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SPECIFICATION

ELECTRONIC BALLAST FOR A DISCHARGE LAMP

5 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to an electronic ballast for a discharge lamp, and more particularly to an assembly of the electronic ballast which is added with a sophisticated function but is made compact enough to be installed in a
10 limited space.

2. Description of the Prior Art

A prior art electronic ballast for a discharge lamp has been designed to assemble various electric parts forming the circuits of the ballast into a single casing. In the prior ballast, it has been a practice to use a circuit board which
15 mounts on its one surface the electric parts and is assembled into the casing. When the ballast is required to have an added function of, for example, controlling the operation of the discharge lamp based upon the operating condition of the discharge lamp, the circuit board is designed to mount a corresponding number of parts forming a detection circuit of detecting the
20 operating condition of the discharge lamp, and therefore requires an extra space for accommodating the parts of the detection circuit. Further, when the ballast is designed to have an inverter with an output transformer which is inherently large, the circuit board has to be correspondingly large enough to mount the output transformer together with the other electric parts.
25 Accordingly, the prior art ballast has an underlying problem in that it is difficult

to be made compact for easy installation in a limited space when the ballast is equipped with the added function of controlling the operation of the discharge lamp based upon the detected operating condition thereof and includes the output transformer.

5 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The above problem has been solved by the present invention which provides an improved architecture of enabling compact arrangement of the electric parts forming the circuits of the ballast when the ballast is equipped with a detection circuit for detection of the operating condition of the discharge
10 lamp and includes an output transformer. An electronic ballast in accordance with the present invention comprises an AC-DC converter adapted to be connected to receive a source AC voltage and convert the source AC voltage into a DC voltage. An inverter is provided to give a high frequency output voltage from the DC voltage for operating the discharge lamp. The inverter
15 includes at least one switching element, a control circuit for the switching element, and the output transformer adapted to be connected to the discharge lamp. The control circuit activates the switching element to repetitively interrupt the DC voltage to provide the high frequency output voltage to the discharge lamp through the output transformer. Included in the ballast is a
20 single circuit board mounting thereon electric parts which constitute the converter and the inverter. The circuit board mounting the electric parts is accommodated within a tubular casing together with a dielectric sheet which is provided for insulating the circuit board as well as the electric parts from the casing. The output transformer is mounted on a top surface of the circuit
25 board together with some of the other electric parts. The characterizing

feature of the present invention resides in that the ballast includes a plurality of chip components forming the detection circuit for detection of an operating condition of the discharge lamp, and that the circuit board mounts the chip components of the detection circuit on a bottom surface at a location
5 immediately opposite of the output transformer.

Thus, the circuit board can be insulated successfully from the casing by the use of the dielectric sheet, thereby minimizing a spacing between the circuit board and the casing to achieve a low profile structure for the assembly of the ballast. Further, the dead space left immediately behind the output
10 transformer of inherently large configuration can be best utilized to mount the chip components forming the detection circuit responsible for achieving an added function of the ballast, thereby achieving compact arrangement of the electric parts on the circuit board for reducing a size requirement of the circuit board and therefore contributing to a compact design of the ballast equipped
15 with the output transformer and with the detection circuit.

Accordingly, it is a primary object of the present invention to provide an electronic ballast for a discharge lamp which is capable of being designed into a compact structure sufficient to be installed in a limited space even with the provision of the output transformer and the added detection circuit for
20 detection of the operating condition of the discharge lamp.

In a preferred version, the detection circuit includes a resistor network composed of chip resistors for dividing the output voltage of the inverter into a detection voltage which is fed to the control circuit for control of the inverter. Since the output voltage is divided into the detection voltage being fed to the
25 control circuit, the circuit board can be designed to have less restriction with

regard to dielectric distance for a path of feeding the detection voltage to the control circuit on the bottom of the circuit board, thereby realizing a compact arrangement of the circuit.

The detection circuit may also include a chip capacitor which is
5 surface-mounted on the bottom surface of the circuit board together with chip resistors forming the resistor network.

Also, the ballast may include another detection circuit in the form of a resistor network composed of chip resistors for detection of whether the discharge lamp is connected to the inverter. The chip resistors are also
10 surface-mounted on the bottom of the circuit board immediately opposite of the output transformer.

The output transformer is preferably in the form of a flat configuration. In order to give sufficient electrical insulation to the output transformer, the dielectric sheet is configured to have an extension which covers the entire top
15 face of the output transformer. With this insulation by the extension of the dielectric sheet, no further extra spacing is required between the output transformer and the casing, thereby reducing an overall height of the assembly. Therefore, it is another object of the present invention to provide the electric ballast which is capable of realizing a low profile structure of the assembly.

20 The inverter includes a smoothing capacitor which accumulates therein the DC voltage from the converter, and may further include a set of capacitors which generate a relatively large amount of heat. The circuit board is preferred to be of an elongated configuration and designed to mount the output transformer and the set of the capacitors on its top surface at its
25 opposite longitudinal ends thereof, respectively. The smoothing capacitor is

mounted on the top surface of the circuit board intermediate between the longitudinal ends thereof so as to be less affected thermally from the output transformer as well as the set of the capacitors. Thus, the smoothing capacitor of which operation life may be shortened by exposure to the heat
5 can be well protected thermally from the heat generating parts, enjoying a prolonged operation life.

Preferably, the casing is of an elongated configuration and is composed of a lower case having a base and a pair of lower side walls upstanding from the opposite lateral sides of the base, and an upper case having a top and a pair
10 of upper side walls depending from the opposite lateral sides of the top to overlap the lower side walls, respectively. The switching element is molded into a flat resin package and is mounted on the circuit board intermediate the opposite longitudinal ends and at one lateral side of the circuit board so as to project on the top surface of the circuit board. The resin package has a major
15 surface being held in intimate contact with one of the lower side walls for escaping heat generated at the switching element to the lower case. Thus, the heat radiation of the switching element can be made by best utilization of the lower case. Further, due to the heat radiation effect, the switching element can be located rather adjacent to the smoothing capacitor without
20 thermally affecting the latter, which assures a compact arrangement of the parts on the circuit board.

