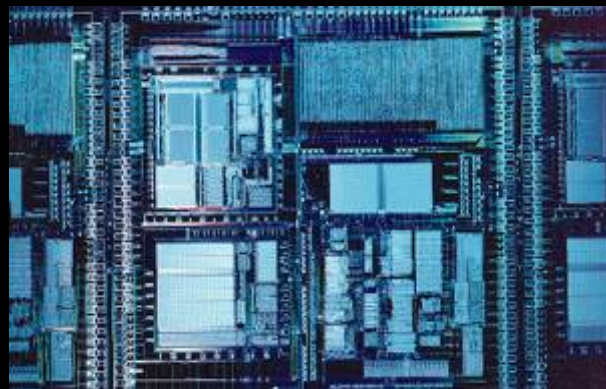
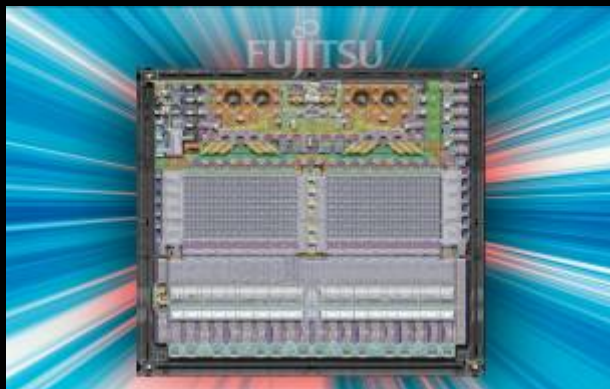


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Reality Check: Challenges of mixed-signal VLSI design for high-speed optical communications





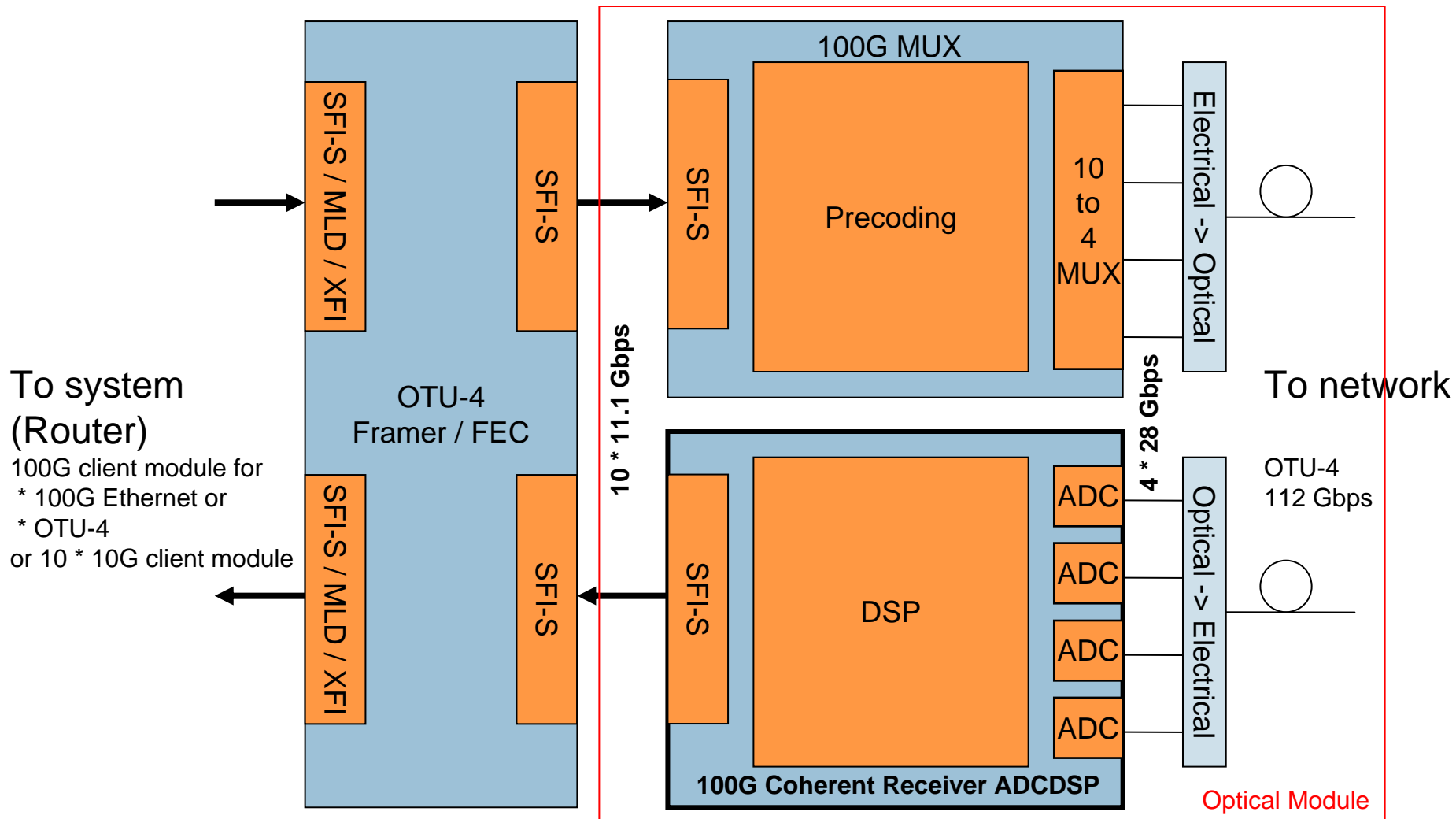
Mixed-signal VLSI for 100G and beyond

- **100G optical transport system**
- **Why single-chip CMOS?**
- **So what is so difficult ?**
- **CH AIS ADC**
- **On-chip noise coupling**
- **Package and PCB design**
- **Testing issues**
- **Future challenges**





100G Optical Transport system





Why single-chip CMOS for 100G?

