

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
25 June 2009 (25.06.2009)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 2009/079214 A1

- (51) International Patent Classification:
H05K 3/40 (2006.01)
 - (21) International Application Number:
PCT/US2008/085433
 - (22) International Filing Date:
3 December 2008 (03.12.2008)
 - (25) Filing Language: English
 - (26) Publication Language: English
 - (30) Priority Data:
11/958,842 18 December 2007 (18.12.2007) US
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 - (81) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BR, BW, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PG, PH, PL, PT, RO, RS, RU, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.
 - (84) Designated States (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, NA, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European (AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
- Published:**
— with international search report

(54) Title: METHODS OF FLUXLESS MICRO-PIERCING OF SOLDER BALLS, AND RESULTING DEVICES

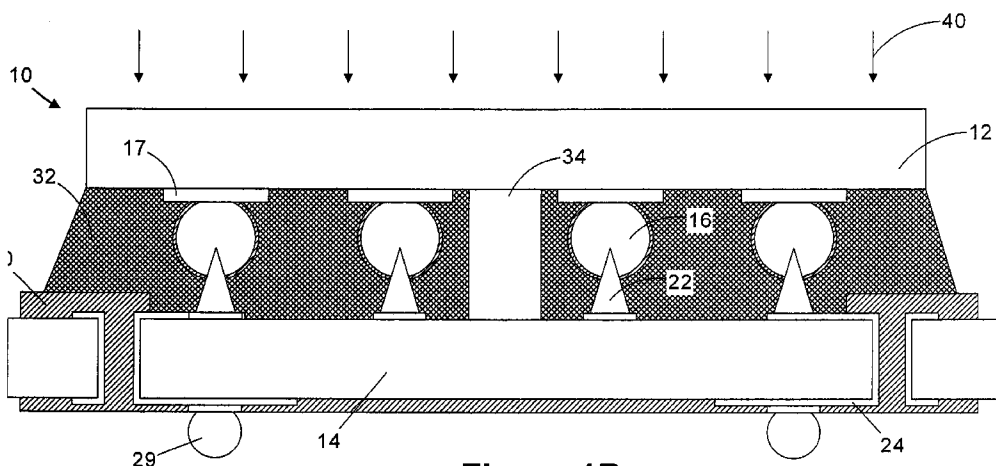


Figure 1B

(57) Abstract: A method is disclosed which includes forming a layer of conductive material above a substrate, forming a masking layer above the layer of conductive material, performing a first etching process on the layer of conductive material with the masking layer in place, removing the masking layer and, after removing the masking layer, performing an isotropic etching process on the layer of conductive material to thereby define a plurality of piercing bond structures positioned on the substrate.

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METHODS OF FLUXLESS MICRO-PIERCING OF SOLDER BALLS,
AND RESULTING DEVICES

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present subject matter is generally directed to the field of microelectronic devices
5 and, more particularly, to methods of fluxless micro-piercing of solder balls, and the resulting
devices.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

Chip-on-board and board-on-chip (BOC) techniques are used to attach semiconductor
dies to an interposer or other carrier substrate such as a printed circuit board (PCB).
10 Attachment can be achieved through flip chip attachment, wirebonding, or tape automated
bonding ("TAB"). Flip chip attachment typically utilizes ball grid array (BGA) technology.
The BGA component (die) includes conductive external contacts, typically in the form of
solder balls or bumps, arranged in a grid pattern on the active surface of the die, which permit
the die to be flip chip mounted to an interposer or other carrier substrate (*e.g.*, PCB).

15 In a flip chip attachment, the balls of the BGA component are aligned with terminals
on the carrier substrate, and connected by reflowing the solder balls. The solder balls can be
replaced with a conductive polymer that is cured. A dielectric underfill is then interjected
between the flip chip die and the surface of the carrier substance to embed the solder balls
and mechanically couple the BGA component to the carrier substrate.

20 Wirebonding and TAB attachment generally involve attaching a die by its backside to
the surface of a carrier substrate with an appropriate adhesive (*e.g.*, epoxy) or tape. With
wirebonding, bond wires are attached to each bond pad on the die and bonded to a
corresponding terminal pad on the carrier substrate (*e.g.*, interposer). With TAB, ends of
metal leads carried on a flexible insulating tape, such as a polyimide, are attached to the bond
25 pads on the die and to the terminal pads on the carrier substrate. A dielectric (*e.g.*, silicon or
epoxy) is generally used to cover the bond wires or metal tape leads to prevent damage.

Flip chip attachment has provided improved electrical performance and allowed
greater packaging density. However, developments in ball grid array technology have

produced arrays in which the balls are made smaller and with tighter pitches. As the balls become smaller and are set closer together, it poses problems for the mutual alignment of the conductive bumps on the flip chip die with the bond pads on the substrate or interposer. Flip chip attachment can also lead to high costs and process difficulties. For example, a flip chip
5 mounter is required to accurately align the die to the interposer or substrate.

In flip chip packaging, solid-state welding, adhesive bonding and soldering are often used for joining the interconnect system. These bonding techniques face numerous assembly challenges. Soldering is the preferred bonding technique, thanks to its high assembly yield, ability to eliminate the probe mark through reflow, allowance for rework after assembly,
10 electrical stability and high tolerance in placement accuracy because of self-alignment effects. However, some challenges still remain for soldering assembly, such as a long processing time and the need for a flux-based removal of oxides and hydrocarbons for solderability. For example, solder balls typically have an oxide layer formed on the outer surface of the ball due to the manufacturing processes employed to manufacture the solder
15 balls in an ambient environment.

In making conductive connections to such solder balls, a flux is employed due to the presence of the oxide layer, *i.e.*, flux is employed to remove such oxides. Processing time is lengthened by flux application, the vision time required for precise alignment and the need for a reflow process to provide sufficient wetting time for soldering. Flux removal of oxides
20 leaves behind undesirable residues that are deleterious to package reliability. Entrapped residues also cause gross solder voids that can result in premature joint failure. Although chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are effective in removing flux residues, they are environmentally hazardous and do not present a long-term solution. Thus, the use of flux and its cleaning processes erects a barrier to flip chip deployment in the packaging and integration of
25 microelectronic, optoelectronic and microelectromechanical systems. Fluxless soldering processes, on the other hand, rely on a controlled atmosphere for the reduction of oxides for soldering, but this is cumbersome in high-volume implementation. Obviously, a method of instantaneous fluxless soldering in ambient atmosphere for flip chip assembly is highly desirable.

