

Specifications

of the antenna amplifier

RLA3C/ 4D - L

Edition: 1.9

Created: 11.01.2019

Amplifier dimensions (W x H x D) :	97 mm x 50 mm x 15 mm (3C/4D incl. connection sockets), 83 mm x 50 mm x 6 mm (board 4E - L)
Frequency range:	30 kHz ... 54 MHz, damping at 90 MHz about 20 dB (3C/4D) 20 kHz ... 71 MHz, damping at 90 MHz about 25 dB (4E- H) 20 kHz ... 30 MHz, damping at 90 MHz about 40 dB (4J - L)
Average noise level (without loop):	3C/4G: -135 dBm/Hz, 4H - L: -142 dBm/Hz @ 10 MHz
IP3:	>= 3C/4F: +26 dBm, 4D - L: +30 dBm (2x -6 dBm bei 10 MHz)
IP2:	>= 3C/4F: +70 dBm, 4D - L: +74 dBm (10.0 MHz + 10.2 MHz, -6 dBm, 0.2 MHz measured difference tone)
Max. permitted input voltage:	0.2 V _{eff} constant, ±10 V _{peak} 1 ms
Output voltage:	>= 3C: 0.8 V _{eff} , 4D - L 1.5 V _{eff} , @1 dB compression
Supply via DC jack / cable:	+6.0 V ... +13.8 V, maximum +14.4 V!
Power consumption per amplifier:	3C: 37 mA ±5 mA, 4D- L: 40 - 100 mA depending on control
HF output:	50 ohm, connection via coaxial cable or matching jacket
Environmental conditions:	-20 ... +70 °C ambient temperature, up to 99 % rel. humidity non-condensing, outdoor application in closed case
Compliance:	CE according to DIN EN 55013, EN 55020, EN 60065 RoHS / WEEE directive, ear reg. nr. 27676700

Specifications are subject to change!

Safety information

Please always observe the following safety instructions!

Never connect the device to any other voltage than indicated in the specifications. Under no circumstances should the device come into contact with the mains voltage of 230 V ~!

If you use the device outdoors, please observe the lightning protection regulations for the outdoor operation of electrotechnical systems!

Observe the permitted temperature range for starting up the device! Do not switch the device on or off again if this range is exceeded or fallen below!

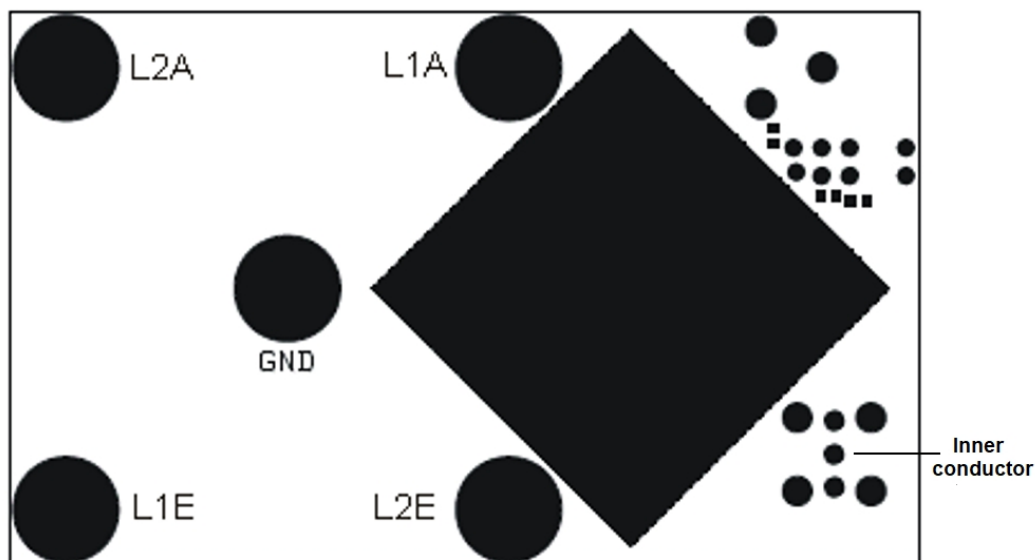
If you notice any damage to the device, immediately take it out of operation (remove power supply)! If necessary, return it to the supplier for repair.

