



## GaAs millimeter wave micromachined circuits

The research of applications of micromachining techniques at ultrahigh frequencies such as sub-millimeter waves and THz

The development of innovative new devices and systems required such as miniaturized THz sources, amplifiers and transceivers which presently are missing in these frequency range though a wealth of applications especially in medicine, biology molecular chemistry, security environmental control and communication.

The development of new concepts such a MMID by integrating micromachining devices with active circuits, sensors and RF MEMS

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## Process flow general issues

- Substrate (GaAs)
- Epitaxial material (MBE)
- FABRICATION**
  - Photolithography
  - Metallizations (active, interconnects, bridges, vias)
  - Micromachining - etching (sacrificial material, selectivity, wet, dry)
  - Passivation**
  - Packaging**

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## Wet etching of GaAs

- ⇒ (zincblende) GaAs → anisotropic etching
- ⇒ (100) most common direction
- ⇒ Various inclinations may be unsuitable for metallisations
- ⇒ Undercutting under the etch mask

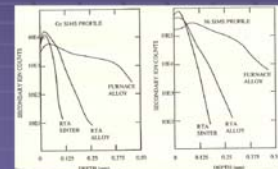
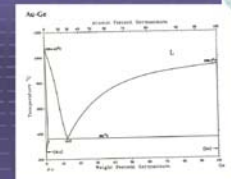


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## Ohmic contacts to GaAs

- ⇒ Small contribution to parasitic resistance
- ⇒ For n GaAs various metals have been used (Si, Ge, Sn, Se, Te) but - Ge dominates
- ⇒ Used with Au and usually there is a system based on (Ge/Au) Ni and Au
- ⇒ Mechanism (upon annealing around 360C-410C)
- ⇒ Au attracts Ga atoms
- ⇒ Ge goes to the Ga vacancies. This acts as n++ doping
- ⇒ Ni assists the diffusion of Ge
- ⇒ Also the top Au helps for the connection to the solder used!



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## Reactive Ion Etching (RIE)

- ⇒ Chlorine based chemistry ( $\text{BCl}_3$ ,  $\text{Cl}_2$ ,  $\text{CCl}_2\text{F}_2$ ,  $\text{SiCl}_4$ )
- ⇒ Selectivity issues between arsenides (GaAs, AlGaAs)
- ⇒ Typical reaction
- ⇒  $2\text{BCl}_3 \rightarrow \text{B}_2\text{Cl}_4 + 2\text{Cl} \rightarrow \frac{1}{4}\text{Al}_2\text{Cl}_6 + \frac{1}{4}\text{Ga}_2\text{Cl}_6 + \frac{1}{4}\text{As}_4$
- ⇒ Gaseous byproducts removed
- ⇒ Monitoring processes

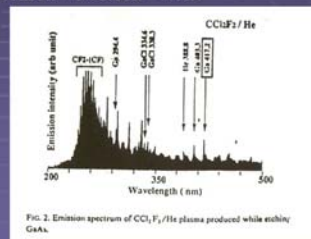


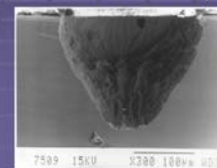
FIG. 2. Emission spectrum of  $\text{CCl}_2\text{F}_2/\text{He}$  plasma produced while etching GaAs.

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## Back side III-arsenide technology (from MMICs)

- Substrate lapping down to 100µm
- Initial substrate thickness 400µm (2-inch) or 600µm (3inch)
- Polishing of final surface
- Final thickness 100 µm ± 10 µm
- Via hole technology
- Incorporation of an AlGaAs etch stop layer to the buffer layer of the structure
- A two step RIE
  - GaAs with  $\text{CCl}_2\text{F}_2$  (rate 1.2µm/min)
  - AlGaAs with  $\text{BCl}_3$  (rate 0.12µm/min)
- RIE with tuned conditions for walls with positive slope



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## GaAs membranes as support for millimeter wave filters

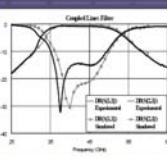


WLI of the 77 GHz filter

Journal of Micromechanics & Microengineering 11, p.305, (2001)



GaAs membrane supported coupled line filter for 45 GHz



S parameter measurements for the new coupled line filter structure

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## Realised devices/GaAs



Front side of GaAs based Yagi-Uda

Back-side of GaAs based Yagi-Uda

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### Equivalent circuit (1)

□ Diode I-V characteristic:

$$I_f(V_f) = I_s e^{\frac{qV_f}{kT}}$$

□ Signal:

$$V = V_0 + v$$

□ Taylor Series:

$$I(V) = I_0 + v \left. \frac{dI}{dV} \right|_{V_0} + \frac{1}{2} v^2 \left. \frac{d^2 I}{dV^2} \right|_{V_0} + \dots$$

$$\left. \frac{dI}{dV} \right|_{V_0} = a I_s e^{a V_0} = a(I_0 + I_s) = G_d = \frac{1}{R_d}$$

$$\left. \frac{d^2 I}{dV^2} \right|_{V_0} = \frac{dG_d}{dV} = a^2 I_s e^{a V_0} = a^2(I_0 + I_s) = aG_d = G_d'$$

$$I(V) = I_0 + i = I_0 + vG_d + \frac{v^2}{2} G_d' + \dots$$

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### Equivalent circuit (2)

□ AC diode current:

$$i = a_1 v + a_2 v^2 + \dots$$

□ Constant wave:

$$v = A \cos \omega_{RF} t$$

□ Then:

$$i = a_1 A \cos \omega_{RF} t + a_2 A \cos^2 \omega_{RF} t$$

$$= a_1 A \cos \omega_{RF} t + \frac{1}{2} a_2 A^2 + \frac{1}{2} a_2 A^2 \cos 2\omega_{RF} t$$

□ DC current factor:

$$i_{DC} = \frac{1}{2} a_2 A^2 \propto A^2$$

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### Electromagnetic simulations

□ IE3D Zeland

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### Coplanar antenna types

End-fire radiation pattern

Broadside radiation pattern

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### Receiver layout

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### MBE wafer structure

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### Yagi-Uda receiver fabrication