30 The present subject matter is directed to various methods and devices that may solve, or at least reduce, some or all of the aforementioned problems.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The subject matter disclosed herein may be understood by reference to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which like reference numerals identify like elements, and in which:

5 Figures 1A-1D are various views of an illustrative device described herein;

 Figures 2A-2B depict a reduced pitch that may be achieved using the piercing bond structures disclosed herein;

 Figure 3 depicts the piercing bond structures disclosed herein as engaged with different size solder balls;

10 Figure 4 depicts a variety of illustrative end configurations for the piercing bond structures disclosed herein; and

 Figures 5A-5D depict one illustrative process flow for forming the piercing bond structures disclosed herein.

 While the subject matter described herein is susceptible to various modifications and
15 alternative forms, specific embodiments thereof have been shown by way of example in the drawings and are herein described in detail. It should be understood, however, that the description herein of specific embodiments is not intended to limit the invention to the particular forms disclosed, but on the contrary, the intention is to cover all modifications, equivalents, and alternatives falling within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by
20 the appended claims.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

 Illustrative embodiments of the present subject matter are described below. In the interest of clarity, not all features of an actual implementation are described in this specification. It will of course be appreciated that in the development of any such actual
25 embodiment, numerous implementation-specific decisions must be made to achieve the developers' specific goals, such as compliance with system-related and business-related constraints, which will vary from one implementation to another. Moreover, it will be appreciated that such a development effort might be complex and time-consuming, but would nevertheless be a routine undertaking for those of ordinary skill in the art having the benefit
30 of this disclosure.

Although various regions and structures shown in the drawings are depicted as having very precise, sharp configurations and profiles, those skilled in the art recognize that, in reality, these regions and structures are not as precise as indicated in the drawings. Additionally, the relative sizes of the various features and doped regions depicted in the drawings may be exaggerated or reduced as compared to the size of those features or regions on fabricated devices. Nevertheless, the attached drawings are included to describe and explain illustrative examples of the subject matter disclosed herein.

Figures 1A-1B depict an illustrative embodiment of a device 10 in accordance with one aspect of the present subject matter. The device 10 comprises a die 12 that is attached to an interposer or substrate 14, *e.g.*, a printed circuit board. The terms "substrate" and "interposer" will be used interchangeably herein and they shall be understood to refer to any type of structure to which an integrated circuit die may be mounted. The die 12 comprises a plurality of schematically depicted solder balls 16 that are conductively coupled to conductive pads 17. The solder balls 16 have an illustrative oxide layer 20, *e.g.*, tin oxide, formed on the outer surface thereof due to the manufacturing processes performed to form the solder balls 16. A plurality of piercing bond structures 22 are formed on the substrate 14. The piercing bond structures 22 are conductively coupled to illustrative wire traces or lines 24 that extend through vias 26 formed in the substrate 14. The wiring traces 24 are conductively coupled to illustrative contact pads 28 formed on the substrate 14. A layer of dielectric material 30 is also provided to electrically isolate various electrical components on the substrate 14. At least one anti-oxidation film 23 (see Figure 1C) is provided on the piercing bond structures 22.

Figure 1A depicts the situation wherein the die 12 is positioned proximate the substrate 14 prior to attachment. The die 12 may be coupled to the substrate 14 using a variety of known techniques, *e.g.*, adhesives, epoxies, etc. In the depicted example, an amount of non-conductive paste 32 is positioned on the substrate 14. A non-conductive film may, in some applications, be applied in lieu of the non-conductive paste 32.

Figure 1B depicts the device 10 at the point of fabrication wherein the die 12 has been conductively coupled to the substrate 14 by virtue of the conductive engagement between the piercing bond structures 22 and the solder balls 16. The piercing bond structures 22 pierce the oxide layer 20 and the solder ball 16 to thereby establish this conductive connection. Also note that Figure 1B depicts an illustrative standoff structure 34 that may be employed if

desired or needed to ensure that the die 12 is positioned a fixed distance from the substrate 14.

In attaching the die 12 to the substrate 14, the device 10 is heated and an illustrative downforce 40 is applied. The magnitude of the downforce 40 may vary depending upon the particular application. In one illustrative embodiment, the downforce 40 may range from approximately 2-12 kg. In some specific applications, a downforce 40 of approximately 8 kg may be employed. The device 10 is heated to a temperature above the melting point of the material of the solder ball 16, *e.g.*, to a temperature ranging from approximately 190-210°C. The downforce 40 may be applied for a duration of 0.5-2 seconds, depending on the particular application. The article entitled "Instantaneous Fluxless Bonding of Au with Pb-Sn Solder in Ambient Atmosphere," *Journal of Applied Physics*, Vol. 98, 034904 (2005) is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

Figures 1C-1D are enlarged views of an illustrative solder ball 16 and piercing bond structure 22 prior to engagement (Figure 1C) and after engagement (Figure 1D). As mentioned previously, the piercing bond structure 22 has one or more anti-oxidation layers 23 formed on the structure 22 to prevent an oxide film from forming on the piercing bond structure 22. In the illustrative example depicted in Figures 1C-1D, the anti-oxidation layer 23 comprises a layer of gold 23A and a layer of nickel 23B. Of course, other materials may be employed. The layer of gold 23A may have a thickness of approximately 2.5 μm , while the layer of nickel 23B may have a thickness of approximately 0.3 μm .

Figures 2A-2B schematically depict the reduced pitch between adjacent conductive structures that may result by use of the piercing bond structures 22 disclosed herein. Figure 2A schematically depicts an illustrative conductive bond structures 90 that are commonly formed using known techniques. The conventional bond structures 90 have a substantially planar upper or contact surface 92. In Figure 2A, the width of the contact surface 92 is designated "A," the width of the sloped sidewalls 94, due to the isotropic nature of the etching process used to form the structures 90, is designated as "B" and the spacing between the structures 90 is designated as "C." Thus, the pitch "P" for the conductive structure 90 would be $A + 2B + C$. In contrast, the pitch ("P1") between the piercing bond structures 22 shown in Figure 2B would be equal to $2B + C$. In short, using the techniques and piercing bond structures 22 disclosed herein, the pitch between conductive bonding structures (like the piercing bond structures 22 disclosed herein) may be substantially less as compared to prior

art devices that employ bonding structures having a substantially planar or non-piercing upper surface 92, as shown in Figure 2A. For example, using the piercing bond structures 22 described herein, the pitch "P1" may be approximately 60 μm minimum.