If you wish to dispose of the device due to damage or because you do not use it anymore, return it to the supplier or to your local waste collection center. Never dispose of the device in any other way, for example, with your household waste!

In case of mechanical assemblies, please note that no bending or torsional stresses are transmitted to the PCB! Mounting material (nuts, screws, etc.) may only be tightened with a force that prevents damage to the surface!

Operator's Manual

The RLA3C and 4D - G boards are intended as antenna amplifiers for magnetic loop antennas. They contain 2 switchable amplifiers for each receiving loop. The amplifier inputs are low impedance (about 1 ... 25 ohms, depending on the frequency range) and thus optimized for single-turn loops with diameters of about 20 ... 100 cm. The HF output voltage is delivered with 50 ohm impedance. This connection is also used for the power supply ("remote supply"). A coaxial cable can be connected to the inner conductor at the midpoint of the female connector and to the shield at any adjacent hole (all GND). In addition, a DC hollow pin socket and a switch for local supply and switching of the amplifiers can be fitted on the board (interior version).



The two receiving loops must be routed with their ends to holes L1A - L1E (first loop) or L2A - L2E (second loop). The holes are 4.3 mm in size and thus allow connection by means of M4 screws. To protect the printed circuit board, it is essential to place shims!

Caution! The amplifier needs a certain minimum impedance at the input to operate correctly! In the event of a short circuit (very small loops with low inductance) of the inputs against each other or against GND, the gain becomes so high that the amplifier becomes unstable and oscillates at high frequencies. This can be recognized by increased power consumption and strong noise in the received signal.

For proper function, the connections of the loops must be connected to ground with low impedance! Current flows from the inputs of the amplifiers to GND. Normally this is done by grounding the loop center to GND. Alternatively, direct current grounding must be performed by throttling (scale of 10 ... 50 μ H) of Lxy against GND.

The GND hole (ground, ground connection) can be connected to a conductive housing into which the board should be installed for optimum reception. In addition, the center of the loop(s) must be connected here (e.g. via a metal rod or thick wire). This results in a grounding of the loop(s) against electrical interference and overvoltage.

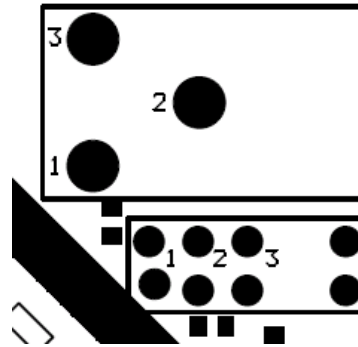
The board is not protected against direct lightning strikes and may not be operated in lightning-prone environments without external protection!

In the case of version 3, the two antenna loops are switched by changing the supply voltage (at the HF connection) according to the following scheme:

- Voltage ≥ 9.0 V: Loop 2 is active (45°).
- Voltage = $8.0 \text{ V} \pm 0,2 \text{ V}$: Loop 1 is active (135°).
- Voltage = $6.9 \text{ V} \pm 0,2 \text{ V}$: both loops are active (0°).
- Voltage ≤ 6.2 V: both loops are active with polarity reversal loop 1 (90°).

Between the specified voltage ranges, the circuit is indeterminate (hysteresis).