□ 8 fabrication stages

- 1<sup>st</sup> mesa formation
- 2<sup>nd</sup> mesa formation
- Ohmic contacts metallization and RTA
- Overlay metallization over ohmic contacts
- Polyimide deposition
- Metallization for bridge formation and Schottky contact diode
- Front etching for later device dicing
- Back side membrane formation

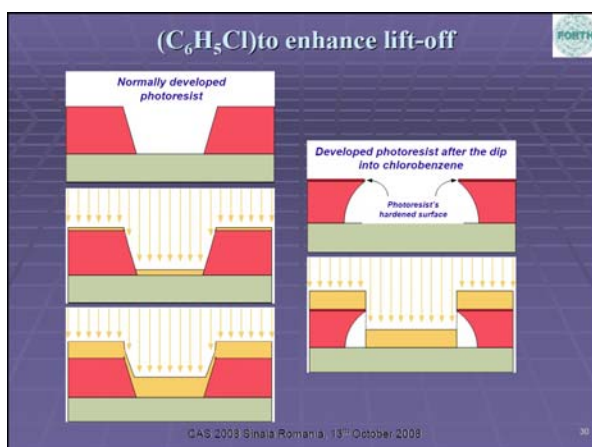
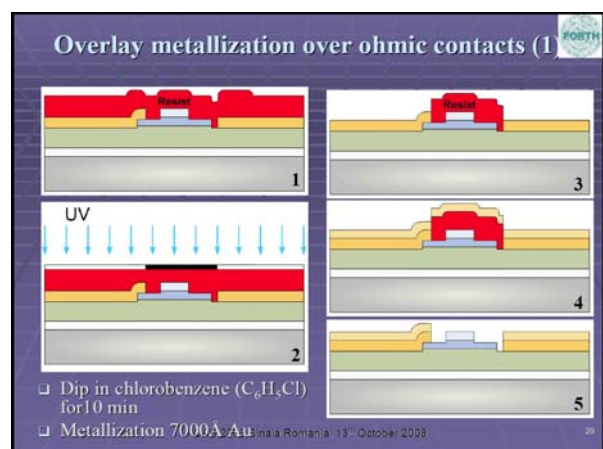
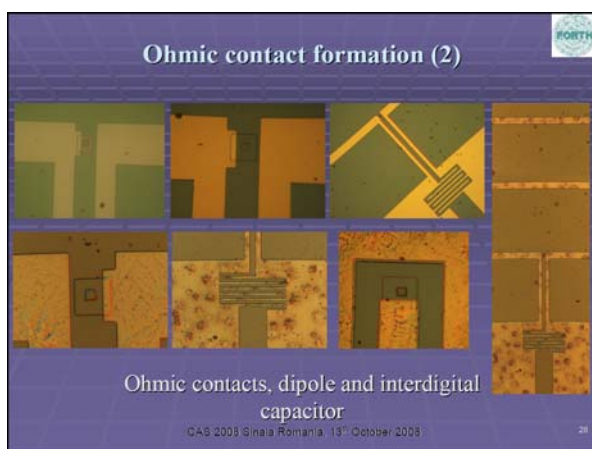
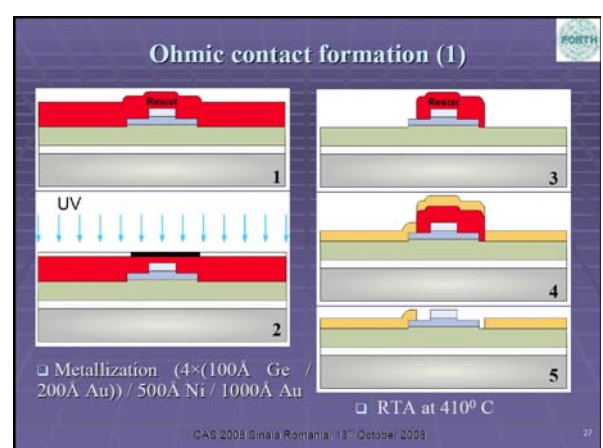
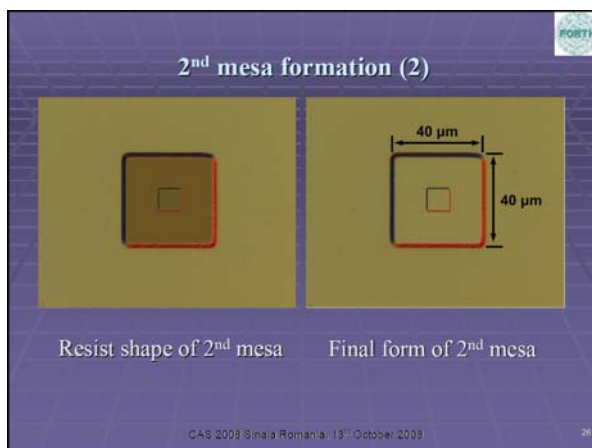
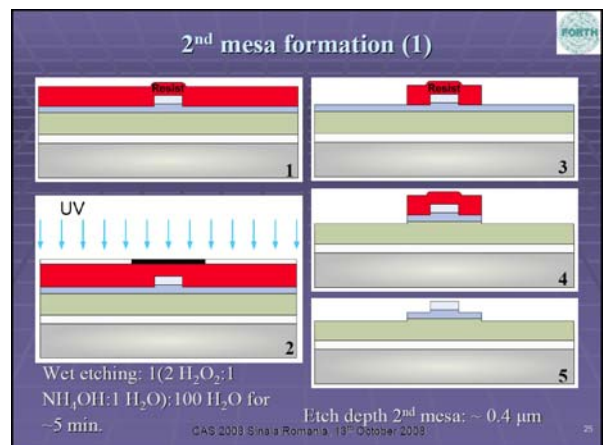
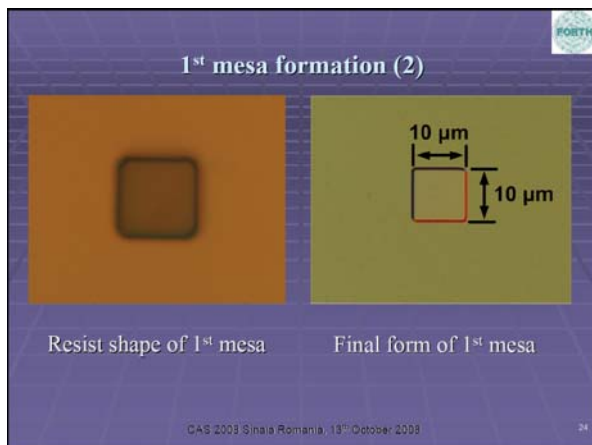
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### 1<sup>st</sup> mesa formation (1)

