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External/internal optical adapter for FTIR spectrophotometer

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Xu

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(54) **EXTERNAL/INTERNAL OPTICAL ADAPTER
FOR FTIR SPECTROPHOTOMETER**

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6, 2009, provisional application No. 61/342,134, filed
on Apr. 8, 2010.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
G01J 5/02 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **250/339.08**

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USPC 250/339.08; 356/433
See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner — David Porta

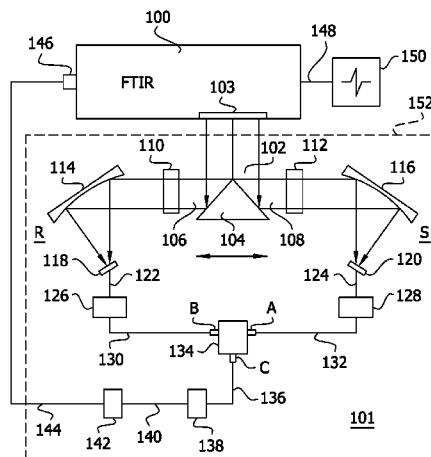
Assistant Examiner — Djura Malevic

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A Fourier Transfer Infrared (FTIR) spectrophotometer having reduced baseline noise. The system and method include internal or external optical adapters having a moveable beam-splitter for splitting the source light beam into a reference beam and a sample beam, and may include a variable band-pass filter, variable preamplifier and reversed biased photo-diodes.

27 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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FIG. 1

