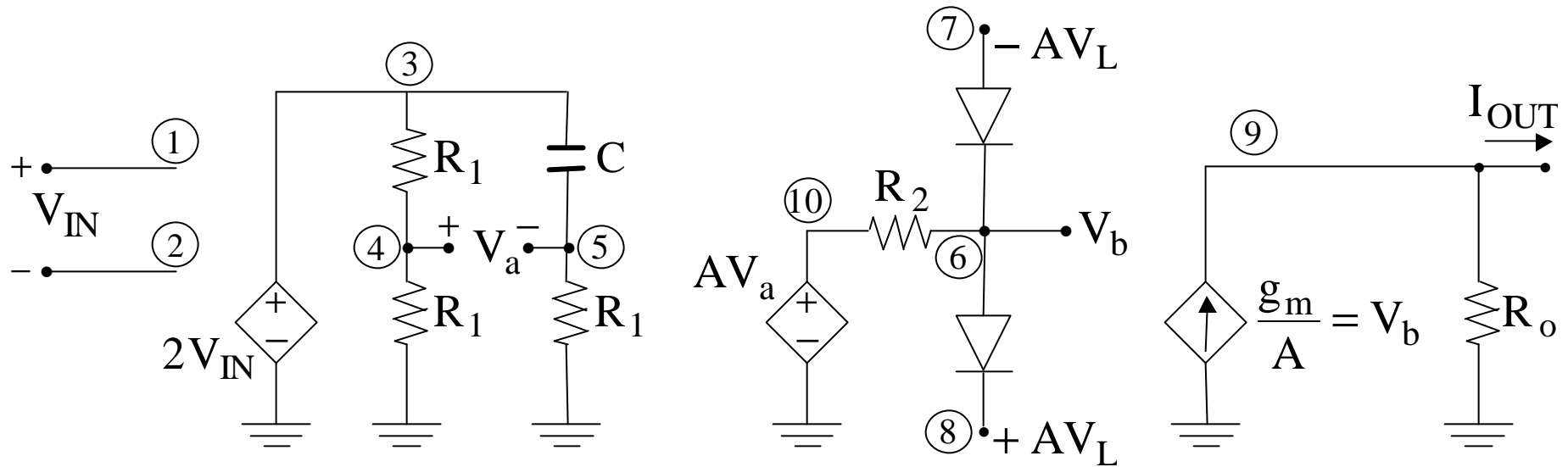
Structure 2. Observe the positive and negative resistance associated with integrator 1.

Where

$$\omega_0^2 = \frac{g_{m1}g_{m2}}{C^2}$$

$$K_Q = \frac{g_{mQ} - g_{m3}}{C}$$

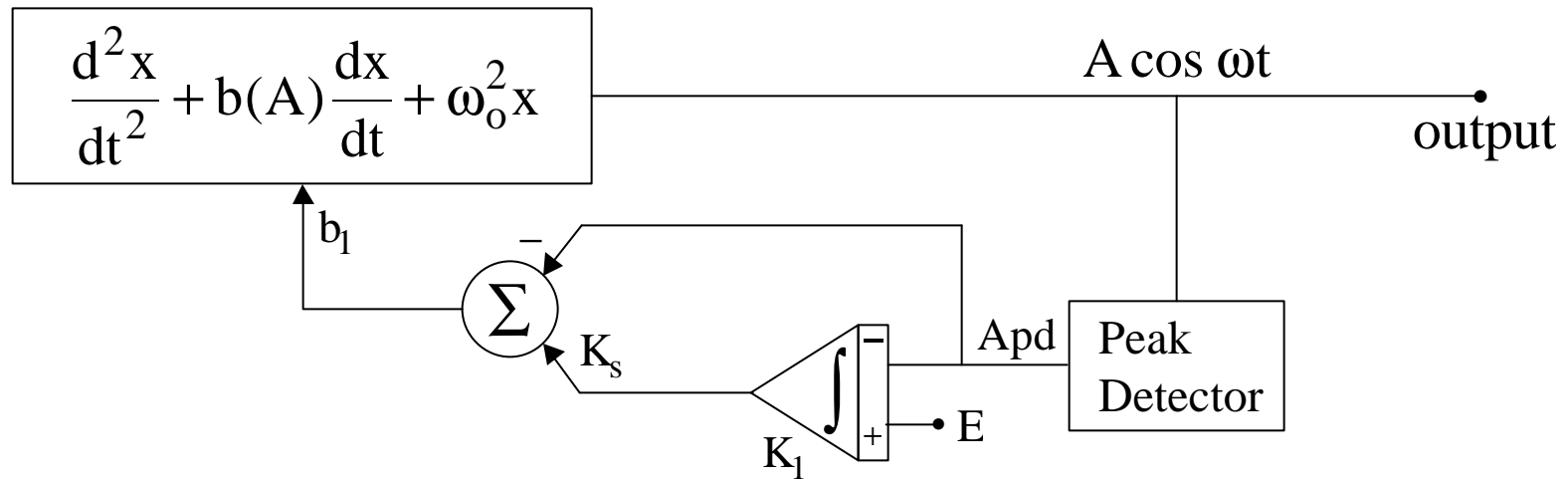
This structure is easier to tune. For a realistic design the OTA non-idealities have to be considered.



Furthermore amplitude control by external limiters. That is connect the limiters discussed before\* at the output of any of the integrators.

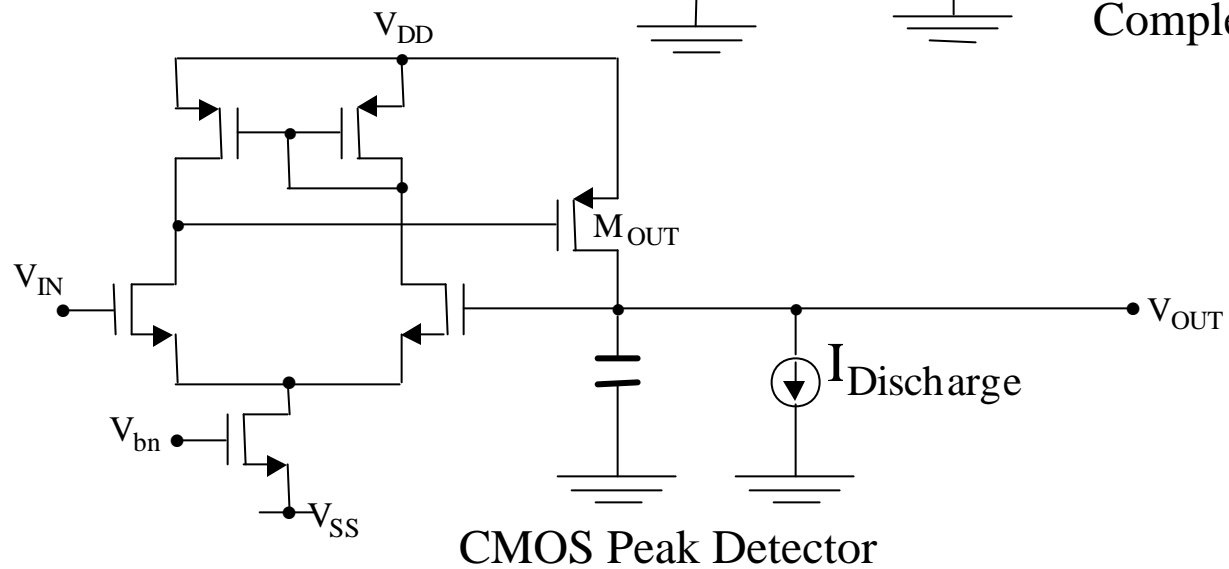
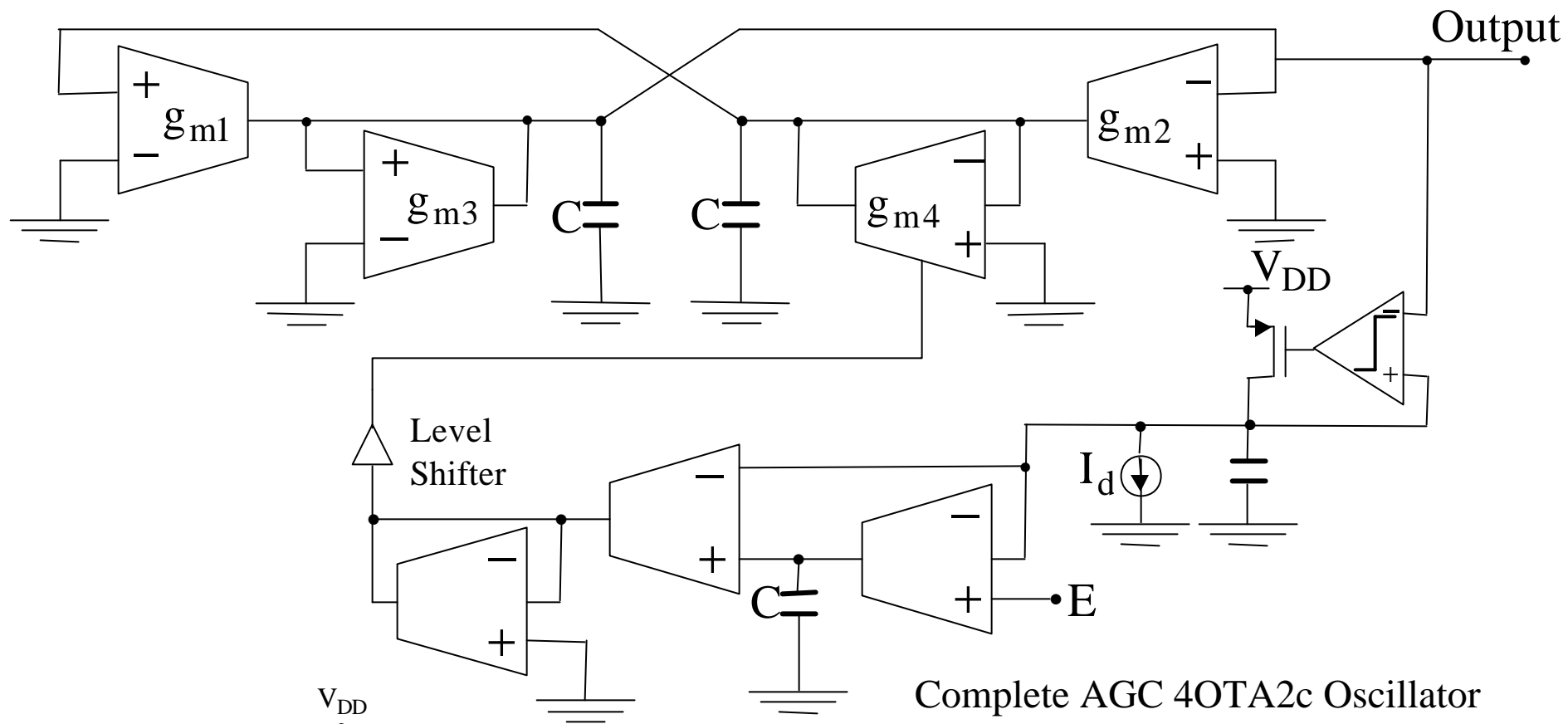


