

# Lecture 04: Solid State Detectors: CCD, CMOS and IRFPA

Wenda Cao

**Big Bear Solar Observatory New Jersey Institute of Technology** 





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#### **Outline**





- What is Solid State Detector?
- Basic Operating Principle
- Performance of Solid
  State Detectors
- □ CCD, CMOS and IRFPA
- Observation with Solid
  State Detectors



Textbook: Handbook of CCD Astronomy, Steve B. Howell

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#### 1. Introduction

- History
- □ What are Solid State Detectors?
  - **CCD Charge Coupling Device**
  - CMOS Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor
  - □ IRFPA Infrared Focal Plane Array
- Why Use Solid State Detectors for Astronomical Imaging ?
  - □ Naked eyes
  - Films

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### **History**





- □ First CCD was designed in AT&T Bell Lab in 1969
- Willard S. Boyle and George E. Smith, Murray Hill, NJ
- Awarded with the Nobel Prize in Physics for 2009
- □ First astronomical image with a CCD camera came out in 1975

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## What is Solid State Detector ?

- A Solid State Device is a photosensitive device that converts light signals into digital signals
  - An incoming photon kicks an electron in the conduction band
  - The read-out system gives a digital signal
- Typically, the three main types in astronomical imaging are CCD, CMOS and IRFPA
  - □ CCD: Charge-Coupled Device
  - CMOS: Complementary Metal-Oxide Semiconductor
  - □ IRFPA: Infrared Focal Plane Array



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## Why not Naked Eyes ?

#### □ Visible to human eyes: 380 ~ 780 nm



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Wavelength

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Cum

Wavelength (nm)

Gincen Yellon

THE EDGE IN KNOWLEDGE

Wavelength



## **Naked Eye Solar Observation**



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## Why not Films ?



- □ Film: silver emulsion on film
- Allow objective measurements and light integration
- Broader spectral coverage and acceptable QE









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## Why not Films ?



- □ Reciprocity failure
- □ Very long exposure (low QE)
- □ Nonlinearity
- □ Low dynamic range
- □ Resolution
- □ Not allow post-processing







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#### **Pros and Cons**



#### <u>Films</u>

 reciprocity failure beyond a few second exposure
 minimal light intensity required to detect a target at all
 low quantum efficiency (5 ~ 20% at optimal wavelengths)
 response to light is nonlinear

- □ small dynamic range (6-bit)
- picture elements (grain) are randomly distributed

needs to be processed in a chemical darkroom

□ good MTF

#### Solid State Devices

□ no loss of sensitivity to light during exposure □ no minimal light intensity required to detect a target □ high efficiency of light detection (up to 50 ~ 90%, though deviceand wavelength-dependent) □ signal is proportional to light intensity □ large dynamic range (typically 16-bit) □ picture elements (pixels) are regularly spaced

□ ready for digital processing



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## 2. Basic Operating Principle

- Step 0 Light into Detector
- **Step 1 Charge Generation**
- **Step 2** Charge Collection
- **Step 3 Charges Transfer**
- Step 4 Charge-to-Voltage Conversion
- **Step 5 Digitization**

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## 2.1 Charge Generation

- Photoelectric Effect
- Photoelectric Material
- Conductors
- Insulators
- Semiconductors
- Band Gap Energy
- CCD, CMOS and IRFPA Photoelectric Materials







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#### Photoelectric Effect



For an electron to be excited from valence band to conduction band

$$hv \ge E_g$$

 $h = 6.63 \times 10^{-34}$  Joule  $\cdot$ s (Planck constant)

 $v = c / \lambda$  (Frequency of light) 

- $E_q$ : electron-volts (Energy gap of material)
- Long wavelength cut-off

$$\lambda \leq \frac{1.238}{E_g(eV)} = \lambda_{cut-off}(\mu m)$$

$$\Box \quad Silicon: E_g = 1.12 \text{ eV}, \ \lambda_{cut-off} = ?$$

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## **Periodic Table**





Material properties depend on outer electron shell

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#### Conductors



- Li, Na, K, Cu, Ag, and Au have a single valence electron.
- These elements all have similar chemical properties. These atoms readily give away one electron to react with other elements.
- The ability to easily give away an electron makes these elements excellent conductors.



Periodic table group IA elements: Li, Na, and K, and group IB elements: Cu, Ag, and Au have one electron in the outer, or valence, shell, which is readily donated.