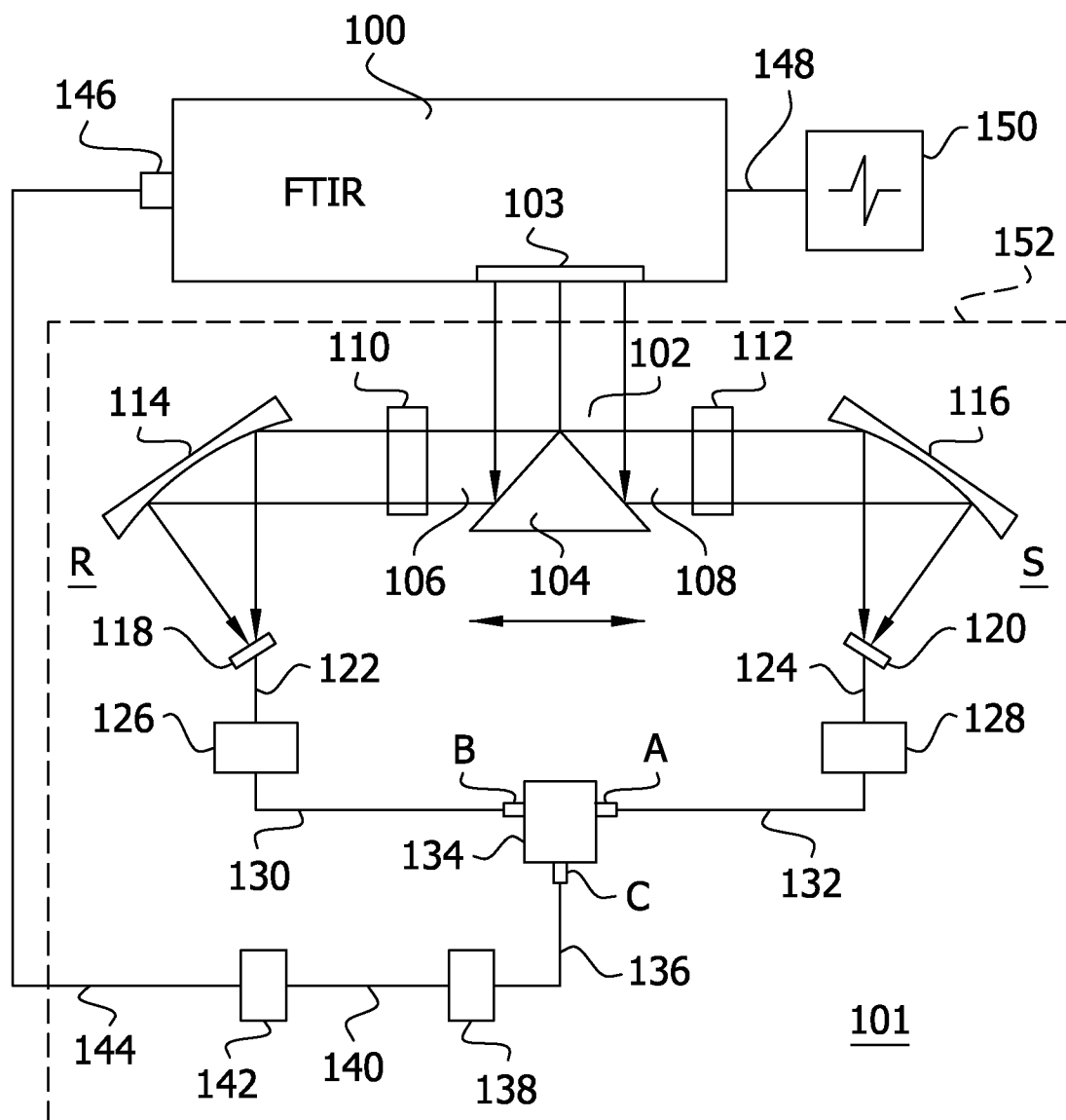


FIG. 2

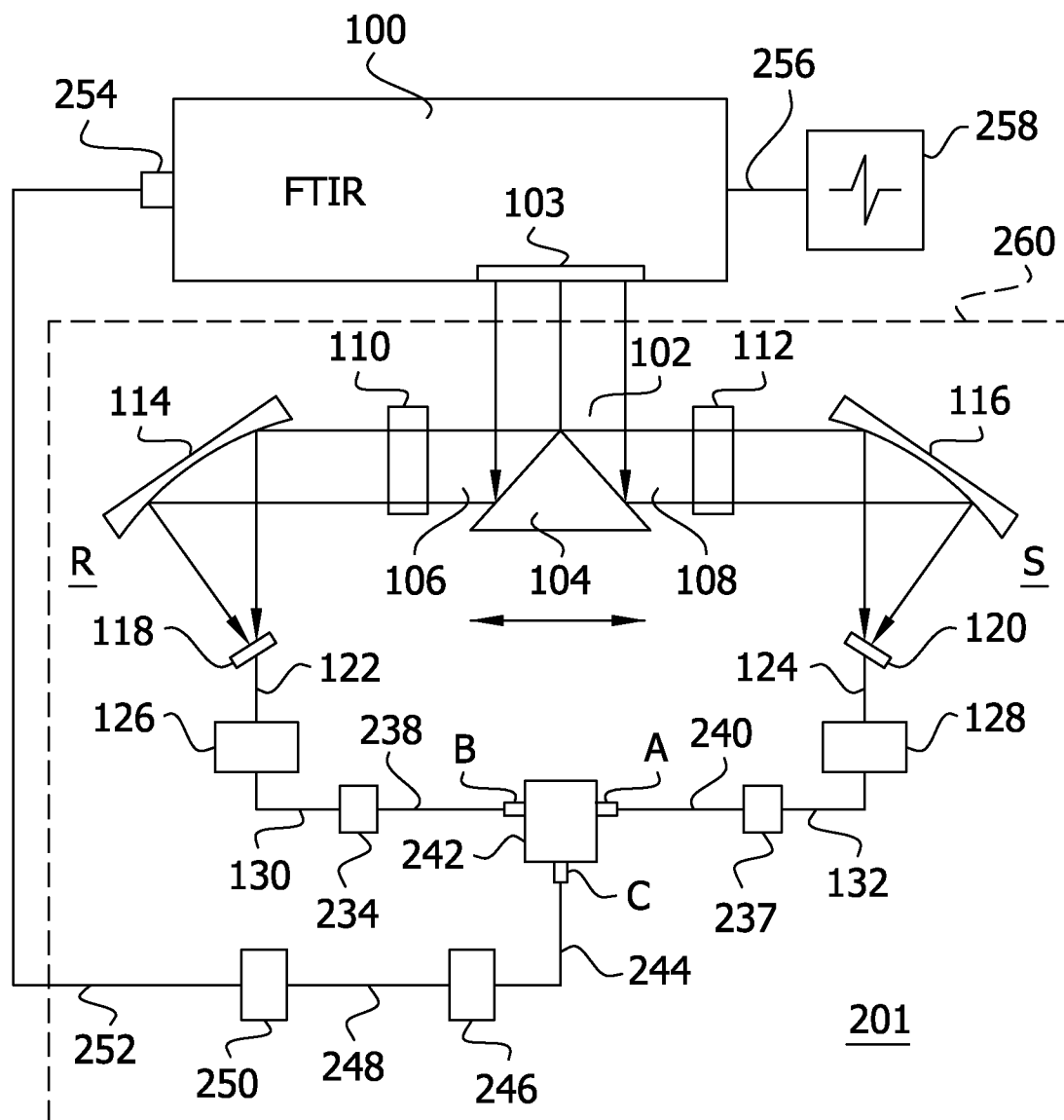


FIG. 3

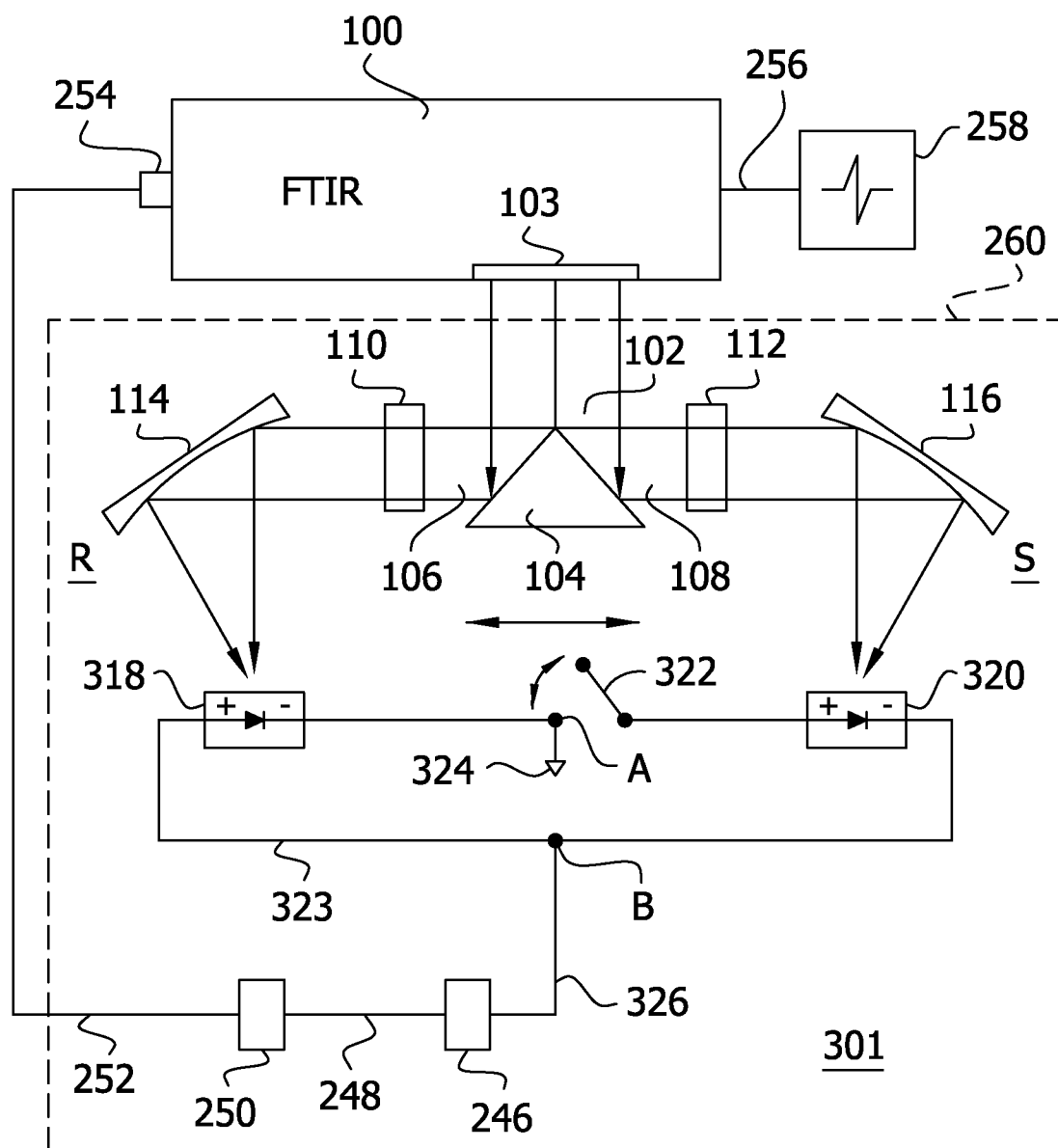


FIG. 4

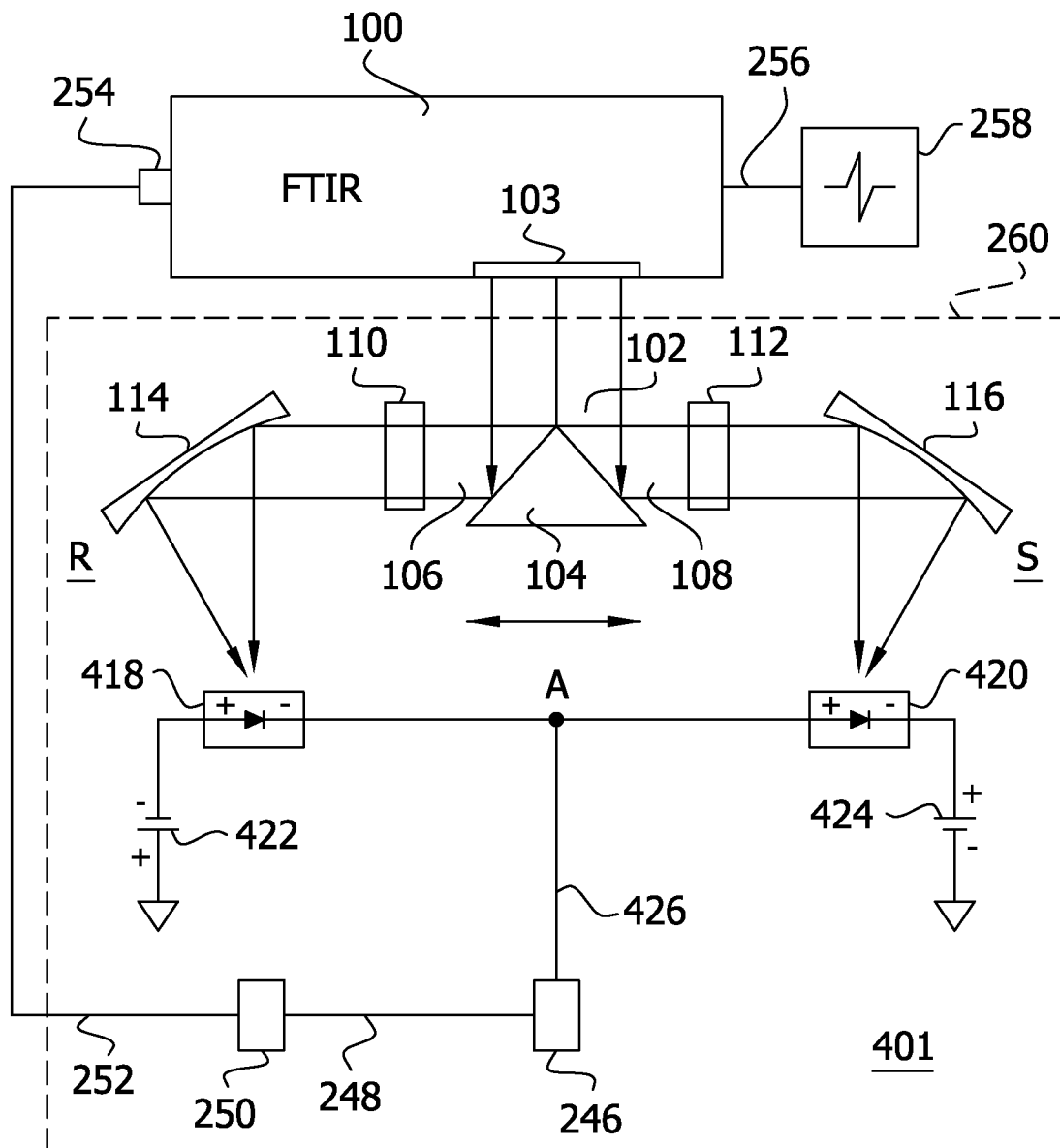
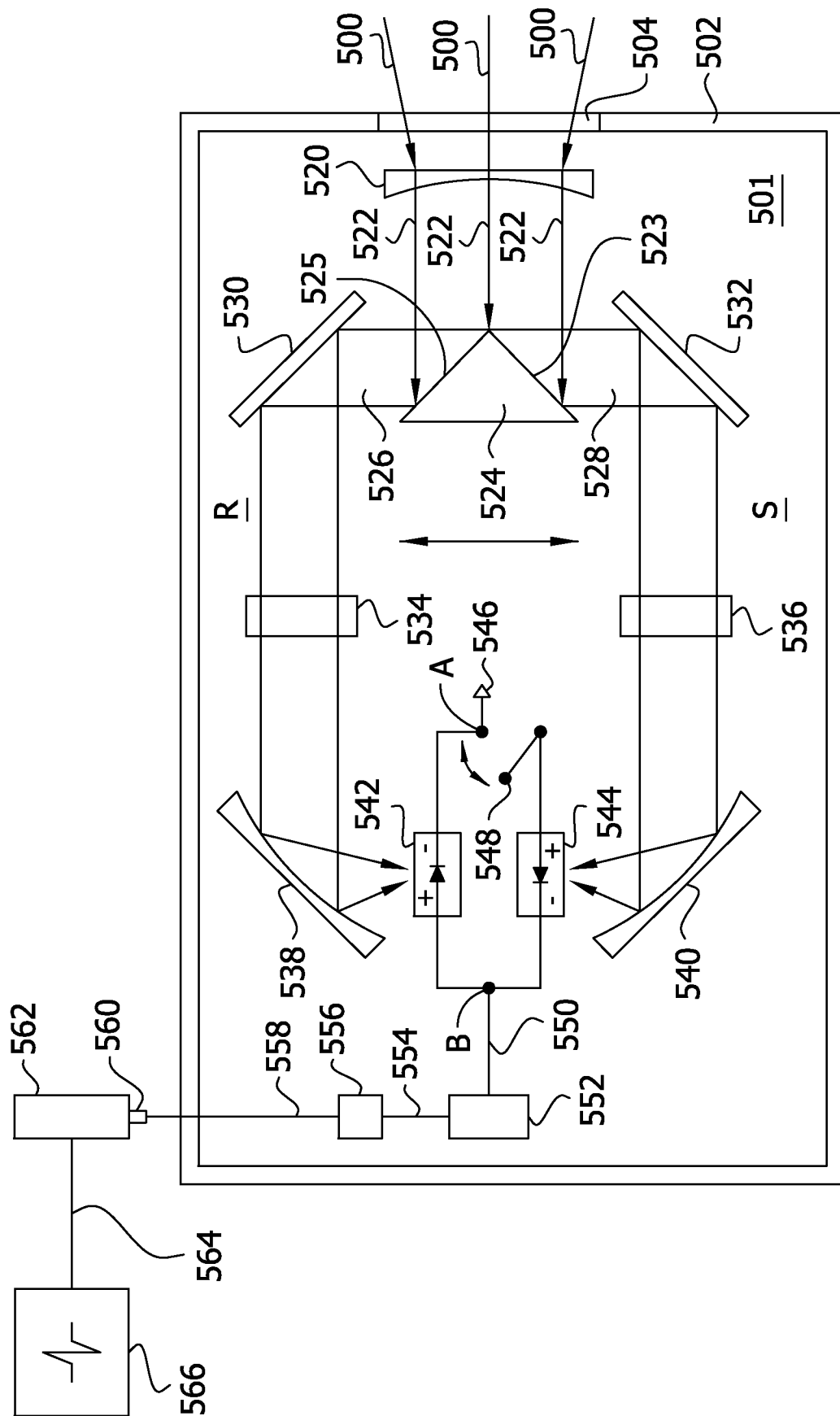


FIG. 5



1

EXTERNAL/INTERNAL OPTICAL ADAPTER FOR FTIR SPECTROPHOTOMETER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to Fourier Transfer Infrared (FTIR) spectrophotometer, more specifically, to devices capable of reducing the baseline noise of FTIR spectrophotometer. The present invention relates to U.S. Published Patent Application 20070291255, Ser. No. 11/845,580, filed Aug. 27, 2007, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

A fundamental property of a sample, be it gas, liquid or solid, is its tendency (or lack of tendency) to affect light at certain wavelengths. Characterization of the tendency of a sample to absorb, scatter, or transmit light is the basis for spectrophotometry. Exemplary applications of spectrophotometry include chemical and biological sample analysis. Other exemplary applications include manufactured product testing and the testing of air or water quality.

