An Energy-Efficient Analog Front-End Circuit for a Sub-1V Digital Hearing Aid Chip

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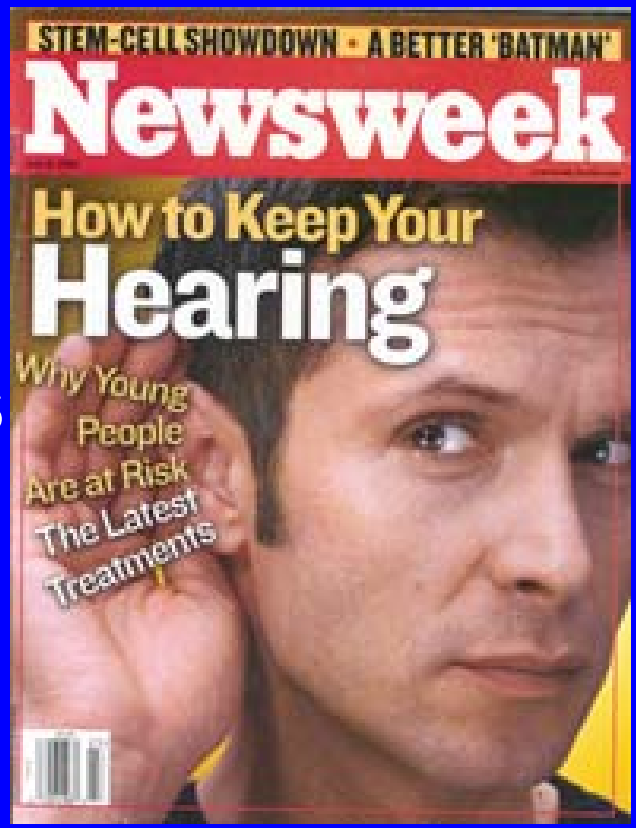
Outline

- Motivation
- Proposed Analog Front-End Circuit
- Building Blocks
  - Preamplifier with combined gain control
  - Σ-Δ Modulator with adaptive-SNR
- Implementation Results
- Conclusions

Motivation

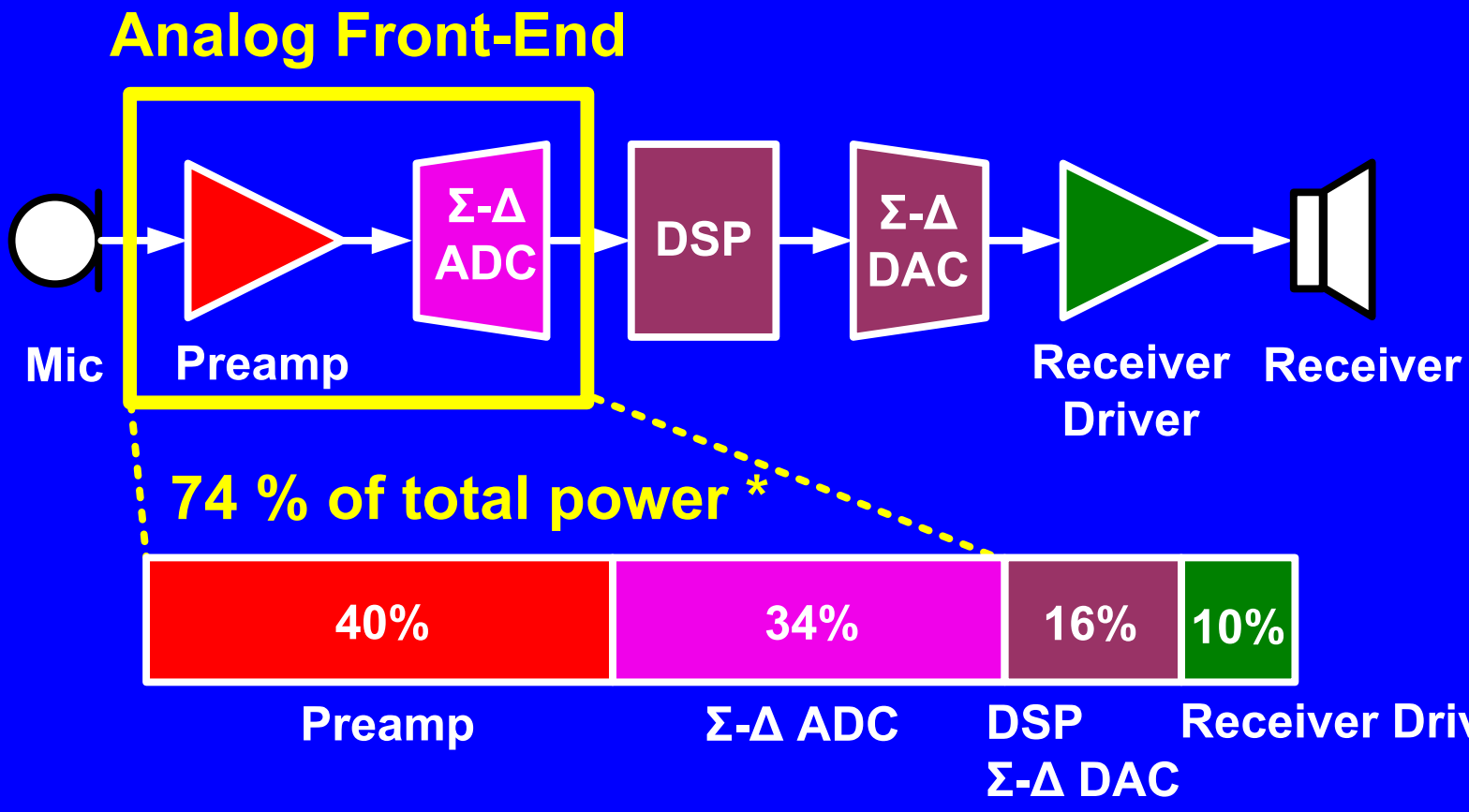
- More and More Needs on Digital Hearing Aid
- More Design Requirements
  - Low-power consumption
  - Small size
  - Programmability
  - Low cost CMOS process



[Newsweek. June 6, 2005]

