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(54) OMNI-DIRECTIONAL RADIATOR FOR MULTI-TRANSDUCER ARRAY

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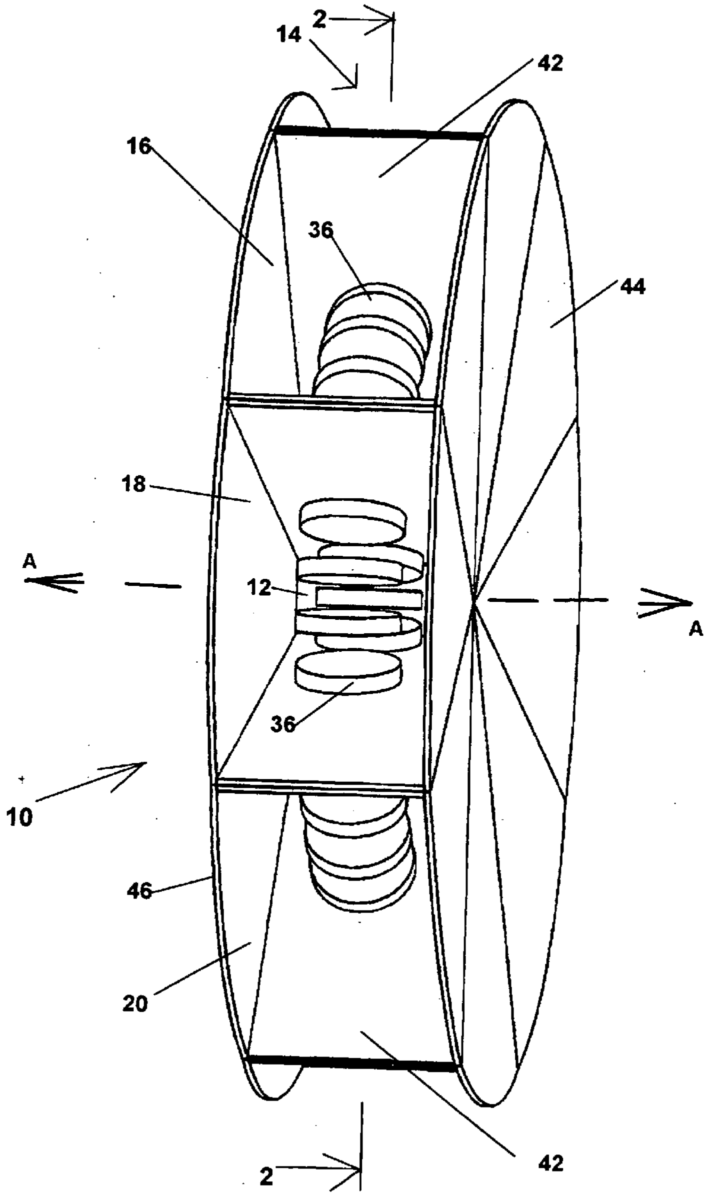
(57) **ABSTRACT**

An acoustic radiator for underwater application is provided by opposing boundaries mutually spaced and centered on a common axis, a plurality of radial barriers located perpendicular to and connected between the top and bottom boundaries to define a plurality of adjacent radial waveguides, and a plurality of transducers disposed in each radial waveguide, and with one group of transducers being located radially outwardly from another group, the groups being defined in part by all members of the group being the same distance from the apex of the radial waveguide.



