

Using the SSM2167 Evaluation Board

By Shawn Scarlett

SSM2167 EVALUATION BOARD

The evaluation board is a convenient means to evaluate and understand the operation of the SSM2167. This *documentation provides a basic explanation of how the board is set up and how to use it to evaluate the SSM2167*. This document is only a supplement and makes several references to figures contained in the product data sheet. The current data sheet is available on-line at www.analog.com.

This document also contains the schematics and layout for the evaluation board to allow easy modification and experimentation. Applications support is available from Analog Devices, Inc. on-line or in the United States at (800) ANALOG D or (800) 262-5643.

Basic Connections and Setup

The board features simple, easy-to-use connections that allow for a broad range of experimentation. The evaluation board is available only with the SSM2167-1.

Power and Ground

The SSM2167 is optimized for operation at 3 V; however, it can operate from a wide range of supplies. Please refer to the product data sheet for the maximum limits. The SSM2167 board can be connected to a bench power supply or two AA batteries. Power leads will need to be soldered into place at JP3. Alternatively, a header jack can be soldered to the board to allow easy disconnection. The power and ground connections are critical to the performance of the board, so care should be taken to ensure proper connection.

Shutdown Connection

Located at JP3, along with the power and ground, is the low current shutdown connection. The board has a pull-up resistor installed so that if no connection is made at that point, the part will operate in active mode. To enable the shutdown feature, simply connect the **SHUTDOWN** pin on JP3 to ground. If an *in-depth analysis* is to be done on the shutdown current, the pull-up resistor R5 may be removed. The shutdown pin should not be left floating. If R5 is removed, be sure to connect the **SHUTDOWN** pin directly to the supply or ground.

Signal Connections, Input, and Output

Signal sources can be connected to the evaluation board with standard 3.5 mm jacks or leads which can be soldered directly to the board at JP2 and JP3. The board uses 3.5 mm stereo sockets with the signal on the tip and the sleeve connected to the board ground; the ring is left floating. At both jumper connections, a ground point is available to prevent noise.

The input jack is configured for maximum versatility. By default, it is designed for use with an electret microphone or input source. It can be changed easily to accommodate dynamic microphones.

Electret Microphones

The evaluation board is configured with a 2.2 k Ω resistor (R4) to the supply for use as a biasing resistor. It is connected directly to the signal path so that both the jack and the jumper (JP2) can be used as input connections. Standard computer electret microphones can be used without modification because the ring and tip are connected internally in the microphone. The input jack and JP2 are decoupled from the input pin via a 0.1 μ F capacitor (C1).

Dynamic Microphones

If the board is to be used with a dynamic or self-powered microphone, R4 should be removed.

Output Signal

The output jack is decoupled from the circuit via a 10 μ F capacitor (C2). The connection can be made at either JP1 or the standard 3.5 mm jack, with the signal connection to the tip of the plug. For listening tests, the output signal can be connected directly from the 3.5 mm jack to an RCA input on a normal audio amplifier using a standard stereo adapter cable. In this case, use the left (white or black) RCA connection because it corresponds with the tip of the 3.5 mm jack. The output of the SSM2167 is not sufficient to drive headphones or other output transducers without external amplification.

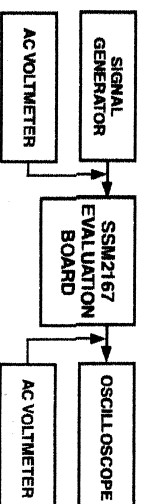


Figure 1. Test Equipment Setup

Test Equipment Setup

The recommended equipment and configuration is shown in Figure 1. A low noise audio generator with a smooth output adjustment range of 50 μ V to 50 mV is a suitable signal source. A 40 dB pad is useful to reduce the level of most generators by 100' to simulate microphone levels. The input voltmeter can be connected before the pad and need only go down to 10 mV. The output voltmeter should go up to 2 V. The oscilloscope is used to verify that the output is sinusoidal, that no clipping is occurring in the buffer, and that the noise-gating threshold is set.

STEP 1. Connections

Connect power, ground, input, and output as discussed above.

STEP 2. Test Setup

To confirm the operation of the board and test setup, first put JP4 in the 1:1 position and JP5 in the -55 dB position. With power on, adjust the generator for an input level of 15 mV, 1 kHz. The output meter should indicate approximately 100 mV. If it does not, check the setup. Substituting the SSM2167-2 will give an output of approximately 40 mV.

STEP 3. Listening

Connect a microphone to the SSM2167 and listen to the results. Be sure to include the proper power for the microphone as discussed above. Experiment with the settings to hear how the results change. Compression ratio will keep the output steady over a range of source-to-microphone distances, and the noise gate will keep the background sounds subdued.

