

Title

A COAX CONNECTOR MODULE

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Background of the Invention

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The invention relates to a coax connector module comprising a housing of electrically insulating material in which a plurality of electrical contact elements being arranged, each contact element having a contact side in the form of a coaxial inner and outer contact part and a connecting side for mounting on a printed circuit board.

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When using high frequency (HF) signals, it is particularly important to electrically shield the terminal connected to the inner part of the coaxial contact element, in order to avoid interference and electromagnetic stray or leakage fields around the terminal.

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International publication WO 8,707,441 discloses a shielded electrical connector comprising a housing having a plurality of housing sections of conductive material, each having a plurality of retaining channels for accommodating the contact elements and terminals disposed therein.

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Such a housing is in practice relatively expensive to manufacture because of the plurality of housing sections of conductive material, whether or not coated with insulating material, and the fact that the housing is designed for a specific connector embodiment, i.e. a specific number of contact elements.

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International patent application WO-A-9,009,686 discloses a metallic shielding shell for placement over an isolated terminal. The shell only partly encloses the terminal and is in electrical contact with a ground terminal of the connector.

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With such a separate shielding shell the signal terminal, i.e. the terminal connected to the inner contact part of a coaxial contact element, is not totally enclosed. Interference signals can therefore be

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superimposed on the various information signals communicated via the contact element. Also stray radiation, and accordingly mutual interference between adjacent contact elements, is not eliminated with the shielding shell disclosed.

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Summary of the Invention

The object of the invention is to provide a coax connector module of the type mentioned in the preamble having shielding means which can be manufactured with a greater design flexibility, in a general-purpose manner, not restricted to a specific number of contact-elements which maximizes shielding and which is less expensive to manufacture than the known coax modules.

According to the invention, there is provided a coax connector module having a housing of electrically insulating material in which a plurality of electrical contact elements being arranged, each contact element having a contact side in the form of a coaxial inner and outer contact part, and a connecting side for mounting on a printed circuit board, wherein at the connecting side each contact element being provided with an electrical terminal connected to the inner contact part and having a connecting end for mounting on a printed circuit board, and a shield member in the form of an electrically conducting casing enclosing the terminal in an electrically insulating manner, the casing having at least one connecting end for mounting on a printed circuit board.

Because the casing according to the invention surrounds the signal terminal of the coax contact element completely, a maximum shielding effect is obtained, whereas the casing itself is advantageously provided with connecting ends for grounding.

The use of shielding casings according to the invention is especially of advantage in a further embodiment of the coax connector module, wherein the contact elements are arranged in rows and columns, and one or more walls or wall parts situated between the respective connecting ends of adjacent casings of the contact elements in a column being of integral or partially common construction.



The common construction of one or more walls results in a reduction of the pitch distance between the respective connecting ends of adjacent casings, as a result of which less space is needed for mounting the connector module on a printed circuit board. This is in harmony with the present trend towards miniaturisation of electrical components and apparatus which, on the one hand, makes the printed circuit boards smaller and, on the other hand accommodates as many components as possible on a board of standard dimensions. In particular, the connector module according to the invention is suitable for a pitch distance of 3.5 mm.

This is also realised in a further embodiment of the connector module according to the invention for mounting on a printed circuit board, in which the plug-on direction is situated parallel to the plane of the board, wherein the casings are of a box-type and essentially L-shaped, having a first and second leg, the outer contact part of a contact element is connected to the free end of the first leg, the at least one connecting end of the casing is situated at the free end of the second leg, and the oppositely situated walls of the second legs of adjacently situated casings are of integral or partially common construction.

In order to make possible a universal assembly of, on the one hand, the housing provided with the contact elements and, on the other hand, the casings provided with solder or press-fit ends, according to yet a further embodiment of the invention, the box-type casings are provided with projecting parallel lips for electrically contacting and mechanically connecting a casing to the outer contact part of a contact element. Preferably, the lips are formed by two oppositely situated walls of the casing and are mechanically and electrically connected to the outer contact part of a respective contact element by spot welding.

