

KISTLER

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PiezoStar® Crystals

A New Dimension in Sensor Technology

Dr. Claudio Cavalloni,
Dr. Roland Sommer,
Kistler Instrumente AG,
Winterthur

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A New Dimension in Sensor Technology

For more than 40 years, Kistler has been developing and manufacturing piezoelectric sensors that can be used to measure pressure, force and acceleration, even under extreme conditions. Nowadays, the sensor elements are increasingly being made from new types of crystals.

Market trends towards miniaturization and higher operating temperatures resulted in a need for new types of crystals capable of satisfying the demand for greater sensitivity and higher temperature. To this end, research was conducted for over ten years in cooperation with universities and institutes throughout the world to investigate new crystal compounds and develop growing processes. The fruit of this research is a whole family of crystals with outstanding properties for piezoelectric sensors. Since 1998, crystals measuring up to 65 mm in diameter and weighing up to 2,5 kg,

have been grown and processed by Kistler to form sensor elements, thus creating a new group of pressure, force and acceleration sensors with superior properties.

Kistler has optimized the PiezoStar crystal elements for use in sensors for demanding applications, thus strengthening its technological edge in sensor technology. Crystals KI85 and KI91 from the PiezoStar group are currently being used in sensors.

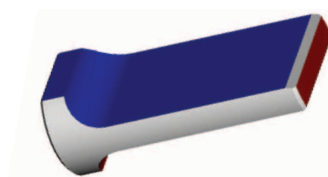
Milestones in the History of PiezoStar Crystals

- 1995 1995 First miniature pressure sensor (20 pC/bar) with a KI85 crystal
- 1995 First high-temperature force sensor with KI85 crystal
- 1998 First KI85 crystal grown at Kistler
- 1999 First miniature pressure sensor (temperature-compensated) with a KI91 crystal
- 2002 First KI91 crystal grown at Kistler

PiezoStar



Single crystal



Measuring element



High-temperature pressure sensor

The Outstanding Properties of Kistler's PiezoStar Crystals Include:

- High piezoelectric sensitivity (up to 5x higher than quartz)
- Low temperature dependence
- High stability of the properties
- Can be used at temperatures of up to more than 600 °C
- No phase transition up to the melting point (above 1300 °C)
- No twin formation
- Growing process can be reproduced on an industrial scale
- Tested and successfully used in high-quality piezoelectric sensors

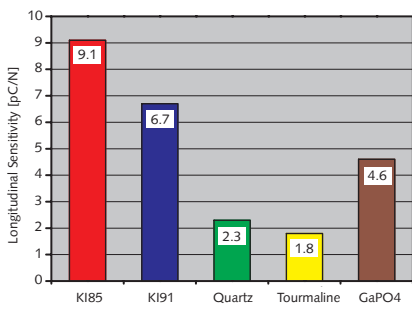
Products

Examples of proven and tested sensors with PiezoStar crystal elements:



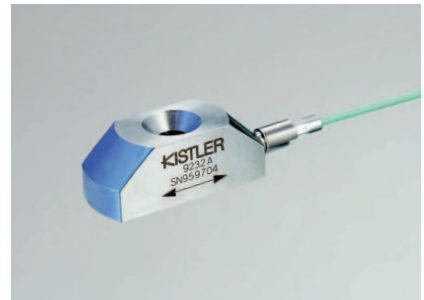
Miniature 5mm HighSens force sensor Type 9215 (100 pC/N)

Piezoelectric Characteristics



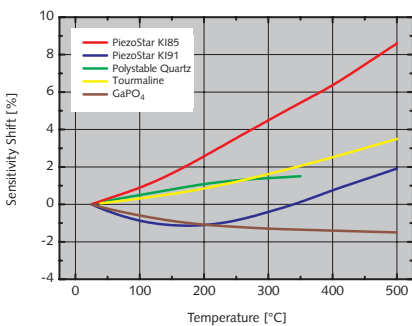
Piezoelectric sensitivity of various high-temperature crystals. KI85 and KI91 are crystals from the PiezoStar group.