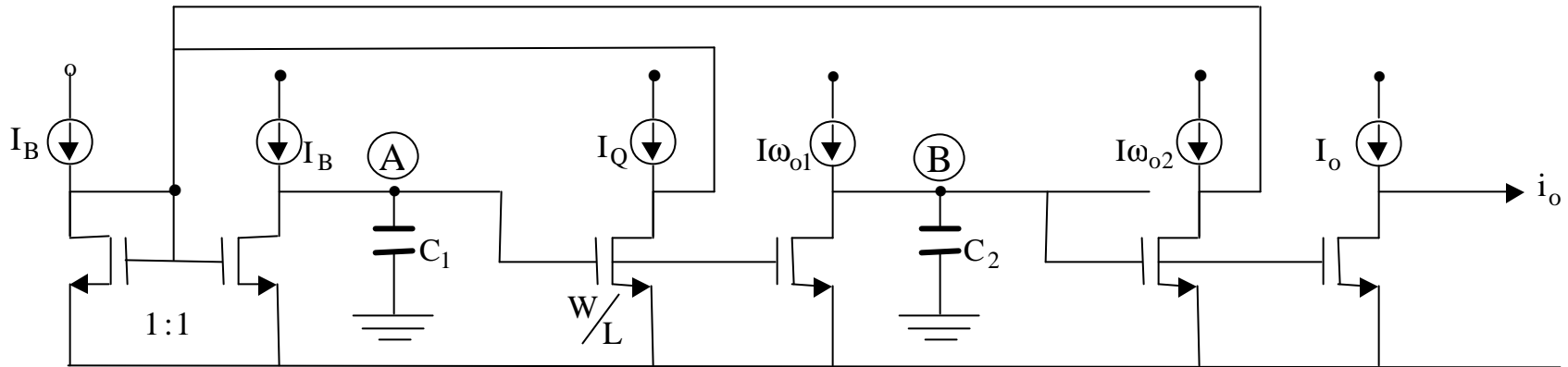
Instead of using limiters, another strategy is using an automatic gain control i.e.,



Can you reformulate as an adaptive filter minimizing  $(E - A_{pd})^2$  ?





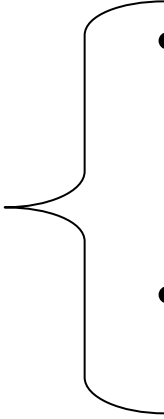


- A potential current - mode  
Quadrature Oscillator

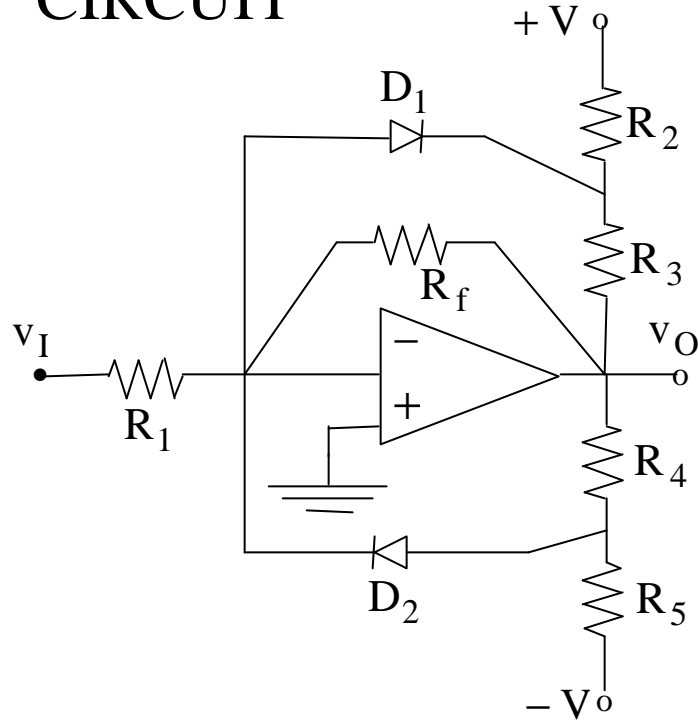
Note that limiters are needed to sustain oscillators. A limiter should be placed at point (A) or (B).

# Limiters, Amplitude Stabilization and Control

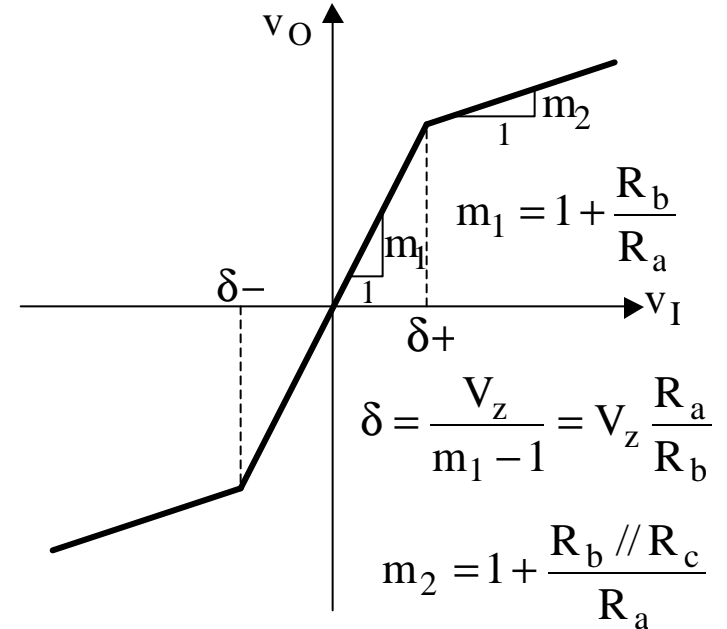
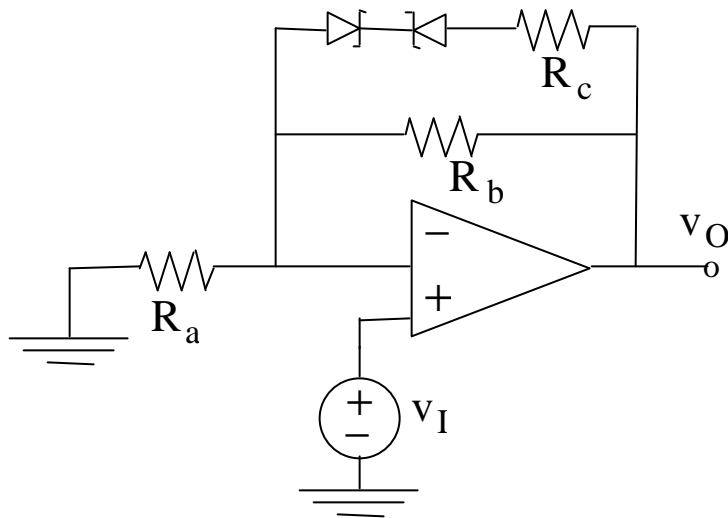
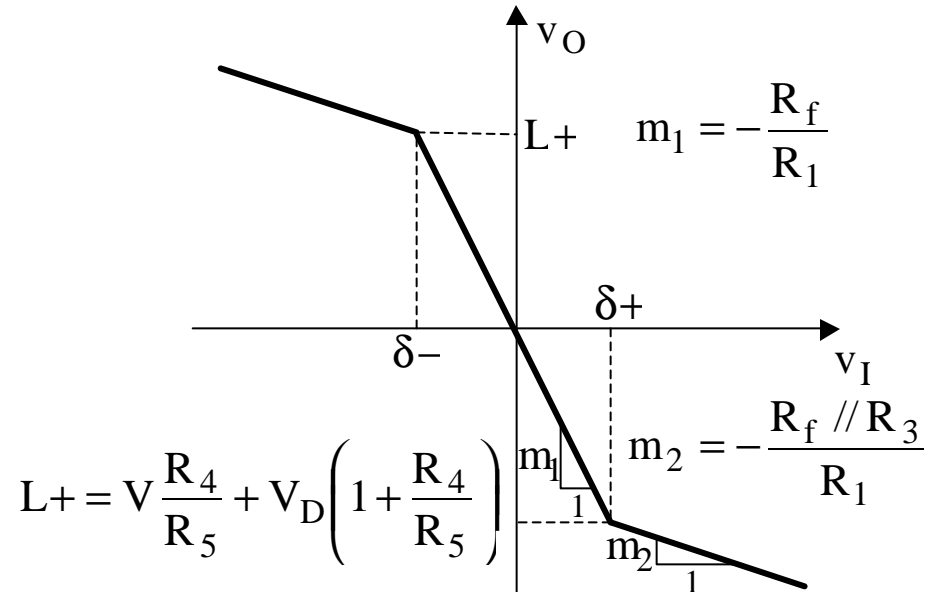
SCHEMES TO  
SUSTAIN OSCILLATIONS  
AT CONSTANT AMPLITUDE

- 
- Nonlinearity in the amplifier's gain characteristics
  - Automatic adjustment of the gain characteristic.

