Fabrication of Semiconductor Devices for Light Emission

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to the fabrication of semiconductor devices for light emission and refers particularly, though not exclusively, to the fabrication of such semiconductor devices on a sapphire substrate.

Background to the Invention

GaN semiconductor devices such as, for example, light emitting diodes ("LEDs"), laser diodes, photodetectors, transistors, switches, and so forth, are widely used in many applications. Well known applications include, but are not limited to, traffic signals, mobile telephone display backlighting, liquid crystal display ("LCD") back lighting, flash lights for cameras, and so forth. The fabrication of gallium nitride semiconductors for use as LEDs, laser diodes or lighting, gives relatively low productivity. Also, known techniques result in semiconductor devices with a light output that is not optimized.

Summary of the Invention

In accordance with a first preferred aspect there is provided a semiconductor device for light emission comprising:

(a) a plurality of epitaxial layers comprising an active layer for light generation, an n-type layer for light transmission and a p-type layer for light reflection;

(b) the p-type layer having thereon at least one seed layer for an outer layer of a conductive metal;

(c) at least one seed layer comprising a material for providing a buffer for differential thermal expansion of the outer layer and the light reflecting layer.

The at least one seed layer may also comprises a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer applied to it from diffusing into at least one of the p-type layer, the active layer and the n-type layer.

According to a second preferred aspect there is provided a semiconductor device for light emission comprising:

(a) a plurality of epitaxial layers comprising an active layer for light generation, an n-type layer for light transmission and a p-type layer for light reflection;

(b) the p-type layer having thereon at least one seed layer for an outer layer of a conductive metal;

(c) at least one seed layer comprising a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer applied to it from diffusing into at least one of the p-type layer, the active layer and the n-type layer.

For the second aspect the at least one seed layer may also comprise a material for providing a buffer for differential thermal expansion of the outer layer and the light reflecting layer.

For both aspects the at least one seed layer may comprise a plurality of seed layers, the plurality of seed layers comprising a first seed layer of reflective material, and having a first co-efficient of thermal expansion, and a second seed layer of a second material having a second co-efficient of thermal expansion. The second co-efficient of thermal expansion may be greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

The n-type layer may comprise an array of an n-type metal. The outer layer and the array of n-type metal may comprise the terminals of the semiconductor device.

According to a third preferred aspect there is provided a semiconductor device for light emission comprising a plurality of epitaxial layers, the plurality of epitaxial layers comprising:

(a) a p-type layer;

(b) at least one reflective layer on the p-type layer;

(c) an outer layer of a conductive material on the at least one reflective layer;

(d) an n-type layer; and

(e) an n-type metal on the n-type layer;

(f) an active layer between the n-type layer and the p-type layer;

the n-type metal being arranged in an array at the centre of the n-type layer for minimizing its effect on light output; the n-type metal and the outer layer being the terminals for the semiconductor device.

The plurality of seed layers may comprise a first seed layer of reflective material and having a first co-efficient of thermal expansion, and a second seed layer of a second material having a second co-efficient of thermal expansion; the second co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

For all three aspects, between the first seed layer and the second seed layer there may be at least one intermediate seed layer of at least one intermediate material having a intermediate co-efficient of thermal expansion, the intermediate co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion and less that the second co-efficient of thermal expansion. The outer layer may be of the second material. The reflective material, the second material and the intermediate material may all be different. The intermediate material may be the diffusion barrier for preventing the second material diffusing into the epitaxial layers. The outer layer may be relatively thick and may be for at least one of: a structural support, a heat sink, a heat dissipater, a current dissipater, and as a terminal, for the semiconductor device. The array may comprise a central portion, an outer portion, and a joining portion connecting the central portion and the outer portion; the outer portion and the joining portion being for current dissipation. The semiconductor device may be a gallium nitride semiconductor device; and the outer layer may be of the second material.

