

March 26, 1974

K. TEER ET AL

Re. 27,951

DEVICE FOR CONVERTING A PHYSICAL PATTERN INTO
AN ELECTRIC SIGNAL AS A FUNCTION OF TIME
UTILIZING AN ANALOG SHIFT REGISTER

Original Filed April 17, 1969

4 Sheets-Sheet 1

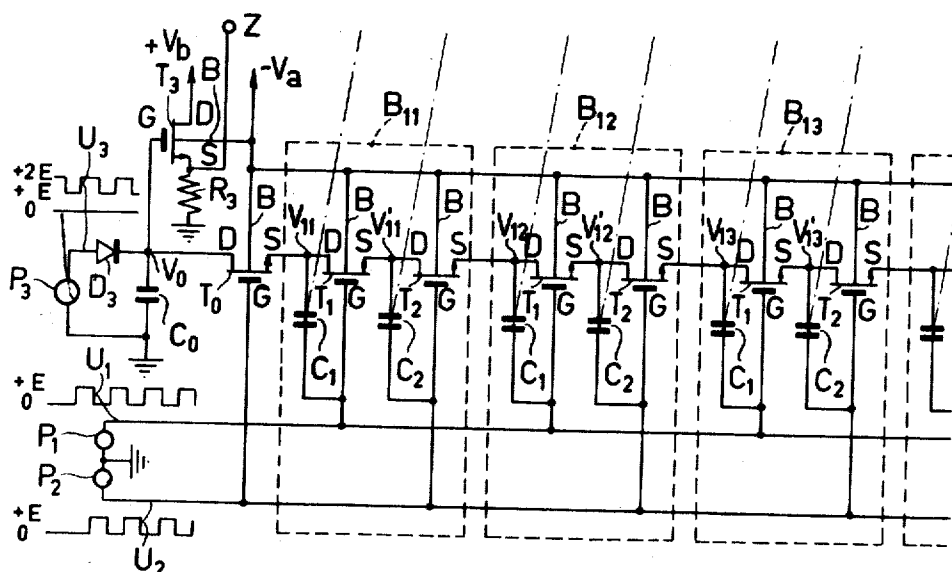


fig. 1

March 26, 1974

K. TEER ET AL

Re. 27,951

DEVICE FOR CONVERTING A PHYSICAL PATTERN INTO
AN ELECTRIC SIGNAL AS A FUNCTION OF TIME
UTILIZING AN ANALOG SHIFT REGISTER

Original Filed April 17, 1969

4 Sheets-Sheet 2

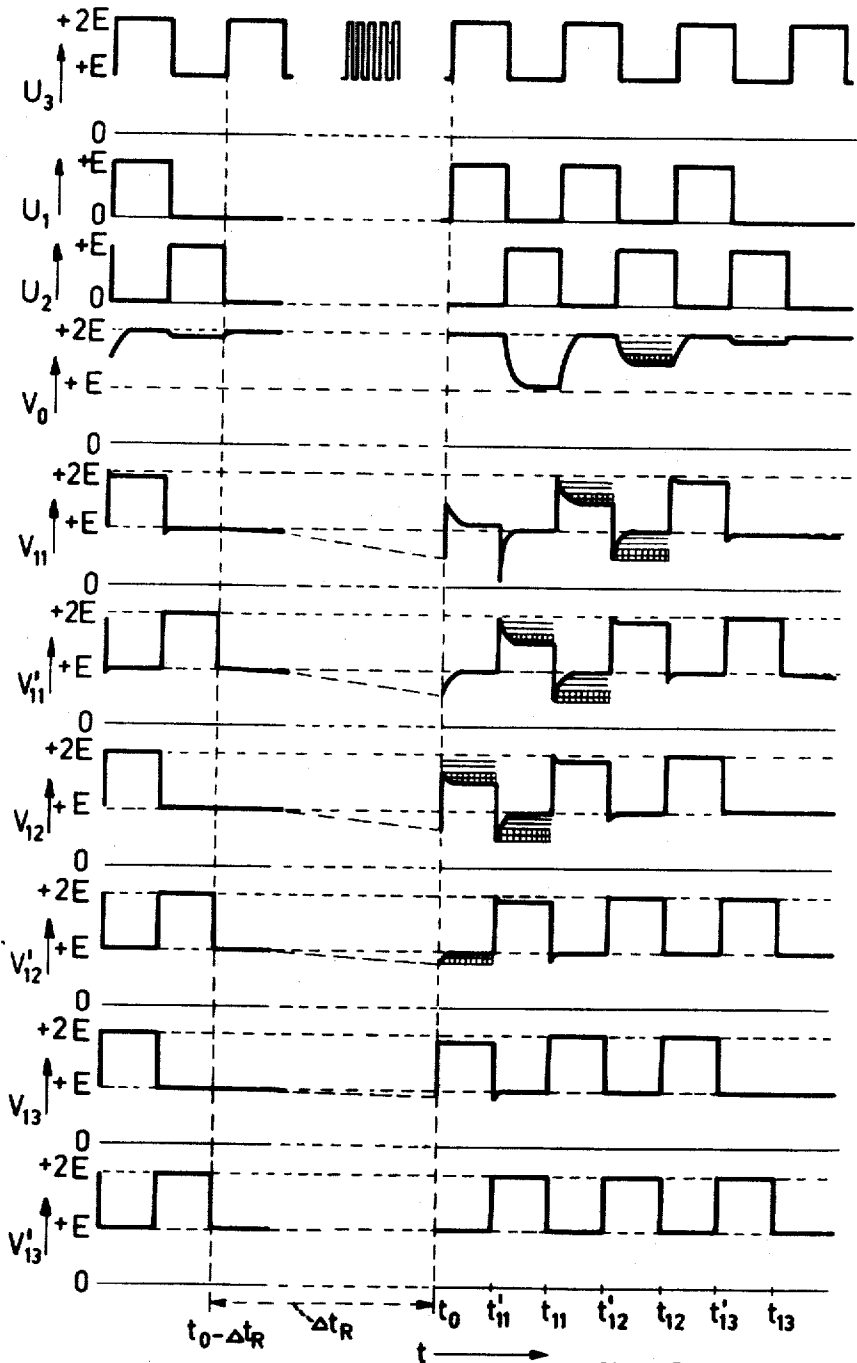


fig.2

March 26, 1974

K. TEER ET AL

Re. 27,951

DEVICE FOR CONVERTING A PHYSICAL PATTERN INTO
AN ELECTRIC SIGNAL AS A FUNCTION OF TIME
UTILIZING AN ANALOG SHIFT REGISTER