The one of the lower side walls may be formed with a recess of which bottom projects inwardly of the lower case. The recess is located intermediate the longitudinal ends of the lower case. The package of the
25 switching element is secured to the bottom of the recess by means of a spring

clip for making the major surface of the package intimate contact with the bottom of the recess. The spring clip is shaped into a U-shaped configuration having a pair of resilient legs connected by a thin flat member for pinching an upper portion of the package and the bottom of said recess between the legs.

5 The thin flat member is kept in intimated contact with a top of the package as well as with the top of the upper case for escaping the heat generated at the package also to the upper case through the member. The resilient leg is dimensioned to have a thickness smaller than a depth of the recess. Thus, the spring clip can facilitate to secure the package in intimate contact with the

10 bottom of the recess. Further, the member of the spring clip acts to escape the heat from the package also to the upper case, improving the heat radiation of the package, which is a further object of the present invention. In addition, the leg of the spring clip is received within the depth of the recess so that the spring clip does not add an extra width to the casing or the entire assembly of

15 the ballast.

Preferably, the inverter includes a pair of switching elements connected in series across an output of the AC-DC converter. The control circuit includes a driver having a level-shift circuit for providing a high driving voltage to turn on a high side one of the switching elements. The control circuit is integrated

20 together with the driver into a single chip which is mounted on the bottom surface of the circuit board at a location intermediate the longitudinal ends of the circuit board. With this architecture of integrating the control circuit and the driver into the single chip, a plurality of discrete components forming the control circuit and the driver can be assembled into the single part for reducing

25 a number of the overall parts mounted on the circuit board and therefore

realizing a compact arrangement of the ballast.

The inverter includes a plurality of capacitors each of which may be in the form of a film capacitor. Also, the circuit board is preferably provided on its top surface at the longitudinal ends respectively with an input terminal socket
5 for connection of the converter to the source AC voltage and an output terminal socket for connection of the output transformer to the discharge lamp. The output transformer is disposed adjacent to the output terminal, while the film capacitors are mounted collectively on the circuit board between the output transformer and the output terminal socket. Thus, the film capacitors
10 which develop only relatively low amount of heat can be closely packed into a small space without giving substantial thermal effect to each other, thereby increasing mounting density of the parts to make the assembly compact.

The circuit board may have an approximately uniform width along the length thereof. The width is selected to be nearly equal to a width of the
15 output transformer which is greatest among all of the electric parts. Thus, the assembly can be reduced to as less as the width of the output transformer for achieving a compact design for the assembly.

The circuit board is formed on its bottom surface with a ground line for the inverter, and with a main current path carrying a high frequency current to the
20 output transformer. The main current path includes a pair of main current lines major portions of which run in close parallel relation to each other. The chip of the control circuit is mounted on the bottom surface of the circuit board to be isolated from the main current lines by the ground line so that the control circuit can be protected from being affected by noises occurring in the main
25 current path. Further, since the major portions of the main current lines run in

close parallel relation to each other, it is readily possible to minimize an area confined by the main current path, thereby reducing an amount of radiation noise therefrom.

The circuit board is preferably separated from an array in which a plurality of
5 the circuit boards are arranged side-by-side with a separation line between the adjacent ones of the circuit boards. Each circuit board has a reduced-in-width section within the length thereof to define a slit along the separation line between the adjacent circuit boards. The inverter includes at least one capacitor in the form of a chip-type ceramic capacitor. The
10 chip-type ceramic capacitor is mounted on the reduced-in-width section. Since the reduced-in-width section can be less affected by a stress developed when separating the circuit board from the array, the chip-type ceramic capacitor can be well protected from the stress so as to be kept intact for reliability of the inverter.

15 The electric parts includes a plurality of chips each having terminals on opposite ends thereof, respectively. The chips are mounted on the bottom surface of the circuit board with all of the terminals oriented in a width direction of said circuit board. Thus, the terminals of the chips can be equally and reliably soldered to the circuit board when the circuit board is fed through a
20 soldering bath along the length of the circuit board.

The dielectric sheet is preferred to have a plurality of studs for supporting the circuit board. With the provision of the studs, the circuit board can be stably supported on the dielectric sheet in such a manner as to avoid unnecessary engagement between the leads of some electric parts and the
25 dielectric sheet which might otherwise damage the dielectric sheet.

The case may be provided with positioning means for holding the circuit board in correct position for easy assembly of the ballast.

The output transformer is preferred to include a first auxiliary winding which provides a driving voltage for energizing the control circuit, a second auxiliary winding which provides a detection output indicative of the high frequency output voltage for monitoring the operation of the discharge lamp, and a third winding which provides a preheat current to filaments of the discharge lamp. Thus, the output transformer alone can provide versatile functions, which reduces the number of the discrete components for the inverter, leading to a compact assembly of the ballast.

Preferably, the output transformer is a leakage transformer having a primary winding connected in circuit to flow a high frequency current, and a secondary winding which is magnetically coupled to the primary winding to induce the high frequency output voltage being applied to the discharge lamp. With the use of the output transformer of the leakage type, a leakage inductance can be best utilized as an oscillation inducing inductance for the inverter operation, requiring no additional separate inductance and therefore reducing the number of the overall components of the inverter for compact arrangement of the ballast. Further, the first auxiliary winding is coupled to the first auxiliary winding so as to provide the driving voltage for energizing the control circuit. Thus, the control circuit can be stably supplied with the energy irrespective of the operating condition of the discharge lamp. Also, the second auxiliary winding is coupled to the secondary winding so as to provide the detection output indicative of the high frequency output voltage such that the second auxiliary winding can provide the detection output reliable enough

for detection of the operating condition of the discharge lamp.

The AC-DC converter includes a rectifier providing the rectified DC voltage.

The control circuit is preferred to include a dropping resistor which is

connected to the rectifier for deriving a DC voltage for energizing the control
5 circuit at the time of starting the inverter. Thus, the dropping resistor is
integrated into the control circuit to reduce the number of the discrete
components.

