

## **ELECTRICAL SOCKET**

### **RELATED APPLICATION**

[0001] This application claims priority to U.S. Patent Application No. 15/940,221, filed on March 29, 2018, entitled Electrical Socket, the subject matter of which is herein incorporated by reference.

### **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

[0002] The present invention relates to an electrical socket, such as for high current applications, with improved durability and performance.

### **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

[0003] Conventional electrical sockets, such as barrel terminals, are configured to accept an electrical pin or prong. Known electrical sockets are disclosed in commonly assigned U.S. Patent Nos. 6,899,571, 6,837,756, 4,734,063, and 4,657,335, the subject matter of each of which is incorporated by reference. The designs of such conventional electrical sockets can, however, lead to reduced performance and service life of the socket, namely due to deformation of the socket contacts, misalignment of the mating pin when inserted into the socket, and skiving of the mating pin.

[0004] Therefore, a need exists for an improved electrical socket that is designed to address the above problems and maintain high performance of the socket.

### **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

[0005] Accordingly, the present invention may provide an electrical socket that comprises a cylindrical body defining a longitudinal axis and having opposite first and second end rings, a plurality of spaced contact beams extending between the first and second end rings, and an inner receiving area for accepting a mating pin. The first and second end rings are rotatably offset from one another with respect to the longitudinal axis, thereby twisting the contact beams into a hyperbolic geometry. Each of the contact beams may comprise a middle section between first and second end sections. The first and second end sections are attached to the first and second

end rings, respectively, and the middle section of each contact beam may be longer and wider than each of the first and second end sections, such that each contact beam has a generally teardrop shape. The middle section of each contact beam has a contour that defines an inner contact area such that the middle section extends further into the inner receiving area than the first and second end sections and such that the inner contact areas are positioned for contact with the mating pin when inserted into the inner receiving area.

**[0006]** In certain embodiments, the contour of the middle section of each contact beam comprises a substantially concave form extending into the inner receiving area; the contour of the middle section of each contact beam comprises angled radii forms extending across the middle section substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis; the end rings have substantially the same diameter and width; the width of each end ring is greater than the width of each middle section of the contact beams; the hyperbolic geometry has a twist of about 40 to 70 degrees; the cylindrical body is a one-piece unitary member; the contact beams are uniformly spaced; and/or the cylindrical body is made of copper, copper alloy, or silver plating.

**[0007]** The present invention may also provide a method of making an electrical socket, that comprises the steps of providing a conductive blank having opposite first and second connecting portions and a plurality of contact beams extending between the first and second connecting portions, each contact beam having a middle section between first and second end sections, the first and second end sections being attached to the first and second connecting portions, respectively; contouring each of the middle sections of the contact beams of the blank to define a contact area; after contouring, rolling the blank to form a cylindrical body wherein the first and second connecting portions form opposite first and second end rings of the body; and then twisting the first and second end rings in opposite directions with respect to a longitudinal axis of the body, thereby twisting the contact beams into a hyperbolic geometry and forming an inner receiving area of the body configured to accept a mating pin with the contact areas of the contact beams facing inside.

**[0008]** In accordance with some embodiments of the method, the step of contouring provides a substantially concave form in each middle section of each contact beam such that the middle sections extend into the inner receiving area after the step of twisting the first and second end

rings; the step of contouring provides angled radii forms across each middle section of each contact beam; the step of twisting includes twisting the first and second end rings until the angled radii forms are substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis; the step of twisting the first and second end rings provides a twist between about 40 and 70 degrees with respect to the longitudinal axis; after the step of rolling the blank, attaching respective ends of the first and second connecting portions to form the first and second end rings, respectively; further comprising the step of welding or mechanically locking end edges of the blank after contouring and rolling the blank to form the cylindrical body; further comprising the step of stamping the blank from a sheet of conductive material; the sheet is made of copper, copper alloy, or silver plating; further comprising the step of forming the cylindrical body as a one-piece unitary member; and/or further comprising the step of uniformly spacing the contact beams.