According to a fourth preferred aspect there is provided method for fabrication of a semiconductor device for light emission, the method comprising:

(a) on a p-type layer of plurality of epitaxial layers of the semiconductor device, forming a layer of a p-type metal; and

(b) on the layer of p-type metal, applying a first seed layer of a plurality of seed layers, the first seed layer being of a first material that is light reflective and has a first co-efficient of thermal expansion; and

(c) forming on the first seed layer a second seed layer of the plurality of seed layers, the second seed layer being of a second material that has a second co-efficient of thermal expansion, the second co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

(b) on the layer of p-type metal, applying at least one seed layer as a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer ,applied to it from diffusing into the p-type layer.

One of the plurality of seeds layers may be a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer applied to it from diffusing into the p-type layer.

According to a fifth preferred aspect there is provided a method for fabrication of a semiconductor device for light emission, the method comprising:

(a) on a p-type layer of plurality of epitaxial layers of the semiconductor device, forming a layer of a p-type metal; and

(b) on the layer of p-type metal, applying at least one seed layer as a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer applied to it from diffusing into the p-type layer.

The at least one seed layer may comprise a plurality of seed layers, a first seed layer being of a first material that is light reflective and has a first co-efficient of thermal expansion; and forming on the first seed layer a second seed layer of the plurality of seed layers, the second seed layer being of a second material that has a second co-efficient of thermal expansion, the second co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

For the fourth and fifth aspects the method may further comprise forming an outer layer on the second seed layer, the outer layer being relatively thick and being for at least one selected from the group consisting of: a structural support, a heat sink, a heat dissipater, a current dissipater, and as a terminal, for the semiconductor device. An array of an n-type metal may be formed on an n-type metal layer of the plurality of epitaxial layers. The array and the outer layer may be the terminals of the semiconductor device.

According to a sixth preferred aspect there is provided a method of fabricating a semiconductor device for light emission comprising a plurality of epitaxial layers, the method comprising:

on a p-type layer of the plurality of epitaxial layers forming a first seed layer of a plurality of seed layers as a reflective layer;

on the plurality of seed layers forming an outer layer of a conductive material;

on an n-type layer of the plurality of epitaxial layers forming an n-type metal in an array at the centre of the n-type layer for minimizing its effect on light output; the n-type metal and the outer layer being the terminals for the semiconductor device.

The first seed layer may be of a reflective material and has a first co-efficient of thermal expansion, the method preferably further comprising forming on the first seed layer a second seed layer of a second material having a second co-efficient of thermal expansion; the second co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

The methods may further comprise forming at least one intermediate seed layer on the first seed layer before the second seed layer is formed, the at least one intermediate seed layer being of at least one material having an intermediate co-efficient of thermal expansion that is greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion and less than the second co-efficient of thermal expansion. The outer layer may be of the second material. The reflective material, the second material and the intermediate seed layer material may all be different. The semiconductor device may be a gallium nitride semiconductor device.

According to a seventh preferred aspect there is provided a method of fabricating a semiconductor device for light emission comprising a plurality of epitaxial layers mounted on a substrate, the method comprising:

separating the substrate from the plurality of epitaxial layers while the plurality of epitaxial layers are intact for preserving electrical and mechanical properties of the plurality of epitaxial layers.

The method may further comprise: prior to separation forming at least one seed layer on the plurality of epitaxial layers, and forming an outer layer on the at least one seed layer, the outer layer being relatively thick and being for at least one selected from the group consisting of: a structural support, a heat sink, a heat dissipater, a current dissipater, and as a terminal, for the semiconductor device.

After the at least one seed layer is formed, and before the outer layer is formed on the at least one seed layer, the following steps may be performed:

(a) applying a p-type metal ohmic contact layer to a p-type layer of a plurality of epitaxial layers;

(b) applying a layer of an oxide over the p-type metal ohmic contact layer and the p-type layer;

(c) removing the oxide layer from above the metal ohmic contact layer; and

(d) depositing the at least one seed layer on the oxide layer and the metal ohmic contact layer.

