

128-Bit Multicomparator Chip designed by Caltech Students and fabricated by Intel.

Ref: IEEE Journal of Solid State Circuits, VOL.SC11, No.4, October 1976

Prof. C. A. Mead and Yoshiaki Daimon Hagiwara working on the silicon chip design at Caltech in 1972

128-Bit Multicomparator

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Abstract—A 128-bit multicomparator was designed to perform the fast-compare function on arbitrary length data strings. Data can be loaded for inputs that range in length up to 128 bits, and the output is a single bit indicating whether the data is greater or less than the key. The comparator is designed to be used in a "key" register and a "key" register with a "mask" register to compare two data strings. The multicomparator was fabricated using standard silicon-gate CMOS technology on a 100 × 100 mil chip containing 7000 gates. Key register—mask register (KMR) logic, data rate in excess of 1 MHz, test time under 100 ns, and 100% data rate in excess of 1 MHz in the CMOS mode and 300 ns in the CMOS mode.

INTRODUCTION

OVER the past several years, there have been significant advances in the design of fast comparators for digital and analog processing units (CPU's) in chip form. In the process, more and more applications of logic-intensive (LSI) to compare addresses have been suggested [1]. LSI has increased the technological distinction between logic and memory. It is now economically feasible to incorporate the CPU of a computer by replacing much of its main memory with fast logic hardware to improve system efficiency. Presently, an increasing amount of processing time is spent on comparing and accessing data in memory. Comparators are usually controlled directly by the CPU and have little or no associated logic of their own. A great improvement in this situation can be made by developing integrated logic units. This article describes such a unit, a 128-bit multicomparator, and its use in a CPU for processing data. This paper describes a 128-bit multicomparator that is designed to perform the fast-compare function.

The block diagram of the multicomparator is shown in Fig. 1. The circuit consists of three independently clocked static CMOS logic registers with multiplexed exclusive-OR gates. In operation, the device indicates a match between the data word and the masked key of the key register. The multicomparator is loaded with a key word by initially setting the word into the key register and loading the register in static mode. While the key word is being loaded, the comparator is enabled by sending "ones" to the appropriate locations of the mask register.

Manuscript received May 11, 1976; revised July 18, 1976.
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This paper is based on the work of the authors in the design of a 128-bit multicomparator. The authors are grateful to the Intel Corporation for its support of this work.



128-bit Multicomparator chip, designed by Hagiwara in 1972-1973 and fabricated by Intel PMOS process.

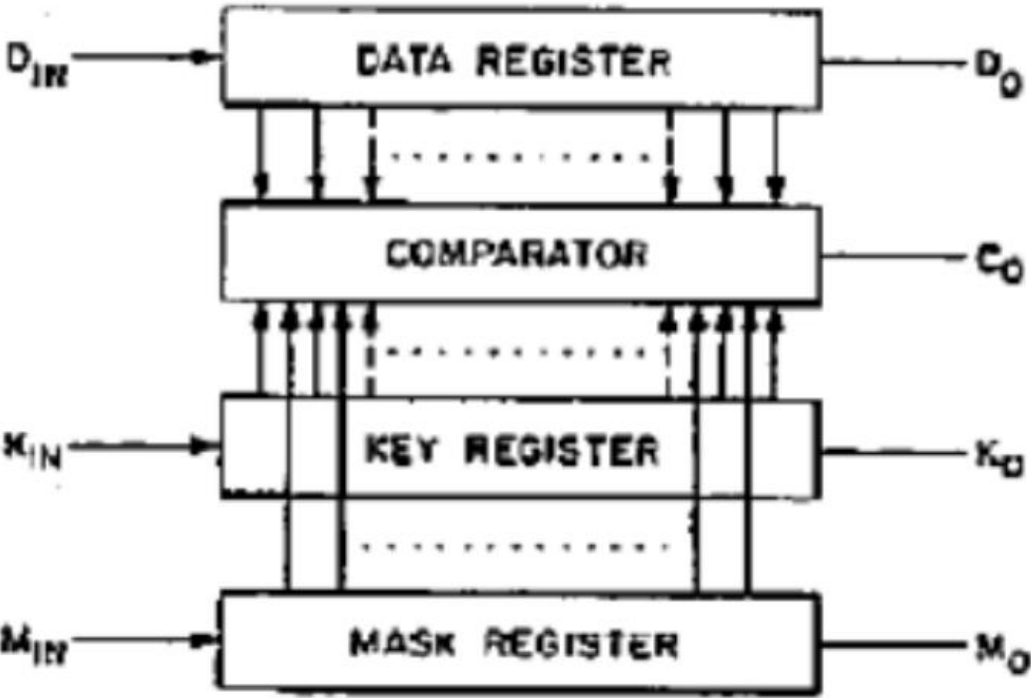
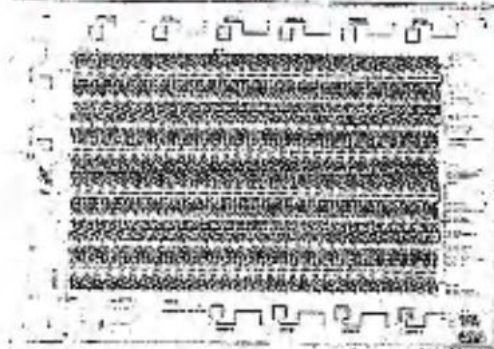


