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(54) Title: STATIC DISSIPATIVE LAYER SYSTEM AND METHOD

(57) Abstract: An apparatus, system, and method is provided including a plurality of test pins, a static dissipative layer having a plurality of openings, and a plurality of support features coupled to the static dissipative layer to movably support the static dissipative layer at a first and a second relative position. The support features enable the static dissipative layer to make initial contact with terminals of a component to be tested to discharge static, if any, built up at the terminals of the component while the static dissipative layer is supported at the first relative position. The support features also enable the static dissipative layer to expose the test pins through the openings to make contact with the terminals of the component after the static dissipative layer had made initial contact with the terminals of the component at the first relative position.



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STATIC DISSIPATIVE LAYER SYSTEM AND METHOD

Technical Field

5 [0001] Embodiments of the present invention relate to the field of electrical component testing, and more specifically, to a static dissipative layer (SDL) that can be used with an electrical component testing apparatus, a method and a system.

Background

10 [0002] Charges can be generated and can accumulate on a component, or a device under test (DUT), from sources such as the nozzles, suction cups, or pick-up mechanisms, on automatic handling equipment used to move the DUTs. Abrupt or rapid electrical discharge may be referred to as an electrostatic discharge (ESD) event, and may occur when the charged DUT contacts the test
15 pins in the test interface unit (TIU). Persistent, or singular, ESD events can cause catastrophic and/or latent failures of the DUT. ESD events can also negatively impact the quality and reliability of the device.

[0003] As the number of terminals on electrical components increases, the number of, and the severity of, ESD events typically increases. As components
20 get more complex the number of terminals typically increases.

[0004] Proposed solutions to this problem include installing air ionizers in the testing environment, or using test pins with retractable static dissipative caps. However, each of these proposed solutions have problems. ESD events may happen so quickly that it is typically not possible for ionizers to completely
25 neutralize a charge that may have accumulated on the device to be tested. Static dissipative test pins are expensive.

Brief Description of the Drawings

[0005] Embodiments of the present invention will be readily understood by
30 the following detailed description in conjunction with the accompanying drawings. To facilitate this description, like reference numerals designate like structural elements. Embodiments of the invention are illustrated by way of example and not by way of limitation in the figures of the accompanying drawings.

[0006] FIG. 1a is a cross sectional view illustrating an apparatus in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention;

[0007] FIG. 1b is a detailed cross sectional view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 1a illustrating the apparatus in a first relative position;

5 [0008] FIG. 1c is a detailed cross sectional view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 1a illustrating the apparatus in a second relative position;

[0009] FIG. 2a is a cross sectional view illustrating an apparatus in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention;

10 [0010] FIG. 2b is a detailed cross sectional view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 2a illustrating the apparatus in a first relative position;

[0011] FIG. 2c is a detailed cross sectional view of the embodiment shown in FIG. 2a illustrating the apparatus in a second relative position;

[0012] FIG. 3 is a top view of the static dissipative layer 114 illustrated in FIG. 2a;

15 [0013] FIG. 4a is a detailed cross sectional view illustrating an apparatus in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention in a first relative position;

[0014] FIG. 4b is a detailed cross sectional view illustrating the apparatus illustrated in FIG. 4a in a second relative position;

20 [0015] FIG. 5 is a detailed cross sectional view illustrating an apparatus in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention;

[0016] FIG. 6 is a cross sectional view illustrating an apparatus in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention;

25 [0017] FIG. 7 illustrates a partial schematic and partial block diagram of a system in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention;

[0018] FIG. 8 is a flow diagram illustrating a method in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention; and

[0019] FIG. 9 is a flow diagram illustrating a method in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention.

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Detailed Description of Illustrative Embodiments of the Invention

[0020] In the following detailed description, reference is made to the accompanying drawings which form a part hereof wherein like numerals designate

like parts throughout, and in which is shown by way of illustration embodiments in which the invention may be practiced. It is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and structural or logical changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention. Therefore, the following detailed description is not to be taken in a limiting sense, and the scope of embodiments in accordance with the present invention is defined by the appended claims and their equivalents.

[0021] Various operations may be described as multiple discrete operations in turn, in a manner that may be helpful in understanding embodiments of the present invention; however, the order of description should not be construed to imply that these operations are order dependent.

[0022] The description may use perspective-based descriptions such as up/down, back/front, and top/bottom. Such descriptions are merely used to facilitate the discussion and are not intended to restrict the application of embodiments of the present invention.

[0023] For the purposes of the present invention, the phrase "A/B" means A or B. For the purposes of the present invention, the phrase "A and/or B" means "(A), (B), or (A and B)." For the purposes of the present invention, the phrase "at least one of A, B, and C" means "(A), (B), (C), (A and B), (A and C), (B and C), or (A, B and C)." For the purposes of the present invention, the phrase "(A)B" means "(B) or (AB)," that is A is an optional element.

[0024] The description may use the phrases "in an embodiment," or "in embodiments," which may each refer to one or more of the same or different embodiments. Furthermore, the terms "comprising," "including," "having," and the like, as used with respect to embodiments of the present invention, are synonymous.

[0025] **FIG. 1a** is a cross sectional view, and **FIGS. 1b** and **1c** are detailed cross sectional views illustrating various embodiments of the invention. As shown, for the embodiments, an apparatus **10** may include a plurality of test pins **12**, and a static dissipative layer **14** having a plurality of openings **16**. A plurality of support features **18** may be coupled to the static dissipative layer **14** to movably support the static dissipative layer **14**, at a first relative position **20** as illustrated in **FIG. 1b**, and at a second relative position **22** as illustrated in **FIG. 1c**. The static

dissipative layer **14** may make initial contact with terminals **24** of a component **26** to be tested, at for example contact points **28**, to discharge static, if any, that may be built up at the terminals **24** of the component **26** while the static dissipative layer **14** is supported at the first relative position **20**, **FIG. 1b**. The support

5 features **18** may also enable the static dissipative layer **14** to expose the test pins **12** through the openings **16** to make contact with the terminals **24** of the component **26** after the static dissipative layer **14** has made initial contact with the terminals **24** of the component **26** at the first relative position **20**. The plurality of openings **16** may be substantially aligned with the test pins **12** when the static
10 dissipative layer **14** is supported at the second relative position **22**, **FIG. 1c**. While in the second relative position **22**, the test pins **12** may make contact with the terminals **24**, and the component **26** may be tested.