Original Filed April 17, 1969

4 Sheets-Sheet 3

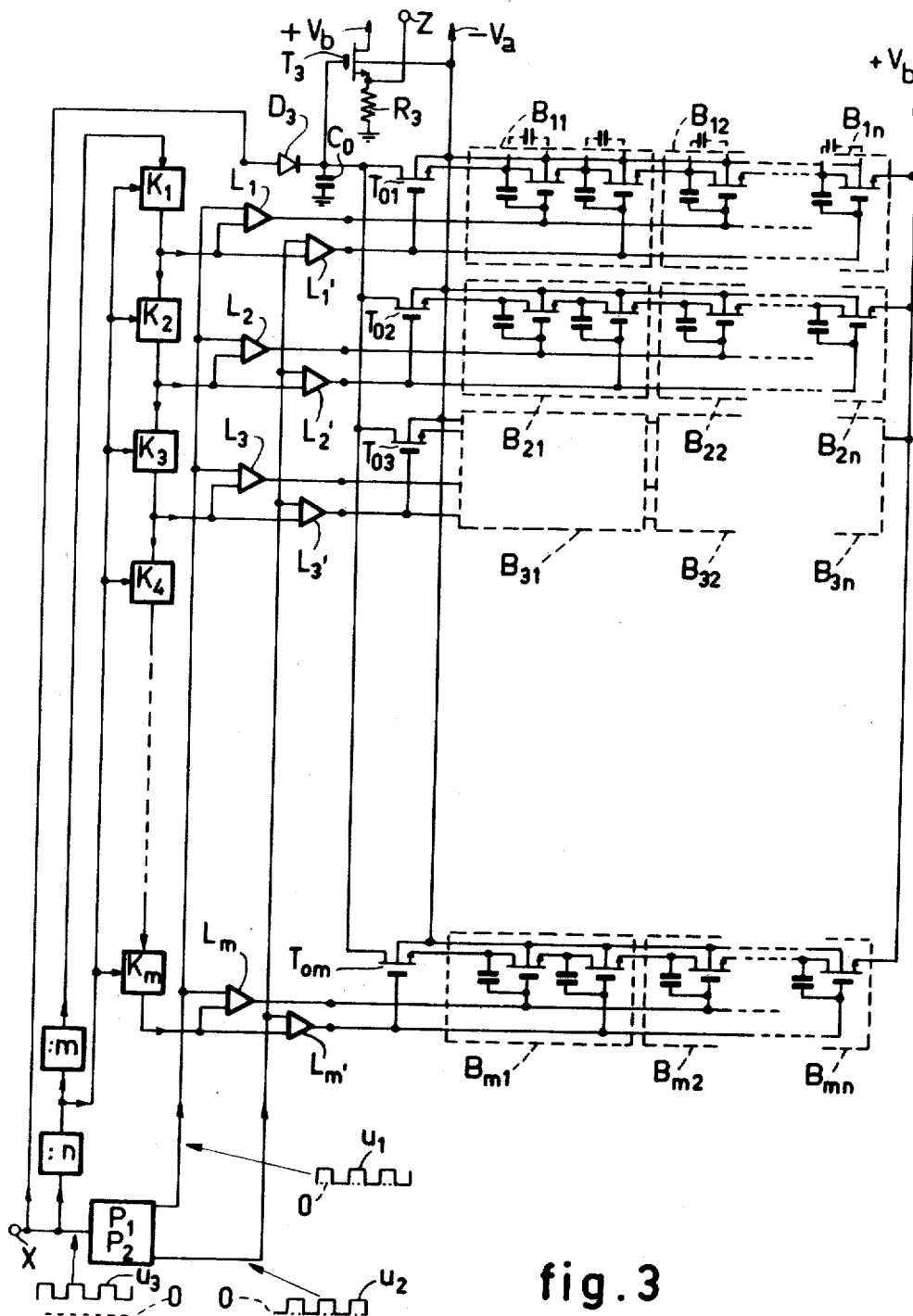


fig. 3

March 26, 1974

K. TEER ET AL

Re. 27,951

DEVICE FOR CONVERTING A PHYSICAL PATTERN INTO
AN ELECTRIC SIGNAL AS A FUNCTION OF TIME
UTILIZING AN ANALOG SHIFT REGISTER

Original Filed April 17, 1969

4 Sheets-Sheet 4

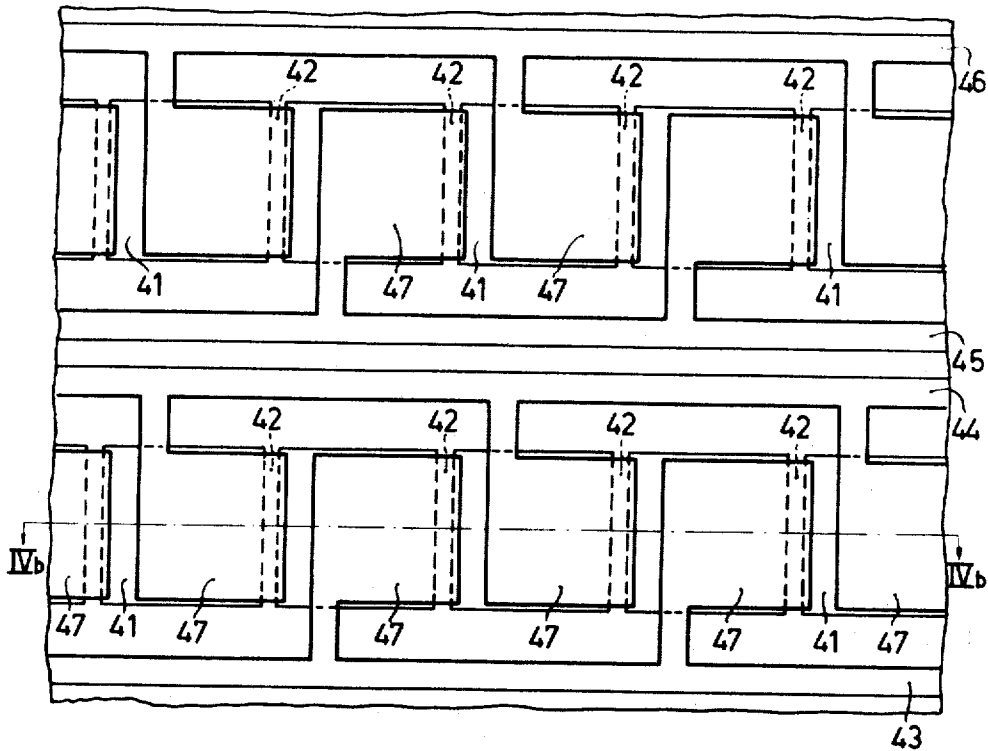


fig. 4a

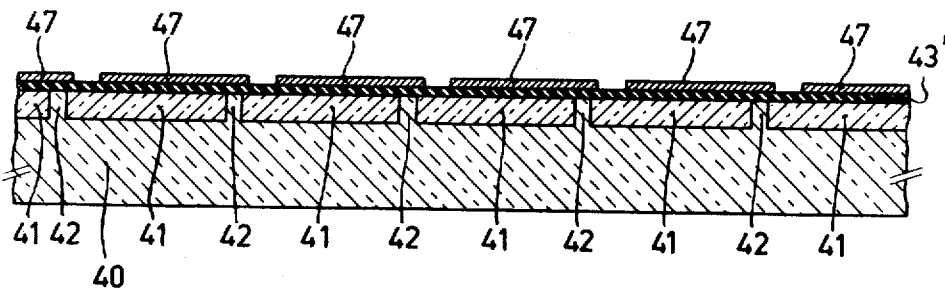


fig. 4b

1

2

27,951

DEVICE FOR CONVERTING A PHYSICAL PATTERN INTO AN ELECTRIC SIGNAL AS A FUNCTION OF TIME UTILIZING AN ANALOG SHIFT REGISTER

Kees Teer and Frederik Leonard Johan Sangster, Eindhoven, Netherlands, assignors to U.S. Philips Corporation, New York, N.Y.