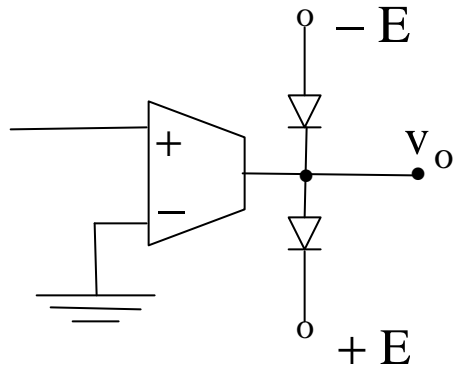
## CIRCUIT



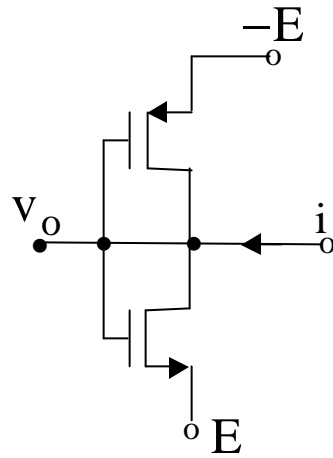
## I - O CHARACTERISTICS



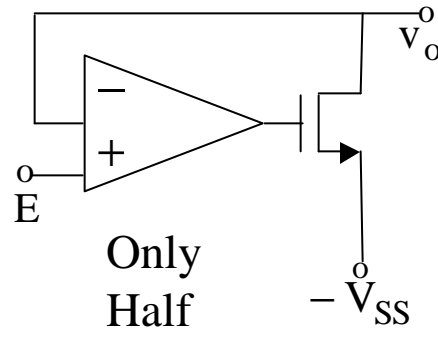
For OTA's



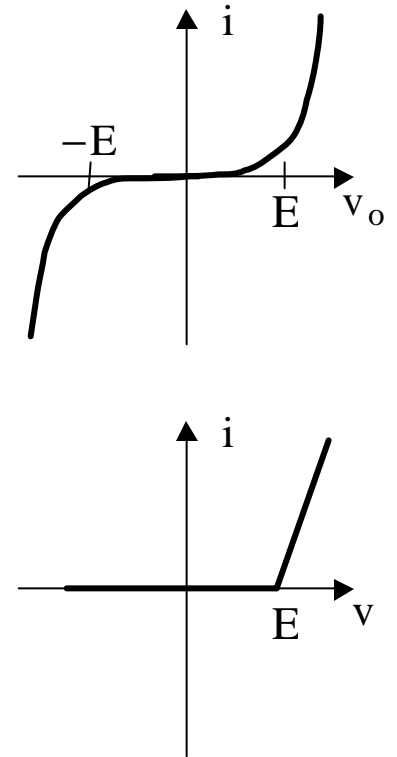
Circuit



(a)

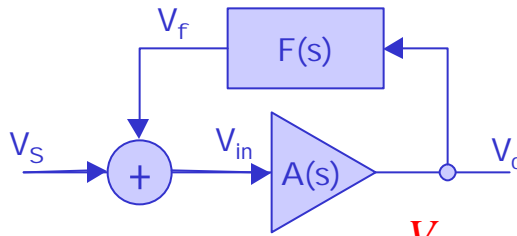


Only  
Half  
(b)



Implementations  
of Limiter

# Tuned Oscillators



$$\frac{V_o}{V_s} = \frac{A(s)}{1 - A(s)F(s)}$$

$$V_o = V_{in} A(s)$$

$$V_f = V_o F(s) = V_{in} A(s) F(s)$$

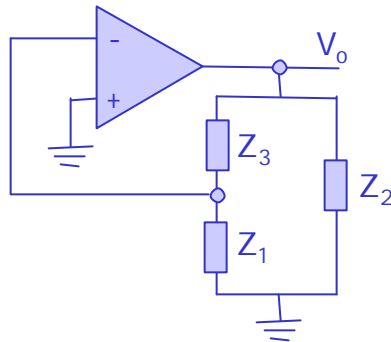
$$\frac{V_f}{V_{in}} = A(s) F(s)$$

Recall the oscillation conditions (Barkhausen)

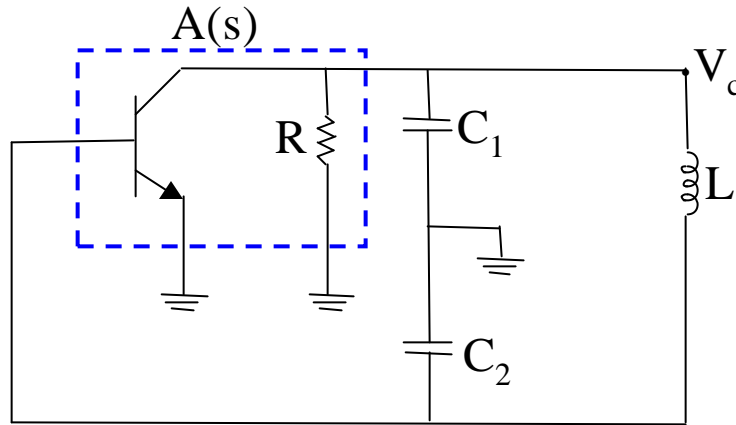
$$\left| \frac{V_f}{V_{in}} \right| = |A(j\omega)| |F(j\omega)| \geq 1$$

$$\text{Phase} \left( \frac{V_f}{V_{in}} \right) = \text{Phase} (A(s)) + \text{Phase} (F(s)) = 0^\circ$$

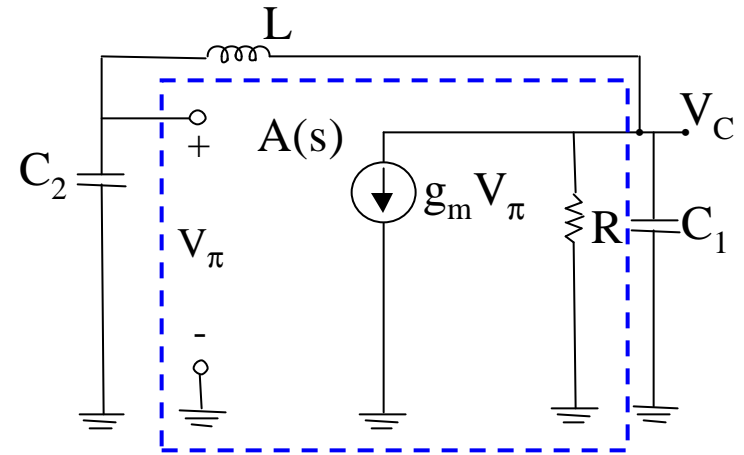
An example:



# LC Tuned Oscillator: Colpitts Oscillator Conditions



Bipolar Implementation



Small-Signal Model

$$V_c \left( \frac{1}{SL} + SC_1 + \frac{1}{R} \right) - \frac{1}{SL} V_p + g_m V_p = 0 \quad (1);$$

$$-\frac{1}{SL} V_c + V_p \left( SC_2 + \frac{1}{SL} \right) = 0 \quad (2)$$

(2) into (1) yields the characteristic equation:

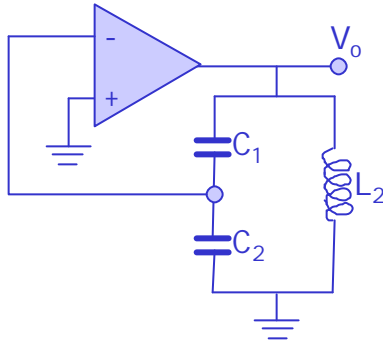
$$(S^2 LC_2 + 1) \left( \frac{1}{SL} + sC_1 + \frac{1}{R} - \frac{1}{SL} \right) + g_m = 0; \quad S^3 LC_1 C_2 + S^2 (LC_2 / R) + s(C_1 + C_2) + (g_m + 1/R) = 0$$

$$\text{For } s = jw; \left( g_m + \frac{1}{R} - \frac{w^2 LC_2}{R} \right) + j[w(C_1 + C_2) - w^3 LC_1 C_2] = 0$$

**Both real and imaginary part should vanish, then**

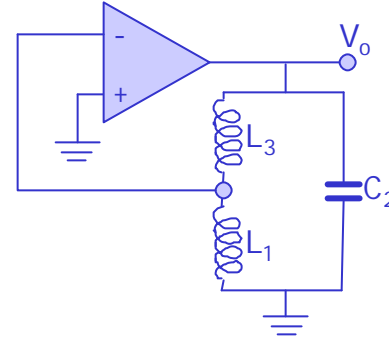
$$w_o^2 = 1/L \left( \frac{1}{C_2} + \frac{1}{C_1} \right) \quad \& \quad C_2 / C_1 \leq g_m R$$

# Particular cases of Negative Feedback Oscillators:



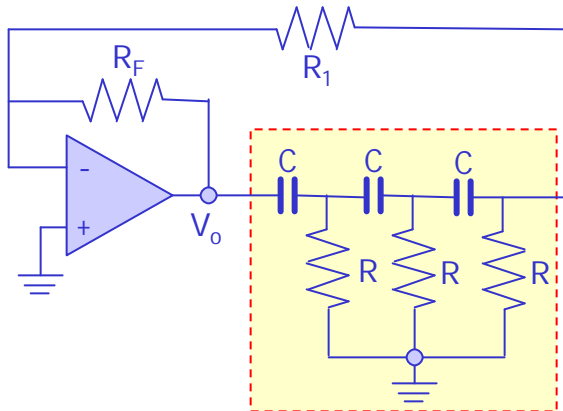
Colpitts

$$f_o = \frac{1}{2\pi} \left\{ \frac{1}{L_2} \left( \frac{1}{C_1} + \frac{1}{C_3} \right) \right\}^{1/2}$$