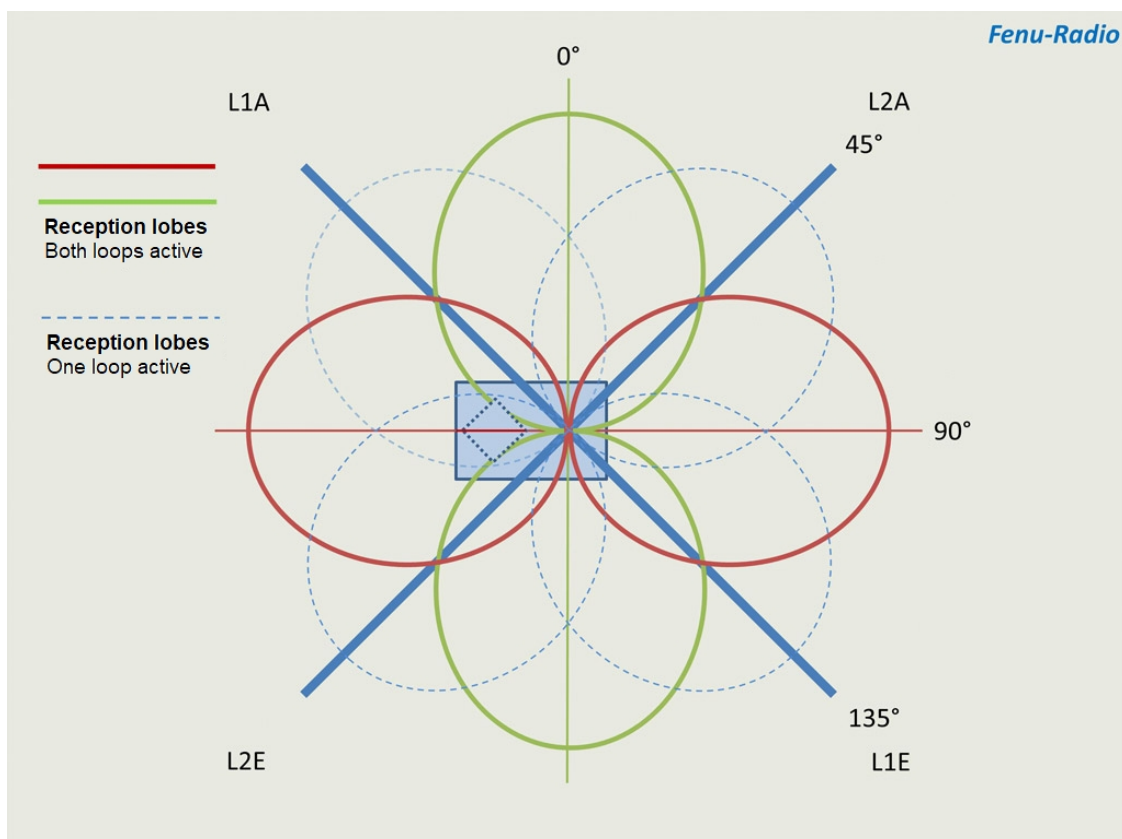
If the amplifier is not to be supplied via the HF cable, a direct DC supply can be established at the designated solder points of the DC socket and the changeover switch (both equipped only with the complete unit for "indoor version").



For this purpose, the negative pole must be connected to the ground connection of the socket (pin 2 or 3, top), the positive connection to pin 1 of the socket, or to pin 2 of the switch (bottom, if present). The above given voltages for the switching points of the amplifiers apply.

Caution! When fed via the HF cable, add approximately 0.3 V to each value to compensate for the loss through the cable and the DC splitter integrated in the amplifier (version 3C only)!

The main receiving direction of a loop always lies in the direction of the loop plane (bidirectional, "8" shape). When both loops are active, the main receiving direction lies between the loop planes (45° twisted to each loop). By reversing a loop, this direction can be switched by 90°. Together with the operation of only one loop, this results in a direction change in 45° steps. Switching can be done by means of an adjustable voltage source (e.g. laboratory power supply unit with feed switch) or a special control unit. The supply voltage should be free of interference and well stabilized!



As of version 4E, the loops are not only controlled by an analogue DC voltage, but also by digital modulation of the remote supply voltage (logically negative RS-232 signal (start bit = increased supply voltage, stop bits = supply voltage)). In this case, a data word is sent from a control unit (modulator) to the antenna. This data word contains a command for setting the receiving direction. Depending on the version, different settings are possible:

4E:

The data format is 125 Baud 8N2 (8 data bits, no parity bit, 2 stop bits). The supply voltage switches as follows:

- Supply with > 10 V (observe permissible maximum!): The RLA4 only operates with loop 1.
 - Supply with > 8 V and <= 10 V: The RLA4 only operates with loop 2.
 - Supply with 6 V and modulation of an RS-232 signal with active level of min. 7 V and maximum 8 V: Directional control:
- Value 0 to 126: Loop operation by setting the receiving direction from 0° to 180° in 127 steps.
 - Value 127 to 255: No reaction (reserved for further developments).

4F:

The version 4F is characterized by a special feature: When switched to "Whip mode", all loop connections including the mid-point connection are switched to high impedance. At the mid-point connection, the reception voltage is tapped by a FET amplifier and conducted with approx. 10 dB gain to the output. As a result, the antenna predominantly receives the electric field component ("active electrical antenna"). In the usual arrangement of loops with the center on top and connections at the bottom or vertical center rod results in omnidirectional reception. The reception power heavily depends on the installation site, the environment, grounding, supply and other factors. Usually, a good reception performance is only achieved with exposed installation sites (high altitude above ground and other objects).