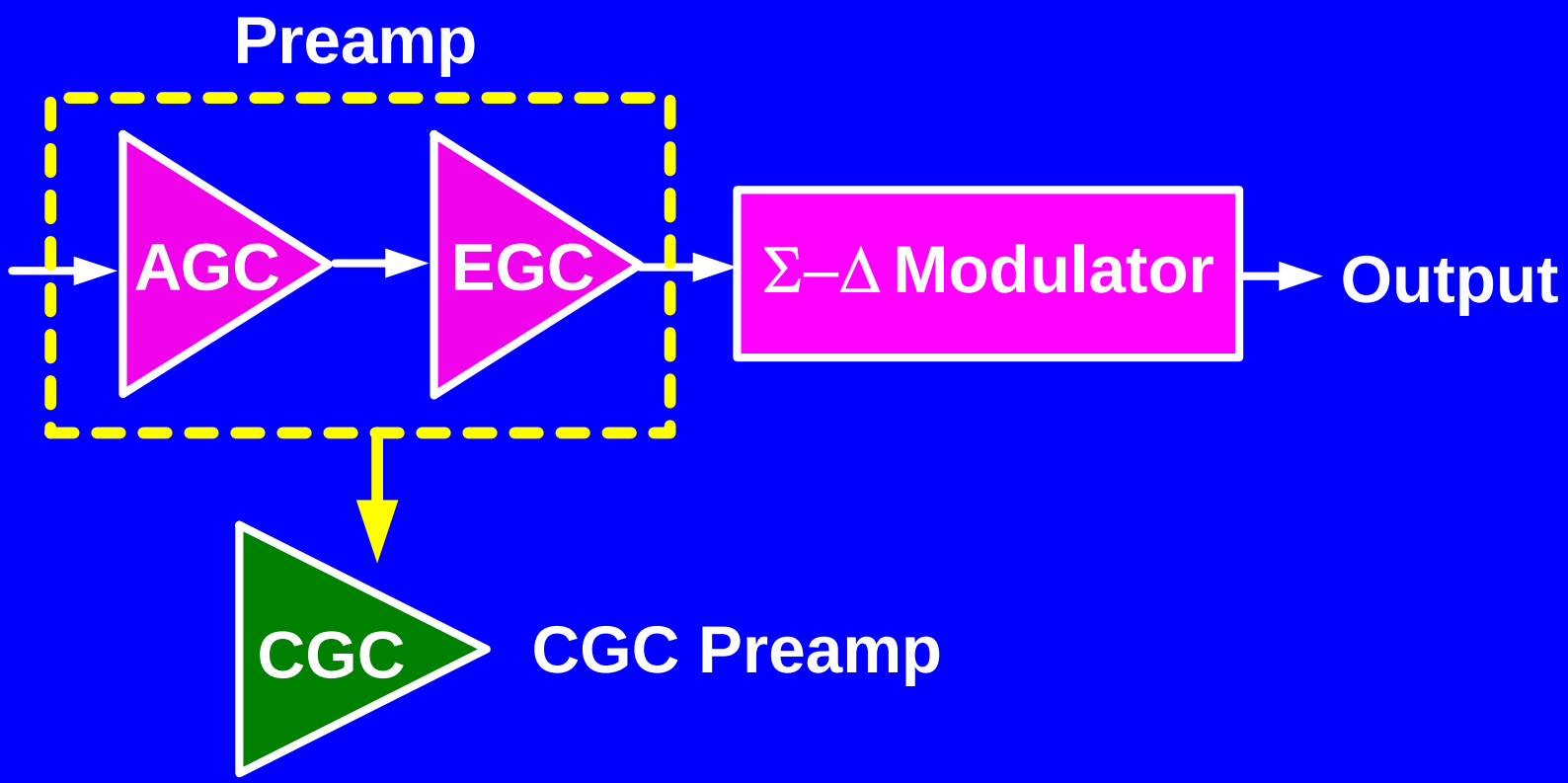
"…more than 28 million Americans have some degree of hearing loss, a number that could reach 78 million by 2030…"

Overview of the Digital Hearing Aid



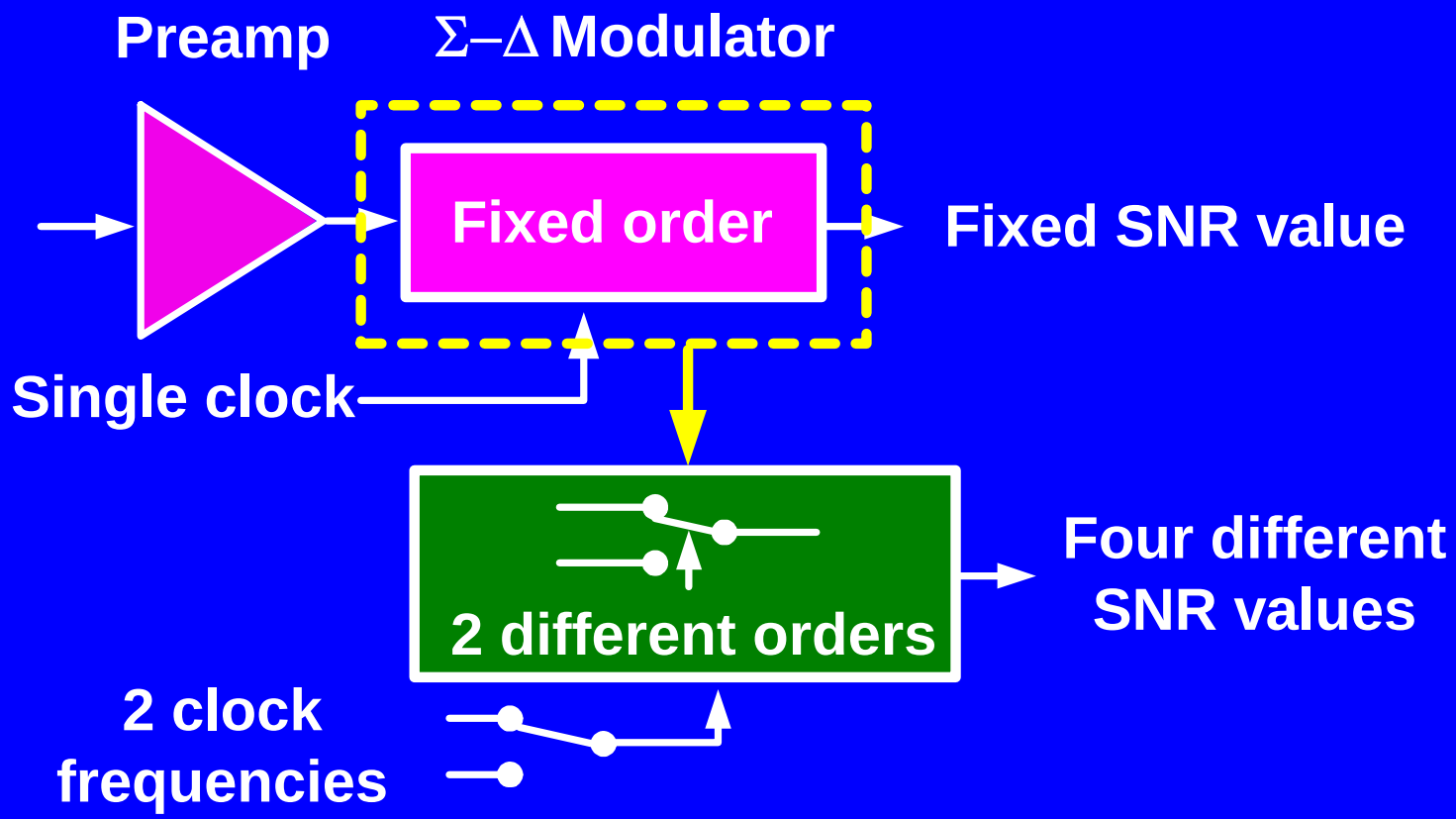
*[ISSCC2002. John W. Fattaruso et.al.]

CGC Preamplifier



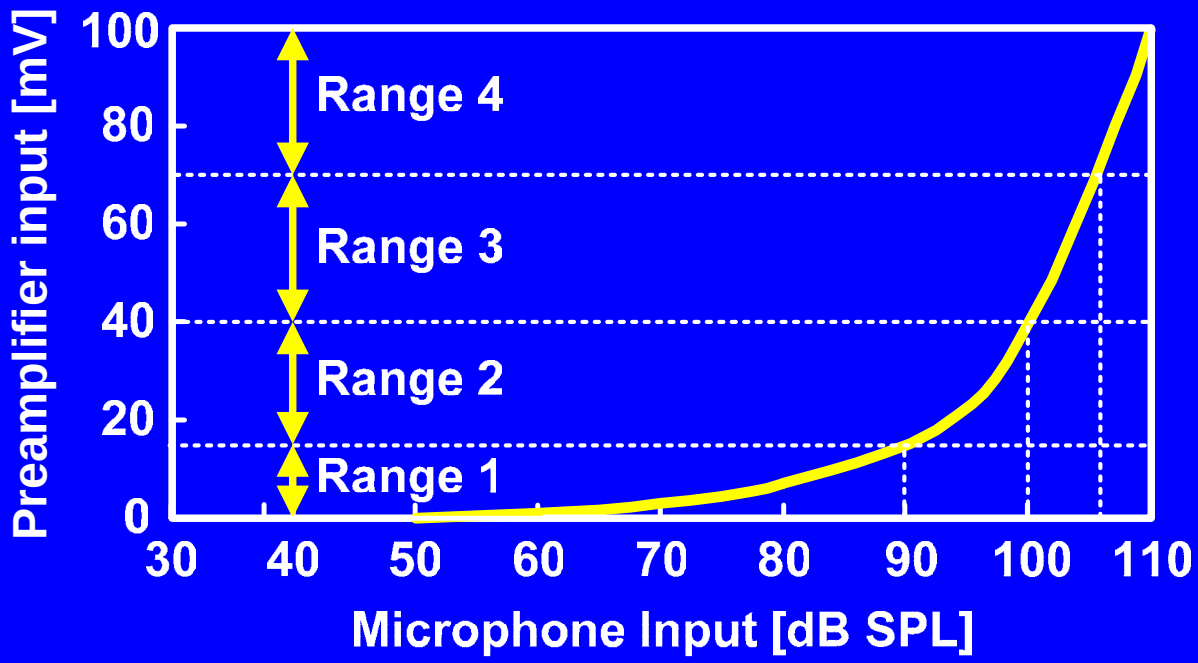
- Low Power Consumption
- Controllability with combined gain control

