

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization  
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date  
25 October 2007 (25.10.2007)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number  
**WO 2007/120587 A2**

(51) International Patent Classification:  
**H04N 5/335** (2006.01) **H01S 4/00** (2006.01)

(21) International Application Number:  
PCT/US2007/008668

(22) International Filing Date: 9 April 2007 (09.04.2007)

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:  
11/402,196 11 April 2006 (11.04.2006) US

(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **FLEX-TRONICS AP LLC** [US/US]; 305 Interlocken Parkway, Broomfield, CO 80021 (US).

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): **TAM, Samuel, Waising** [US/US]; 102 Ashland Dr., Daly City, CA 94015 (US). **SHANGGUAN, Dongkai** [US/US]; 5550 Big Oak Drive, San Jose, CA 95129 (US).

(74) Agent: **HENNEMAN, Larry, E.**; Henneman & Associates, PLC, 714 W. Michigan Ave., Three Rivers, MN 49093 (US).

(81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, SV, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

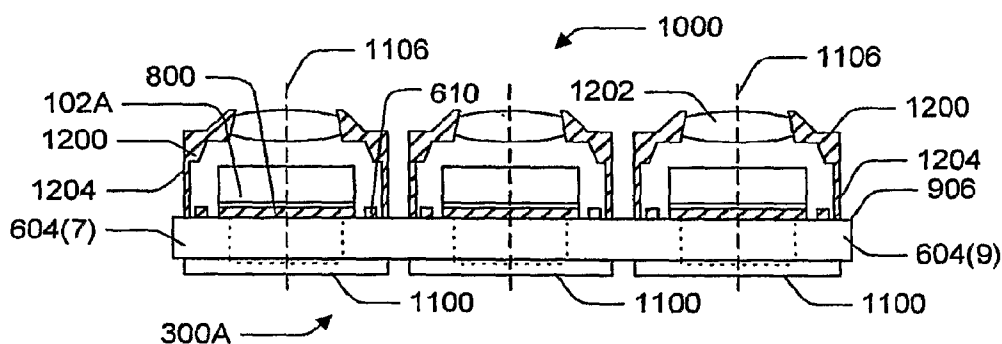
(84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MT, NL, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

**Published:**

— without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

(54) Title: METHOD FOR MOUNTING PROTECTIVE COVERS ON IMAGE CAPTURE DEVICES AND DEVICES MANUFACTURED THEREBY



(57) Abstract: A method for manufacturing camera modules including image capture devices with protective covers is disclosed. The method includes providing a unitary transparent substrate including a plurality of individual protective covers, providing a unitary component substrate including a plurality of individual component parts, bonding the unitary transparent substrate to the unitary component substrate, dividing the transparent substrate into a plurality of discrete protective covers, and separating the component parts from one another. According to one particular method, the component substrate is a semiconductor wafer having a plurality of integrated electronic image capture devices formed therein. According to another particular method, the component substrate is a circuit board having a plurality of individual device circuit boards formed therein.

WO 2007/120587 A2

METHOD FOR MOUNTING PROTECTIVE COVERS ON IMAGE CAPTURE DEVICES  
AND DEVICES MANUFACTURED THEREBY

5

Inventors: Samuel Tam and Dongkai Shangguan

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to electronic devices, and more particularly to digital camera modules. More particularly, this invention relates to a method for manufacturing digital camera modules including image capture devices with protective covers mounted thereon.

15

Description of the Background Art

20

Electronic camera modules are currently included in various consumer electronic products such as mobile telephones and hand-held electronic organizers. These camera modules typically include a CCD or CMOS image sensor and a lens assembly mounted on a printed circuit board (PCB). The camera module is then mounted on a PCB of the host device.

25

Some known camera modules include a protective glass cover mounted over the sensor array of the image capture device to protect the sensor area from contamination, which will adversely affect images captured by the device and render the camera module unacceptable for its intended use. According to current practice, the protective covers are mounted during the assembly of the camera modules. For example, the protective covers can be mounted after the image capture device is mounted on the PCB, but before the lens assembly is mounted over the imager. Although the protective covers are somewhat effective to prevent contamination of the sensor array, there are some drawbacks to their use.

30

One disadvantage associated with current methods of mounting protective covers over image capture devices is that it is time consuming to attach the covers to each image capture device. The covers must be placed over the sensor array, without covering other components

(e.g., electrical contact pads) disposed on the top surface of the image capture device.

Although the protective covers can be placed with automated equipment, the placing of the covers still adds a step to the manufacturing process.

Another disadvantage of known methods is that the protective glass covers need to be  
5 thicker than is often desired. The reason for the thicker glass is that the automated equipment used to place the glass covers is incapable of handling glass less than about 300 microns thick without breaking it. As a result, the thicker glass unnecessarily increases the thickness and/or weight of the device.

Another disadvantage is the cost and/or time required to prepare the glass covers. In  
0 particular, the individual protective covers are formed by sawing or dicing a sheet of glass. Several cuts are required to process a single sheet of glass, and the cuts must be clean and precise, in order to yield an acceptable finished product. The machinery used to perform the glass sawing operations is expensive, and the time required is substantial. In addition, the finished glass covers must be cleaned and packaged for use by the placing equipment. Thus,  
5 the time and cost of preparing the protective covers is substantial.

Another problem with the methods of the prior art are that the protective covers can only protect the sensor array after they are mounted on the image capture device. Therefore, the device is susceptible to contamination by foreign particles during any assembly steps that occur prior to mounting the cover. For example, contamination can result from handling of  
10 the image capture devices prior to mounting on the PCB, the process of soldering the image capture devices to the PCB, cleaving of the PCB, or even from the singulation process of separating the image capture devices from the unitary substrate on which they are formed. To compound the problem of contamination, once the protective cover is applied, any contaminants on the sensor array will be trapped, thereby resulting in a permanently defective  
15 image capture device.

What is needed, therefore, is a method for mounting protective covers over image capture devices of camera modules that is cheaper, faster, and more efficient than known methods. What is also needed is a method for mounting protective covers over image capture devices of camera modules that has a higher manufacturing quality and yield than known  
20 methods. What is also needed is a method for mounting protective covers over image capture devices of camera modules that enables covers that are thinner than the covers of known methods. What is also needed is a method for mounting protective covers over image capture

devices of camera modules that reduces the time and expense associated with preparation of the protective covers. What is also needed is a method for mounting protective covers over image capture devices of camera modules that protects the imager from contamination early in the assembly process.

5

### SUMMARY

The present invention overcomes the problems associated with the prior art by providing methods for mounting protective covers over image capture devices of camera modules that are cheaper, faster, and more efficient than known methods. Methods of the invention have higher manufacturing quality and yield, and facilitates the use of thinner protective covers. Methods of the present invention also reduce the time and expense of preparing the protective covers for mounting and protect the image capture devices against contamination early in the assembly process. The described methods, and/or variations thereof, each provide some, but not necessarily all, of the foregoing advantages.

The inventive methods provide the stated advantages by fixing a plurality of protective covers to a plurality of components when the protective covers and components are each part of a respective unitary substrate. One method includes the steps of providing a unitary component substrate, providing a unitary transparent substrate, bonding the unitary transparent substrate to the unitary component substrate, separating the unitary transparent substrate to form the protective covers, and separating the unitary component substrate to form discrete component parts. The step of separating the unitary transparent substrate is distinct from the step of dividing the component substrate. For example, the transparent substrate can be divided prior to separating the component parts.

In a particular method, the unitary transparent substrate is made of glass, and the unitary component substrate is a semiconductor wafer having a plurality of discrete image capture integrated circuits formed therein. In another particular method, the unitary component substrate is a printed circuit board, which includes a plurality of discrete printed circuits (e.g., camera module circuit boards) formed thereon. The camera module circuit boards each include an opening therethrough, and the method further includes attaching an image capture device to the bottom surface of each of the individual camera module circuit boards, with the sensor of the image capture device facing through the opening. Optionally, the image capture devices are mounted on the camera module circuit boards after the bottom

surface of the transparent substrate is bonded to the top surface of the component substrate with the protective covers covering the openings. In addition, passive components can be mounted on the camera module circuit boards (bottom or top surface) either before or after the unitary transparent substrate is bonded to the unitary component substrate.

5           The transparent substrate includes a plurality of channels, each having a depth and width, which at least partially define perimeters of the individual protective covers. The channel width defines a predetermined spacing between adjacent protective covers on the component substrate. In a particular method the channels include a first group of channels, parallel to one another, and a second group of channels, parallel to one another and  
10           perpendicular to the first group of channels, so the protective covers are rectangular in shape.