Fig. 1. Block diagram of multicomparator.

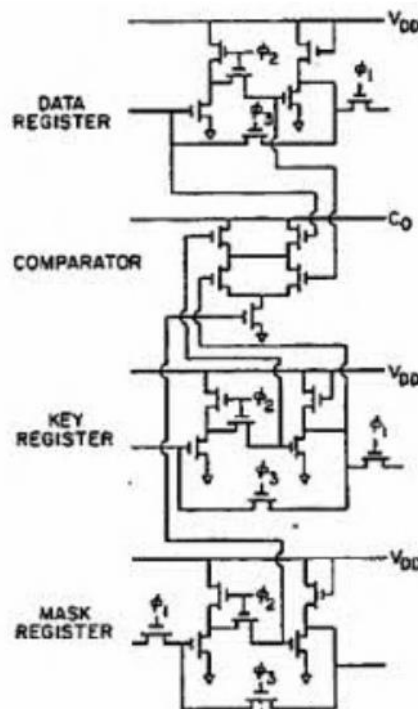


Fig. 5. Full schematic of one bit slice of the multicomparator.

*serial-in/serial-out fast 128 bit parallel data comparator chip
fabricated by Intel corporation p-channel E/D MOS fabrication line*

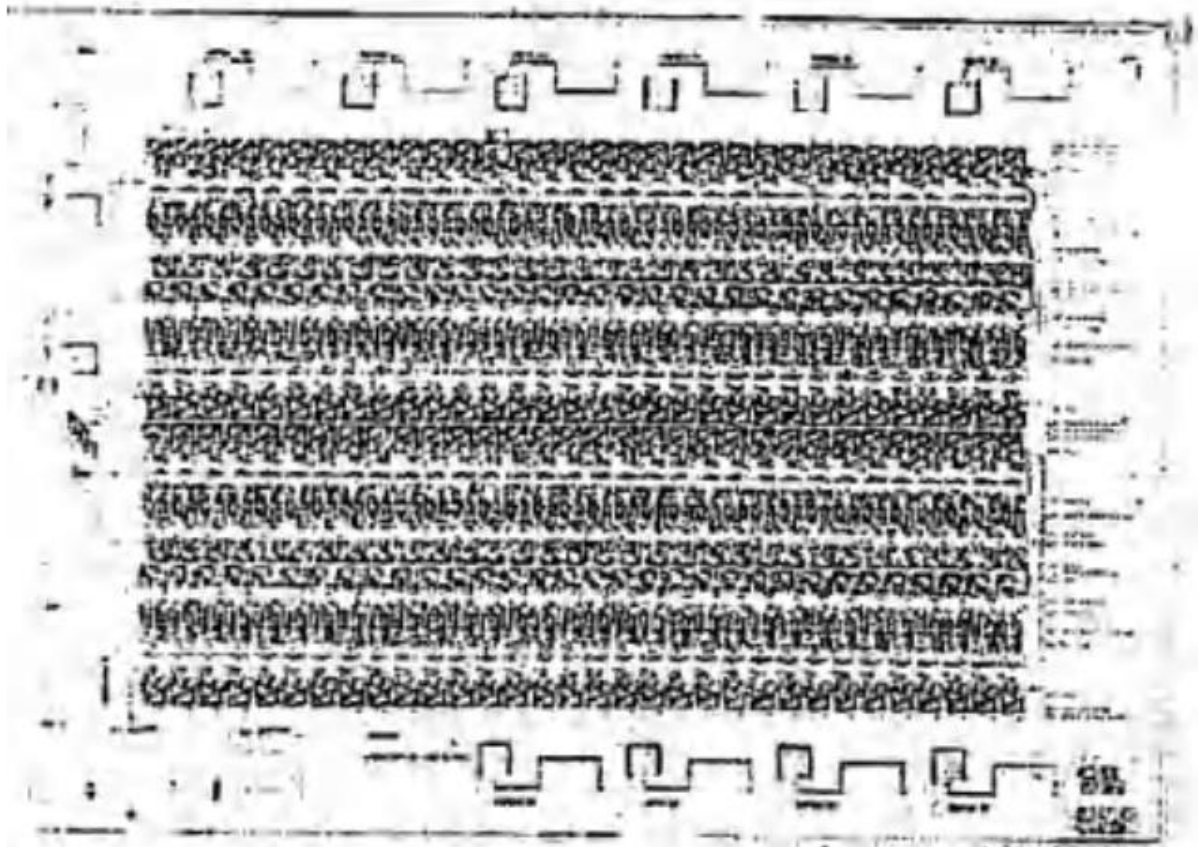


Fig. 6. Photomicrograph of multicomparator chip.

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Dr. Lee Barton at Hewlett-Packard
Caltech Graduate, 1973



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Dr. Yoshiaki Hagiwara at Sony
Caltech Graduate, 1975



Yoshiaki Hagiwara was born in Kyoto, Japan, on July 4, 1948. He received the B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees from the California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, in 1971, 1972, and 1975, respectively.
Since 1967, he has served several research groups in the Institute. He worked as a Data Processor in hydraulics from 1967 to 1969, engaging in the analysis of the pressure distribution of solitary waves, the influence of the geological features of a harbor upon the induced standing-wave amplitude in the harbor, and the diffusion mechanism of polluted objects in moving fluids. From 1969 to 1971, he worked as an Experimentalist in the Material Science Department and studied the switching and other electronic properties of newly developed amorphous alloys from the low temperature of 4 K to room temperature. From 1971 to 1975 he was a Research and Teaching Assistant both in the Electrical Engineering and Physics Departments at the California Institute of Technology. In the summer of 1971 and 1973, he visited Sony Corporation, Tokyo, Japan, as a Product-Appraisal Engineer at the Atsugi plant and engaged in developments and applications of bipolar technologies in video and power integrated circuits. He is presently with the Sony Corporation, Tokyo, Japan. His interests lie in the areas of digital and linear integrated circuit design, the physics of microelectronics, and artificial intelligence.

Prof. C.A.Mead at Caltech



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Dr. Pashley is a member of the American Physical Society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