After step (d) and before the outer layer is formed, a pattern of thick resists may be applied to the at least one seed layer, the outer layer being formed between the pattern of thick resists. The outer layer may also be formed over the pattern of thick resists. The outer layer may be polished subsequent to separation. The oxide layer may be silicon dioxide.

Subsequent to separation of the substrate, the following steps may be performed:

(a) a first stage of isolation of individual devices by trench etching along edges of each mesa;

(b) pad etching;

(c) die isolation;

(d) forming an array of n-type ohmic contacts on an n-type layer of the plurality of epitaxial layers; and

(e) die separation.

Brief Description of the Drawings

In order that the present invention may be fully understood and readily put into practical effect, there shall now be described by way of non-limitative example only preferred embodiments of the present invention, the description being with reference to the accompanying illustrative drawings.

In the drawings:

Figure 1 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a first stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 2 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a second stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 3 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a third stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 4 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a fourth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 5 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a fifth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 6 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a sixth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 7 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a seventh stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 8 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at an eighth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 9 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a ninth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 10 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a tenth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 11 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at an eleven stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 12 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a twelfth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 13(a) is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a thirteenth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 13(b) is a bottom view of the semiconductor of Figure 13(a);

Figure 14(a) is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a fourteenth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 14(b) is a bottom view of the semiconductor of Figure 14(a);

Figure 15(a) is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a fifteenth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 15(b) is a bottom view of the semiconductor of Figure 15(a);

Figure 16 is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a sixteenth stage in the fabrication process;

Figure 17(a) is a non-scale schematic, cross-sectional view of a semiconductor at a seventeenth stage in the fabrication process; and

Figure 17(b) is a bottom view of the semiconductor of Figure 17(a).

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

The GaN devices described below are fabricated from epitaxial wafers that consist of a stack of thin semiconductor layers (called epitaxial layers) on a sapphire

substrate. The composition and thickness of the epitaxial layers depends on the wafer design, and determine the light color (wavelength) of light that will be emitted by the devices that are fabricated from the wafer. Usually a thin buffer layer is first deposited on the sapphire substrate with a thickness often in the range 10 to 30 nm, and can be either AlN or GaN. In this specification this layer is not described or illustrated. On top of the thin buffer layer, other layers made of GaN, AlGaN, InN, InGaN, AlGaInN, and so forth, are deposited. To achieve high wafer quality, n-type layers are often deposited on the buffer layer, followed by an unintentionally doped active region. Finally, p-type doped layers are deposited. The active region is usually a double heterostructure made of a single quantum well, or multiple quantum wells and is for light generation. But it may be in other forms such as, for example, quantum dots. The deposition of epitaxial layers is usually by metal organic chemical vapor deposition ("MOCVD") or molecular beam epitaxy ("MBE"). The thickness of the epitaxial layers is in the range from a few nanometers to a few microns.

To first refer to Figure 1, the process starts after the sapphire substrate 4 has applied to it the n-type layer 3 of gallium nitride (GaN), the quantum well or active layer 2, and the p-type layer 1 of GaN. The p-metal layer 5 is then applied over the p-type layer 1. The p-type metal layer 5 may be of nickel-gold (NiAu) or other suitable metal. Standard photolithography and etching are then used to pattern layer 5. This is done by applying a thin layer of photoresist (layer 6(a) in Figure 2) on to metal layer 5, followed by resist exposure and development. The resist pattern 6(a) serves as an etching mask for etching the metal layer 5. The etching may be by wet chemical etching or plasma dry etching (see Figure 2). The photoresist 6(a) is then removed. The patterned layer 5 that remains on the surface of p-type GaN layer 1 will serve as an ohmic contact layer to the p-type GaN layer 1. Annealing may take place either before or after layer 5 is patterned.

The p-type Layer 1 is relatively thin – normally no more, but preferably less, than 1 micron.

A layer 7 of silicon dioxide (SiO_2) is deposited over the remaining p-metal layer portions 5 and the P-type GaN layer 1 (Figure 3) by a standard thin film deposition method. This may be by plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition ("PECVD"), sputtering, evaporation, or other suitable techniques.