As shown in Figure 3, the methodologies and piercing bond structures 22 disclosed herein may be employed with solder balls 16A, 16B, 16C of differing sizes. Thus, the piercing bond structures 22 described herein may be employed with a vast variety of different connection technologies and techniques.

The present subject matter may also be employed to control the offset between the die 12 and the printed circuit board 14. In general, all other things being equal, the greater the downforce 40, the less the distance between the die 12 and the printed circuit board 14. The temperature during the engagement process can also be employed to control the spacing between the die 12 and the printed circuit board 14. In general, the greater the temperature, the less the spacing between the die 12 and the printed circuit board 14.

As shown in Figure 4, the piercing bond structures 22 may have a variety of configurations for the piercing end 22A of the structure 22. For example, the piercing end 22A may be pointed, rounded or comprise multiple peaks as depicted on the piercing bond structures 22 in Figure 4 (from left to right).

Figures 5A-5D depict one illustrative process flow for forming the piercing bond structures 22 described herein. Initially, as shown in Figure 5A, a masking layer 80 is formed above a layer of conductive material 82. The masking layer 80 may be comprised of a variety of materials, *e.g.*, a photoresist material, and it may be formed using traditional photolithography techniques. The layer of conductive material 80 may be comprised of a variety of different materials, *e.g.*, gold, and it may be formed by a variety of known techniques, *e.g.*, plating.

As shown in Figure 5B, an anisotropic etching process 84 is performed to partially define conductive structures 86 having sloped sidewalls 87. The etching process 84 may be stopped at a point in time such that a portion 88 of the layer of conductive material 80 is not etched completely away. In some applications, stopping the etch process 84 so as to leave a remaining portion 88 of the layer of conductive material 82 may not be required. As shown in Figure 5C, the masking layer 80 is removed, and an isotropic etching process 89 is performed until such time as the piercing bond structures 22 depicted in Figure 5D are formed. Note that, in the illustrative embodiment depicted herein, the piercing bond

structures 22 have a substantially triangular cross-sectional configuration and a substantially pointed end 22A. The end 22A of the piercing bond structure 22 is generally non-planar or non-flat, but it may take on other configurations. For example, Figure 4 depicts various illustrative configurations for the end 22A of the piercing bond structures 22.

5 The particular embodiments disclosed above are illustrative only, as the invention may be modified and practiced in different but equivalent manners apparent to those skilled in the art having the benefit of the teachings herein. For example, the process steps set forth above may be performed in a different order. Furthermore, no limitations are intended to the details of construction or design herein shown, other than as described in the claims below. It
10 is therefore evident that the particular embodiments disclosed above may be altered or modified and all such variations are considered within the scope and spirit of the invention. Accordingly, the protection sought herein is as set forth in the claims below.

CLAIMS

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A method, comprising:
forming a layer of conductive material above a substrate;
5 forming a masking layer above the layer of conductive material;
performing a first etching process on the layer of conductive material with the
masking layer in place;
removing the masking layer; and
after removing the masking layer, performing an isotropic etching process on the
10 layer of conductive material to thereby define a plurality of piercing bond
structures positioned on the substrate.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
providing an integrated circuit die having a plurality of solder balls, each of which
have a layer of oxide on an outer surface of the ball;
15 heating at least the solder balls; and
applying a force that causes each of the plurality of piercing bond structures to pierce
one of the solder balls with the oxide layer formed thereon and thereby
establish a conductive connection between the solder ball and the piercing
bond structure.
- 20 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the steps recited in claim 2 are performed in
an ambient, oxygen-containing environment.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein heating at least the solder balls comprises
heating at least the solder balls to a temperature that is above a melting point of a material of
the solder balls.
- 25 5. The method of claim 2, wherein applying the force comprises applying a force
ranging from 5-12 Kg for a duration ranging from 0.5-2 seconds.

6. The method of claim 2, wherein the steps recited in claim 2 are performed without applying a flux to the plurality of solder balls.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the first etching process is an anisotropic etching process.

5 8. The method of claim 3, wherein the substrate comprises a printed circuit board.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein each of the plurality of piercing bond structures has a substantially triangular cross-sectional configuration.

10. A method, comprising:
10 providing an integrated circuit die having a plurality of solder balls, each of which have a layer of oxide on an outer surface of the ball;
performing a heating process to heat at least the solder balls; and
applying a force that causes each of a plurality of piercing bond structures on a substrate to pierce one of the solder balls and its associated oxide layer to
15 thereby establish a conductive connection between the solder ball and the piercing bond structure.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the steps recited in claim 10 are performed in an ambient, oxygen-containing environment.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein performing the hearing process comprises
20 heating at least the solder balls to a temperature that is above a melting point of a material of the solder balls.

13. The method of claim 10, wherein applying the force comprises applying a force ranging from 5-12 Kg for a duration ranging from 0.5-2 seconds.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the steps recited in claim 10 are performed
25 without applying a flux to the plurality of solder balls.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein the substrate comprises a printed circuit board.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein each of the plurality of piercing bond structures has a substantially triangular cross-sectional configuration.

5 17. A device, comprising:
an integrated circuit die having a plurality of solder balls that are conductively coupled to bond pads on the die, each of the solder balls having a layer of oxide on an outer surface thereof; and
a substrate comprising a plurality of piercing bond structures, each of the piercing
10 bond structures penetrating and extending at least partially into a corresponding solder ball to thereby establish a conductive connection between the solder ball and the piercing bond structure, the piercing bond structure penetrating the layer of oxide.