Miniature M5 high-temperature pressure sensors Type 6052B and pressure probes Type 6055/6057 for use in internal combustion engines



HighSens strain sensor Type 9232A and strain transmitter Type 9234A

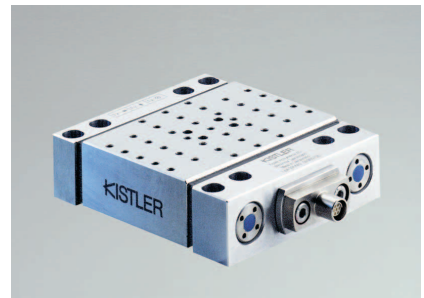
Measuring spark plug M14 Type 6117B and M12 Type 6115A for use in internal combustion engines



Sensitivity shift as a function of the temperature of various crystals



High-sensitivity 3-component force sensors (11 pC/N) Type 9017A/9018A in the ForceLink Type 9317A/9318A



Miniature 3-component dynamometer MiniDyn Type 9256A for micromachining

Crystal Properties

PiezoStar crystals belong to the family of calcium gallogermanates quartz isotypes, such as langasite ($\text{La}_3\text{Ga}_5\text{SiO}_{14}$). The first crystal of this family ($\text{Ca}_3\text{Ga}_2\text{Ge}_4\text{O}_{14}$) was discovered at Moscow State University as long ago as 1979. Since then over 100 different compounds from this family have been grown. Only for few of them the piezoelectric properties have been measured. As the crystals belong to the same crystallographic class (32) as quartz, it is possible to obtain the same crystal cuts (longitudinal, transversal and shear). However, unlike quartz or gallium orthophosphate, crystals from the langasite family do not have a phase transition point below melting point and this explains their excellent stability up to extreme temperatures.

Bibliography: B.V. Mill and Yu.V. Pisarevsky, Proc. IEEE International Frequency Control Symposium, 2000, p. 133-144.

Apart from their use in sensor technology, these crystals can be applied in resonators and surface acoustic wave devices for oscillators, frequency filters and delay circuits for mobile communications and television sets.



KI85 crystal, \varnothing 55 mm, 1,8 kg

Advantages of PiezoStar Crystals

Easy and economical to grow, good yield, good stability, high sensitivity, no twin formation, no phase transition below the melting point, usable at extremely high temperatures, no pyroelectric effect.

Disadvantages

Lower mechanical strength and higher cost than quartz.

Disadvantages of Tourmaline

Only natural crystals can be obtained (varying quality, uncertain availability), low sensitivity.

Disadvantages of GaPO4

Very expensive to grow, only small crystals can be obtained, low yield, twin formation, phase transition at 970 °C.

Disadvantages of Quartz

Low sensitivity, twin formation, phase transition at 573 °C.

Comparison of Various Piezoelectric Materials

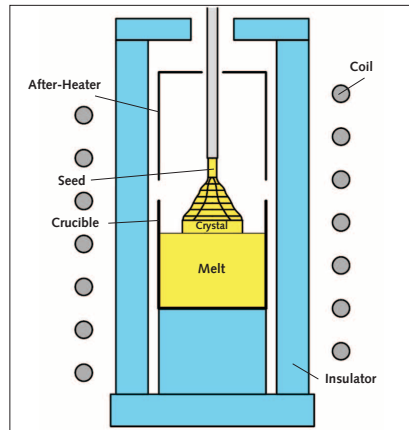
	Peculiarity	Pyroelectric effect	T_{\max} *	Production		
				Process	Volume	Costs
Quartz	High mechanical strength	No	573 °C	Hydrothermal	Large	Low
KI85	High sensitivity	No	T_m	Czochralsky	Average	High
KI91	Low temperature coefficient	No	T_m	Czochralsky	Average	High
GaPO4	Low temperature coefficient	No	970 °C	Hydrothermal	Small	High
Tourmaline	High temperature stability	Yes	>900 °C	Natural	Small	High
Piezoceramic (PZT)	High sensitivity	Yes	250 °C	Sintering	Large	Low

* Phase transition temperature. T_m = no transition below the melting point.

Czochralsky Growth (or Crystal Pulling)

The Czochralsky process has been known since 1917. Kistler uses it to grow large, high quality crystals within a relatively short period of time (for example, our KI85 crystal (Ø55 mm, 1.8 kg) is grown within one week). The individual components (mostly oxide powder) are mixed in a crucible and heated up to the melting point (induction heating). As this temperature is approximately 1400 to 1500 °C, the crucible must be made of a noble metal (platinum or iridium). A seed crystal (i.e. a piece of crystal of the same compound) is dipped into the melt. The temperature of the melt has to be controlled very precisely: if it is too hot, the seed crystal will melt down, while if it is too cold, there is a risk that the melt will quickly solidify. Once the crystal growth process has started, the seed crystal is pulled very slowly (approximately 1 mm/h). The size (diameter) of the crystal is automatically controlled by means of the heating power and the pulling speed.