As shown in Fig. 4, a second photoresist layer 6(b) is applied over the oxide layer 7. The resist is then patterned and serves as mask for patterning the oxide layer 7. Wet etching or dry etching (plasma etching) of the oxide layer 7 is carried out. The oxide in the areas where there is no photoresist 6(b) is removed, while oxide 7 protected by the resist 6(b) remains after etching. The patterned second resist layer 6(b) is larger in area than the NiAu layer 5 so that the SiO_2 layer 7 remaining extends across the NiAu layer 5 and down the sides of NiAu layer 5 to the p-type GaN layer 1, as shown in Figure 4.

As shown in Figure 5, the second resist layer 6(b) is removed for mesa etching of the p-type GaN layer 1, the quantum well layer 2 and the n-type GaN layer 3. The etching is for the full depth of the p-type GaN layer 1, and the quantum well layer 2, but for a small part only of the depth of the n-type GaN layer 3. The patterned oxide 7 in Figure 5 serves as the dry etching mask to define the mesa on which the device is subsequently formed.

The SiO_2 layer 7 of Figure 5 is removed and replaced by a full coating isolation layer 8 of SiO_2 (Figure 6) that covers the entire top surface. A photoresist layer 6(c) is then applied over the SiO_2 layer 8. The photoresist layer 6(c) is then patterned by light exposure and subsequent development, so that it covers everywhere except the center part of the mesas – over the P-type metal layer 5. The third resist layer 6(c) extends around the periphery and toward the center, with the third resist layer 6(c) being generally annular. As such the third resist layer 6(c) does not cover the central portion 17 of SiO_2 layer 8. SiO_2 window etching follows to remove the central portion 17 of the SiO_2 layer 8 above the NiAu layer 5 to thus expose the top of the NiAu layer 5.

The third resist layer 6(c) is then removed and seed layer deposition follows, as is shown in Figure 8. The seed layer is of three different metal layers. The first seed layer 11 adheres well to the NiAu layer 5 and may be of chromium or titanium. It is followed by second layer 10 and third layer 9 of tantalum and copper respectively. Other materials may be used. The first seed layer 11 preferably has good reflectivity for the reflection of light generated in the light emitting device. The second seed layer 10 acts as a diffusion barrier, preventing copper or other materials placed on top of it (such as, for example, the third seed layer 9) from diffusing into the Ohmic contact layers and the semiconductor epitaxial layers. The third seed layer 9 acts as a seeding layer for subsequent electroplating.

The coefficients of thermal expansion of the seed layers may be different from that of GaN which is 3.17. While the thermal expansion coefficients of the Ohmic contact layers (Ni and Au) are also different from that of GaN (they are 14.2 and 13.4 respectively), they are relatively thin (a few nanometers) and do not pose serious stress problems to the underlining GaN epitaxial layers. However, plated copper to be added later may be as thick as hundreds of microns and thus may cause severe stress problems. Thus, the seed layers can be used to buffer the stress. This may be by one or more of:

(a) by having sufficient flexibility to absorb the stress,

(b) by having sufficient internal slip characteristics to absorb the stress,

(c) by having sufficient rigidity to withstand the stress, and

(d) by having graded thermal expansion coefficients.

In the case of graded thermal coefficients, that of the first layer 11 preferably less than that of the second layer 10, and that of the second layer is preferably less than that of the third layer 9. For example, the first layer 11 may be chromium with a coefficient of thermal expansion of 4.9, the second layer 10 may be tantalum with a coefficient of thermal expansion of 6.3, and the third layer 9 may be copper with a coefficient of thermal expansion of 16.5. In this way the coefficients of thermal expansion are graded from the SiO_2 layer 8 and GaN layer to the outer, copper layer 9. An alternative is to have coefficients of expansion that differ such that at the temperatures concerned, one metal layer expands while another contracts.