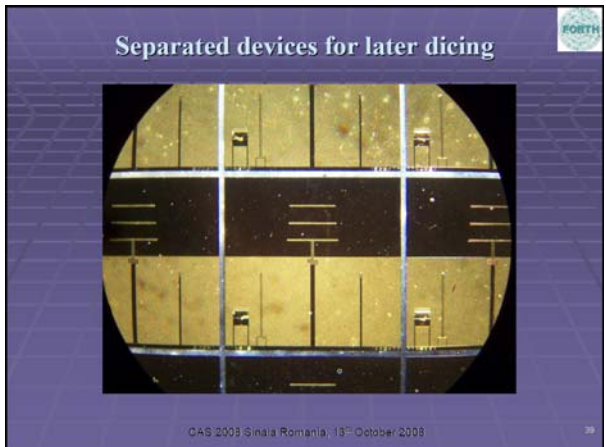
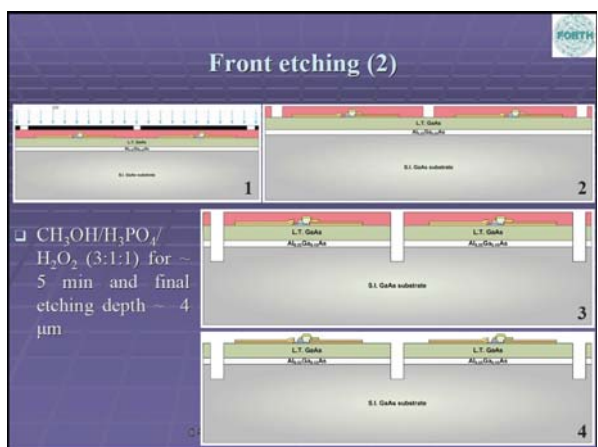
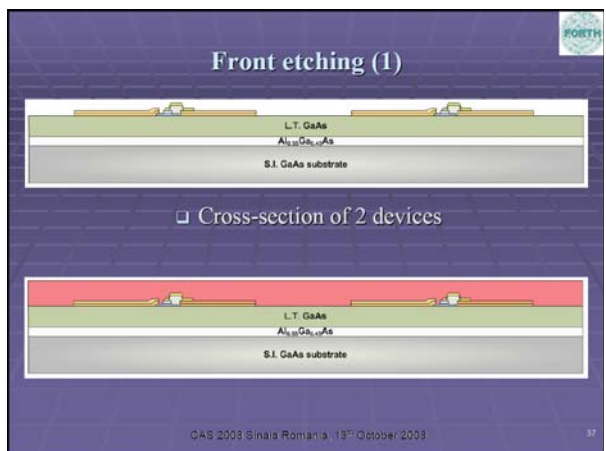
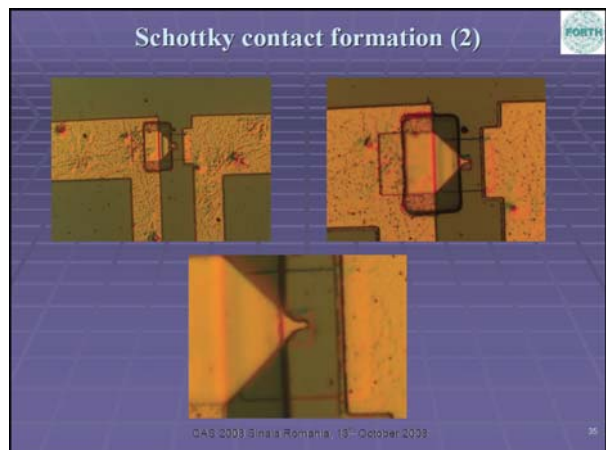
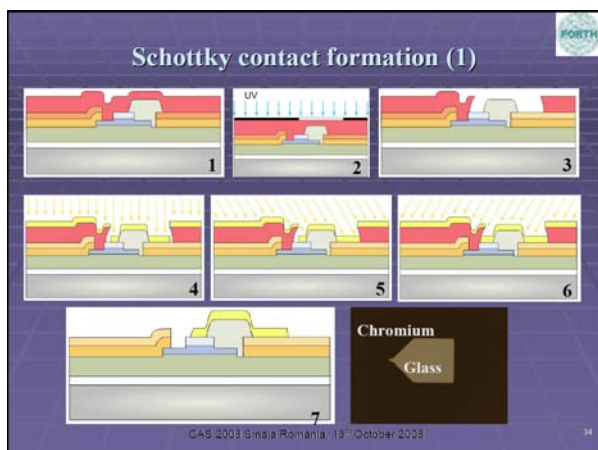
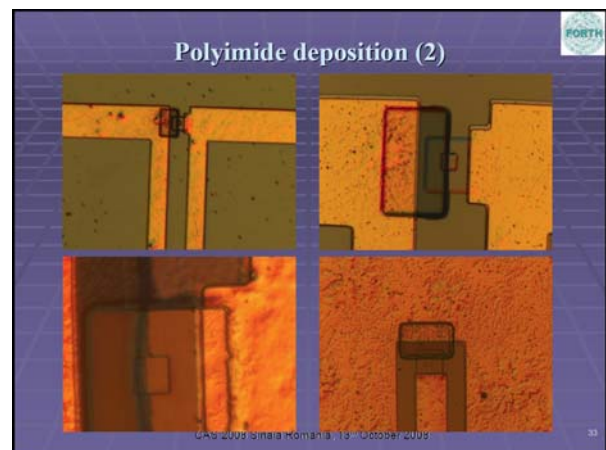
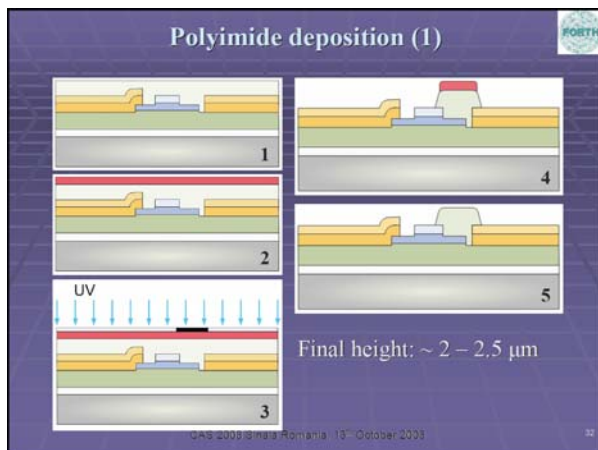
Wet etching: 1(2 H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>:1 NH<sub>4</sub>OH:1 H<sub>2</sub>O):100 H<sub>2</sub>O for ~5 min.