Though the process is simple in theory, its practical application is complicated by complex and chaotic phenomena occurring in 3 dimensions. In particular, the temperature must be controlled very precisely. If the crystal grows too quickly, there is a risk that cracks or imperfections will form in the crystal structure. Thus, growing a perfect crystal requires precise control of the heating power and considerable experience on the part of the operator.



Schematic representation of the Czochralsky process



KI91 crystal Ø 65 mm, 2,5 kg



Crystal growing system according to the Czochralsky process (photo by Kistler)

Kistler worldwide

Europe

Germany

Kistler Instrumente GmbH
PO Box 1262
DE-73748 Ostfildern
Tel. (+49) 7 11 34 07 0
Fax (+49) 7 11 34 07 159
info.de@kistler.com

France

Kistler SA
ZA de Courtabœuf 1
15, avenue du Hoggar
FR-91953 Les Ulis cédex
Tel. (+33) 1 69 18 81 81
Fax (+33) 1 69 18 81 89
info.fr@kistler.com

Switzerland/Liechtenstein

Kistler Instrumente AG
Verkauf Schweiz
PO Box, Eulachstr. 22
CH-8408 Winterthur
Tel. (+41) 52 224 12 32
Fax (+41) 52 224 14 21
sales.ch@kistler.com

Austria

Kistler GmbH
Lemböckgasse 49f
AT-1230 Wien
Tel. (+43) 1 867 48 67 0
Fax (+43) 1 867 48 67 17
sales.at@kistler.com

Italy

Kistler Italia s.r.l.
Via Paolo Uccello, 4
IT-20148 Milano
Tel. (+39) 02 481 27 51
Fax (+39) 02 481 28 21
sales.it@kistler.com

UK

Kistler Instruments Ltd.
Alresford House, Mill Lane
Alton, Hampshire GU34 2QJ, UK
Tel. (+44) 1420 54 44 77
Fax (+44) 1420 54 44 74
sales.uk@kistler.com

Denmark/Finland/Norway/Sweden

Kistler Nordic AB
Aminogatan 34
SE-431 53 Mölndal
Tel. (+46) 31 871 566
Fax (+46) 31 871 597
info.se@kistler.com

Netherlands

Kistler B.V. Nederland
Newtonlaan 115
NL-3584 BH, Utrecht
Tel. (+31) 30 210 63 67
Fax (+31) 30 210 66 66
sales.nl@kistler.com

Asia

Japan

Kistler Japan Co., Ltd.
MT Building
7-5, Shibadaimon 2-chome
Minato-ku, Tokyo 105
Tel. (+81) 3 35 78 02 71
Fax (+81) 3 35 78 02 78
sales.jp@kistler.com

Korea, Republic of

Kistler Korea Co., Ltd.
3rd Floor, Bow Building
1580-1, Seocho-3 dong,
Seocho-ku,
Seoul, Korea 137-875
Tel. (+82) 2 597 6013
Fax (+82) 2 525 6015
sales.kr@kistler.com

China, People's Republic of

Kistler China Ltd.
Unit D, 24 / F Seabright Plaza
9-23 Shell Street
North Point, Hong Kong
Tel. (+852) 25 91 59 30
Fax (+852) 25 91 18 85
sales.cn@kistler.com

Representative Office Beijing

Tel. (+86) 10 8225 2163
Fax (+86) 10 8225 2124
sales.cn@kistler.com

Singapore

Kistler Instruments (Pte) Ltd.
50 Bukit Batok Street 23
#04-06 Midview Building
Singapore 659578
Tel. (+65) 631 67331
Fax (+65) 631 67332
sales.sg@kistler.com

America

USA / Canada

Kistler Instrument Corp.
75 John Glenn Drive
Amherst, NY 14228-2171
Tel. (+1) 716 691 5100
Fax (+1) 716 691 5226
sales.us@kistler.com

Other countries

Kistler Instrumente AG
Export Sales
PO Box, Eulachstr. 22
CH-8408 Winterthur
Tel. (+41) 52 224 11 11
Fax (+41) 52 224 15 49
sales.export@kistler.com

Headquarters

Switzerland

Kistler Instrumente AG
PO Box, CH-8408 Winterthur
Tel. (+41) 52 224 11 11
Fax (+41) 52 224 14 14
info@kistler.com

www.kistler.com

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