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128-Bit Multicomparator

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Abstract—A 128-bit multicomparator was designed to perform the search-sort function on arbitrary length data strings. Devices can be cascaded for longer block lengths or paralleled for bit-parallel, word-serial applications. The circuit utilizes a 3-phase static-dynamic shift register cell for data handling and a unique gated EXCLUSIVE-NOR circuit to accomplish the compare function. The compare operation is performed bit parallel between a "data" register and a "key" register with a third "mask" register containing DON'T CARE bits that disable the comparator. The multicomparator was fabricated using p-channel silicon-gate metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) technology on a 107×150 mil chip containing 3350 devices. With transistor-transistor logic (TTL) input, data rates in excess of 2 MHz have been attained. The average power dissipation was 250 mW in the dynamic mode and 300 mW in the static mode.

INTRODUCTION

OVER the past several years, there have been significant amounts of energy devoted to the fabrication of larger and faster semiconductor memories and conventional central processing units (CPU's) in chip form. In the process, many other applications of large-scale integration (LSI) to computer architecture have been neglected [1]. LSI has removed the technological distinction between logic and memory. It is now economically feasible to decentralize the CPU of a computer by replacing much of its maintenance software with functional hardware to improve system efficiency. Presently, an inordinate amount of processing time is spent on organizing and accessing files in peripherals. Peripherals are usually controlled directly by the CPU and have little or no associated logic of their own. A great improvement in this situation can be made by developing peripheral logic units. This would allow each peripheral to accomplish its own internal processing and thus reduce CPU housekeeping duties. This paper describes a 128-bit multicomparator that is designed to perform the search-sort function.