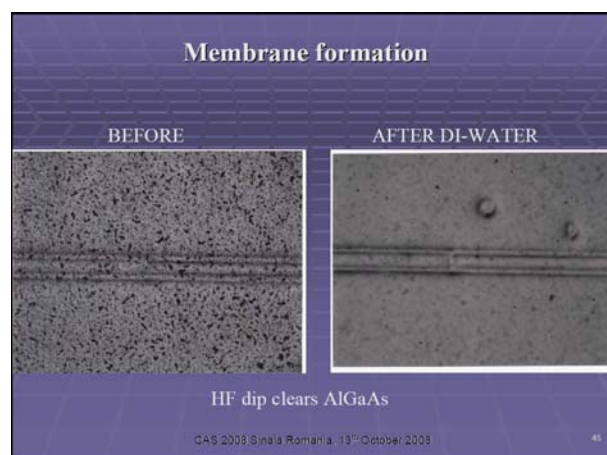
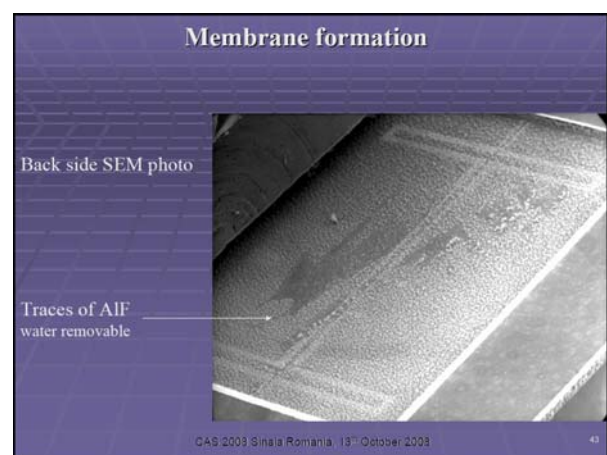
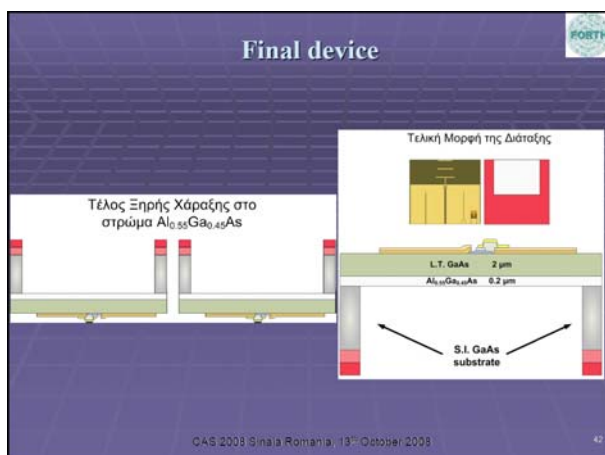
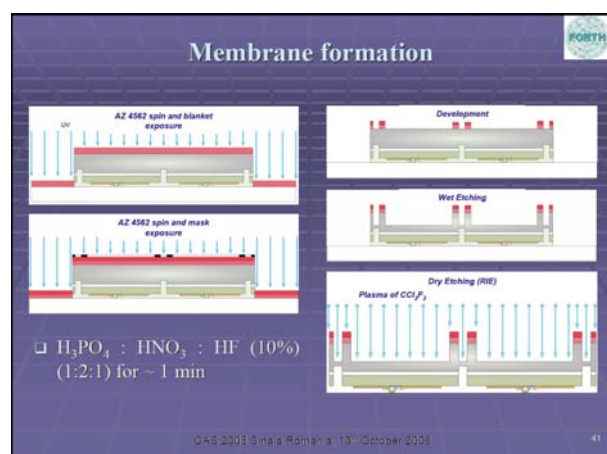
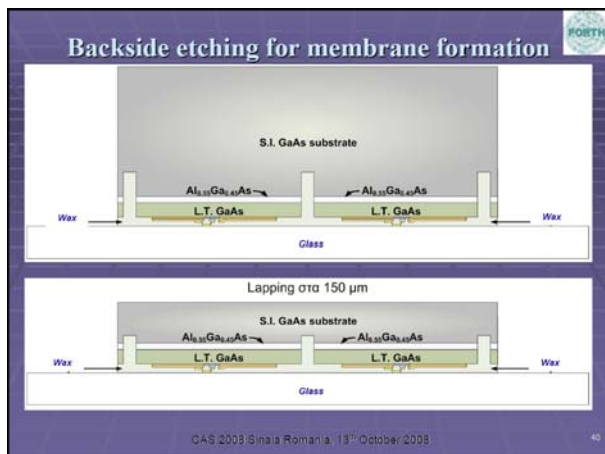
Etch depth of 1<sup>st</sup> mesa: ~0.4 μm