Hartley

$$f_o = \frac{1}{2\pi} \left[ \frac{1}{C_2(L_1 + L_3)} \right]^{1/2}$$



Phase - Shift  
Network

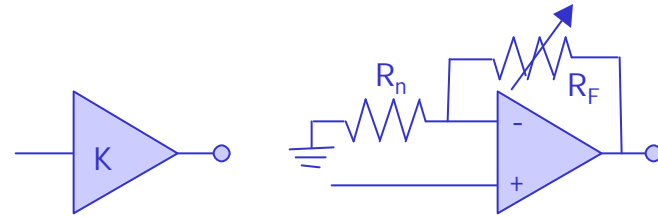
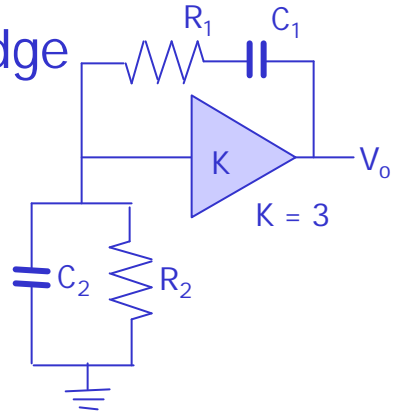
Note that each RC should contribute with 60 degrees, such that the threeRC combination contributes 180°. **In addition the amplifier also contributes with 180°**

Phase-Shift Oscillator

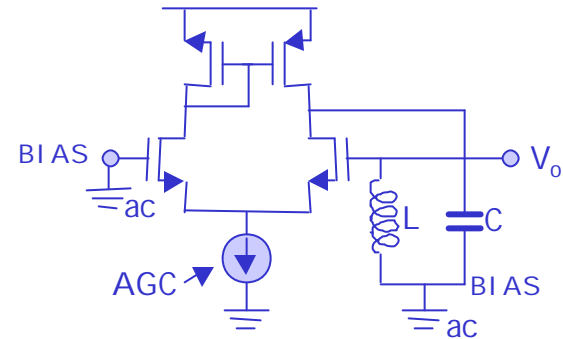
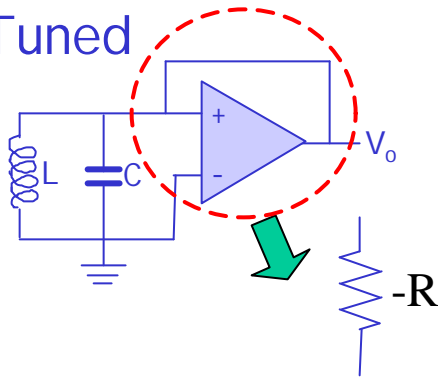


# Positive - Feedback Oscillator

Wien - Bridge



LC - Tuned

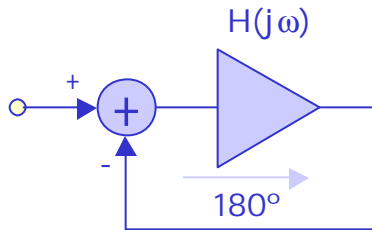


Observe that the positive feedback amplifier has a negative resistance property.

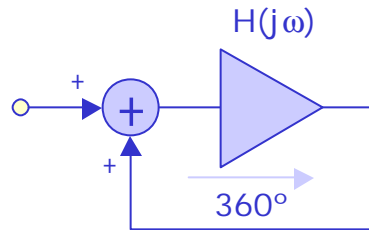
# Ring Oscillators

- The main difficulty for using submicron CMOS ring oscillators in wireless communication systems is their relatively poor phase noise response.
- Precaution is required to achieve as low phase noise as possible from CMOS ring oscillators.
  - Dominant noise sources in IC environment are common-mode signals in nature (e.g. power supply noise, substrate-coupled noise).
    - Fully differential design is a must!

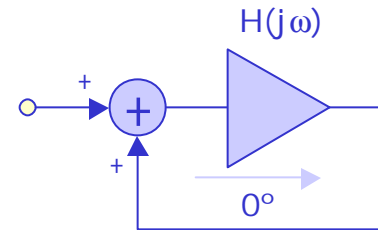
# Ring Oscillators



(a)

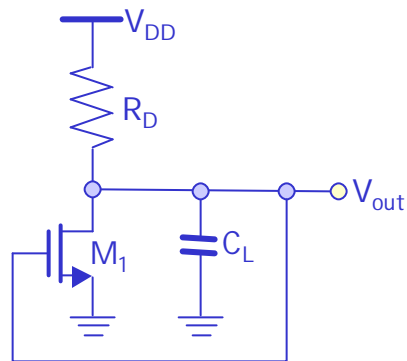


(b)

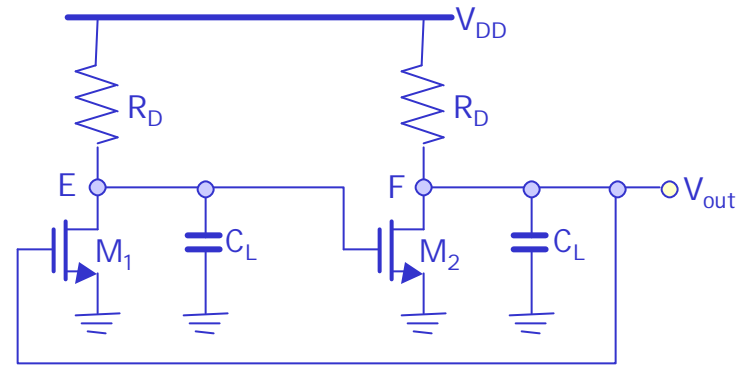


(c)

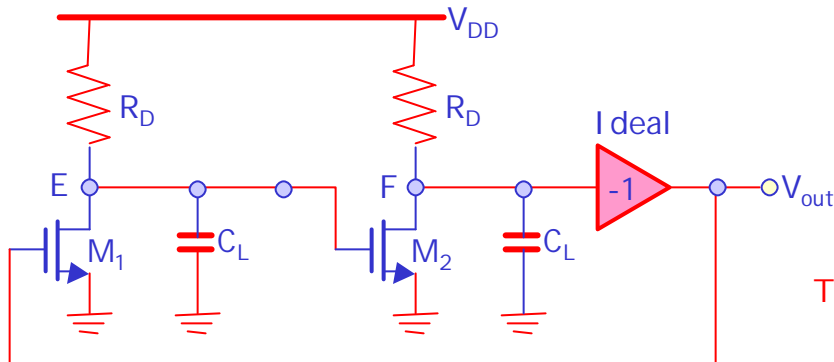
Various views of oscillatory feedback system.



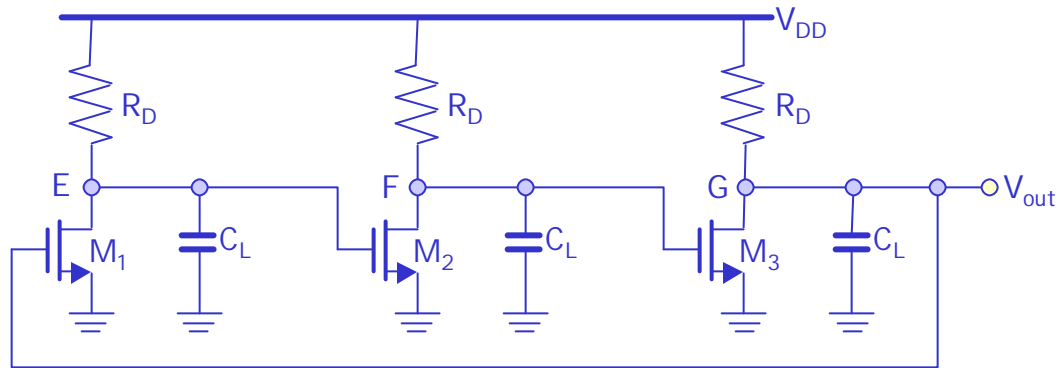
One-pole feedback



Two-pole feedback system



Two-pole feedback system plus an inverter



Three-stage ring oscillator

$$H(s) = -\frac{A_0^3}{\left(1 + \frac{s}{w_0}\right)^3}$$

$$w_{osc} = \sqrt{3}w_0$$

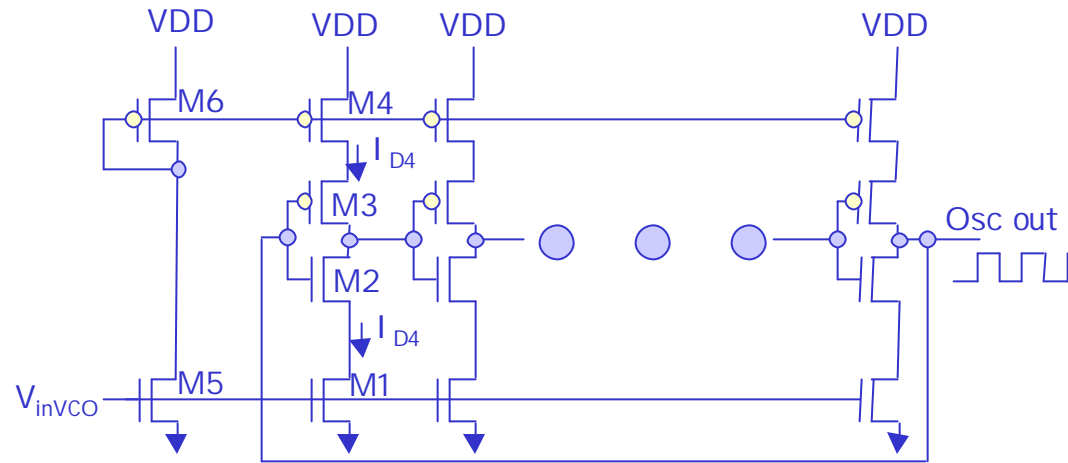
$$\tan^{-1} \frac{w_{osc}}{w_o} = 60^\circ$$

$$\frac{V_{out}(s)}{V_{in}(s)} = \frac{\frac{-A_0^3}{(1 + s/w_0)^3}}{1 + \frac{A_0^3}{(1 + s/w_0)^3}} = \frac{-A_0^3}{(1 + s/w_0)^3 + A_0^3}$$