The block diagram of the multicomparator is shown in Fig. 1. The circuit consists of three independently clocked static-dynamic shift registers with associated EXCLUSIVE-NOR gating. In operation, the device indicates a match between the data word and the unmasked bits of the key word. The multicomparator is loaded with a key word by serially shifting the word into the key register and locking the register in static mode. While the key word is being loaded, the comparator is enabled by entering zeros¹ in the appropriate locations of the

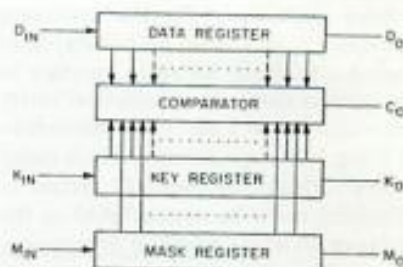


Fig. 1. Block diagram of multicomparator.

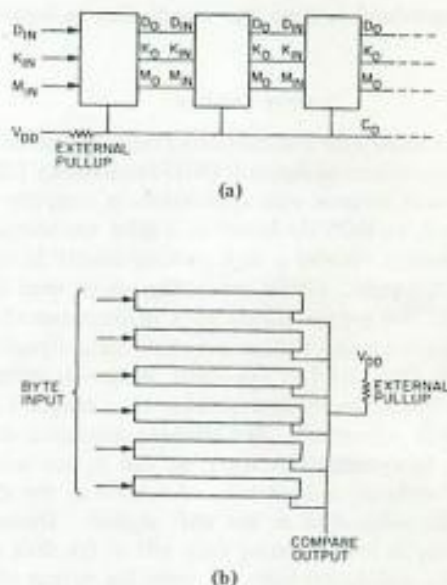


Fig. 2. Possible connections of multicomparator. (a) Cascaded. (b) Bit-parallel, word-serial.

mask register. Masking allows the multicomparator to search for bit strings of varying length and composition. For example, assume it is necessary to search for all words containing a specific 113-bit code. By entering the 113-bit code in the key register and masking out the rest of the comparator, the multicomparator is conformed to search for this code wherever it occurs in the data file. Once the multicomparator is loaded with "key" and "mask" words, the file being searched is serially shifted through the data register. The data words are compared in bit parallel with the unmasked bits of the key word as they pass through the data register. When a match is found, the compare output goes high.

Large multicomparators can be constructed of the 128-bit circuits. Cascaded [Fig. 2(a)], the comparator can be used to search for words longer than 128 bits. By implementing multicomparators in parallel [Fig. 2(b)], a word-serial, bit-parallel

Manuscript received March 15, 1976; revised July 18, 1976.

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¹Voltage convention: high—"1"— V_{DD} , low—"0"— V_{CC} . Note that since V_{DD} is negative for p-channel MOS and positive for n-MOS transistor-transistor logic (TTL) levels may or may not have reverse polarity depending on the processing used.

organization is achieved which is completely compatible with byte oriented machines. For example, an arbitrary length string of ASCII characters (such as one line of a source listing) can be easily searched using this technique, making the device ideal for indexing, test, etc.

There are many applications for the multicomparator in machine construction. As a result of its serial-search nature, the multicomparator is ideally suited to interface serial-access devices such as tapes or disks. For example, a "smart disk" can be constructed which has as a part of its instruction set, "find the following string." The specification of the string of course would allow DON'T CARES to mask out certain fields. For example, bin sorting could be accomplished in this manner. This capability coupled with a standard microprocessor would provide a disk capable of doing a large fraction of the string manipulation now done by CPU's. Such string manipulation capability on the word level would be useful in text processing applications. Many of the Snobol-type instructions can be directly implemented using the search chip as input to the processor.

CHIP DESIGN

The multicomparator was fabricated using p-channel silicon-gate metal-oxide-semiconductor (MOS) technology [2]. Since the circuit was designed with applications in computer peripherals in mind, an MOS clock rate of 2 MHz was adequate and MOS technology allowed a high packing density in combination with high yield. n-MOS processing can be used with the same design, with approximately $2\frac{1}{2} \times$ performance advantage.