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#### Insulators



- Group VIIA elements: FI, CI, Br, and I all have 7 electrons in the outer shell.
- These elements readily accept an electron to fill up the outer shell with a full 8 electrons.
- □ These elements which do not give up electrons are insulators.



Periodic table group VIIA elements: F, Cl, Br, and I with 7 valence electrons readily accept an electron in reactions with other elements.

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#### **Semiconductors**



- Group IVA elements: C, Si, Ge, having 4 electrons in the valence shell, form compounds by sharing electrons with other elements without forming ions.
- A semiconductor becomes a conductor if the electrons are excited to high enough energies, otherwise it is an insulator.



Allows for photo-sensitive circuits (photon absorption adds energy to electron). Minimum energy to elevate an electron into conduction is the "band gap energy".

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## **Band Gap Energy**



- Minimum energy to elevate an electron into conduction is the "band gap energy".
- semiconductors have a narrow gap between the valence and conduction bands.



Semiconductors allow for photo-sensitive circuits (photon absorption adds energy to electron).

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## **Detector Family**





## 2.2 Charge Collection

- □ Capacitor
- MOS Capacitor
- Potential Well
- Surface Channel\*
- Buried Channel\*







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## Capacitor



The capacitance of two parallel plates is 4.5pF. Calculate the charge on one plate when a voltage of 8.0 V is applied to the plates ?



- Each pixel releases electrons (by the photoelectric effect) when light is incident on it.
- □ We may think of each pixel like a small capacitor.
- The electrons released in each pixel constitute a certain amount of charge Q, and so a potential difference V develops at the ends of the pixel.
- The number of electrons released, and the voltage created across the pixel is proportional to the intensity of light.

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#### **MOS Capacitor**



□ A Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor (MOS) capacitor has a potential difference between two metal plates separated by an insulator.





#### **Potential Well**



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## 2.3 Charge Transfer

- CCD Readout Architecture
- Description Pixel and Register
- CCD Phase Clocking

**CCD Image Readout Animation** 

- Parallel Register
- Serial Register





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### **CCD Pixel and Register**



- □ MOS capacitors are the basic building blocks of the CCD
- **Each pixel consists of several MOS capacitors**
- □ MOS capacitors follow phase clock to transfer charges

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### **CCD Phased Clocking**



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Time-slice shown in diagram









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#### **CCD Phased Clocking: Summary**





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- □ Full frame and frame transfer devices tend to be used for scientific applications.
- □ Interline transfer devices are used in consumer camcorders and TV systems.
- Frame transfer imager consists of two almost identical arrays, one devoted to image pixels and one for storage.
- Interline transfer array consists of photodiodes separated by vertical transfer registers that are covered by an opaque metal shield.

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#### 2.4 Charge-to-Voltage Conversion



- Each pixel's collected charge is sensed and amplified by an output amplifier
- They are designed to have low noise and built into the silicon circuitry
- Typical values are in the range of 0.5 to 4 microvolts per electron

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### 2.5 Digitization (A/D Conversion)



- Output voltage from a given pixel is converted to a digital number (ADUs – analog-to-digital units)
- A/D (ADC, analog-to-digital converter) performs the conversion of output voltage signal to a digital number
- Digitization circuits are complicated and not included in a CCD chip, "off-chip" circuit.
- Digital output values can only be integer numbers with digital bits:
  - □ 8 bits:  $2^8 = 256$
  - **10** bits:  $2^{10} = 1024$
  - $\Box$  14 bits:  $2^{14} = 16383$
  - **a** 16 bits:  $2^{16} = 65535$



- Ultimate readout speed depends on how fast the process of pixel examination and A/D conversion can take place
  - At a readout rate of 50 µs/pixel (~20 kHz), how long does it take over to read out a 2048 by 2048 CCD ?



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#### 3. Performance of CCD

**Charge Generation** 

- QE Quantum Efficiency
- Dark Current
- **Charge Collection** 
  - **Pixel Size**
  - **On-Chip Pixel Binning**
  - Full Well Capacity

#### Charge Transfer

CTE – Charge Transfer Efficiency 

Defects 

#### Charge Detection

- Readout Noise
- Linearity
- Gain and Dynamic Range



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#### 3.1 Quantum Efficiency

- QE: the percentage of photons hitting the photoreactive surface that will produce an electron-hole pair.
- QE is an accurate measurement of device's electrical sensitivity to light.
- QE is a function of wavelength.
- QE is often measured over a range of different wavelengths
- □ Film typically has a QE of less than 10%.
- CCDs have a QE of well over 90% at some wavelength.
- QE depends on many factors, such as the gate structure, surface reflection, illuminating way ...