■ Massive data bandwidth between ADC/DAC and digital

- 4-channel 8b 56Gs/s ADC/DAC means 1.8Tb/s of data at interface
- Getting this from one chip to another costs power and chip area
 - 10G SERDES link ~250mW/channel → ~10W per ADC or DAC

■ Critical performance factor is power efficiency, not just speed

- Discrete ADC/DAC (e.g SiGe) dissipating ~20W each (including I/O) are difficult to use
 - Very high total power dissipation in package (>100W for multiple channels)
 - Skew management/calibration problem (especially over temperature/lifetime)

■ Single-chip CMOS solution is the “Holy Grail”

- Integrate on ASIC with >50M gates or memory (size limited by power dissipation)
- Leverage CMOS technology advances to drive down power and cost
- ADC and DAC get faster and lower power at the same rate as digital -- hopefully 😊



ADCDSP -- so what is so difficult ?

■ ADC is the biggest circuit design problem

- Ultra-high speed, low noise and jitter, low power consumption – all at the same time...
- Conventional techniques cannot easily deliver required performance

■ Digital-analogue noise coupling

- Sampler/clock jitter ~100fs on same chip as DSP with >100A current spikes

■ Wide bandwidth (>20GHz) and good S11 (up to >30GHz)

- Sampler, package, PCB design all very challenging with high pin count FCBGA

■ On-chip DSP design is very out-of-the-ordinary (multiple TeraOPS)

- Extremely power-efficient → use massive parallelism, not GHz clocks (Pentium 4...)

■ Test

- Performance verification challenges limits of test equipment
- Need at-speed performance verification in production, not just functional testing