The multicomparator utilizes a 3-phase static-dynamic shift register cell [Fig. 3(a)]. The static feature is attained by adding a clocked feedback transistor to a standard 2-phase dynamic shift register cell. The clocking diagram is shown in Fig. 3(b). In dynamic operation, ϕ_1 and ϕ_2 are clocked sequentially while ϕ_3 is kept low. ϕ_3 serves as the clamping clock which holds data in the shift register. During static operation, ϕ_1 is low (isolating each cell of the shift register) and both ϕ_2 and ϕ_3 are high. ϕ_3 gates the output of an element back to the input, and hence during the transition between modes of operation, ϕ_3 must be delayed somewhat from ϕ_2 to avoid an undefined data state. In practice, one may use a delayed ϕ_2 as ϕ_3 for both static and dynamic operation.

A unique five device activated EXCLUSIVE-NOR gate was implemented to perform the compare operation [Fig. 4(a)]. The cross-coupled structure was chosen over the standard EXCLUSIVE-NOR circuit for layout simplicity. However, the operation is similar to an EXCLUSIVE-NOR gate with the addition of an activating transistor [Fig. 4(b)]. When the activating transistor is on, the comparator is operational. When off, the comparator is disabled and the compare output indicates a match irrespective of comparator inputs. Note that the match state is a logical ONE, hence when several EXCLUSIVE-NOR gates are connected in parallel to construct a comparator, only one not-compare element is necessary to pull the compare line down to the low state.

The maximum operating speed of the comparator is set by the compare line capacitance and its associated pickup device resistance. A single not-compare bit must be able to pull

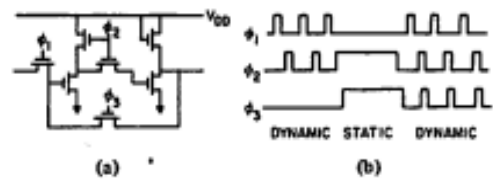


Fig. 3. Basic shift register cell. (a) Schematic. (b) Clock timing.

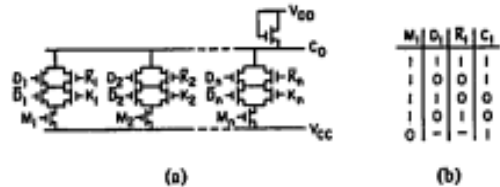


Fig. 4. Gated EXCLUSIVE-NOR gate. (a) Schematic. (b) Truth table.

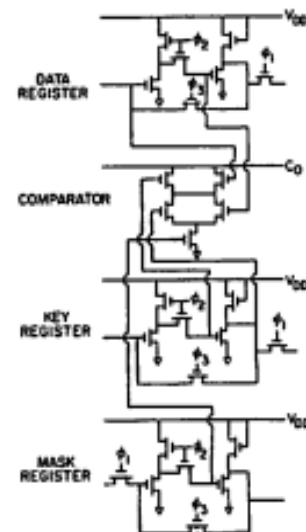


Fig. 5. Full schematic of one bit slice of the multicomparator.

the compare line down in one clock cycle. With the comparator shown, the compare line capacitance for one row of 32 cells is approximately 2 pF and the ON resistance of the 3 series comparator transistors is about 6 k Ω . Hence the time constant of a low going not-compare output from one row is approximately 12 ns. However, for a high going (compare) signal, the time constant is set by the 60 k Ω pull-up resistor at the end of the compare line. Thus the high going time constant is much larger (~ 120 ns). For this reason, the chip was arranged in four independent rows of 32 bits each. The four compare lines were NANDed to avoid paralleling the line capacitances and hence maintain the data rate achievable with the basic 32-bit row.