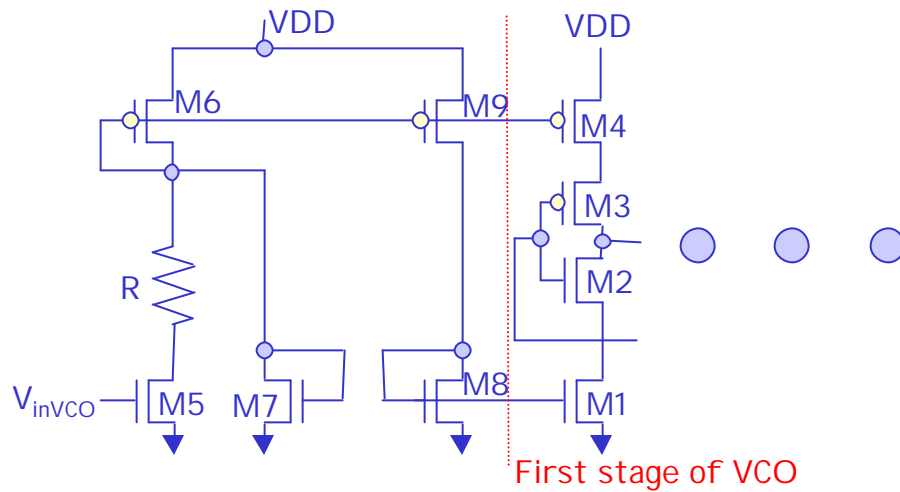
$$\frac{A_0^3}{\left[\sqrt{1 + \left(\frac{w_{osc}}{w_0}\right)^2}\right]^3} = 1$$

$$A_0 = 2$$

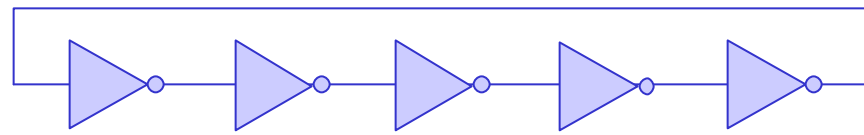
## Single –ended Inverters (delay elements)



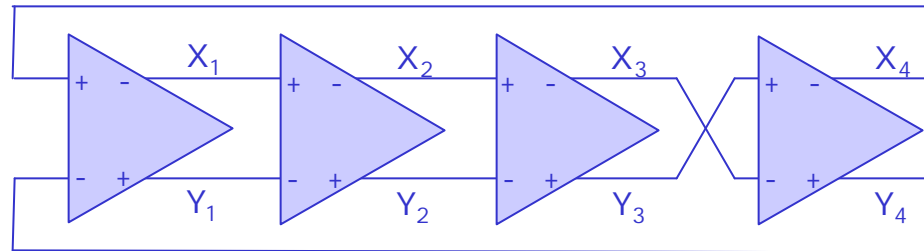
Current – starved VCO.



Modifications to the current-starved VCO to set minimum and maximum frequencies.

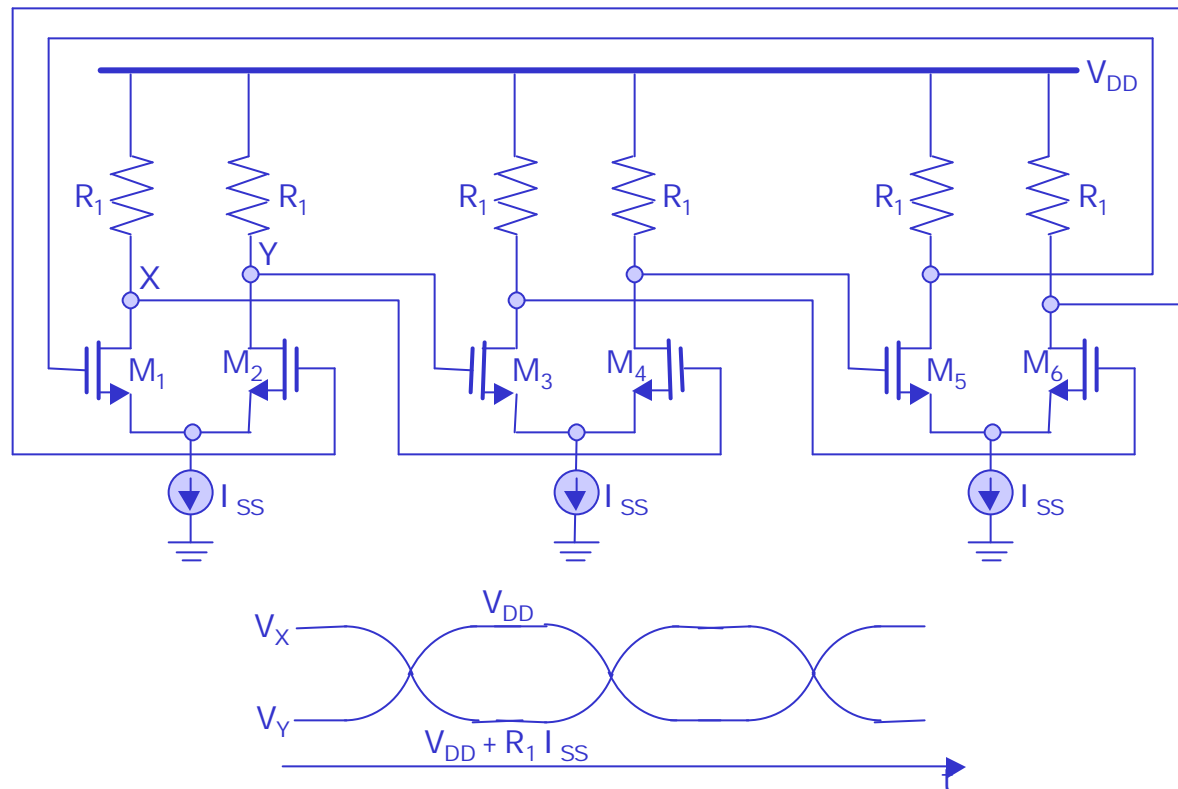


(a)

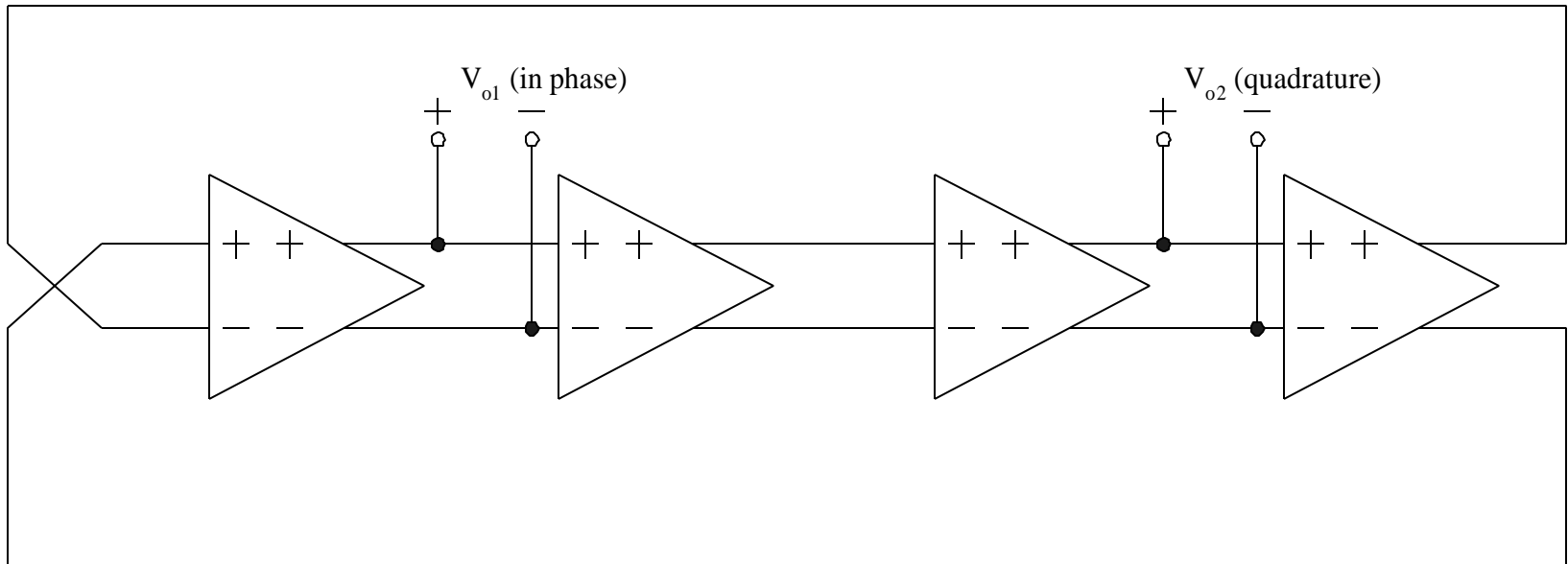


(b)