Most preferably, the inverter is of a charge-pump type having a capacitor
which is connected in a path of receiving an input current from said AC-DC
10 converter and flowing the input current through an oscillating element of the
inverter and through the switching element for restraining harmonics in the
input current from the source AC voltage. With the use of the charge-pump
type inverter, it is possible to restrain the harmonics of the input current from
the source AC voltage and therefore improve power factor of the ballast
15 without requiring any external harmonic filter, contributing to reduce the
number of the circuit components for the inverter capable of suppressing the
harmonics.

The ballast may include an adjusting means mounted on the circuit board
to adjust output characteristics of the discharge lamp for operating the
20 discharge lamp successfully even when the ballast is energized by the source
AC voltage of different voltages, thereby enabling to operate the lamp
consistently from the differing AC voltage sources with the use of the common
ballast.

The adjustor means can operate to adjust a lamp start output power and a
25 lamp operating output power fed to the discharge lamp respectively at the time

of starting the lamp and during the steady-state operation of the lamp, thereby minimizing electrical stress applied to the electric components of the inverter and therefore giving reliability thereto, in addition to facilitating the circuit design of the inverter.

5 These and still other objects and advantageous features of the present invention will become more apparent from the following description of the preferred embodiment when taken in conjunction with the attached drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

10 FIG. 1 is an exploded perspective view of an electronic ballast for a discharge lamp in accordance with a preferred embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view showing the bottom of a circuit board utilized in the above ballast;

FIG. 3 is a circuit diagram of the above ballast;

15 FIGS. 4A to 4F are diagrams showing the operation of an inverter in the above ballast;

FIG. 5 is a block diagram of a control circuit utilized for control the operation of the inverter;

FIG. 6 is a circuit diagram of a driver incorporated in the control circuit;

20 FIG. 7 is a time chart illustrating the operation of the driver;

FIG. 8 is a partial top view of the circuit board;

FIG. 9 is a partial perspective view illustrating switching transistors secured to a case of the ballast;

FIG. 10 illustrates a spring clip for securing the switching transistors;

25 FIG. 11 is a sectional view illustrating the switching transistors secured to the

case;

FIG. 12 is a schematic plan view illustrating a portion of the bottom of the circuit board;

FIG. 13 is a schematic plan view illustrating a portion of the bottom of the circuit board;

FIG. 14 is a perspective view illustrating end portions of a lower casing;

FIG. 16 is a schematic top view illustrating the circuit board supported in position to the lower casing;

FIGS. 16 and 17 are schematic top views illustrating modified arrangements for supporting the circuit board to the lower casing, respectively;

FIG. 18 illustrates an end portion of the circuit board engaged with a positioning stand of the lower case according to the arrangement of FIG. 17;

FIG. 19 is a plan view illustrating an array of the circuit boards which are to be separated from each other;

FIG. 20 is a sectional view of the array; and

FIG. 21 a plan view of a portion of the circuit board in accordance with a further modification of the embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENT

Referring now to FIG. 1, there is shown an electronic ballast in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. The ballast comprises a circuit board **10** mounting various electric parts forming an electric circuit of the ballast, a tubular casing composed of a lower case **210** and an upper case **220** to enclose the circuit board, and a dielectric sheet **230** covering the circuit

board **10** as well as the electric parts for insulating the same from the casing.

The casing is made of a metal such as steel and aluminum. The circuit board

10 is of an elongated configuration and provided on its top surface at its opposite longitudinal ends respectively with an input terminal socket **20** for

5 wiring connection with an AC mains **21** and with an output terminal socket **30**

for wiring connection with discharge lamps **LA1** and **LA2**. The circuit board is

made of a phenol resin impregnated paper or a composite epoxy material (CEM).

FIG. 3 shows the ballast circuit which is designed to operate two discharge
10 lamps **LA1** and **LA2**. The ballast circuit has an AC-DC converter **40** in the form of a full-wave diode-bridge rectifier which is connected through the input terminal socket **20** to receive a source AC voltage from the AC mains **21** and convert the source AC voltage into a pulsating DC voltage. The converter **40** is connected to the AC mains **21** through a filtering capacitor **41**, and a filter **42**
15 composed of a common-mode choke **43**, and a normal-mode choke **44**. The pulsating DC voltage from the rectifier **40** is smoothed by a step-down chopper **50** composed of a smoothing capacitor **51**, an inductor **52**, diodes **53** to **55**, and a switching element **72**. The smoothing capacitor **51** is connected in series with the inductor **52** and diode **53** across the rectifier **40** in a parallel
20 relation respectively with capacitors **61** and **62**. The circuit includes an inverter **70** which converts the DC voltage into a high frequency output AC voltage to be applied to the discharge lamps **LA1** and **LA2**. The inverter **70** comprises a series connected pair of switching elements **71** and **72** connected across the rectifier **40** in series with a series combination of diodes **73** and **74**,
25 and a leakage-type output transformer **80** having a primary winding **81** and a

secondary winding **82**. The primary winding **81** is connected across the switching element **71** in series with an inductance **83** which is given by a leakage inductance of the transformer, a DC blocking capacitor **75** and diode **74**. The secondary winding **82** is connected across a series combination of the discharge lamps **LA1** and **LA2** in parallel relation to an oscillation-inducing capacitor **77**. The switching element **72** is connected in series with the primary winding **81**, leakage inductance **83**, capacitor **75**, and diode **73** across the rectifier **40** for drawing in an input current through the switching element **72**. A distortion improving capacitor **76** is connected across diode **74**.

Switching elements **71** and **72**, each realized by a MOSFET having an inherent parasitic diode permitting a reverse current flow, are controlled to turn on repetitively at a high frequency in an alternate fashion with each other so as to generate the high frequency voltage at a resonance circuit composed of the leakage inductance **83**, discharge lamps **LA1**, **LA2**, and capacitor **77**, thereby applying the high frequency output voltage to operate the discharge lamps.