One significant aspect of any application of quantitative spectrophotometry is the ability to numerically characterize a sample. Thus, quantitative spectrophotometry reveals sample properties and allows one sample to be differentiated from another. In particular, aspects of spectrophotometry are often applied to determine optical spectra for samples in order to generally characterize and distinguish the samples. For example, aspects of spectrophotometry may be used to determine an absorption spectrum and/or a transmittance spectrum of a sample for identifying the sample or differentiating it from another sample. A sample's absorption spectrum indicates the fraction of light absorbed by the sample for a particular range of wavelengths. A sample's transmittance spectrum indicates the fraction of light which passes through the sample for a particular range of wavelengths. The range of wavelengths may include one or more of the following ranges of light: ultraviolet (UV), visible, and infrared (IR).

Two general methods by which optical spectra, such as absorption and transmittance spectra, are obtained are (i) dispersive scanning (hereinafter referred to as "DS") and (ii) Fourier Transform (hereinafter referred to as "FT"). Both methods include facilitating an interaction between a sample light beam and a sample and detecting light (e.g., transmitted light, reflected light, scattered light) resulting from the interaction. Similarly, both methods include facilitating an interaction between a light beam and a reference or a sample, and detecting light (e.g., transmitted light, reflected light, scattered light) resulting from the interaction. For both methods, an optical spectrum is obtained from the ratio of the detected light for the sample to the detected light for the reference. According to the DS method, the sample light beam and the reference light beam each contain light having one particular wavelength (or a very narrow waveband) referred to as, monochromatic light. Thus, to obtain an optical spectrum, the DS method includes selecting the particular wavelength (or very narrow waveband) from a wavelength range, facilitating the sample and reference interactions with light, detecting the resulting light, and repeating the process for each particular wavelength in the wavelength range.

According to the FT method, however, the sample light beam and the reference light beam contain light having a plurality of wavelengths (e.g., polychromatic light). To obtain an optical spectrum, the FT method includes modulating the sample light beam and the reference light beam, facilitating the sample and reference interactions with light, detecting the resulting light, and applying Fourier Transform techniques to

2

the detected light. The FT method, instrumentation, and operation thereof are described in further detail below.

In general, the DS method and the FT method can be applied to the entire light spectrum (e.g., electromagnetic spectrum). However, the FT method is generally preferable to the DS method for infrared and near infrared applications because it produces substantially enhanced signal to noise ratios with respect to DS methodology. Additionally, since the FT method obtains the optical spectrum from exposing the sample and reference to only one light beam, rather than a plurality of light beams, the optical spectrum is generally obtained in a substantially shorter time using the FT method rather than the DS method. Thus, the FT method is often more desirable than the DS method when spectra must be obtained quickly or when certain physical features of the sample must be enhanced.

Irrespective of whether optical spectra are obtained using the DS method or the FT method, sensitivity, precision, and accuracy of the spectrophotometric measurements are critical. The sensitivity of a spectrophotometric measurement directly relates to the ability to detect small differences between samples having similar absorption properties. The greater the sensitivity, the smaller the difference that can be detected. The precision of a spectrophotometric measurement may be considered as a function of the ability to repeat the same measurement for an identical sample at different times. The accuracy of a spectrophotometric measurement may be considered as a function of the ability to correctly determine the numerical measure of the sample composition. The latter is critical, for example, when attempting to quantify an unknown element in a sample. Over a given range of concentration, the quantification is characterized by certain levels of precision and accuracy. However, below some critical lower limit of the concentration range, both precision and accuracy are adversely affected. This lower limit is the detection limit of the particular spectrophotometric instrument. As sensitivity increases, the detection limit decreases. Improvements in sensitivity, while retaining high levels of precision and accuracy are desirable.

For example, in FT methods, fluctuations in the light source power cause noise in the signal generated by the detector. The noise is ultimately carried through to the optical spectrum (e.g., transmittance spectrum). Additionally or alternatively, in FT methods, the various noises include digitization errors and tracking errors. In particular, digitization errors are a result of the finite resolution of the digitizer (i.e., electronics module, such as, analog to digital converter) limiting the ability of the digitizer to digitize signals generated by the detector with sufficient precision to indicate relatively small absorption peaks. This noise is introduced into the electronic signal at the stage of analog to digital conversion. Tracking errors are a result of the inconsistent sampling associated with the timing of the modulations introduced into the input light beam by an interferometer. The noise is ultimately carried through to the optical spectrum (e.g., transmittance spectrum). Such noise sources have traditionally not been considered in conventional devices that were incapable of providing the sensitivity required to make such sources apparent.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention describes a new device capable of reducing the baseline noise of Fourier transfer Infrared (FTIR) spectrophotometer by about 50 to 100 folds, and thus increase the signal-to-noise (S/N) ratio of FTIR spectrophotometer by about 50 to 100 times. In one aspect of the invention, an

3

optical adapter external to FTIR spectrophotometer is described. In another aspect of the invention, an optical adapter which can be part of commercial FTIR spectrophotometers or can be retrofitted into the sample compartment of most commercial FTIR spectrophotometers is described.

In one form, the invention comprises an adapter for use with an FTIR spectrophotometry system having a light source generating a source light beam of coherent light. A sealed housing receives the source light beam and an optical system within the housing includes a moveable beamsplitter for splitting the source light beam into a reference beam directed in a first path and a sample beam directed in a second path different from the first path. The beamsplitter is moveable between the first and second paths. A reference cell within the housing includes a reference for interacting with the reference beam to yield an output reference beam having a direction. A reference light detector detects at least a portion of the output reference beam based on the direction of the output reference beam and generates a reference signal representative of the detected light. A sample cell within the housing includes a sample for interacting with the sample beam to yield an output sample beam having a direction. A sample light detector detects at least a portion of the output sample beam based on the direction of the output sample beam and generates a sample signal representative of the detected light. A detector circuit produces a difference signal proportional to the difference between the reference signal and the sample signal. A processor is configured to determine a spectrum of the sample based on the difference signal.

In another form, the invention includes a method of determining an optical spectrum for a sample substance relative to a reference substance. The method is for use with a spectrophotometry system having a light source generating a source light beam of coherent light. The source beam is split into a reference beam and a sample beam by using a beamsplitter. The reference beam is directed into a reference cell having a substance therein. The substance in the reference cell interacts with the reference beam to yield an output reference beam having a direction. The sample beam is directed into a sample cell having a substance therein. The substance in the sample cell interacts with the sample beam to yield an output sample beam having a direction. At least a portion of the output reference beam and at least a portion of the output sample beam are detected. As a result, a reference signal representative of the detected portion of the output reference beam and a sample signal representative of the detected portion of the output sample beam are generated. A difference signal proportional to the difference between the reference signal and the sample signal is also generated. Thereafter, the method includes:

- 1) placing the reference substance in the reference cell and in the sample cell;
- 2) determining a reference spectrum of the reference substance based on the difference signal;
- 3) moving the beamsplitter in a direction perpendicular to the propagation of the source beam to determine a minimized noise location of the beamsplitter at which a center burst of an interferogram is minimized;
- 4) determining a baseline difference spectrum;
- 5) placing the beamsplitter at the determined minimized noise location;
- 6) thereafter placing the reference substance in the reference cell and placing the sample substance in the sample cell;
- 7) determining a sample difference spectrum; and
- 8) determining the absorption spectrum of the sample based on the reference spectrum and the sample difference spectrum.

4

In another form, the invention comprises a spectrophotometry system including a light source generating a light beam and a lens in a path of the light beam and transmitting the light beam as a coherent source light beam. An optical system includes a moveable beamsplitter for splitting the source light beam into a reference beam directed in a first path and a sample beam directed in a second path different from the first path. The beamsplitter is moveable between the first and second paths. A reference cell includes a reference for interacting with the reference beam to yield an output reference beam having a direction. A reference light detector detects at least a portion of the output reference beam based on the direction of the output reference beam and generates a reference signal representative of the detected light. A sample cell includes a sample for interacting with the sample beam to yield an output sample beam having a direction. A sample light detector detects at least a portion of the output sample beam based on the direction of the output sample beam and generates a sample signal representative of the detected light. A detector circuit produces a difference signal proportional to the difference between the reference signal and the sample signal. A processor is configured to determine a spectrum of the sample based on the difference signal.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows the optical layout and electronics configuration of the first exemplary external adapter, according to one embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 2 shows the optical layout and electronics configuration of an alternative external adapter based on voltage cancellation.

FIG. 3 shows the optical layout and electronics configuration of an external adapter according to another embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 4 shows the optical layout and electronics configuration of an external adapter according to another embodiment of the invention.

FIG. 5 shows the optical layout and electronics configuration of an exemplary internal adapter according to one embodiment of the invention.

DETAIL DESCRIPTION

Embodiments of the invention provide an external/internal adapter for the existing FTIR spectrophotometers to reduce the baseline noise and increase the signal-to-noise ratio of the spectrophotometers. The adapters improve both qualitative and quantitative analytical capability in a broad range of chemical, biological, medical and other applications. For example, the adapters may be employed in the FTIR spectrophotometers used in the drug discovery and development process to significantly reduce the time needed for identifying an efficient drug. The adapters may be used in clinical research and diagnostics to lead to more accurate and faster diagnosis, especially in early stage disease detections. The adapters may also be used in fundamental research in universities and research laboratories. The new devices can enable scientists to study phenomena that could not be previously observed, which may lead to a better molecular level understanding of many physical, chemical, and biological processes.

Referring to FIG. 1, an optical layout and electronics configuration of an exemplary external adapter according to one embodiment of the invention is illustrated. As shown in FIG. 1, an FTIR spectrophotometer 100 with an exemplary external adaptor 101 has an external beam option that sends a

5

collimated external IR beam **102** out of a FTIR spectrophotometer **100** through an exit port **103**. The external IR beam **102** is split by a beamsplitter **104** into a reference beam **106** on a reference side R of the beamsplitter **104** and a sample beam **108** on a sample side S of the beamsplitter **104**. The beamsplitter **104** is moveable along a linear path perpendicular to the beam **102** along the path of the beams **106**, **108**, as indicated by the double-headed arrow, to minimize noise as noted herein. In one embodiment, the two reflective surfaces of the beamsplitter **104** are coated with a protective gold layer to provide a uniform reflectivity in the entire infrared region from 700 nm to 10 μ m. The reference beam **106**, after passing through a reference cell **110**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **114**, and collected by reference detector **118**. The sample beam **108**, after passing through a sample cell **112**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **116**, and collected by sample detector **120**. To achieve more accurate results, matched optical cells **110** and **112** may be used and matched IR detectors **118** and **120** may be used. By moving the beamsplitter **104** along the linear path perpendicular to the beam **102** along the path of the beams **106**, **108** and between the mirrors **114**, **116** with a reference in both the reference cell **110** and the sample cell **112**, the position of the beamsplitter **104** relative to the mirrors **106**, **108** and relative to the collimated external IR beam **102** is varied to determine a position at which the center burst of the waveform of the interferogram is minimized.