[0026] It will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that while in the first relative position **20**, in some embodiments according to the invention, the
15 test pins **12** may not be aligned with the openings **16**.

[0027] The component illustrated in these example embodiments is illustrated to have ball grid array (BGA) terminals **24**. It will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that components having other terminal types may also be used. Various terminal types include land grid array (LGA) and pin grid array
20 (PGA) and are discussed below.

[0028] The plurality of support features **18** may be designed to move the static dissipative layer **14** toward the test pins **12**, or the test **12** pins may be designed to move toward the static dissipative layer **14**. In various embodiments, both the static dissipative layer **14**, and the test pins **12** may be designed to move.

25 [0029] **FIG. 2a** is a cross sectional view, and **FIGS. 2b** and **2c** are detailed cross sectional views illustrating various embodiments of the invention. As shown, for the embodiments, an apparatus **110** may include a plurality of test pins **112**, and a static dissipative layer **114** having a plurality of openings **116**. The apparatus **110** may include a plurality of support features **118** which may be, or
30 may include a bias **119** designed to bias one or both of the static dissipative layer **114** and the test pins **112** toward a first relative position **120**, as illustrated in **FIG. 2b**. The bias **119** may be a spring, for example, a coil spring. In various embodiments, the bias **119** may have a bias force strong enough to support a

component **126**, and in other embodiments, the bias **119** may have a bias force such that the weight of the component may push the static dissipative layer **114** toward the test pins **112**.

[0030] Various of the embodiments having a bias **119** strong enough to support the component **126** may further include a pushing member, illustrated schematically in **FIG. 2a** with an arrow **128**, designed to push the static dissipative layer **114** toward the test pins **112** against the bias **119**. The pushing member may be automated, or manually actuated, and may put the static dissipated layer into a second relative position **122** as illustrated in **FIG. 2c**.

[0031] **FIG. 3** is a top view of the static dissipative layer **114** illustrated in **FIG. 2a**. The static dissipative layer **114** may have tabs **130** extending from opposite edges **132** thereof. For example, the static dissipative layer **114** may have a tab **130** extending from each of the four edges **132** thereof. Returning again to **FIG. 2a**, the apparatus **110** may further comprise a base **134** designed to hold the plurality of test pins **112**. The plurality of support features **118** may include bias members **119**, for example, three springs **119**, disposed between each of the tabs **130**, and the base **134** designed to bias the static dissipative layer **114** and the plurality of test pins **112** toward the first relative position **120** illustrated in **FIG. 2b**.

[0032] Various embodiments may include various numbers and placements of bias members, including no bias members. Various embodiments may provide direct interconnection and movement between the static dissipative layer **114** and the test pins **112** with, for example, gearing and/or servo motors, or the like.

[0033] Various embodiments may include a static dissipative layer **114** having a plurality of openings **116** which may be shaped as inverted frustocones. The frustoconical shape may provide good contact at one end of the openings **116** of the static dissipative layer **114** with the terminals **124** of an electrical component **126**. The frustoconical shape may also provide ample clearance within the openings **116** for the test pins **112** to move unobstructed. The embodiments illustrated may include a static dissipative layer **114** with a plurality of protrusions **140** adjacent the plurality of openings **116** designed to contact the terminals **124** to dissipate a static charge, if present, from the terminals. The protrusions **140** may each include edges **142** designed to contact the respective terminals **124**.

The edges **142** may tend to cut through an oxidation layer, or other material, if any, that may be on the terminals **124**.

[0034] Various embodiments may be constructed by forming protrusions **140** on the static dissipative layer **114** and then forming openings **116** disposed through the protrusions **140**.

[0035] In various embodiments the static dissipative layer **114** may be coupled with a ground. The ground may be the ground of a test circuit designed to test the component.

[0036] **FIG. 4a** and **FIG. 4b** are detailed cross sectional views illustrating various embodiments of the invention. As shown, for the embodiments, an apparatus **210** may include a plurality of test pins **112**, and a static dissipative layer **114** having a plurality of openings **116** similar to the embodiments illustrated in **FIGS. 2a, 2b, and 2c**. The static dissipative layer **114** may also have a plurality of protrusions **140** disposed adjacent the openings **116**, and disposed to make initial contact with the terminals **224** of a device under test, or component **226**. In this illustrated embodiment the component **226** may include land grid array (LGA) terminals **224**. The protrusions **140** may include edges **142** as discussed and may also aid to ensure good contact between the terminals and the static dissipative layer **114**.

[0037] **FIG. 5** is a detailed cross sectional view illustrating various embodiments of the invention. As shown, for the embodiments, a static dissipative layer **114** may have a plurality of protrusions **140** having edges **142** that may provide good contact with terminals **324** of a device under test **326** arranged in a pin grid array (PGA).

[0038] **FIG. 6** is a cross sectional view illustrating various embodiments of the invention. As shown, for the embodiments, an apparatus **410** may include a plurality of test pins **412**, and a static dissipative layer **414** having a plurality of openings **416**. The apparatus **410** may include a plurality of support features **418** which may be, or may include, a bias **419** and guiding features **421**. The guiding features **421** may include mating surfaces and may include notches, or the like, disposed to guide and/or stabilize the static dissipative layer **414** as it moves from a first relative position **420**, as illustrated in **FIG. 6**, or a second relative position (not shown). The bias **419** may be designed to bias one or both of the static

dissipative layer **414** and the test pins **412** toward the first relative position **420**. The bias **419** may be a spring, for example a coil spring, and may be located in an area where test pins are not needed. For example substantially in the center when testing a component **426** with no terminals in a center region thereof. In various embodiments, the bias **419** may have a bias force strong enough to support the component **426**, and in other embodiments, the bias **419** may have a bias force such that the weight of the component may push the static dissipative layer **414** toward the test pins **412**. Other features may be the same or similar to features described in relation to other embodiments described above. Other features may differ and still not depart from the invention.