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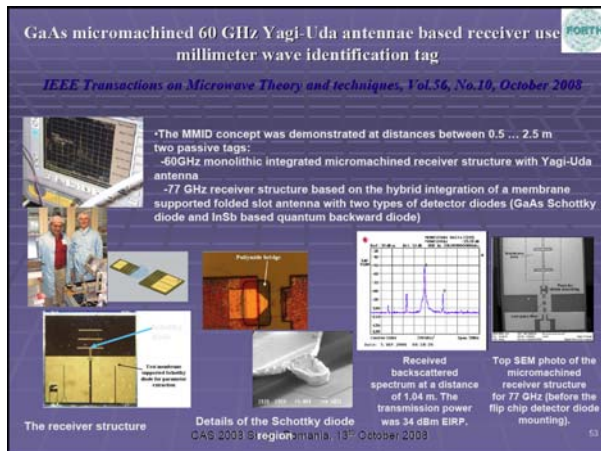
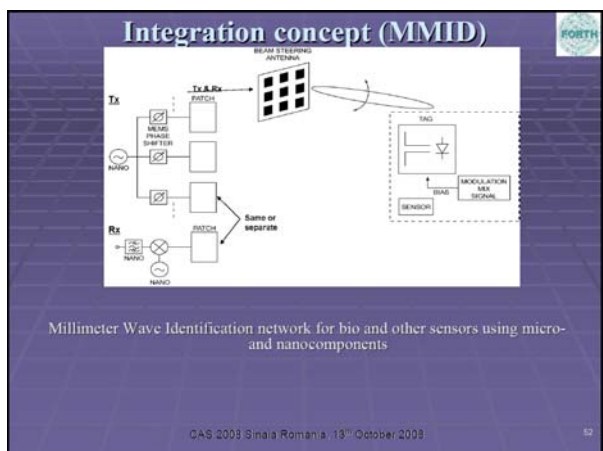
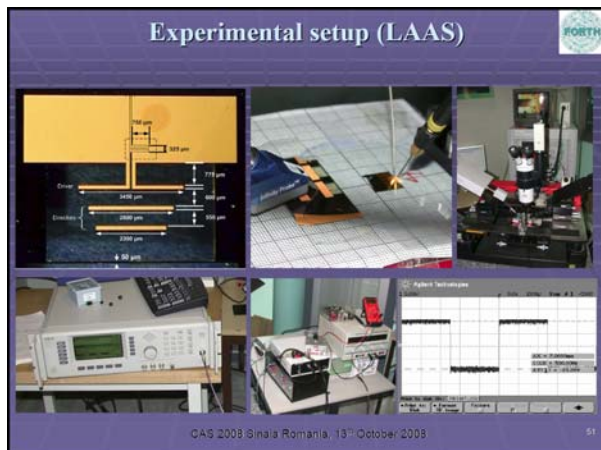
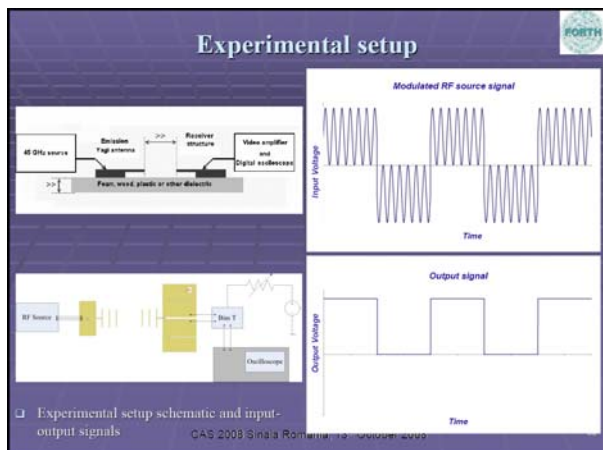












### III-Nitrides

#### Advantages of WBG semiconductors

- Direct band-gap (which has as effect better spectral selectivity)
- The cutoff frequency can be selected by changing the mole fraction in their ternary alloys (Al<sub>x</sub>Ga<sub>1-x</sub>N)
- High breakdown field (downscaling)
- Saturation velocity which is a few times higher in GaN than in GaAs, favours transient transport (faster)
- Operate in harsh environments and at high temperatures
- Chemical sensitive surface (sensing)

#### Major drawbacks

- Immature technology
- Expensive substrates (Sapphire, SiC)

**Investigate III-nitrides on Si (MBE, MOCVD)**

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### Substrates for GaN heterostructures process

<b>Sapphire : Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>low cost</li> <li>available in large sizes</li> <li>poor thermal conductivity</li> <li>high lattice mismatch with GaN (16%)</li> </ul>	<b>Semi-insulating silicon carbide : 4H-SiC</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>very good thermal conductivity</li> <li>good lattice match (97%)</li> <li>very expensive</li> </ul>	<b>n-type silicon carbide</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>very low cost</li> <li>available in large sizes</li> <li>known as reliable through previous applications</li> <li>very good thermal conductivity</li> <li>good lattice match with GaN (97%)</li> <li>complex process of GaN growth</li> </ul>
<b>Silicon : Si</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>low cost</li> <li>available in large sizes</li> <li>high lattice mismatch</li> </ul>	<b>Bulk gallium nitride</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no interface, no stress, less defects</li> <li>reduce processing steps</li> <li>complex process</li> <li>difficulties to get large sizes</li> </ul>	<b>MBE (more options for polarity of interfaces) and MOCVD (fast growth, mass production)</b>

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## RIE GaN

⇒ Only DRY etching is practically possible  
 ⇒ Chlorine based chemistry ( $\text{BCl}_3$ ,  $\text{Cl}_2$ ,  $\text{CCl}_2\text{F}_2$ ,  $\text{SiCl}_4$ )

⇒ Typical reaction  
 $\text{GaN} + \text{Cl} \rightarrow \text{GaCl}_3 + \text{N}_2$   
 ⇒ Gaseous byproducts removed  
 ⇒ Monitoring processes

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## MBE layers

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## Antenna metallization & Front side etch and chip definition

Conventional contact lithography, e-gun evaporation and lift-off techniques are used to define the filter structure.  
 To ensure lift-off, chlorobenzene treatment is used for the resist.  
 A 500 Å Ti / 7000 Å Au metallization is used.  
 Then again contact lithography is used to define the perimetry on the top surface where the GaN layers will be etched.  
 This step serves in the definition of the free membrane edge as well as for chip dicing during the subsequent RIE etch for the formation of the membrane.  
 Then, RIE is used with  $\text{Cl}_2$  and  $\text{BCl}_3$  chemistry.  
 Then the wafers are mounted face-down on special glass plates and the Si substrate is thinned down to 150 μm by lapping technique.

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## Membrane formation & release of free membrane edge

The etching pattern for the membranes is defined by backside alignment contact photolithography.  
 Here, Aluminum is used as the etch mask (e-beam deposition and lift-off).  
 Then, the wafer is removed from the glass carrier, cleaned in TCE and dried.  
 The membranes are fabricated in a VacuTec 1350 RIE chamber using  $\text{SF}_6$  chemistry.  
 With the prior removal of the etch stop layer around the perimetry the free membrane edge is formed and the chips are diced.  
 Because there are numerous "fragile" chips in the plasma chamber, a special carriage is under design to remove them all at once.