STEP 4. Setting the Noise-Gate Threshold

The evaluation board provides three different preset values of noise-gate threshold. Experiment with these values by varying the gate. The board also provides landing pads for a custom value that can be extrapolated from the table given in the data sheet, or TPC 1 in the Typical Performance Characteristics section of the data sheet. Using above 5 k Ω is not recommended because extremely low noise-gate thresholds may approach the noise floor of the system.

The highest setting (-48 dB) is recommended to start an evaluation. If the input signal is not sufficient to surpass the threshold, lower the setting. In most applications, the input signal will easily overcome this setting. If the gate is set too low, the background noise will be amplified well into the audible range. By examining the function (Figure 1) in the data sheet, the maximum gain of the part can be determined when the input signal is at the noise-gate threshold. The dashed line on the transfer function represents unity gain; the distance between the dashed line and the solid line represents the VCA gain.

STEP 5. Adjusting the Compression Ratio

The evaluation board provides three different settings for the compression ratio in the same manner as the noise-gate threshold. Experiment with different compression ratios to determine what will sound best in a given system; starting with a 2:1 ratio is recommended. High compression ratios will exaggerate the effect of the noise gate because compression ratio determines the gain at the noise gate, as shown in Figure 4 of the data sheet. Compression of 10:1 should be used only in systems where the noise floor is well below the noise gate. Most systems require between 2:1 and 5:1 compression for best results.

Listening Test

The final step in evaluating the SSM2167 should be a listening test. The improvement in vocal clarity can be heard by recording the SSM2167 output or listening to it live. Ideally, the evaluation board should be connected to an existing system. The impact of the compression is demonstrated by shorting out RCOMP (R9 through R12). When the RCOMP resistor is shorted, the VCA will revert to the audible 1:1 compression setting. This will not affect the noise-gate or limiting settings. The effect of turning off the compression will be most noticeable when the input signal is between -50 dBV and -40 dBV. Evaluating the SSM2167 within the end application will also give the best indication of how high the noise-gate threshold should be set. The noise level of the system will be greatly influenced by the design of the system, including cooling fans, hard drives, handling, and other sources of acoustic noise.

Listening tests are the most critical part of an evaluation. Since test equipment and signal generators do not represent audio signals well, listening is the best way to evaluate the benefits of the SSM2167. The evaluation board makes it easy to implement the SSM2167 and to pick appropriate application settings. The end result is a noticeable improvement in signal clarity and a system that is easy for customers to use.

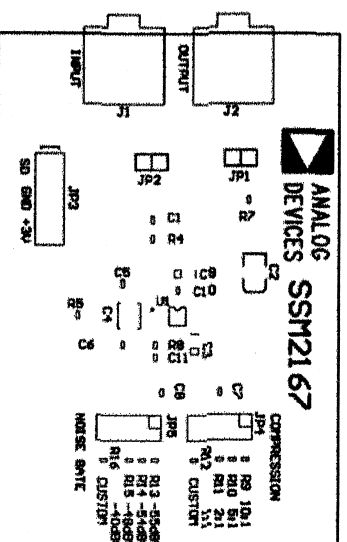


Figure 2. SSM2167 Evaluation Board, Top Layer
Including Component Identification and Placement