**[0009]** With those and other objects, advantages, and features of the invention that may become hereinafter apparent, the nature of the invention may be more clearly understood by reference to the following detailed description of the invention, the appended claims, and the several drawings attached herein.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

[0010] A more complete appreciation of the invention and many of the attendant advantages thereof will be readily obtained as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0011] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a blank of an electrical socket according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

[0012] FIG. 2 is an enlarged plan view of a portion of the blank illustrated in FIG. 1;

[0013] FIGS. 3A and 3B are perspective and elevational views, respectively, of an electrical socket according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, after the blank of the electrical socket has been rolled and twisted;

[0014] FIG. 4 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the electrical socket illustrated in FIGS. 3A and 3B, showing a mating pin received in the electrical socket;

[0015] FIGS. 5A and 5B are partial plan and perspective views of tooling used to make an electrical socket according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention;

[0016] FIGS. 6A and 6B are cross-sectional views of an electrical socket according to an exemplary embodiment of the present invention, after the blank of the electrical socket is rolled (FIG. 6A) and twisted (FIG. 6B); and

[0017] FIG. 7 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the electrical socket illustrated in FIGS. 6A and 6B, showing a mating pin received in the electrical socket.

**DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS**

**[0018]** Referring to the figures, the present invention relates to an electrical socket 100 that is configured to be radially resilient for accepting a mating pin or prong 10. In a preferred embodiment, the electrical socket 100 is adapted for high current applications. In general, the electrical socket 100 may be a stamped and formed electrical contact grid or blank 102 that is rolled and then twisted into a hyperbolic geometry inside of which the mating pin 10 is received. Contact beams 110 of the electrical socket 100 may be particularly shaped and contoured to aid in mating pin contact with the inner contact surface area of the electrical socket 100 and increase the contact cycle life of the mating pin 10.

**[0019]** The design of electrical socket 100 of the present invention is configured to provide high radial resilience which allows, among other things, misalignment between the pin 10 and the electrical socket 100 at the connection interface; contact pressure (i.e. normal force) between the pin 10 and the electrical socket 100 that is delivered by both normal beam deflection forces as well as tensile forces of contact beams; low electrical resistance due to a relatively high amount of contact interface area between the hyperbolically formed contact beams 110 wrapping around the mating pin 10; low mating forces due to the distribution of the normal contact forces over a large surface area; tolerance of damage to one or more of the contact beams 110 by debris or foreign material; and/or the capability of a high number of mating cycles due to the distribution of plating wear (friction) over large surface.

**[0020]** Figs. 1 and 2 illustrate the blank 102 of the electrical socket 100 prior to rolling and twisting the same into the hyperbolic geometry (seen in Figs. 3A and 3B). Blank 102 is a grid comprising connecting portion 104 and 106 with the contact beams 110 extending therebetween. Blank 102 may be stamped from a sheet of conductive material, such as copper or copper alloy, or metal plating, such as gold, silver, or nickel plating and the like. Fig. 1 shows the contact beams 110a before being formed or contoured. Fig. 2 shows some of the contact beams 110b after the contact beams 110 have been contoured, in accordance with the present invention.

**[0021]** As seen in Figs. 3A and 3B, once the blank 102 is rolled and twisted, the electrical socket 100 generally comprises a cylindrical body 120 with one or more of the contoured contact beams

110 extending between opposite end rings 122 and 124. End rings 122 and 124 are preferably rotatably offset from one another with respect to a longitudinal axis 126 (Fig. 3B) defined by cylindrical body 120, thereby twisting contact beams 110 into a hyperbolic geometry, inside of which defines an inner receiving area 114 for accepting the mating pin 10. The end rings 122 and 124 may have substantially the same diameter and width. The width of each end ring 122 and 124 is preferably selected to provide an increased strength to the cylindrical body 120 and/or to provide a press-fit engagement with either a bore of a connector or outer housing sleeve.

**[0022]** Each contact beam 110 comprises a middle section 130 that is between two end sections 132 and 134. End sections 132 and 134 are connected or attached to end rings 122 and 124, respectively. Each middle section 130 of each contact beam 110 is preferably longer and wider than each end section 132 and 134, such that each contact beam 110 has a generally teardrop shape, as seen in Fig. 1. This generally teardrop shape provides more mass in the center of the electrical socket 100.