The casing or shielding member according to the invention can be formed relatively simply and rapidly from sheet metal by pressing or punching and suitably modelling, without the need for special machines. This has a favourable effect on the cost price of the casings and, consequently, on the connector module as a whole.

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However, the casing according to the invention can be formed also from a block of metal, which is machined by milling and drilling to form one or more connecting ends and having one or more inner channels, in each of which a terminal for contacting the inner part of a coax contact element is arranged, in an electrically insulating manner with respect to the casing.

In a preferred embodiment of the coax connector module according to the invention, wherein a casing and terminal, and the corresponding coaxial inner and outer contact part of one or more contact elements form a separate unit to be arranged in the housing, the unit and housing have means for mutually locking with one another. These locking or latching means may comprise lips having a free end radially projecting from the outside surface of an outer contact part of a contact element, these free ends each engage in the assembled state in a recess in the housing of the connector module.

It should be evident that such a separate unit, for example a unit of two contact elements making up a row of a coax connector module, will provide for a very flexible and universal assembly of connector modules, independent of the number of rows of such a connector, i.e. the housing thereof.

The connecting ends of the conductor and the casing may be formed for a solder connection (either through hole or surface mount) or for clamped mounting in an opening of a printed circuit board. In the specialist literature, the last mentioned connecting ends are known as "press-fit electrical terminals".

The invention is explained in greater detail below on the basis of a number of exemplary embodiments, with reference to the drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Figure 1 shows, diagrammatically and in perspective, coax connector modules to be mutually coupled and having shielding cases constructed from sheet metal for mounting on a printed circuit board according to the invention;

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Figure 2 shows diagrammatically a cross-sectional view of the coax connector module shown in the right-hand part of Figure 1;

5 Figure 3 shows, diagrammatically and in perspective, the casing according to the invention used in Figure 1 on an enlarged scale;

10 Figures 4a and 4b, respectively, show diagrammatically a side view of the coax connector module illustrated in the right-hand part of Figure 1 on an enlarged scale and partially broken away and a partial view towards the connecting side of the housing;

15 Figure 5 shows diagrammatically a cross-sectional view of a coax connector module according to the invention by analogy with Figure 2, having a modified embodiment of the casings;

20 Figure 6 shows diagrammatically and in perspective, by analogy with the right hand part of figure 1, a coax connector module having shielding cases constructed from a machined block of metal for mounting on a printed circuit board according to the invention;

Figure 7 shows diagrammatically a cross-sectional view of the coax connector module according to figure 6;

25 Figure 8 shows, diagrammatically and in perspective, a press-fit connecting end suitable for use in the invention on an enlarged scale.

Detailed Description of the Embodiments

30 In Figure 1, the reference numeral 1 shows a coax connector module assembly composed of two coax connector modules 2, 3 to be connected to each other and having a connecting side 4 for mounting on, respectively, a printed circuit board 5, 6.

35 The coax connector module 2 is constructed of a plastic housing 7, a portion of which is shown broken away for the sake of clarity. In this exemplary embodiment, the housing 7 carries two rows each containing three coax contact elements 8 composed of a cylindrical outer

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contact part 9 which surrounds a pin-type inner contact part 10, both of electrically conducting material.

5 The coax connector module 3 to be coupled to the coax connector module 2 comprises a housing 11, a portion of which is shown broken away for the sake of clarity, having two rows of three coax contact elements 12. Each coax-contact element 12 comprises a cylindrical outer contact part 13 which surrounds a tubular inner contact part 14 shown in broken lines, both of electrically conducting material.