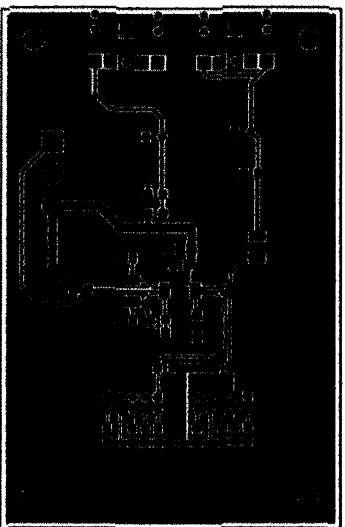


Figure 3. SSM2167 Evaluation Board; Top Layer



Figure 4. SSM2167 Evaluation Board; Bottom Layer

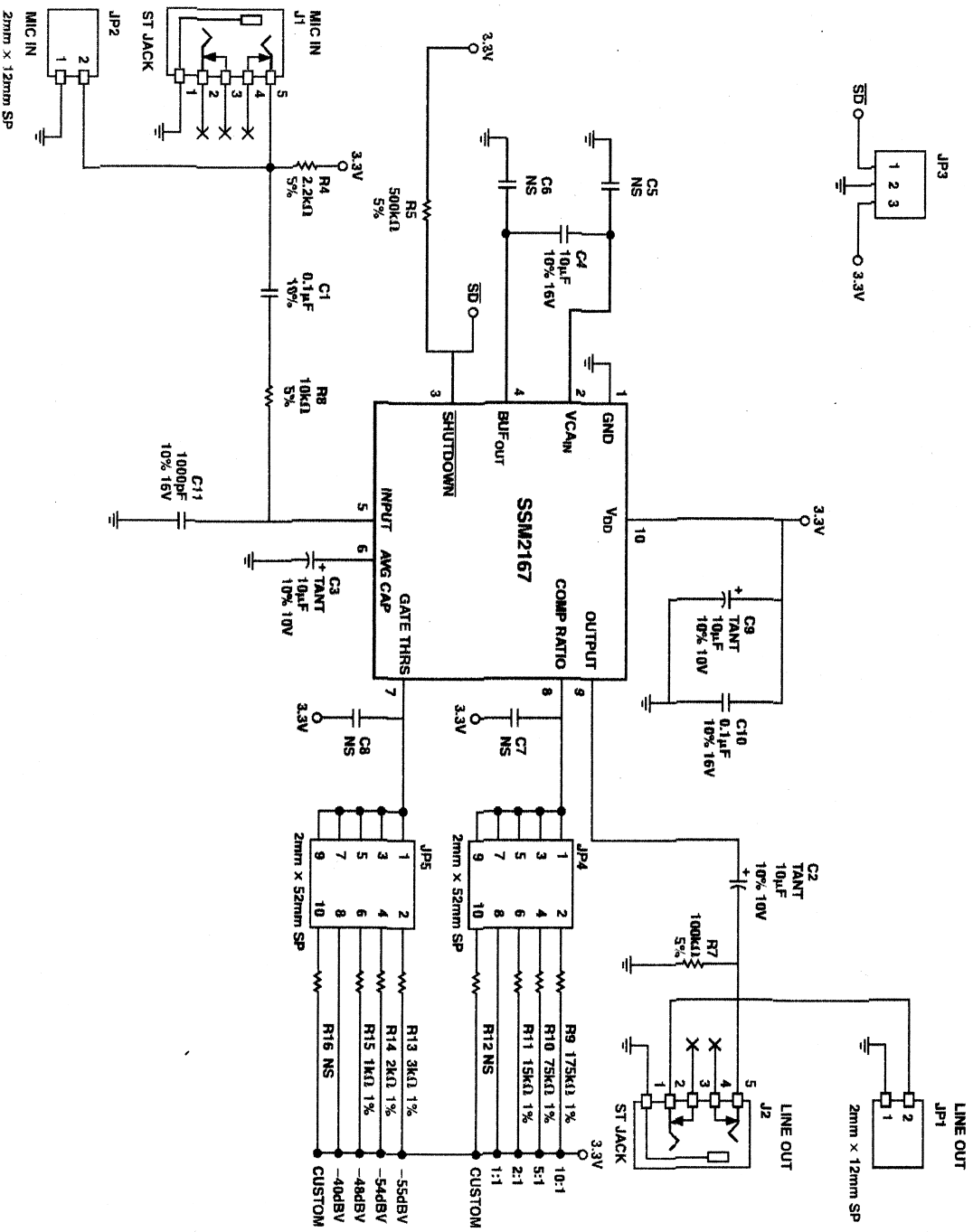


Figure 5. SSM2167 Evaluation Board Circuit Schematic

Table I. Part List for SSM2167 Evaluation Board

Reference	Part	PCB Footprint	Value	Tolerance
U1	IC	10-Lead MSOP	SSM2167	
C1, C10	CAP	805	0.1 μ F (X7R)	10%
C2, C3, C9	CAP	CASE - A	10 μ F (TANT)	10%
C4	CAP NP	1206	10 μ F (X5R)	10%
J1, J2	ST JACK	T.H.	ST JACK	
JP4, JP5	HEADER	T.H.	2 mm \times 52 mm SP	
R5	RES	805	499 k Ω	1%
R8	RES	805	10 k Ω	5%
R4	RES	805	2.2 k Ω	5%
R7	RES	805	100 k Ω	5%
R9	RES	805	175 k Ω	5%
R10	RES	805	75 k Ω	5%
R11	RES	805	15 k Ω	5%
R13	RES	805	3 k Ω	5%
R14	RES	805	2 k Ω	5%
R15	RES	805	1 k Ω	5%
JP4 (7-8), JP5 (7-8)	JUMPER		2 mm SHUNT	
R12, R16	RES	805	NS	
C5, C6, C7, C8	CAP	805	NS	
C11	CAP	805	NS	
JP1, JP2	HEADER	2 mm \times 12 mm SP	NS	
JP3	HEADER	3 mm \times 10.2 in SP	NS	

NS = Not Stuffed