A reference photocurrent **122** from the reference detector **118** is provided to a low-noise reference preamplifier **126** where the reference photocurrent **122** is converted into a reference voltage **130**. A sample photocurrent **124** from the sample detector **120** is sent to a low-noise sample preamplifier **128** where the sample photocurrent **124** is converted into a sample voltage **132**.

The reference voltage signal **130** is sent to an input channel B of an electronic device **134**. The sample voltage signal **132** is sent to an input channel A of the electronics device **134**.

The electronic device **134** is a selective combining circuit which selectively sends the following voltage signals to its output channel C:

C=A; sample voltage signal **132**;

C=B; reference voltage signal **130**; or

C=B-A; differential voltage signal **136** of the two input ports.

For example, device **134** may be SIM911 from Stanford Research Systems. The output voltage signal **136** from the output channel C of electronic device **134** is sent to a low-noise voltage amplifier **138** with variable gain, e.g., G=1 to G=100. The amplified voltage signal **140** from the voltage amplifier **138** is then sent to an electronic bandpass filter device **142** with variable band center (e.g., f_o =100 Hz to f_o =100 kHz) and variable bandwidth (e.g., Δf =10 Hz to Δf =1000 Hz). The voltage signal **144** from the electronic bandpass filter **142** is sent to an external detector input port **146** on the FTIR spectrophotometer **100**. The processed signal **148** such as the center burst of the waveform of the interferogram will be displayed on a PC **150** that controls the operation of the FTIR spectrophotometer **100**. In one embodiment, the optical adapter **101** is enclosed in a sealed box **152** to reduce light interference and vibration from the environment.

In summary, FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of the external adapter **101** for use with a spectrophotometry system **100** having a light source generating a source light beam **102** of coherent light. The adapter **101** is located within a sealed housing **152** for receiving the source light beam **102**. An optical system within the housing **152** includes the moveable

6

beamsplitter **104** for splitting the source light beam **102** into the reference beam **106** directed in the first reference path R and the sample beam **108** directed in the second sample path S, different from the first path. The beamsplitter **104** is moveable between the first and second paths to minimize noise, as noted herein. The reference cell **110** within the housing includes the reference for interacting with the reference beam **106** to yield the output reference beam having a direction. The reference light detector **118** detects at least the portion of the output reference beam based on the direction of the output reference beam and generates the reference signal **122** representative of the detected light passing through the reference cell **110** and interacting with the reference within the cell. The sample cell **112** is also within the housing and includes the sample for interacting with the sample beam **108** to yield an output sample beam having a direction. The sample light detector **120** detects at least the portion of the output sample beam based on the direction of the output sample beam and generates the sample signal **124** representative of the detected light. A detector circuit including the selectively combining electronic device **134** selectively produces the reference voltage **130** proportional to the reference signal **122** after amplification by the preamplifier **126**. The electronic device **134** also produces the difference voltage **136** proportional to the difference between the reference voltage **130** and the sample voltage **132** after amplification by the preamplifiers **126**, **128**. When the difference voltage **136** is indicative of an interferogram of a reference in both the reference cell **110** and the sample cell **112**, the beamsplitter **104** moves along the first and second paths to a determine a position of increased noise cancellation and increased signal to noise ratio of the difference signal **136**. When the difference voltage **136** is indicative of an interferogram of a reference in the reference cell **110** and a sample in the sample cell **112** and the beamsplitter **104** is in its noise minimizing position, a processor such as personal computer (PC) **150** is configured to determine the spectrum of the sample based on the difference voltage **136**. Optionally, the adapter may include the variable gain amplifier **138** between the detector circuit and the processor **150**.

Referring to FIG. 2, an optical layout and electronics configuration of an embodiment of an adapter based on voltage cancellation is illustrated. Similar to FIG. 1, FIG. 2 illustrates the FTIR spectrophotometer **100** with an exemplary external adaptor **201** has an external beam option that sends a collimated external IR beam **102** out of a spectrophotometer of the FTIR spectrophotometer **100** through an exit port **103**. The external IR beam **102** is split by a beamsplitter **104** into a reference beam **106** on a reference side R of the beamsplitter **104** and a sample beam **108** on a sample side S of the beamsplitter **104**. The beamsplitter **104** is moveable along a path perpendicular to the beam **102** along the path of the beams **106**, **108**, as indicated by the double-headed arrow, to minimize noise as noted herein. In one embodiment, the two reflective surfaces of the beamsplitter **104** are coated with a protective gold layer to provide a uniform reflectivity in the entire infrared region from 700 nm to 10 μ m. The reference beam **106**, after passing through a reference cell **110**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **114**, and collected by reference detector **118**. The sample beam **108**, after passing through a sample cell **112**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **116**, and collected by sample detector **120**. To achieve more accurate results, matched optical cells **110** and **112** may be used and matched IR detectors **118** and **120** may be used.

A reference photocurrent **122** from the reference detector **118** is provided to a low-noise reference preamplifier **126** where the reference photocurrent **122** is converted into a

reference voltage **130**. A sample photocurrent **124** from the sample detector **120** is sent to a low-noise sample preamplifier **128** where the sample photocurrent **124** is converted into a sample voltage **132**.

The reference voltage signal **130** is sent to a phase delay device **234**, and an output voltage signal **238** from the phase delay device **234** is sent to the input channel B of the electronic device **242**. In one embodiment, the phase delay may be implemented by adjusting the phases of the waveforms via an oscilloscope. The sample voltage signal **132** is sent to a phase delay device **237**, and an output voltage signal **240** from the phase delay device **237** is sent to an input channel A of the electronic device **242**. As a result, the phase delay devices **234**, **237** adjust the phases of the voltage signals **238** and **240** to have identical phases.

The output voltage signal **244** from an output channel C of the electronic device **242** can be one of the followings:

C=A: Voltage signal **244** is identical to the reference voltage signal **238**;

C=B: Voltage signal **244** is identical to the sample voltage signal **240**; or

C=B-A: Voltage signal **244** is identical to a differential voltage signal between the voltage signal **240** at the input channel A and the voltage signal **238** at the input channel B of the electronic device **242**.

The output voltage signal **244** from the output channel C of electronic device **242** is sent to a low-noise voltage amplifier **246** with variable gain, e.g., $G=1$ to $G=100$. The amplified voltage signal **248** from the voltage amplifier **246** is then sent to an electronic bandpass filter **250** with variable band center (e.g., $f_0=100$ Hz to $f_0=100$ kHz) and variable bandwidth (e.g., $\Delta f=10$ Hz to $\Delta f=1000$ Hz). The voltage signal **252** from the electronic bandpass filter **250** is sent to an external detector input port **254** on the FTIR spectrophotometer **100**. The processed signal **256** such as the center burst of the interferogram will be displayed on a PC **258** that controls the operation of the FTIR spectrophotometer **100**. In one embodiment, the optical adapter **101** may be enclosed in a sealed box **260** to reduce light interference and vibration from the environment.

One reason for including the phase shifters such as phase delay devices **234** and **237** is to provide flexibility to accommodate off the shelf components. For example, for devices which operate in certain IR wavelength regions, most IR detection module available for purchase are modules in which an IR detector is coupled with a preamplifier. The output of these IR detection modules is a voltage. However, two similar IR detection modules may have different electronic bandwidths and rise time. As a result, the two signals **130** and **132** in FIG. **1** may be out of phase to a certain extent at switching device **134**. This out of phase condition could minimize cancellation and in some configurations, a high degree of cancellation cannot be reached at point C.

The phase delay device **234**, **237** shift the phase signals **130** and **236** to have the identical phase needed for high degree of cancellation at switching device **242**.

In summary, FIG. **2** illustrates one embodiment of the external adapter **201** for use with a spectrophotometry system **100** having a light source generating a source light beam **102** of coherent light. As noted above, one feature of FIG. **2** not illustrated in FIG. **1** is the first phase shifting device **234** for shifting the phase of the reference signal **130** and the second phase shifting device **237** for shifting the phase of the sample signal **132**. The detector circuit produces a reference voltage **238** proportional to the phase shifted reference signal and a difference voltage **244** proportional to the difference between the phase shifted reference signal and the phase shifted sample signal.

Referring to FIGS. **1** and **2**, the following describes an exemplary method of operation of the above-described embodiments illustrated wherein the external adapters **101** and **201** is used in liquid phase detection:

(1) A reference solvent is placed in both the reference cell **110** and the sample cell **112**. The electronic device **134**, **242** is set to send differential voltage B-A to channel C. The amplitude of the center burst of the waveform of the interferogram displayed on PC **150** is minimized by moving the beamsplitter **104** in the direction perpendicular to the propagation direction of the IR beam **102** (as shown by the double headed arrow in FIGS. **1** and **2**). In one embodiment, the beamsplitter **104** is mechanically moved slowly and linearly to determine a location of the beamsplitter **104** at which the center burst is minimized. A relatively high gain value, e.g., $G=10$ to 100 , may be used on the voltage amplifier **138**, **246** during this process. Once the minimizing location of the beamsplitter **104** is determined, it is positioned at the determined minimizing location to minimize the center burst of the interferogram. As a result, the reference signal **130** and the sample signal **132** are balanced, and at least some of if not all of the source noise is cancelled in the differential signal **136**, **244**. At this point, the spectrophotometer has been calibrated to minimize source noise.

(2) After the magnitude of the center burst is minimized, a baseline difference spectrum $D_R=(B_R-A_R)G_R$ is measured, where B_R represents the reference voltage signal **130** corresponding to the reference solvent in the reference cell **110**, and A_R represents the sample voltage signal **132** corresponding to reference solvent in the sample cell **112**. G_R is the baseline gain value selected for the voltage amplifier **138**, **246** during the previous step, e.g., $G_R=10$ to 100 .

(3) The reference spectrum $R=B_R$ is determined by setting the electric device **134**, **242** to only transmit the reference voltage **130**, **238** at channel B to channel C. A gain of $G=1$ on the voltage amplifier **138**, **246** is used during this process to determine the reference spectrum. (4) The reference solvent in the sample cell **112** is replaced with a sample solution to be characterized. The sample difference spectrum $D_S=(B_R-A_S)G_S$ is determined, where A_S represents the sample voltage signal **132**, **240** corresponding to sample solution in the sample cell **112**. The sample gain value G_S on the voltage amplifier **138**, **246** should be the same as or close to the baseline gain G_R , e.g., $G_S=10$ to 100 .