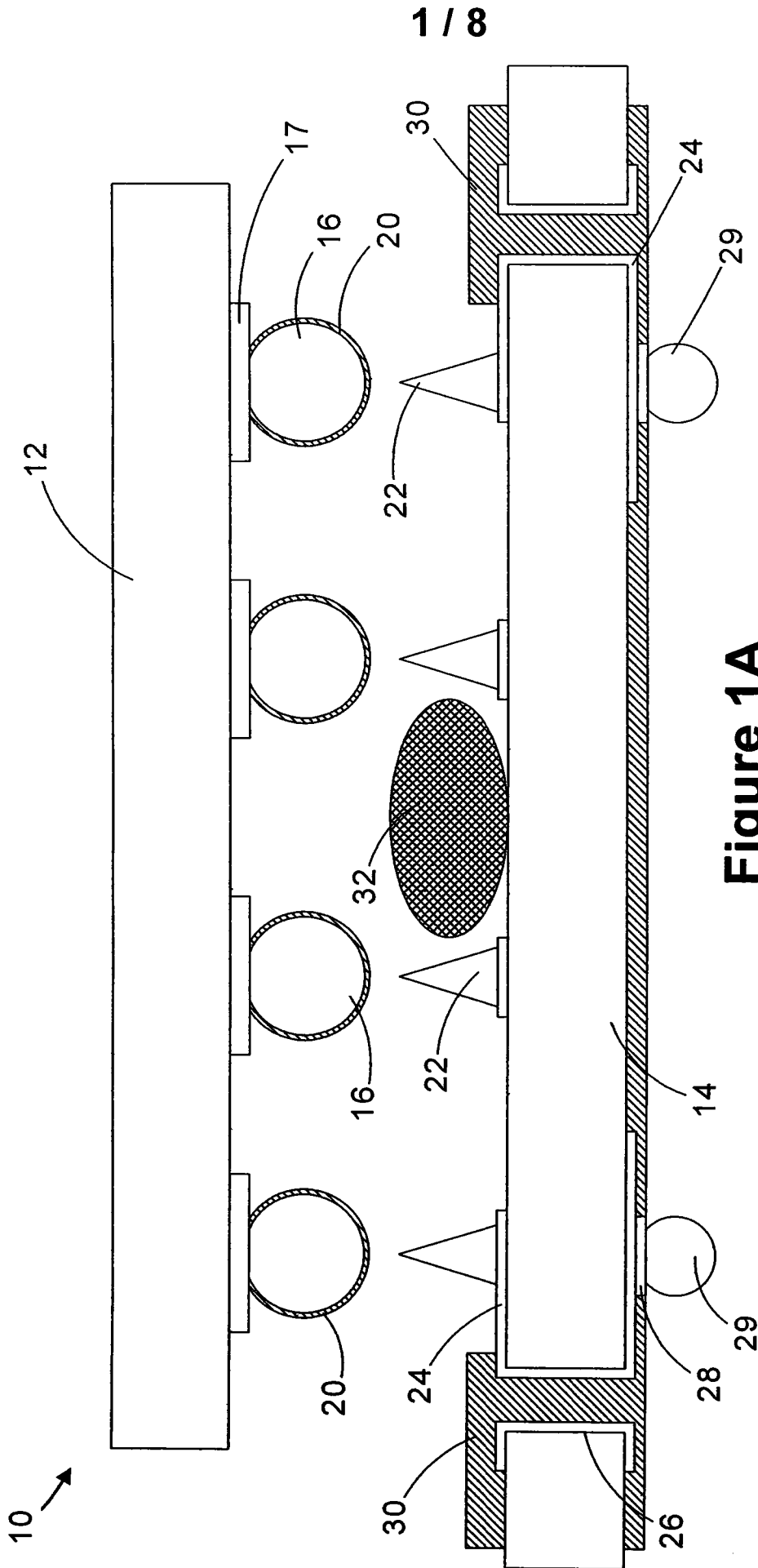
15 18. The device of claim 17, wherein the piercing bond structures have a non-flat end.

19. The device of claim 17, wherein each of the piercing bond structures comprises at least one anti-oxidation layer formed on an outer surface of the piercing bond structure.

20 20. The device of claim 19, wherein the at least one anti-oxidation layer comprises a plurality of layers of material.

21. The device of claim 20, wherein the plurality of layers comprises a layer comprising gold formed on an exposed surface of the piercing bond structure and a layer comprising nickel formed on the layer comprising gold.

25 22. The device of claim 17, wherein the plurality of piercing bond structures has a substantially triangular cross-sectional configuration.



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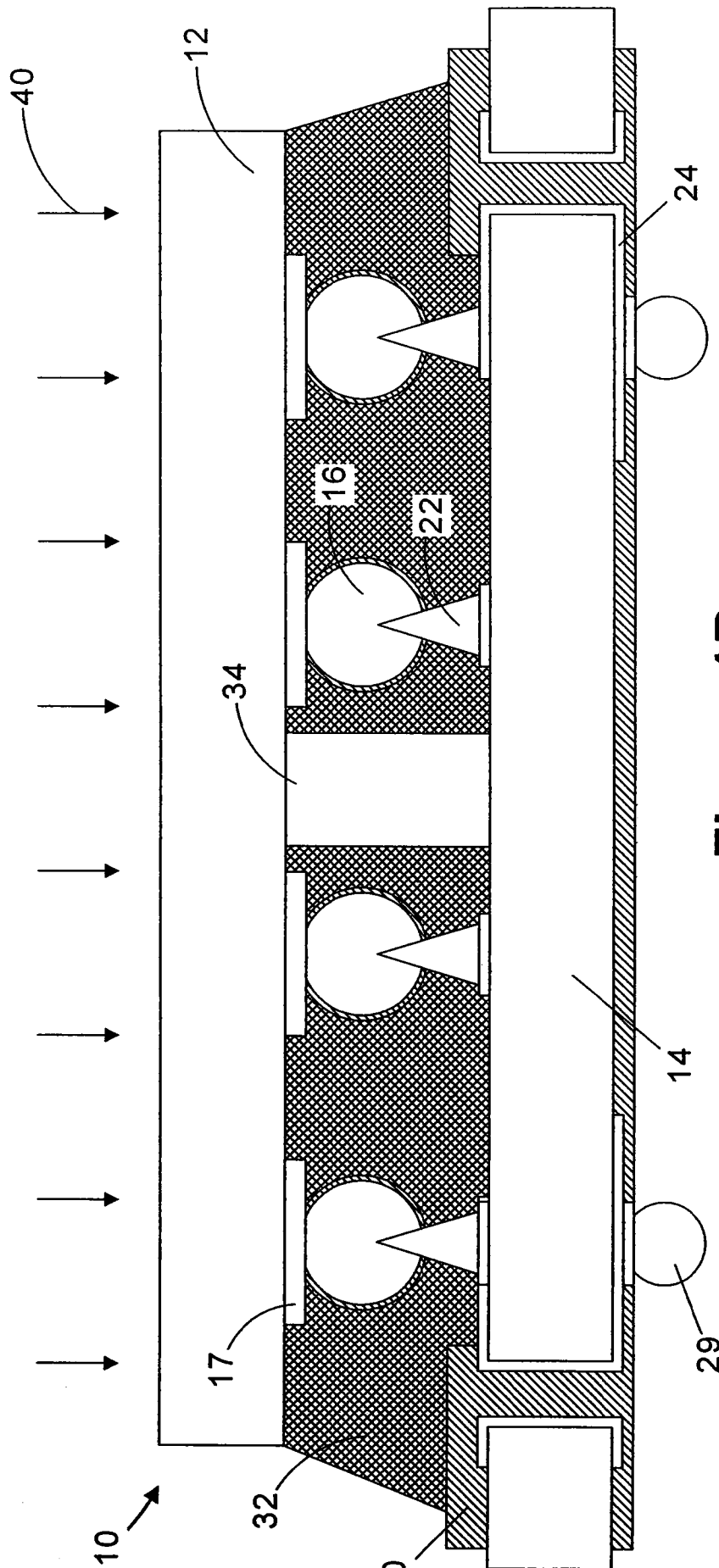


