

Filter-Preamp Rev 1

Front-end shelf and anti-alias low-pass filter, with preamp

Document Version 0.1
May 25, 2024

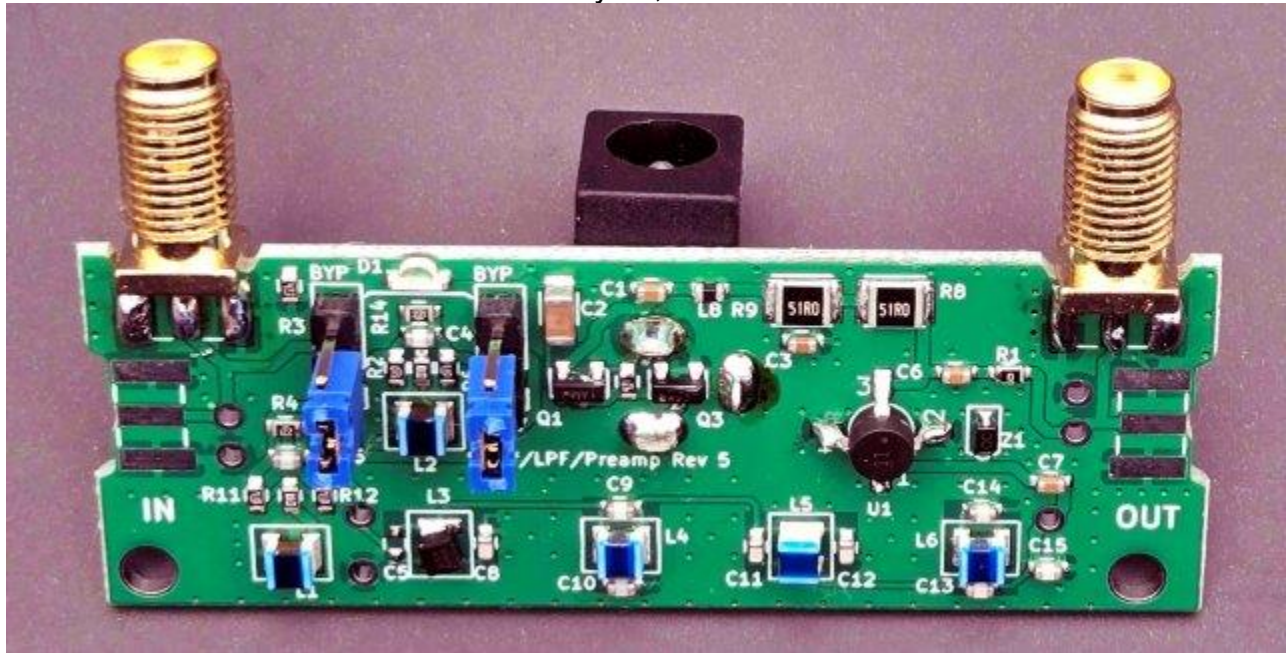


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Changes to This Document

V 0.1: First draft

About the Filter-Preamp

This is a 30 MHz four section elliptic low-pass filter, combined with a two-section shelf filter, and followed by a medium-gain preamplifier. The low-pass filter serves as an anti-aliasing filter for a SDR, especially one that is clocked at 66 MHz or so. The shelf filters will provide moderate attenuation at the lower frequencies, where powerful signals can cause overload.

