

800 MHz, Linear-in-dB VGA with AGC Detector

AD8368

FEATURES

Analog variable gain range: −12 dB to +22 dB Linear-in-dB scaling: 37.5 dB/V 3 dB bandwidth: 800 MHz @ VGAIN = 0.5 V Integrated rms detector P1dB: 16 dBm @ 140 MHz Output IP3: 33 dBm @ 140 MHz Noise figure at maximum gain: 9.5 dB @ 140 MHz Input and output impedances: 50 Ω Single-supply voltage from 4.5 V to 5.5 V RoHS-compliant, 24-lead LFCSP

APPLICATIONS

Complete IF AGC amplifiers Gain trimming and leveling Cellular base stations Point-to-point radio links RF instrumentation

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The AD8368 is a variable gain amplifier (VGA) with analog linear-in-dB gain control that can be used from low frequencies to 800 MHz. Its excellent gain range, conformance, and flatness are attributed to the Analog Devices, Inc. X-AMP® architecture, an innovative technique for implementing high performance variable gain control.

The gain range of −12 dB to +22 dB is scaled accurately to 37.5 dB/V with excellent conformance error. The AD8368 has a 3 dB bandwidth of 800 MHz that is nominally independent of gain setting. At 140 MHz, the OIP3 is 33 dBm at maximum gain. The output noise floor is −143 dBm/Hz, which corresponds to a 9.5 dB noise figure at maximum gain. The single-ended input and output impedances are nominally 50 Ω .

The gain of the AD8368 can be configured to be an increasing or decreasing function of the gain control voltage depending on whether the MODE pin is pulled to the positive supply or to ground, respectively. When MODE is pulled high, the AD8368 operates as a typical VGA with increasing gain.

FUNCTIONAL BLOCK DIAGRAM

By connecting MODE to ground and using the on-board rms detector, the AD8368 can be configured as a complete AGC system with RSSI. The output power is accurately leveled to the internal default setpoint of 63 mV rms (−11 dBm referenced to 50 Ω), independent of the waveform crest factor. Because the uncommitted detector input is available at DETI, the AGC loop can level the signal at the AD8368 output or at any other point in the signal chain over a maximum input power range of 34 dB. Furthermore, the setpoint level can be raised by dividing down the output signal before applying it to the detector.

The AD8368 operates from a supply voltage of 4.5 V to 5.5 V and consumes 60 mA of current. It can be fully powered down to <3 mA by grounding the ENBL pin. The AD8368 is fabricated using the Analog Devices proprietary SiGe SOI complementary bipolar IC process. It is available in a 24-lead LFCSP and operates over the industrial temperature range of −40°C to +85°C. Application boards are available upon request.

Rev. A

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REVISION HISTORY

4/06-Revision 0: Initial Version

SPECIFICATIONS

 $V_S = 5$ V, $T_A = 25$ °C, system impedance $Z_0 = 50 \Omega$, $V_{MODE} = 5$ V, RF input = 140 MHz, unless otherwise noted.

Table 1.

¹ Operation at compression is not recommended due to adverse distortion components.

 $V_S = 5$ V, $T_A = 25$ °C, system impedance $Z_0 = 50 \Omega$, $V_{\text{MODE}} = 5$ V, RF input = 140 MHz, unless otherwise noted.

Table 2.

¹ Refe[r to AGC Operation section.](#page-13-1)

ABSOLUTE MAXIMUM RATINGS

Table 3.

Stresses above those listed under Absolute Maximum Ratings may cause permanent damage to the device. This is a stress rating only; functional operation of the device at these or any other conditions above those indicated in the operational section of this specification is not implied. Exposure to absolute maximum rating conditions for extended periods may affect device reliability.

ESD CAUTION

ESD (electrostatic discharge) sensitive device. Charged devices and circuit boards can discharge without detection. Although this product features patented or proprietary protection circuitry, damage may occur on devices subjected to high energy ESD. Therefore, proper ESD precautions should be taken to avoid performance degradation or loss of functionality.