Adaptive SNR Σ-Δ Modulator



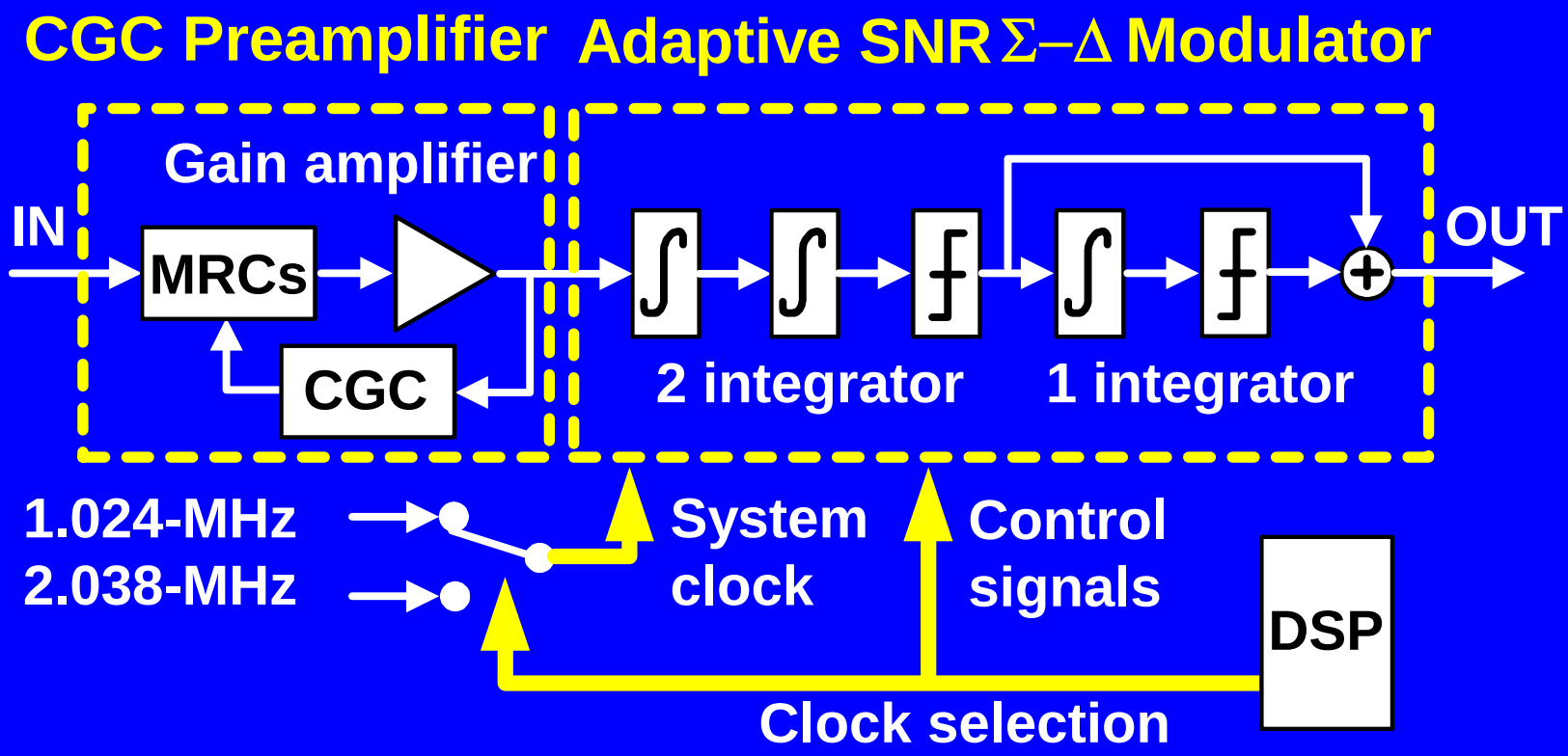
- Multiple SNR values with adaptive SNR

Needs of Adaptive-SNR Values

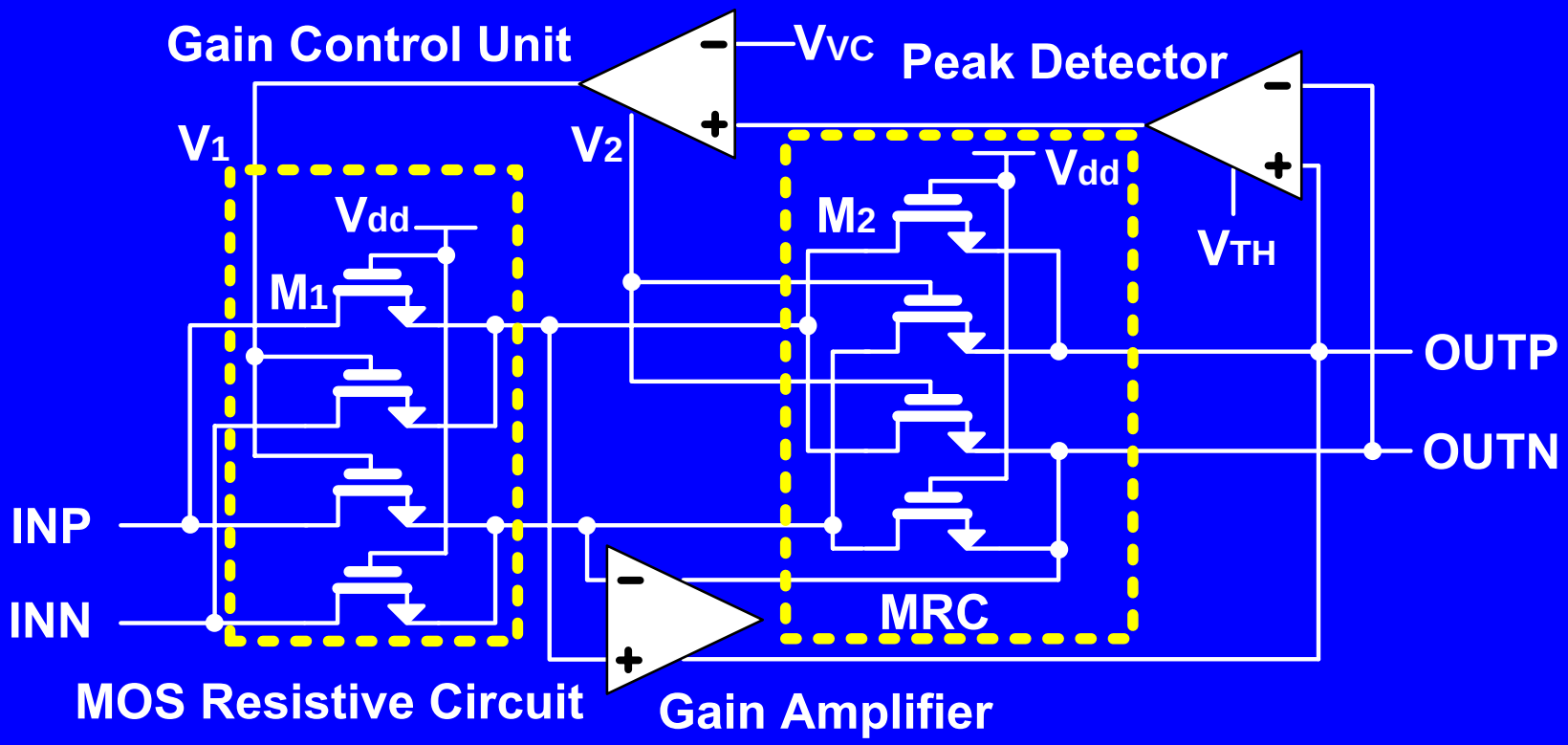


- Normal sound level from 30 to 90-dB SPL
  - High performance Σ-Δ Modulator
- Sufficiently large sound above 90-dB SPL
  - Medium performance Σ-Δ Modulator