Figure 1B

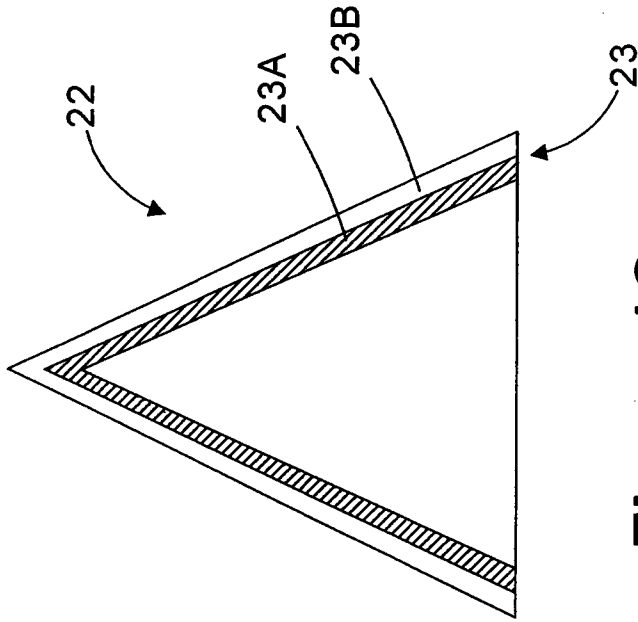
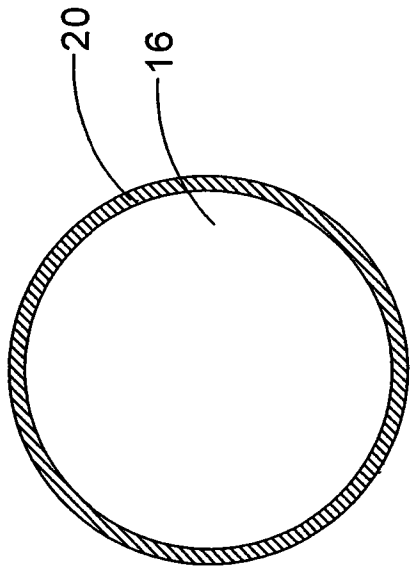