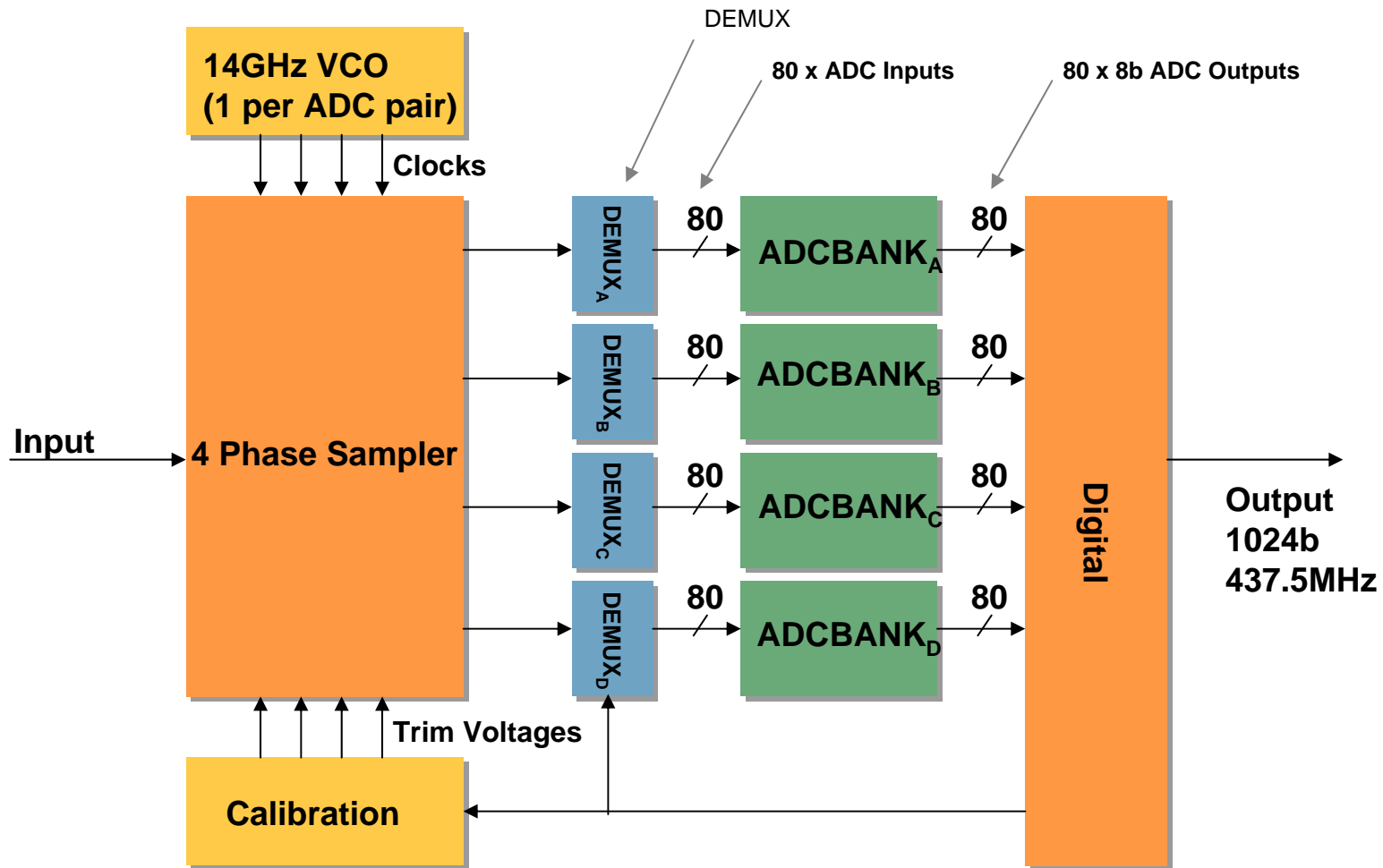


The ADC problem

- **Wideband low-noise sampler + demultiplexer + interleaved ADC array**
 - Smaller CMOS geometries → higher speed → worse mismatch and noise
- **Single 56Gs/s track/hold very difficult due to extreme speed**
 - <9ps to acquire, <9ps to transfer to following interleaved T/H stages
- **Interleaved track/hold (e.g. 4-channel 14Gs/s) also very difficult**
 - Signal/clock delays must match to <<1ps – how do you measure this?
- **Noise, mismatch and power of cascaded circuits all adds up**
 - Multiple sampling capacitors, buffers, switches, demultiplexers...
- **Layout and interconnect *extremely* challenging**
 - Design the circuits, then find you can't actually connect everything up...
- **Interleaved ADC back-end is not so difficult (only in comparison!)**
 - Design for best power and area efficiency rather than highest speed
 - Interleave as many as necessary to achieve required sampling rate
 - 8 x 175Ms/s 8b SAR ADCs fit underneath 1 solder bump → 45Gs/s per sq mm ☺

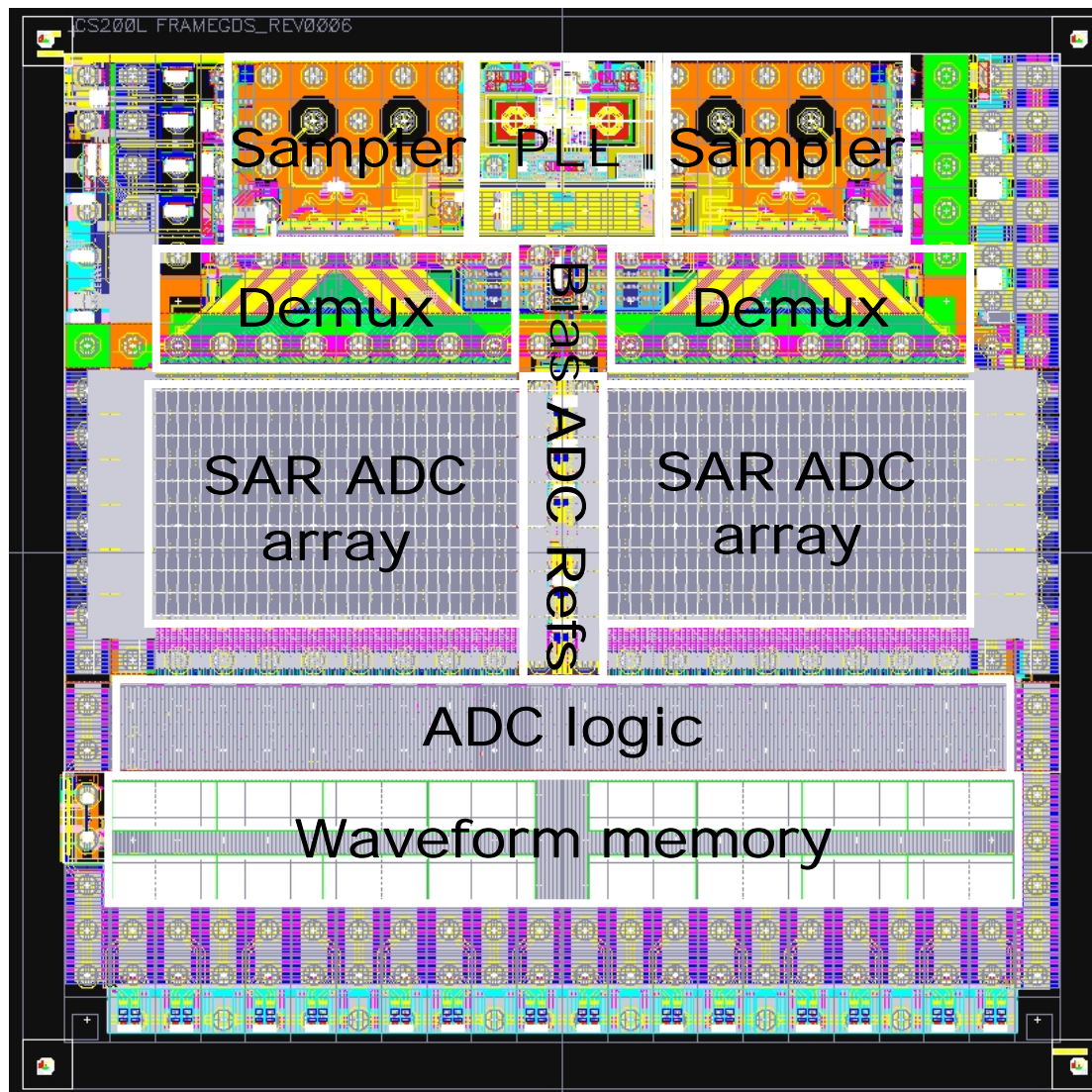


A 56Gs/s CMOS ADC solution – CHArge-mode Interleaved Sampler (CHAIS)