[0039] FIG. 7 illustrates a partial schematic and partial block diagram of a system **500**, according to another embodiment of the invention, which is just one of many possible systems in which one or more of the earlier described test arrangements may be used. The system **500** may include one or more test arrangements as described herein or others in accordance with embodiments of the invention. This illustrated system **500** may include a tester **502** that may have a socket **504** adapted to receive a component **526** for testing. The socket **504** may have a plurality of test pins **512** at least partially housed therein. A static dissipative layer **514** may have a plurality of openings **516**. A plurality of support features **518** may be coupled to the static dissipative layer **514** to movably support the static dissipative layer **514** at a first and a second relative position, to enable the static dissipative layer **514** to make initial contact with terminals **524** of the component **526** to be tested to discharge static, if any, built up at the terminals of the component while the static dissipative layer is supported at the first relative position. The support features **518** may be designed to enable the static dissipative layer **514** to expose the test pins **512** through the openings **516** to make contact with the terminals **524** of the component **526** after the static dissipative layer **514** had made initial contact with the terminals **524** of the component **526** at the first relative position. The plurality of openings **516** may be substantially aligned with the test pins **512** when the static dissipative layer **514** is supported at the second relative position. The system **500** may include a power supply unit **550** coupled to the tester **502** to provide DC power to the tester **502**. The power supply unit **550** may be coupled to the tester **502** via a test circuit **552**.

Various other embodiments may use an AC power source. When in the second relative position the component **526** may be tested.

[0040] In this illustrated system **500**, the test circuit **552** may include integrated circuit **554** which may be a processor. The test circuit may be partly or
5 completely contained in or on a printed circuit board (PCB). The PCB may be a motherboard.

[0041] Additionally, system **500** may include a main memory **556** and one or more, for example three, input/output (I/O) modules **558**, **560**, and **562**. These elements including the earlier described integrated circuit **554** may be coupled to
10 each other via a bus **564**. The system **500** may further include a display device **566**, a mass storage device **568**, and an input/output (I/O) device **570** coupled to the bus **564** via respective input/output (I/O) modules **558**, **560**, and **562**.

Examples of the memory include, but are not limited to, static random access memory (SRAM) and dynamic random access memory (DRAM). The memory
15 may also include cache memory. Examples of the display device may include, but are not limited to, a liquid crystal display (LCD), cathode-ray tube (CRT), light-emitting diode (LED), gas plasma, or other image projection technology.

Examples of the mass storage device include, but are not limited to, a hard disk drive, a compact disk (CD) drive, a digital versatile disk (DVD) drive, a floppy
20 diskette, a tape system, and so forth. Examples of the input/output (I/O) devices may include, but are not limited to, devices which may be suitable for communication with a computer user, for example, a keyboard, a mouse, a microphone, a voice recognition device, a display, a printer, speakers, and a scanner. The system may be included within, or include, a cell phone or a
25 personal digital assistant (PDA).

[0042] In various embodiments the system **500** may include a plurality of support features **518** which may include a bias **519** designed to bias one or both of the static dissipative layer **514** and the test pins **512** toward the first relative position.

[0043] In various embodiments the plurality of openings **516** may be inverted frustoconically shaped. The static dissipative layer **514** may have a plurality of protrusions **540** adjacent the plurality of openings **516** designed to contact the terminals **524** to dissipate a static charge, if present, from the

terminals **524**. The static dissipative layer **514** may include a plurality of protrusions designed to contact the terminals **524** on the component **526**. The openings **516** being disposed through the plurality of protrusions **540**.

[0044] In various embodiments the socket **504** may include a base **534** designed to hold the plurality of test pins **512**. The static dissipative layer **514** may have tabs **530** extending from opposite edges thereof, and the plurality of support features **518** may include a bias **519** disposed between each of the tabs **530** and the base **534** biasing the static dissipative layer **514** and the plurality of test pins **512** toward the first relative position.

[0045] In various embodiments the system **500** may include a static dissipative layer **514** coupled with a ground **572** on the test circuit **552** designed to test the component **526**. In various embodiments the static dissipative layer **514** may be coupled with the ground **572** via one or more support features **518**, for example, via the bias **519**.

[0046] **FIG. 8** is a flow diagram illustrating a method in accordance with various embodiments of the invention. The method may include:

placing a component to be tested in a test apparatus having a number of test pins, and a static dissipative layer movably supported over the test pins, where the static dissipative layer makes initial contact with terminals of the component to substantially discharge static, if any, built up at the terminals of the component, before exposing the test pins to contact the terminals of the component, **802**; and

testing the component, **804**.

[0047] As illustrated in **FIG. 9**, in various embodiments, the method illustrated in **FIG. 8** may further comprise:

effecting a movement of one or both of the static dissipative layer toward the test pins **806**; and

allowing the test pins to pass through a plurality of openings in the static dissipative layer **808**; or

raising the test pins through the plurality of openings in the static dissipative layer **810**; and

contacting the terminals **812**.

[0048] In various embodiments, the method may further comprise biasing one or both of the static dissipative layer and the test pins away from each other. In various embodiments, the method may further comprise forming a number of inverted frustoconical openings in the static dissipative layer sized to allow the test pins to pass through and contact the terminals. In various embodiments, the method may further comprise forming a number of protrusions on the static dissipative layer disposed to contact the terminals. In various embodiments, the method may further comprise coupling the static dissipative layer with a ground on a test circuit designed to test the component.