          The channels in the transparent substrate are at least as deep as a predetermined thickness of the protective covers. The protective covers can then be separated from one another by removing material (e.g., via an etching process, a lapping process, a dicing process, etc.) from the top surface (opposite the component substrate) of the transparent  
15           substrate until the channels pass completely through the transparent substrate. Due to the width of the channels, after separation the top surface areas of the individual protective covers are significantly smaller than the top surface areas of the associated component parts.

          The transparent substrate is bonded to the component substrate by applying a bonding agent to the bottom surfaces of the partially defined protective covers. According to one  
20           method, an optical bonding agent is applied to substantially the entire bottom surfaces of the protective covers by, for example, a spin-on process. In an alternate method, the bonding agent is patterned on the bottom surface of each protective cover so that the bonding agent forms a closed perimeter around the peripheral portion of the bottom surface of the protective cover and leaves the central portion (overlying the sensor array) of the bottom surface free of  
25           bonding agent. Thus, in this particular method, the bonding agent need not be an optical quality bonding agent. According to yet another particular method, the bonding agent is laminated on the bottom surfaces of the protective covers. According to yet another particular method, the bonding agent applied to the bottom surfaces of the protective covers is a partially cured thermosetting adhesive. The transparent substrate is then positioned such  
30           that the bonding agent contacts the top surface of the component substrate and the curing process of the bonding agent is completed. Regardless of the particular bonding method

used, it should be understood that the bonding agent can alternatively be applied first to the component substrate.

Methods of the present invention further include mounting a lens holder on the component substrate. In one particular method, the lens holder is mounted on the component substrate after the step of dividing the transparent substrate, but before the step of separating the component parts.

Camera modules manufactured by methods of the present invention are also disclosed. One particular camera module includes a component substrate having a top surface and a transparent protective cover disposed on the top surface of the component substrate. The transparent protective cover can be as thin as or thinner than 300 microns. In a particular embodiment, the component substrate is an image capture integrated circuit chip. In another particular embodiment, the component substrate is a printed circuit board.

A camera module manufacturing workpiece is also disclosed. In a particular embodiment, the camera module manufacturing workpiece includes a unitary component substrate including a plurality of individual component parts, and a unitary transparent substrate including a bottom surface that at least partially defines a plurality of discrete protective covers. Each of the protective covers are bonded to a respective one of the individual component parts. In a more particular embodiment, the discrete protective covers are at least partially defined by channels formed in the bottom surface of the unitary transparent substrate. In another more particular embodiment, the unitary component substrate is an integrated circuit wafer.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention is described with reference to the following drawings, wherein like reference numbers denote substantially similar elements:

FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a unitary transparent substrate with channels that partially define a plurality of individual protective covers;

FIG. 2A is a cross-sectional view of the unitary transparent substrate of FIG. 1 with an optical bonding material applied to the individual protective covers;

FIG. 2B is a cross-sectional view of the unitary transparent substrate of FIG. 1 with a patterned bonding material applied to the individual covers;

FIG. 3A is a cross-sectional view of the unitary transparent substrate of FIG. 2A positioned over a unitary component substrate;

FIG. 3B is a cross-sectional view of the components of FIG. 3A fixed to one another by the bonding material to form an intermediate workpiece;

5        FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of the workpiece of Fig. 3B after the bottom surface of the unitary transparent substrate has been removed;

FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of the unitary component substrate of Fig. 4 being separated into individual image capture devices with protective covers;

0        FIG. 6 is a top plan view of an alternate unitary transparent substrate and an alternate unitary component substrate;

FIG. 7 a cross-sectional view of the alternate unitary transparent substrate of Fig. 6;

FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional view of the unitary transparent substrate of FIG. 7 with bonding material applied;

FIG. 9 is a top view of the unitary transparent substrate of FIG. 8;

5        FIG. 10A shows material being removed from the top surface of an assembled camera module manufacturing workpiece (bottom surface of the unitary transparent substrate);

FIG. 10B is a side view of the camera module manufacturing workpiece of FIG. 10A after enough material has been removed to separate the unitary transparent substrate into a plurality of individual protective covers;

10        FIG. 11 is a side view of the camera module manufacturing workpiece of FIG. 10B (inverted) with a plurality of image capture devices installed thereon;

FIG. 12 is a side view of the camera module manufacturing workpiece of FIG. 11 with a plurality of individual lens holders installed thereon;

15        FIG. 13 is a side view of the camera module manufacturing workpiece of FIG. 12 being separated into individual camera modules;

FIG. 14 is a side view of an individual camera module of FIG. 13;

FIG. 15 is a flowchart summarizing one particular method for manufacturing camera modules including image capture devices with protective covers mounted thereon;

20        FIG. 16 is a flowchart summarizing one particular method for forming a unitary transparent substrate;

FIG. 17 is a flowchart summarizing one particular method for bonding a unitary transparent substrate to a unitary component substrate; and

FIG. 18 is a flowchart summarizing a method for creating camera modules including printed circuit board substrates and protective covers.

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION

5 Particular embodiments of the present invention will now be described with reference to the drawings. In the following description, numerous specific details are set forth (e.g., certain manufacturing and assembly processes, example lens housings, etc.) in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. Those skilled in the art will recognize, however, that the invention may be practiced apart from these specific details. In other  
10 instances, details of well known manufacturing practices (e.g., semiconductor fabrication, optical bonding, component mounting, etc.) and components have been omitted, so as not to unnecessarily obscure the present invention. It should be understood that the full scope of the invention is not limited by this detailed description of particular embodiments of the invention.

15 FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a unitary transparent substrate 100 that includes a plurality of individual protective covers 102 partially defined by a plurality of channels 104. The channels 104 are formed in a top surface 110 of substrate 100 and have a depth 106 and a width 108. The width 108 of channels 104 defines the desired size of and spacing between adjacent covers 102. The depth 106 of channels 104 is equal to, or slightly greater than the  
20 desired final thickness of the covers 102. Dotted line 114 indicates a desired thickness of protective covers 102 for this particular example. The bottom surface 112 of unitary transparent substrate 100 is flat and continuous and holds protective covers 102 together during the assembly process, as will be described below.

In this example embodiment, unitary transparent substrate is formed of glass.  
25 However, it should be understood that any optically suitable transparent material could be used instead including, but not limited to, clear plastic. In addition, the material itself may provide an optical function (e.g., a filter) by design.

FIG. 2A is a cross-sectional view of the unitary transparent substrate 100 of FIG. 1 with a bonding agent 200 applied to the top surfaces 110 of the individual protective covers  
30 102. In the embodiment of FIG. 2, bonding agent 200 is an optical quality bonding agent, because bonding agent 200 covers the entire top surface 110 of each of protective covers 102. Bonding agent 200 can be applied by a dropper, by a spin-on process, as a laminate, or by any



other suitable means. One particular bonding agent found to be suitable is thermosetting optical adhesive that is applied as either a spin-on coating or laminate. The adhesive is partially cured after being applied to protective covers 102. The partially cured adhesive is then fully cured by the application of heat and pressure between the bonded components, as will be described below with reference to FIG. 3B.

FIG. 2B is a cross-sectional view of unitary transparent substrate 100 with an alternate bonding agent 202 applied on the top surfaces 110 of the individual protective covers 102. Alternate bonding agent 202 is patterned so as not to cover a central portion 204 of each cover 102. Instead, the bonding agent forms a closed ring around the peripheral portions of each individual cover 102, while the central portions 204 remain free of adhesive.

The patterning of bonding agent 202 provides at least one advantage. In particular, bonding agent 202 need not be an optical bonding agent, because the bonding agent 202 is not disposed in the optical paths through the centers 204 of protective covers 102. Therefore, the bonding agent can be selected solely based on its suitability (e.g., strength, durability, ease of application, cost, and so on) to hold protective covers 102 in place, without concern for the optical properties of bonding agent 202.

Patterned bonding agent 202 can be conveniently applied as a laminate material. For example, a single sheet of double-sided adhesive material can be applied over the entire top surface 110 of unitary transparent substrate 100. Then the desired pattern is cut into the sheet and the excess material is removed, leaving behind patterned bonding agent 202. Optionally, the sheet can be cut and the excess material removed prior to applying the laminate to the protective covers 102.

FIG. 3A is a cross-sectional view of unitary transparent substrate 100 inverted and disposed over a unitary component substrate 300. Component substrate 300 includes a plurality of individual component parts (integrated image capture devices) 302. Boundaries between the individual devices 302 are indicated by vertical dotted lines 304. As those skilled in the art of semiconductor fabrication will understand, image capture devices 302 are formed in the top surface 306 of component substrate 300. Each of devices 302 include a photosensitive sensor array 308 and, optionally, an array of micro-lenses 310 overlying each sensor array 308.