Original No. 3,621,283, dated Nov. 16, 1971, Ser. No. 816,954, Apr. 17, 1969. Application for reissue Jan. 5, 1973, Ser. No. 321,352

Claims priority, application Netherlands, Apr. 23, 1968, 6805706

Int. Cl. G06g 7/12; H01l 11/14

U.S. Cl. 307—229

12 Claims

Matter enclosed in heavy brackets [] appears in the original patent but forms no part of this reissue specification; matter printed in italics indicates the additions made by reissue.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A device for converting energy patterns in the form of light, pressure, heat or magnetic images into an electrical signal as a function of time where the necessity for a scanning beam or a crossed bar readout system is eliminated by cascading elements which function as both storage and energy sensitive devices and by providing circuitry for shifting [the] charges [of the energy sensitive storage] stored in the elements in a single direction along the cascaded array.

The invention relates to a device for converting an energy pattern into an electric signal as a function of time, which device comprises at least one row of pickup elements. In the pickup elements, which comprise a semiconductor circuit element, the information of the energy pattern is converted into an electric voltage corresponding thereto in value across a capacitance in a pickup element.

Such a device, for example, for observing a scene optically or in the infrared range is known from the article "Charge Storage Lights the Way for Solid-State Image Sensors" by G. P. Weckler in "Electronics," May 1, 1967, pp. 75-78.

In the said articles pickup elements are described inter alia which contain semiconductor metal oxide (MOS) transistors. A PN-junction of the MOS transistors of the P-channel type brought in the cutoff condition serves as a capacitance. The radiation from the scene to be observed is incident on said capacitance. Dependent upon the intensity of the radiation more or fewer holes and electrons will be created in the boundary layer between the semiconductor P- and N-layers which discharge the capacitance by recombination with the charge provided on the capacitance. By subsequently charging the capacitance again by means of a pulsatory voltage and determining the charge required for that purpose, an indication regarding the intensity of the incident radiation is obtained for a pickup element in the form of an electric signal.

Pickup elements forming a pickup array are also described in the article, in which the capacitances collecting the radiation are constituted by phototransistors, the pulsatory charging voltage being applied through MOS transistors serving as switches. It is proposed to use a system of crossed bars to obtain the electric signal representing the physical information from the pickup elements. The pickup elements are provided between the intersections of two pairs of intersecting parallel conductors. The pickup elements are thus connected in rows and columns by means of the conductors. By applying a switching signal to one of the row conductors and one

of the column conductors, the electric signal representing the radiation is obtained, through the MOS transistor operating as a switch, from the pickup element arranged between the relative conductors.

The reading out of the said pickup array by means of a system of crossed bars, presents many problems and disadvantages. The intersecting conductors of the system of crossed bars are located close to each other. Therefore, comparatively large stray capacitances are present between the conductors. Since for reading out the pickup elements a high-frequency switching signal is required said stray capacitances give a disturbing crosstalk effect.

Since the requirement holds that only one pickup element of a row or of a column should provide its information, the result is that between the relative pickup element and the conductor, a small resistance must be present and between the other pickup elements and the conductor a large resistance must be present. For that purpose it is stated in the abovementioned article that in each phototransistor operating as a capacitance, a MOS transistor must be provided which serves as a switch. It also holds that a conductor must be very low-ohmic in order that the switching signal be attenuated by the conductor as little as possible. The attenuation and, for example, the voltage drop across the conductor resulting therefrom, may in fact have for its result that a pickup element other than the relative pickup element also provides information. The requirements of the readily conducting material for the conductor for which, for example, aluminum is suitable, presents difficulties in integration methods for the pickup elements constructed with semiconductor material as regards the provision and the required connections.

In addition at least two shift registers are required for supplying the switching signal to the rows and to the columns.

It is the object of the invention to provide a device which does not exhibit the abovementioned drawbacks associated with a system of crossed bars, in which also the influence of stray capacitances occurring is used to advantage. The device according to the invention provides an entirely new method of reading out the pickup elements and for that purpose it is characterized in that the capacitance in a pickup element is present between an output electrode and a control electrode of the said semiconductor circuit element. The control electrode is connected, through a voltage source which can produce a voltage having a value as a function of time cutting off the semiconductor circuit element, to a control electrode of another semiconductor circuit element between the output electrode and control electrode of which another capacitance is present. The output electrode of one semiconductor circuit element is coupled to the input electrode of the other semiconductor circuit element []. A transport of charge which depends upon the information of the radiation pattern [occurring] occurs in said coupling between one capacitance and the other capacitance as a result of bringing the other semiconductor circuit element in the conductive condition by means of the said voltage source.

In order that the invention may be readily carried into effect, a few examples thereof will now be described in greater detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

FIG. 1 shows a device according to the invention in which the pickup elements are provided with semiconductor circuit elements constructed as MOS transistors.

FIG. 2 serves to explain the operation of the device shown in FIG. 1 and shows diagrammatically a few diagrams as a function of time.

FIG. 3 shows a device according to the invention provided with several rows of pickup elements.

FIGS. 4a and 4b show an example of an embodiment of the pickup elements in IC-form of a device according to the invention.

Referring now to FIG. 1, of a device according to the invention constructed with a number of pickup elements 1 to n which are collectively denoted by pickup elements B_{11} to B_{1n} , the first three pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} and B_{13} are shown in detail. Since the pickup elements B_{11} to B_{1n} are constructed in the same manner, a detailed description is given of the pickup element B_{11} only. The pickup element B_{11} comprises two [semiconductor] semiconductor circuit elements, denoted as transistors T_1 and T_2 which are further constructed as semiconductive metal oxide (MOS) transistors of the N-channel type. An input or source electrode denoted by S and an arrow indicating the direction of current of MOS transistor T_1 is connected to an output or drain electrode of MOS transistor T_2 denoted by D, while of MOS transistors T_1 and T_2 a [mass or] common bias electrode B arranged on the substrate of each transistor is connected to a terminal having a negative potential $-V_a$. The terminal which is at the potential $-V_a$ forms part, in a manner not shown, of a direct voltage source V_a another terminal of which is connected to ground. The same will apply to further direct voltage sources to be mentioned in the description. A control or gate electrode G of MOS transistors T_1 and T_2 , respectively, is coupled to the drain electrode D through a capacitance denoted as capacitors C_1 and C_2 respectively.

The pickup elements B_{11} to B_{1n} are connected together by connecting of each pickup element, except for the last pickup element B_{1n} , the source electrode S of MOS transistor T_2 to the drain electrode D of the MOS transistor T_1 in the succeeding pickup element and by interconnecting the gate electrodes G of the MOS transistors T_1 and T_2 , respectively. The source electrode S of the MOS transistor T_2 in the pickup element B_{1n} (not shown) may be connected both to a terminal having positive potential and may not be connected further, that is to say, it may be kept floating. The drain electrode D of the MOS transistor T_1 in the pickup element B_{11} is connected to the source electrode S of a MOS transistor T_0 the bias electrode B of which is connected to the terminal having a negative potential $-V_a$ and the gate electrode G is connected to that of MOS transistors T_2 . In the pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} and B_{13} , the potentials at the drain electrodes D of the MOS transistors T_1 and T_2 , respectively, are denoted by V_{11} , V_{12} and V_{13} and V_{11}' , V_{12}' and V_{13}' respectively.