Switching elements **71** and **72** are controlled to turn on and off by a control circuit **100** including a driver IC **110** which provides driving voltages to gates of switching elements **71** and **72** respectively through resistors **77** and **78**.

Capacitor **61** is connected in parallel with the series combination of smoothing capacitor **51**, inductor **52**, and diode **53** of the step-down chopper **50** to bypass the high frequency output of the inverter, while capacitor **62** is connected across the rectifier **40** to bypass the high frequency output of the inverter for reducing a stress at the rectifier **40**.

The smoothing capacitor **51** is connected in series with a switching element **64** and a resistor **65** across the rectifier **40**. The switching element **64** is

controlled by the control circuit **100** to be kept turned off only at the time of energizing the inverter in order to restrict a rushing current from flowing into the inverter for protection of the circuit. After the smoothing capacitor **51** is charged, the switching element **64** is turned off to enable the inverter operation
5 of providing the high frequency output voltage.

The output transformer **80** additionally includes a first auxiliary winding **84**, a second auxiliary winding **85**, and a third auxiliary winding **86** which induce individual voltages proportion to the high frequency output voltage of the inverter. The first auxiliary winding **84** is coupled to the primary winding **81** to
10 provide a power through a diode **66** to the control circuit. Since the first auxiliary winding **84** is coupled on the side of the primary winding **81**, it can supply the power to the control circuit **100** stably without being affected by the condition of the discharge lamps coupled on the side of the secondary winding
15 **82**. The second auxiliary winding **85** is coupled to the secondary winding **82** to provide a voltage corresponding to the high frequency output voltage being applied to the discharge lamps and therefore give a reliable monitoring of the output voltage. The third auxiliary winding **86** is coupled to the secondary winding **82** and is cooperative with a capacitor **87** to provide a preheating current to the filaments of the discharge lamps for facilitating the start-up of the
20 discharge lamps. Incidentally, a capacitor **88** is connected to one end of the secondary winding **82**, and a capacitor **89** is connected across the one discharge lamp LA1.

As shown in FIGS. 4A to 4F, the inverter operates to repeat six modes many times during one complete cycle of the AC voltage to suppress
25 harmonics, i.e., input current distortion in the input current from the AC voltage

source to the inverter. In these figures, output transformer **80**, discharge lamps **LA1** and **LA2** as well as the associated parts are collectively referred to as a load circuit **RL**, and also inductor **52**, diodes **53** to **55**, switching element **64**, and resistor **65** are omitted for simplicity.

5 Mode 1 (FIG. 4A)

When switching element **72** is on, an oscillating current (resonance current) I is supplied from rectifier **40**. In this condition, there is established a relation among voltage V_{51} of smoothing capacitor **51**, voltage V_{76} of distortion improving capacitor **76**, and voltage V_{in} of the input voltage to the inverter (output voltage of rectifier **40**) that $V_{in} \geq V_{51} + V_{76}$.

10 Mode 2 (FIG. 4B)

After switching element **72** goes off, the oscillating current I continues to flow through parasitic diode of switching element **71** to charge smoothing capacitor **51**. Then, switching element **71** is triggered to turn on.

15 Mode 3 (FIG. 4C)

When leakage inductance **83** of output transformer **80** is exhausted in mode 2, the oscillating current I is reversed due to the charge accumulated in capacitors **76** and **75**, while discharging capacitor **76**.

Mode 4 (FIG. 4D)

20 When capacitor **76** is discharged, diode **74** becomes conductive to flow the oscillating current I continuously.

Mode 5 (FIG. 4E)

After switching element **71** is turned off, the oscillating current I continues to flow through parasitic diode of switching element **72** to charge smoothing capacitor **51**. Then, switching element **72** is triggered to turn on.

Mode 6 (FIG. 4F)

When leakage inductance **83** of output transformer is exhausted in mode 5, the oscillating current **I** is reversed due to the charge accumulated in smoothing capacitor **51**, thereby charging capacitor **76**. When capacitor **76** is charged to such an extent of satisfying the relation that $V_{in} = V_{51} + V_{76}$, the operation goes back to mode 1.

Therefore, by setting that $V_{51} = V_{in} \text{ (peak)}$, and $V_{76} \text{ (peak)} = V_{51}$, the above six modes repeats many times during one complete cycle of the AC voltage from the AC mains, thereby suppressing harmonics (input current distortion) in the input current. In other words, the input current from the AC mains is drawn to flow into the inverter even when the AC voltage is at a lowered level within the cycle of the AC voltage, thereby suppressing the harmonics in the input current. In this sense, the inverter having the circuit configuration of FIG. 3 can be referred to as the inverter of a charge-pump type inherently capable of suppressing the harmonics without requiring additional harmonic suppressing circuit such as a passive filter and an active filter. Thus, the use of the inverter of the charge-pump type can reduce the number of the parts, making the whole ballast assembly into a compact design.

The control circuit **100** is designed to control the switching elements **71** and **72** in order to preheat, start, and operate the discharge lamps, and also to deactivate the inverter upon detection of an abnormal condition or no-load condition. As shown in FIG. 5, the control circuit **100** comprises a VCO (voltage-controlled oscillator) **101** which provides to driver IC **110** a series of oscillating pulses of which frequency is varied with an applied voltage. The

driver IC **110** is responsive to the oscillating pulses from VCO **101** for generating driving voltages for turning on the switching elements **71** and **72**, details of which will be discussed later. The control circuit **100** includes a first timer **102**, a second timer **103**, an abnormal condition determining circuit **104**,
5 and a no-load condition determining circuit **105**. Further, the control circuit **100** includes a dropping resistor (not shown) which is connected to the rectifier **40** for deriving a DC voltage for energizing the control circuit at the time of starting the inverter. Thereafter, the control circuit **100** is continuously energized by the voltage from the first auxiliary winding **84**. The parts forming
10 the circuit of the controller **100** are integrated together with the driver IC **110** into a single chip **100A** mounted on the bottom surface of the circuit board **10**. The first timer **102** is programmed to provide to VCO **101** voltages respectively controlling driver IC **110** to operate the inverter for preheating, starting, and operating the discharge lamps in accordance with a predetermined time
15 schedule. The abnormal condition determining circuit **104** is connected to monitor the output voltage of the inverter so that it determines an abnormal condition and issue an abnormal signal when the monitored output voltage becomes critically high due to the increased lamp voltage seen at the end of its operation life. Upon receiving the abnormal signal, the first timer **102**
20 operates to cease the inverter for a predetermined time period after which it actuates to restart the inverter. The abnormal signal is also fed to the second timer **103** which measures a time during which the abnormal signal lasts and issues a stop signal when the measured time exceeds over a predetermined level. The stop signal is fed to deactivate VCO **101** so as to stop driving the
25 switching elements. The no-load condition determining circuit **105** is coupled