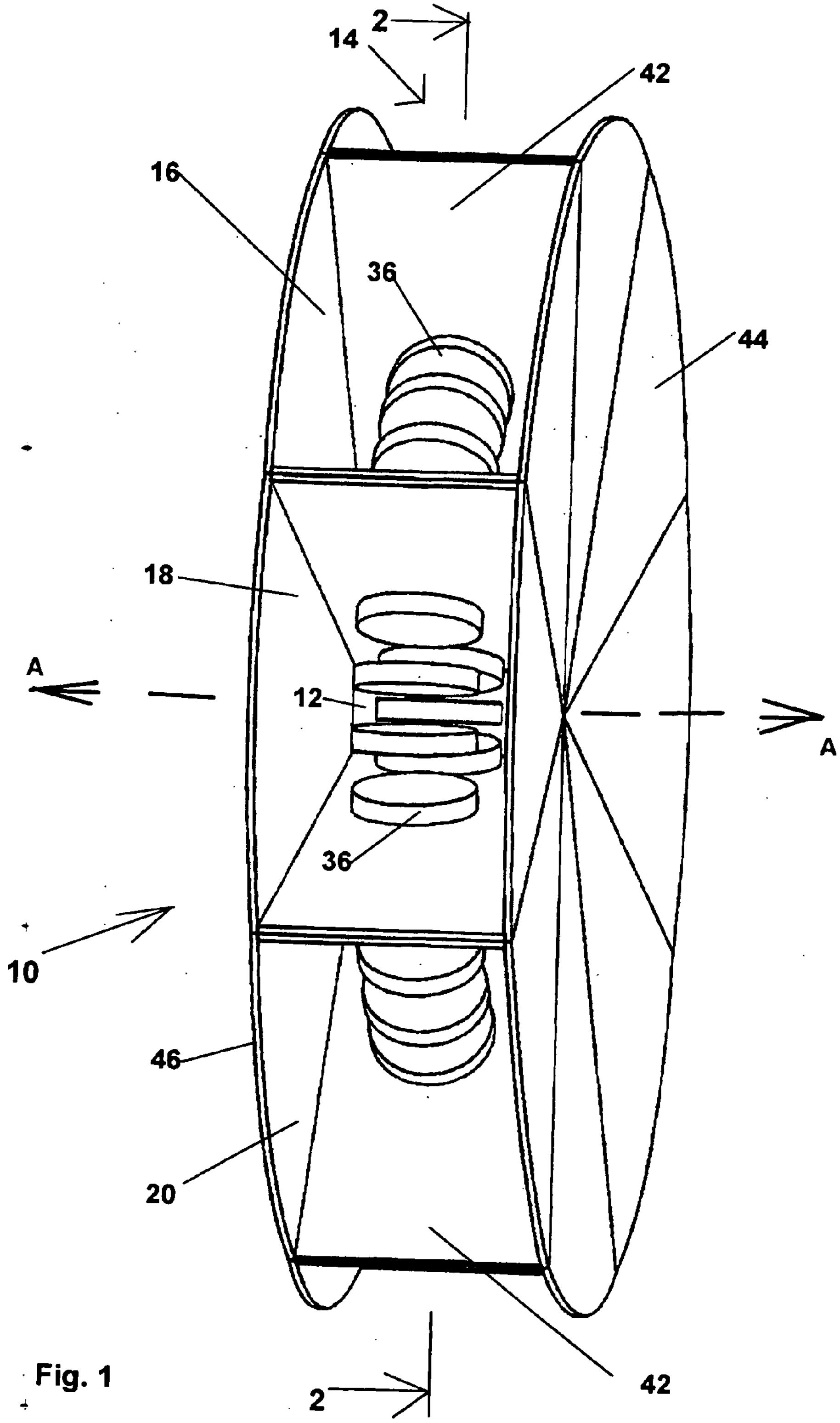


Fig. 1

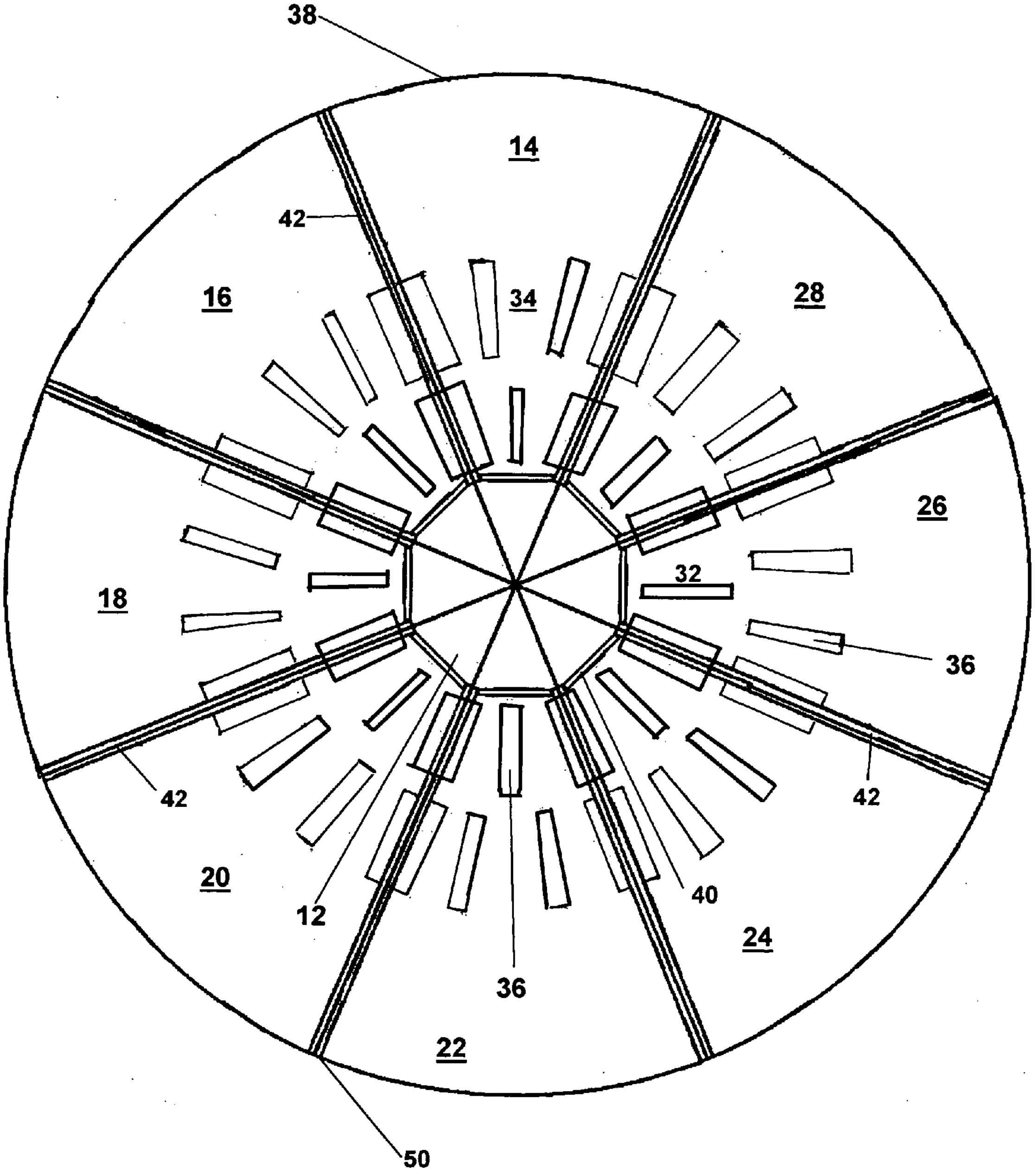


Fig. 2

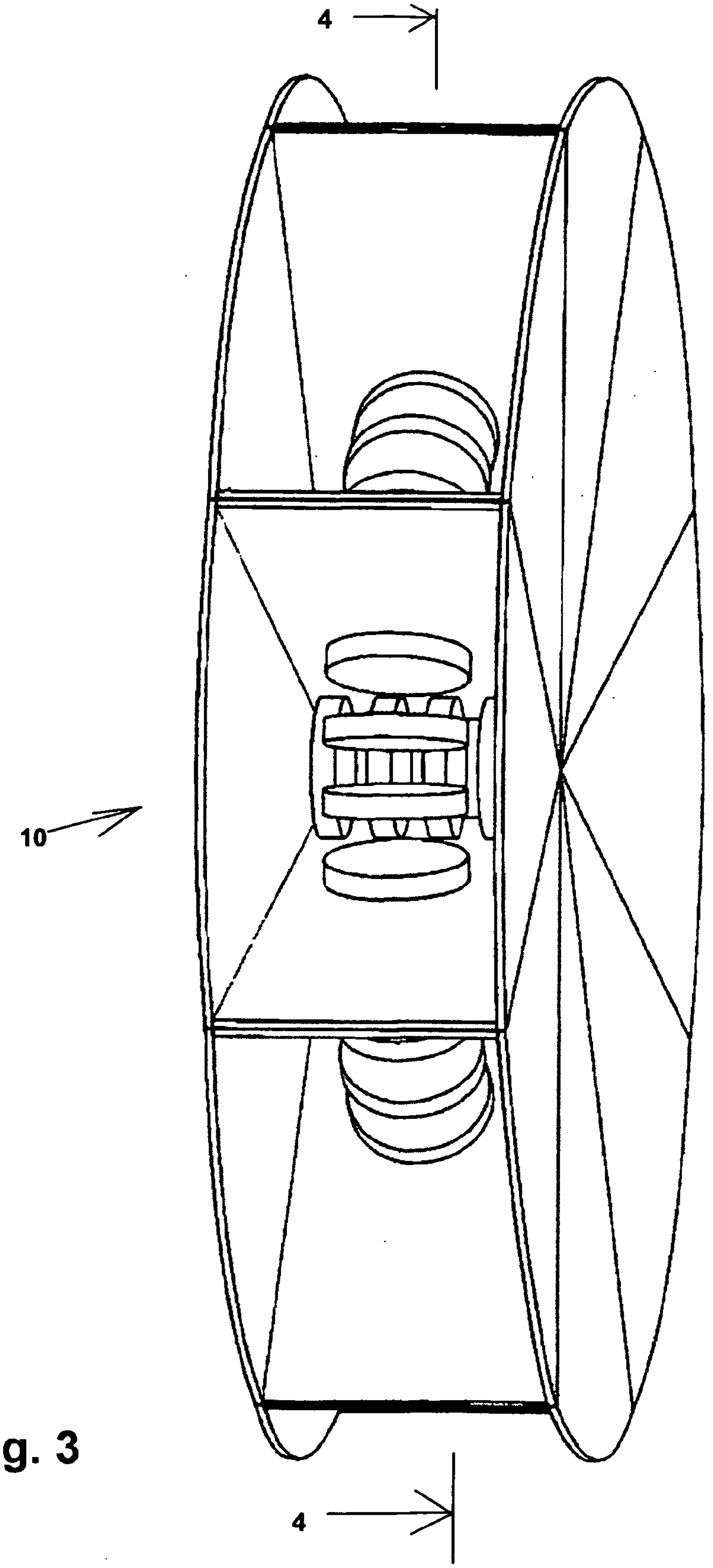


Fig. 3

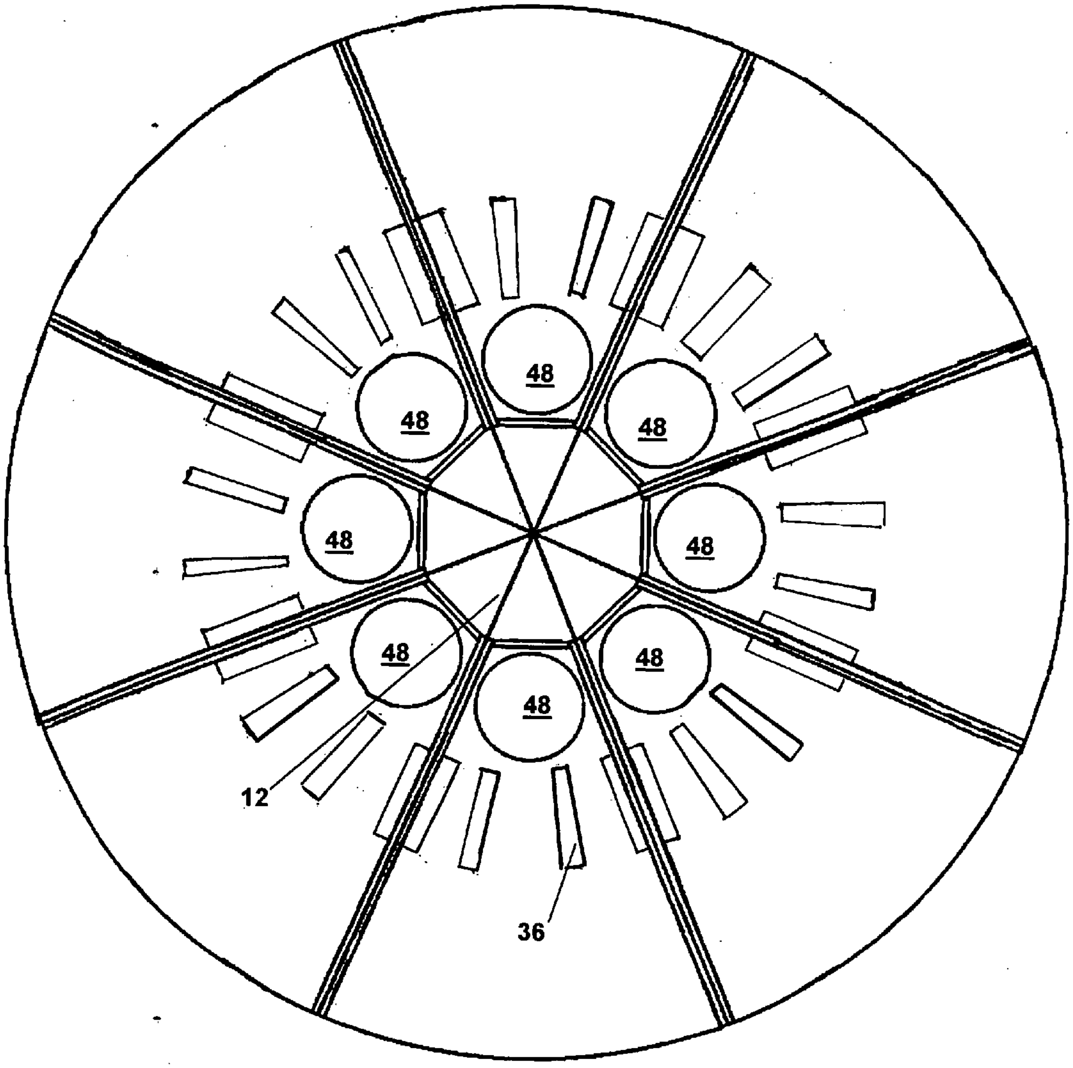


Fig. 4

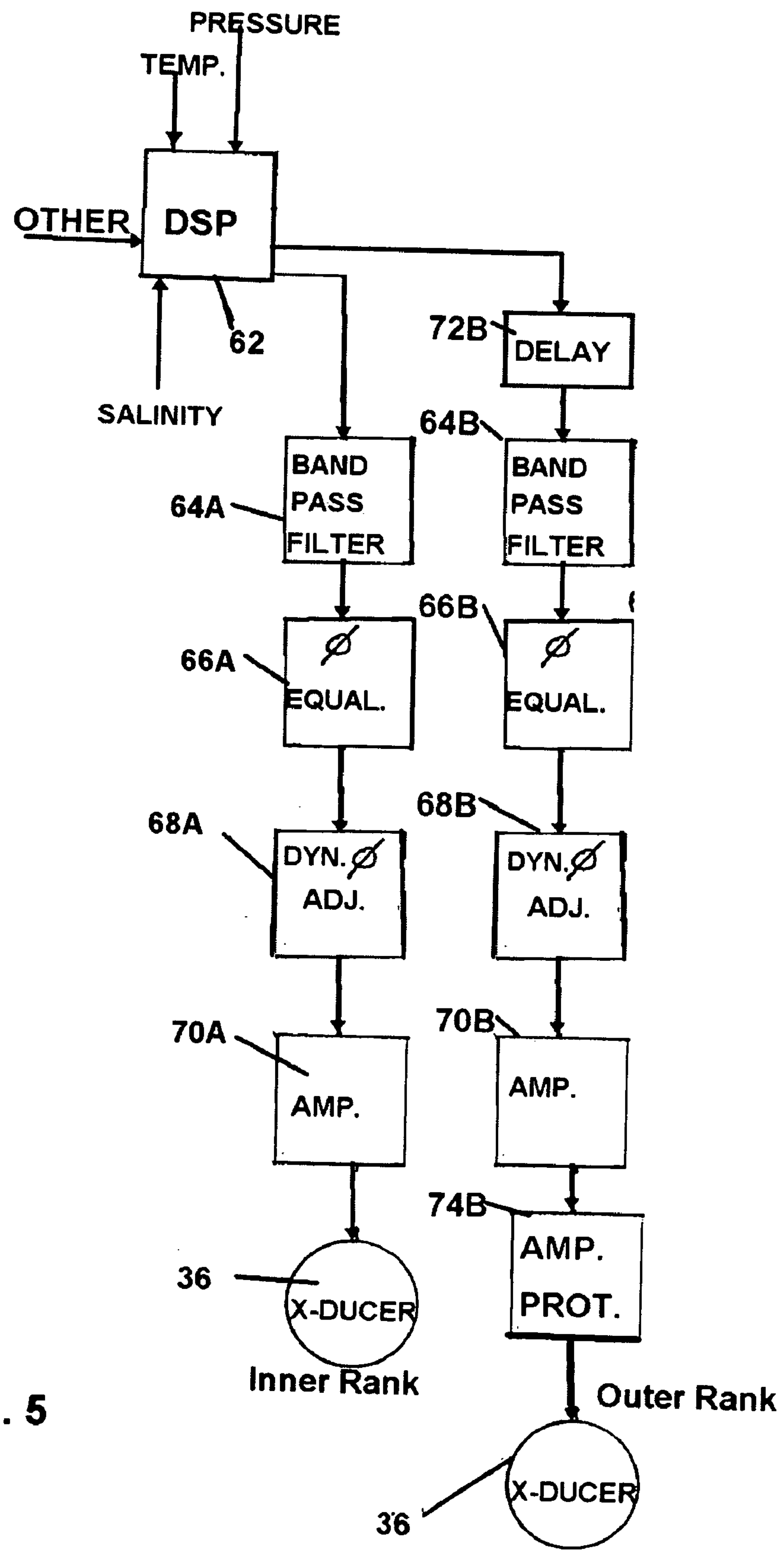

PRESSURE
TEMP.
OTHER
DSP
62
SALINITY
72B
DELAY
64B
BAND PASS FILTER
64A
BAND PASS FILTER
66B
ø EQUAL.
66A
ø EQUAL.
68A
DYN. ø ADJ.
68B
DYN. ø ADJ.
70A
AMP.
70B
AMP.
74B
AMP. PROT.
36
X-DUCER
Inner Rank
Outer Rank
X-DUCER
36

Fig. 5

OMNI-DIRECTIONAL RADIATOR FOR MULTI-TRANSDUCER ARRAY

BACKGROUND

[0001] 1. Technical Field

[0002] The disclosure relates to transducer arrays for producing sound, and more particularly to a high power sound source for use in liquids.

[0003] 2. Description of the Problem

[0004] Sound is a disturbance in the physical properties of an elastic material/medium that propagates through the material. The disturbed