Transmittance (T) and Absorbance (Abs) of the sample can be calculated as a function of the sample difference spectrum D_S , the baseline difference spectrum D_R , the reference spectrum R, the sample gain value G_S , and the baseline gain value G_R , using the following equations:

$$T = \frac{1 - D_S / G_S / R}{1 - D_R / G_R / R} \quad \text{Abs} = -\log T$$

In FIGS. **1** and **2**, the settings of the variable bandwidth and the band center of the electronic bandpass filter **142**, **250** depend on the following factors:

- (1) Center wavelength (e.g., the peak wavelength) of the optical absorption band,
- (2) The full width at half maximum (FWHM) bandwidth of the optical absorption band, and

(3) The speed at which the moving mirror of the FTIR spectrophotometer travels.

For example, a near infra-red (NIR) band is centered at $\tilde{\nu}_0=10,000\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ($\lambda_0=1000\text{ nm}$), and has an optical bandwidth (FWHM) of $\Delta\tilde{\nu}=4\text{ cm}^{-1}$. Assuming the moving mirror speed of the FTIR spectrophotometer is $V=0.25\text{ cm/s}$, the center frequency of electronic bandpass filter **142, 250** should be set at $f_0=2V\tilde{\nu}_0=5\text{ kHz}$. The FWHM optical bandwidth translates into an electronic bandwidth of $2V\Delta\tilde{\nu}=2\text{ Hz}$. As such, the bandwidth of the electronic bandpass filter **142, 250** should be wide enough to allow the entire band region interested to be displayed without distortion.

Although a larger Δf may be desirable for displaying a larger spectral region, the overall baseline noise is proportional to the square root of Δf . Considering the above, a balanced choice should be selected.

In summary, FIGS. 1 & 2 illustrate one embodiment of the method of operation of the external adapter **101** for use with a spectrophotometry system **100** having a light source generating a source light beam **102** of collimated, coherent light. The method determines an optical spectrum for the sample substance relative to the reference substance. The method is for use with a spectrophotometry system **100** providing the light source generating the source light beam of collimated, coherent light **102**. The method comprises:

- 1) splitting by using the beamsplitter **104** the source beam **102** into the reference beam **106** and the sample beam **108**;
- 2) directing the reference beam **106** into the reference cell **110** having a substance therein, said substance in the reference cell **110** interacting with the reference beam **106**, said interacting yielding an output reference beam having a direction;
- 3) directing the sample beam **108** into the sample cell **112** having a substance therein, said substance in the sample cell **112** interacting with the sample beam **108**, said interacting yielding an output sample beam having a direction;
- 4) detecting (such as by detectors **118, 120**) at least the portion of the output reference beam and at least the portion of the output sample beam;
- 5) generating the reference signal **122** representative of the detected portion of the output reference beam and the sample signal **124** representative of the detected portion of the output sample beam;
- 6) generating the reference voltage **130** proportional to the reference signal and the difference voltage **136, 244** proportional to the difference between the reference signal **122** and the sample signal **124**;
- 7) placing the reference substance in the reference cell **110** and in the sample cell **112**;
- 8) moving the beamsplitter **104** in the direction perpendicular to the propagation of the source beam **102** so that the beamsplitter **104** is positioned to minimize the amplitude of center burst in the interferogram when a reference is in both the reference cell **110** and the sample cell **112** to thereby minimize source noise in the differential signal B-A;
- 9) determining a baseline difference spectrum based on the difference voltage **136, 244** with the reference substance placed in the reference cell **110** and the sample cell **112**;
- 10) determining the spectrum of the reference by sending only the reference signal in channel B to channel C;
- 11) thereafter placing the reference substance in the reference cell **110** and placing the sample substance in the sample cell **112**; and

12) determining the sample difference spectrum based on the difference voltage **136, 244** with the reference substance placed in the reference cell **110** and the sample substance placed in the sample cell **112**.

In summary, the method of FIG. 2 also includes using the first phase shifting device **234** for shifting the phase of the reference signal **130**, using the second phase shifting device **237** for shifting the phase of the sample signal **132**, producing the reference voltage **238** proportional to the phase shifted reference signal and producing the difference voltage **244** proportional to the difference between the phase shifted reference signal **238** and the phase shifted sample signal **240**.

Referring to FIG. 3, another embodiment of an exemplary external adapter is illustrated. As shown in FIG. 3, the FTIR spectrophotometer **100** with a second exemplary external adaptor **301** has an external beam option that sends out a collimated IR beam **102** through an exit port **103**. The external IR beam **102** is split by a beamsplitter **104** into a reference beam **106** on a reference side R of the beamsplitter **104** and a sample beam **108** on a sample side S of the beamsplitter **104**. The beamsplitter **104** is moveable along a path perpendicular to the beam **102** along the path of the beams **106, 108**, as indicated by the double-headed arrow, to minimize noise as noted herein. In one embodiment, the two reflective surfaces of the beamsplitter **104** are coated with protective gold layer to provide a uniform reflectivity in the entire infrared region from 700 nm to 10 μm . The reference beam **106**, after passing through a reference cell **110**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **114**, and collected by a reference detector **318**. The sample beam **108**, after passing through a sample cell **112**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **116**, and collected by a sample detector **320**. To achieve more accurate results, matched optical cells, **110** and **112**, may be used and matched IR detectors, **318** and **320**, may be used.

In one embodiment, the reference detector **318** and the sample detector **320** each comprise a photodiode having a cathode and an anode. The cathode (negative end) of the reference photodiode detector **318** is electrically connected to an electric ground **324** of the electronics of the system at point A. The anode (positive end) of the reference photodiode detector **318** is electrically connected to an output point B. The anode (positive end) of the sample photodiode detector **320** is electrically connected to a switch **322** which selectively connects to the ground point A to selectively ground the anode of the sample photodiode detector **320**. The cathode (negative end) of the sample photodiode detector **320** is electrically connected to the output point B.

When the switch **322** is closed, the anode of sample photodiode detector **320** is electrically connected to the point A. The anode of the reference photodiode detector **318** is electrically connected to the cathode of the sample photodiode detector **320** at point B. The combined current signal **326** from point B is sent to a low-noise pre-amplifier **246**.

The preamplifier **246** has different current-to-voltage conversion factors, e.g., 5 k Ω , 10 k Ω , 50 k Ω , 100 k Ω , and 500 k Ω . The output voltage signal **248** from the preamplifier **246** is sent to an electronic bandpass filter device **250** that has variable band center (e.g., $f_c=100\text{ Hz}$ to $f_c=100\text{ kHz}$) and variable bandwidth (e.g., $\Delta f=10\text{ Hz}$ to $\Delta f=1000\text{ Hz}$). The voltage signal **252** from the electronic bandpass filter **250** is sent to an external detector input port **254** of the FTIR spectrophotometer **100**. The processed signal **256** such as the center burst of the interferogram will be displayed on a PC **258** that controls the operation of the FTIR spectrophotometer **100**. In one embodiment, the optical adapter **301** is enclosed in a sealed box **260** to reduce light interference and vibration from the environment. The circuit is configured

11

such that the reference voltage **248** is positive when the switch **322** is open (i.e., when the anode of the sample photodiode **320** is electrically open circuited and disconnected from the point A).

In summary, FIG. 3 illustrates one embodiment of the external adapter **301** for use with a spectrophotometry system **100** having a light source generating a source light beam **102** of collimated, coherent light. One feature of FIG. 3 not illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2 is that the reference light detector comprises a reference photodiode **318** and the sample light detector comprises a sample photodiode **320**. The switch **322** selectively electrically connects the grounded cathode of the reference photodiode **318** and the anode of the sample photodiode **320**. The anode of the reference photodiode **318** is connected to the cathode of the sample photodiode **320** at the point B which provides the current signal **326**, and amplifier **246** converts the current signal into the reference voltage (when the switch **322** is open) and the difference voltage (when the switch **322** is closed) **248**. The amplifier **246** may have different current-to-voltage conversion factors.

Referring to FIG. 3, the following describes an exemplary operation of the above-described embodiment illustrated wherein the external adapter **301** is used in liquid phase detection:

- (1) Switch **322** is closed to electrically connect and ground the anode of the sample detector **320** to point A, which is at ground potential **324**.
- (2) A reference solvent is placed in both the reference cell **110** and the sample cell **112**. A relatively high baseline resistor value (e.g., 100 k Ω) to provide high gain may be used for the preamplifier **246** during this process. The amplitude of the FTIR center burst of the interferogram displayed on PC **258** is minimized by moving the beamsplitter **104** in the direction perpendicular to the propagation direction of the IR beam **102** (as shown by the double headed arrow in FIG. 3), thereby determining the position of the beamsplitter **104** at which noise is minimized, as noted herein. Once the minimizing location of the beamsplitter **104** is determined, it is positioned at the determined minimizing location to minimize the center burst. As a result, the reference channel R and the sample channel S are balanced, and at least some of if not all of the source noise is cancelled in the differential current signal **326**. At this point, the spectrophotometer has been calibrated to minimize source noise.
- (3) After the beamsplitter **104** is positioned to minimize the magnitude of the center burst, a baseline difference spectrum V_B is measured. A relatively high gain baseline resistor value (e.g., $R_1=100$ k Ω) on the preamplifier **246** is used during this baseline process.
- (4) The anode of the sample photodiode **320** is then disconnected from point A by opening the switch **322** to disconnect the anode of the sample detector **320** from the cathode of the reference detector **318**, which is grounded at point A. A reference spectrum V_R is measured. A relatively low gain reference resistor value (e.g., $R_2=5$ k Ω) on the preamplifier **246** is used during this process.
- (5) The reference solvent in the sample cell **116** is replaced with a sample solution to be characterized. Switch **322** is closed to electrically connect and ground the anode of the sample detector **320** to point A. The sample difference spectrum V_S is then recorded. A high gain sample resistor value (e.g., $R_3=100$ k Ω) on the preamplifier **246** is used during this process.