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The housing 7 of the coax connector module 2 is provided with grooves 15 which interact with projections in the housing 11 of the connector module 3 (which are not shown). These projections and grooves effect a suitable guide for contacting the connectors to be coupled. The possibility is also avoided that, with a plurality of adjacently mounted connectors, an incorrect contacting may occur because a connector to be coupled partly makes contact to one connector and partly makes contact to the adjacent connector (anti-mismatch guard). The housing 7 is furthermore provided with locking slots 16 in which locking projections of locking means such as, for example, those shown in the non-published European Patent Application 0,401,937 in the name of the Applicant, engage in the contacted state. Furthermore, coding blocks can also be incorporated in the slots 16 for interaction with matching coding blocks to be received in the housing 11, for which purpose the housing 11 is provided with hook-type projections 17, all these features being as illustrated in European Patent Application 0,401,937.

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To locate the coax connector modules 2, 3 on a printed circuit board, the respective housings 7, 11 are provided, as shown, with positioning pins 18, 19. In the mounted state, the pins 18, 19 engage in correspondingly situated locating holes 20, 21 in the respective printed circuit boards 5, 6.

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The box-type casings 22, 23 situated at the connecting side 4 of the coax connector modules 2, 3, which casings are connected to the outer contact part 13 of the associated contact element 8, 12, are each provided with two pin-type connecting ends 24 for connecting them to the respective printed circuit board 5, 6. For this purpose, the printed

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circuit boards 5, 6 are provided with correspondingly situated connecting holes 25. To connect the inner contact parts 10, 14 of a contact element 8, 12, a connecting end 26 extends outwards from the casings 22, 23, the boards 5, 6 being provided with correspondingly situated contact holes 27.

It will be clear that the connector module 2 may also be provided with coax contact elements 12 or a combination of coax contact elements 8, 12. This applies, of course, to the connector module 3. If desired, the housings 7, 11 may be provided with more or less than two rows of three contact elements, according to the requirements. The contact elements 8, 12 of the coax connector modules 2, 3 may, of course, be contacted by coaxial cables provided with suitable coax plugs, for example provided with locking means such as those shown in the European Patent Application 0,401,937.

In the cross-sectional view of Figure 2 of the coax connector module 3 according to Figure 1, some components are shown in broken lines for the sake of clarity. The outer contact part 13 of the contact element 12 is extended so as to project outside the housing 11 in the direction of the connecting side 4, the box-type casings 22 and 23, respectively, being electrically and mechanically connected by means of spot welds which are diagrammatically indicated by open circles 30. The contact elements 12 are accommodated in channels 31 formed separately in the housing 11, which channels are provided on the inside along the circumference with one or more recesses 29 in which the radially projecting lips 28 for locking the contact elements 12 to the housing 11 can engage.

In Figure 2 it can clearly be perceived that, in this embodiment of the invention viewed from the contact side of the contact element 12, the rear wall of the casing 23 partially forms the front wall of the adjacent casing 22. As a consequence of this measure, the connecting ends 24, 26 associated with the casings 22, 23 can be arranged in a simple manner at an equal mutual pitch distance d , for example a pitch distance of 4 mm.

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Figure 3 shows, in perspective and on an enlarged scale, the L-shaped casings 22, 23 manufactured from sheet metal. In the embodiment shown, the casings 22 and 23 are assembled from side walls 35, 36, to which a top wall 37, 38 and, if necessary, a bottom wall 39, 40, respectively, connect. As suggested by arrows 32, in the mounted state the rear wall 33 of the casing 23, viewed in the direction of the arrow, connects to the front wall 35 of the casing 22. The rear wall 33 of the casing 23 consequently effects, together with the front wall 34, a portion of the shielding of the casing 22. The casing 22 is furthermore provided with a rear wall 41 and the casing 23 is provided with a front wall 42, all these features being such that, in the mounted state of the two casings, the respective terminals 45 are completely surrounded by sheet metal, which terminals or conductors 45 are shown in broken lines in figure 2.