The layout of sensor arrays 308 in component substrate 300 corresponds to the layout of protective covers 102 in unitary transparent substrate 100. Thus, when transparent

substrate 100 is properly positioned over component substrate 300, each individual protective cover 102 will be properly positioned over an associated one of sensor arrays 308. This alignment facilitates the placement of several covers 102 onto several respective image capture devices 302 at one time. In this particular embodiment, transparent substrate 100 and component substrate 300 include 36 (6x6 array) individual protective covers 102 and devices 302, respectively, even though only one dimension of the array is shown.

FIG 3B is a cross-sectional view of unitary transparent substrate 100 and component substrate 300 bonded together to form an intermediate camera module manufacturing workpiece 316. Bonding agent 200 is held in direct contact with micro-lenses 310 and is cured by the application of heat and pressure. The cured bonding agent forms a hermetic seal between protective covers 102 and micro-lenses 310, thereby protecting image capture devices 302 against contamination that might otherwise occur in later assembly steps.

Note that transparent substrate 100 has bonding agent 200 applied, as shown in the embodiment of FIG. 2A. Therefore, the dimensions of covers 102 are roughly the same as the dimensions of sensor arrays 308. If patterned bonding agent 202 shown in FIG. 2B were used instead, then protective covers 102 would need to be slightly larger than sensor arrays 208, so that patterned bonding agent 202 would contact top surface 306 of component substrate 300 around, but not on top of, each sensor array 308. In addition, covers 102 and bonding agent 200 should not obstruct or contaminate bonding pads (not shown) located on top surface 306 of component substrate 300.

FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of intermediate manufacturing workpiece 316 after material has been removed from bottom surface 112 (FIG. 3B) of transparent substrate 100. Removal of material from bottom surface 112 down to line 114 divides unitary transparent substrate 100 into individual protective covers 102.

The material removal process can be accomplished in a number of ways including, but not limited to, etching, scratching, milling, lapping, and so on. These processes are all similar in that they remove material from bottom surface 112 (FIG. 3B) of the unitary transparent substrate 100 to at least the channel depth 106 (FIG. 3B), thus leaving only the individual protective covers 102 in place over respective micro-lenses 310. This method allows the individual protective covers 102 to be much thinner than in the methods of the prior art. Additionally, because individual protective covers 102 were bonded over imager micro-lenses

310 prior to the separation process, contaminants from the separation process of unitary transparent substrate 100 can not cause contamination of lens arrays 308 or micro-lenses 310.

FIG. 5 shows a cross-sectional view of camera module manufacturing workpiece 316 being cleaved along lines 304 (FIG. 4) to divide unitary component substrate 300 into a plurality of individual image capture integrated circuit chips 302, each having a protective cover 102 mounted thereon. In the example method of FIG. 5, a plurality of dicing blades 500 are used to saw through component substrate 300. Other singulation methods are known in the art and are suitable for use with the present invention. However, the particular type of singulation process used is not particularly relevant to the present invention. What is relevant is that protective covers 102 protect sensor arrays 308 from contamination during the singulation process.

FIG. 6 is a top plan view of an alternate unitary transparent substrate 100A and an alternate unitary component substrate 300A. Alternate unitary transparent substrate 100A is similar to unitary transparent substrate 100 the dimensions of individual protective covers 102A are modified to be complementary to alternate unitary component substrate 300A, as will be described below. In addition, in this example embodiment, unitary transparent substrate 100A includes only nine devices (3x3 array), whereas transparent substrate 100 includes 36 devices (6x6 array). It should be understood, however, that the invention can be practiced with substrates embodying different numbers of individual components, which may or may not be arranged in a square or rectangular array. For example, if component substrate 300 (FIG. 3A) is a silicon wafer of integrated image capture devices, then component substrate 300 would likely include several hundred individual image capture devices.

Alternate unitary component substrate 300A is formed from a single piece of circuit board material 602 and includes nine individual device boards 604(1-9) (not all labeled). Dotted lines 606 show the boundaries of individual device boards 604(1-9). Each individual device board 604 defines a central opening 608 and includes a plurality of passive electronic components 610. Each device board 604 also includes electronic circuit traces and contact pads, which are not shown so as not to unnecessarily obscure the drawings. Together, the circuit traces, passive components 610, and an image capture device (FIG. 9) form the electronic circuitry of a camera module, as will be described below.

FIG. 7 is a side view of alternate transparent substrate 100A showing individual protective covers 102A separated by a plurality of channels 704. As in the previous

embodiment, the depth 706 and the width 708 of channels 704 define the spacing and approximate thickness of individual protective covers 102A. Dotted line 714 indicates the desired final thickness for the individual protective covers 102A. For reference in subsequent drawings, the top surface of transparent substrate 102A is labeled as 710 and the bottom surface is labeled as 712.

FIG. 8 is a side view of alternate unitary transparent substrate 100A with a bonding agent 800 applied to the top surfaces 710 of the individual protective covers 102A. In this embodiment, bonding agent 800 is applied as a laminate, but any other suitable method can be employed.

Also, an optional optical coating 802 (e.g., an infrared filter, thin film layers, etc.) is formed on top surface 710 prior to applying bonding agent 802. Forming such optical coatings on protective covers 102A eliminates the need for a separate element in the camera module.

FIG. 9 is a top plan view of alternate transparent substrate 100A with bonding agent 800 applied to individual protective covers 102A. Bonding agent 800 is patterned around the peripheral edges of the top surfaces 710 of the individual protective covers 102A. Center portions 902 of protective covers 102A are free of bonding agent 800, so as to provide a clear optical path. Alternatively, the entire top surfaces 710 of protective covers 102A can be covered with an optical bonding agent.

FIG. 10A is a side view of alternate unitary transparent substrate 100A inverted and bonded to component substrate 300A to form an intermediate manufacturing workpiece 1000. Transparent substrate 100A is aligned with component substrate 300A such that patterned bonding agent 800 contacts device boards 604 around the openings 608. Note also that passive devices 610 are sufficiently spaced from openings 608 to provide sufficient contact area for bonding agent 800.

FIG. 10A also shows a lapping mechanism 1002 removing material from the bottom surface 712 of transparent substrate 100A. Lapping mechanism 1002 (e.g., a grinder, an abrasive block, an etchant bath, etc.) is shown representationally, because the details of the actual machine are not particularly relevant to the present invention. In the view of FIG. 10A, the removal of material is nearly complete, but the lapping process will continue until lapping mechanism 1002 reaches dotted line 714.

FIG. 10B is a side view of intermediate manufacturing workpiece 1000 after the lapping process is complete. At this stage, protective covers 102A are completely separated from one another and are each bonded to a respective one of device boards 604(1-9).

The separation process also allows individual protective covers 102A to be much thinner than protective covers of the prior art. In particular, the lapping process can be carried out until protective covers 102A are too thin to be handled by conventional pick-and-place assembly machines. For example, protective covers 102 (FIG. 5) and 102A can be less than 0.5 mm thick.

Note that the components of the invention are not drawn to scale in the drawings. For example, the thickness of protective covers 102A is exaggerated compared to the other components. Although protective covers 102A appear to be about the same thickness as component substrate 300A, they are actually much thinner.

FIG. 11 is a side view of the camera module manufacturing workpiece 1000 being inverted and having a plurality of image capture devices 1100 mounted on the bottom surface 1102 of component substrate 300A. Image capture devices 1100 are attached to bottom surface 1102 of component substrate 300A by automated electronic manufacturing equipment. Circuitry (not shown) of imagers 1100 is connected to circuitry (not shown) of device boards 604 during the mounting process by a gold stud flip-chip bonding process using nonconductive paste.

Image capture devices 1100 are positioned on bottom surface 1102 of component substrate 300A so that sensor arrays 1104 of image capture devices 1100 align with openings 608 through component substrate 300A. In particular, each image capture device 1100 is positioned so that its sensor array 1104 is centered on a respective optical axis 1106 passing through a corresponding opening 608. As will be described below, other optical components of the camera modules will be aligned with respect to optical axes 1106.

FIG. 12 is a side view of camera module manufacturing workpiece 1000 with a plurality of lens holders 1200 mounted thereon. Lens holders 1200 are shown in partial cross-section to each include a lens element 1202 supported by a housing 1204. Lens holders 1200 are positioned so that lens elements 1202 are each centered on one of optical axes 1106. In addition, housings 1204 each surround passive components 610 and the protective cover 102A of a respective device board 604. Lens holder 1200 is attached with an adhesive (not show).

Lens holders 1200 are intended to be simplified representations of lens holders. The specific details of the actual lenses and housings (e.g., number of lenses, lens material, focus mechanisms, etc.) are not considered to be especially relevant to the practice of the invention. What is relevant, however, is that the camera module optics can be mounted, aligned, focused, and/or tested while device boards 604 are still an integral part of component substrate 300A.