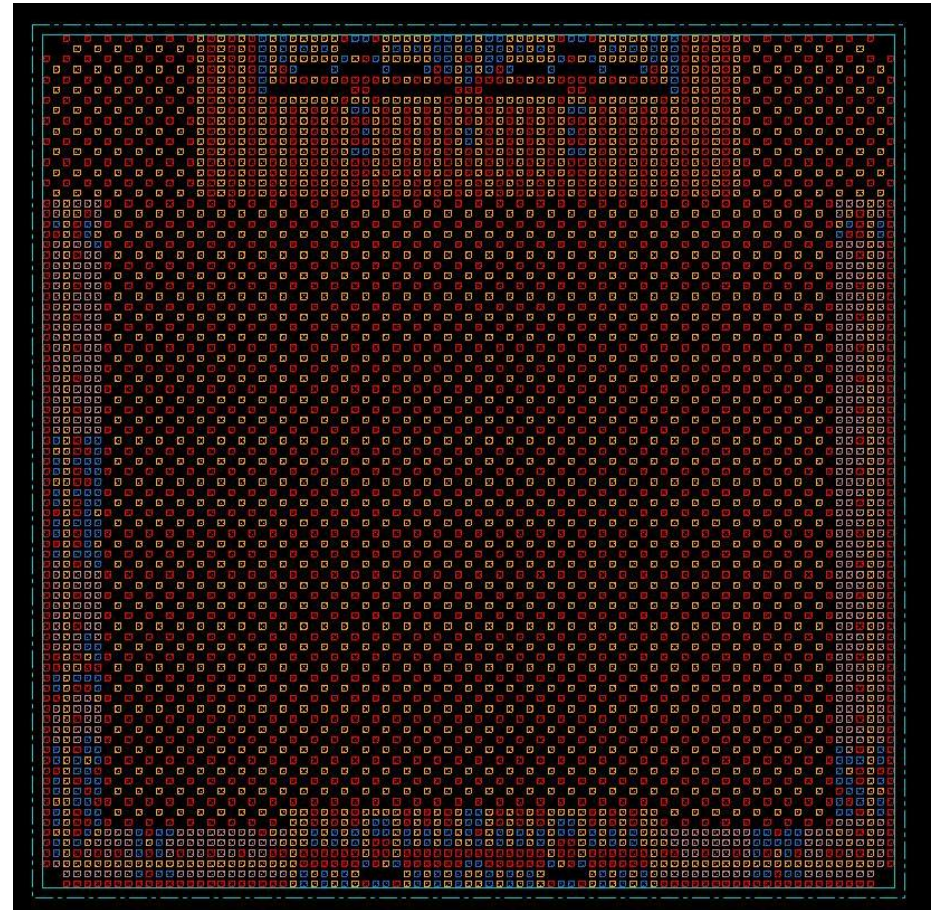
Dual ADC layout (4mm x 4mm test chip)





Example of 100G coherent receiver ASIC

- Architecture: Single CMOS die
- Technology: 65nm CMOS
- Interconnect: 12 layer metal
- Die size: 15 mm x 15 mm
- Gate count: ~50 million gates
- Package: FCBGA, >1000 pins
- M/S macros: 4 channel 56 Gs/s ADC
24 channel CEI-11G TX
- ADC power : ~2W/channel





The DSP problem

- **Digital design tools (and designers) *really* don't like this type of DSP**
 - The tools (and designers) synthesize circuits, then worry about how to connect them up
 - But interconnect capacitance causes ~90% of power dissipation, not circuits
 - Massive data bus widths (4k bits at ADC outputs) → massive interconnect problem

- **Partitioning into usable size blocks may be more difficult than it appears**
 - Tools don't like doing flat designs with tens of millions of gates (turn-around time)
 - “OK, lets split that big DSP block into two and add some pipelining”
 - “Erm, about this 16k bit wide data bus you've just introduced...” ☹

- **Better system/architecture tools for this type of design are needed**
 - Should really design/optimize the data flow, then shovel the circuits in underneath...
 - Designers' brains (and system-level design tools) don't really think this way ☹



On-chip noise coupling

■ Reduce aggressor (DSP logic) noise generation

- Use intentional skew of clock timing within each block and between blocks
 - Reduces peak current and spreads out in time → >10x lower di/dt
- Lots of on-chip (~400nF) and ultra-low-inductance (~4pH) in-package decoupling

■ Increase victim (ADC analogue) immunity

- Fewest possible noise/jitter sensitive circuits, all fully differential
- Lots of on-chip (~100nF) and low-inductance in-package decoupling