The data format is 125 Baud 8N2 (8 data bits, no parity bit, 2 stop bits).

- Supply with > 10 V (observe permissible maximum!): The RLA4 operates with loop 1 + 2.
 - Supply with > 8 V and <= 10 V: The RLA4 only operates in whip mode.
 - Supply with 6 V and modulation of an RS-232 signal with active level of min. 7 V and maximum 8 V: Control in all possible operating modes:
- Value 0 to 126: Loop operation by setting the receiving direction from 0° to 180° in 127 steps.
 - Value 127: Whip operation.
 - Value 127 to 255: No reaction (reserved for further developments).

4G:

Version 4G no longer has "whip operation". However, it possesses less noise and higher IM resistance.

The data format is 125 Baud 9E2 (9 data bits, even parity bit, 2 stop bits).

- Supply with > 8 V (observe permissible maximum!): The RLA4 only operates with loop 1.
 - Supply with 6 V and modulation of an RS-232 signal with active level of min. 7 V and maximum 8 V: Directional control:
- Value 0 to 232: Loop operation by setting the receiving direction from 0° to 180° in 233 steps.
 - Value 233 to 511: No reaction (reserved for further developments).

4H:

Version 4H possesses a duplicate fitting of input transistors at each input (8 in total). High-quality SFET are used. This increases the IM resistance and reduces the intrinsic noise. The 4H amplifier requires a little more current (approx. 100 mA total current consumption).

4J / 4K:

This version uses only integrated circuits and no longer uses transistors. This means that very low IM values can be achieved up to the clipping limit of approx. 1.2 Vrms at 50 Ohms. The current consumption is approx. 70 mA, the self-noise is approximately the same as version H.

The lower cut-off frequency is significantly lower than that of the transistor amplifiers and, in combination with larger loops (from approx. 0.5 m in diameter, RLA4GS), enables reception even at the lowest frequencies (e.g. SAQ on 17.2 kHz).

The upper cut-off frequency has been reduced to 30 MHz. The 4J amplifier has an enhanced filtering effect for frequencies above 30 MHz. This avoids interference that can occur when setting up antennas near VHF/DAB/DVB transmitters, cell towers, TV towers, etc.

Note: If interference still occurs in close proximity to strong VHF / UHF transmitters (audibility of FM radio stations, interference sounds or increase in broadband noise), it is helpful to mount the loop antenna as close to the ground as possible. Also, a design of the loops as a slender, vertical oval / rectangle has proven to be advantageous over high-frequency irradiation.

4L:

This version uses high-gain and cut-off frequency paired bipolar transistors in the input stage, and integrated circuits in all other stages. The current consumption is approx. 80 mA, the self-noise is slightly lower than in version 4J/K, and the tendency to self generated oscillations is significantly reduced at variable impedances (loop sizes and shapes). This makes the 4L particularly suitable for DIY constructions.

Due to the elimination of input transformers, the lower cut-off frequency is just as low as that of pure IC amplifiers (approx. 20 kHz). Upper cut-off frequency and indications of high-frequency interference apply as for 4J/K.

The previous versions up to 4K basically required a control unit for transmitting control data and thus activating / adjusting the amplifiers (directional control). Version 4L now activates its amplifiers at 45° after switching on the power supply, even without control data. This corresponds to maximum reception in the longitudinal direction of the board or the RLA4 enclosure. There are 2 modes of operation:

- Supply voltage less than approx. 11 V: The amplifiers work with active directional control (variable phase and damping) and can be adjusted with control data immediately after activating the 45° basic setting.
- Supply voltage greater than approx. 11 V (note the maximum value!): All amplifiers are switched to maximum gain and cannot be further influenced by control signals.

In the latter case, direct or remote power supply with a nominal 12 V results in an approx. 3 dB higher gain in the 45° preferred direction. There is no longer a need for a control unit. This makes the RLA4L with 12 V power supply particularly suitable for fixed setups or operation with a mechanical rotor.

Note: When connecting only one loop, the main receiving direction is perpendicular to the loop plane. The reception power is reduced by about 3 dB compared to the connection of both loops.