FIG. 13 is a side view (lens holders 1200 shown in partial cross-section) of the camera module manufacturing workpiece 1000 undergoing a process to separate unitary component substrate 300A into individual camera modules 1300. In the example process shown in FIG. 13, a plurality of dicing blades 1302 are spaced to saw through component substrate 300A between the individual camera modules 1300, first along the direction shown and then along a perpendicular direction. Various other methods for dividing unitary component substrate 300A can be used with the present invention including, but not limited to, routing, punching, and so on.

FIG. 14 is a side view of an individual camera module 1300 showing a plurality of electrical contact pads 1402 (7 shown, 3 labeled) on an edge of device board 604. Contact pads 1402 are connected to the internal circuitry of camera module 1300 and are used to electronically connect camera module 1300 to a host device (e.g., digital camera, cell phone, etc.). Although contact pads 1402 are shown on the edge of device board 604 by way of example, it should be understood that contact pads 1402 can optionally be formed on the top or bottom surface of device board 604, either before or after the division of unitary component substrate 300A.

FIG. 15 is a flowchart summarizing a method 1500 for manufacturing camera modules including image capture devices with protective covers mounted thereon. In a first step 1502 a unitary component substrate including a plurality of individual component parts is provided. Next, in a second step 1504, a unitary transparent substrate is provided. Then, in a third step 1506, the unitary transparent substrate is bonded to the unitary component substrate. Next, in a fourth step 1508, the unitary transparent substrate is divided into a plurality of discrete protective covers. Then, in a fifth step 1510, the unitary component substrate is separated into component parts. Finally, in a sixth step 1512, the camera module assembly is completed.

FIG. 16 is a flowchart summarizing a method 1600 for performing second step 1504 (providing a unitary transparent substrate) of method 1500. In a first step 1602, a glass plate is provided. Next, in a second step 1604, channels are formed in the surface of the glass plate to partially define discrete protective covers. Finally, in a third step 1606, optical coatings are formed on the surfaces of the partially defined protective covers.

FIG. 17 is a flowchart summarizing a method 1700 for performing third step 1506 (bonding unitary transparent substrate to unitary component substrate) of method 1500. In a first step 1702, a bonding agent is applied to the surfaces of the partially defined protective covers. Next, in a second step 1704, the transparent substrate is positioned with respect to the component substrate. Then, in a third step 1706, the component substrate is brought in contact with the bonding agent on the partially defined protective covers. Next, in a final step 1708, the bonding agent is cured.

FIG. 18 is a flowchart summarizing a method 1800 for creating a camera module with a printed circuit board substrate. In a first step 1802, a unitary component substrate including a plurality of individual circuit boards is provided. Next, in a second step 1804, openings are formed in each circuit board. Then, in a third step 1806, passive electronic components are attached to each circuit board. Next, in a fourth step 1808, a transparent substrate is bonded to the component substrate. Then, in a fifth step 1810, the transparent substrate is divided into a plurality of discrete protective covers. Next, in a sixth step 1812, image capture devices are attached to each circuit board. Then, in a seventh step 1814, lens assemblies are attached to each circuit board. Finally, in an eighth step 1816, the component substrate is separated into the individual circuit boards to form individual camera modules.

The description of particular embodiments of the present invention is now complete. Many of the described features may be substituted, altered or omitted without departing from the scope of the invention. For example, the invention can be practiced with other types of unitary component substrates and/or unitary transparent substrates. As another example, the layout and structure of the individual covers within the unitary transparent substrate and the devices within the unitary component substrate can be modified. As yet another example, in the embodiment of FIGs. 6-14, image capture devices 1100 can be mounted to component substrate 300A prior to dividing transparent substrate 100A into individual protective covers 102A. These and other deviations from the particular embodiments shown will be apparent to those skilled in the art, particularly in view of the foregoing disclosure.

We claim:

1           1. A method for manufacturing camera modules, said method comprising:  
2           providing a unitary component substrate including a plurality of individual  
3           component parts, a top surface, and a bottom surface;  
4           providing a unitary transparent substrate including a top surface and a bottom  
5           surface;  
6           bonding said bottom surface of said transparent substrate to said top surface of  
7           said component substrate;  
8           dividing said transparent substrate into a plurality of discrete protective covers  
9           after said transparent substrate is bonded to said component substrate, each of  
0           said protective covers being bonded to a respective one of said component  
1           parts; and  
2           separating said component parts from one another in a step separate from said step  
3           of dividing said transparent substrate.

1           2. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2           unitary transparent substrate is made of glass.

1           3. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2           unitary transparent substrate includes channels formed in said bottom surface of said  
3           transparent substrate to at least partially define said protective covers.

1           4. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 3, wherein said  
2           channels are at least as deep as a predetermined thickness of said protective covers.

1           5. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 3, wherein the  
2           width of said channels defines a predetermined spacing of said protective covers on said  
3           component substrate.



6. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 3, wherein:  
said channels include a first group of channels parallel to one another;  
said channels include a second group of channels parallel to one another and  
perpendicular to said channels of said first group of channels; and  
said protective covers are rectangular in shape and disposed between adjacent pairs of  
said channels.

7. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 3, wherein said  
step of bonding said bottom surface of said transparent substrate to said top surface of said  
component substrate includes applying a bonding agent to bottom surfaces of said protective  
covers.

8. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 7, wherein said  
step of applying a bonding agent to bottom surfaces of said protective covers includes  
applying an optical bonding agent to substantially the entire bottom surfaces of said protective  
covers.

9. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 7, wherein said  
step of applying a bonding agent to bottom surfaces of said protective covers includes using a  
spin-on process to apply said bonding agent.

10. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 7, wherein said  
step of applying a bonding agent to bottom surfaces of said protective covers includes  
patterning said bonding agent on said bottom surface of each said protective covers such that  
said bonding agent forms a closed perimeter around a peripheral portion of said bottom  
surface and leaves a central portion of said bottom surfaces free of said bonding agent.

11. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 7, wherein said  
step of applying a bonding agent to bottom surfaces of said protective covers includes  
laminating said bonding agent on said bottom surfaces of said protective covers.

1           12. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 7, wherein said  
2 bonding agent is a partially cured thermosetting adhesive.

1           13. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 7, wherein said  
2 step of bonding said bottom surface of said transparent substrate to said top surface of said  
3 component substrate includes:  
4           positioning said transparent substrate such that said bonding agent contacts said top  
5 surface of said component substrate; and  
6           completing the curing process of said bonding agent.

1           14. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 1, wherein:  
2 said unitary component substrate is an integrated circuit wafer; and  
3 said individual component parts are integrated image capture devices.

1           15. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 1, wherein  
2 said unitary component substrate is circuit board; and  
3 said individual component parts are camera module circuit boards.

1           16. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 15, wherein:  
2 said camera module circuit boards each include an opening; and  
3 said method of manufacturing camera modules further includes attaching an image  
4 capture device to said bottom surface of each of said individual camera module  
5 circuit boards with a sensor of said image capture device facing through said  
6 opening.

1           17. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 16, wherein  
2 said step of attaching said image capture device occurs after said step of bonding said bottom  
3 surface of said transparent substrate to said top surface of said component substrate.

1           18. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 15, further  
2 including attaching passive electronic devices to said component substrate prior to bonding  
3 said bottom surface of said transparent substrate to said top surface of said component  
4 substrate.

1           19. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 18, wherein  
2 said step of attaching passive electronic devices to said component substrate includes  
3 attaching said passive electronic devices to said top surface of said component substrate.

1           20. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2 step of dividing said transparent substrate into a plurality of discrete protective covers  
3 includes removing material from said top surface of said transparent substrate until said  
4 channels pass completely through said transparent substrate.

1           21. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 20, wherein  
2 said step of removing material includes an etching process.

1           22. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 20, wherein  
2 said step of removing material includes a lapping process.

1           23. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 20, wherein  
2 said step of removing material includes a dicing process.

1           24. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 1, wherein said  
2 step of separating said component parts occurs after said step of dividing said transparent  
3 substrate.

1           25. A method for manufacturing camera modules according to Claim 1, further  
2 comprising mounting a lens holder on said component substrate after said step of dividing  
3 said transparent substrate but before said step of separating said component parts.

1           26. A method of assembling a camera module according to Claim 1, wherein after  
2 said step of dividing said transparent substrate the top surface area of each of said individual  
3 protective covers is significantly smaller than the top surface area of an associated one of said  
4 component parts.

1           27. A method of assembling a camera module according to Claim 1, further  
2 comprising forming an optical filter on said protective covers.

1           28. A camera module comprising:  
2 a component substrate having a top surface;  
3 a transparent protective cover disposed on said top surface of said component  
4 substrate, said protective cover having a thickness no greater than 300 microns.

1           29. A camera module according to Claim 28, wherein said component substrate is an  
2 image capture integrated circuit chip.