The interconnected gate electrodes G of MOS transistors T_1 , MOS transistors T_2 and MOS transistors T_0 , respectively, are connected to ground, through voltage source P_1 and P_2 , respectively. Voltage sources P_1 and P_2 produce the clock voltages U_1 and U_2 as a function of time shown in FIG. 1, which voltages vary between the ground potential denoted by zero and a potential value $+E$. The voltage U_2 produced by the voltage source P_2 lags half a period with respect to voltage U_1 which is supplied by the voltage source P_1 . The drain electrode D of MOS transistor T_0 is connected to ground through a capacitor C_0 . Parallel to the capacitor C_0 is connected a voltage source P_3 which supplies a clock voltage U_3 as shown through a diode D_3 connected with its cathode to capacitor C_0 . The voltage U_3 having a square-wave form as a function of time varies between the potential value $+E$ and a reference value $+2E$. The terminal of the capacitor C_0 having a potential V_0 is connected to the gate electrode G of a MOS transistor T_3 of the N-channel type, the bias electrode B and the drain electrode D, respectively, being connected to a terminal having a potential $-V_a$ and $+V_b$, respectively. The source electrode S of MOS transistor T_3 is connected to ground through a resistor R_3 and the voltage produced across the resistor R_3 dependent upon the value of potential V_0 appears at an output terminal Z of the device.

Instead of MOS transistors, germanium transistors or silicon transistors may alternatively be used in the device. The said input or source electrode S and output or drain electrode D correspond to an emitter and collector electrode respectively. The said gate electrode [6] G corresponds to a base electrode, which two electrodes may collectively be referred to as control electrodes.

As is known, the construction of the said transistors [T_{ox},] T_0 , T_1 , T_2 and T_3 as MOS transistors, as compared with normal germanium or silicon transistors for the same drive, presents the advantage of a very much smaller value of the current through the gate electrode G than through the base electrodes of the normal transistors. Of course, normal transistors in the known Darlington arrangement could also be used to obtain the same effect, or the loss of charge corresponding to the said base current could be eliminated by providing charge amplifiers between a few pickup elements. Alternatively, transistors using a field-effect (so-called FET's) are to be considered.

In the embodiment shown the physical pattern which is to be converted into an electric signal influences the voltage across the capacitors [C1 and C2] C_1 and C_2 and hence the values of the potentials V_{11} , V_{11}' , V_{12} , V_{12}' and so on, by a physical interaction which is denoted diagrammatically by [arrows in] dot-and-dash lines. As already stated in the above-mentioned Weckler article, the interaction may be photoelectric. The capacitors C_1 and C_2 each denote the essentially parallel capacitance of the PN-junction of the substrate-drain diode in the MOS transistors T_1 and T_2 and that present between the gate electrodes G and the drain electrodes D. In the capacitors C_1 and C_2 shown the stray capacitances are included in the MOS transistors T_1 and T_2 and these are thus used to advantage.

It is also possible to construct capacitors C_1 and C_2 as separate components having a leak resistance, the value of which depends upon the number of incident photons, for example, the dielectric of a parallel arranged photoresistor. Alternatively a pattern characterized by a pressure distribution or a geometry of unevenness could act upon the dielectric constructed with piezo oxides, or on, for example, pressure sensitive resistors connected parallel to the capacitor C_1 and C_2 . The same applies to a magnetization pattern, the magnetic field distribution of which influences the value of a resistor which is sensitive to magnetic fields. For that purpose the resistor may consist, for example, of an InSb-mass, in which NiSb-needles occur. The magnetic field influences the position of the NiSb-needles readily conducting electric current in the InSb-mass poorly conducting electric current.

The operation of the device according to the invention shown in FIG. 1 will now be explained with reference to the diagrams shown in FIG. 2. The diagrams shown in FIG. 2 as a function of time give the voltages U_3 , U_1 and U_2 supplied by voltage sources P_3 , P_1 and P_2 and the potentials V_0 , V_{11} , V_{11}' , V_{12} , V_{12}' , V_{13} and V_{13}' which occur at the places already shown in FIG. 1. To explain the operation of the device shown in FIG. 1 it is sufficient to consider a device having only three pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} and B_{13} . It is assumed that the source electrode S of MOS transistor T_2 in the pickup element B_{13} is kept floating. To obtain a closely reasoned explanation of the cyclic operation of the device a given condition is started from. It will appear that after the period to be explained, the assumed given condition is again reached automatically. The period of the square wave voltage U_3 is shown in FIG. 2 with a few time intervals t_0 to t_{11} , t_{11} to t_{12} , t_{12} to t_{13} .

In FIG. 2 an instant $t_0 - \Delta t_R$ is shown shortly after which the potentials shown V_{11} , V_{11}' , V_{12} , V_{12}' , V_{13} and V_{13}' all appear to have the value $+E$, which the potential V_0 is equal to $+2E$. Starting from the instant $t_0 - \Delta t_R$ in which a time interval denoted by Δt_R for television will be found to lie in the order of a few tens of milliseconds,

the following occurs in the time interval Δt_R : the value of the voltages U_1 and U_2 supplied during the time interval Δt_R to the gate electrodes G of MOS transistors T_0 , T_1 and T_2 by voltage sources P_1 and P_2 is equal to ground potential, so that said transistors are cutoff during the time interval Δt_R due to the higher potential at the source electrodes S. In the time interval Δt_R the value of the voltage U_3 supplied by the voltage source P_3 varies between the potentials $+2E$ and $+E$. Since the potential V_0 has the value $+2E$ and keeps it during the time interval Δt_R when leakage losses are negligible, the diode D_3 will not conduct. In order to show that, for example, for television, the time interval Δt_R is relatively long with respect to the recurrence period of the voltage U_3 , the voltage U_3 during the time axis denoted by a broken line, shortened relative to that which is shown by a solid line, is shown again with an apparently more rapidly varying square-wave voltage. During the comparatively long time interval Δt_R the energy pattern to be converted influences the voltage across the capacitors C_1 and C_2 and causes it to decrease dependent upon the value of the information. Assuming the information in the form of photons to represent a scene to be picked up, the light from the scene varying in brightness from white peak via gray to black, it may be assumed that, for example, the bright white light impinges upon capacitor C_1 of pickup element B_{11} and no light impinges upon the capacitor C_2 of the pickup element B_{13} while the intermediate gray values are evenly distributed between the other capacitors C_1 and C_2 . The result is that during the time interval Δt_R the potentials V_{11} , V_{11}' , V_{12} , V_{12}' and V_{13} decrease, while the potential V_{13}' , for negligible dark current, remains constant. The potential drop during the time interval Δt_R is shown linearly in FIG. 2, which, however, is not required. A nonlinear, for example, exponential drop is also readily possible. As will become apparent in the course of the description, the minimum occurring potential value for the maximum value of the brightness of the light should not be smaller than $+1/2E$. This value is reached for white peak, by the potential V_{11} at the end of the time interval Δt_R , that is to say at the instant t_0 . It is found that the potentials V_{11} to V_{13}' at the end of the time interval Δt_R have values $[]$ which, dependent upon the brightness of the light, vary from $+1/2E$ for white peak to $+E$ for black.