PIN CONFIGURATION AND FUNCTION DESCRIPTIONS

Table 4. Pin Function Descriptions

TYPICAL PERFORMANCE CHARACTERISTICS

V_S = 5 V, T = 25°C, system impedance Z₀ = 50 Ω , MODE = 5 V, unless otherwise noted.

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Figure 21. RSSI (V_{DETO}) and Conformance Error vs. Input Power (f = 70 MHz)

Figure 22. RSSI (V_{DETO}) and Conformance Error vs. Input Power (f = 140 MHz)

Figure 23. RSSI (V_{DETO}) and Conformance Error vs. Input Power (f = 240 MHz)

Figure 24. RSSI (V_{DETO}) and Conformance Error vs. Input Power (f = 380 MHz)

Figure 25. AGC Time Domain Response (3 dB Power Step, $C_{DETO} = 1$ nF)

Figure 26. Supply Current and Disable Current vs. Temperature

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CIRCUIT DESCRIPTION

The AD8368 is a single-ended VGA with a bandwidth of 800 MHz and a gain control span of 34 dB ranging from −12 dB to +22 dB. It incorporates an uncommitted square law detector that can be used to form a tight AGC loop around the VGA. Using the Analog Devices patented X-AMP architecture, the AD8368 achieves accurate linear-in-dB gain control with excellent linearity (OIP3) and noise figure (NF). The part also features 50 Ω input and output impedances for ease of use.

The main signal path, shown in [Figure 30](#page-11-1), consists of a variable input attenuator followed by a fixed-gain amplifier and output buffer. This architecture allows for a constant OIP3 and output noise floor as a function of gain setting. As a result, NF and IIP3 increase 1 dB for every 1 dB decrease in gain, resulting in a part with constant dynamic range over gain setting.

INPUT ATTENUATOR AND INTERPOLATOR

The input attenuator is built from an 18-section resistor ladder providing 2 dB of attenuation at each successive tap point. The resistor ladder acts as a linear input attenuator, in addition to providing an accurate 50 Ω input impedance. The variable transconductance (gm) stages are used to select the attenuated signal from the appropriate tap point along the ladder and feed this signal to the fixed-gain amplifier. To realize a continuous gain control function from discrete tap points, the gain interpolator creates a weighted sum of signals appearing on adjacent tap points by carefully controlling the variable g_m stages.

FIXED-GAIN STAGE AND OUTPUT BUFFER

The weighted sum of the different tap points is fed into the fixed-gain stage that drives the output buffer. Because the resistive input attenuator is linear and contributes minimal noise as a passive termination, the dynamic range as a function of gain is determined primarily by the noise and the distortion of the fixed-gain amplifier. This architecture explains the constant OIP3 and constant output noise floor with gain setting and the corresponding dB-for-dB increase in IIP3 and NF with decreasing gain. The output buffer has 6 dB of gain and provides a broadband 50 Ω single-ended output impedance.

OUTPUT OFFSET CORRECTION

The dc level at the input, INPT, is driven by an internal reference to $V_S/2$. The reference is made available at the DECL pin for external decoupling with CDECL. The dc level at the output, OUTP, is regulated to the same midsupply reference by an offset correction loop independent of gain setting, temperature, and process. The low-pass response of this loop creates a high-pass corner frequency in the signal path transfer function, which can be set by choosing C_{DECL} and C_{HPFL}.

The input and output coupling capacitors should be selected to provide low impedances at the frequencies of interest relative to 50 $Ω$ so as not to affect the high-pass corner. In this case, the high-pass corner frequency can be set by either CHPFL or CDECL, which form independent poles in the feedback path of the offset correction loop. The high-pass corner is determined by the highest of these poles, which are given by:

$$
f_{HP, HPE} (kHz) = \frac{0.8}{(0.005 + C_{HPFL})}
$$

$$
f_{HP, DECL} (kHz) = \frac{5700}{(0.005 + C_{DECL})}
$$

where *CHPFL* and *C_{DECL}* are in nF.