1           30. A camera module according to Claim 28, wherein said component substrate is a  
2 printed circuit board.

1           31. A camera module manufacturing workpiece comprising:  
2 a unitary component substrate including a plurality of individual component parts; and  
3 a unitary transparent substrate including a bottom surface, said bottom surface  
4 partially defining a plurality of discrete protective covers each bonded to a  
5 respective one of said individual component parts.

1           32. A camera module manufacturing workpiece according to Claim 31, wherein said  
2 discrete protective covers are at least partially defined by channels formed in said bottom  
3 surface of said unitary transparent substrate.

1           33. A camera module manufacturing workpiece according to Claim 30, wherein said  
2 unitary component substrate is an integrated circuit wafer.

1/10

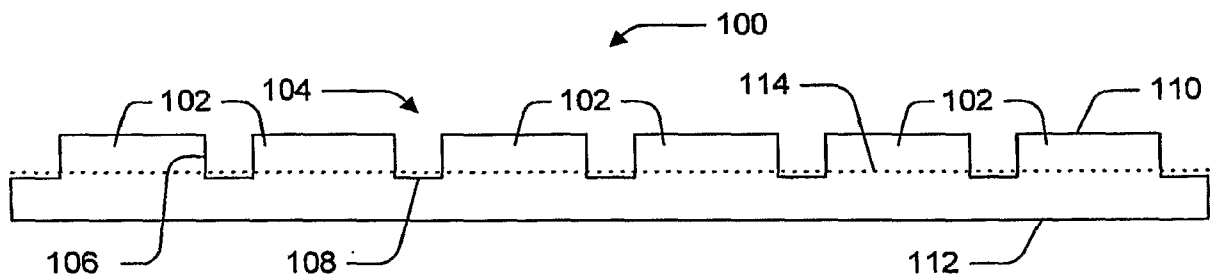


FIG. 1

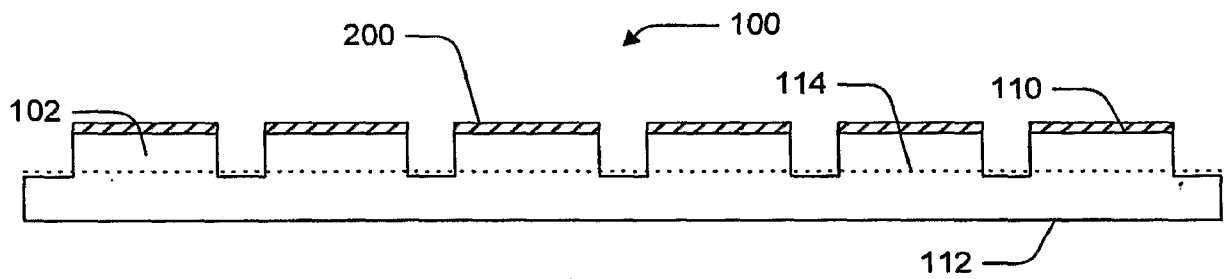


FIG. 2A

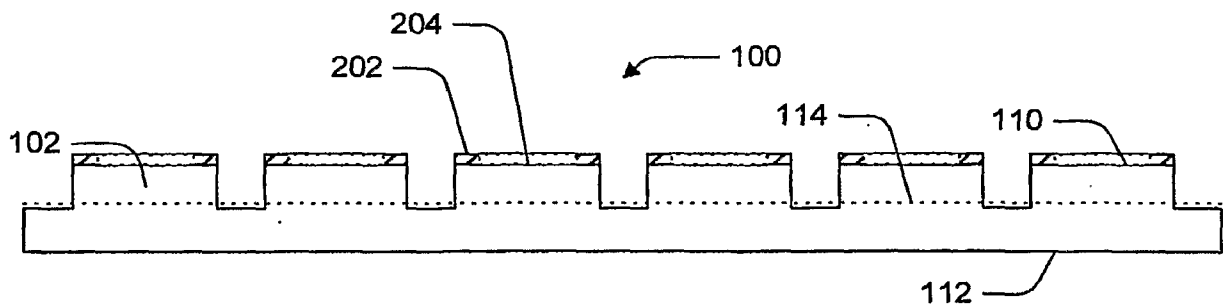


FIG. 2B

**2/10**

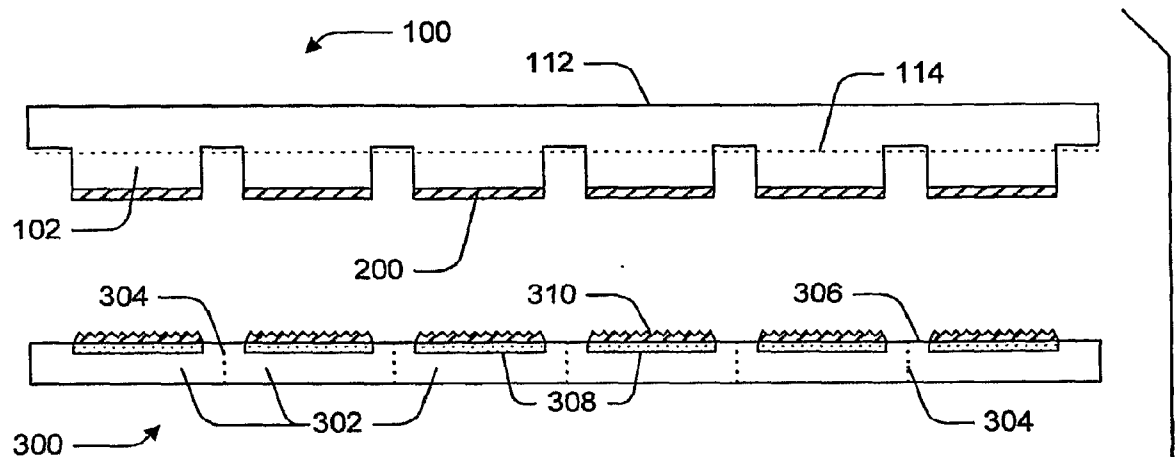
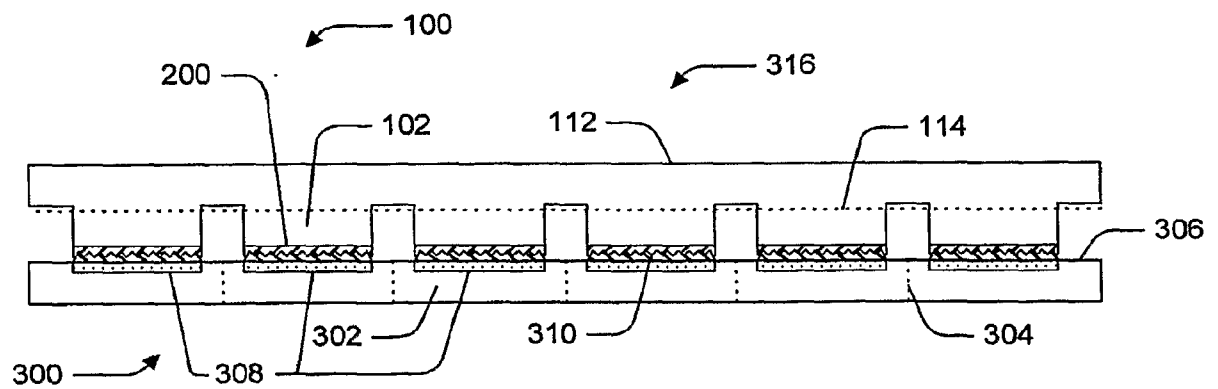