At the instant t_0 the value of the voltage U_1 supplied by the voltage source P_1 steps from ground potential 0 to $+E$. The result is that this potential step is impressed upon the gate electrodes G of the MOS transistors T_1 and the terminals of capacitors C_1 connected thereto. As a result of this the potential step having the value E will simultaneously occur, through the capacitors C_1 , in the potentials V_{11} , V_{12} and V_{13} , so that these reach values at the instant t_0 which lie between $+1/2$ and approximately $[+3E] + 2E$. The potential step from 0 to $+E$ on the gate electrode G of MOS transistor T_1 sets it in the conductive condition if the potential V_{11}' at $[the]$ its source electrode S is lower than $+E$, which potential V_{11}' is in turn determined by the charge condition of C_2 , and applied potential U_2 . As a result of this the capacitors C_1 and C_2 in the pickup elements B_{11} and B_{12} are connected together until, apart from threshold voltages, the value of the potential at the source electrode S has become equal to that at the gate electrode G of the MOS transistor T_1 . The charge required therefor cannot be applied through the gate electrode G but must be supplied from the capacitor C_1 through the drain electrode D and the source electrode S to the capacitor C_2 . Starting from substantially the same values of the capacitors C_1 and C_2 it is found that, as shown in FIG. 2 in the time interval t_0 to t_{11}' , the respective potentials V_{11} and V_{12} will have to decrease as much as the respective potentials V_{11}' and V_{12}' will increase.

Since no light has impinged upon the capacitor C_2 in pickup elements B_{13} , the $[change]$ charge of the capacitor C_2 has remained constant. The potential step from 0

to $+E$ at the gate electrode G of MOS transistor T_1 in pickup element B_{13} , will therefore not cause the same to become conductive.

The result of the potential step in the voltage U_1 at the instant t_0 is that in a pickup element the loss of charge in the capacitors C_2 , due to the charging to the potential $+E$, has been transferred to the capacitor C_1 through the source electrode S and the drain electrode D of the conductive MOS transistor T_1 . The potentials V_{11} , V_{12} and V_{13} thus obtain a given value relative to the value $+2E$ which difference value corresponds to the brightness of the light which is incident on the pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} and B_{13} .

At the instant t_{11}' the value of the voltages U_1 and U_3 respectively, supplied by the voltage sources P_1 and P_3 respectively, steps back from the value $+E$, and $+2E$, respectively, to ground potential and potential value $+E$, respectively. Simultaneously the voltage U_2 supplied by the voltage source P_2 steps from ground potential up to the value $+E$. The potential step in the voltages U_1 and U_2 , respectively, show a potential step E downwards and upwards, respectively. In the pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} and B_{13} , the so far cutoff MOS transistors T_2 will become conductive instead of the MOS transistors T_1 , as it also holds for MOS transistor T_0 . As a result of this, the terminal of capacitor C_0 , which has a potential V_0 equal to $+2E$, is connected $[]$ through MOS transistor T_0 to the terminal of capacitor C_1 in pickup element B_{11} which has a potential V_{11} . Since potential V_{11} is lower than $+E$, which value is impressed upon the gate electrode G of MOS transistor T_0 by the voltage source P_2 with voltage U_2 , the potential V_{11} will increase to the value $+E$. As already described above, the charge required for that purpose will have to be supplied by capacitor C_0 . For a value of capacitor C_0 equal to that of capacitor C_1 in pickup elements B_{11} , the increase of potential V_{11} will be equal to the drop of potential V_0 .

The same phenomenon presents itself between the pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} and B_{13} , the loss of charge in the capacitors C_1 in the pickup elements B_{12} and B_{13} , respectively, being transmitted to the capacitor C_2 in pickup elements B_{11} and B_{12} . This is expressed in FIG. 2 when the potentials V_0 , V_{11}' and V_{12}' , respectively, are compared with the potentials V_{11} , V_{12} and V_{13} , respectively, during the stated time interval t_{11}' to t_{11} . During this time interval t_{11}' to t_{11} , the diode D_3 remains cut off since the value of the voltage U_3 is equal to $+E$.

The potential V_0 decreased from $+2E$ to approximately $+E$, causes $[]$ through the $[transistor]$ resistor R_3 a smaller current to flow through the MOS transistor T_3 so that relative to ground a voltage occurs at the output terminal Z of the device which is equal to potential V_0 . The voltage drop occurring at the output terminal Z, thus represents the brightness of the light which impinges upon the pickup element B_{11} .

At the instant t_{11} a potential step occurs in the voltages U_1 , U_2 and U_3 , after which these voltages obtain the same value as shortly after the instant t_0 . The result is the same operation of the device as already described at the instant t_0 . A difference is, however, that in the time interval t_{11} to t_{12}' the potential V_0 will increase to the value $+2E$, since this value is impressed by the voltage source P_3 through the conductive diode D_3 .

For illustration FIG. 2 shows a part of the potential variations which correspond to the brightness of the light incident upon the pickup element B_{12} as a shaded area. It can simply be seen that during the time interval t_0 to t_{11}' the information given by the value of potential V_{12}' relative to $+E$ is transmitted to the potential V_{12} and is superimposed thereon relative to the value $+2E$. During the time interval t_{11}' to t_{11} , the total information which is supplied to the pickup element B_{12} during the time interval Δt_R is transferred to the capacitor C_2 in the pickup element B_{11} as a result of which the potential V_{11}' varies rela-

tive to the value $+2E$. During the period t_{11} to $[t_{11}]$ t_{12}' the information of the pickup element B_{12} is transferred in the pickup element B_{11} from the capacitor C_2 having a potential V_{11}' to capacitor C_1 having a potential V_{11} . The result is that in the time interval t_{12}' to t_{12} the information given by the pickup element B_{12} is transferred to the capacitor C_0 and hence to the output terminal Z. The information of the pickup element B_{13} becomes available at the output terminal Z for further processing in the time interval t_{13}' to t_{13} .

It has been found that for reading out a device comprising three pickup elements it is necessary and sufficient that the voltages U_1 and U_2 supplied by the voltage sources P_1 and P_2 show three square-wave pulses during the time interval t_0 to t_{13} . From this it appears that shortly after the instant t_{13} the value of the potentials V_{11} , V_{11}' , V_{12} , V_{12}' and V_{13} , V_{13}' is equal to $+E$ while that of potential V_0 is equal to $+2E$. As already described above it is found that after reading out the device, the condition is automatically reached from which was started for the explanation. The result is that the instant t_{13} for a cyclic operation of the device corresponds to the instant $t_0 - \Delta t_R$.

For a device comprising n -pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} , $[B_{13}]$ B_{13} to B_{1n} , in which a time interval Δt_R in which the light of the scene to be picked up influences the potentials V_{11} , V_{11}' , V_{12} , V_{12}' , V_{13} , V_{13}' , V_{13} to V_{1n} , V_{1n}' must be comparatively large relative to the time interval t_0 to t_{1n} . This requirement does not hold for a device in which the information of the physical pattern is written instantaneously without integration in time. An example thereof may be a device in which a pattern characterized by a pressure distribution in an instantaneous manner influences the potential picture of the dielectric constructed with a piezo oxide of capacitors C_1 and C_2 .