[0049] Although certain embodiments have been illustrated and described herein for purposes of description of the preferred embodiment, it will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that a wide variety of alternate and/or equivalent embodiments or implementations calculated to achieve the same purposes may be substituted for the embodiments shown and described without departing from the scope of the present invention. Those with skill in the art will readily appreciate that embodiments in accordance with the present invention may be implemented in a very wide variety of ways. This application is intended to cover any adaptations or variations of the embodiments discussed herein. Therefore, it is manifestly intended that embodiments in accordance with the present invention be limited only by the claims and the equivalents thereof.

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus comprising:
5 a plurality of test pins;
a static dissipative layer having a plurality of openings; and
a plurality of support features coupled to the static dissipative layer to
movably support the static dissipative layer at a first and a second relative
position, to enable the static dissipative layer to make initial contact with terminals
10 of a component to be tested to discharge static, if any, built up at the terminals of
the component while the static dissipative layer is supported at the first relative
position, and to enable the static dissipative layer to expose the test pins through
the openings to make contact with the terminals of the component after the static
dissipative layer had made initial contact with the terminals of the component at
15 the first relative position, the plurality of openings being substantially aligned with
the test pins when the static dissipative layer is supported at the second relative
position.
2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the plurality of support features include a
20 bias designed to bias one or both of the static dissipative layer and the plurality of
test pins toward the first relative position.
3. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the bias has a bias force strong enough
to support the component, and further comprising a pushing member designed to
25 push the static dissipative layer toward the test pins against the bias.

4. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the bias has a bias force such that the weight of the component pushes the static dissipative layer toward the test pins.

5 5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the plurality of openings are inverted frustoconically shaped.

6. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the static dissipative layer has a plurality of protrusions adjacent the plurality of openings designed to contact the terminals
10 to dissipate a static charge, if present, from the terminals.

7. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a base designed to hold the plurality of test pins, and wherein the static dissipative layer has two tabs extending from opposite edges thereof, and the plurality of support features
15 include a bias member disposed between each of the two tabs and the base biasing the static dissipative layer and the plurality of test pins toward the first relative position.

8. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the static dissipative layer is coupled with
20 a ground on a test circuit designed to test the component.

9. A method comprising:

placing a component to be tested in a test apparatus having a number of test pins, and a static dissipative layer movably supported over the test pins,

25 where the static dissipative layer makes initial contact with terminals of the

component to substantially discharge static, if any, built up at the terminals of the component, before exposing the test pins to contact the terminals of the component; and

testing the component.

5

10. The method of claim 9 further comprising biasing one or both of the static dissipative layer and the test pins away from each other.

11. The method of claim 9 further comprising forming a number of inverted
10 frustoconical openings in the static dissipative layer sized to allow the test pins to pass through and contact the terminals.

12. The method of claim 9 further comprising forming a number of protrusions on the static dissipative layer disposed to contact the terminals.

15

13. The method of claim 9 further comprising coupling the static dissipative layer with a ground on a test circuit designed to test the component.

14. A system comprising:

20 a tester having a socket adapted to receive a component for testing, the socket having a plurality of test pins, a static dissipative layer having a plurality of openings, a plurality of support features coupled to the static dissipative layer to movably support the static dissipative layer at a first and a second relative position, to enable the static dissipative layer to make initial contact with terminals
25 of a component to be tested to discharge static, if any, built up at the terminals of

the component while the static dissipative layer is supported at the first relative position, and to enable the static dissipative layer to expose the test pins through the openings to make contact with the terminals of the component after the static dissipative layer had made initial contact with the terminals of the component at
5 the first relative position, the plurality of openings being substantially aligned with the test pins when the static dissipative layer is supported at the second relative position; and

a power supply unit coupled to the tester to provide DC power to the tester.

10 15. The system of claim 14 wherein the plurality of support features include a bias designed to bias one or both of the static dissipative layer and the plurality of test pins toward the first relative position.

15 16. The system of claim 15 wherein the bias has a bias force strong enough to support the component, and further comprising a pushing member designed to push the static dissipative layer toward the test pins against the bias.

17. The system of claim 14 wherein the plurality of openings are inverted frustoconically shaped.

20

18. The system of claim 14 wherein the static dissipative layer has a plurality of protrusions adjacent the plurality of openings designed to contact the terminals to dissipate a static charge, if present, from the terminals.

19. The system of claim 14 wherein the socket includes a base designed to hold the plurality of test pins, and wherein the static dissipative layer has two tabs extending from opposite edges thereof, and the plurality of support features include a bias member disposed between each of the two tabs and the base
5 biasing the static dissipative layer and the plurality of test pins toward the first relative position.

20. The system of claim 14 wherein the static dissipative layer is coupled with a ground on a test circuit designed to test the component.