Figure 1C

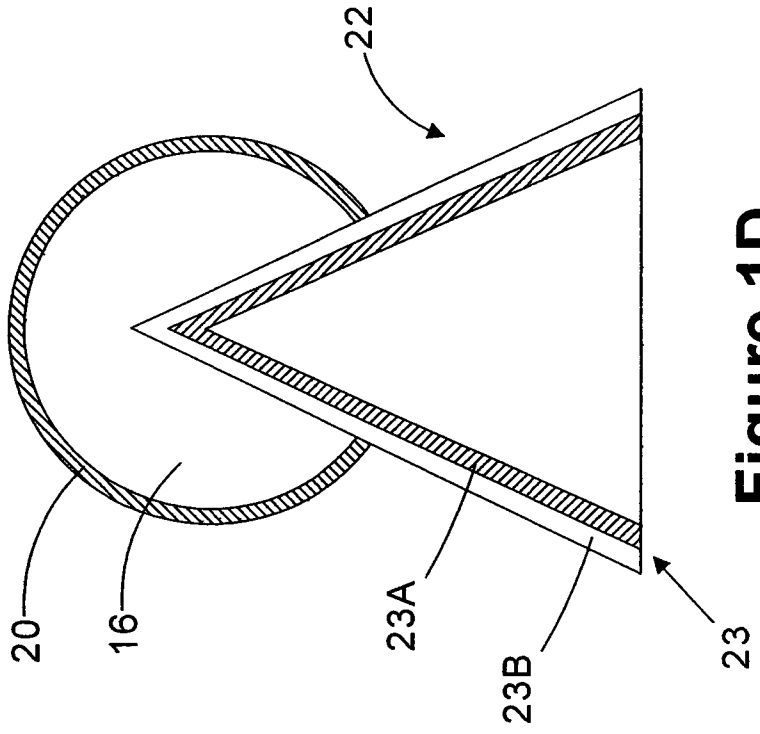
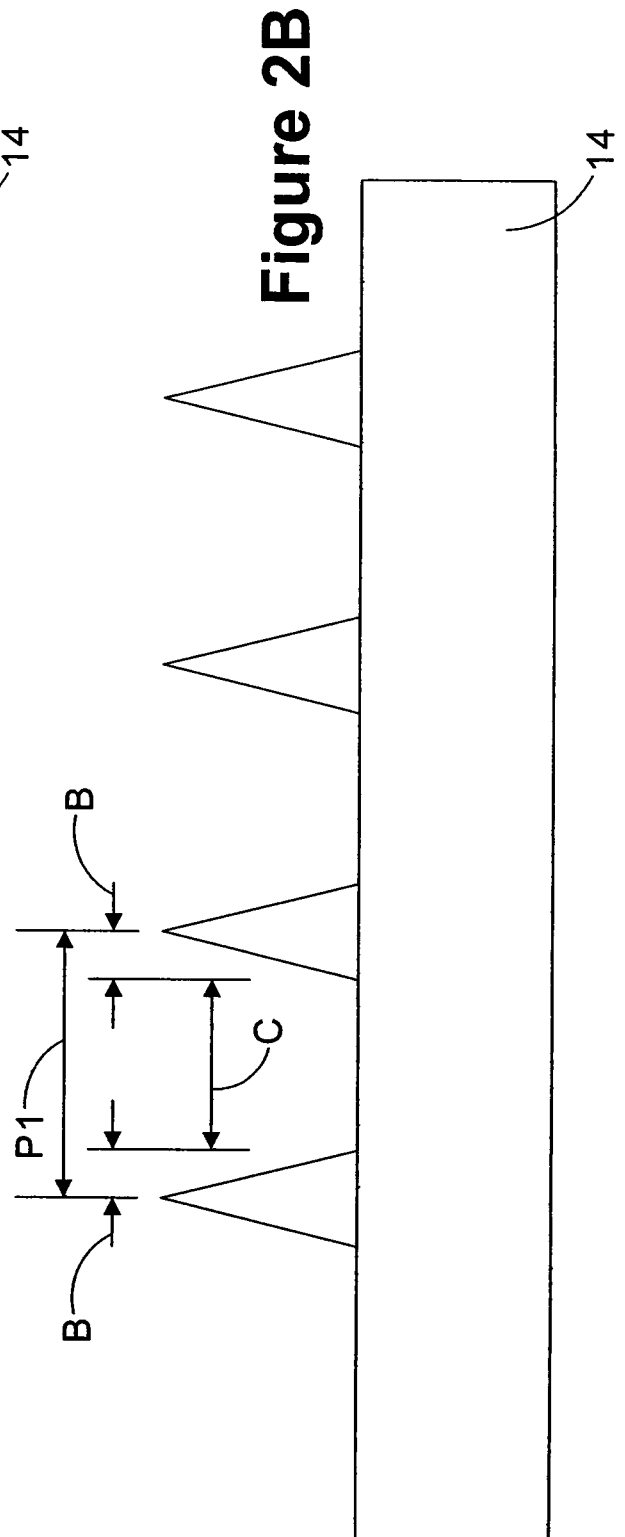
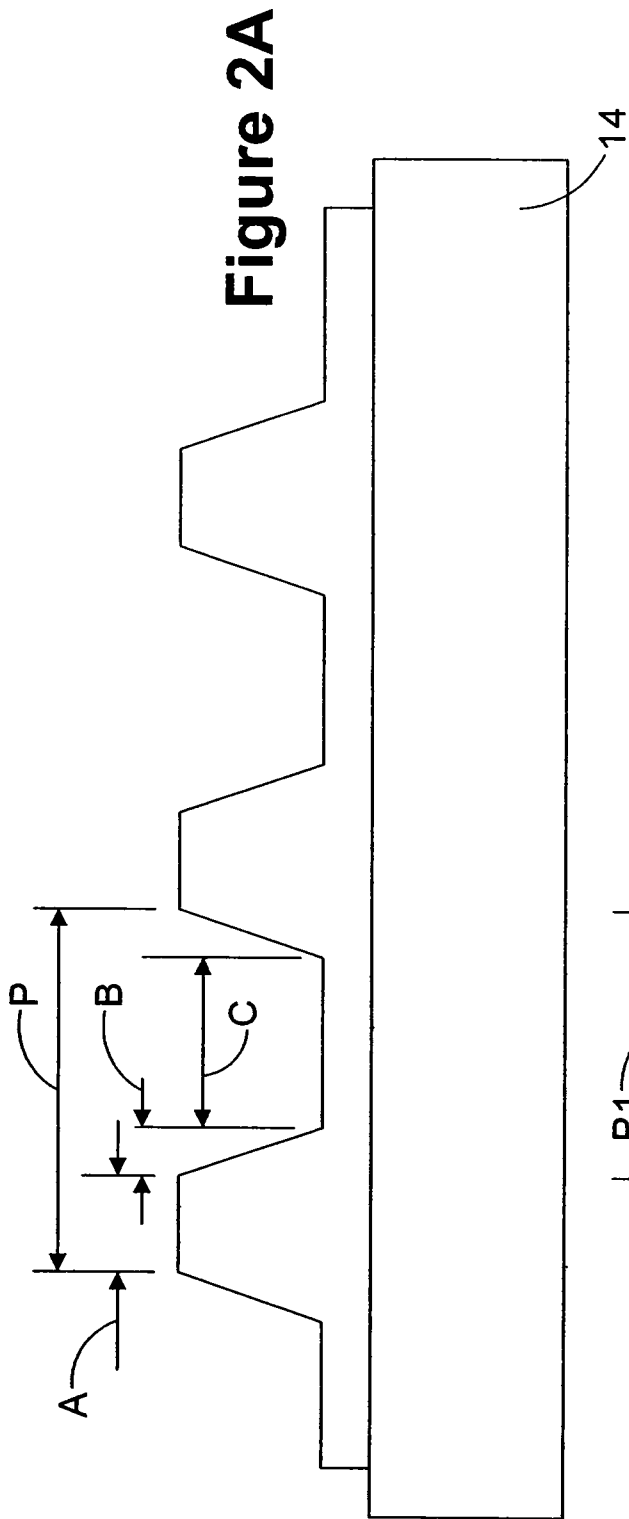