If the outer, copper layer 9 was applied directly to the SiO_2 layer 8 and P-metal layer 5, the differences in their thermal expansion rates may cause cracking, separation, and/or failure. By depositing a plurality of seed layers 11, 10 and 9 of different materials, particularly metals each having a different coefficient of thermal expansion, the stresses of thermal expansion are spread through the layers 11, 10 and 9 with the resultant lower likelihood of cracking, separation and/or failure. The first seed layer 11 should be of a material with a relatively low coefficient of thermal expansion, whereas the final layer 9 may have a higher coefficient of thermal expansion. If there are intermediate layer(s) 10, the intermediate layer(s) should have coefficient(s) of expansion between those of layers 11 and 9, and should be graded from that of the first layer 11 to that of the final layer 9. There may be no

intermediate layer 10, or there may be any required or desired number of intermediate layers 10 (one, two, three and so forth).

Alternatively, the seed layers 9, 10 and 11 may be replaced by a single layer of dielectric such as, for example, AlN with vias or holes therethrough to enable the copper layer 9(a) to connect to the p-type metal layer 5.

For patterned plating of a relatively thick metal such as copper that will serve as the new substrate and heatsink after the removal of the original substrate 4, a pattern of thick resists 12 is applied to the outer, copper seed layer 9 by standard photolithography (Figure 9), and the remaining metal 9(a) is plated in the regions defined by the thick resists 12 (Figure 10), and then plated over the thick resists 12 to form a single metal support layer 9(a).

Alternatively, before the application of the thick resists 12, the outer, seed copper layer 9 may be partially etched in the center of the street between the mesas for the formation of the thick photoresists 12 (Figure 9) and plating of the main copper layer 9(a) (Figure 10). This has the advantage of improved adhesion.

The removal or lift-off of the sapphire substrate 5 then takes place (Figure 11) in accordance with known techniques such as, for example, that described in Kelly [M.K. Kelly, O. Ambacher, R. Dimitrov, R. Handschuh, and M. Stutzmann, phys. stat. sol. (a) 159, R3 (1997)]. The substrate may also be removed by polishing or wet etching. This exposes the lowermost surface 13 of the n-type GaN layer 3. It is preferred for lift-off of the substrate 5 to take place while to epitaxial layers are intact to improve the quality of removal, and for structural strength. By having the epitaxial layers intact at the time of removal the electrical and mechanical properties of the epitaxial layers are preserved.

After the removal of the original substrate 4, the thickly plated metal 9(a) acts as: the new mechanical support; and during operation of the semiconductor device is able to act as one or more of: a heat sink, a heat dissipater, a terminal for the p-type layer 1, and as a current dissipater. As the p-type layer 1 is relatively thin, the heat generated in active layer 2 is more easily able to be conducted to the thick layer 9(a).

As shown in Figure 12, the devices are then isolated from each other by trench etching from the newly exposed surface along the edges of the mesa, as shown in Figures 12 to 14, with a photoresist layer 6(d) protecting the regions of the n-type GaN layer 3 during the etching process.

Alternatively, the lowermost surface 13 of the n-type layer 3 may be cleaved at locations in alignment with the photoresists 12 and the dies separated. This is of advantage for laser diodes as the exposed side surfaces of the n-type layer 3 are substantially parallel, thus causing a large amount of total internal reflection. This acts as a light amplification system for improved, and directed, light output.

Pad etching takes place after applying a fifth resist layer 6(e) over the exposed surfaces of the SiO_2 layer 8, the sides of the n-type GaN layer 3, and the center of the n-type GaN layer 3 (Figures 13(a) and (b)) thus forming projecting portions 14 and recess portions 15 of n-type GaN layer 3.

The resist 6(e) is then removed and a sixth resist 6(f) applied over the exposed surfaces of the n-type GaN layer 3 and the outer periphery of the SiO_2 layer 8 to thus leave a gap 16 for die isolation. Etching takes place (Figure 14) through the gap 16 and the SiO_2 layer 8, and seed layer 11 until the ends of the thick photoresists 12 are exposed. The resist 6(f) is removed.