Transmittance (T) and Absorbance (A) can be calculated as a function of the sample difference spectrum V_S , the reference

12

spectrum V_R , the baseline difference spectrum V_B , the high gain baseline resistor value R_1 , the low gain reference resistor value R_2 , and the high gain sample resistor value R_3 , using the following equations:

$$T = \frac{1 - \frac{V_S / R_3}{V_R / R_2}}{1 - \frac{V_B / R_1}{V_R / R_2}} \quad \text{Abs} = -\log T$$

In summary, FIG. 3 illustrates one embodiment of the method of operation of the external adapter **301** for use with a spectrophotometry system **100** having a light source generating a source light beam **102** of collimated, coherent light. The method also uses a reference photodiode **318** to detect at least a portion of the output reference beam and uses a sample photodiode **320** to detect at least a portion of the output sample beam. The switch **322** selectively electrically connects the grounded cathode of the reference photodiode **318** and the anode of the sample photodiode **320**. The anode of the reference photodiode **318** is connected to the cathode of the sample photodiode **320** at the point B which provides a current signal. The preamplifier **246** converts the current signal into the reference voltage (when the switch **322** is open) and the difference voltage (when the switch **322** is closed) **248**. The method determines the reference spectrum V_R when the switch **322** is open. The spectrum of the sample substance is based on the determined baseline difference spectrum V_B , determined sample difference spectrum V_S , and the determined reference spectrum V_R . The method employs the preamplifier **246** with a variable current-to-voltage conversion factor. A higher gain factor is used to determine a baseline difference spectrum V_B and a sample difference spectrum V_S , and a lower gain factor is used to determine a reference spectrum V_R . Once difference between the method of operation of embodiment of FIGS. 1-2 and embodiment of FIG. 3 is that the embodiment of FIG. 3 includes biased photodiodes **318** and **320** which provide biased reference and sample signals at point B.

Referring to FIG. 4, the optical layout and electronics configuration of an exemplary external adapter according to one embodiment of the invention. As shown in FIG. 4, FTIR spectrophotometer **100** has an external beam option that sends out a collimated IR beam **102** through an exit port **103**. The external IR beam **102** is split by a beamsplitter **104** into a reference beam **106** on a reference side R of the beamsplitter **104** and a sample beam **108** on a sample side S of the beamsplitter **104**. The beamsplitter **104** is moveable along a path perpendicular to the beam **102** along the path of the beams **106**, **108**, as indicated by the double-headed arrow, to minimize noise as noted herein. The two reflective surface of the beamsplitter **104** should be coated with identical reflecting layers for consistent beam splitting. The reference beam **106**, after passing through a reference cell **110**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **114**, and collected by a reference photodiode detector **418**. The sample beam **108**, after passing through a sample cell **112**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **116**, and collected by a sample photodiode detector **420**. To achieve best result, one should use matched optical cells, **110** and **112**, and matched IR detectors, **418** and **420**. The negative end (cathode) of the reference photodiode detector **418** is electrically connected to the positive end (anode) of sample photodiode detector **420** at point A. The positive end (anode) of the reference photodiode detector **418** is connected to the negative terminal of a battery **422**. The

13

positive terminal of the battery 422 is connected to the electrical ground of the detection system. Thus, the reference photodiode detector 418 is reversely biased. The negative end of the sample photodiode detector 420 is connected to the positive terminal of a battery 424. The negative terminal of the battery 424 is connected to the electrical ground of the detection system. Thus, the reference photodiode detector 420 is also reversely biased. The voltage of the battery 422 is identical to that of the battery 424. Differential current signal 426 from the point A is sent to a low-noise preamplifier 246 at which the current signal 426 is converted into a voltage signal 248.

The preamplifier 246 has different current-to-voltage conversion factors, e.g., 5 kΩ, 10 kΩ, 50 kΩ, 100 kΩ, and 500 kΩ. The output voltage signal 248 from the preamplifier 246 is sent to an electronic bandpass filter device 250 that has variable band center (e.g., $f_c=100$ Hz to $f_c=100$ kHz) and variable bandwidth (e.g., $\Delta f=10$ Hz to $\Delta f=1000$ Hz). The voltage signal 252 from the electronic bandpass filter 250 is sent to an external detector input port 254 of the FTIR spectrophotometer 100. The processed signal 256 such as the center burst of the interferogram will be displayed on a PC 258 that controls the operation of the FTIR spectrophotometer 100. In one embodiment, the optical adapter 401 is enclosed in a sealed box 260 to reduce light interference and vibration from the environment.

In summary, FIG. 4 illustrates one embodiment of the external adapter 401 for use with a spectrophotometry system 100 having a light source generating a source light beam 102 of collimated, coherent light. One feature of FIG. 4 is the reversed biased photodiodes 418, 420. The reference light detector comprises the reference photodiode 418 and the sample light detector comprises the sample photodiode 420. The cathode of the reference photodiode 418 is electrically connected by the central point A to the anode of the sample photodiode 420. The central point A provides the difference current signal 426 to the low noise preamplifier 246. The anode of the reference photodiode 418 is connected to reverse-biasing battery 422. The cathode of the sample photodiode 420 is connected to reverse-biasing battery 424. The low noise preamplifier 246 converts the difference current signal 426 into the difference voltage signal 248.

Referring to FIG. 4, the following describes an exemplary method of operation of the above-described embodiment illustrated wherein the external adapter 401 is used in liquid phase detection:

- (1) A reference solvent is placed in both the reference cell 110 and the sample cell 112. The amplitude of the center burst displayed on PC 258 is minimized by moving the beamsplitter 104 in the direction perpendicular to the propagation direction of the IR beam 102 (as shown by the double headed arrow in FIG. 4), thereby determining the position of the beamsplitter 104 at which noise is minimized, as noted herein. A relatively high baseline gain resistor value (e.g., 100 kΩ) may be used for the preamplifier 246 during this process. Once the beamsplitter 104 is positioned to minimize the center burst, the reference channel R and the sample channel S are balanced, and at least some of if not all of the source noise is cancelled in the differential current signal 426.
- (2) After the beamsplitter 104 is positioned to minimize the magnitude of the center burst, the baseline difference spectrum V_B is measured. The same relatively high gain baseline resistor value (e.g., $R_1=100$ kΩ) on the low noise preamplifier 246 is used during this baseline process.

14

- (3) The reference solvent in the sample cell 112 is replaced with a sample solution to be characterized. The sample difference spectrum V_S corresponding to the difference signal 426 is recorded. A high gain sample resistor value (e.g., $R_3=100$ kΩ) on the low noise preamplifier 246 is used during this process.

- (4) The sample beam 108 is then blocked from reaching the sample detector 420, such as by using a light shutter (not shown in FIG. 4) positioned between the beamsplitter 104 and the sample photodiode 420. The reference spectrum, V_R is recorded. A relatively low gain reference resistor value (e.g., $R_2=5$ kΩ) on the preamplifier 246 is used during this process.

Transmittance (T) and Absorbance (Abs) can be calculated as a function of the sample difference spectrum V_S , the reference spectrum V_R , the baseline difference spectrum V_B , the high gain baseline resistor value R_1 , the low gain reference resistor value R_2 , and the high gain sample resistor value R_3 , using the following equations:

$$T = \frac{1 - \frac{V_S / R_3}{V_R / R_2}}{1 - \frac{V_B / R_1}{V_R / R_2}} \quad \text{Abs} = -\log T$$

In summary, FIG. 4 illustrates one embodiment of method of operation of the external adapter 401 for use with a spectrophotometry system 100 having a light source generating a source light beam 102 of collimated, coherent light. The reference photodiode 418 is used to detect at least a portion of the output reference beam and the sample photodiode 420 is used to detect at least a portion of the output sample beam. The cathode of the reference photodiode 418 is electrically connected by the central point A to the anode of the sample photodiode 420. The central point A provides the difference current signal. The anode of the reference photodiode 418 is connected to the reverse-biasing battery 422. The cathode of the sample photodiode 420 is connected to the reverse-biasing battery 424, and the low noise preamplifier 246 converts the difference current signal 426 into the difference voltage signal 248. The baseline difference spectrum V_B , the sample difference spectrum V_S , and the reference spectrum V_R are determined. The spectrum of the sample substance is obtained based on the determined baseline difference spectrum V_B , the determined sample difference spectrum V_S , and the determined reference spectrum V_R . The low noise preamplifier 246 has a variable current-to-voltage conversion factor. A higher gain factor is used to determine the baseline difference spectrum V_B and the sample difference spectrum V_S , and a lower gain factor is used to determine a reference spectrum V_R . Once difference between the method of operation of embodiment of FIGS. 1-2 and embodiment of FIG. 4 is that the embodiment of FIG. 3 includes biased photodiodes 418 and 420 which provide biased reference and sample signals at point A.

Referring to FIG. 5, an optical layout and electronics configuration of an exemplary internal adapter 501 according to yet another embodiment of the invention is illustrated.

As shown in FIG. 5, a converging infrared (IR) beam 500 from the interferometer of an FTIR spectrophotometer 562 enters a sample compartment 502 of the FTIR spectrophotometer via a window 504. The converging IR beam 500 is converted into a collimated IR beam 522 by a plano-concave lens 520. The collimated IR beam 522 is split by a beamsplitter 524 into a reference beam 526 on a reference side R of the

15

beamsplitter **524** and a sample beam **528** on a sample side S of the beamsplitter **524**. In one embodiment, the beamsplitter **524** is a 90° prism with two reflective surfaces **523** and **525** coated with a protective gold layer to provide uniform reflectivity in the entire infrared region from 700 nm to 10 μm. The beamsplitter **524** is mounted on an optical translation stage (not shown) that enables the beamsplitter **524** to move in the direction perpendicular to the propagation direction of the IR beam **522** as indicated by the double-headed arrow. The reference beam **526**, after being reflected by a flat mirror **530** and passing through a reference cell **534**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **538** onto a reference photodiode detector **542**. The sample beam **528**, after being reflected by a flat mirror **532** and passing through a sample cell **536**, is reflected and focused by a concave mirror **540** onto a sample photodiode detector **544**. To achieve more accurate results, matched optical cells, **534** and **536**, may be used and matched IR detectors, **542** and **544**, may be used.

In one embodiment, the reference detector **542** and the sample detector **544** each comprise a photodiode having a cathode and an anode. The cathode (negative end) of the reference photodiode detector **542** is electrically connected to an electric ground **546** of the electronics of the system at point A. The anode (positive end) of the reference photodiode detector **542** is electrically connected to an output point B. The anode (positive end) of the sample photodiode detector **544** is electrically connected to a switch **548** which selectively connects the ground point A. The cathode (negative end) of the sample photodiode detector **544** is electrically connected to the output point B.

When the switch **548** is closed, the anode of sample photodiode detector **544** is electrically connected to the point A. The anode of the reference photodiode detector **542** is electrically connected to the cathode of the sample photodiode detector **544** at point B. The combined current signal **550** from point B is sent to a low-noise preamplifier **552** where the combined current signal **550** is converted into a voltage signal **554**.

The preamplifier **552** has different current-to-voltage conversion factors, e.g., 5 kΩ, 10 kΩ, 50 kΩ, 100 kΩ, and 500 kΩ. The output voltage signal **554** from the preamplifier **552** is sent to an electronic bandpass filter device **556** that has variable band center (e.g., $f_c=100$ Hz to $f_c=100$ kHz) and variable bandwidth (e.g., $\Delta f=10$ Hz to $\Delta f=1000$ Hz). The voltage signal **558** from the electronic bandpass filter **556** is sent to an external detector input port **560** of the FTIR spectrophotometer **562**. The processed signal **564** such as the center burst of the interferogram will be displayed on a PC **566** that controls the operation of the FTIR spectrophotometer **562**. In one embodiment, the optical adapter **501** is enclosed in the sealed sample compartment **502** to reduce light interference and vibration from the environment. The circuit is configured such that the reference voltage **554** is positive when the switch **548** is open (i.e., when the anode of the sample photodiode **544** is electrically open circuited and disconnected from the point A).