For mounting on a printed circuit board, the casings 22, 23 are each constructed with connecting ends 24, integrated with the respective rear wall 41, 33, in the form of connecting pins for connecting them to the printed circuit by soldering. The side walls 35, 36 are extended to form parallel lips 43 for electrically and mechanically connecting the casings 22, 23 to the outer contact parts 9, 13 of a contact element 8 or a contact element 12, respectively. One or more of the walls of the casings 22, 23 may be formed by folding from one single metal sheet. The other walls may, if necessary, be connected thereto by soldering or welding, so that an optimal shielding action of the respective conductor against electromagnetic interferences is obtained.

Figure 4a shows, partially broken away and on an enlarged scale, the cross section according to Figure 2, in which the connection of the terminals 22, 23 to the outer contact part 13 and the connection of the terminal 45, surrounded by a casing 22, 23, to the inner contact part 14 of a contact element 12 are shown partially broken away. Figure 4b shows a partial view towards the housing 11 from the connecting side 4 thereof, without casings 22, 23 mounted.

As already described above, the casings 22, 23 are electrically and mechanically connected to the outer contact part 9, 13, extended towards the connecting side, of a respective contact element 8, 12 by

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spot welds 30. The terminal 45 located by means of electrical insulation 44 in a casing 22, 23 has a connecting end 26, projecting outside the associated casing, in the form of a connecting pin for solder mounting on a printed circuit board and another connecting end 46 which engages
5 as a plug pin in the portion, designed as contact socket 47 projecting towards the connecting side 4 of the respective module 3, of the inner contact part 14, 10 of a contact element 12, 8 respectively (Figure 1).

Figure 4b shows a view of a contact element 12 from the
10 connecting side 4 of the housing 11 of the coax connector module 3. The contact socket 47 can be clearly perceived therein. It can also be seen that the outer contact part 13, extended to the connecting side 4, is flattened at the sides where the lips 43 of the respective casings 22, 23 engage, as indicated by the reference numeral 48. These flattened
15 parts 48 produce a convenient, electromagnetically sealed connection of the casings 22, 23 to the respective outer contact part 13. If desired, the connection of the lips 43 to the respective outer contact part 9, 13 may also be constructed as a locking plug/socket connection, so that the casings 22, 23 can be coupled electrically and mechanically to their
20 respective terminal 45 as a whole in the form of a plug connection having a housing 7, 11 provided with coax contact elements 8, 12 by plugging-on.

Figure 5 shows a variant by analogy with the cross section
25 according to Figure 2, in which, viewed in the plug-on direction of the module, the front wall 34 of the respective casing 22' is of common construction for the two casings (see also Figure 3). Note also the offset position of the connecting ends 24 of the casings 22', 23' with respect to Figure 1, 2 or 3. It will be clear that, although not shown,
30 other opposite walls of the adjacent casings can be of common construction.

Figure 6 shows another variant of a coax connector module according to the invention, in which the casings 49, belonging to the
35 contact elements 12 in a column (X-direction in figure 6) are of integral type and formed from a machined block of metal. The contact elements 12 form rows in Y-direction.

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Figure 7 shows partly a cross-sectional view of the embodiment according to figure 6, having a casing 49 formed of a block of metal 50. In this block 50, channels are milled and drilled for receiving the terminals 45. The terminals 45 are surrounded by electrical insulation 44, in order to electrically isolate the terminals 45 from the walls of the block 50. The outer contact part 13 of a contact element 12 is provided with a flange 51 by means of which the contact element is connected to the block 50, for example by soldering or spot-welding.

Particularly in right-angled blocks 50 of reduced dimensions, the insertion of the terminals 45 may be difficult to achieve, due to their bending. In such cases, a terminal 45 may be composed of two straight pieces, inserted from the respective openings of the housing 49 and electrically connected to each other, for example by soldering, at their meeting point. For this purpose, the block 50 may be provided with a hole running from the outside surface to this meeting point. After connection of the terminal pieces, the hole is filled up with insulating material and closed by a metallic cover.