in the circuit to monitor whether the discharge lamps are mounted correctly, and issue a no-load signal when any of the two discharge lamps is dismounted. Upon receiving the no-load signal, the first timer **102** operates to deactivate the VCO **101** for ceasing the inverter.

5 The output voltage of the inverter is monitored by a voltage monitor which comprises, in addition to the second auxiliary winding **85**, a detection circuit **90** having a resistor network of resistors **91** and **92**, a diode **93**, and a capacitor **94**. The resistor network is cooperative with capacitor **94** to provide a divided DC voltage indicative of the output voltage of the inverter to the abnormal
10 condition determining circuit **104**. The third auxiliary winding **86** is connected to another detection circuit **99** which is a resistor network composed of resistors **95** to **98** connected in series with the filaments of discharge lamps **LA1** and **LA2** in a path leading from one end of the rectifier **40** to the no-load condition determining circuit **105** of the control circuit **100**. When either or
15 both of the discharge lamps **LA1** and **LA2** is disconnected, no current will flow through the resistor network of resistors **95** to **99**. Upon this occurrence, the control circuit **100** responds to stop the inverter.

Now referring to FIG. 6, the driver IC **110** includes a level-shift circuit **111**, and a pair of buffer circuits **112** and **113**. The level-shift circuit **111** is provided
20 for generating a high driving voltage to turn on the high-side switching element **71**, and comprise a pulse generator **114**, a pair of transistors **115** and **116**, and a flip-flop **117**. The signal from the control circuit **100** is processed at the level-shift circuit **111** and through the buffer circuit **112** to provide the high driving voltage at a terminal **HO** for turning on the high-side switching element
25 **71** of the inverter. While the same signal from the control circuit **100** is

processed through the buffer circuit **113** to provide a low driving voltage at terminal **LO** for turning on the low-side switching element **72** of the inverter. FIG. 7 illustrates waveforms at points A to F in the circuit of FIG. 6.

Turning back to FIGS. 1 and 2, there are shown which parts of the ballast
5 circuit are mounted on which portions of the circuit board **10**. The circuit board **10** is of an elongated configuration having a uniform width and is formed on its bottom surface with a circuit pattern connecting the parts of the ballast circuit. It is noted that bulk parts are mounted on the top surface of the circuit board, while chip components are mounted on the bottom surface of the circuit
10 board. As seen in FIG. 1, the bulk parts include input terminal socket **20**, filtering capacitor **41**, filter **42**, capacitors **61**, **62** and **76**, switching transistors **71** and **72**, a combination of diodes **73** and **74**, inductor **52**, smoothing capacitor **51**, resistor **65**, variable resistors **67** and **68**, DC blocking capacitor **75**, output transformer **80**, capacitors **77**, **87** to **89**, and the output terminal
15 socket **30**. As seen in FIG. 2, the chip components include chip resistors **91**, **92**, **95** to **98**, chip capacitor **94**, chip diodes **93** and **66**, chip transistor (FET) **64**, chip package **100A** integrating a portion of the control circuit **100** and the driver IC **110**, and chip components **100B** forming the remainder of the control circuit **100**.

20 The input terminal socket **20** and the output terminal socket **30** are mounted at the distal longitudinal ends of the circuit board **10**. Each of the terminal sockets **20** and **30** has a rapid wire connection and release mechanism for easy wiring connection and disconnection. The output transformer **80** is mounted on one side of the output terminal socket **30** in such
25 a manner as to occupy full width of the circuit board **10**. That is, output

transformer **80** has a maximum width among the other bulk parts and the circuit board **10** is dimensioned to have the width approximately equal to the width of the output transformer **80**, as shown in FIG. 8. Capacitors **77**, **87** to **89**, each in the form of a film capacitor, are collectively mounted between the
5 output terminal socket **30** and the output transformer **80** such that the film capacitors which develop only relatively low amount of heat can be closely packed into a small space without giving substantial thermal effect to each other.

As discussed hereinbefore with reference to FIG. 3, the detection circuit **90**
10 for monitoring the high frequency output voltage of the inverter and providing the detected voltage to the control circuit **100** are realized by diode **93**, resistors **91** and **92**, and capacitor **94**. All these parts are presented as the chip components and are mounted on the bottom surface of the circuit board **10** at a location immediately opposite of output transformer **80**, as shown in
15 FIG. 2, in order to best utilize a space behind the output transformer for adding the detection circuit to the ballast. Further, resistors **95** to **98** forming the detection circuit **99** for detecting whether the discharge lamps are mounted in the portion opposite of output transformer **80** by best utilization of the space behind the output transformer. In FIG. 2, soldered lead ends of input terminal
20 socket **20**, output terminal socket **30**, output transformer **80**, switching elements **71** and **72**, and combination **73A** of diodes **73** and **74** are indicated respectively by numerals **20X**, **30X**, **71X**, **72X**, and **73X**.