10

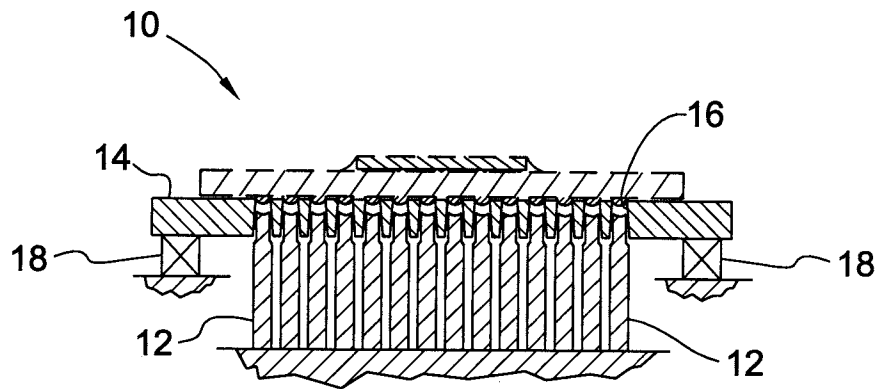


FIG. 1a

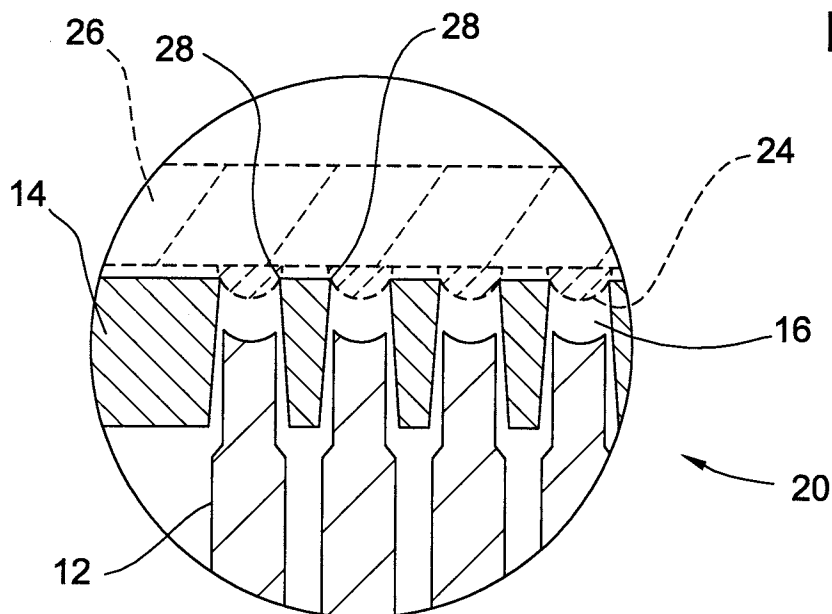


FIG. 1b

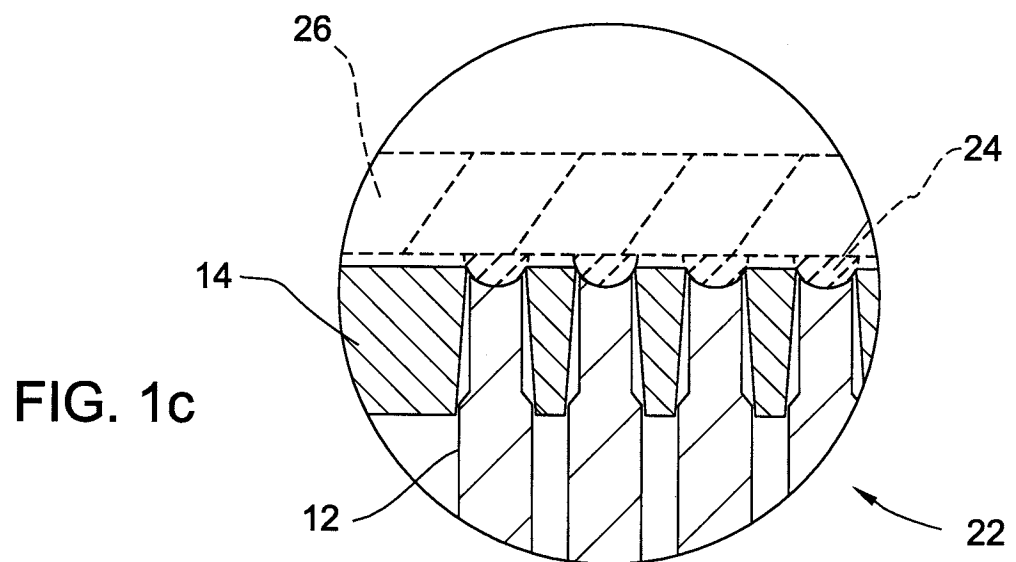


FIG. 1c