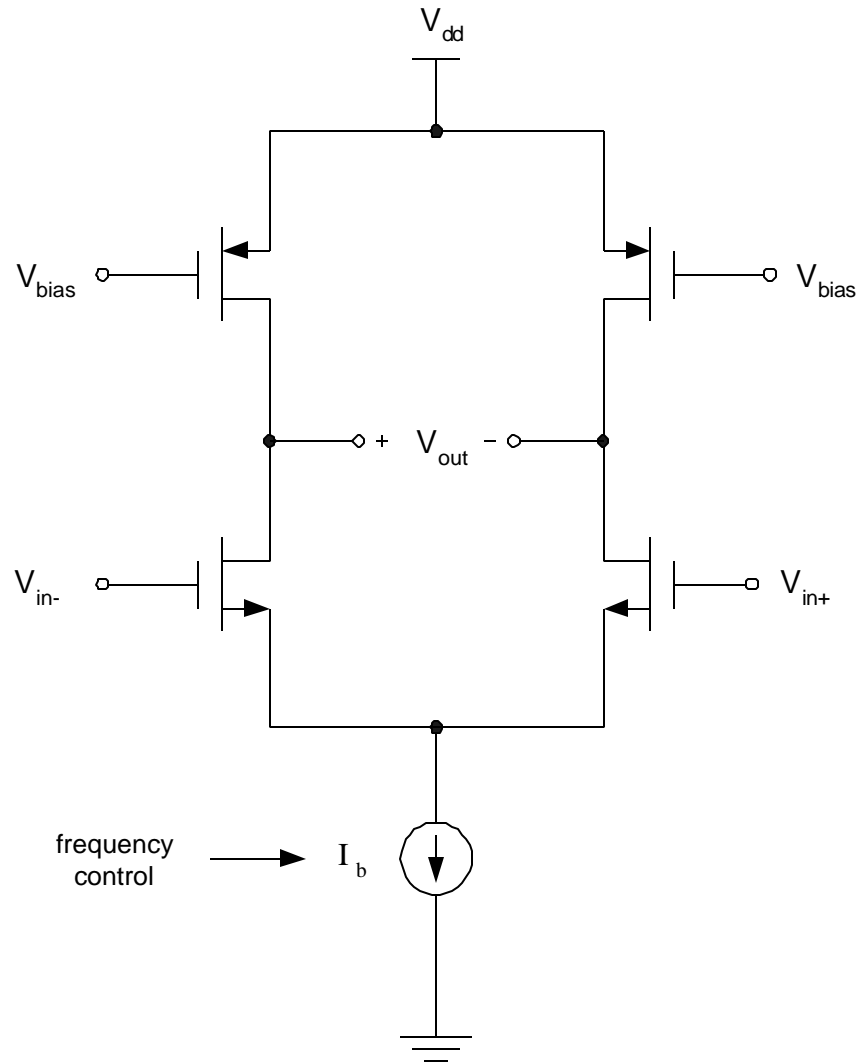
(a) Five-stage single-ended ring oscillator, (b) four-stage differential ring oscillator