Turning back to FIG. 1, smoothing capacitor **51** is mounted at the longitudinal center of the circuit board **10** so as to be less thermally affected
25 from output transformer **80** as well as from a set of capacitors **61**, **62**, and **76**

which are mounted at one longitudinal end adjacent to the input terminal socket **20**. Since the smoothing capacitor **51** is in the form of an aluminum electrolytic capacitor of which life is shortened when exposed to high temperature, the above arrangement is advantageous to elongate the life of the smoothing capacitor. Switching elements **71** and **72** are each molded into a flat resin package and are mounted at a portion intermediate the longitudinal ends of circuit board **10** and arranged side-by-side along one lateral edge of the circuit board. Also, the combination of diodes **73** and **74** is molded into a like flat resin package **73A** which is mounted in an adjacent relation to the switching element **72**. In this connection, the chip package **100A**, the chip components **100B** of control circuit **100**, and associated chip resistors **77** and **78** are collectively mounted on the bottom and at near the longitudinal center of the circuit board in a spaced relation from the switching transistors **71** and **72**, the control circuit can be well protected from being influenced by the switching elements and therefore be free from noises, in addition to that the control circuit and its associated resistors can be densely packed on the bottom of the circuit board **10**.

The flat package **71**, **72**, and **73A** are secured to one side wall **212** of the lower case **210** by means of spring clips **250**, as shown in FIGS. 9 to 11. As shown in FIG. 1, the side wall **212** is formed with a recess **213** of which bottom projects inwardly of the lower case. It is this recess **213** that serves to hold the packages **71**, **72**, and **73A** and to release the heat thereof into the lower case **210**. That is, the major surface of each package is held in an intimate contact with the bottom of the recess **213** to release the heat to the lower case. The spring clip **250** comprises a pair of resilient legs **251** and **252** connected

by a thin flat member **253**. As shown in Fig. 11, the spring clip **250** serves to retain the upper end of the package **71** (**72**, **73A**) together with the bottom of recess **213** between resilient legs **251** and **252**, and with the member **253** in contact with the upper end of the package. When the lower case **210** is covered with upper case **220**, member **253** comes into contact with the top **222** of upper case **220**, thereby serving to escape the heat of the package also into the upper case **220** and therefore improving heat radiation of the package. As shown in FIG. 11, the thickness of the resilient leg **251** is less than the depth of recess **213** so that the clip does not add an extra width to the whole assembly. The side wall **222** of the upper case **220** is dimensioned to cover the recess **213**. It is noted in this connection that the height of the package as measured from circuit board **10** plus the thickness of member **253** of spring clip **250** is nearly equal to the height of output transformer **80**. Thus, the height of the assembly is determined by a higher one of the output transformer and the package.

The variable resistors **67** and **68** are included in the control circuit **100** in order to adjust the oscillating frequency of the inverter in accordance with differing source AC voltage available at different areas of the world. Particularly, variable resistor **67** is provided to adjust the oscillating frequency at the time of starting the discharge lamps, while variable resistor **68** adjusts the oscillating frequency at the stable-state operation of the discharge lamps. With the inclusion of variable resistors, it is possible to provide constant luminous output of the discharge lamps irrespective of the different source AC voltages, while minimizing an electrical stress applied to the parts of the inverter.

As shown in FIG. 1, the dielectric sheet **230** is designed to cover almost all of the circuit board **10** and comprises an elongated bottom **231**, a pair of side walls **232**, and a top extension **233** extending one of the side walls. The top extension **233** is bent over the parts mounted on the circuit board **10** so as to cover at least the entire top of output transformer **80**, capacitors **77**, **87** to **89**, smoothing capacitor **51**, capacitor **75**, resistor **65**, and variable resistors **67** and **68**. Capacitor **41** as well as filter **42** which have sufficient insulation capability against the upper case **220** can be left uncovered by the extension **233** so as to improve heat radiation from these parts to the upper case **230**.

One of the side walls **232** has a cut-out **235** at a portion corresponding to the recess **213** of the lower case **210** for contacting the packages **71**, **72**, and **73A** directly with the bottom of recess **213**. Projecting integrally on the bottom **231** of dielectric sheet **230** are longitudinally spaced studs **236** to support the circuit board **10**, improving electrical insulation of the circuit board **10** from the bottom of the lower case **210**. The studs **236** are formed to abut against the bottom of circuit board **10** at portions free from the lead ends of the parts mounted on top of the circuit board. Thus, the dielectric sheet **230** can be protected from being scratched by the lead ends of the parts on top of circuit board **10**. One of the studs **236** is located to support the output transformer **80** which is a heaviest part of the ballast. It is noted in this connection that the lead ends of the parts project on the bottom surface of the circuit board **10** so as not to exceed a maximum height of the chips **64** and **100A** mounted on the bottom of circuit board **10**.

As shown in FIG. 12, the circuit board **10** is formed on its bottom with a pair of parallel lines **P1** and **P2** forming a main current path carrying the high

frequency output current to the output transformer **80**, and with a ground line **P3** of the inverter. The chip components of the control circuit **100** are mounted in an area **X** which is isolated from the lines **P1** and **P2** by the ground line **P3**. Thus, the control circuit can be well protected from being adversely
5 affected by the high frequency current. Further, the main current path can be closely arranged to form a closed circuit occupying an area which is small enough to reduce radiation noise from the main current path.

As shown in FIG. 13, all the chips including the chip package **100A** of the control circuit **100** mounted on the bottom of the circuit board **10** are oriented
10 uniformly such that terminals or electrodes **D** at the opposite ends of each part are oriented in a width direction of the circuit board **10**. This is advantageous for reliable soldering connection of the electrodes **D** to the circuit pattern while moving the circuit board within a soldering bath along the lengthwise direction (indicated by an arrow) of the circuit board.

15 As shown in FIG. 1, the circuit board **10** is held on a plurality of stands **214** which are formed at four corners of the bottom **211** of the lower case **210** as being upturned therefrom. One of the stands **214** has an upright fin **215** which fits into a single slit **11** formed at one longitudinal and width end of the circuit board **10**. As best shown in FIG. 14, the upright fin **215** of the one
20 stand **214** is made longer than those of the other three stands **214** such that the circuit board **10** can be correctly positioned on the bottom of the lower case **210**, while the upright fins of the other three stands abut against the longitudinal ends of the circuit board, as shown in FIG. 15. Thus, the stand **214** with the long fin **215** is cooperative with the slit **11** to define a positioning
25 means for correct assembly of the circuit board in the casing. Alternately, as

shown in FIG. 16, the slits 11 may be formed respectively at the longitudinal ends of the circuit board 10 but offset towards one width end thereof so as to receive the correspondingly long upright fins 215 at the longitudinal end of the lower case 210. Further, as shown in FIGS. 17 and 18, one of the stands 214
5 may be formed with a separate pin 216 for insertion into a corresponding hole 12 of the circuit board 10 for correct positioning of the circuit board.