It is obvious from the variation of the potentials V_{11} and V_{11}' that the potential drop under the influence of the light from the scene for white peak cannot be more than $\frac{1}{2}E$. If in fact the light impinges upon both capacitors C_1 and C_2 in the pickup element B_{11} with maximum brightness that is to say white peak, the potential V_{11} will decrease from $+1\frac{1}{2}E$ to $+E$ in the time interval t_0 to t_{11}' . The result is that shortly before the instant t_{11}' , the potential V_{11} at the drain electrode D, the potential V_{11}' at the source electrode S, and the potential at the gate electrode G of MOS transistor T_1 in the pickup element B_{11} all have the value $+E$. If, however, the potentials V_{11} and V_{11}' should experience a larger drop than $\frac{1}{2}E$ and reach, for example, the value $+\frac{3}{2}E$, the potential V_{11} will decrease from $+1\frac{3}{2}E$ to $+E$ in the time interval t_0 to t_{11}' . Due to this the potential V_{11}' can only increase by $\frac{3}{2}E$ to the value $+\frac{5}{2}E$. Since for a correct operation of the device it is required that the potential V_{11}' at the source electrode S increases to the reference value $+E$, the limit already set results.

The stated limit of $\frac{1}{2}E$ for the potential drop does not hold for the case in which in each pickup element the voltage across the capacitor C_1 or C_2 is not influenced by the physical information but is kept constant at the reference value $+E$, so that the reference value is always available in a pickup element. As a result of this the other capacitor in the pickup element may experience a voltage drop by the value E , so may be substantially $[be]$ discharged without interfering with the correct operation of the device. This may be realized, for example, by screening the dielectric of a capacitor C_1 or C_2 in each pickup element from the physical information or making it insensitive thereto.

When the device is actuated the charging of the capacitors C_1 and C_2 in the pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} , B_{13} and B_{1n} occurs in a simple manner by means of the voltage sources P_1 , P_2 , and P_3 already described with reference to FIG. 1. The squarewave voltage U_3 supplied by the voltage source P_3 charges the capacitor C_0 $[at]$ to the value $+2E$ via diode D_3 so that the potential V_0 obtains

the value $+2E$. The voltage U_2 supplied by the voltage source P_2 then makes the MOS transistor $[T_0]$ T_0 conductive at the value $+E$ so that in the manner already described the potentials V_0 and V_{11} obtain the value $+E$. The voltage U_1 supplied by the voltage source P_1 then renders the MOS transistor $[T_1]$ T_1 conductive at the value $+E$ so that $[as a result of the charge distribution between two capacitors,]$ the potentials V_{11} and V_{11}' obtain the values 0 and E respectively $[value +\frac{1}{2}E]$. Simultaneously, the capacitor C_0 is charged again so that the potential V_0 again has the value $+2E$. In a following period it is achieved that the potentials V_{12} and V_{12}' reach the values 0 and E respectively $[value +\frac{1}{2}E]$. After n periods the potentials V_{1n} and V_{1n}' are equal to 0 and E respectively $[2(1-2n)E]$, which value then rapidly increases. Due $[due]$ to the further charging of the preceding capacitors C_1 and C_2 $[until]$ after some time a voltage having substantially a value $+E$ is available across all the capacitors C_1 and C_2 present in the pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} , B_{13} to B_{1n} . This instant corresponds to the instant $t_0 - \Delta t_R$ in FIG. 2. Of course, the charging can be accelerated by increasing the frequency of the voltages U_1 , U_2 and U_3 .

For analyzing optical, magnetic, or other physically given phenomena which manifest themselves in a one-dimensional pattern it is possible, as shown in FIG. 1, to use a single row of pickup elements for converting the physical pattern into an electric signal as a function of time. If it should be desirable to convert the information in a two-dimensional manner, the device shown in FIG. 3 provides a solution.

FIG. 3 shows a device according to the invention which is provided with m rows having n pickup elements. Since a row of pickup elements B_{11} , B_{12} , B_{13} to $[B_{02}]$ B_{1n} was already described with reference to FIG. 1, and since in FIG. 3 the rows are constructed in an equivalent manner, the components of the pickup elements are not shown in detail. Further components already shown in FIG. 1 are denoted by the same reference numerals in FIG. 3 at least substantially. The MOS transistor T_0 associated with the row in FIG. 1, which for reading a row of pickup elements connects the same to the capacitor C_0 , is constructed m -fold in FIG. 3 and is denoted for the rows $1, 2, 3, \dots, m$, by $[T_{01},]$ $T_{01}, T_{02}, T_{03} \dots T_{0m}$. Instead of the source electrode S of the MOS transistor T_2 in the last pickup element B_{13} , which in the explanation of FIG. 1 was assumed to be floating, the corresponding source electrodes S of the MOS transistors T_2 in the last pickup elements B_{1n} , B_{2n} , B_{3n} to B_{mn} in FIG. 3 are connected together and connected to a terminal having a potential $+V_b$. All this is not essential for the invention.

The device shown in FIG. 3, may serve, for example, as a television camera, in which the light from the scene to be picked up is incident on the pickup elements B_{11} to B_{mn} . In order to obtain the image signal produced by the camera at the output terminal Z, the voltage U_3 is shown at an input terminal X of the camera which voltage is produced by a voltage source P_3 , not shown. In order to obtain the voltages U_1 and U_2 a combined voltage source (P_1, P_2) is shown which may comprise, for example, a symmetrical bistable trigger circuit which is pulsed by the voltage U_3 . The voltage U_3 is also applied to an n -divider (denoted by n). The output voltage of the n -divider is applied to an m -divider (denoted by m) and to each of the shift register stages K_1, K_2, K_3 to K_m constituting a shift register. The voltage supplied by the m -divider is applied to the first shift register stage K_1 . The outputs of the shift register stages K_1, K_2, K_3 to K_m are connected to an input of gates (L_1, L_1'), (L_2, L_2') (L_3, L_3') to (L_m, L_m'), respectively, to a second input of which gates L the $[volume]$ voltage U_1 and to a second input of which gates L' the voltage U_2 is also applied. The output of gates L and L', respectively, sup-

plies the voltages U_1 and U_2 , respectively, to a row of the pickup elements dependent upon the voltage supplied by the associated shift register stage K .

The voltage supplied by the m -divider has a recurrence period which is equal to $[m.n.] m \times n$ periods of the voltages U_1 , U_2 and U_3 and serves as a starting voltage for the first register stage K_1 . This latter then supplies a voltage to the gates L_1 and L_1' during n -periods as a result of which the voltages U_1 and U_2 are transferred to the pickup elements B_{11} to B_{1n} . The image signal supplied by the first row of pickup elements B_{11} to B_{1n} appears at the output terminal Z during the n -periods. After the n -periods the voltage supplied by the shift register stage K_1 varies, so that the gates L_1 and L_1' are closed and the shift register stage K_2 is pulsed so that as a result of the varied voltage supplied by the stage K_2 , the gates L_2 and L_2' open for the second number of n -periods. After the m^{th} number of n -periods, the row of the pickup elements B_{m1} to B_{mn} has supplied its image signal to the output terminal Z .