■ Improve victim-aggressor isolation

- Avoid low-resistance epi substrate (short-circuit for substrate noise)
- Build “nested walls” of isolation with most sensitive circuits in the middle
 - SAR ADCs (not jitter-sensitive) form the first line of defense
 - Isolation walls through package and into chip form the next line
 - Demux and other analogue circuits (calibration etc.) form the next line
 - Sampler and PLL are hidden away inside all these layers of isolation

■ Measurements show very little noise makes it past all the defenses ☺

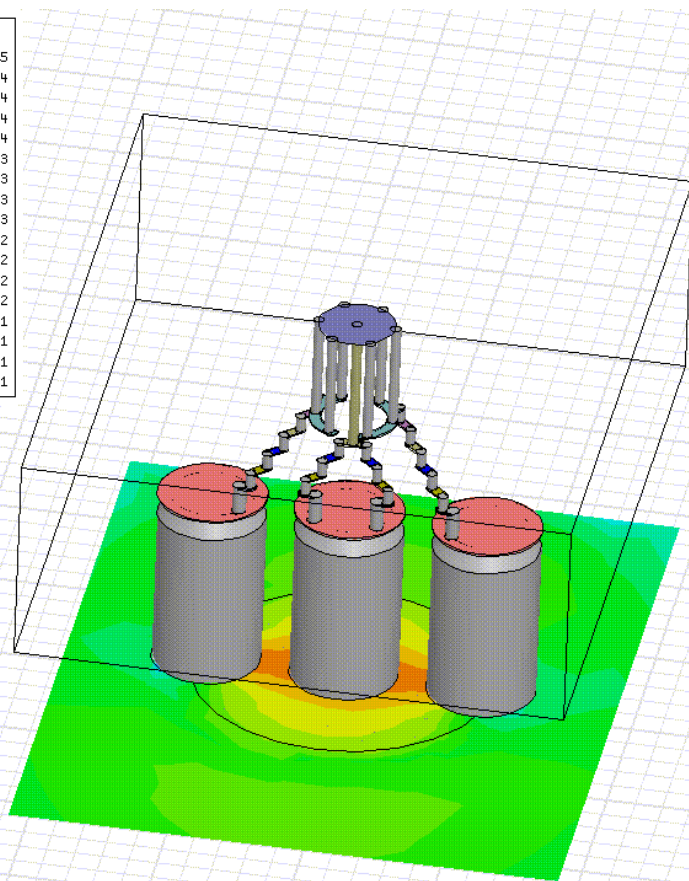
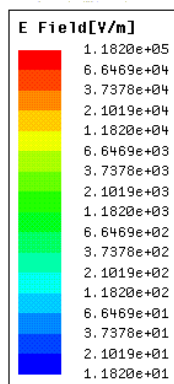
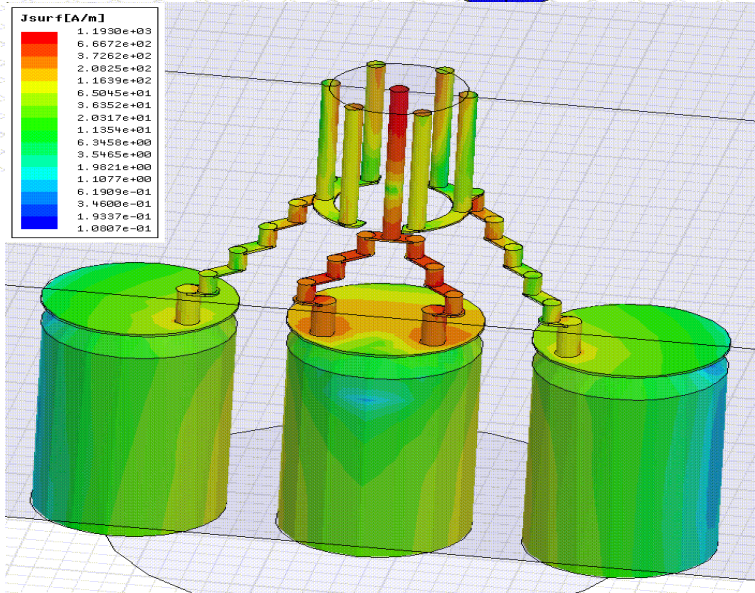
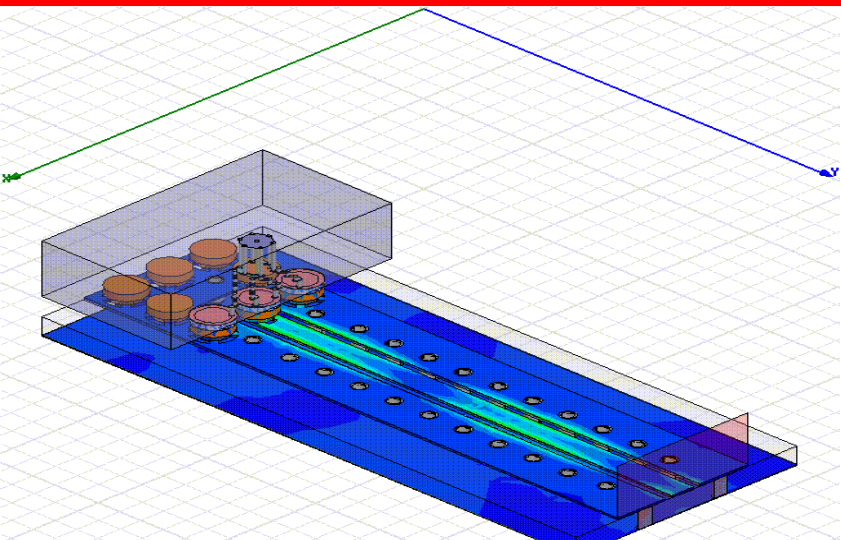