When using this method to set the high-pass frequency, the other capacitor should be sized such that its pole is at least 30× lower in frequency. In addition, note that CDECL represents the total decoupling capacitance at the DECL pins.

INPUT AND OUTPUT IMPEDANCES

The AD8368 offers single-ended broadband 50 Ω input and output impedances. The excellent match to 50 Ω is maintained from part to part, over frequency, and over gain setting. Both the input and output pins must be externally ac-coupled to prevent disruption of the internal dc levels. Sufficiently large coupling capacitors should be used so that their impedance is negligible relative to the 50 Ω presented by the ladder at the input and by the output buffer at the output.

GAIN CONTROL INTERFACE

The AD8368 has a linear-in-dB gain control interface that can be operated in either a gain-up mode or gain-down mode. In the gain-up mode with the MODE pin pulled high, the gain increases with increasing gain voltages. In the gain-down mode, with the MODE pin pulled low, the gain decreases with increasing gain voltages. In both modes of operation, the gain control slope is maintained at +37.5 dB/V or −38 dB/V (depending on mode selection) over temperature, supply, and process as VGAIN varies from 100 mV to 900 mV. To form an AGC loop with the on-board detector around the VGA, the MODE pin has to be pulled low.

The gain functions for MODE pulled high and low are given respectively by:

Gain_{HIGH} (dB) = 37.5 × *V_{GAIN}* − 14

 $Gain_{LOW}$ (dB) = $-38 \times V_{GAN} + 24.8$

where $V_{\textit{GAN}}$ is expressed in volts.

As shown in [Figure 32,](#page-12-1) the gain function can be either an increasing or decreasing function of $V_{\tiny\mbox{GAIN}\nolimits}$, depending on the MODE pin.

APPLICATIONS INFORMATION **VGA OPERATION**

The AD8368 is a general-purpose VGA suitable for use in a wide variety of applications where accurate, continuous, linear-in-dB gain control over a broad range of frequencies is important. Its stability over temperature and supply in comparison to other variable-gain techniques can be traced back to the X-AMP architecture. While having an 800 MHz bandwidth, its low frequency operation can be extended by properly selecting CHPFL and CDECL.

The typical connections for using the AD8368 in VGA mode are illustrated in [Figure 33](#page-13-3). The input (INPT) and output (OUTP) of the AD8368 should be externally ac-coupled to prevent disrupting the dc levels on the chip. Therefore, a sufficiently large coupling capacitor should be used such that the series impedance of the capacitor is negligible at the frequencies of interest.

Figure 33. Typical Connections for VGA Mode for Increasing Gain with Increasing V_{GAIN} (MODE High)

The gain control voltage ranging from 0 V to 1 V is applied to the GAIN pin. The MODE pin controls whether the gain of the part is an increasing or decreasing function of the gain voltage. When the MODE pin is pulled high, the gain increases with increasing gain voltages. When the MODE pin is pulled low, the gain decreases with increasing gain voltages. The ENBL pin is used to enable or disable the part. ENBL is active high; when ENBL is pulled low, the part is disabled and draws a fraction of the normal supply current.

The DECL pin provides the internal midsupply dc reference for the AD8368. It should be well decoupled to ground using a large capacitor with low ESR. The capacitors connected to the HPFL pin and DECL pin are used to control the low-pass corner frequency of the output offset correction loop. The resulting high-pass corner frequency is inversely proportional to their values.

AGC OPERATION

The AD8368 can be configured as a standalone AGC amplifier by using the on-board rms detector, as shown in [Figure 34](#page-13-4). The detector output, DETO, is an error current representing the difference of squares between the root-mean-square (rms) of the sensed signal and an internal reference of 63 mV rms. This error current is integrated on C_{DETO} and connected to the GAIN pin to form the AGC loop.