As shown in FIGS. 19 and 20, a plurality of the circuit boards 10 are prepared in the form of an array in which the boards 10 are arranged side-by-side with a separation line or V-shaped cut S formed between the
10 adjacent ones of the boards. Further, each board 10 is formed to have reduced-in-width section 13 along its length to thereby leave corresponding slits 14 between the adjacent two boards 10. With the provision of the slits 14, the reduced-in-width sections can be less susceptible to a stress which develops when separating the board 10 from the array by bending it along the
15 separation line S. It is this reduced-in-width section 12 that is reserved for mounting the chip components M which is delicate or fragile so as to protect the chip components from the stress applied at the time of separating the board. The chip components typically include chip-type ceramic capacitors.

Turning back to FIG. 1, the upper case 220 has a pair of upper side walls
20 222 depending from the lateral ends the top 221 to overlap the lower side wall 212 of the lower case 210. The upper side walls 222 are provided respectively with inward projections 223 which engage into corresponding openings 217 in the lower side walls 212 of the lower case 210 to secure the upper case to the lower case. Depending respectively at the longitudinal
25 ends of the upper case 220 are partitions 224 and 225 which are positioned

behind the input and output terminal sockets **20** and **30** to conceal the other parts of the ballast in the tubular casing.



Claims:

1. An electronic ballast for a discharge lamp comprising:

an AC-DC converter (40) adapted to be connected to receive a source AC

5 voltage and convert the source AC voltage into a DC voltage;

an inverter (70) providing a high frequency output voltage from said DC
voltage for operating the discharge lamp (LA1, LA2), said inverter comprising
at least one switching element (71, 72), a control circuit (100) for said
switching element, and an output transformer (80) adapted to be connected to
10 said discharge lamp, said control circuit (100) activating said switching
element (71, 72) to repetitively interrupt said DC voltage to provide the high
frequency output voltage to said discharge lamp (LA1, LA2) through said
output transformer (80),

a single circuit board (10) mounting thereon electric parts which constitute
15 said converter and said inverter;

a tubular casing (210, 220) accommodating therein said circuit board;

a dielectric sheet (230) interposed between said circuit board and said
casing for insulation of said circuit board and said electric parts from said
casing;

20 characterized in that

said ballast includes a plurality of chip components (91, 92, 93, 94) forming
a detection circuit (90; 99) for detection of a condition of said discharge lamp;

said circuit board (10) mounting said output transformer (80) on its top
surface and mounting said chip components (91, 92, 93, 94) on its bottom
25 surface at a location immediately opposite of said output transformer (80).



2. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
said detection circuit (90) is provided to detect an operating condition of said
5 discharge lamp and includes a resistor network composed of chip resistors (91,
92) for dividing the output voltage of said inverter into a detection voltage
which is fed to said control circuit (100) for control of said inverter.

10 3. The ballast as set forth in claim 2, wherein
said detection circuit (90) further includes a chip capacitor (94) which is
surface-mounted on the bottom surface of said circuit board (10) together with
said chip resistors (91, 92).

15

4. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
said detection circuit is provided for detection of whether said discharge lamp
(LA1, LA2) is connected to said inverter, said detection circuit (99) being in
the form of a resistor network which is composed of chip resistors (95-98), and
20 said chip resistors (95-98) being surface-mounted on the bottom of said circuit
board (10) immediately opposite of said output transformer (80).

5. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
25 said output transformer (80) is of a flat configuration, said dielectric sheet (230)



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having an extension (233) which covers the entire top face of said output transformer (80) for insulation thereof from said casing.

5 6. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
said inverter (70) includes a smoothing capacitor (51) which accumulates
therein said DC voltage from said converter, and further includes a set of
capacitors (61, 62, 76) which generate a relatively large amount of heat,
said circuit board (10) being of an elongated configuration and mounting said
10 output transformer (80) and a set of said capacitors (61, 62, 76) on its top
surface at its opposite longitudinal ends thereof, respectively,
said smoothing capacitor (51) being mounted on the top surface of said circuit
board intermediate between the longitudinal ends thereof.

15

7. The ballast as set forth in claim 6, wherein
said casing is of an elongated configuration and is composed of a lower case
(210) having a base (211) and a pair of lower side walls (212) upstanding from
the opposite lateral sides of the base, and an upper case (220) having a top
20 (221) and a pair of upper side walls (222) depending from the opposite lateral
sides of the top to overlap the lower side walls, respectively,

 said switching element (71, 72) being molded into a flat resin package and
being mounted on said circuit board (10) intermediate the opposite longitudinal
ends and at one lateral side of said circuit board to project on the top surface
25 of said circuit board, said resin package having a major surface being held in



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intimate contact with one of said lower side walls (212) for escaping heat generated at the switching element to the lower case.

5 8. The ballast as set forth in claim 7, wherein
the one of said lower side walls (212) is formed with a recess (213) of which
bottom projects inwardly of said lower case, said recess being located
intermediate the longitudinal ends of the lower case,
said package (71, 72) being secured to the bottom of said recess (213) by
10 means of a spring clip (250) for making said major surface of said package
intimate contact with the bottom of said recess,
said spring clip being shaped into a U-shaped configuration having a pair of
resilient legs (251, 252) connected by a thin flat member (253) for pinching an
upper portion of the package (71, 72) and the bottom of said recess (213)
15 between said legs (251, 252), said thin flat member (253) being held in
intimated contact with a top of said package (71, 72) as well as with said top
(221) of said upper case (220) for escaping the heat generated at the package
also to said upper case through said member, said resilient leg (251) having a
thickness which is smaller than a depth of said recess.