FIG. 3A



**FIG. 3B**

**3/10**

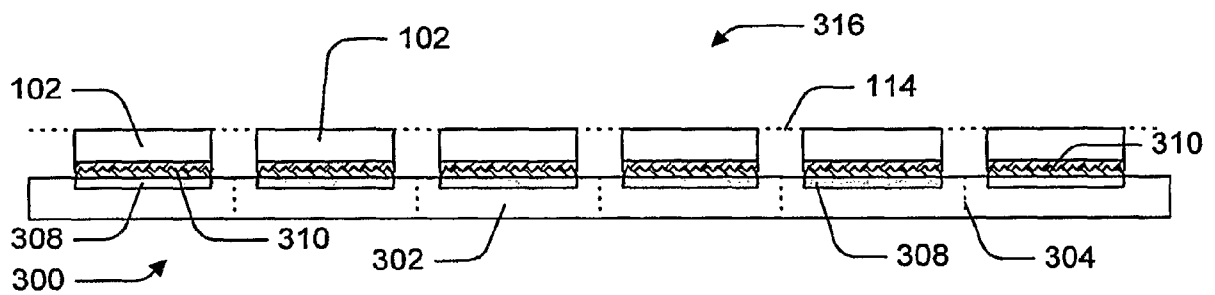


FIG. 4

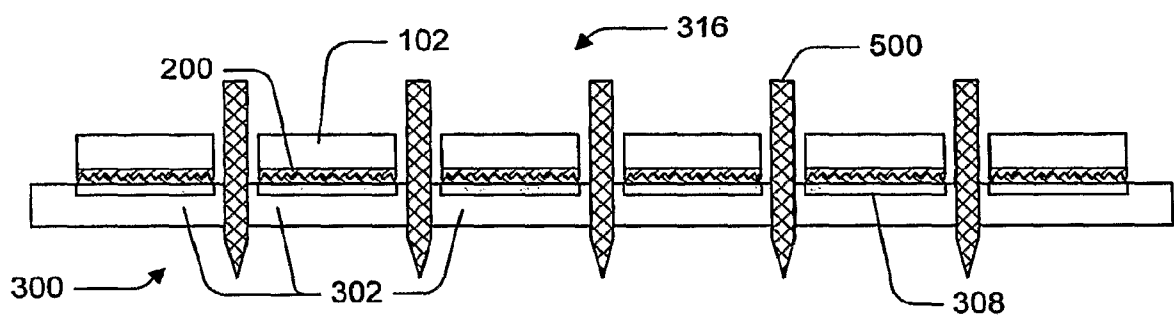


FIG. 5

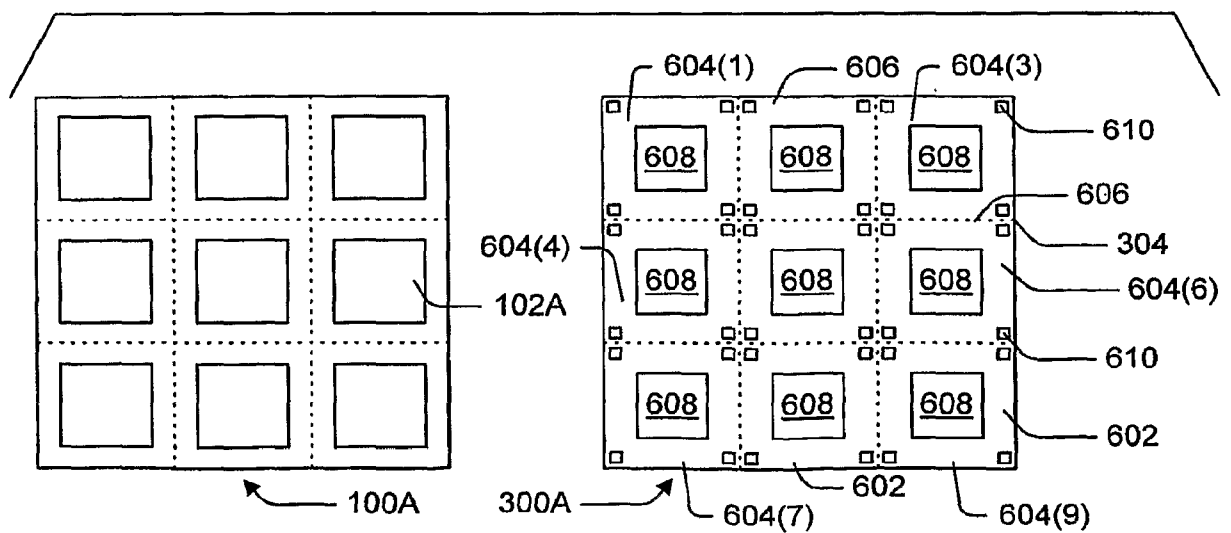


FIG. 6

4/10

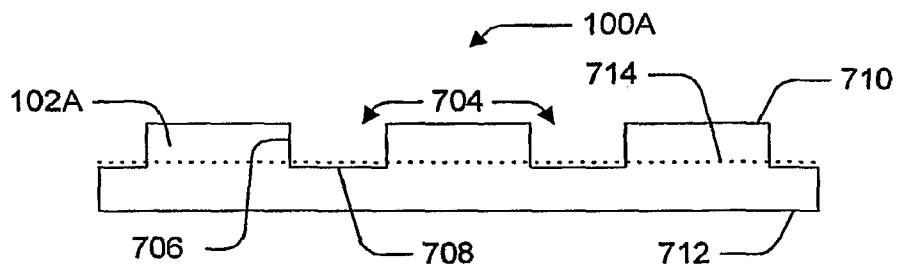


FIG. 7

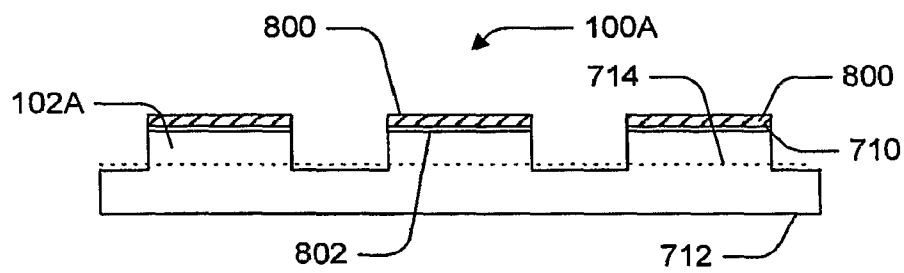


FIG. 8

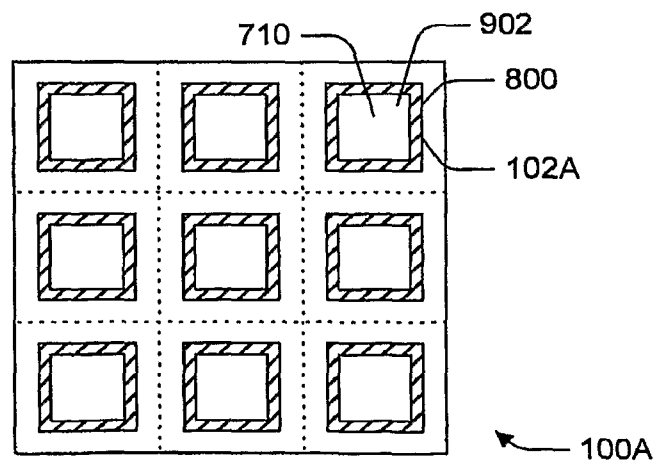


FIG. 9