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# Front or Back Side Illumination



- Front side illumination: CCDs are illuminated through the electrodes. Electrodes are semi-transparent, but some losses occur.
- Back side illumination: CCDs are illuminated from the back side.
- □ Front-side illuminated device: relatively low QE, filling factor < 1.
- Back-side illuminated device (or thinned devices): high QE and physically thinned to about 15 microns, filling factor close to 1.



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### **Photon Absorption Length in Si**

- Si is responsible for the response of the detector to various wavelength of light.
- For light outside the range of 350 to over 850 nm, CCDs become transparent:
  - at short wavelengths, > 70% of photons are reflected.
  - at long wavelengths, light photons pass right through the silicon.
- For light inside the range of 350 to over 850 nm, photons get absorbed.
- Back-side device thickness ~15 microns.
- Front-side device thickness ~300 microns, QEs are more red sensitive and lower in the blue.



Frontside and Backside CCD Quantum Efficiency





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#### 3.1 Dark Current

- When thermal agitation is high enough, electrons get free from the valence band.
- They become collected within the potential well of a pixel.
- These dark current electrons become part of the signal, indistinguishable from object photons.
- Dark current is a strong function of the temperature of the device.
- At room temperature, dark current of a typical CCD is 25,000 e-/pixel/sec.
- Darks are more serious in IRFPAs than that in Si CCD/CMOS camera



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#### **Minimize Dark Current**

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#### Dark noise has a Poisson distribution

 $N_D = \sqrt{dark \ current}$ 

- LN2 (Liquid Nitrogen) cooling
  - Dewar in vacuum and LN2 in dewar
  - □ Cool CCD chip to -100°C
  - Cool IRFPA to 77 Kelvin
- **Thermoelectric cooling** 
  - $\Box$  Cool CCD to -20 to -50 °C









### 3.2 Full Well Capacity

- Well capacity is defined as the maximum charge that can be held in a pixel
- The physically larger the pixel (both in area and in thickness) the more charge that it can collect and store.
- "Saturation" is the term that describes when a pixel has accumulated the maximum amount of charge that it can hold
- Full well capacity in a CCD is typically ~100,000 e-/pixel
- A rough rule of thumb is that well capacity is about 10,000 e-/ $\mu$  m<sup>2</sup>.
- What will happen when the full well capacity of a pixel is exceeded?

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#### **Blooming**



Bright objects can lead to the collection of too many charges in one pixel, causing pixel to overflow …





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## **Anti-blooming CCDs**



- Blooming occur when the full well capacity of a pixel is exceeded.
- Blooming causes a bright streak leading away from bright pixel, generally in two opposite directions.
- "Saturation" effects are irritating and sometimes render measurement useless.
- Anti-blooming gates allow saturated pixels to be "drained" off.
- Anti-blooming gates occupy 30% of active pixel area, causing QE reduction.



Figure 3

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## 3.2 Pixel Binning

- Pixel binning is a clocking scheme used to combine the charge collected by several adjacent CCD pixels.
- Binning process is performed on-chip, which assumes that accumulated charge is brought together and summed prior to amplification of analog signal and A/D conversion.
- Pixel binning reduces noise and image size, improves the signal-to-noise ratio and frame rate.
- Pixel can be binned in both directions.
- Serial register pixels can hold 5-10 times the charge of a single pixel.
- Pixel binning decrease image resolution.

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# 3.3 Charge Transfer Efficiency



- When the well are nearly empty, charge can be trapped by impurities in the silicon. So faint image can have tails in the vertical direction.
- Modern CCDs can have a CTE per transfer of 99.999995% (five 9s), so after 2000 transfers only 0.1% of the charge is lost.







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#### **3.3 Defects**

- Dark/bright columns are caused by traps of electrons during image readout.
- Stuck pixel: a pixel that always reads high on all exposures.
- Hot pixel: a pixel that reads high on longer exposures.
- Dead pixel: a pixel that reads zero (black) on all exposures.<sup>2</sup>
- Defects can't be corrected by flat fielding.
- Defects can be removed by calibration.