Proposed Analog Front-End



CGC Preamplifier



$$Av = \frac{OUT}{IN} = W_1 L_2 \left(1 + \frac{V_x}{V_{dd} - V_{VC}}\right) / W_2 L_1 \left(1 - \frac{V_x}{V_{dd} - V_{VC}}\right) \qquad \begin{aligned} V_1 &= V_{VC} - V_x \\ V_2 &= V_{VC} + V_x \end{aligned}$$

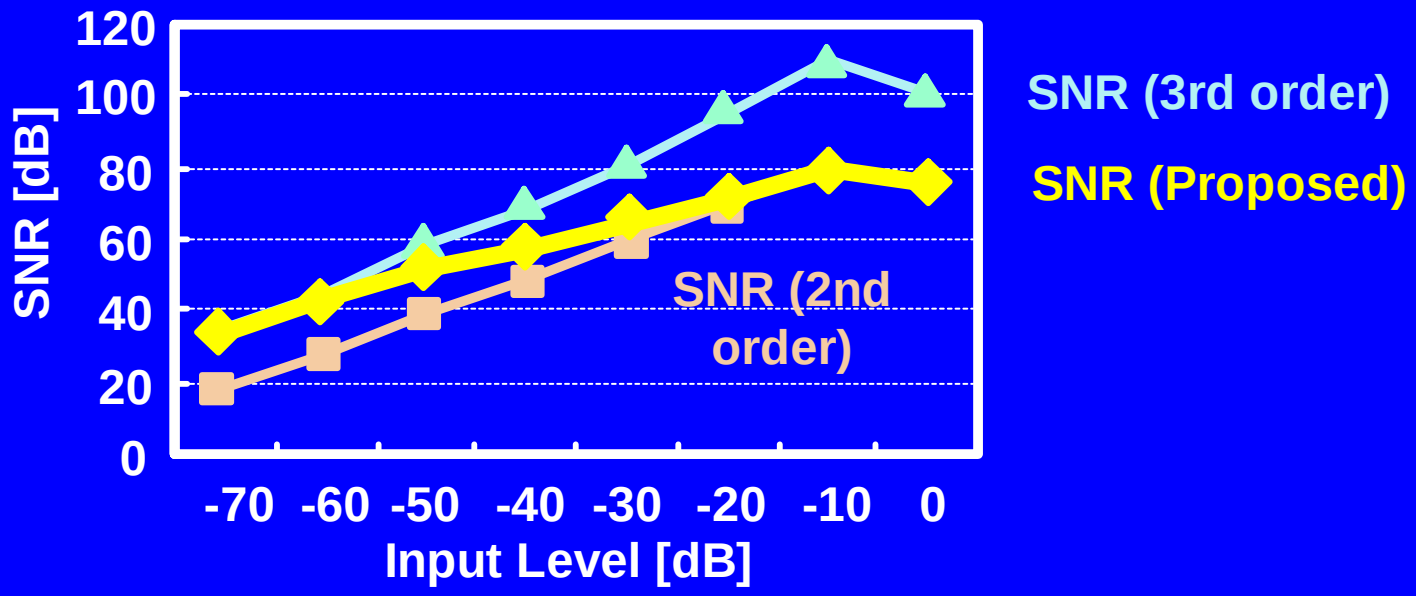
How to obtain multiple SNR values

- **Multiple Clock Frequencies**
  - ☺ Various SNR values with small power consumption
  - ☹ Difficult to design by analog circuit

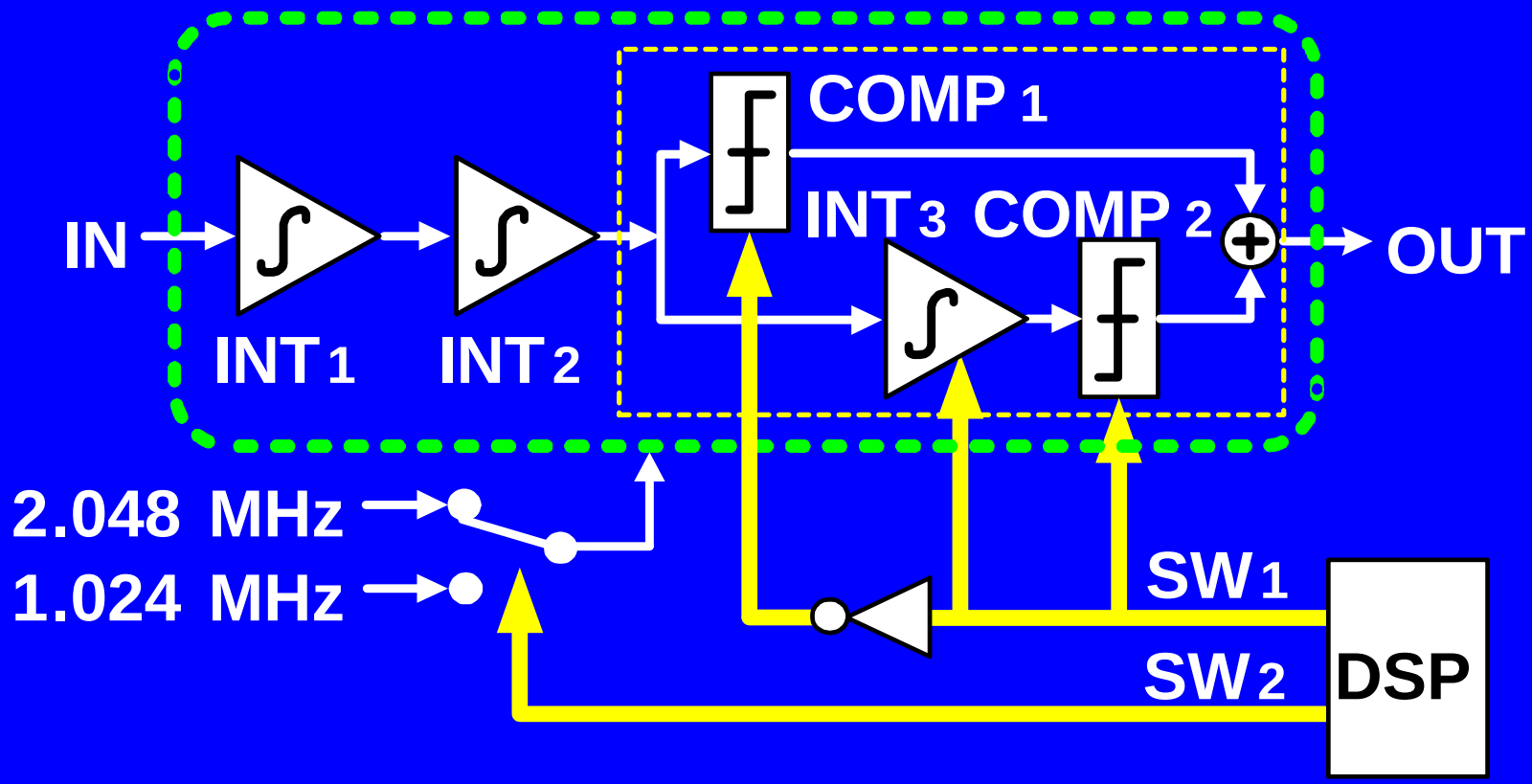
- **Multiple Orders of the Σ-Δ Modulator**
  - ☺ Large SNR variations
  - ☺ High power consumption due to additional OTA
  - ☹ Unstable @ > 3rd order Σ-Δ modulator

