

VLBA TEST MEMO NO. 29

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To: VLBA Project

From: Alan E.E. Rogers

Subject: Choice of phase calibration frequencies for processing on Haystack
MKIII Correlator

During a recent test experiment, phase calibration tone frequencies (in the baseband) of 10, 20, and 50 KHz were tested. The choice of 10 KHz is traditional for MKIII as it results in the lowest errors at the correlator (see attached memo). However, 10 KHz is more subject to spurious signal pick-up within the DAR. Craig Walker ran a short test experiment on 19 December 1991 and the FRNGE plots are attached for the LA-FD baseline. The residual phases for each frequency for this scan are as follows:

PCAL		FREQ #				
10 KHz	+2.8	-2.3	-2.6	+4.9	+0.9	-3.4
20 KHz	-3.8	+4.2	-1.7	+2.1	+3.3	-5.5
50 KHz	+0.6	+4.1	-7.6	+1.1	-1.6	+1.8

Residual phases in degrees 1σ noise ~3 degrees.

In this test the residual phases are within expected error - the maximum deviation being about 2σ for frequency number 3 at 50 KHz. Since there are no large spurious signals in this test also shows that the results are satisfactory at all 3 frequencies. If 10 KHz continues to be a problem (there are some BBC updates that lower the spurious signal levels - see VLBA Acquisition Memo #223) 20 KHz would be a good choice as it can be extracted at the MKIII correlators with less error than 50 KHz (see Table 1 of attached memo).

Attachments (2)

1. Memo (3 pages)
2. FRNGE plots (3 pages)

Choice of Phase Calibration Rail Frequencies for Mark III

Technical Note
TN-1979-6-AEER

The phase calibration correlator in the Mark III processor can extract any rail whose quarter period has an integral number of bits. A list of permissible frequencies (for a 2 MHz bandwidth) are given in Table 1. Owing to the harmonic content of the square wave used to extract the calibrator rail, the signals from other rails (spaced at 1 MHz intervals) or their images result in an error signal. The peak magnitude of the phase errors which result from the error signal are also given in Table 1. For all practical purposes, some of these errors are "static" as they remain unchanged by variations in the local oscillator phases. They change only with a change in receiver delay and undergo a full cycle in 1 microsecond. Furthermore, since the variation in receiver and video converter delay varies by less than 20 nanoseconds with frequency and video converter the phase error should be the same (to within 12% of the maximum phase error) for each bandwidth synthesis channel. Phase errors which result from the video converter images and rails aliased by the sampling frequency are much more serious as they change with local oscillator phase. The calibration rail frequency with lowest non-static error is 10 KHz. 10 KHz can be used as a calibrator rail frequency for all bandwidths down to 0.5 MHz. With bandwidths of 0.25 MHz and smaller there is no calibration rail frequency which can be set-up by the Mark III converters and processed by the phase calibration correlators. For these narrow bandwidths, which will probably only be used for spectral line VLBI, the main fringe rotator can be used to extract the calibration rail. In this case the calibrator rail frequency can be any frequency up to 1/4 of the bandwidth.

Table 2 lists other error sources present in the calibrator and their expected magnitude. All these error sources, with the exception of #8, will probably be present at the same level regardless of the choice of the video rail frequencies given in Table 1. "Static" error sources are benign at least to the extent with which they remain constant during an experiment. Some of the static errors, like those which result from the false extraction of calibration rails owing to the harmonic content of the square wave, are not dependent on the bandwidth synthesis channel and so only affect the phase delay measurement. The largest "static" error is probably that which results from the dispersion present in the front-end waveguide and feed. Some of the "static" errors may change with temperature in which case a worst case estimate of the temperature coefficient is given. Error source #9 can be eliminated by avoiding calibration rails that are harmonics of 5 MHz. Error source #8 could be eliminated by using another video rail frequency. While this study suggests that 10 KHz is the best choice of video rail frequency, zero baseline tests need to be made to make direct measurements of these effects and to check for additional effects which may have been overlooked.

Distribution

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AERTN::57

VIDEO RAIL FREQ. KHz	# BITS IN PERIOD/4	"STATIC ERROR SOURCES"	MAX STATIC ERROR (DEG)	OTHER ERROR SOURCES	MAX ERROR (DEG)
1000	1		0	V.C. image	5
500	2	3rd harmonic	19	V.C. image	5
250	4	5th harmonic	11	aliased 7th harm.	1.7
200	5		0	aliased 9th harm.	1.5
100	10	11th harmonic	5	aliased 19th harm.	1.0
50	20	21st harmonic	2.7	aliased 39th harm.	0.5
40	25		0	aliased 49th harm.	0.4
20	50	51st harmonic	1.1	aliased 99th harm.	0.2
10	100	101st harmonic	0.6	aliased 199th harm.	0.1

Table 1. Permissible "Phase Cal" Frequencies for 2 MHz BW

SOURCES OF ERROR	MAX STATIC ERROR (DEG)	MAXIMUM L.O. PHASE DEPENDENT ERROR (DEG)	AFFECTED RAIL FREQ. HARMONIC
1 Front-end image rejection		0.2 (50dB)	1
2 Harmonic responses of video converter		0.2	3
3 5KHz signal in cal. electronics		<0.1	3
4 Variation of Differential Phase across v.conv. band	5 (0.2/deg C)		
5 Difference between phase response of USB & LSB	5 (0.2/deg C)		
6 Multiple reflections of injected pulse	5 (20dB)		
7 Dispersion in waveguide (1 meter over 300 MHz at 8.3GHz-WR90)	9		
8 Presence of spurious 10KHz in video output		0.2 (50dB)	1
9 Presence of spurious signals at harmonics of 5MHz		0.5 (40dB)	1

Table 2. Sources of Calibration Error Not Dependent (except #8)
on Choice of Video Rail Frequency.