A seventh resist layer 6(g) is applied over all exposed lower-surfaces from the edge of the SiO_2 layer 8 through to adjacent the center of the n-type GaN layer 3, where a central gap 17 remains (Figure 15).

A layer or layers 18 of n-type metals are then applied over the resist 6(g) with the layer 18 at the gap 17 at the center of the n-type GaN layer 3 being applied directly to the GaN layer 3 (Figure 16). The resist layer 6(g) with the layer 18 attached, is removed leaving the layer 18 attached to the center 17 of the n-type GaN layer 3 where gap 17 was previously located.

The copper layer 9(a) is then polished flat (Figure 17) and the dies separated.

In this way the seed layers 11, 10, 9 and the copper layer 9(a) act as reflectors to increase light output, with copper layer 9(a) being one terminal, thus not interfering with light output. The second terminal is layer 18 on the n-type layer 3 of GaN and

this is as an array at and/or around the center of that layer 3, thus minimizing its effect on light output, and increasing the diffusion of current. The array has a central portion 19 to which a bonding part will normally be applied, an outer portion 20 and joining portion 21 connection the central portion 19 and the outer portion 20. The outer portion 20 and joining portion 21 are for dispersion of current to maximize light output. As shown in Figure 17(a) portions 20, 21 may have a small trench formed in the layer 3 to aid adhesion.

After polishing of the copper layer 9(a) the dies may be left with several dies being physically interconnected, but being electrically isolated on the n-type layer side by virtue of the silicon oxide layer 8. The n-type layer connections will be in accordance with normal practice and will be addressable individually, collectively, or in any desired or required combination or permutation. The p-type layers will have a common connection for all dies by means of the copper layer 9(a). In this way the several dies can be operated at the one time for maximum light output, or in any possible combination or sequence, by appropriate control of the n-type layer connections. The copper layer 9(a) provides common connectivity on the p-type layer side, physical strength and support, and acts as a common heat sink. The presence of the oxide layer 8 provides electrical isolation and prevents leakage.

Although the layer 18 is shown having a square, cruciform and dot array, it may have any suitable form and shape of array.

For growing high quality GaN layers, it is common that the first 0.5-1.5 micron GaN layer 4 in Figure 1 is undoped, and thus it is electrically nonconductive. For current conduction, this layer needs to be removed by etching. However, for the area where the bonding pad 19 is to be deposited, it is advantageous to keep this nonconductive layer under the bonding pad 19, so that the current does not flow vertically through this area, but spreads through the n-GaN layer 3. Fig. 17(a) shows an example contact, where under the circular bonding pad 19 the nonconductive material is retained.

Whilst there has been described in the foregoing description preferred embodiments of the present invention, it will be understood by those skilled in the technology concerned that many variations or modifications in details of design or construction may be made without departing from the present invention.

THE CLAIMS

1. A semiconductor device for light emission comprising:

(a) a plurality of epitaxial layers comprising an active layer for light generation, an n-type layer for light transmission and a p-type layer for light reflection;

(b) the p-type layer having thereon at least one seed layer for an outer layer of a conductive metal;

(c) at least one seed layer comprising a material for providing a buffer for differential thermal expansion of the outer layer and the light reflecting layer.

2. A semiconductor device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the at least one seed layer also comprises a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer applied to it from diffusing into at least one of the p-type layer, the active layer and the n-type layer.

3. A semiconductor device for light emission comprising:

(a) a plurality of epitaxial layers comprising an active layer for light generation, an n-type layer for light transmission and a p-type layer for light reflection;

(b) the p-type layer having thereon at least one seed layer for an outer layer of a conductive metal;

(c) at least one seed layer comprising a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer applied to it from diffusing into at least one of the p-type layer, the active layer and the n-type layer.

4. A semiconductor device as claimed in claim 3, wherein the at least one seed layer also comprises a material for providing a buffer for differential thermal expansion of the outer layer and the light reflecting layer.