20

9. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
said inverter (70) includes a pair of switching elements (71, 72) connected in
series across an output of said AC-DC converter (40),
25 said control circuit (100) including a driver (110) having a level-shift circuit



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(111) for providing a high driving voltage to turn on a high side one (71) of said switching elements,

said control circuit (100) being integrated together with said driver (110) into a single chip (100A),

5 said chip (100A) being mounted on the bottom surface of said circuit board (10) at a location intermediate between the longitudinal ends of said circuit board.

10 10. The ballast as set forth in claim 6, wherein
said inverter (70) includes a plurality of capacitors (77, 87, 88, 89) each in the form of a film capacitor,
said circuit board (10) being provided on its top surface at the longitudinal ends respectively with an input terminal socket (20) for connection of said
15 converter to said source AC voltage and an output terminal socket (30) for connection of the output transformer to said discharge lamp,
said output transformer (80) being disposed adjacent to said output terminal (30),
said film capacitors (77, 87, 88, 89) being mounted collectively on said circuit
20 board (10) between said output transformer (80) and said output terminal socket (30).

11. The ballast as set forth in claim 5, wherein
25 said circuit board (10) is of an elongated configuration having an



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approximately uniform width which is nearly equal to a width of said output transformer (80), the width of said transformer being largest among all of said electric parts.

5

12. The ballast as set forth in claim 9, wherein
said circuit board (10) is formed on its bottom surface with a ground line (P3)
for said inverter, and with a main current path carrying a high frequency
current to said output transformer, said chip (100A) of said control circuit (100)
10 being isolated from said main current path by said ground line (P3), and said
main current path including a pair of main current lines (P1, P2) major portions
of which run in close parallel relation to each other.

15

13. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein said circuit board (10) is of an
elongated configuration and is separated from an array in which a plurality of
said circuit boards (10) are arranged side-by-side with a separation line (S)
between the adjacent ones of said circuit boards,
each of said circuit boards (10) having a reduced-in-width section (13) within
20 the length thereof to define a slit (14) along said separation line between the
adjacent circuit boards,
said inverter including at least one capacitor (M) in the form of a chip-type
ceramic capacitor, said chip-type ceramic capacitor (M) being mounted on said
reduced-in-width section (13).

25



14. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
said circuit board (10) is of an elongated configuration,
said electric parts including a plurality of chips each having terminals (D) on
5 opposite ends thereof, respectively,
said chips being mounted on the bottom surface of said circuit board (10) with
said terminals (D) oriented in a width direction of said circuit board.

15. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
10 said dielectric sheet (230) is provided with a plurality of studs (236) for
supporting said circuit board (10).

16. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
15 said case (210) is provided with positioning means (214, 215) for holding said
circuit board (10) in a correct position.

17. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
20 said output transformer (80) includes a first auxiliary winding (84) which
provides a driving voltage for energizing said control circuit (100), a second
auxiliary winding (85) which provides a detection output indicative of the high
frequency output voltage for monitoring the operation of said inverter, and a
third auxiliary winding (86) which provides a preheat current to filaments of
25 said discharge lamp (LA1, LA2).



18. The ballast as set forth in claim 17, wherein
said output transformer (80) is a leakage transformer having a primary winding
5 (81) connected in circuit to flow a high frequency current, and a secondary
winding (82) magnetically coupled to said primary winding to induce a resulting
high frequency voltage which is applied to said discharge lamp, said first
auxiliary winding (84) being coupled to said primary winding (81), said second
and third auxiliary windings (85, 86) being coupled to said secondary winding
10 (82).

19. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
said AC-DC converter includes a rectifier (40) providing the rectified DC
15 voltage, said control circuit (100) including a dropping resistor which is
connected to said rectifier for deriving a DC voltage for energizing said control
circuit at the time of starting the inverter.

20. The ballast as set forth in claim 1, wherein
said inverter (70) is of a charge-pump type having a capacitor (76) which is
connected in a path of receiving an input current from said AC-DC converter
(40) and flowing the input current through an oscillating element (83, 77) of the
inverter and through the switching element (71, 72) for suppressing harmonics
25 in the input current from said source AC voltage.



21. The ballast as set forth in claim 20, wherein
said ballast includes an adjusting means (67,68) mounted on said circuit board
5 (10) to adjust output characteristics of said discharge lamp (LA1, LA2).

22. The ballast as set forth in claim 21, wherein
said adjustor means (67, 68) operates to adjust a lamp start output power and
10 a lamp operating output power fed to said discharge lamp (LA1, LA2)
respectively at the time of starting the lamp and during the steady-state
operation of the lamp.

15 23. The ballast as set forth in claim 1,
said detection circuit (90) includes a resistor network composed of chip
resistors (91, 92) for dividing the output voltage of said inverter into a detection
voltage which is fed to said control circuit (100) for control of said inverter,
said detection circuit (90) also including a chip capacitor (94) which is
20 surface-mounted on the bottom surface of said circuit board (10) together with
said chip resistors (91, 92),

said ballast further including another detection circuit (99) in the form of a
resistor network which is composed of chip resistors (95-98) for detection of
whether said discharge lamp (LA1, LA2) is connected to said inverter, said
25 chip resistors (95-98) being surface-mounted on the bottom of said circuit



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board (10) immediately opposite of said output transformer (80),

said inverter (70) including a pair of switching elements (71, 72) connected in series across an output of said AC-DC converter (40),

said control circuit (100) including a driver (110) having a level-shift circuit
5 (111) for providing a high driving voltage to turn on a high side one (71) of said switching elements,

said control circuit (100) being integrated together with said driver (110) into a single chip (100A),

said chip (100A) being mounted on the bottom surface of said circuit board
10 (10) at a location intermediate the longitudinal ends of said circuit board, and

said inverter (70) being of a charge-pump type having a capacitor (76) which is connected in a path of receiving an input current from said AC-DC converter (40) and flowing the input current through an oscillating element (83, 77) of the inverter and through the switching element (71, 72) for suppressing
15 harmonics in the input current from said source AC voltage.