In summary, FIG. 5 illustrates one embodiment of the internal adapter **501** for use with a spectrophotometry system **562** having a light source generating a source light beam **500**. In another aspect of the invention, an internal optical adapter **501** which can be part of commercial FTIR spectrophotometers or which can be retrofitted into the sample compartment **502** of most commercial FTIR spectrophotometers is illustrated in FIG. 5.

The spectrophotometry system **562** of FIG. 5 comprises the light source generating the light beam **500** and the lens **520** in the path of the light beam and transmitting the light beam as

16

the collimated, coherent source light beam **522**. The optical system within the compartment **502** includes the moveable beamsplitter **524** for splitting the collimated, coherent source light beam **522** into the reference beam **526** directed in the first reference path R and the sample beam **528** directed in the second sample path S different from the first path. The beamsplitter **524** is moveable between the first and second paths to determine the center burst minimizing position, as noted herein. The reference cell **534** includes the reference for interacting with the reference beam **526** to yield the output reference beam having a direction. The reference light detector **542** detects at least a portion of the output reference beam based on the direction of the output reference beam and generates the reference signal representative of the detected light. The sample cell **536** includes the sample for interacting with the sample beam **528** to yield the output sample beam having a direction. The sample light detector **544** detects at least a portion of the output sample beam based on the direction of the output sample beam and generates the sample signal representative of the detected light. The reference light detector **542** comprises a reference photodiode and the sample light detector **544** comprises a sample photodiode. The switch **548** selectively electrically connects the grounded cathode of the reference photodiode **542** at point A and the anode of the sample photodiode **544**. The anode of the reference photodiode **542** is connected to the cathode of the sample photodiode **544** at the point B which provides the current signal **550**. The preamplifier **552** converts the current signal **550** into the reference voltage signal (when the switch **548** is open) and the difference voltage signal (when the switch **548** is closed). The amplifier **552** has different current-to-voltage conversion factors.

Referring to FIG. 5, the following describes an exemplary method of operation of the above-described embodiment illustrated wherein the internal adapter **501** is used in liquid phase detection:

- (1) Switch **548** is closed to electrically connect and ground the anode of the sample detector **544** to point A, which is at ground potential **546**.
- (2) A reference solvent is placed in both the reference cell **534** and the sample cell **536**. A relatively high gain baseline resistor value R_1 (e.g., 100 kΩ) is selected for the preamplifier **552** during this process. The amplitude of the FTIR interferogram center burst displayed on the PC **566** is minimized by moving the beamsplitter **524** in the direction perpendicular to the propagation direction of the collimated IR beam **522** (as shown by the double headed arrow in FIG. 5), thereby determining the position of the beamsplitter **524** at which noise is minimized, as noted herein. Once the minimizing location of the beamsplitter **524** is determined, it is positioned at the determined minimizing location to minimize the center burst. As a result, the reference channel R and the sample channel S are balanced, and at least some of if not all of the source noise is cancelled in the differential current signal **550**. At this point, the spectrophotometer has been calibrated to minimize source noise.
- (3) After the beamsplitter **524** is positioned to minimize the magnitude of the center burst, a baseline difference spectrum V_B is measured. A relatively high gain baseline resistor value (e.g., $R_1=100$ kΩ) on the preamplifier **552** is used during this baseline process.
- (4) The anode of the sample photodiode **544** is then disconnected from point A by opening the switch **548** to disconnect the anode of the sample detector **544** from the cathode of the reference detector **542**, which is grounded at point A. A reference spectrum

17

V_R is measured. A relatively low gain reference resistor value (e.g., $R_2=5\text{ k}\Omega$) on the preamplifier **552** is used during this process. (5) The reference solvent in the sample cell **536** is replaced with a sample solution to be characterized. Switch **548** is closed to electrically connect and ground the anode of the sample detector **544** to point A. The sample difference spectrum V_S is then recorded. A high gain sample resistor value (e.g., $R_3=100\text{ k}\Omega$) on the preamplifier **552** is used during this process.

Transmittance (T) and Absorbance (A) can be calculated as a function of the sample difference spectrum V_S , the reference spectrum V_R , the baseline difference spectrum V_B , the high gain baseline resistor value R_1 , the low gain reference resistor value R_2 , and the high gain sample resistor value R_3 , using the following equations:

$$T = \frac{1 - \frac{V_S/R_3}{V_R/R_2}}{1 - \frac{V_B/R_1}{V_R/R_2}} \quad \text{Abs} = -\log T$$

In summary, FIG. **5** illustrates one embodiment of the method of operation of the internal adapter **501** for use with a spectrophotometry system **562** having a light source generating a source light beam **500**. Once difference between the method of operation of embodiment of FIGS. **1-2** and embodiment of FIG. **5** is that the embodiment of FIG. **3** includes biased photodiodes **542** and **544** which provide biased reference and sample signals at point B.

In FIGS. **1-5**, the settings of the optional variable bandwidth and the band center of the electronic bandpass filters **142**, **250**, **556** depend on the following factors:

- (1) Center wavelength of the optical absorption band,
- (2) Full width at half maximum (FWHM) bandwidth of the optical absorption band, and
- (3) The speed at which the moving mirror of the FTIR spectrophotometer travels.

For example, a near infra-red (NIR) band is centered at $\tilde{\nu}_0=10,000\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ($\lambda_0=1000\text{ nm}$), and has an optical bandwidth (FWHM) of $\Delta\nu=4\text{ cm}^{-1}$. Assuming the moving mirror speed of the FTIR spectrophotometer is $V=0.25\text{ cm/s}$, the center frequency of the electronic bandpass filter **556** should be set at $f_0=2V\tilde{\nu}_0=5\text{ kHz}$. The FWHM optical bandwidth translates into an electronic bandwidth of $2V(\Delta\nu)=2\text{ Hz}$. As such, the bandwidth of the electronic bandpass filters **142**, **250**, **556** should be wide enough to allow the entire band to be displayed without distortion. In this particular case, $\Delta f=20\text{ Hz}$ should provide sufficient resolution. Although a larger Δf may be desirable for displaying a larger spectral region, the overall baseline noise is proportional to the square root of Δf . Considering the above, a balanced choice should be selected.

In summary, FIGS. **1-5** illustrate embodiments of the adapter, which adapter may be a separate add-on or retrofit to an existing spectrophotometer and/or which may be an integral portion of a spectrophotometer and/or which may be a combination of both. Optionally, the adapter may include the variable bandpass filter **142**, **250**, **556** between the detector circuit and the processor **150**, **258**, **566** for filtering the voltage signal **140**, **248**, **554** in which case the processor is configured to determine the spectrum of the sample based on the filtered voltage signal **144**, **252**, **558**. The variable bandpass filter **142**, **250**, **556** may have a variable band center and a variable bandwidth so that the band center and the bandwidth are a function of the center wavelength of the optical absorption band, the full width at half maximum (FWHM) band-

18

width of the optical absorption band and the speed at which the moving mirror of the FTIR spectrophotometer travels.

Although described in connection with an exemplary computing system environment, embodiments of the invention are operational with numerous other general purpose or special purpose computing system environments or configurations. The computing system environment is not intended to suggest any limitation as to the scope of use or functionality of any aspect of the invention. Moreover, the computing system environment should not be interpreted as having any dependency or requirement relating to any one or combination of components illustrated in the exemplary operating environment. Examples of well known computing systems, environments, and/or configurations that may be suitable for use with aspects of the invention include, but are not limited to, personal computers, server computers, hand-held or laptop devices, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based systems, set top boxes, programmable consumer electronics, mobile telephones, network PCs, minicomputers, mainframe computers, distributed computing environments that include any of the above systems or devices, and the like.

Embodiments of the invention may be implemented in the general context of data and/or computer-executable instructions, such as program modules, stored one or more tangible computer storage media and executed by one or more computers or other devices. Generally, program modules include, but are not limited to, routines, programs, objects, components, and data structures that perform particular tasks or implement particular abstract data types. Aspects of the invention may also be practiced in distributed computing environments where tasks are performed by remote processing devices that are linked through a communications network. In a distributed computing environment, program modules may be located in both local and remote computer storage media including memory storage devices.

In operation, computers and/or servers may execute the instructions such as those illustrated herein to implement aspects of the invention.

The order of execution or performance of the operations in embodiments of the invention illustrated and described herein is not essential, unless otherwise specified. That is, the operations may be performed in any order, unless otherwise specified, and embodiments of the invention may include additional or fewer operations than those disclosed herein.

Embodiments of the invention which are implemented with computer-executable instructions may be organized into one or more computer-executable components or modules on a tangible computer readable storage medium. Aspects of the invention may be implemented with any number and organization of such components or modules.

When introducing elements of aspects of the invention or the embodiments thereof, the articles "a," "an," "the," and "said" are intended to mean that there are one or more of the elements. The terms "comprising," "including," and "having" are intended to be inclusive and mean that there may be additional elements other than the listed elements.

In view of the above, it will be seen that several advantages of the invention are achieved and other advantageous results attained.

Not all of the depicted components illustrated or described may be required. In addition, some implementations and embodiments may include additional components. Variations in the arrangement and type of the components may be made without departing from the spirit or scope of the claims as set forth herein. Additional, different or fewer components may

be provided and components may be combined. Alternatively or in addition, a component may be implemented by several components.

The above description illustrates the invention by way of example and not by way of limitation. This description clearly enables one skilled in the art to make and use the invention, and describes several embodiments, adaptations, variations, alternatives and uses of the invention, including what is presently believed to be the best mode of carrying out the invention. Additionally, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and the arrangement of components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced or carried out in various ways. Also, it will be understood that the phraseology and terminology used herein is for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

Having described aspects of the invention in detail, it will be apparent that modifications and variations are possible without departing from the scope of aspects of the invention as defined in the appended claims. As various changes could be made in the above constructions, products, and methods without departing from the scope of aspects of the invention, it is intended that all matter contained in the above description and shown in the accompanying drawings shall be interpreted as illustrative and not in a limiting sense.