5. A semiconductor device as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the at least one seed layer comprises a plurality of seed layers, the plurality of seed layers comprising a first seed layer of reflective material, and having a first co-efficient of thermal expansion, and a second seed layer of a second material having a second co-efficient of thermal expansion.

6. A semiconductor device as claimed in claim 5, wherein the second co-efficient of thermal expansion is greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

7. A semiconductor device as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the n-type layer comprises an array of an n-type metal.

8. A semiconductor device as claimed in claim 7, wherein the outer layer and the array of n-type metal comprise the terminals of the semiconductor device.

9. A semiconductor device for light emission comprising a plurality of epitaxial layers, the plurality of epitaxial layers comprising:

(a) a p-type layer;

(b) at least one reflective layer on the p-type layer;

(c) an outer layer of a conductive material on the at least one reflective layer;

(d) an n-type layer; and

(e) an n-type metal on the n-type layer;

(f) an active layer between the n-type layer and the p-type layer;

the n-type metal being arranged in an array at the centre of the n-type layer for minimizing its effect on light output; the n-type metal and the outer layer being the terminals for the semiconductor device.

10. A semiconductor device as claimed in claim 9, wherein the plurality of seed layers comprises a first seed layer of reflective material and having a first co-efficient of thermal expansion, and a second seed layer of a second material having a second co-efficient of thermal expansion; the second co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

11. A semiconductor device as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 8 or claim 10, wherein between the first seed layer and the second seed layer there is at least one intermediate seed layer of at least one intermediate material having a intermediate co-efficient of thermal expansion, the intermediate co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion and less that the second co-efficient of thermal expansion.

12. A semiconductor device as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 8, claim 10 or claim 11, wherein the outer layer is of the second material.

13. A semiconductor device is claimed in claim 11 or claim 12, wherein the reflective material, the second material and the intermediate material are all different.

14. A semiconductor device as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 8 or claims 11 to 13, wherein the intermediate material is the diffusion barrier for preventing the second material diffusing into the epitaxial layers.

15. A semiconductor device as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein the outer layer is relatively thick and is for at least one selected from the group consisting of: a structural support, a heat sink, a heat dissipater, a current dissipater, and as a terminal, for the semiconductor device.

16. A semiconductor device is claimed in any one of claims 7 to 15, wherein the array comprises a central portion, an outer portion, and a joining portion connecting the central portion and the outer portion; the outer portion and the joining portion being for current dissipation.

17. A semiconductor device as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 16, wherein the semiconductor device is a gallium nitride semiconductor device.

18. A semiconductor device as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 8 or 10 to 17, wherein the outer layer is of the second material.

19. A method for fabrication of a semiconductor device for light emission, the method comprising:

(a) on a p-type layer of plurality of epitaxial layers of the semiconductor device, forming a layer of a p-type metal; and

(b) on the layer of p-type metal, applying a first seed layer of a plurality of seed layers, the first seed layer being of a first material that is light reflective and has a first co-efficient of thermal expansion; and

(c) forming on the first seed layer a second seed layer of the plurality of seed layers, the second seed layer being of a second material that has a second

co-efficient of thermal expansion, the second co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

(b) on the layer of p-type metal, applying at least one seed layer as a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer applied to it from diffusing into the p-type layer.

20. A method as claimed in claim 19, wherein one of the plurality of seeds layers is a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer applied to it from diffusing into the p-type layer.

21. A method for fabrication of a semiconductor device for light emission, the method comprising:

(a) on a p-type layer of plurality of epitaxial layers of the semiconductor device, forming a layer of a p-type metal; and

(b) on the layer of p-type metal, applying at least one seed layer as a diffusion barrier for providing a barrier to diffusion of a layer applied to it from diffusing into the p-type layer.

22. A method as claimed in claim 21, wherein the at least one seed layer comprises a plurality of seed layers, a first seed layer being of a first material that is light reflective and has a first co-efficient of thermal expansion; and forming on the first seed layer a second seed layer of the plurality of seed layers, the second seed layer being of a second material that has a second co-efficient of thermal expansion, the second co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

23. A method as claimed in any one of claims 19, 20 or 22 further comprising forming an outer layer on the second seed layer, the outer layer being relatively thick and being for at least one selected from the group consisting of: a structural support, a heat sink, a heat dissipater, a current dissipater, and as a terminal, for the semiconductor device.