5/10

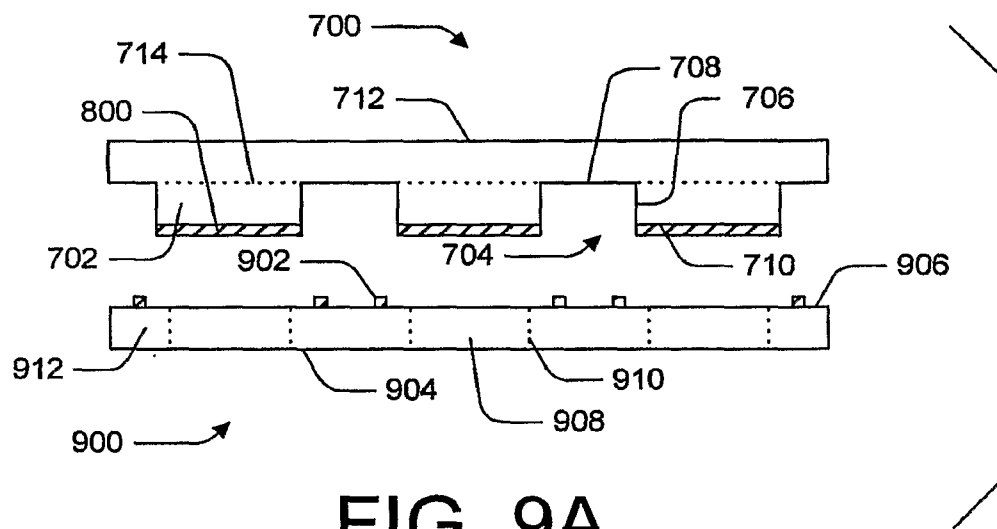


FIG. 9A

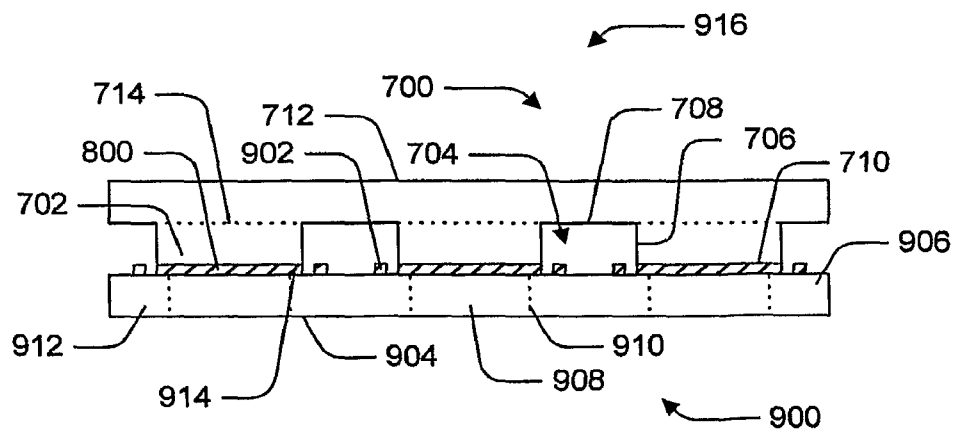


FIG. 9B

6/10

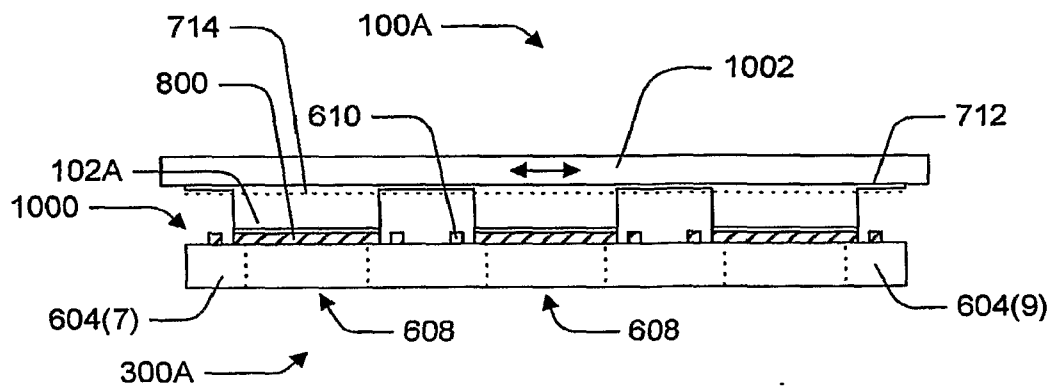


FIG. 10A

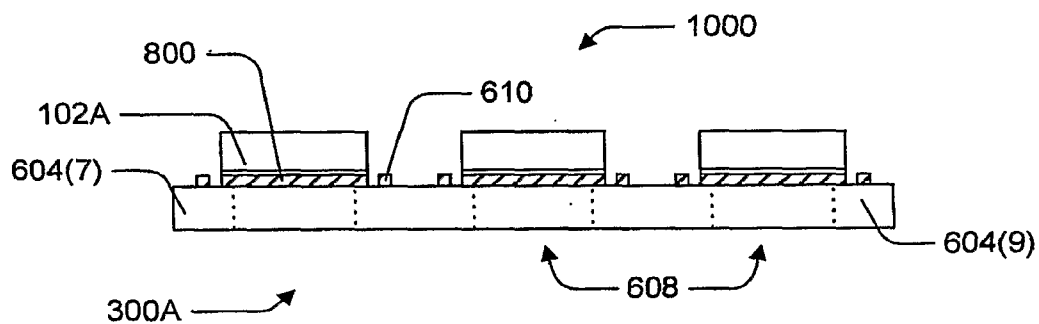


FIG. 10B

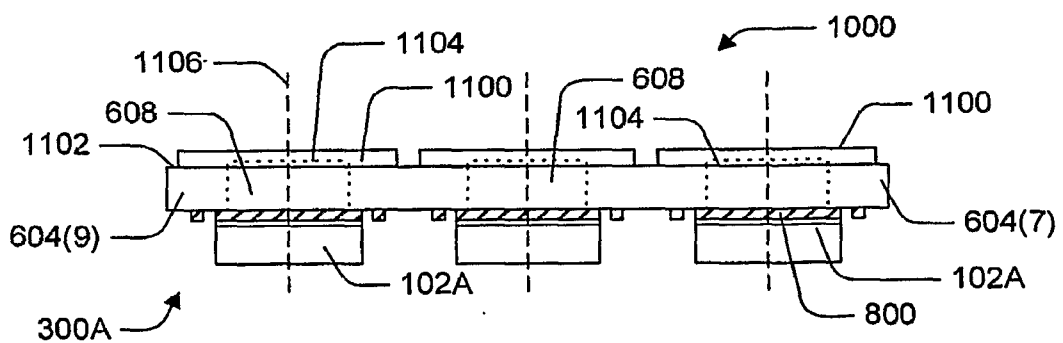
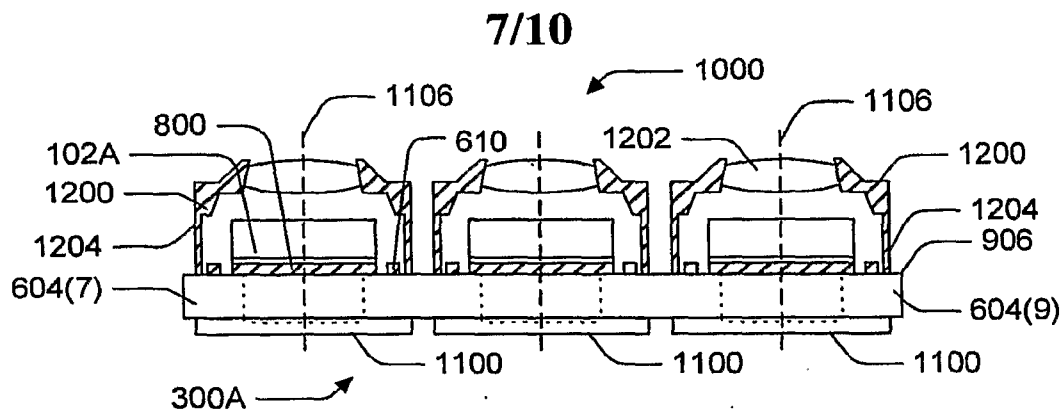
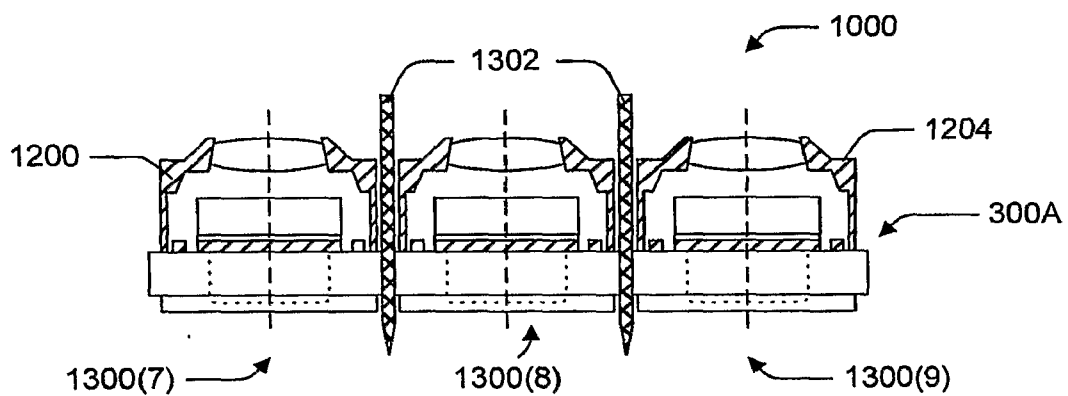