Package and PCB design

- **1mm pitch FCBGA, >1000 pins, 19 internal layers, copper lid**
 - Use similar package for test chips as typical ASIC to get same performance
 - Low-loss high-TCE LTCC (12ppm/C) for improved second-level reliability
- **Multiple power/ground regions and shields for noise isolation**
- **Ultra-low-inductance internal decoupling for supplies and bias/reference**
 - Multiple interleaved VDD/VSS planes connect chip to multi-terminal decouplers
 - Noise dealt with inside package → predictable (stops end user getting it wrong)
- **Coaxial via and waveguide structures, <1dB loss at 20GHz**
 - Ground planes completely removed above signal balls to reduce capacitance
 - Dual 100ohm balanced lines used to connect coaxial via structure to G-S-G pads
- **Optimized launch to G-S-G coplanar waveguide on low-loss PCB**
 - Balls on row inside signal pins removed to reduce capacitance, grounds cut back
 - Outer PCB layers use MEW Megtron 6 (very low loss, lead-free multilayer compatible)

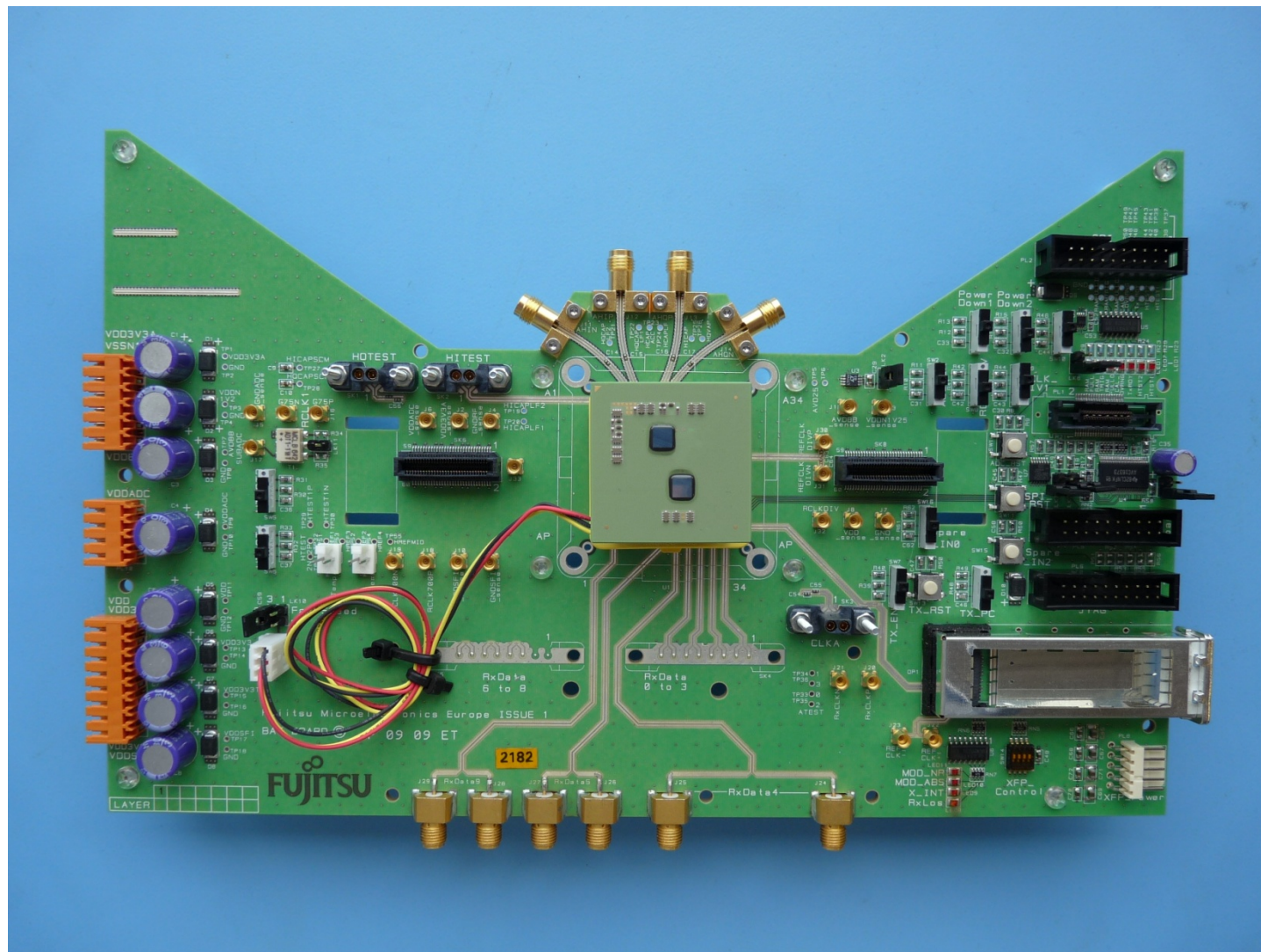


Package + PCB EM field simulations



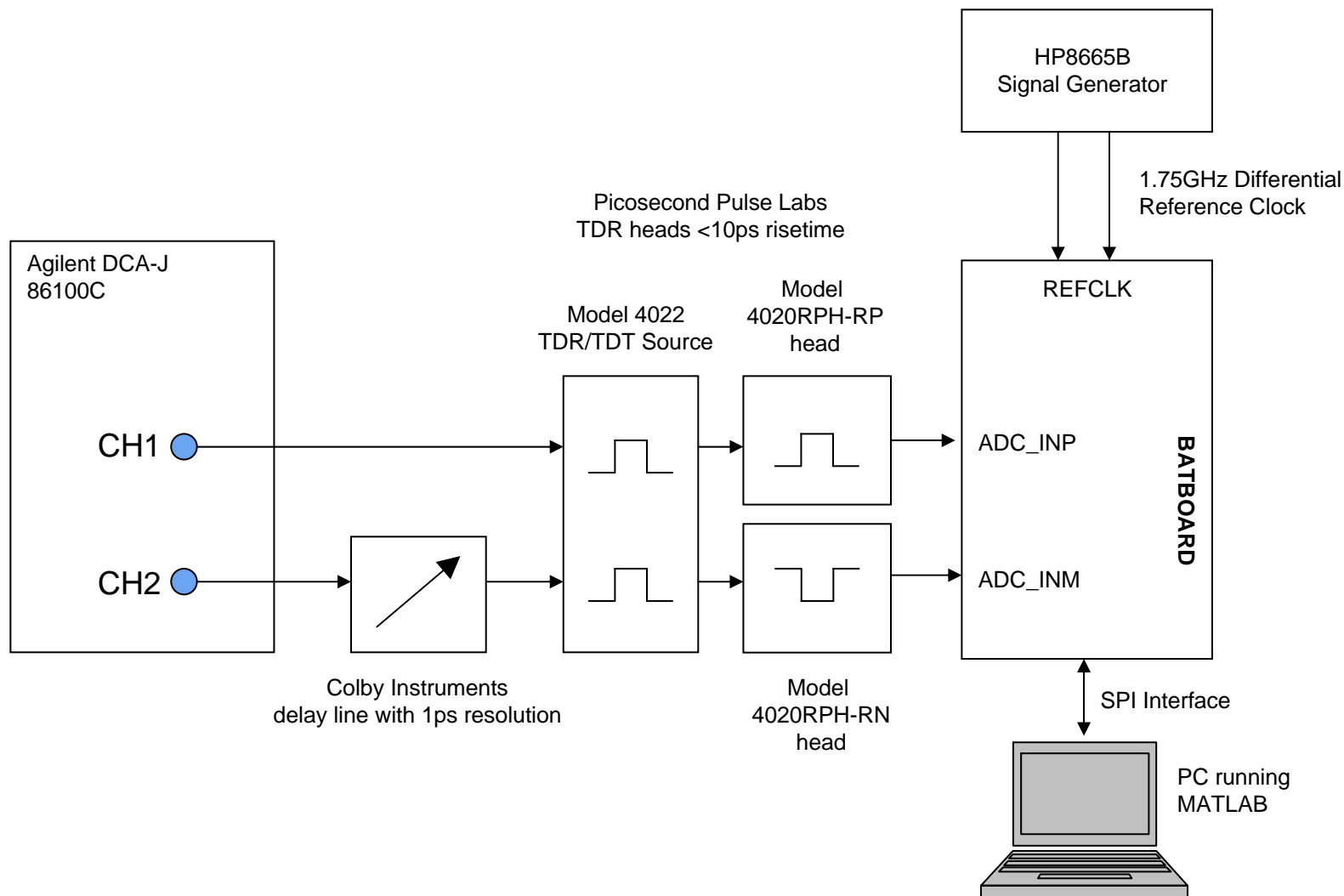


BATBOARD and ROBIN



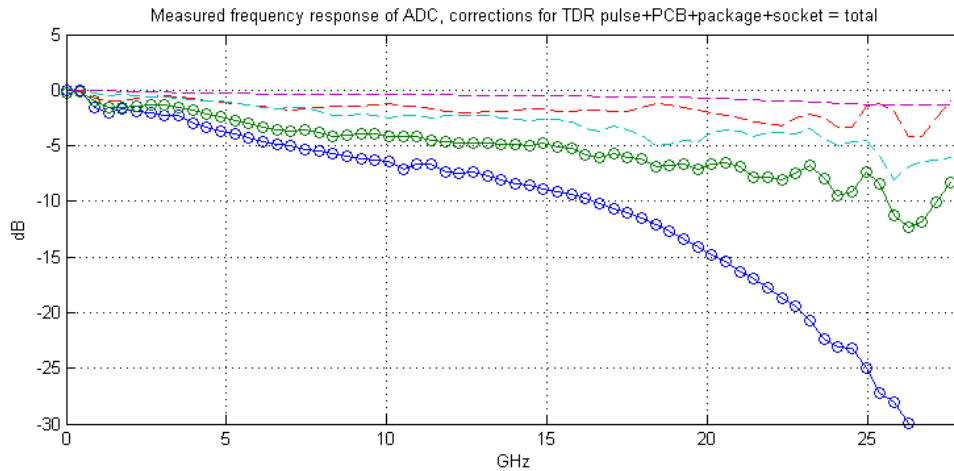