In the description with reference to FIGS. 1 and 2 the time interval Δt_R is shown which occurs between two successive reading out operations of a row of pickup elements B_{11} to B_{1n} . For the device shown in FIG. 3, having m rows of pickup elements, the time interval Δt_R in a cyclic operation appears to be equal to $(m-1)$ times the reading out interval of a row of pickup elements. For a television system having 25 images per second built up to 625 lines, the time interval Δt_R is approximately equal to 40 ms minus 64 μ s.

It is obvious that in a simple manner the known interlacing with two frames can be reached by applying the voltage supplied by shift register stages K_2 to the gates L_2 and L_2' , while the gates L_2 and L_2' are connected to a shift register stage which opens the same after approximately $\frac{1}{2}[m.n.]m \times n$ periods.

It is obvious that for deriving a video signal having the so-called line blanking from the image signal occurring at the output terminal Z , both a part of the information supplied by the rows of pickup elements may be left unused and the shift register may be adapted by incorporating in the stages K , for example, a delay which corresponds to the line blanking time or, for example, the frame blanking time.

The three-fold or two-fold construction of the device shown in FIG. 3 results in a camera suitable for color television by dividing the light coming from the scene in three or two basic colors.

A semiconductor device constructed as a pickup array in which the pickup elements are preferably integrated in one semiconductor body will now be described with reference to FIG. 4. FIG. 4a diagrammatically shows a part of a plan view of an embodiment of such a semiconductor device, while FIG. 4b diagrammatically shows a cross-sectional view taken on the line IVb-IVb in FIG. 4a.

The embodiment shown in FIG. 4 comprises a substrate 40 which may be, for example, of an insulating material, the substrate being provided with one or more surface regions of a semiconductor material or, as in the present example, consisting itself of a semiconductor material, for example, P-type silicon. In a manner commonly used in semiconductor technology, for example, by means of a conventional photoresist and diffusion method, surface regions 41 of the opposite conductivity type, for example, having proportions of 64 μ m. x 64 μ m., are provided in a surface region of the substrate 40. These surface regions 41 together with the intermediate regions 42 constitute the semiconductor regions of a number of MOS transistors. These MOS transistors are arranged in series, in which each of the regions 41 shown constitutes the output or drain electrode of a MOS transistor of a series and also the input or source electrode of the succeeding MOS transistor of that series. The intermediate regions 42, width, for example, approximately 6 μ m.,

constitute the channel regions between the source and drain electrode of each MOS transistor. The MOS transistors are furthermore provided with gate electrodes 47, proportions approximately 60 μ m. x 60 μ m., which are insulated from the semiconductor surface by an insulating layer 43', for example, by a layer of silicon oxide, thickness 0.1 μ m. The gate electrodes 47 are alternately connected to one of the conductive tracks 43 and 44 and 45 and 46, respectively. The thickness of the insulating layer below the conductive tracks 43 to 46 preferably is larger than below the gate electrodes 47 (for example, approximately 0.5 μ m.) to prevent undesired channel formation. Channel interruptors, for example, diffused channel interruptors, may alternatively be used.

The gate electrodes 47 and the metal tracks 43 to 46 consist, for example, of gold, and have a thickness of approximately 250 Å. Such gold electrodes are transparent so that radiation incident on the surface can be absorbed in the semiconductor body and the photosensitivity of the PN-junctions between the surface regions 41 and the surrounding surface region of the substrate 40 may be used. In connection herewith the distance between the surface of the semiconductor body and the said PN-junctions preferably is approximately 1 μ m. In the operating condition, the said PN-junctions are biased in the [forward] reverse direction to establish a depletion layer around each junction. For that purpose the surrounding surface region is connected to a negative potential, in this case via a connection conductor which is connected to the substrate 40 and is not shown.

The pickup elements of the pickup array are each constituted by two succeeding transistors. The two capacitances C_1 , C_2 between which a transport of charge may occur dependent upon the information of the physical pattern, are provided between the gate electrode and the drain electrode of the two MOS transistors of the pickup element as depicted in FIG. 1. In the present example, said capacitances are constituted by the initial capacitance between the gate electrode and the drain electrode for each MOS transistor, said internal capacitance being increased in that the gate electrodes 47 extend for a considerable part of their surface above the surface regions 41. The photosensors which modify the stored charge in relation to the incident radiation are, as in the Weckler publication, the photodiodes constituted by the reverse-biased n-p junctions formed between each of the N regions 41 and the P substrate 40. In the FIG. 3 embodiment, for instance, in the various rows of pickup elements, the capacitors which are shown connected between gate and drain correspond to the capacitances formed across the insulating layer 43'. The photodiodes would correspond to capacitors connected between each drain and the substrate. For completeness sake, these are shown in dashed lines only for the first row. It will be evident to those skilled in the art that the two capacitors connected to a common drain are essentially in parallel and thus mutually influence their charge conditions. The said transport of charge can be controlled with control signals which can be applied to the gate electrode 47 of the MOS transistors through the conductive tracks 43 to 46.

What is claimed is:

1. A device for converting an energy pattern into an electrical signal as a function of time, comprising a plurality of serially connected pickup elements; each of said elements comprising an input terminal, an output terminal, at least two semiconductor switches each having input, output and control terminals, a capacitor connected in parallel with the control and input terminals of each of the semiconductor switches in each pickup element, an energy-sensitive conduction path means connected in parallel with each capacitor for discharging each capacitor at a rate determined by the amount of energy incident thereon, means for connecting the output

11

terminal of a first of the semiconductor switches in each element to an input terminal of a second semiconductor switch in each element, means for connecting the input terminal of the first semiconductor switch in each element to the input terminal of that element, means for connecting the output terminal of the second semiconductor switch of each element to the output terminal of that element; the device further comprising an external semiconductor switch having input, output and control terminals; means for connecting the output terminal of the external semiconductor switch to the input terminal of a pickup element on an end of the plurality of serially connected pickup elements, an external capacitor connected to the input terminal of the external semiconductor switch, means for providing a first alternating switching voltage to the control terminal of each of the first semiconductor switches in each element, means for providing a second alternating switching voltage to the control terminal of the external semiconductor switch and to the control terminals of each second semiconductor switch in each element, and means for providing a third alternating voltage in phase with said second alternating switching voltage for charging said external capacitor.】

【2. A device as claimed in claim 1, wherein each of the semiconductor switches in each pickup unit comprises a metal oxide transistor, wherein each of the capacitors in the pickup units each comprise a PN-junction of an associated MOS transistor, and wherein the radiation sensitive conduction path means comprises a photosensitive boundary layer of the MOS transistor.】

【3. A device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising an additional row of serially connected pickup elements, an additional external semiconductor switch connected to one end of said additional row of pickup units, means for connecting the semiconductor switch to the external capacitor, and means for alternately energizing said first and said second external semiconductor switches.】

【4. A device as claimed in claim 1, wherein all of the semiconductor switches are integrated into a single integrated semiconductor body.】

5. A solid state photosensitive imaging array comprising:

- a plurality of rows having a plurality of transistors, each transistor having first and second electrodes defining the ends of a conduction path and a control electrode; the conduction paths of the transistors of a row being connected in series for forming a signal transmission path terminated at one end at an output terminal;
- a capacitor per transistor coupled between the control electrode and one of said first and second electrodes of each transistor;
- a photoresponsive element per transistor, each element being common to the capacitor at said one electrode of its associated transistor, said element being poled in a direction to discharge said capacitor as a function of photo signals;
- two conductors per row, one conductor being connected to the control electrode of every other transistor and the other conductor being connected to the control electrode of the remaining transistors;
- a source of clock voltages;
- switch means connected between said conductors of each row and said clock source for, when enabled, applying between said conductors clock voltages for serially reading out the contents of a row and concurrently recharging the capacitors of a row; and
- scan means having an output terminal connected to different one of said switch means for enabling said switch means in sequence for completely reading out and recharging one row and then another one and so on until all rows are read out.