The 63 mV rms reference corresponds to 178 mV p-p for a sine wave but the detector accuracy is maintained for more complex signals such as Gaussian noise, complex envelopes, and multicarrier signals with high peak-to-average ratios.

The AGC mode of operation requires a specific gain direction. The gain must fall as V_{DETO} increases to restore the needed balance against the setpoint. Therefore, the MODE pin must be pulled low. By connecting the signal at OUTP directly to the detector input (DETI), the output level is driven to the 63 mV rms reference setpoint.

The output setpoint can be increased using an external resistive divider network between OUTP and DETI, referenced to DECL as depicted in [Figure 34.](#page-13-4) In this configuration, the rms output voltage is forced to $(1 + R1/R2)$ 63 mV rms by the AGC loop. For a 0 dBm (224 mV rms referenced to 50 Ω) output setpoint, this ratio is 3.5. After correcting for the input impedance of DETI, the choice of R1 = 226 Ω and R2 = 100 Ω yields a setpoint of roughly 0 dBm. This very accurate leveling function is shown in [Figure 35](#page-14-0), where the rms output is held to within 0.2 dB of the 0 dBm setpoint for >30 dB range of input levels.

Figure 35. Output Power vs. Input Power in AGC Mode at 140 MHz

Note that to achieve the accurate level of AGC output power, the DECL capacitor must be adjusted for the corresponding RF frequency. The DECL capacitor value varies depending on board parasitics. [Table 5](#page-14-1) shows the DECL capacitor value based on the evaluation board parasitics.

Table 5. DECL Capacitor Value

A valuable feature of using a square law detector in AGC mode is that the RSSI voltage is a true reflection of signal power and can be converted to an absolute power measurement for any given source impedance. The RSSI in units of dBm referenced to 50 $Ω$ and based on the voltage available on the DETO pin is given by

$$
RSSI = -11 + 20 \log_{10}(1 + R1/R2) + 38 \times V_{DETO} - 24.8
$$

[Figure 36](#page-14-2) shows a plot of the RSSI voltage at DETO as input power is swept.

Figure 36. Monitoring the GAIN/DETO RSSI Voltage vs. Input Power

In some cases, it can be found that, if driven into AGC overload, the AD8368 requires unusually long times to recover; that is, the voltage at DETO remains at an abnormally high value, and the gain is at its lowest value. To avoid this situation, it is recommended that a clamp be placed on the DETO pin, as shown in [Figure 37](#page-14-3).

The resistive divider network, RA and RB, should be designed such that the base of Q1 is driven to 0.5 V.

The choice of CDETO is a compromise of averaging time constant, response time, and carrier leakage. If CDETO is selected to be too small to speed up the response time, the AGC loop could start tracking and leveling any amplitude envelope and corrupt the constellation. [Figure 38](#page-15-0) illustrates a 16 QAM, 100 ksymbols per second constellation with a degraded error vector magnitude (EVM) of 5%. By increasing C_{DETO} to 0.01 $\mu\mathrm{F}$ the EVM is improved to 1.1%.

Figure 38. Degraded Error Vector Magnitude Performance for 16 QAM at 100 ksymbols per second (CDETO Too Small)

[Figure 39](#page-15-1) illustrates the measured EVM performance for a 16 QAM modulation at 10 Msymbols per second using $C_{\text{DETO}} = 1$ nF.

Figure 39. Error Vector Magnitude Performance for 16 QAM 10 Msymbols per second

EVALUATION BOARD

Table 6. Evaluation Board Configuration Options

OUTLINE DIMENSIONS

 COMPLIANT TO JEDEC STANDARDS MO-220-VGGD-8

Figure 41. 24-Lead Lead Frame Chip Scale Package [LFCSP_VQ] 4 mm × 4 mm Body, Very Thin Quad $(CP-24-3)$ Dimensions shown in millimeters

ORDERING GUIDE

 $1 Z =$ RoHS Compliant Part.

 2 WP = waffle pack.

NOTES

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