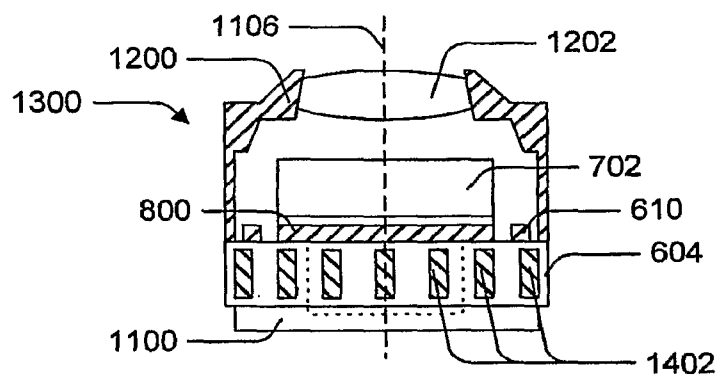
FIG. 11



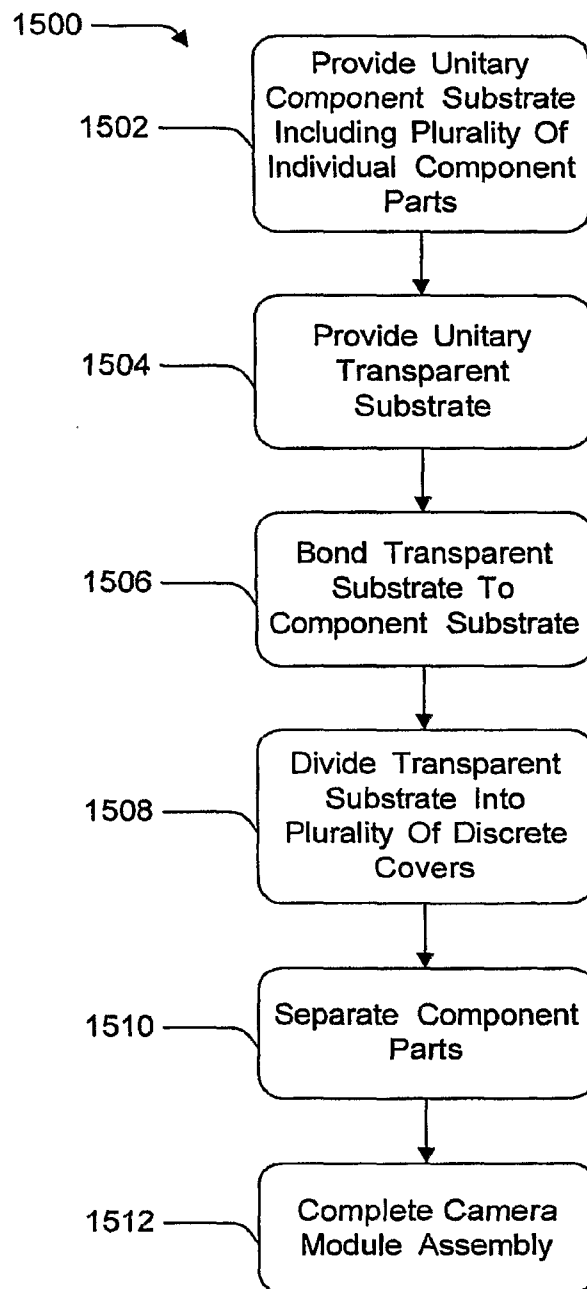
**FIG. 12**



**FIG. 13**



**FIG. 14**

**8/10****FIG. 15**

9/10

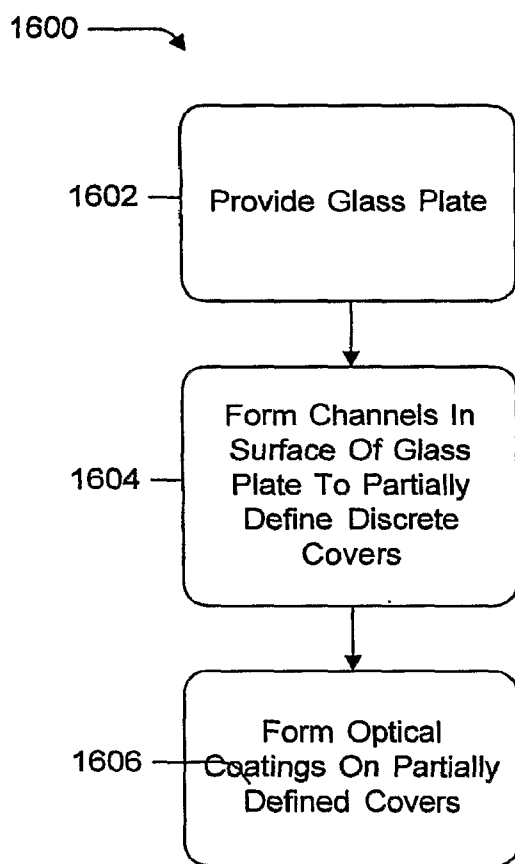


FIG. 16

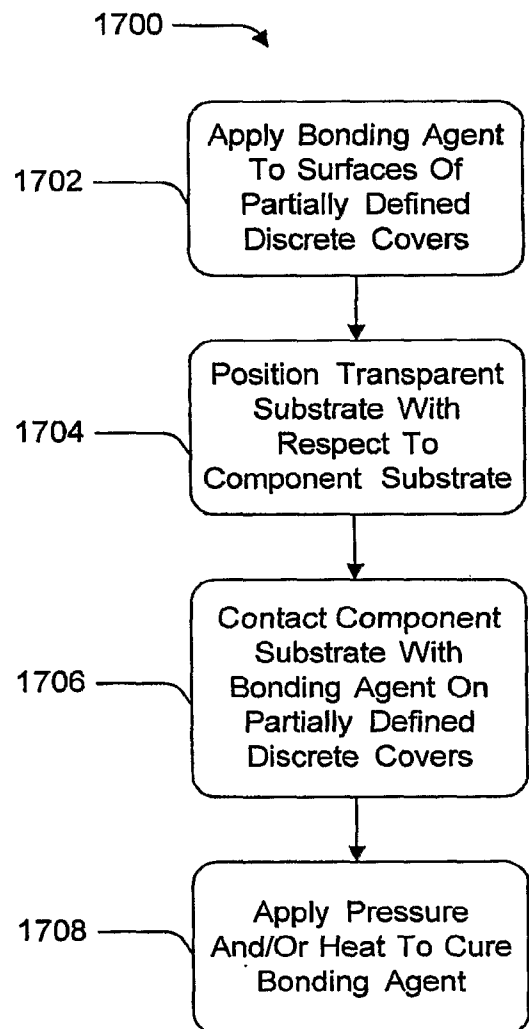
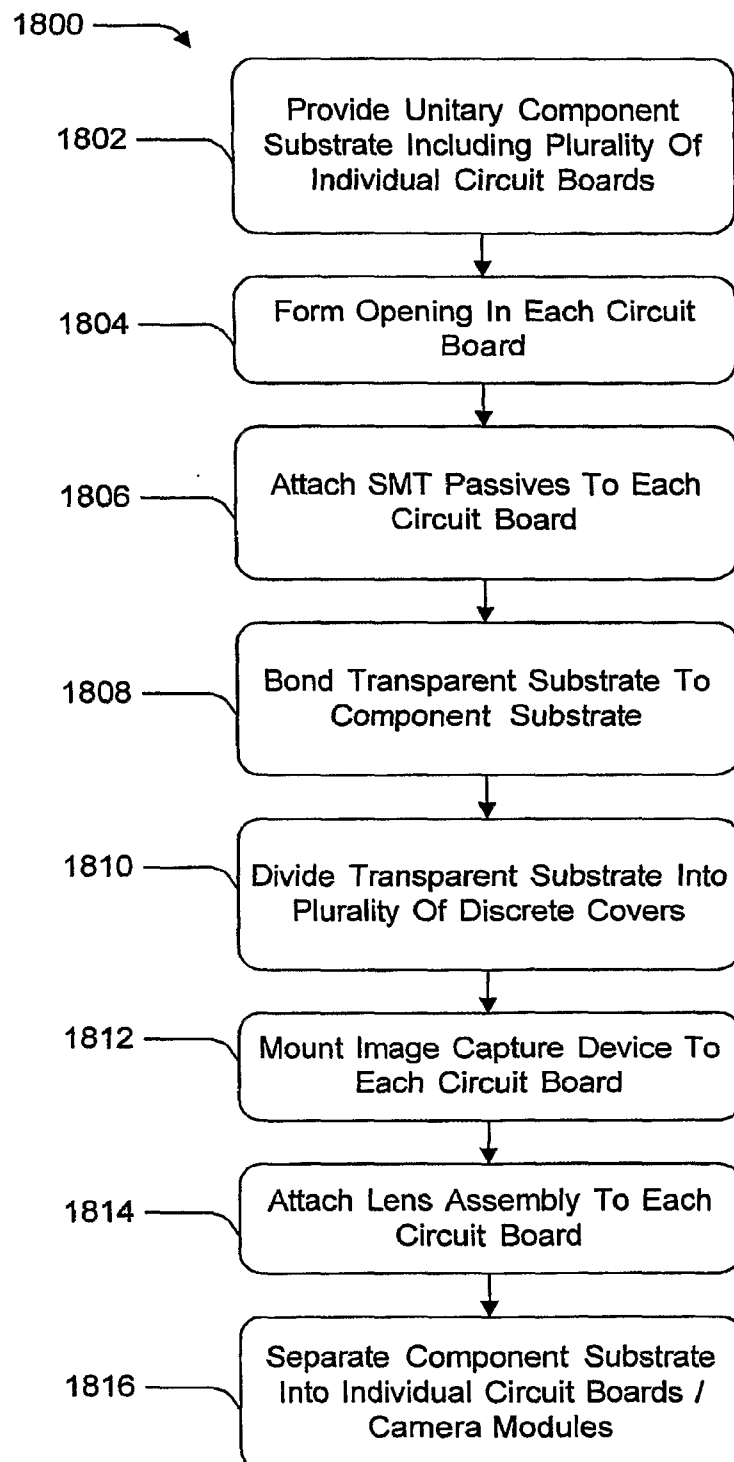


FIG. 17

**10/10****FIG. 18**