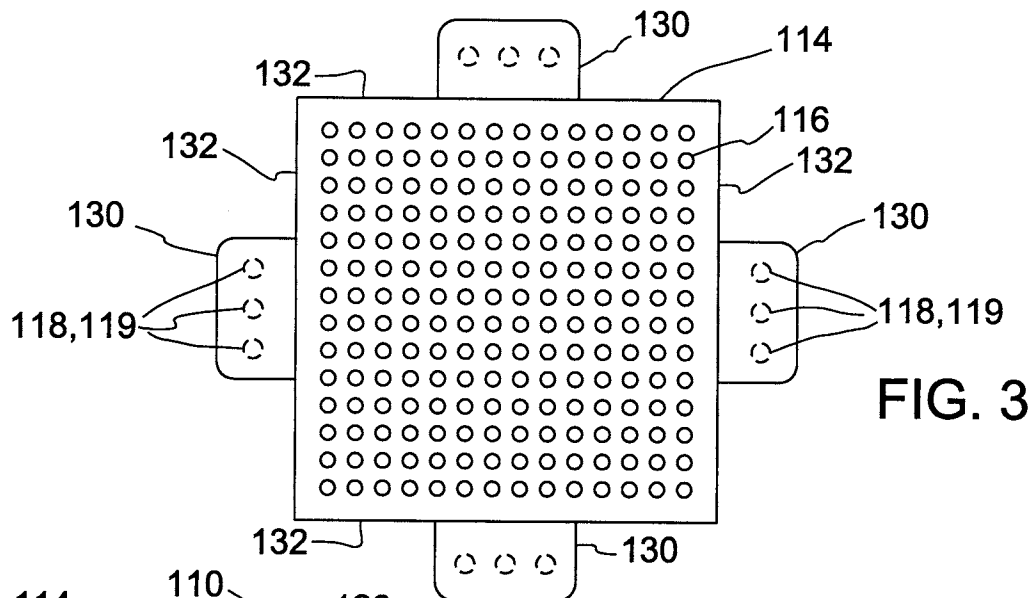


FIG. 3

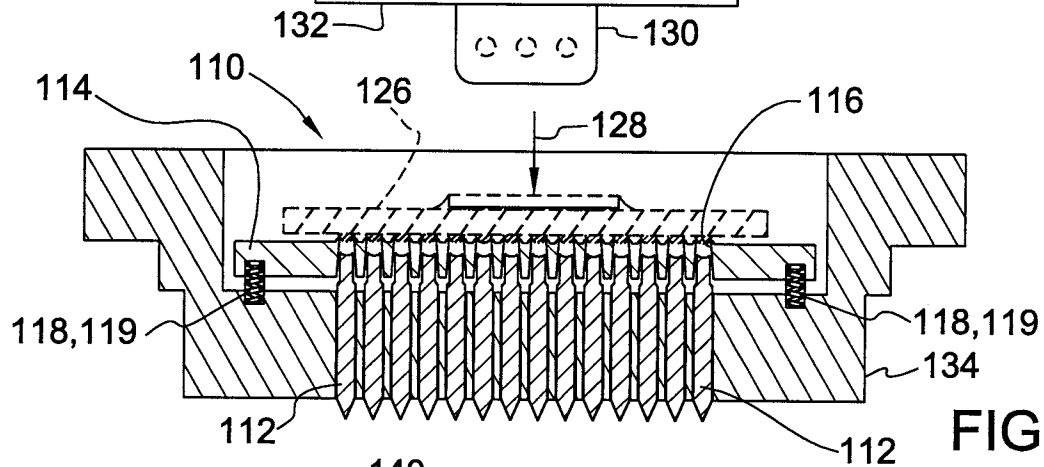


FIG. 2a

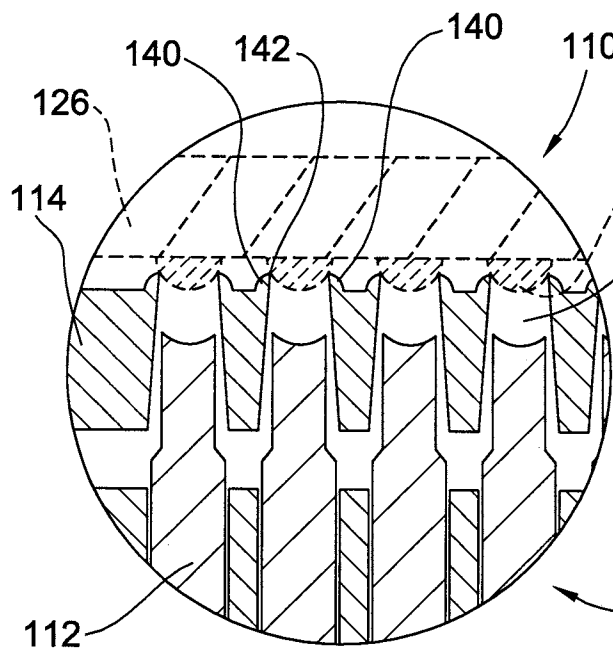


FIG. 2b