# Fully-Differential Ring Oscillator

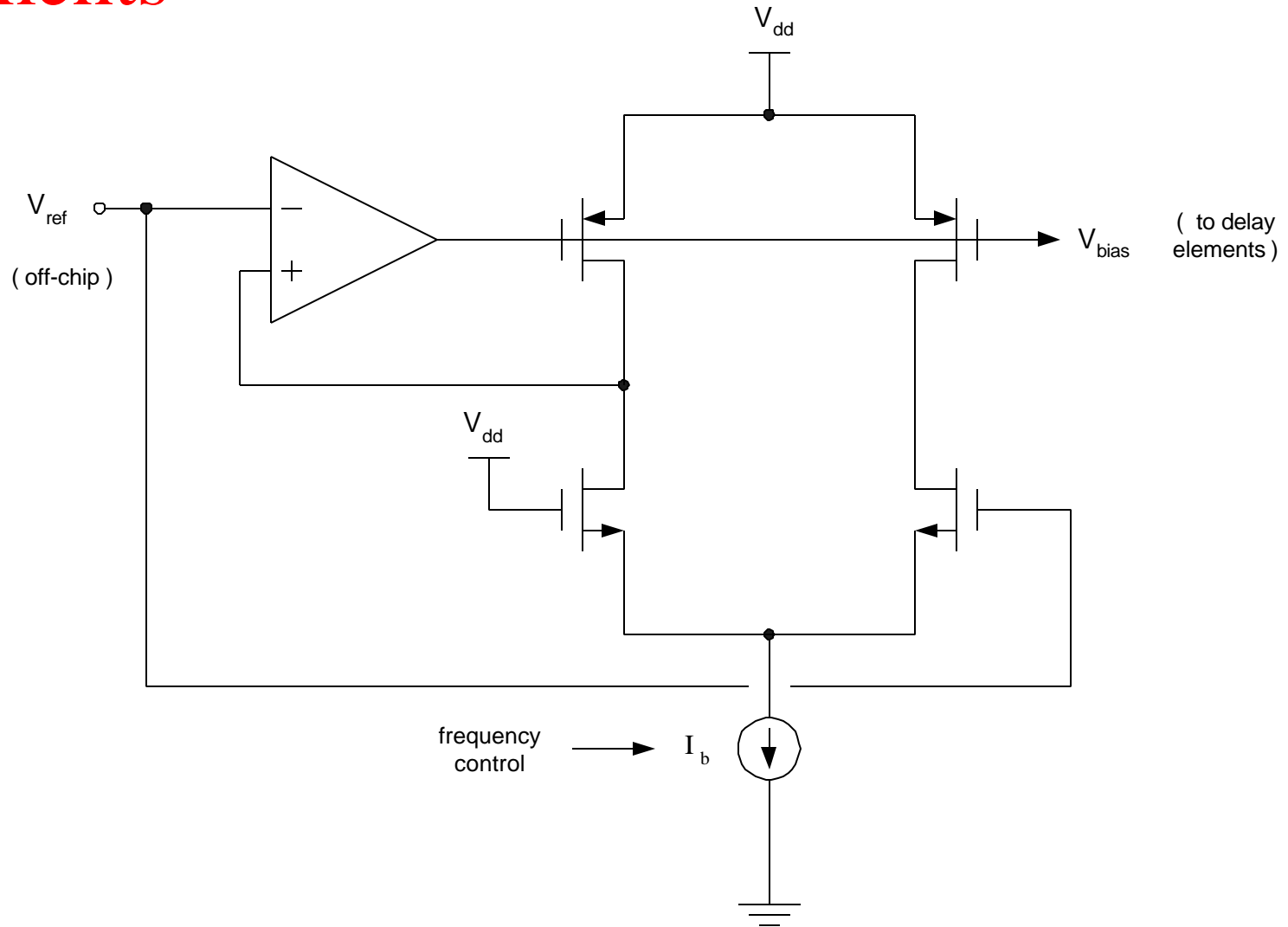


# One potential delay element





# Replica Biasing needed for the Delay Elements

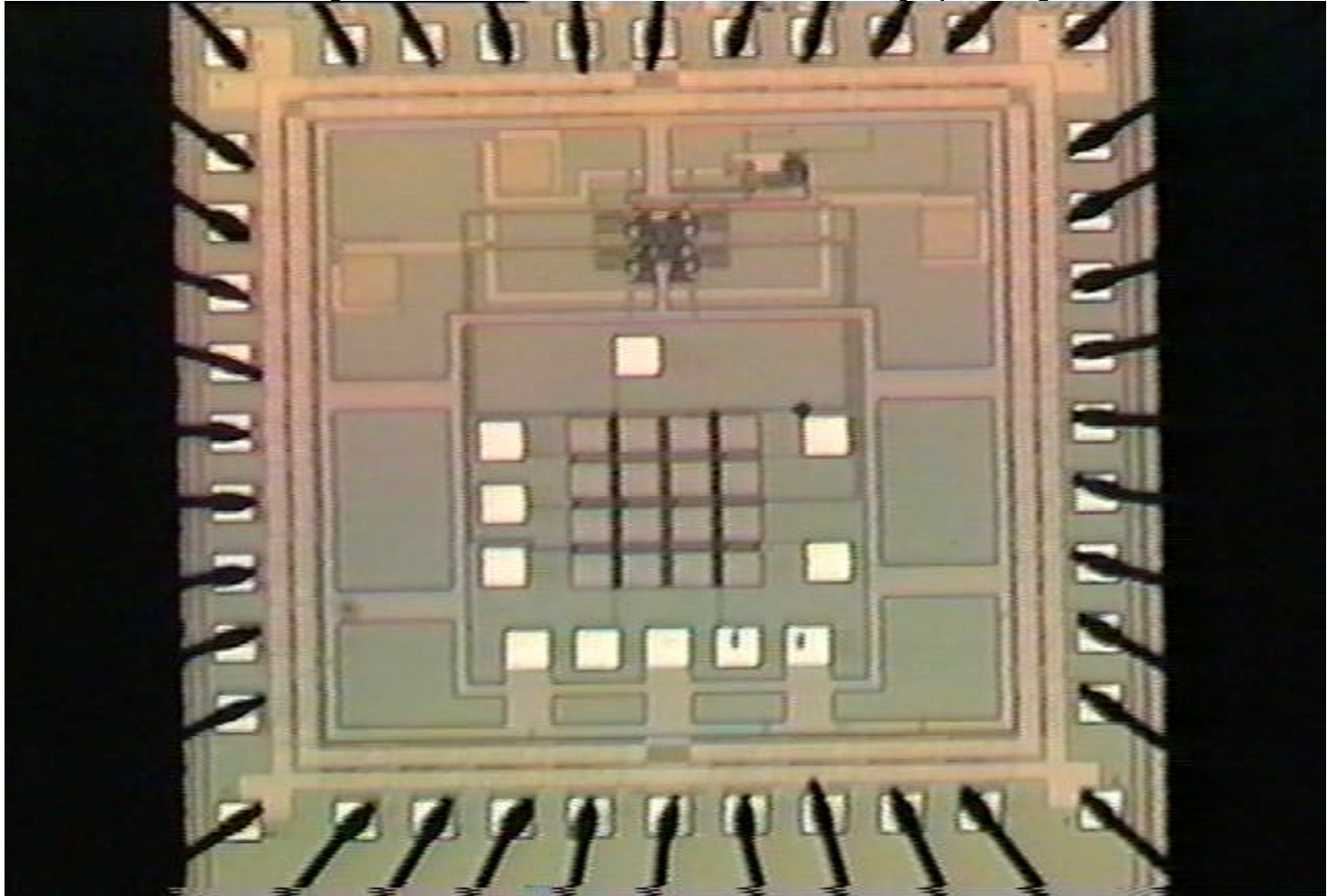


# Frequency Control

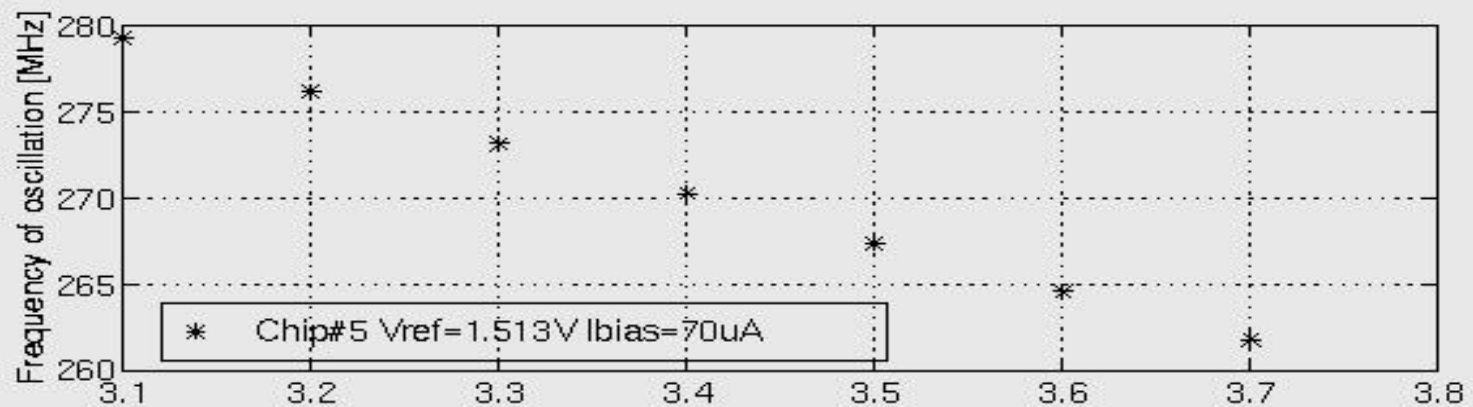
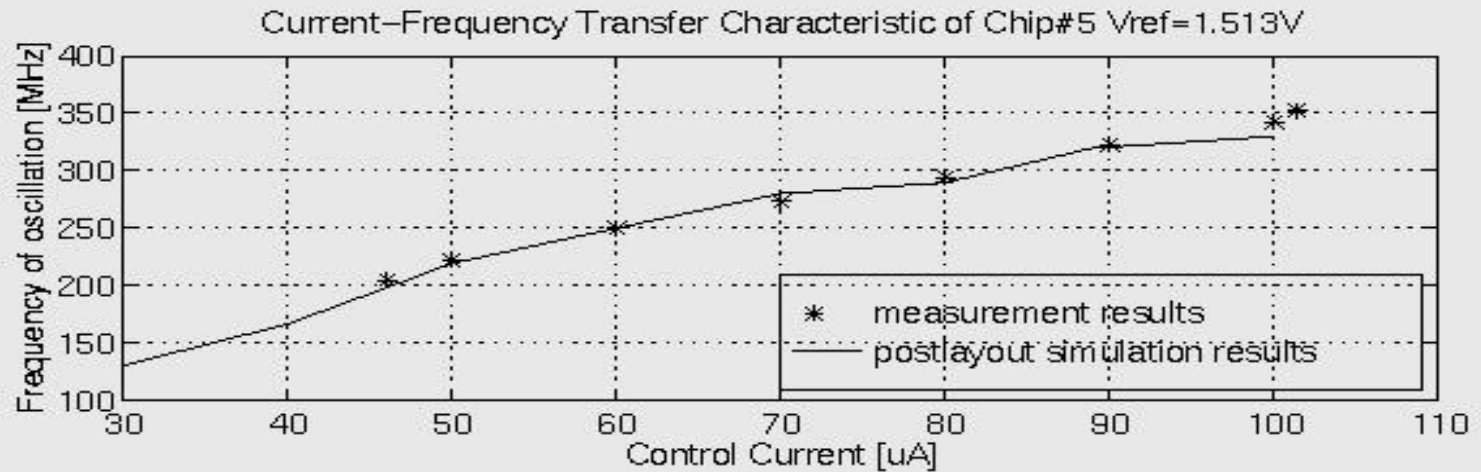
- Frequency of oscillation, ( $f_{osc}$ ), is controlled through the bias current of a delay element ( $I_b$ ).
- Maximum peak-to-peak voltage, ( $V_{pp}$ ), is controlled through the replica biasing.
- Total output capacitance of a delay element, ( $C_{out}$ ), directly affects the frequency of oscillation.

$$f_{osc} \approx \frac{I_b}{V_{pp} \cdot C_{out}}$$

# Chip Photomicrograph



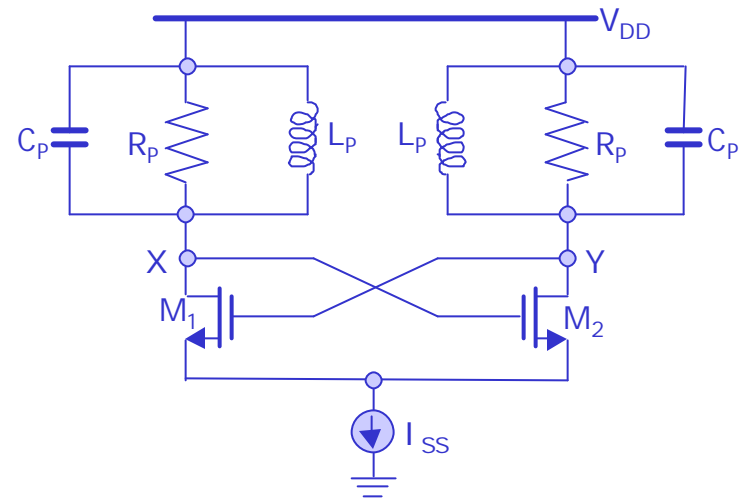
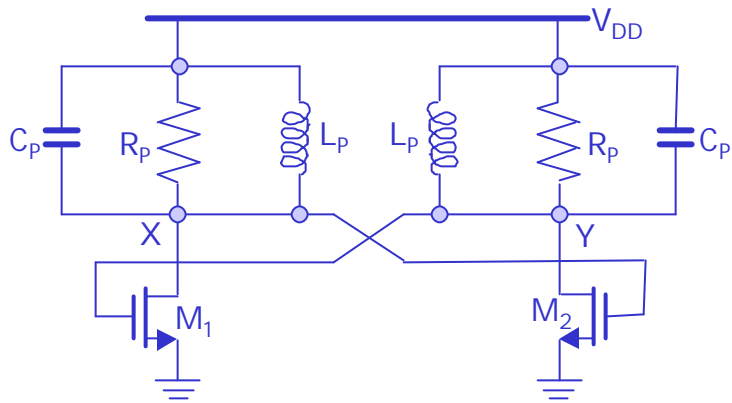
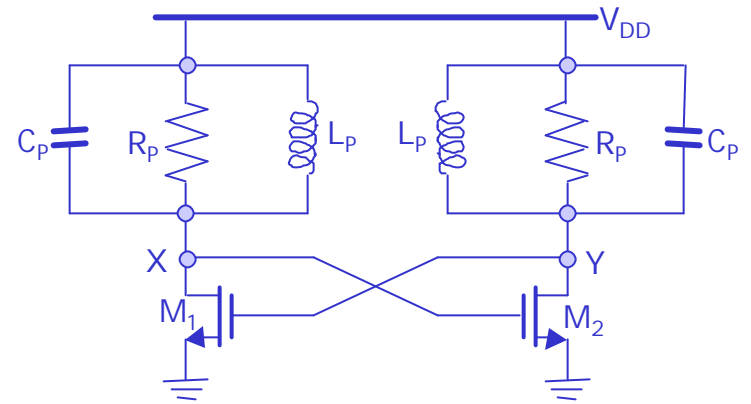
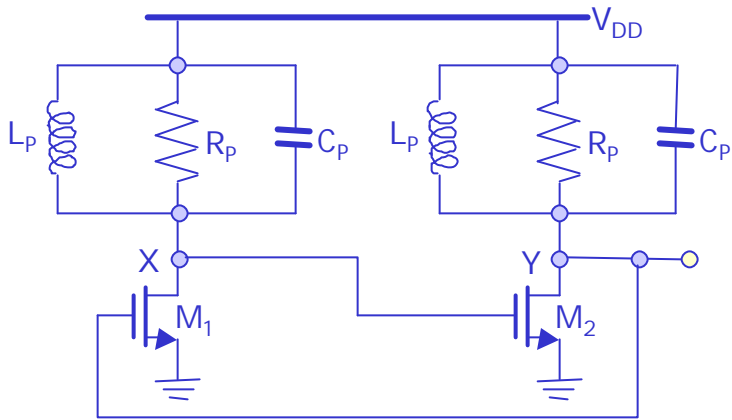
# Test Results