The casing and associated contact elements can be provided as an integral part for mounting with the housing for forming the connector module according to the invention.

Figure 8 shows an embodiment of a so-called "press-fit" connecting end 52 for mechanically locked assembly in a plated-through hole in a printed circuit board. The respective connecting ends 24, 26 are in this case provided with fins 53 which connect to a base 54. The press-fit connecting end consequently has an H-shaped cross section. For a more detailed description, reference is made to the European Patent Specification 0,209,936.

The invention has been illustrated above on the basis of exemplary embodiments in which the casings are designed for use with modules whose plug-on direction is parallel to the surface of the printed circuit board (right-angled). It will be clear that the invention can be used with the same advantage in the case of coax connector modules for mounting on a printed circuit board, for example a so-called "back-plane", in which the respective connecting ends of the

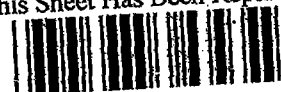


casings extend in the plug-on direction of the respective connector module.

5 The connection of the casings to the respective outer contact parts is, of course, not restricted to spot welding or soldering. Although spot welding is an advantageous technique, essentially any connecting method known per se, including screw thread connection, snap-in connection, riveted connection etc. can be used. The connecting ends of the casings and their respective connector may, moreover, be of a construction suitable for the surface mounting technique. In the specialist literature this is termed a "surface mounting device".

15 The term "printed circuit board" used above and in the claims is understood, in general, as meaning any board or substrate having electrically conducting tracks or paths, that is to say, for example, also a substrate of a liquid-crystal display and the like.

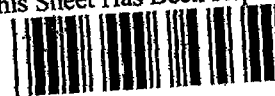
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Claims

1. A coax connector module comprising a housing of electrically insulating material in which a plurality of electrical contact elements being arranged, each contact element having a contact side in the form of a coaxial inner and outer contact part, and a connecting side for mounting on a printed circuit board, wherein at the connecting side each contact element being provided with an electrical terminal connected to the inner contact part and having a connecting end for mounting on a printed circuit board, and a shield member in the form of an electrically conducting casing enclosing said terminal in an electrically insulating manner, said casing having at least one connecting end for mounting on a printed circuit board.
2. A coax connector module according to Claim 1, wherein the contact elements are arranged in rows and columns, and one or more walls or wall parts situated between the respective connecting ends of adjacent casings of the contact elements in a column being of integral or partially common construction.
3. A coax connector module according to Claim 2, wherein the casings are of a box-type and essentially L-shaped, having a first and second leg, the outer contact part of a contact element is connected to the free end of the first leg, the at least one connecting end of the casing being situated at the free end of the second leg, and the oppositely situated walls of the second legs of adjacently situated casings are of integral or partially common construction.
4. A coax connector module according to Claim 3, wherein the box-type casings at the free end of the first leg are provided with projecting parallel lips for electrically contacting and mechanically connecting a casing to the outer contact part of a contact element.
5. A coax connector module according to Claim 4, wherein the lips are formed by two oppositely situated walls of a casing.
6. A coax connector module according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the casing is constructed from walls of sheet metal or formed of a machined block of metal.
7. A coax connector module according to any of the preceding claims, wherein a casing and terminal, and the corresponding coaxial inner and outer contact part of one or more contact elements form a separate unit

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to be arranged in the housing, said unit and housing have means for mutually locking with one another.

5 8. A coax connector module according to Claim 7, wherein the locking means comprise lips having a free end radially projecting from the outside surface of an outer contact part of a contact element, said free ends each engage in the assembled state in a recess in the housing of the connector module.

10 9. A coax connector module according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the connecting ends for mounting on a printed circuit board are either constructed as soldering ends or constructed for press-fit mounting thereof in a hole of a printed circuit board.

10. A unit according to claim 7, for use with a housing to form a coax connector module.



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