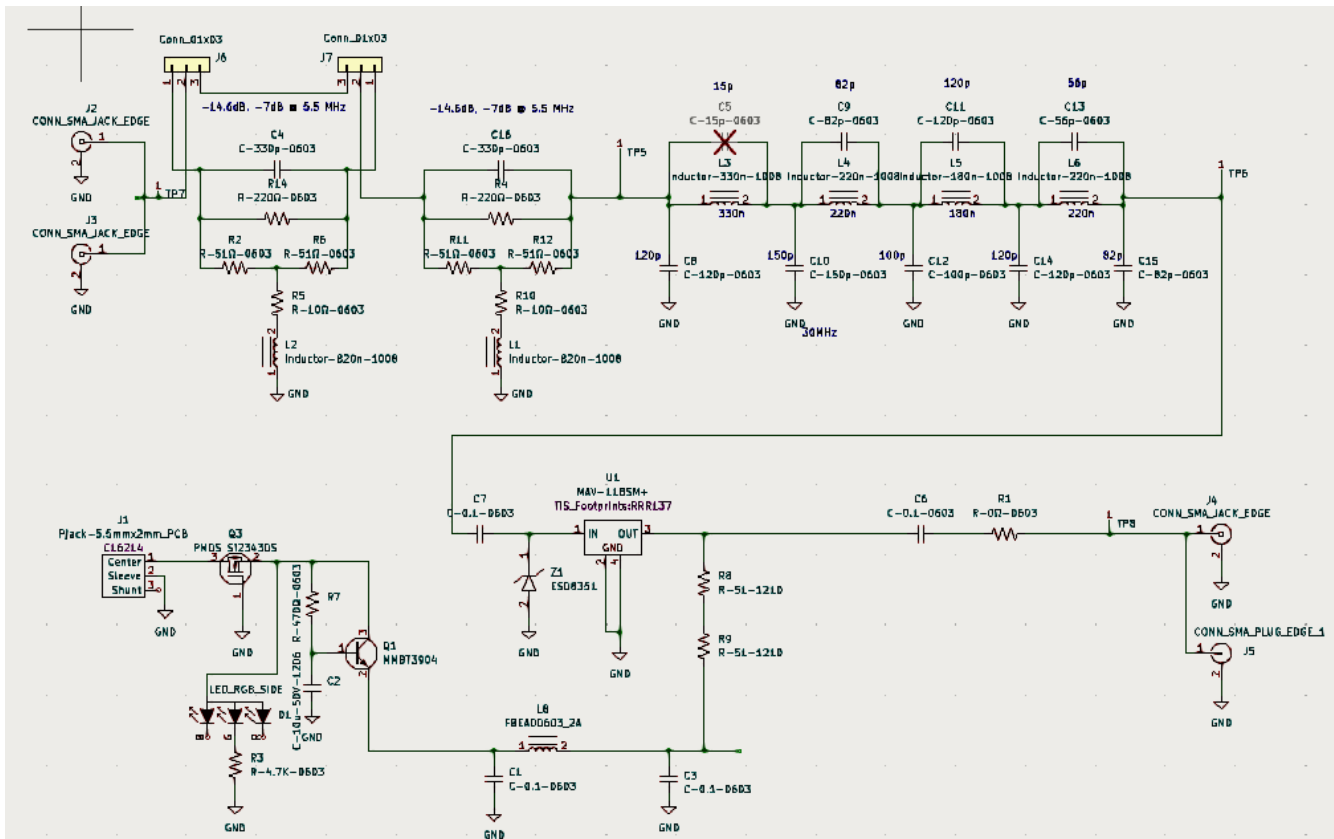
The amplifier provides enough gain to compensate for the filter loss, and boost the signal presented to the receiver. Depending on the antenna system, some SDRs may require additional gain for optimal performance.

The filter is available in the in-line plug/jack configuration, or in a two-jack arrangement (which fits nicely in a small die-cast aluminum box for extra shielding.)

Connections

- Input, output: SMA jack, 50 Ohms.
- Power: 12VDC, 60 mA typical current drain. 5.5 x 2.1mm barrel jack, pin positive, sleeve negative.

Schematic



This design has a two-stage high-pass shelf filter (one stage bypassable), followed by a four-section elliptic low-pass filter. The shelf filters provides attenuation at the lower frequencies, reducing the potential overload from AM broadcast-band stations in the USA. This filter will have little effect on European HF broadcast-band signals. The low-pass filter has a sharp cutoff above 30 MHz, greatly reducing SDR sampling aliasing of signals above this frequency.