Adaptive SNR Σ-Δ Modulator

- **Combine only the strong points of the two methods**
  - ☺ **Variable clocking : 1.024-MHz or 2.048-MHz**
  - ☺ **Various order : 2nd or 3rd order**

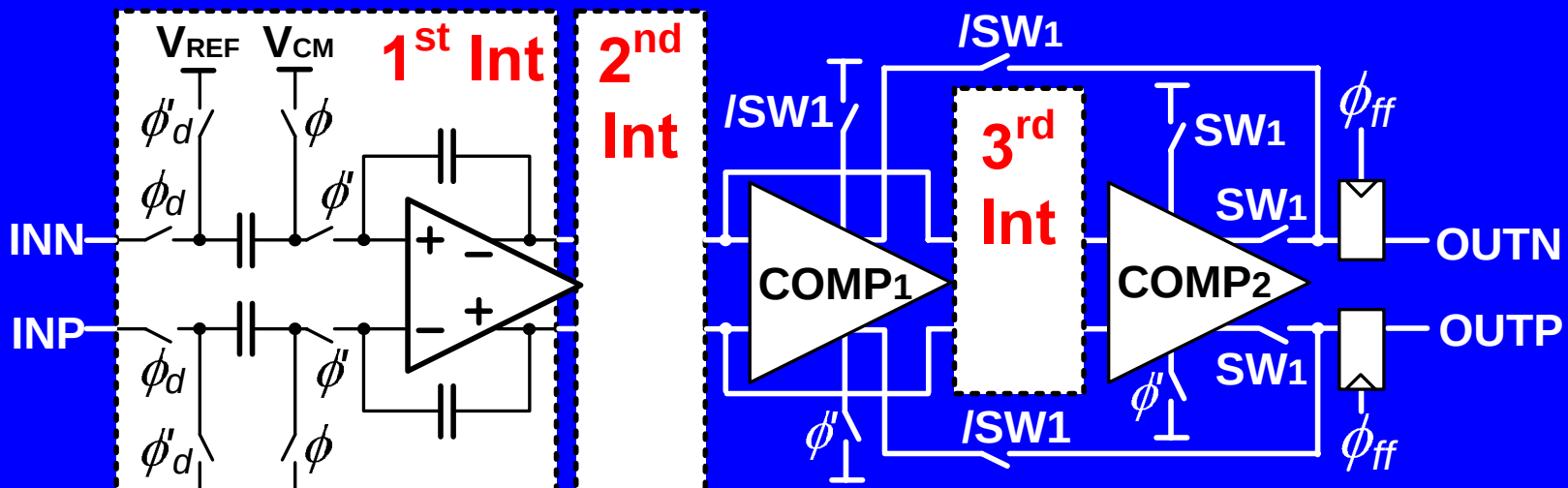


Adaptive SNR



- SW_1 determines the number of integrators (order)
- SW_2 decides the clock frequency