Bandwidth measurement using TDR step

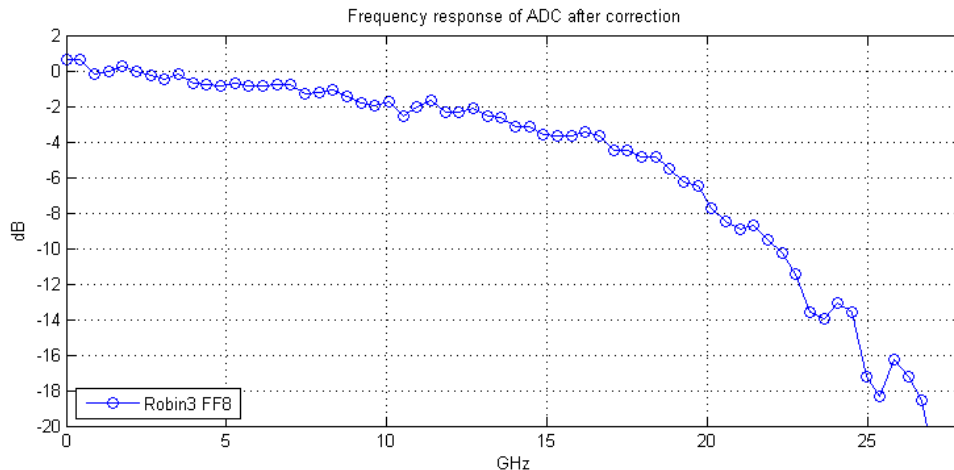




Frequency Response (test setup and ADC)



- **Frequency response of test setup**
 - TDR step (measured)
 - Batboard PCB (measured)
 - ENIG not Ag finish (Ni is lossy!)
 - Socket (estimated -1dB @ 20 GHz)
- **Test setup loss similar to ADC response**



- **Corrected ADC frequency response**
 - accurate measurements are not easy
- **ADC -3dB bandwidth ~ 15GHz**
 - very close to simulation and specification



Production test

- **Need proper performance verification, not just functionality**
 - Increased confidence that chip actually meets design specifications
 - Make chip self-testing as far as possible and do at-speed performance tests

- **Drive ADC inputs from wideband n-way power combiners**
 - Sum outputs of multiple CEI-11G channels with sinewave input(s)
 - Enable and disable channels/clocks instead of switching (avoid 20GHz+ relays)

- **Test ADC ENOB using sinewave input(s)**
 - Sampled data stored in on-chip RAMs then read out and analysed (ENOB)
 - Signal source TBD (filtered DRO? phase locked to REF?) – high quality essential

- **Test CEI-11G outputs by looping back into 56Gs/s ADC inputs**