Figure 1D



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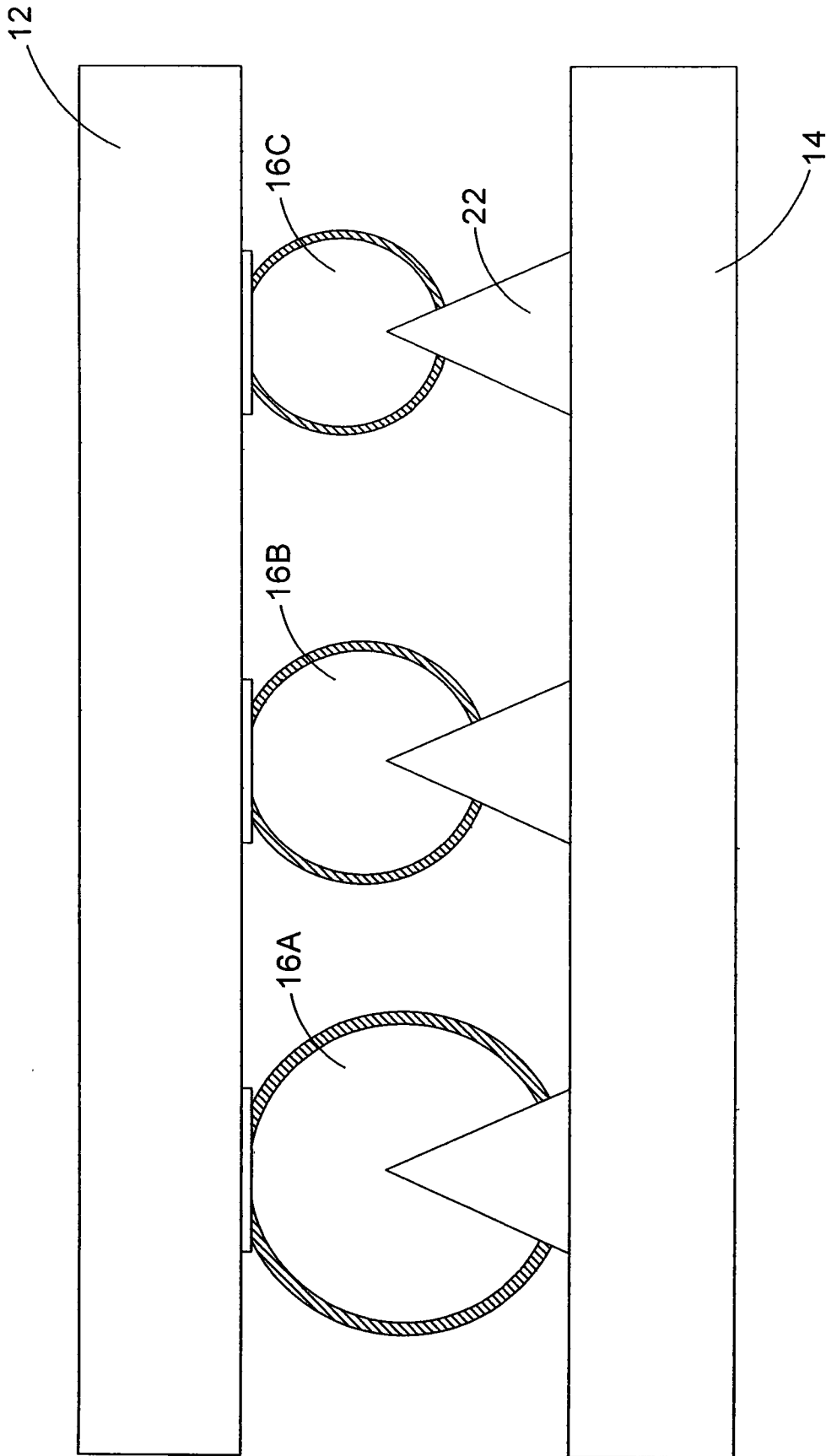