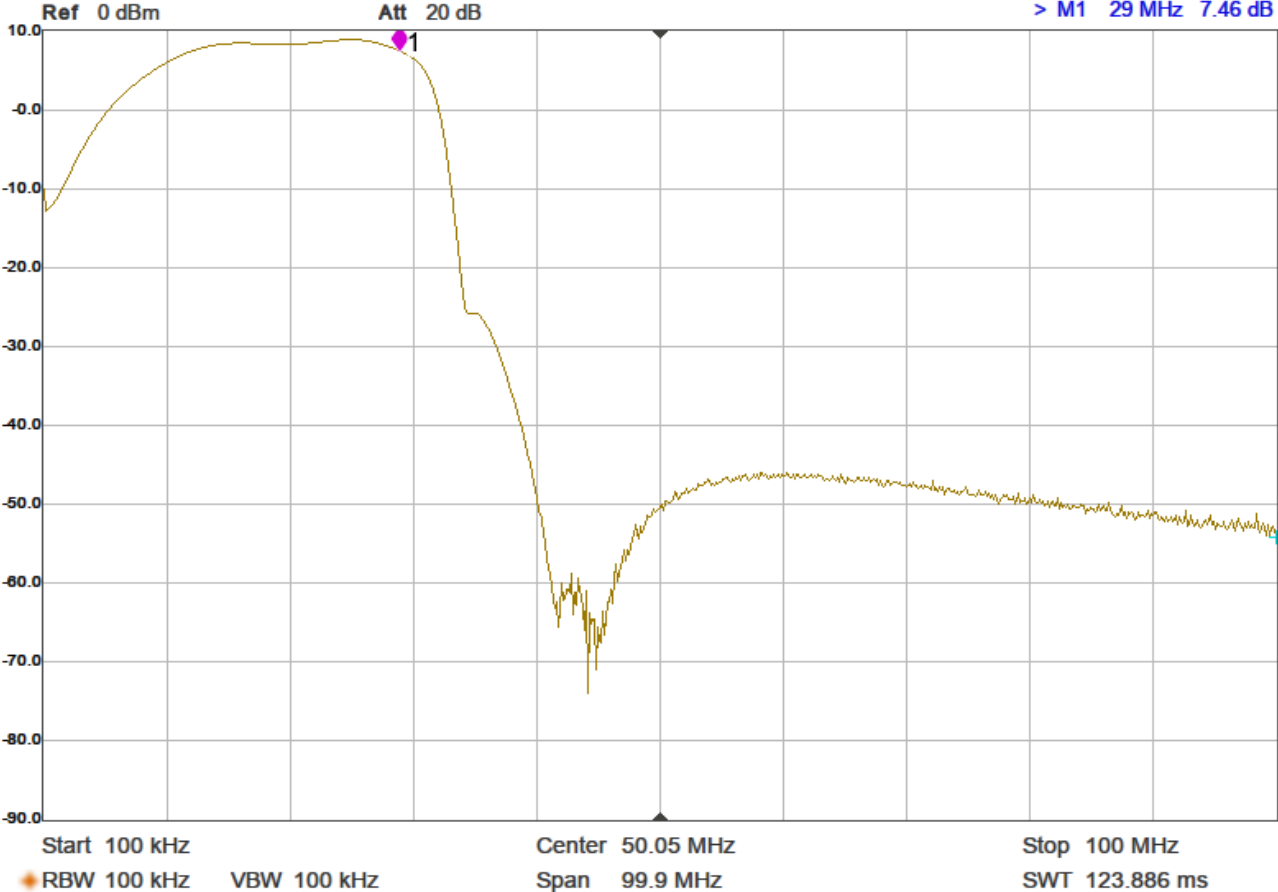
Note that the “notch” capacitor (C5) in the first section of the LPF has been removed. While this does allow the response above 50 MHz to rise slightly, when this capacitor is installed there is a significant filter response peak near 425 MHz, probably due to inductor parasitics. Removal of this capacitor greatly attenuates the parasitic response.

Following the filters is a relatively low-noise, high dynamic-range preamp: the Mini-Circuits MAV-11BSM+.

The preamp requires a 12V DC power supply, capable of providing at least 60 mA. A PFET transistor protects the amplifier from reverse-polarity voltage., and a simple NPN transistor active filter circuit provides over 30 dB of supply-noise attenuation. A small LED lights up when power is present.

The schematic shows two options for the input and output connector orientation.