What is claimed is:

1. An adapter for use with an FTIR spectrophotometry system having a light source generating a source light beam of coherent light, said adapter comprising

a sealed housing for receiving the source light beam directed along a propagation path;

an optical system within the housing including a single moveable beamsplitter having first and second reflecting surfaces, each coated with a reflecting layer, said beamsplitter for splitting the source light beam into:

(1) a reference beam reflected by the first reflecting surface to form a first linear path different from the source path, and

(2) a sample beam reflected by the second reflecting surface to form a second linear path different from the source path and different from the first linear path,

wherein the beamsplitter and its first and second reflecting surfaces are moveable together in a direction perpendicular to the propagation path of the source beam between the first and second linear paths to minimize source noise and to minimize a centerburst of a waveform of an interferogram of the reference beam and the sample beam;

a reference cell within the housing, said reference cell including a reference for interacting with the reference beam wherein said interacting yields an output reference beam having a direction;

a reference light detector for detecting at least a portion of the output reference beam based on the direction of the output reference beam and generating a reference signal representative of the detected light;

a sample cell within the housing, said sample cell including a sample for interacting with the sample beam wherein said interacting yields an output sample beam having a direction;

a sample light detector for detecting at least a portion of the output sample beam based on the direction of the output sample beam and generating a sample signal representative of the detected light;

a detector circuit for producing a difference signal proportional to the difference between the reference signal and the sample signal; and

a processor configured to determine a spectrum of the sample based on the difference signal.

2. The adapter of claim 1 wherein the detector circuit includes a variable gain amplifier.

3. The adapter of claim 1 further comprising a variable electronic bandpass filter between the detector circuit and the processor for filtering the difference signal and wherein the processor is configured to determine a spectrum of the sample based on the filtered difference signal.

4. The adapter of claim 3 wherein the spectrophotometry system comprises an FTIR spectrophotometer with a moving mirror and wherein the variable electronic bandpass filter has a variable band center and a variable bandwidth and wherein the band center and the bandwidth are a function of a center wavelength of the optical absorption band, a full width at half maximum (FWHM) bandwidth of the optical absorption band and a speed at which the moving mirror of the FTIR spectrophotometer travels.

5. The adapter of claim 1 further comprising a first phase shifting device for shifting the phase of the reference signal and a second phase shifting device for shifting the phase of the sample signal and wherein the detector circuit produces a reference signal proportional to the phase shifted reference signal and a difference signal proportional to the difference between the phase shifted reference signal and the phase shifted sample signal.

6. The adapter of claim 1 wherein the reference light detector comprises a reference photodiode and the sample light detector comprises a sample photodiode and further comprising a switch selectively electrically connecting a grounded cathode of the reference photodiode and an anode of the sample photodiode and wherein an anode of the reference photodiode is connected to a cathode of the sample photodiode at a point which provides a current signal, and an amplifier converting the current signal into a reference voltage and a difference voltage.

7. The adapter of claim 6 wherein the amplifier has different current-to-voltage conversion factors.

8. The adapter of claim 1 wherein the reference light detector comprises a reference photodiode and the sample light detector comprises a sample photodiode and wherein a cathode of the reference photodiode is electrically connected by a central point to an anode of the sample photodiode, the central point providing a current signal, wherein an anode of the reference photodiode is connected to reverse-biasing battery, wherein a cathode of the sample photodiode is connected to reverse-biasing battery, and an amplifier converting the current signal into a reference voltage and a difference voltage.

9. The adapter of claim 8 wherein the amplifier has different current-to-voltage conversion factors.

10. The adapter of claim 1 wherein the beamsplitter is positioned to minimize a center burst of a waveform of an interferogram with a reference in both the reference cell and the sample cell so that the reference signal and sample signal are balanced and at least some source noise is cancelled in the difference signal.

11. The adapter of claim 1 wherein the detector circuit comprises a circuit for selectively producing a reference voltage proportional to the reference signal and a difference voltage proportional to the difference between the reference signal and the sample signal wherein the beamsplitter is moveable along the first and second paths to a position at which noise cancellation is increased and the signal to noise ratio of the difference signal is increased.

21

12. The adapter of claim 1 wherein the first linear path is opposite the second linear path and wherein each reflecting layer provides a uniform reflectivity within an infrared region from 700 nm to 10 μ m.

13. The adapter of claim 1 wherein the beamsplitter is moveable between the first and second linear paths to vary the position of the beamsplitter relative to source light beam, to vary the position of the beamsplitter relative to the reference beam and to vary the position of the beamsplitter relative to the sample beam to minimize source noise including at least one of digitization errors and tracking errors.

14. A method of determining an optical spectrum for a sample substance relative to a reference substance, said method for use with a spectrophotometry system having a light source generating a source light beam of coherent light, said method comprising:

- 1) splitting, by using a single beamsplitter having first and second reflecting surfaces, each coated with a reflecting layer, the source beam into a reference beam having a path different than the source beam and a sample beam having a path different than the source beam and the reference beam;
- 2) directing the reference beam into a reference cell having a substance therein, said substance in the reference cell interacting with the reference beam, said interacting yielding an output reference beam having a direction;
- 3) directing the sample beam into a sample cell having a substance therein, said substance in the sample cell interacting with the sample beam, said interacting yielding an output sample beam having a direction;
- 4) detecting at least a portion of the output reference beam and at least a portion of the output sample beam;
- 5) generating a reference signal representative of the detected portion of the output reference beam and a sample signal representative of the detected portion of the output sample beam;
- 6) generating a difference signal proportional to the difference between the reference signal and the sample signal;
- 7) placing the reference substance in the reference cell and in the sample cell;
- 8) determining a reference spectrum of the reference substance based on the difference signal;
- 9) moving the beamsplitter in a direction perpendicular to the propagation of the source beam to determine a minimized noise location of the beamsplitter at which a center burst of an interferogram is minimized;
- 10) determining a baseline difference spectrum;
- 11) placing the beamsplitter at the determined minimized noise location by moving the beamsplitter and its first and second reflecting surfaces together in a direction perpendicular to the propagation path of the source beam between the first and second linear paths;
- 12) thereafter placing the reference substance in the reference cell and placing the sample substance in the sample cell;
- 13) determining a sample difference spectrum; and
- 14) determining the absorption spectrum of the sample based on the reference spectrum, the baseline difference spectrum and the sample difference spectrum.

15. The method of claim 14 further comprising shifting the phase of the reference signal, shifting the phase of the sample signal, producing a reference voltage proportional to the phase shifted reference signal and producing a difference voltage proportional to the difference between the phase shifted reference signal and the phase shifted sample signal.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein the spectrophotometry system comprises an FTIR spectrophotometer with a moving

22

mirror and wherein a variable bandpass filter filters the difference signal, said filter having a variable band center and a variable bandwidth and further comprising setting the band center and the bandwidth of the filter as a function of a center wavelength of the optical absorption band, a full width at half maximum (FWHM) bandwidth of the optical absorption band and a speed at which the moving mirror of the FTIR spectrophotometer travels.

17. A spectrophotometry system comprising:

- a light source generating a light beam;
- a lens in a path of the light beam and transmitting the light beam as a coherent source light beam;
- an optical system within the housing including a single moveable beamsplitter having first and second reflecting surfaces, each coated with a reflecting layer, said beamsplitter for splitting the source light beam into:

- (1) a reference beam reflected by the first reflecting surface to form a first linear path different from the source path, and
- (2) a sample beam reflected by the second reflecting surface to form a second linear path different from the source path and different from the first linear path,

wherein the beamsplitter and its first and second reflecting surfaces are moveable together in a direction perpendicular to the propagation path of the source beam between the first and second linear paths;

a reference cell including a reference for interacting with the reference beam wherein said interacting yields an output reference beam having a direction;

a reference light detector for detecting at least a portion of the output reference beam based on the direction of the output reference beam and generating a reference signal representative of the detected light;

a sample cell including a sample for interacting with the sample beam wherein said interacting yields an output sample beam having a direction;

a sample light detector for detecting at least a portion of the output sample beam based on the direction of the output sample beam and generating a sample signal representative of the detected light;

a detector circuit for producing a difference signal proportional to the difference between the reference signal and the sample signal;

a sealed housing for enclosing the light source, the lens, the optical system including the moveable beamsplitter, the reference cell including the reference, the reference light detector, the sample cell including the sample, the sample light detector, and the detector circuit; and

a processor configured to determine a spectrum of the sample based on the difference signal configured to determine and minimize a centerburst of a waveform of an interferogram of the reference beam and the sample beam.

18. The system of claim 17 wherein the detector circuit includes a variable gain amplifier.

19. The system of claim 17 further comprising a variable electronic bandpass filter between the detector circuit and the processor for filtering the difference signal and wherein the processor is configured to determine a spectrum of the sample based on the filtered difference signal.

20. The system of claim 19 wherein the spectrophotometry system comprises an FTIR spectrophotometer with a moving mirror and wherein the variable electronic bandpass filter has a variable band center and a variable bandwidth and wherein the band center and the bandwidth are a function of a center wavelength of the optical absorption band, a full width at half

23

maximum (FWHM) bandwidth of the optical absorption band and a speed at which the moving mirror of the FTIR spectrophotometer travels.

21. The system of claim 17 further comprising a first phase shifting device for shifting the phase of the reference signal and a second phase shifting device for shifting the phase of the sample signal and wherein the detector circuit produces a reference signal proportional to the phase shifted reference signal and a difference signal proportional to the difference between the phase shifted reference signal and the phase shifted sample signal.

22. The system of claim 17 wherein the reference light detector comprises a reference photodiode and the sample light detector comprises a sample photodiode and further comprising a switch selectively electrically connecting a grounded cathode of the reference photodiode and an anode of the sample photodiode and wherein an anode of the reference photodiode is connected to a cathode of the sample photodiode at a point which provides a current signal, and an amplifier converting the current signal into a reference voltage and a difference voltage.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein the amplifier has different current-to-voltage conversion factors.

24. The system of claim 17 wherein the reference light detector comprises a reference photodiode and the sample light detector comprises a sample photodiode and wherein a

24

cathode of the reference photodiode is electrically connected by a central point to an anode of the sample photodiode, the central point providing a current signal, wherein an anode of the reference photodiode is connected to reverse-biasing battery, wherein a cathode of the sample photodiode is connected to reverse-biasing battery, and an amplifier converting the current signal into a reference voltage and a difference voltage.

25. The system of claim 24 wherein the amplifier has different current-to-voltage conversion factors.

26. The system of claim 17 wherein the beamsplitter is positioned to minimize a center burst of a waveform of an interferogram with a reference in both the reference cell and the sample cell so that the reference signal and sample signal are balanced and at least some source noise is cancelled in the difference signal.

27. The system of claim 17 wherein the detector circuit comprises a circuit for selectively producing a reference voltage proportional to the reference signal and a difference voltage proportional to the difference between the reference signal and the sample signal wherein the beamsplitter is moveable along the first and second paths to a position at which noise cancellation is increased and the signal to noise ratio of the difference signal is increased.

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