**[0023]** The middle sections 130 of each contact beam 110 may have a contour 140 that defines an inner contact area 142 for engaging the mating pin 10. The inner contact areas 142 preferably extend into inner receiving area 114 of the electrical socket 100. As such, the middle sections 130 extend further or deeper into inner receiving area 114 than end sections 132 and 134 so that the inner contact areas 142 are positioned for smooth and resilient contact with the mating pin 10 when it is inserted into inner receiving area 114. In a preferred embodiment, the middle sections 130 are contoured so that the contour 140 is a substantially concave form that curves into inner receiving area 114, as best seen in Fig. 4. The contoured teardrop shape of the contact beams 110 adds bending resistance thereto and a fully radiused, smooth contact area at the pin-to-socket interface. As seen in Fig. 4, when the mating pin 10 is received in the inner receiving area 114 of the electrical socket 100, its outer contact surface 12 engages the smooth inner contact areas 142 of the middle sections 130 of the contoured contact beams 110 without sharp edges ever contacting the pin's outer surface 12.

**[0024]** The shape and contour 140 of the contact beams 110 achieves several performance benefits to the electrical socket such as, an increase in the beam bending strength of each contact beam 110 due to its three dimensional contoured form; enabling delivery of higher normal

contact forces between the mating pin 10 and the electrical socket 100; a wider radial depth of an arched profile of contact beams 110, thereby serving to limit the maximum radial offset possible to eliminate the risk of mechanical overstressing and plastic deformation of contact beams 110, particularly in a misaligned condition between the mating pin 10 and the electrical socket 100; and/or an arched profile of contact beams 110 which serves to eliminate sharp edges from the pin-to-socket interface area, thereby eliminating the possibility of skiving plating off the mating pin 10 and extending the mating service life of the interface connection.

**[0025]** In one embodiment, the electrical socket 100 is preferably one-piece. Also, the contact beams 110 may be uniformly spaced around the cylindrical body 120. However, the electrical socket 100 may be formed as more than one-piece and the contact beams 110 may be spaced non-uniformly. Also, although the end rings 122 and 124 preferably have substantially the same diameter and width; end rings 122 and 124 may have different diameters and widths. In another embodiment, the end rings 122 and 124 have an increased width to increase the strength of the electrical socket 100 and protect the electrical socket 100 from being over stressed. For example, the width of each end ring 122 and 124 may be greater than the width of each middle section 130 of the contact beams 100.

**[0026]** The design of the electrical socket 100 of the present invention provides sufficient mechanical structure such that the socket 100 may be used as a standalone socket, that is without an outer housing. Due to the contoured contact beam profiles of the socket 100, the socket 100 may be simply press-fit into a bore, such as zero clearance bore, such as in a contact holder body of a cable connector. As an option, however, the electrical socket 100 may be inserted into a holder sleeve 150, as seen in Fig. 4. The holder sleeve 150 may receive the electrical socket 100, in a press-fit, for example. In either case, the design and contour 140 of the contact beams 110 help prevent overstressing and plastic deformation of the contact beams 110, particularly if there is misalignment between the mating pin 10 and the electrical socket 100. That is because the contour of the contact beams 110 creates minimal space between the contact beams 110 and inner surface of the bore or the holder sleeve 150, such that the contact beams 110 would travel only a minimal distance  $d$  (Fig. 4) before they hit the inner surface 152 of the bore or the holder sleeve 150.

**[0027]** A method for making the electrical socket 100, according to an embodiment of the present invention, may comprise the steps of stamping a conductive sheet to form the blank 102 with the connecting portions 104 and 106 and the substantially teardrop shaped contact beams 110 therebetween, as seen in Fig. 1. The size of the blank 102 may be selected based on the application, e.g. the diameter of the mating pin (such as 8mm or 12mm diameter pin). After forming the blank 102, each of the middle sections 130 of the contact beams 110 is contoured, as described above. That is, each middle section 130 is shaped and contoured to have contour 140. After contouring the contact beams 110, the blank 102 may be rolled to form the cylindrical body 120 and the connecting portions 104 and 106 will form the opposite end rings 122 and 124, respectively, of the body 120. The end edges of the rolled blank may be attached to one another by welding, mechanically such as by interlocking protrusions, or the like. Alternatively, the end edges of the rolled blank may not be attached and left un-joined.