 - 5 samples per bit gives complete waveform analysis on *all* TX channels
 - Full-speed measurement of eye opening and jitter



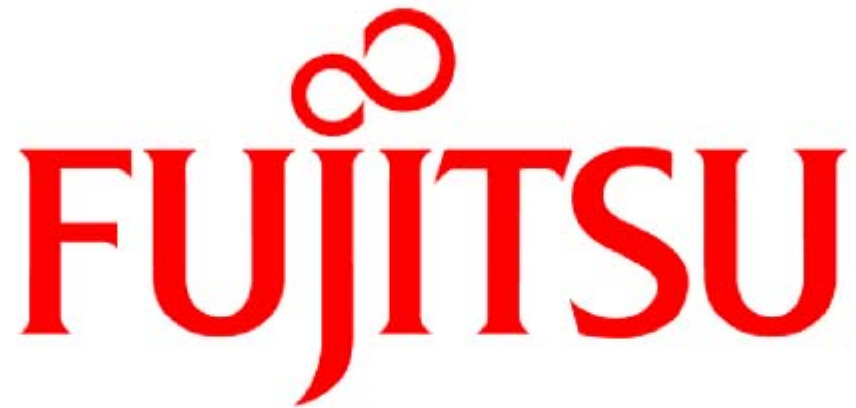
Future challenges -- what obstacles are there to progress beyond 100Gb/s?

- **Sampler noise/bandwidth/interleave skew/clock jitter**
 - Can be solved using new CMOS techniques instead of exotic technology
 - CHAIS sampler/demux/ADC is capable of >100Gs/s even in 65nm
 - Bandwidth scales with clock rate (-3dB at $\sim 0.3F_s$)

- **Input bandwidth increase and S11 improvement**
 - FBGA package modifications to optimize design for very high frequencies
 - Smaller ball pitch conflicts with second-level reliability and PCB issues

- **Power consumption – DSP issue, ADC is $\sim 2W$ /channel (65nm, scales like digital)**
 - DSP power is several times ADC power, especially with more complex systems
 - Power increase (complexity) is outrunning power savings (process shrink)

- **Layout (interconnect and floorplan) feasibility**
 - Everything wants to be on top of everything else with zero-length connections ☹
 - Could need unconventional layouts – ADCs might look like dartboards 😊



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THE POSSIBILITIES ARE INFINITE