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## Realised devices/GaN on Silicon

Back-side of GaN based Yagi-Uda

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## First GaN membrane FBAR structures

Cross section of the FBAR structure with the evaporated Ti/Au for the top metallization and sputtered Au for the bottom contact. Sputtered Al is used as mask for the back-micromachining of the membrane.

GaN membrane supported series connection of two FBAR structures (test structures)

Series FBARs

Applied Physics Letters 89 (14), 142122, (2006)

Superlattices and Microstructures 40 (4-6), pp.426-431, (2006)

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## GaN FBARs

500 nm (GaN) + 280 nm (buffer) thin membrane supported FBAR structure based on GaN micromachining

• 50 nm thin Mo metallization

• GaN/Si wafers from NTT AT Japan

Before membrane manufacturing

Top view; bottom illumination

Top view top illumination

Top view; top+ bottom illumination

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## AlN FBAR structures

The layout of the AlN FBAR test structure

Top optical photo of the manufactured FBAR structure (w = 300 μm, membrane: 1000x400 μm)

Bottom gold under the transparent AlN membrane

AlN on silicon

Magnitude of the measured S parameters of the AlN based FBAR 300 μm test structure

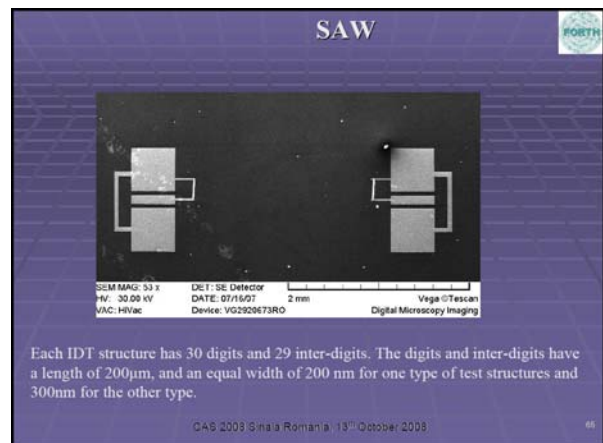
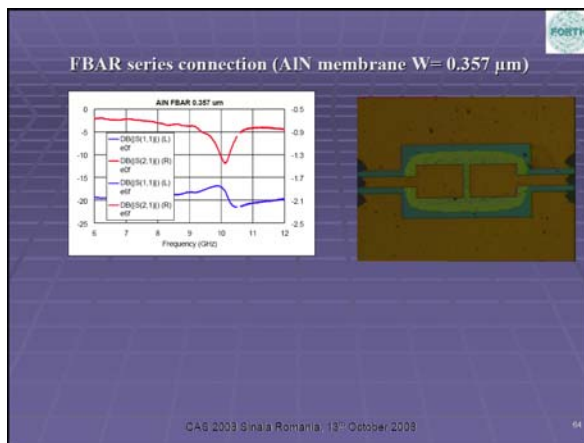
The resistance and the conductance of the two FBARs structures connected in series

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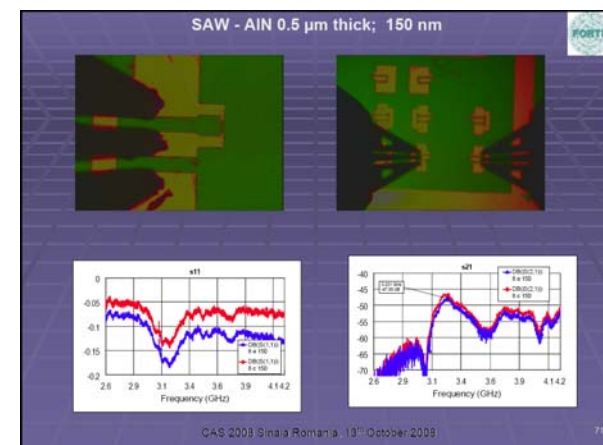
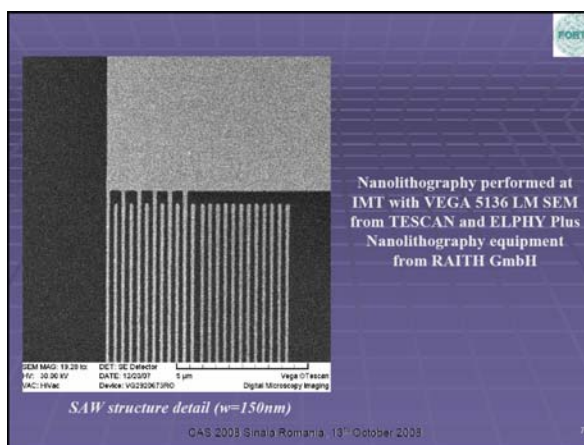
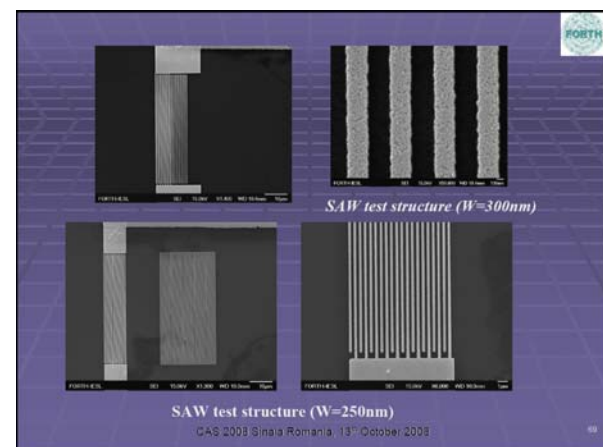
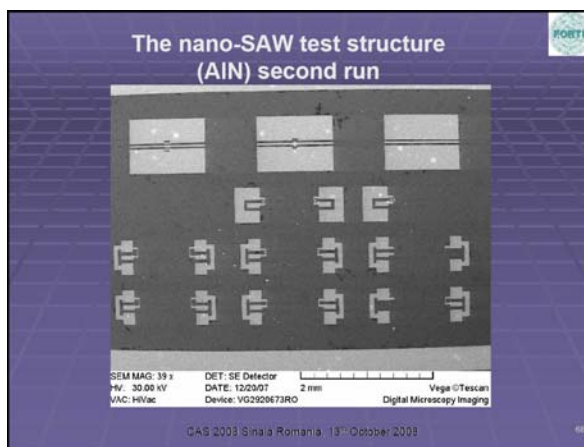
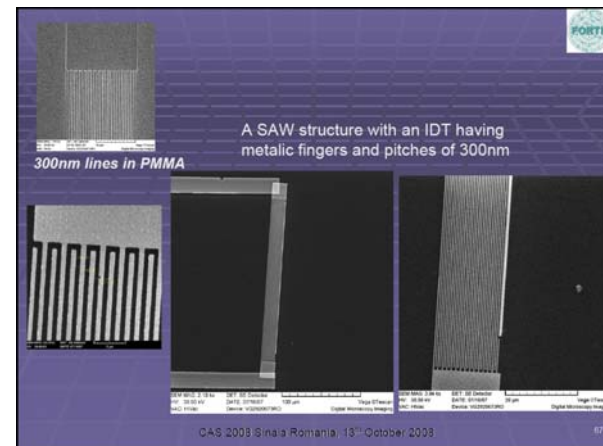
The first step in the SAW structure manufacturing was the measurement pads patterning and deposition. Conventional photolithography, e-beam metalization (Ti/Au  $20 \text{ nm}/200 \text{ nm}$ ) and lift-off technique was used (FORTH).