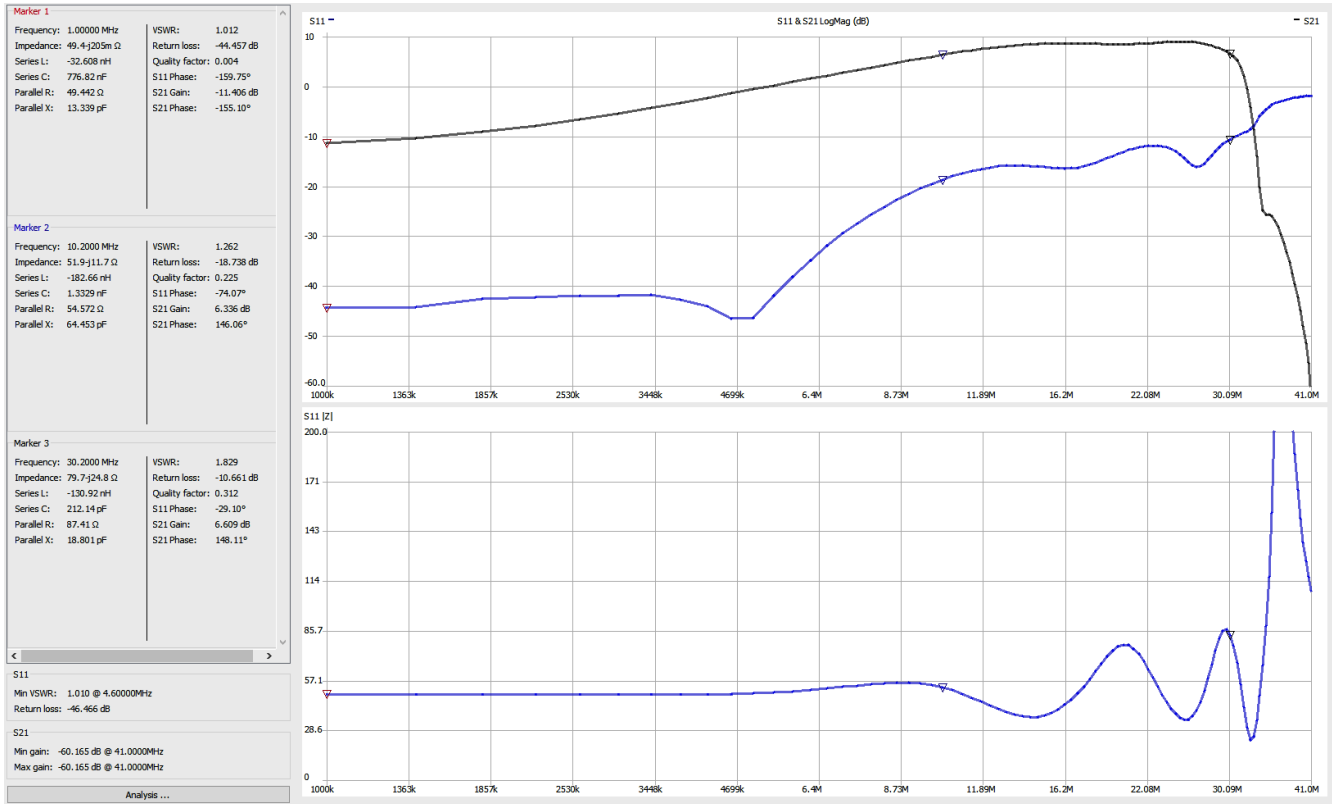
Gain, Frequency Response



The filter/preamp provides about +9 dB gain between 14 and 28 MHz, with the gain dropping to -10 dB at 1 MHz when both shelf filters are enabled. The attenuation above 40 MHz is around -50 dB or better.

Frequency (MHz)	Typical Gain (dB)
0.1	-12.9
1	-11.5
2	-8.7
5	-0.9
10	5.8
15	8.5
20	8.4
25	8.9
29	7.5
30	6.8
35	-27.1

The chart below shows the filter-preamp gain, input return loss, and input impedance plotted on a logarithmic frequency scale. This better-shows the performance of the cascaded shelf-filters.



Enclosure



The right-angle-connector filter option fits nicely in a small die-cast enclosure. Here is the filter in a “Hammond 1590A” enclosure, available, custom-milled, as an option from Turn

Island Systems. The SMA jacks are on 2-inch centers. While an SMA jack will fit through ¼ inch diameter hole, I suggest making a slightly larger hole to accommodate slight variations in connector alignment.

These boxes are available from many sources, most of them probably clones. Sources I have used are:

Tayda Electronics (<https://www.taydaelectronics.com/hardware/enclosures/1590a-style/1590a-style-aluminum-diecast-enclosure.html>)

and

StompBoxParts (<https://stompboxparts.com/enclosures/1590a-enclosure/>)

Of course you can buy actual “Hammond” boxes from DigiKey and other traditional suppliers.