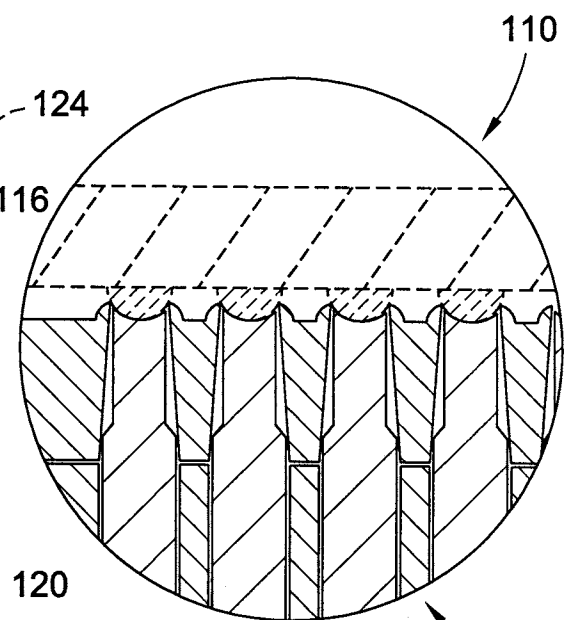
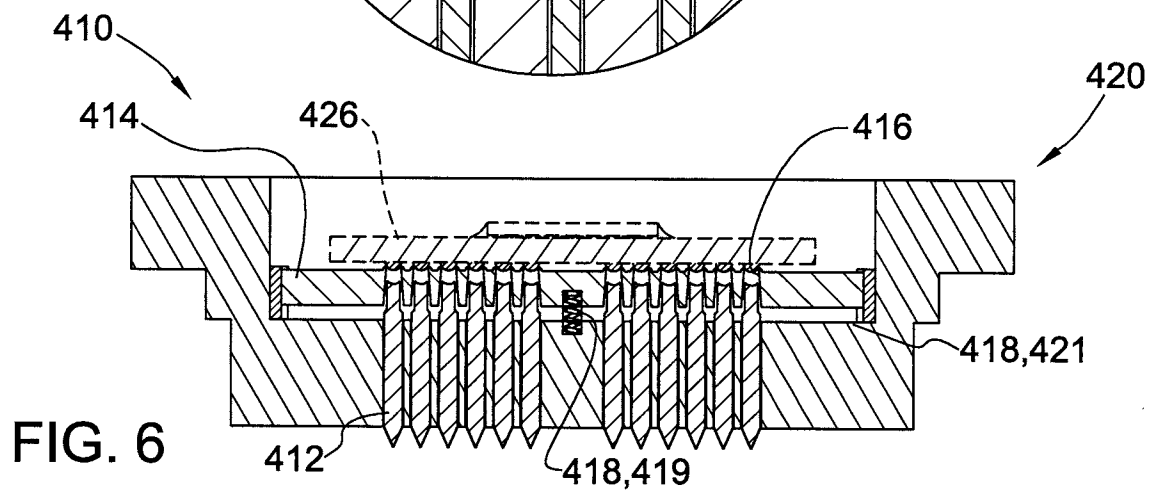
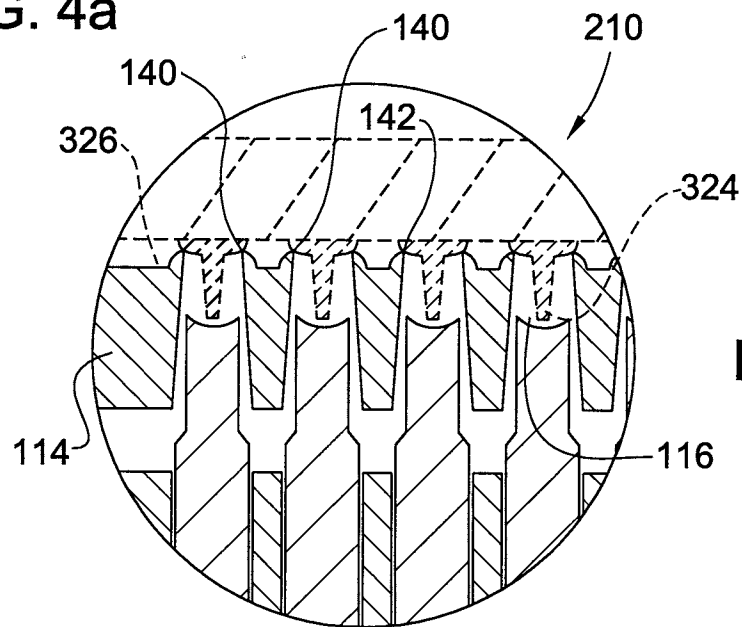
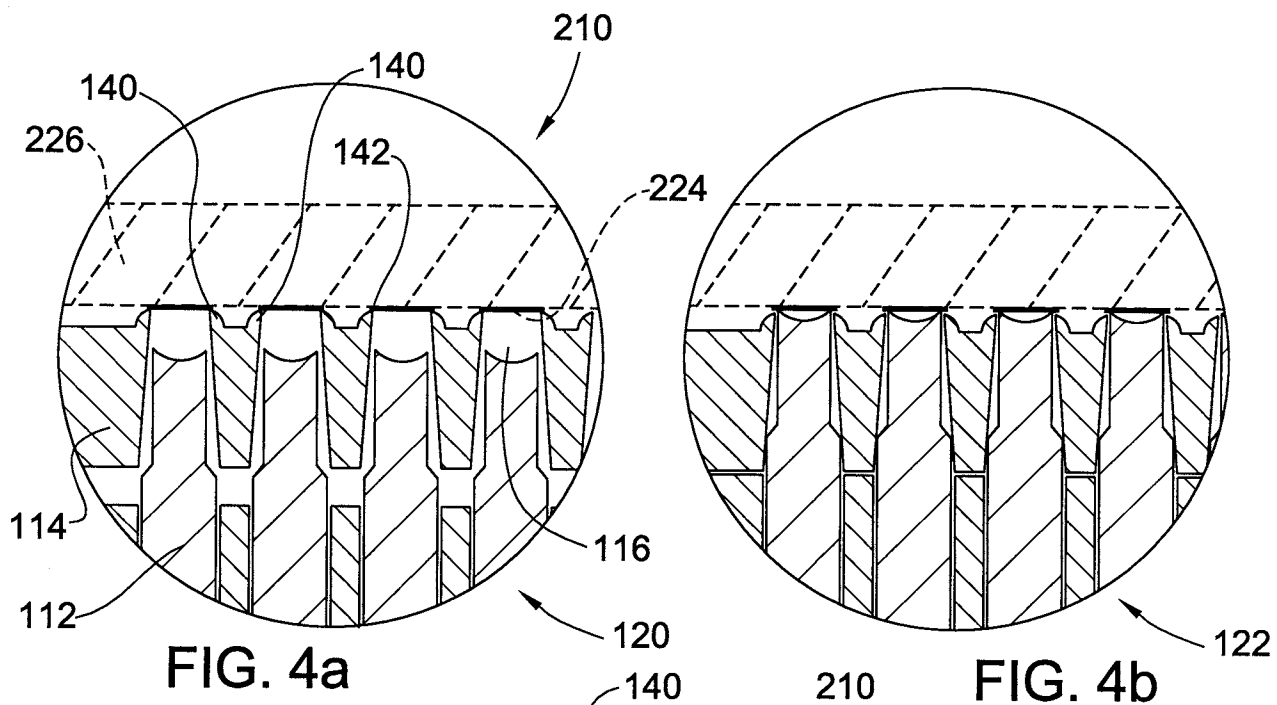