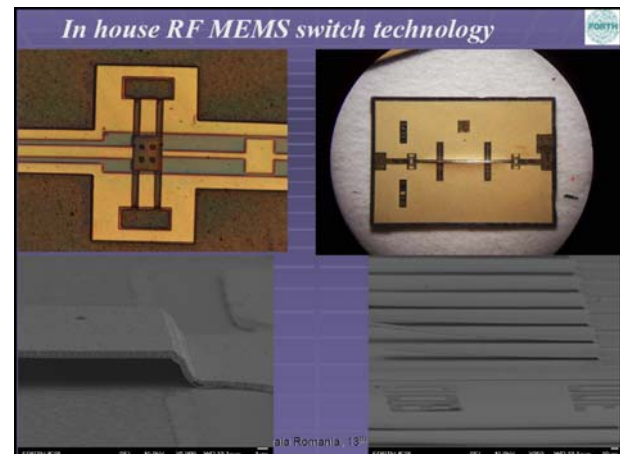
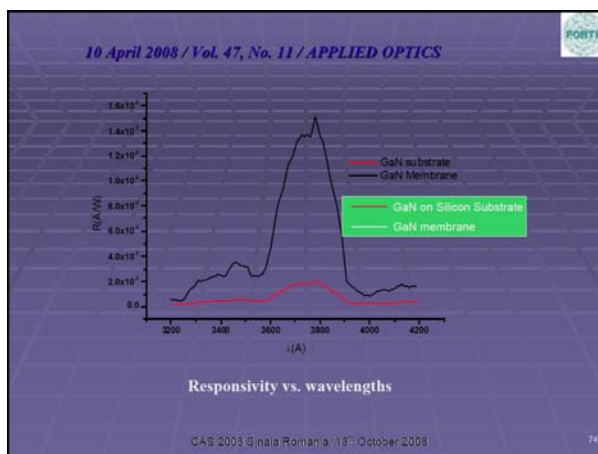
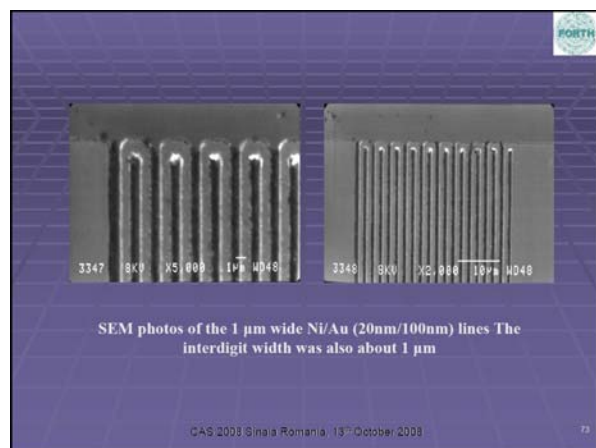
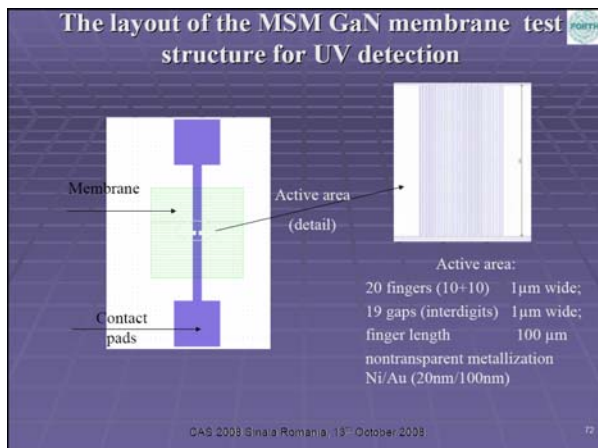
Due to the digits/interdigits dimensions, a direct writing process was used, for the IDT structure.

The design transfer on the wafer was performed using a Scanning Electron Microscope (Vega from Tescan), equipped with an Electron Beam Lithography system (Elphy Plus from Raith) (IMT).

Finally, Ti/Au ( $20 \text{ nm}/200 \text{ nm}$ ) is deposited by e beam and a lift-off process, is used to remove the unwanted metal (FORTH).

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### ...Combining technology from 3 works...

Yagi-Uda Antennas	Shear-Horizontal Surface Acoustic Wave Biosensors	RF-MBE of GaN and AlN epitaxials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yagi - Uda antennas (Operation frequency: 45 and 60 GHz)</li> <li>Based on GaAs</li> <li>2 <math>\mu\text{m}</math> membrane formation</li> <li>Dicing of chips during membrane formation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SH-SAW biosensors (Operation frequency: 110 and 155 MHz)</li> <li>Based on quartz</li> <li>Used for bacteria detection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GaN and AlN on Si</li> <li>High resistivity layers</li> </ul>

...in order to fabricate biosensors based on compound semiconductors

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### What are biosensors?