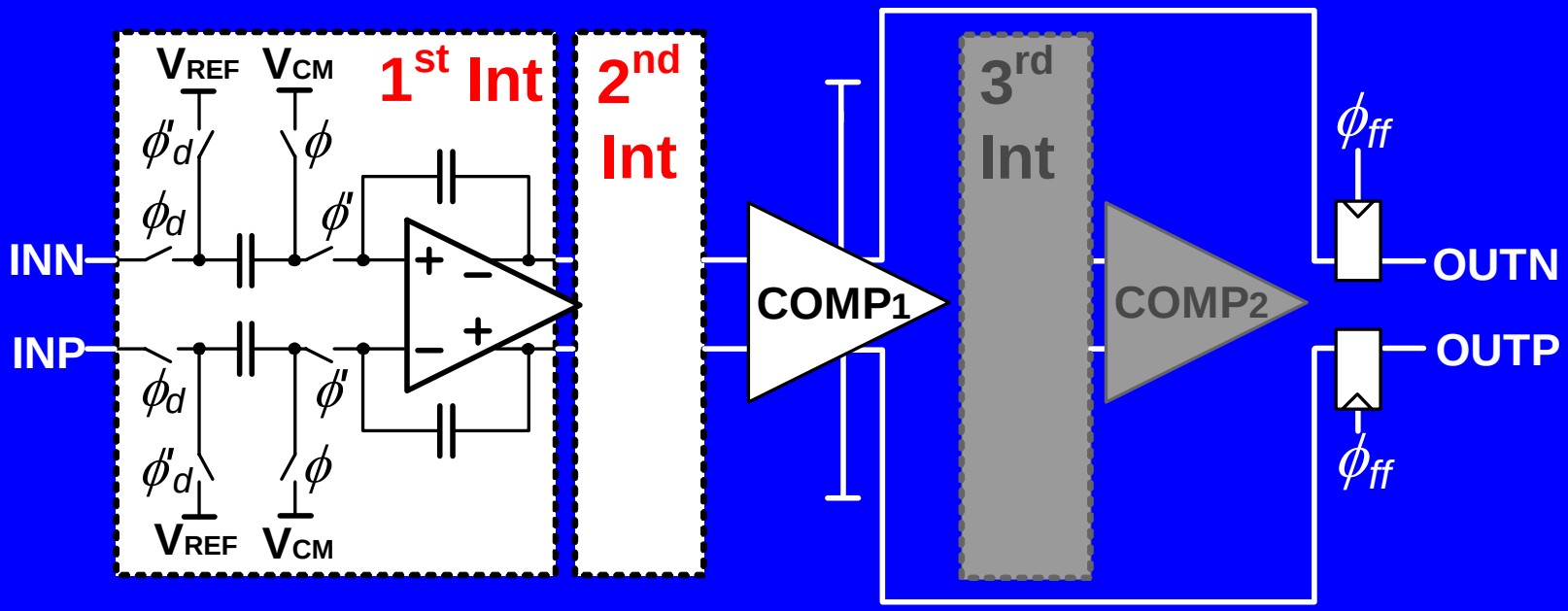
Schematic of Adaptive SNR Σ-Δ Modulator



	Type1	Type2	Type3	Type4
SW1	off	off	on	on
SW2	off	on	off	on

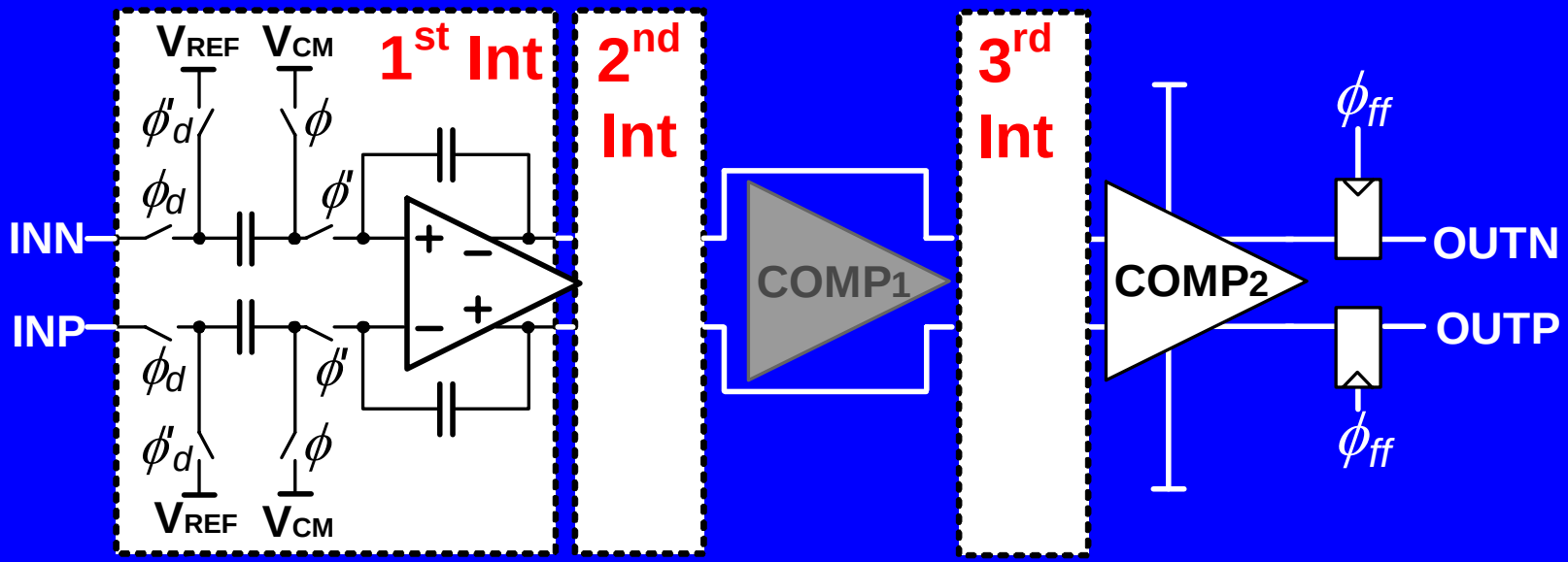
- The combination of SW_1 and SW_2 allows the Σ-Δ modulator to obtain four kinds of SNR

2nd order Σ-Δ Modulator



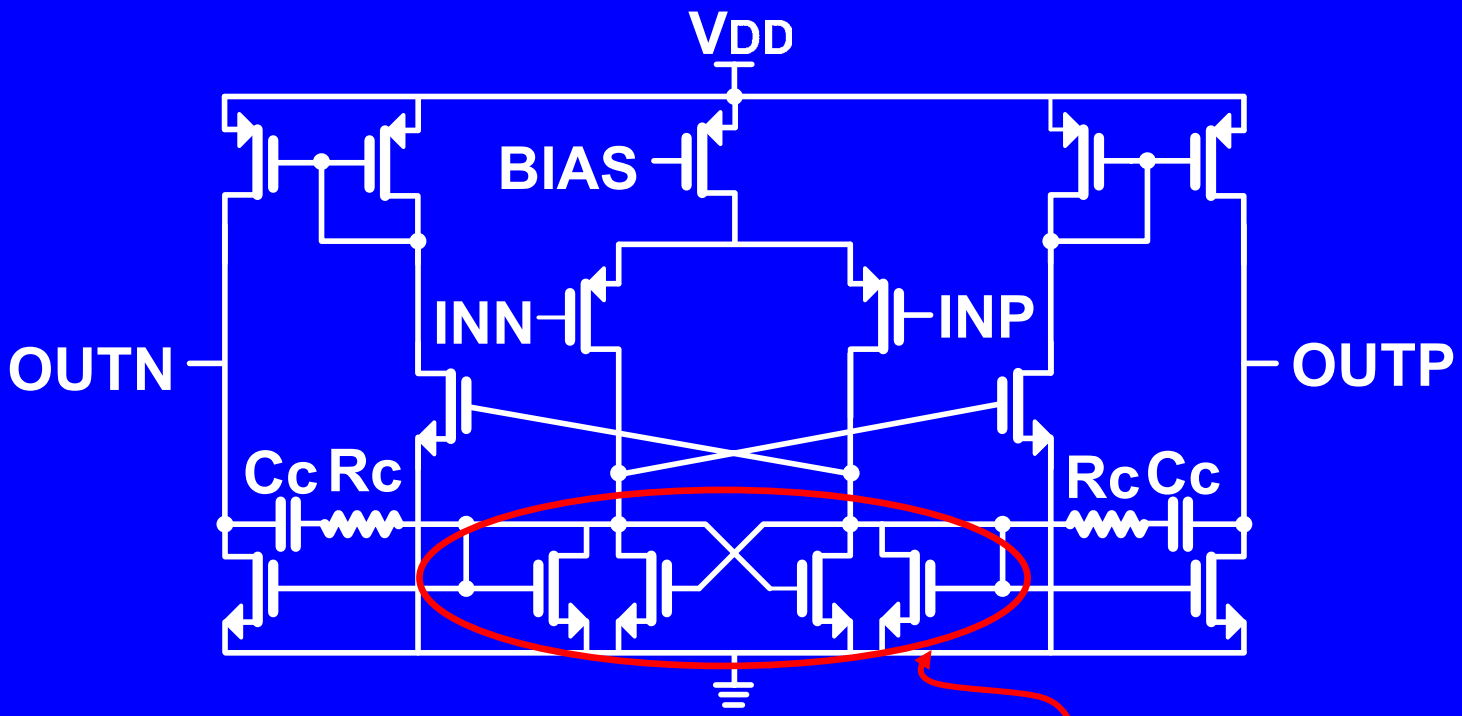
- 2nd order Σ-Δ modulator when the /SW$_1$ is closed

3rd order Σ-Δ Modulator



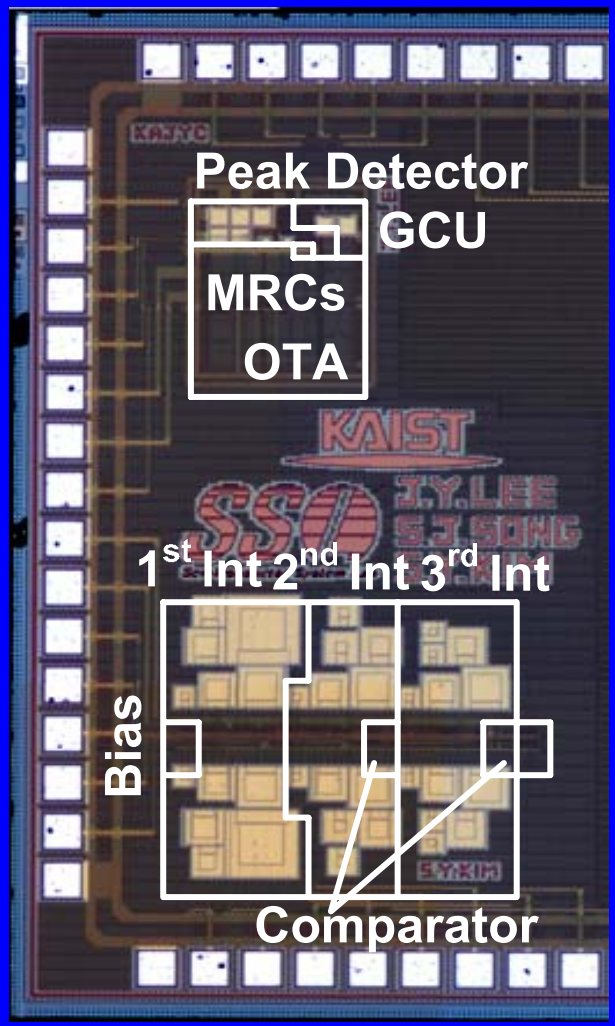
- 3rd order Σ-Δ modulator when the /SW$_2$ is opened