**[0028]** Once rolled into the cylindrical body 120, the end rings 122 and 124 are rotated with respect to the longitudinal axis 126 of the body 120 in opposite directions, thereby twisting the contact beams 110 into the hyperbolic geometry and forming the inner receiving area 114 of the body 120 configured to accept the mating pin 10 with the contact areas 142 of the contact beams 110 facing inside. The amount or degree of twist may be customized, that is, it may be any degree or range of degrees based on a particular application (e.g. the diameter of mating pin 10). Factors that determine the amount of twist include, but are not limited to, having enough twist to pull the contoured contact beams 110 inwardly enough so that they do not interfere with the connector bore or housing the electrical socket 100 is going inserted into; having enough twist to ensure no sharp edges can contact the mating pin 10 when inserted into the inner receiving area 114 of the socket 100; and having sufficient pin engaging forces between the contact beams 110 and the mating pin 10, particularly in view of the size of the mating pin. In one embodiment, the degree of twist may be about 40 to 70 degrees. In a preferred embodiment, the degree of twist may be about a 58 degree twist for a 12mm sized mating pin 10.

**[0029]** In one embodiment, after the cylindrical body 120 is twisted into the hyperbolic geometry, the electrical socket 100 may be inserted into the housing sleeve 150. The electrical socket 100 may be press-fit or welded, for example, into the housing sleeve 150. Alternatively,

the leading edge of a holder sleeve 150 may be formed after the electrical socket 100 is inserted therein to trap it inside the holder sleeve 150.

**[0030]** Figs. 5A through 7 illustrate an alternative embodiment of the electrical socket 100' according to the present invention. The electrical socket 100' of this embodiment is similar to the electrical socket 100 of the first embodiment, except that the contour 140' of the middle sections 130' of the contact beams 110' comprises angle radii forms 140a' and 140b' (Figs. 5B, 6A, and 6B) that extend across the width of the middle sections 130' and define a formed radius contact area 142' therebetween that corresponds to the size of the mating pin 10.

**[0031]** Like the first embodiment, the electrical socket 100' generally includes a cylindrical body 120' with opposing end rings 122' and 124' and teardrop shaped contact beams 110' therebetween. The electrical socket 100' is made in the same manner and steps as described above regarding the electrical socket 100 of the first embodiment, except that a different contour 140' is applied to the contact beams 110'.

**[0032]** Figs. 5A and 5B illustrate a tool 200 for forming the contour 140', which comprises the angled radii forms 140a' and 140b' and the formed radius contact area 142', in the contact beams 110'. The tool 200 has upper and lower parts 202 and 204 with the blank 102' of the electrical socket 100' sandwiched therebetween. Blank 102' and blank 102 of the first embodiment may be substantially the same. Angled and curved inward extensions 206 and 208 of each tool upper and lower parts 202 and 204, respectively, are positioned to form the contact area 142' between the angled radii forms 140a' and 140b' in each middle section 130' of each contact beam 110'. Each middle section 130' is between end sections 132' and 134' of the contact beam 110'. The angled radii forms 140a' and 140b' preferably correspond to the radius of the mating pin 10, such that the angled radii forms 140a' and 140b' define tangent points of where the mating pin radius 10 feathers out and the contact area 142' therebetween is the radius of the mating pin 10. The placement and angle of the angled radii forms 140a' and 140b' and contact area 142' with respect to the length of the contact beams 110' is selected such that when the cylindrical body 120' is twisted (at end rings 122' and 124') to form the hyperbolic geometry, the angled radii forms 140a' and 140b' are oriented substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis 126' of the cylindrical body 120', as seen in Fig. 6B. The placement and angle of the angled radii forms

140a' and 140b' may be customized depending on the application, such as the diameter of the mating pin 10.

**[0033]** As seen in Fig. 7, when the mating pin 10 is received in the electrical socket 100', the contact areas 142' of each contact beam 110' extend into the inner receiving area 114' (Fig. 6A) of the socket 100' and engage the outer surface 12 of the mating pin 10. Because the angled radii forms 140a' and 140b' are generally parallel to the longitudinal axis 126' (after twisting) and each formed contact area 142' therebetween corresponds to the size of the selected mating pin 10, smooth contact with the mating pin 10 when it is inserted into the socket's inner receiving area 114' is achieved.

**[0034]** Although certain presently preferred embodiments of the disclosed invention have been specifically described herein, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art to which the invention pertains that variations and modifications of the various embodiments shown and described herein may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Accordingly, it is intended that the invention be limited only to the extent required by the appended claims and the applicable rules of law.