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## 3.4 Linearity



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#### 3.4 Gain



- Output voltage (electrons) from a given pixel is converted to a digital number (ADUs – analog-to-digital units)
- Gain: amount of charge collected in each pixel will be assigned to produce 1 ADU
  - Gain = 10 e-/ADU: for 1509 e- coming, how many ADUs ?
- Gain value: given in terms of the number of electrons needed to produce one ADU (e-/ADU)
- Gain is set by the electronics that read out the CCD chip.
- Gain value is an average conversion ratio, based on changing large numbers of electrons into large numbers of ADUs.
- □ What does a gain of 1.8e-/ADU stand for?



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#### **Saturation and Gain**



- **Full well saturation: full well of a given pixel is full of electrons.**
- □ The largest output number that a CCD can produce is set by the number of bits in the A/D converter:
  - 8 bits:  $2^8 = 256$
  - **u** 10 bits:  $2^{10} = 1024$
  - $\Box$  14 bits:  $2^{14} = 16383$
  - $\square \quad 16 \text{ bits: } 2^{16} = 65535$



- A/D saturation: output number reach its maximum set by A/D converter.
- A/D saturation can occur prior to full well saturation, and vice verse, depending on gain.
  - A CCD camera: 14-bit A/D converter and full well capacity of 25000 e-
  - $\Box \quad If gain = 2 e ADU, light curve?$
  - □ If gain = 1 e-/ADU, light curver?



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#### 3.4 Readout Noise





- Readout noise is mainly due to Johnson noise in on-chip amplifier and A/D circuit.
- Readout noise: in terms of the number of electrons.
- This noise can be reduced by reducing the bandwidth, but this requires that readout is slower.
- Readout noise is added into every pixel every time the array is read out.
- Pixel binning can reduce image noise
  - □ 2 by 2 binning

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$$\mathbf{V} = N_{RN}$$

2 by 2 co-addition

1

$$N = \sqrt{N_1^2 + N_2^2 + N_3^2 + N_4^2}$$

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#### **Dynamic Range**



Dynamic Range defined as the ratio between the brightest and faintest detectable signal.

$$DR = \frac{V_{\text{max}}}{V_{\text{noise}}} = \frac{N_{\text{fullwell}}}{N_{RN}}$$

- Dynamic range is simplified as the ratio of full well and readout noise
- Dynamic range has no unit, but often expressed in decibels,

$$DR = 20 \log \left(\frac{N_{fullwell}}{N_{RN}}\right) dB$$

A CCD array has a full well of 150,000 e-. The advertised dynamic range is 80dB. Could you estimate its readout noise?

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# 4.1 CMOS vs CCD



Photon-to-Electro Conversion

Electron-to-Voltage Conversion

- CMOS: Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor
- CCD: Charge Coupling Device
- Both are pixelated MOS and have the same process in charge generation and charge collection

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- However, charge transfer and charge detection are different
- CCD: all pixels share one charge-to-voltage converter
- CMOS: every pixel has its own charge-to-voltage converter







## **Pros and Cons**



#### <u>CCD</u>

- □ offer high-quality, low-noise images
- □ greater sensitivity and fidelity
- □ 100 times more power
- □ acceptable speed
- complicated anti-blooming technique
- □ require specialized assembly lines
- □ equal reliability
- □ older and more developed technology

#### <u>CMOS</u>

- □ more susceptible to noise
- □ light sensitivity is lower
- □ consume little power
- much fast
- □ natural blooming immunity
- easy to manufacture
- highly integrated
- □ less expensive
- CMOS imagers offer superior integration, power dissipation and system size at the expense of image quality (particularly in low light) and flexibility. They are the technology of choice for high-volume, space-constrained applications where image quality requirements are low.
- CCDs offer superior image quality and flexibility at the expense of system size. They remain the most suitable technology for high-end imaging applications.



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#### **4.2 IRFPA**





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## Hybrid IRFPA



#### IRFPAs mostly deploy hybrid structure

- Photosensitive substrate
- Silicon read-out circuit
- □ Sapphire Substrate
  - Array of n-p-photodiodes made from HgCdTe (epitaxially grown on transparent carrier (AlsO3/CdTe, CdZnTe/CdTe))
  - Boron implants to define pixel structure
  - Read-out Circuit (ROIC)
  - Si based integrated circuit (CMOS array) with individually addressable pixels
- Flip-chip Technique
  - Substrate and ROIC are electrically connected pixel by pixel
  - □ Indium bumps





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# 5. Observation with Solid State Detectors

$$image(x, y) = \frac{raw(x, y) - dark(x, y)}{flat(x, y)}$$



- CCD, CMOS, IRFPA Imaging
- Dark Fielding
- Flat Fielding
- Image Reduction



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