Low Power OTA



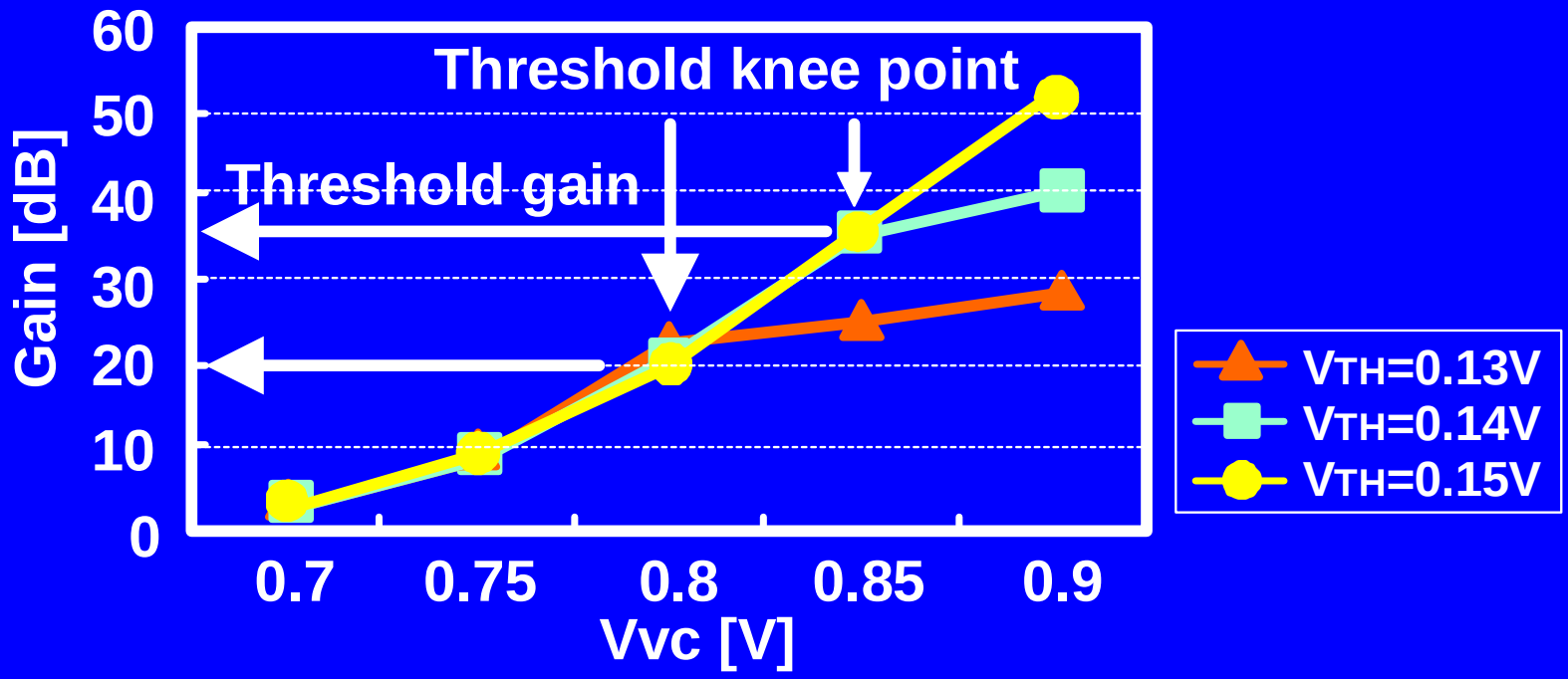
- DC gain : 77.6-dB
- Unity gain bandwidth : 7.07-MHz
- Phase margin : 55˚ @ 3-pF load
- Power Consumption : 15-μW

Chip Microphotograph



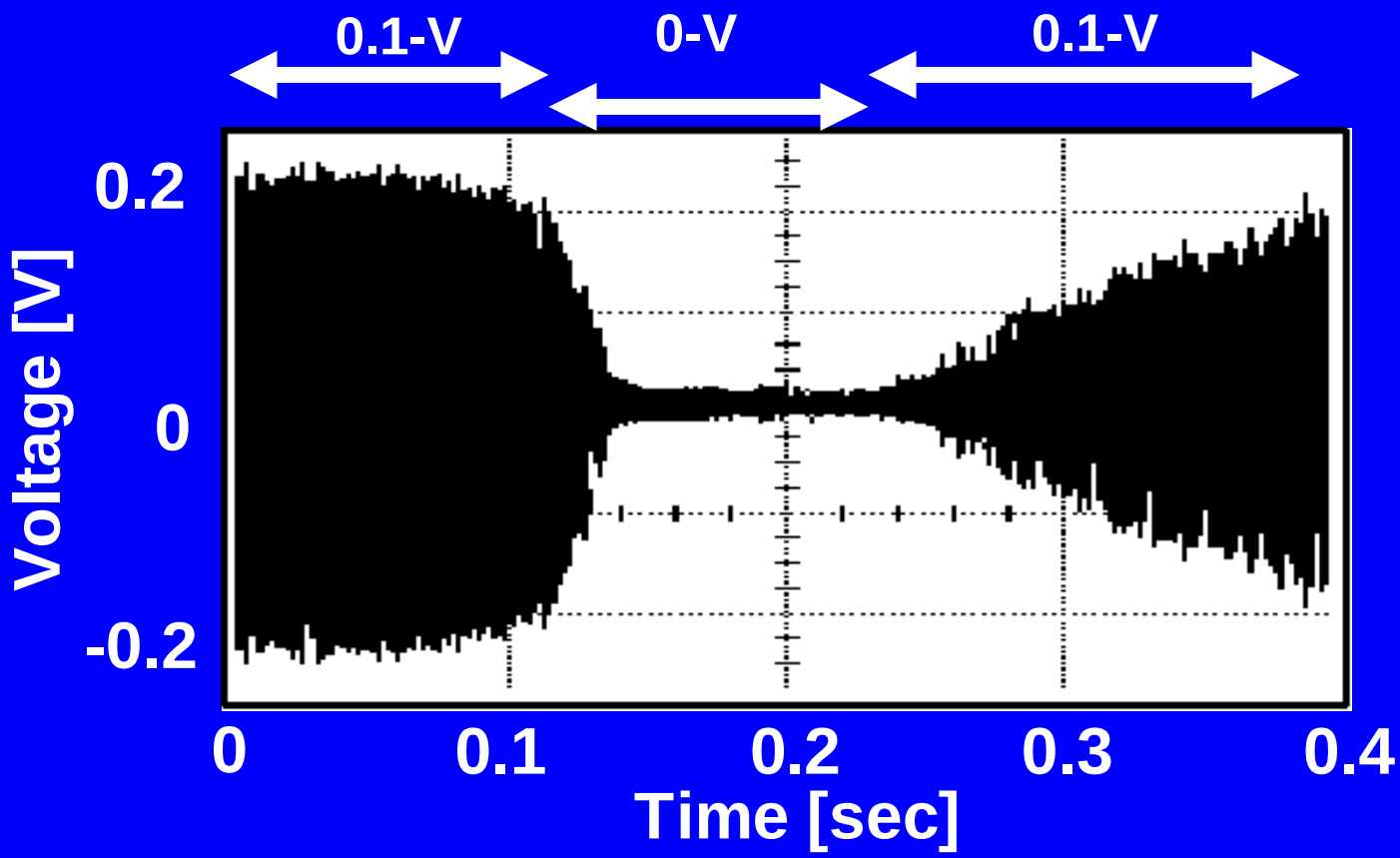
- 0.25-μm CMOS Process
- 0.9-V supply voltage
- 0.5-mm^2 active area
  - Preamplifier : 0.1-mm^2
  - Σ-Δ Modulator : 0.4-mm^2
- Power consumption
  - < 74.7-μW
- Peak SNR
  - 72-dB(2nd), 86-dB(3rd)