The schematic of one bit of the multicomparator is shown in Fig. 5. The circuit is composed of three static-dynamic shift registers for data handling and an EXCLUSIVE-NOR gate to accomplish the compare function. The unit cell was laid out using conservative design rules (10- μ metal lines with 10- μ

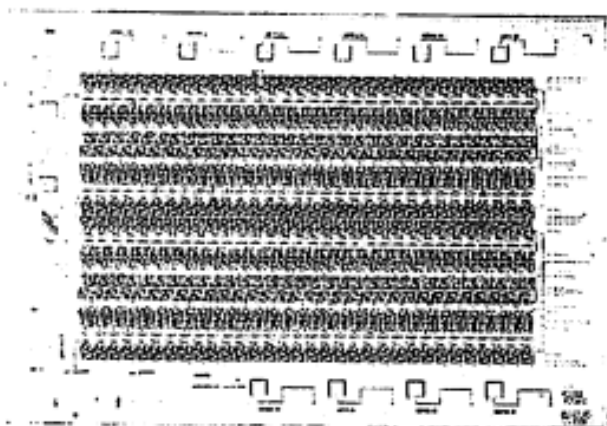


Fig. 6. Photomicrograph of multicomparator chip.



Fig. 7. Oscilloscope photo of multicomparator output with pseudorandom data input. Note: Compare pulse when data are aligned with internal stored-bit pattern.

metal-to-metal spacing). On silicon, the unit cell measures $91 \times 470 \mu$. Photomicrographs of the 128-bit multicomparator unit cell and chip layout are shown in Fig. 6. Each shift register has independent clocks and separate output pads. The 3350 device multicomparator is 107×150 mils and has 18 bonding pads.

PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

A typical device characterization was carried out by entering a 128-bit data word composed of a pseudorandom sequence of ones and zeros in the key register. The comparator was enabled by simultaneously entering zeros in the mask register. The 128-bit data word was then cycled through the data register. Only when alignment between the cycling data word and its stored counterpart was achieved did match occur (Fig. 7). As expected, the compare pulses had a width equal to the time increment between ϕ_2 and ϕ_1 and recorded every 128 even pulses. When all ones are entered in the mask register, the comparator is disabled and the compare output is high (indicating a match) since there are no unmasked bits to disagree with the data register.

The multicomparator operates over a wide range of voltages with a TTL input. Fig. 8 shows the operational range of the multicomparator at a clock frequency of 2 MHz. The clocks had a 25 percent duty cycle and were symmetrically spaced in time. V_{cc} was set at +5 V with V_{ϕ} referenced to it. The minimum supply voltage is set by two MOS thresholds (approximately

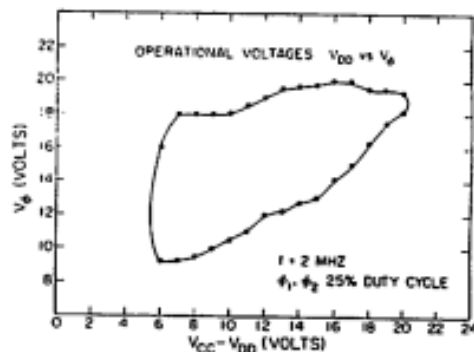


Fig. 8. Operational range of p-channel multicomparator chip.

TABLE I

Parameter	Performance ^a
Clock rate	0.0001–2 MHz
Dynamic supply current	25 mA
Static supply current	30 mA
Clock leakage current (ϕ_1)	120 nA
Clock leakage current (ϕ_2)	300 nA
Clock capacitance (ϕ_1)	40 pF
Clock capacitance (ϕ_2)	60 pF
Clock capacitance (ϕ_3)	40 pF
Interlock capacitance	7 pF
Input capacitance	10 pF
Output capacitance	10 pF

^aTest Conditions:

$$T = 23^\circ\text{C}, V_{cc} = 5 \text{ V}, V_{DD} = -5 \text{ V}, \\ V_{\phi L} = +5 \text{ V}, V_{\phi H} = -5 \text{ V}, V_{\text{input}} = 0.5 \text{ V}.$$

2 V in the p-MOS process used). The maximum clock voltage was set by the onset of inversion under the field oxide. At high power supply voltages, the clock voltages were approximately one threshold less than $V_{cc} - V_{DD}$.

The multicomparator performance characteristics are summarized in Table I.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors are pleased to acknowledge Intel Corporation for wafer fabrication.

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- [2] F. Faggin and T. Klein, "Silicon gate technology," *Solid-State Electron.*, vol. 13, pp. 1125-1144, 1970.



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in insulators. He has proposed and demonstrated the operation of a number of new solid-state electronic devices and holds several U.S. Patents.

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