physical properties can be alternation in pressure, the displacement of particles or a change in the density of the elastic material/medium. Sound in the form of an acoustic pressure wave will have alternating zones of high and low pressure, which can be referred to as the compression and rarefaction waves. An acoustic pressure wave propagating through a liquid medium can produce phase changes and otherwise affect physical properties of the liquid medium due to changing pressure. Pressure drops in a liquid medium can result in the liquid medium temporarily assuming a gaseous state, gasses dissolved in the liquid leaving solution, or both. In other words bubbles can form and collapse. Such bubbles are termed acoustic cavitation bubbles. Usually acoustic cavitation bubbles rapidly collapse, which in turn can produce intense shock waves.

[0005] Whether acoustic cavitation bubbles are a problem in a given situation depends upon the system. For example, in systems where the pressure variation is highest at the surfaces of the transducers acoustic cavitation bubbles occur along these surfaces and their occurrence decreases rapidly with increasing distance from the surface of the transducer. In such systems the transducer surfaces are vulnerable to damage from acoustic cavitation.

[0006] The acoustic cavitation phenomenon can also limit the amount of power that can be transferred from the transducer element(s) to the propagating medium and distort the resulting signal. A cavitation resistant array was proposed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,050,361 in which interstices of the sonar array between transducers was designed to match the specific acoustic impedance of water.