Measured Performance - CGC Preamplifier



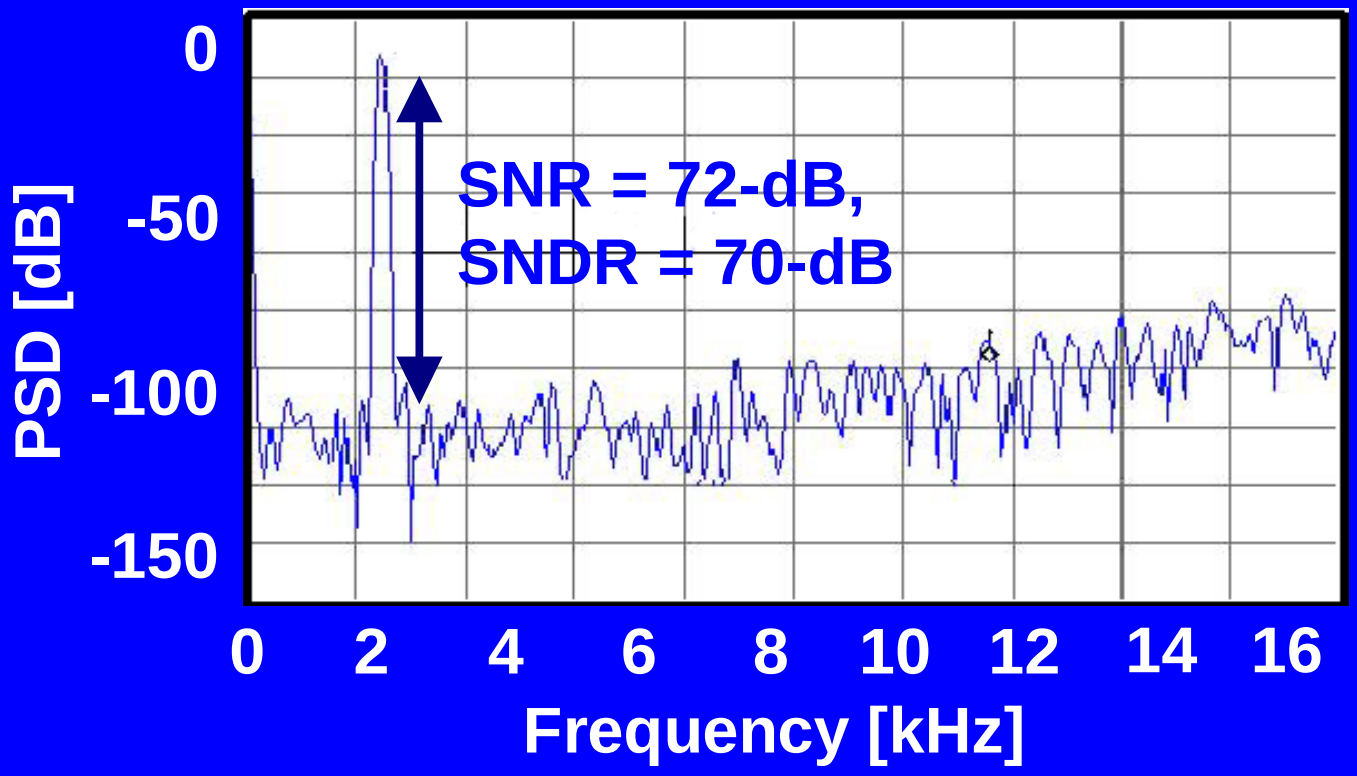
- By reducing V_{TH}, the threshold knee point is decreased simultaneously

Attack and Release time – CGC Preamplifier



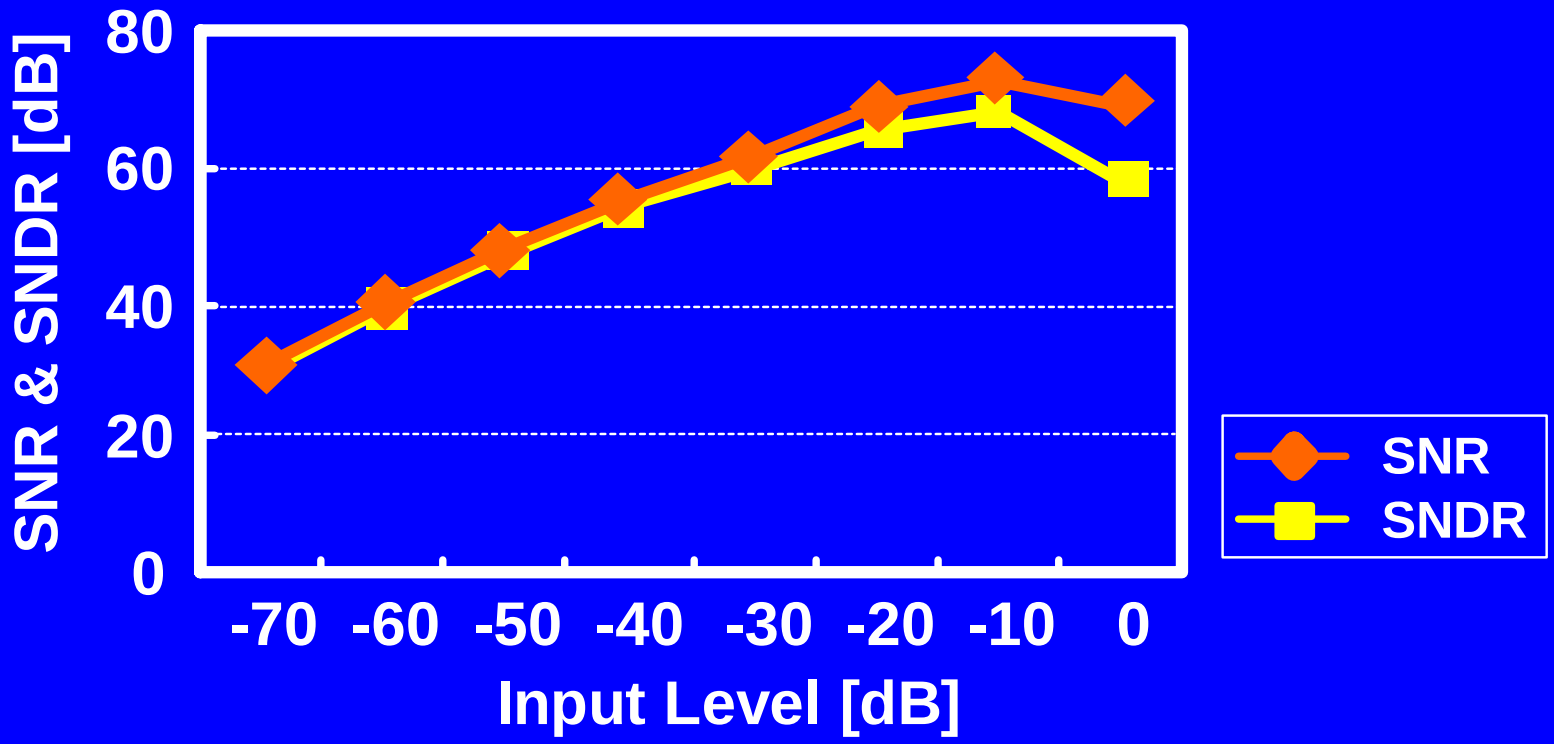
Measured attack and release response

Measured SNR
- Adaptive SNR Σ-Δ Modulator



Measured output spectrum

SNR variation
- Adaptive SNR Σ-Δ Modulator



Measured SNR/SNDR versus input amplitude

Performance Summary

Supply voltage	0.9-V			
Order	2nd order		3rd order	
Type	1	2	3	4
Clock frequency (MHz)	1.024	2.048	1.024	2.048
Peak SNR	72-dB	81-dB	78-dB	86-dB
Power dissipation (Σ-Δ Modulator)	26.4-μW	26.8-μW	35.7-μW	36.7-μW
Power dissipation (Preamplifier)	Vvc=0.75	Vvc=0.8	Vvc=0.85	
	33-μW	35-μW	38-μW	
Total power dissipation (Analog front-end)	59.4-μW ~ 74.7-μW (According to the parameter value)			
Signal bandwidth	8-kHz			

Conclusions

- **Digital Hearing Aid Preamplifier with Combined Gain Control**
  - **Wide dynamic range**
  - **Low power consumption**
- **Σ-Δ Modulator with Adaptive-SNR**
  - **Optimized Power consumption wrt input condition**
- **Average power consumption of the proposed Hearing Aid Front End**
  < 74.7-μW @ 0.9-V Supply