24. The method of any one of claims 19 to 23 further comprising forming an array of an n-type metal on an n-type metal layer of the plurality of epitaxial layers.

25. The method as claimed in claim 24 when appended to claim 23, wherein the array and the outer layer are the terminals of the semiconductor device.

26. A method of fabricating a semiconductor device for light emission comprising a plurality of epitaxial layers, the method comprising:

on a p-type layer of the plurality of epitaxial layers forming a first seed layer of a plurality of seed layers as a reflective layer;

on the plurality of seed layers forming an outer layer of a conductive material;

on an n-type layer of the plurality of epitaxial layers forming an n-type metal in an array at the centre of the n-type layer for minimizing its effect on light output; the n-type metal and the outer layer being the terminals for the semiconductor device.

27. A method as claimed in claim 26, wherein the first seed layer is of a reflective material and has a first co-efficient of thermal expansion, the method further comprising forming on the first seed layer a second seed layer of a second material having a second co-efficient of thermal expansion; the second co-efficient of thermal expansion being greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion.

28. A method as claimed in any one of claims 19, 20, 22 to 25 or 27, further comprising forming at least one intermediate seed layer on the first seed layer before the second seed layer is formed, the at least one intermediate seed layer being of at least one material having an intermediate co-efficient of thermal expansion that is greater than the first co-efficient of thermal expansion and less than the second co-efficient of thermal expansion.

29. A method as claimed in any one of claims 23 to 25, 27 or 28, wherein the outer layer is of the second material.

30. A method as claimed in claim 28 or claim 29, wherein the reflective material, the second material and the intermediate seed layer material are all different.

31. A method as claimed in any one of claims 19 to 30, wherein the semiconductor device is a gallium nitride semiconductor device.

32. A method of fabricating a semiconductor device for light emission comprising a plurality of epitaxial layers mounted on a substrate, the method comprising:

forming at least one seed layer on the plurality of epitaxial layers, and forming an outer layer on the at least one seed layer, the outer layer being relatively thick;

and

separating the substrate from the plurality of epitaxial layers while the plurality of epitaxial layers are intact for preserving electrical and mechanical properties of the plurality of epitaxial layers.

33. A method as claimed in claim 32, wherein the outer layer is for at least one selected from the group consisting of: a structural support, a heat sink, a heat dissipater, a current dissipater, and as a terminal, for the semiconductor device.

34. A method as claimed in claim 33, wherein after the at least one seed layer is formed, and before the outer layer is formed on the at least one seed layer, the following steps are performed:

(a) applying a p-type metal ohmic contact layer to a p-type layer of a plurality of epitaxial layers;

(b) applying a layer of an oxide over the p-type metal ohmic contact layer and the p-type layer;

(c) removing the oxide layer from above the metal ohmic contact layer;

and

(d) depositing the at least one seed layer on the oxide layer and the metal ohmic contact layer.

35. A method as claimed in claim 34, wherein after step (d) and before the outer layer is formed, a pattern of thick resists is applied to the at least one seed layer, the outer layer being formed between the pattern of thick resists.

36. A method as claimed in claim 35, wherein the outer layer is also formed over the pattern of thick resists.

37. A method as claimed in claim 35 or claim 36, wherein the outer layer is subsequently polished.

38. A method as claimed in any one of claims 34 to 37, wherein the oxide layer is silicon dioxide.

39. A method as claimed in any one of claims 32 to 38, wherein subsequent to separation of the substrate the following steps are performed:

(a) a first stage of isolation of individual devices by trench etching along edges of each mesa;

(b) pad etching;

(c) die isolation;

(d) forming an array of n-type ohmic contacts on an n-type layer of the plurality of epitaxial layers; and

(e) die separation.