[0007] The present applicant has a pending United States Patent Application for an Omni-Directional Radiator for Multi-Transducer Array (Ser. No. 12/590,182, filed 4 Nov. 2009, which is incorporated herein by reference) which teaches use of a full or partial toroidal waveguide in sonar applications which limits cavitation for a given power input level. The radiator includes two facing interior surfaces forming boundaries. Acoustic transducers are arranged in a constellation along one of the interior surfaces of a waveguide to face the opposed surface. The facing interior surfaces extend outwardly from a central base or core of the waveguide and terminate at a mouth. Pressure waves propagating outwardly in the waveguide may be reinforced along a portion or substantially the full depth waveguide, including being summed in a cumulative or cascade manner, with operation of outer transducers being delayed and phase compensated to achieve coherent reinforcement of the pressure wave as it propagates outwardly from the core. The waveguide may be divided into channels by the use of interior radial baffles to increase output amplitude.

SUMMARY

[0008] An acoustic radiator for underwater application is provided by opposing boundaries mutually spaced, perpendicular to and centered on a common axis and a plurality of radial barriers located perpendicular to and connected between the top and bottom boundaries to define a plurality of adjacent radial waveguides. A plurality of transducers is disposed in each radial waveguide. The transducers are organized into at least first and second groups or ranks. The groups are characterized in part by the distance of the members of the group from the common axis or apex of the radial waveguide, with at least one group having members located further from the common axis than the other group.