Biosensors are analytical devices that can transduce a biological response into an electrical signal

#### Types of biosensors

- Electrochemical
- Optical
- Acoustic
  - Bulk Acoustic Wave
  - Surface Acoustic Wave
  - Flexural Plate Wave
  - ...

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### What is a Lamb-wave biosensor?

- Membrane thickness  $d$  is much less than the acoustic wavelength  $\lambda$   $\sim$  Generates only 2 fundamental modes ( $A_0$  and  $S_0$ )
- Until now: Piezoelectric layer is being deposited by sputtering method (AlN, ZnO)

#### 3 ADVANTAGES

- 2 interfaces
- True surface wave
- Materials

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### Why using GaN or AlN as the PZ material?

- Compatible with processing techniques
- High acoustic velocity
- Excellent thermal stability
- Feasibility of operation in harsh environments

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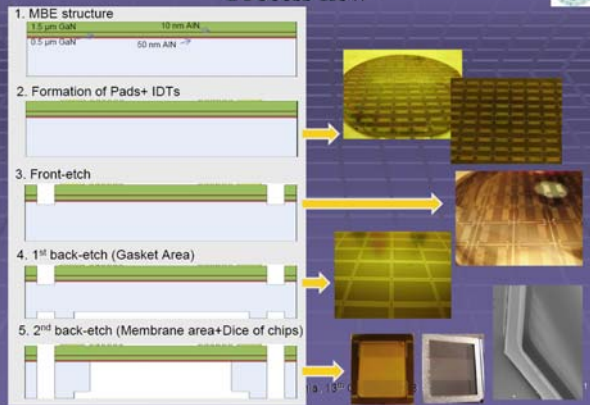
## Fabrication of a Lamb-wave biosensor

- Photolithographic techniques were used
- The design was based on 5 masks
- High resistivity ( $>10000 \Omega \cdot \text{cm}$ ) Si (111) wafers
- Piezoelectric layers were fabricated by Molecular Beam Epitaxy (RF-MBE)
- Piezoelectric material: GaN and AlN

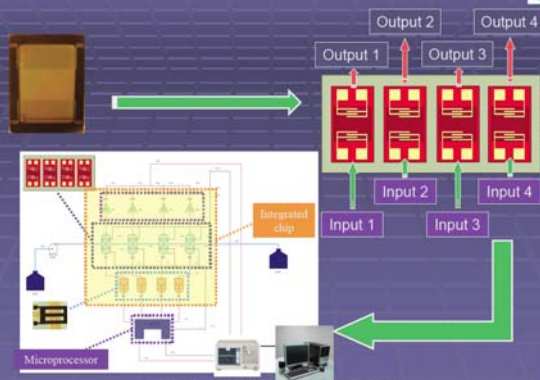
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## Process flow



## Future Work



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## Conclusions/1

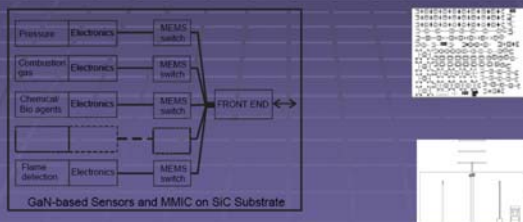
- Birth of a strong friendship with Alex Muller and the rest of my friends at IMT as well as other friends around Europe
- My Octobers = Sinaia
- Led to moments of real scientific joy as well as recognition (Descartes prize nomination, Award from the Romanian Academy)
- Opened new ways of research and technology for MRG while building on its expertise and strength
- Assist IMT to its tremendous leap towards its "re-birth" within the last decade
- Establish a very competitive "high-tech duo" originating from two non-traditionally high-tech EU states

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## Conclusions/2

- State of the art technologies for III-arsenides and III-nitrides have been developed
- Implementation into IMS for terrestrial and space applications



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## Acknowledgements

### "NoE" AMiCOM

(Advanced MEMS for RF and Millimeter Wave Communications)

### North Star Project (NSP)

MMID (Millimeter wave identification network for bio and other sensors using micro- and nanocomponents)

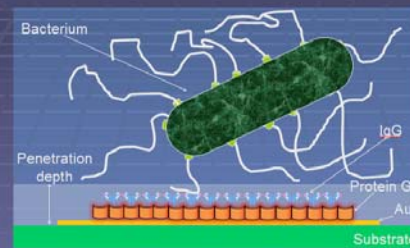
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Thank you !  
Multumesc!

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Sputter or Evaporator

Au deposition: ~20nm

Flow

Biomaterials being deposit:

1) Protein G

2) IgG

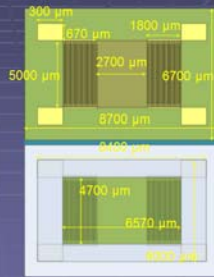
3) Bacteria

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## General info:

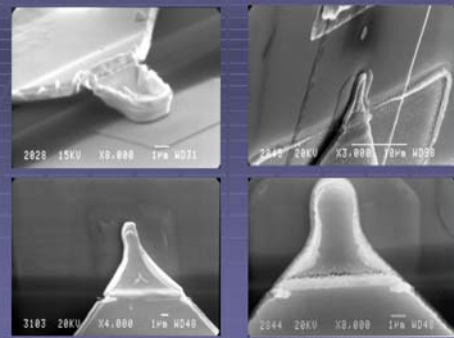
- Width of IDTs:  $\lambda/4$
- Distance between 2 adjacent IDTs connected to the same transmission line:  $3\lambda/4$
- 3 different  $\lambda$ : 36, 25 and 16  $\mu\text{m}$  (50, 90, 102 pairs of IDTs)
- Operation frequency for Lamb devices depends on:  $\lambda$ , acoustic velocity of material and quality of material



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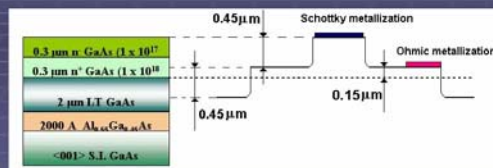
## SEM



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## Why high $R_s$ ?



Only 0.15  $\mu\text{m}$  h.r. GaAs can be solved during RTA and the ohmic contact has not the best quality -this has as effect a relative high series resistance.

In the next run, the  $n^+$  layer will be 0.5  $\mu\text{m}$  thick (not 0.3  $\mu\text{m}$ )

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