FIG. 2c



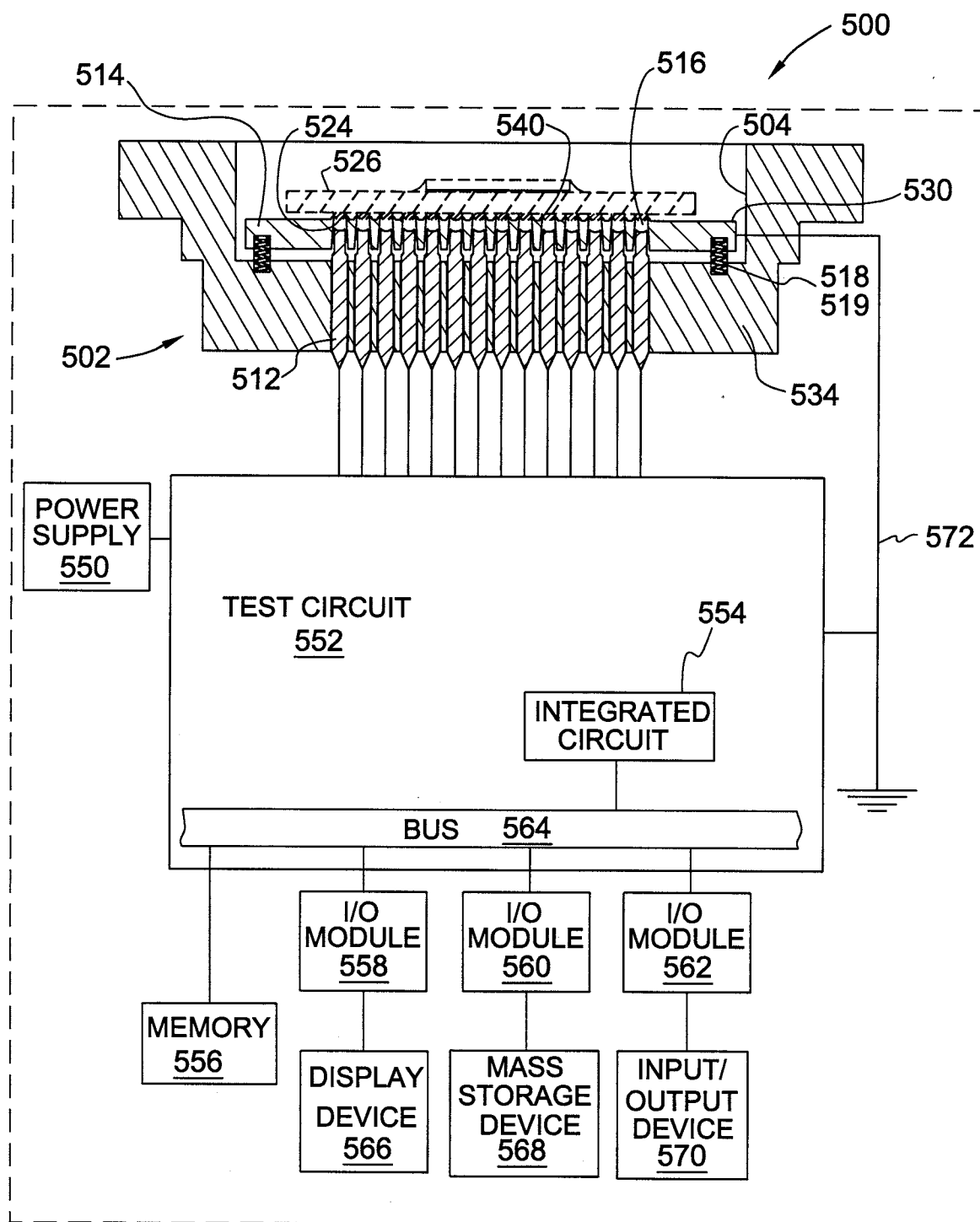


FIG. 7

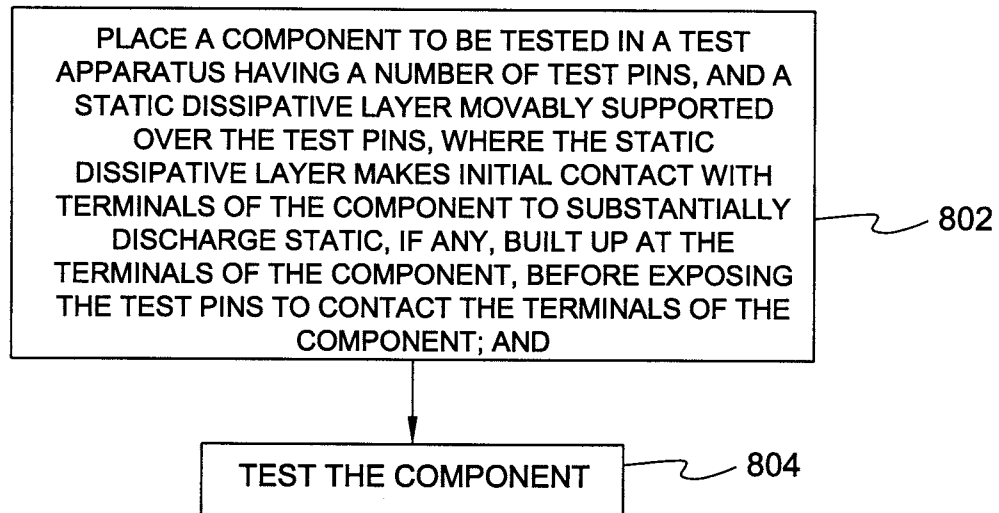


FIG. 8

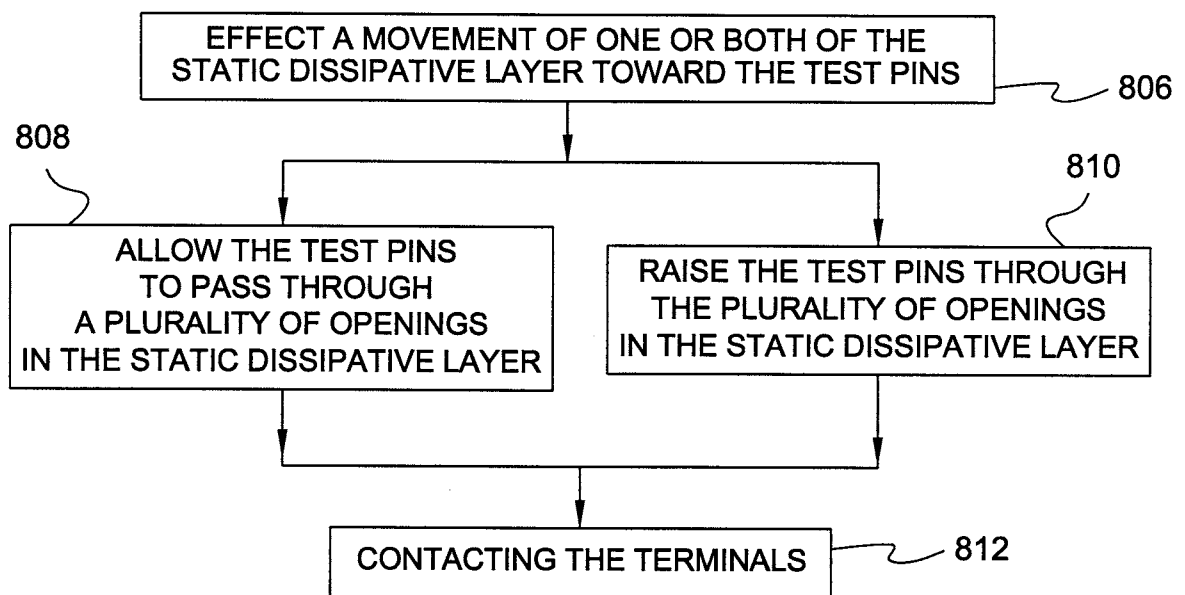


FIG. 9