[0009] Additional effects, features and advantages will be apparent in the written description that follows.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] The contribution to the art believed novel is set forth in the appended claims. The preferred mode of use will best be understood by reference to the following detailed description of an illustrative embodiment when read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0011] FIG. **1** is a perspective view of an omni-directional acoustic radiator in accord with one embodiment of the invention.

[0012] FIG. **2** is a cross-sectional view of the omni-directional radiator taken along section lines **2-2** in FIG. **1**.

[0013] FIG. **3** is a perspective view of an omni-directional acoustic radiator in accord with one embodiment of the invention.

[0014] FIG. **4** is a cross-sectional view of the omni-directional radiator taken along section lines **4-4** in FIG. **1**.

[0015] FIG. **5** is a block schematic of drive circuitry for the radiator.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0016] Referring now to the drawings and more particularly to FIGS. **1-2**, an acoustic radiator **10** is shown. Acoustic radiator **10** may be employed to radiate sound in a liquid medium, typically fresh or sea water, and can operate through a full 360-degree arc or circle in a plane perpendicular to a vertical axis A, or in 45-degree arc segments corresponding to each of 8 radial waveguides **14**, **16**, **18**, **20**, **22**, **24**, **26** and **28**. Radial waveguides **14-28** are arrayed in a plane and acoustic radiator **10** exhibits minimal vertical spread in an emission plane perpendicular to the A axis and parallel to the plane of the waveguides.

[0017] Radial waveguides **14-28** are defined by pairs of radial barriers **42** which converge on the central core **12** from the perimeter **50** of the acoustic radiator **10**. The radial barriers **42** are located in planes including the vertical axis A, which is centered within central core **12**. Radial waveguides **14-28** have rectangular cross sectional profiles with sides defined by the radial barriers **42** and opposed top and bottom boundaries provided by disks **44** and **46**, which may be mounted perpendicular to and connected to the radial barriers **42** and centered on the central axis A.

[0018] Radial waveguides **14**, **16**, **18**, **20**, **22**, **24**, **26** and **28** resemble horns in some respects. Horns are conventionally employed as acoustic transformers in low impedance, highly compressible transmission mediums, such as air. In a highly compressible medium a horn increases the efficiency of coupling energy from a transducer/driver to the air by constraining expansion of the air in response to transducer movement in the vicinity of the transducer. In a liquid medium impedance matching functions are not significant at moderate power input levels, however the containment functionality provided still has application in a liquid transmission medium where acoustic cavitation is possible, enabling increased power input from piezoelectric transducers installed in the radial waveguides **14-28**.

[0019] Piezoelectric transducers **36** are supported by suitable braces (not shown) in the waveguides or on the radial barriers **42**. Increased power input is achieved using two ranks **32**, **34**, or arrays, of transducers **36**. The second rank **34** is disposed radially outwardly (or at a greater displacement) from the apex **40** of each of the waveguides **14-28** than the first rank **32** of transducers **36**. The first rank **32** of transducers **36** is located proximate to the apex **40** for each radial waveguide **14-28** at a central core **12**. By initiating a sound wave using the first rank **32** and reinforcing the pressure wave by operating the second rank in phase with the phase of the sound wave as it passes the second rank toward the mouth **38** of a radial waveguide, the second rank **34** can be operated to maintain acoustic wave amplitude. Radial barriers **42** prevent omnidirectional propagation of the acoustic wave from any given rank of transducers **36**, which could operate to cancel the signal.

[0020] By constraining displacement of liquid medium the phenomenon of the sound wave producing a change in phase of the medium is depressed because the transducer appears to operating at greater than its actual depth. This allows a step up in transducer operational intensity both initially and as it propagates from an apex **40** toward the mouth **38** of a given radial waveguide. The generation of acoustic cavitation bubbles during initial generation and reinforcement of the compression and rarefaction portions of an acoustic wave is retarded.

[0021] The first (inner) and second (outer) ranks **32**, **34** of piezoelectric transducers **36** illustrate one way of stacking the transducers so that they are facing one another and spaced. For the first embodiment, the transducers **36** are disposed in what may be characterized as partial toroids located parallel to the plane of the acoustic radiator **10** with the center point of the full toroid located on the central axis A. The transducers **36** of the ranks are mutually spaced, facing one another and located in the toroids. A second embodiment illustrated in FIGS. **3-4** employs an inner rank **48** of piezoelectric transducers with the transducers mounted spaced from one another in a cylinder parallel to the central axis A. The outer rank **34** is unchanged from that used in the first embodiment and the second embodiment is otherwise physically identical to the first embodiment.