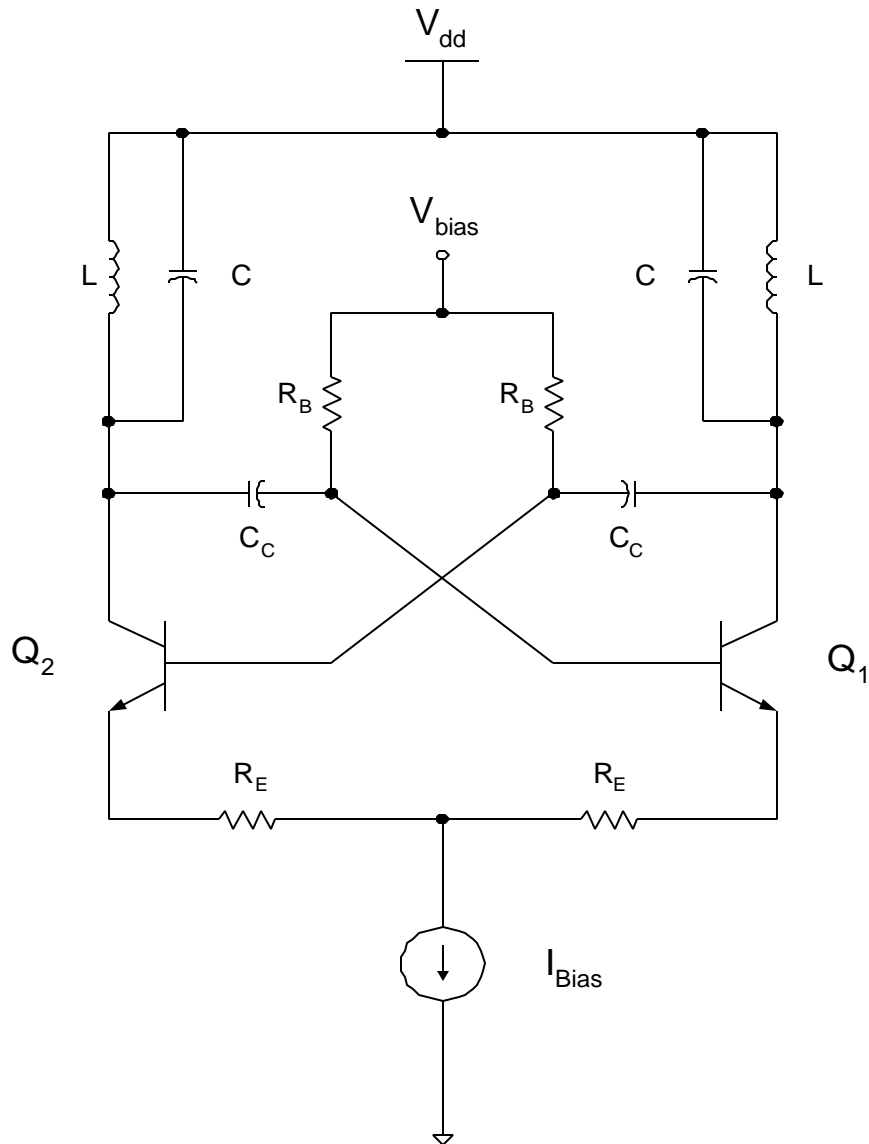
# LC Oscillators

- Negative- $g_m$  (negative conductance) oscillators are known to provide the best phase noise performance among integrated oscillators.
- It is possible to build a fully-differential oscillator with only two transistors in the signal path.
- The phase noise depends on the quality factor of the resonator, the noise figure of the amplifier creating the negative resistance and the energy in the resonator.
- The quality factor of the resonator is usually limited by that of the inductor.

# Tuned LC Oscillators

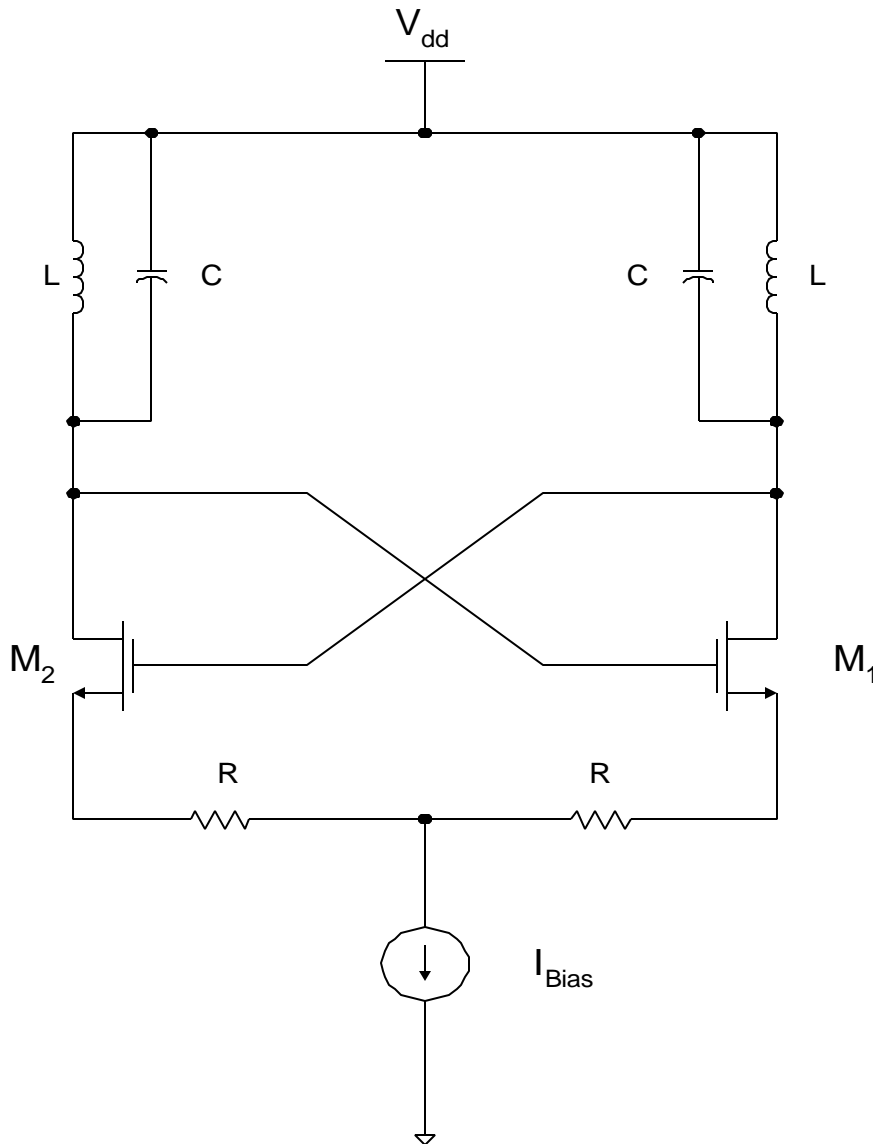


# Bipolar LC Oscillator



- Capacitive coupling is used to alleviate the forward-biased CB junction problem.
- Higher oscillation amplitude is possible, which reduces the phase noise significantly.
- Further increase in the amplitude is possible through adjusting the value of the bias voltage applied to the base terminals.
- Proper design of the capacitive coupling is vital to ensure oscillation.

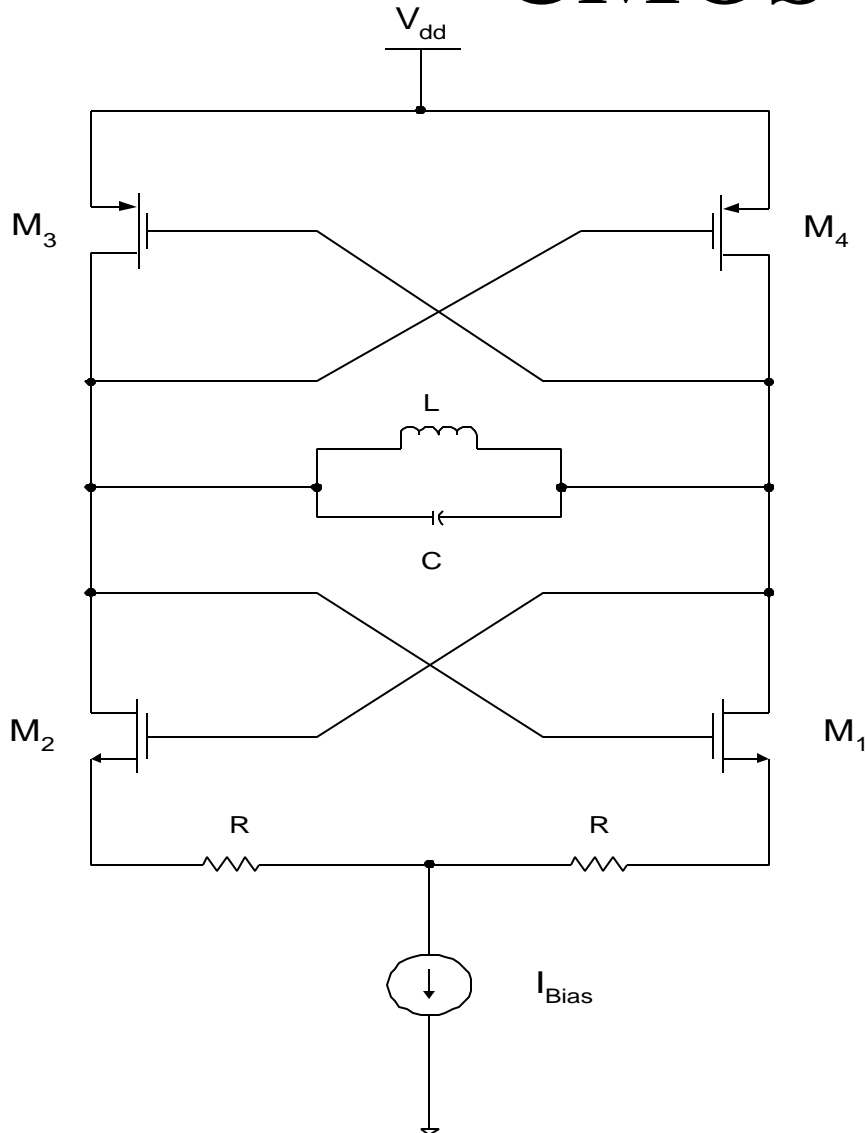
# NMOS Oscillator



- Direct coupling is possible in the positive feedback amplifier due to the fact that MOS transistors are inherently more linear than the bipolar counterparts.
- Source degeneration resistors reduce the phase noise through linearization.
- $1/f$  noise of the NMOS transistors is an important drawback.



# CMOS Oscillator



- Less current consumption is possible due to the additional pMOS transistors used for negative conductance generation.
- Better waveform symmetry can be achieved through proper sizing of the transistors.
  - Less phase noise due to less  $1/f$  upconversion!

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