6. The combination as claimed in claim 5, wherein the scan means comprises a shift register having one output

per stage, and means connecting the output of each stage of the shift register to the switch of a different row of transistors.

7. The combination as claimed in claim 6, and further including means for coupling said clock source to the shift register of the scan means.

8. Imaging semiconductor apparatus comprising:

a semiconductive wafer including a bulk portion of a first type semiconductivity and a plurality of spaced, localized zones of opposite type semiconductivity disposed adjacent and forming a series path along the surface of the wafer;

a dielectric layer disposed over said surface and over said localized zones;

a plurality of localized conductive electrodes disposed over the dielectric layer and registered with said localized zones such that each of said conductive electrodes extends over the space between a pair of said zones and over a portion of one zone of the pair of zones and forms with the latter charge storage means;

means for applying alternating clock voltages between successive ones of said electrodes, said clock voltages being sufficient to produce in the localized zones in the absence of incident photons a reference potential and said clock voltages additionally being such that their successive application to the electrodes is sufficient to cause the advance of any charge if present representing a variation of the reference potential from one zone to the next zone along the series path at each alternation of the voltages;

means for enabling incident photons to impinge upon the semiconductive wafer to cause in response to the photon intensity adjacent the charge storage means localized variations from the reference potential, said localized variations representing signal information corresponding to the local photon intensity; and detection means for the potential variations coupled to the localized zone at the end of the said series path, whereby upon application of the clock voltages the signal information can be derived from the said detection means in serial fashion.

9. Imaging semiconductor apparatus as set forth in claim 8 wherein the charge storage means are arranged in a row with a single detection means for the row connected to the end of the row, said row being adapted to image and convert to electrical signals a line of incident photons.

10. Imaging semiconductor apparatus as set forth in claim 9 wherein plural rows of charge storage means are provided each with a single detection means at the end of each row.

11. Imaging semiconductor apparatus as set forth in claim 8 and including means for applying the clock voltages over a relatively small time interval compared with the time interval during which photons impinge upon the wafer.

12. A charge transfer imaging device comprising:

a charge storage medium;

an insulating layer covering the charge storage medium;

a plurality of electrode field plates disposed on the insulating layer and overlying spaced sites within the charge storage medium wherein charge can be stored when appropriate electrical bias is applied to the field plates, said charge storage sites forming a series path along the medium, said electrode field plates being spaced along the insulating layer with each contiguous to at least two other field plates such that with appropriate electrical bias applied to said electrode field plates electrical charge can be made to pass controllably through the medium between selected charge storage sites and ultimately to an output located at the end of the series path and capable of converting charge to an electrical signal;

13

photo-sensitive means each associated with one of the charge storage sites and capable in response to incident photons to cause a variation in charge stored at the associated site;

means for enabling incident photons to impinge upon the photosensitive means; and

means for applying cyclically varying voltages to the electrode field plates, said voltages being such as to establish at one set of non-contiguous storage sites the appropriate bias for storing charge and to establish in another set of different storage sites the appropriate bias for transferring charge therein to said one set and upon subsequently varying the bias for transferring charge from said one set to said other set and thus along the series path of storage sites to the output, whereby from the output can be derived a serial electrical signal representative of the photon-varied charge condition of the plurality of charge storage sites along the series path.

13. A charge transfer imaging device as set forth in claim 12 wherein the plurality of charge storage sites form an array of m rows of n charge storage sites per row, each row being formed by a series path and being terminated by a single output, means coupled to the output of each row for deriving a serial electrical signal representative of a line of incident photons, and means for operating the device to provide in serial fashion the electrical signals derived from the m rows to provide a video signal of the photon intensity of an image incident on the array.

14. A charge transfer imaging device comprising a body having a semiconductor surface layer, an insulating layer over the semiconductor surface layer, a plurality of linearly-arranged electrode field plates disposed over the insulating layer, said electrode field plates being divided into at least first and second sets of non-contiguous plates, a source of cyclically varying voltages, means for applying the cyclically varying voltages to the first and second sets such that the plate sets vary in voltage between first and second values which when applied to a plate are capable of establishing in an underlying portion of the semiconductor layer a site whereat electrical charge can be stored, said charge storage sites formed under the first and second plate sets being linearly arranged, said charge storage sites comprising a depletion layer and having a reference potential in the absence of incident photons, means for imaging a line of an object onto the device whereby the photons incident thereon cause a variation representative of the photon intensity from the reference

14

value in the potential at charge storage sites along a line, and output means coupled to a storage site at the end of the line and capable of converting a variation in potential into an electrical signal, the voltage applied to one set of field plates being different than that applied to the other set of field plates whereby during the first voltage value charge representative of a potential variation is caused to flow through the semiconductor layer toward the output between storage sites located under the first plate set and during the second voltage value charge representative of a potential variation is caused to flow through the semiconductor layer toward the output between storage sites located under the second plate set and so on, whereby localized potential variations at storage sites are transferred along the line and thus from the output can be derived an electrical signal representative of photon-varied charge conditions.

15. A charge transfer imaging device as claimed in claim 14 and further comprising plural lines of linearly-arranged electrode field plates defining plural lines of charge storage sites to form a two-dimensional array of lines.

16. A charge transfer imaging device as claimed in claim 15, wherein a common output means is coupled to the two-dimensional array of lines.

References Cited

The following references, cited by the Examiner, are of record in the patented file of this patent or the original patent.

UNITED STATES PATENTS

3,172,043	3/1965	Altman	328—55
3,390,273	6/1968	Weckler	317—235
3,446,973	5/1969	Springer	307—311
3,471,711	10/1969	Poschenrieder et al.	328—37
3,546,490	12/1970	Sangster	328—55
2,991,374	7/1961	Miranda et al.	307—221 R
3,473,032	10/1969	Lehovec	317—235

OTHER REFERENCES

Electronics, "Charge Storage Lights the Way for Solid State Image Sensors" by Weckler, May 1967, pp. 75—79.

JERRY D. CRAIG, Primary Examiner

U.S. Cl. X.R.

307—221 D, 304; 178—7.1; 317—235 G, 235 N

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

Patent No. Re. 27951 Dated March 26, 1974

Inventor(s) Kees Teer and Frederik Leonard Johan Sangster

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent
and that said Letters Patent are hereby corrected as shown below:

Column 4, line 72, change "which" to -- while --.

Column 10, line 39, change "initial" to -- internal --.

Signed and sealed this 27th day of August 1974.

(SEAL)
Attest:

MCCOY M. GIBSON, JR.
Attesting Officer

C. MARSHALL DANN
Commissioner of Patents