[0022] Piezoelectric acoustic transducers **17** are conventionally provided as circular disks, though such a shape is not necessarily best.

[0023] The outer rank **34** of transducers **36** should add enough energy, synchronized with the wave, to at least maintain the acoustic wave's amplitude notwithstanding the expanding circumference of a wave front in a radial waveguide.

[0024] Referring to FIG. **5**, a block diagram circuit **60** illustrates a mechanism for control over transducer **46** inner and outer ranks **32** and **34** or **48** and **34**. Block diagram circuit **60** is adapted for use of the system in a water environment, though its use in other liquid environments should not be discounted. A variety of factors must be taken into account in generating a high intensity underwater sound pulse, such as water depth (represented by pressure), salinity of the water and temperature of the water. All of the these factors affect water density and the speed of sound in water. In addition, other factors may be relevant to consideration of the possible onset of acoustic cavitation, such as the concentration of dissolved gasses, such as oxygen and nitrogen, in the water. Such measurements as are available (typically pressure, temperature and salinity) are provided a digital signal processor **62** which adjusts the base wave form for two channels (inner rank, outer rank) and generates a delay factor for transmission to the outer rank channel. The circuit channels correspond to the two ranks. Final amplifier stages **70**A-B provide differential levels of amplification depending upon the number of transducers in a rank.

[0025] The inner and outer rank channels are schematically substantially identical save that the channel for the inner rank does not provide for delay of the base signal and may not require feedback protection for the final amplifier stage. Each channel includes a bandpass filter **64**, an equalizer **66**, dynamic phase adjustment **68** and final stage amplification **70**. The outer channel adds delay elements **72** and amplification stage feedback protection **74**.

[0026] The acoustic radiator **10** may also be operated as a highly directional receiver.

What is claimed is:

1. An acoustic radiator comprising:

opposing boundaries mutually spaced and centered on a common axis;

a plurality of radial barriers located perpendicular to and connected between the top and bottom boundaries to define a plurality of adjacent radial waveguides; and

a plurality of transducers disposed in each radial waveguide, at least one transducer being located radially outwardly from another transducer.

2. The acoustic radiator of claim **1**, further comprising:

the radial waveguides being located in a plane and defining a circular emission front.

3. The acoustic radiator of claim **2**, further comprising:

a central core located at an apex for each radial waveguide.

4. The acoustic radiator of claim **3**, further comprising:

the plurality of transducers for each radial waveguide being arrayed in inner and outer ranks, each rank having a plurality of transducers and the inner rank being closer to the apex of the radial waveguide.

5. The acoustic radiator of claim **4**, the transducers being piezoelectric devices.

6. An acoustic radiator as claimed in claim **5**, further comprising drive circuitry for the acoustic transducers for synchronously reinforcing a sound wave propagating along the length of each radial waveguide from the apex to a mouth.

7. The acoustic radiator of claim **6**, further comprising:

the plurality of transducers in the inner rank being disposed spaced from one another in a stack parallel to the central axis; and

the plurality of transducers in the outer rank being disposed in a facing relationship spaced from another in a partial toroid centered on the central axis.

8. The acoustic radiator of claim **6**, further comprising:

the plurality of transducers in the inner rank being disposed in a facing relationship spaced from one another in a partial toroid centered on the central axis; and

the plurality of transducers in the outer rank being disposed in a facing relationship spaced from another in a partial toroid centered on the central axis.

9. An acoustic radiator for underwater application comprising:

an arcuate emission front;

a plurality of waveguides extending from apexes to form the arcuate emission front;

a plurality of acoustic transducers positioned in each of first and second ranks in each waveguide, an inner rank being located substantially at the apex of the waveguide and an outer rank being located radially outwardly from the first rank; and

drive circuitry for the acoustic transducers for synchronously reinforcing a sound wave propagating outwardly in each waveguide.

10. An acoustic radiator as claimed in claim **9**, the arcuate emission front being closed on itself to form a circle defining an emission plane.

11. An acoustic radiator as claimed in claim **10**, further comprising:

the inner and outer ranks of acoustic transducers being located in spaced, facing relationship to each other.

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