Figure 3

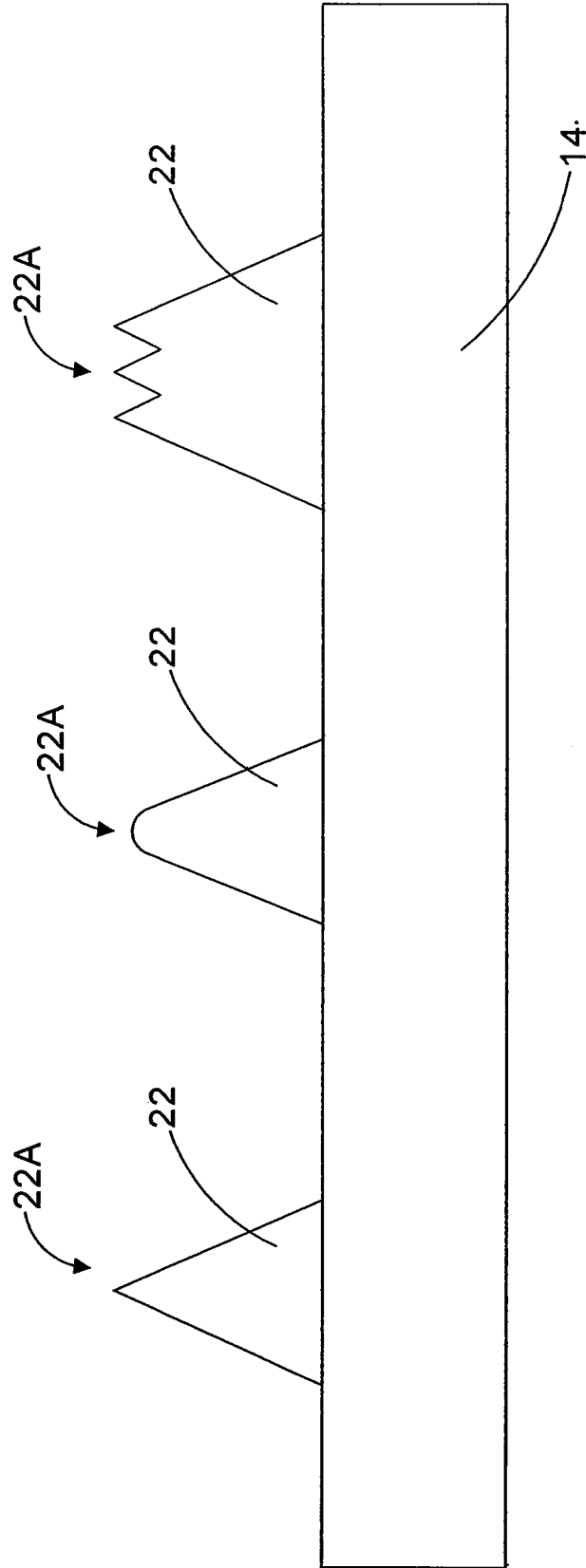


Figure 4

Figure 5A

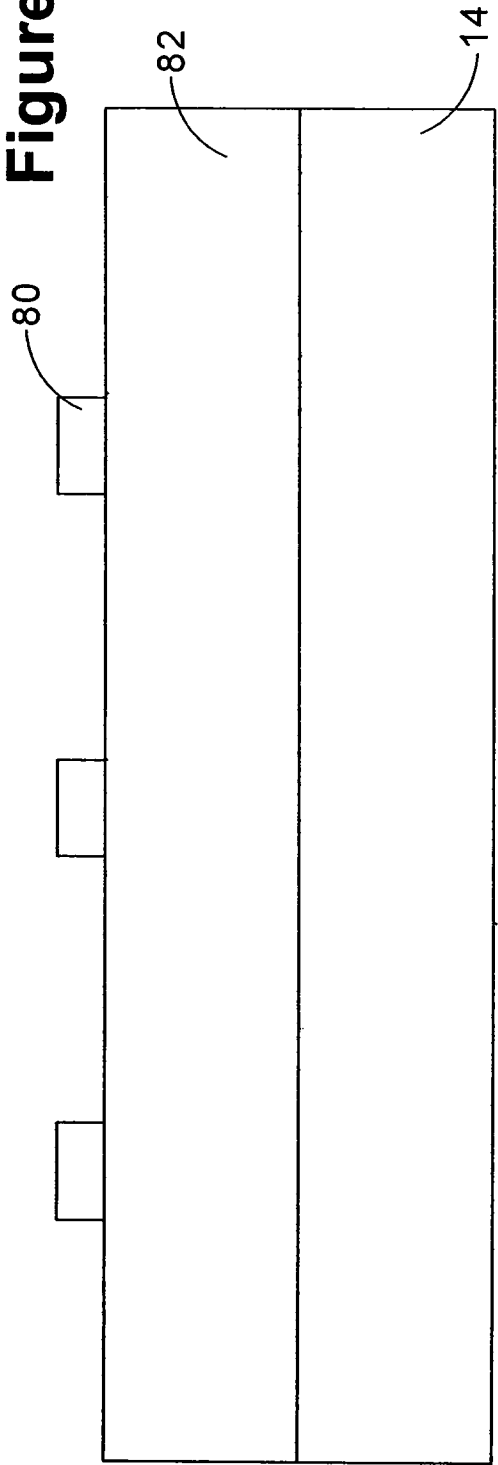
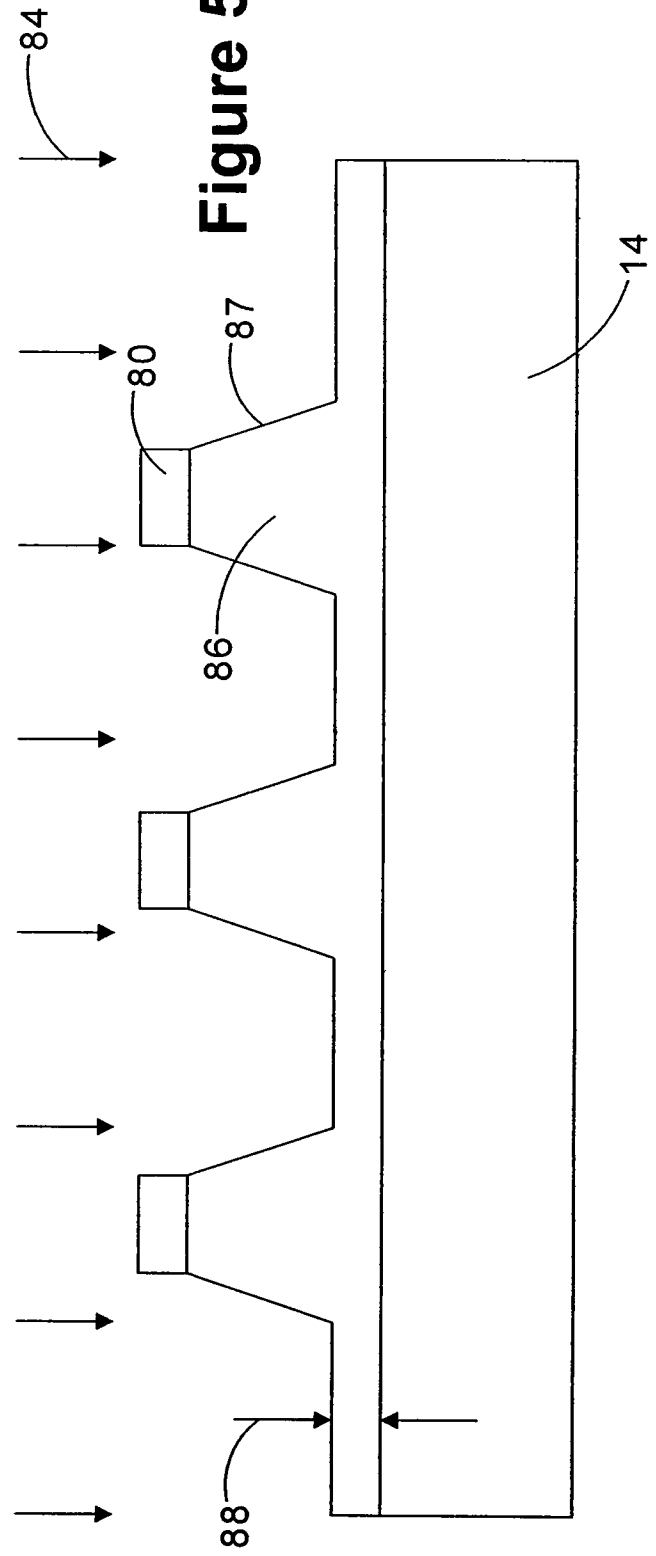


Figure 5B



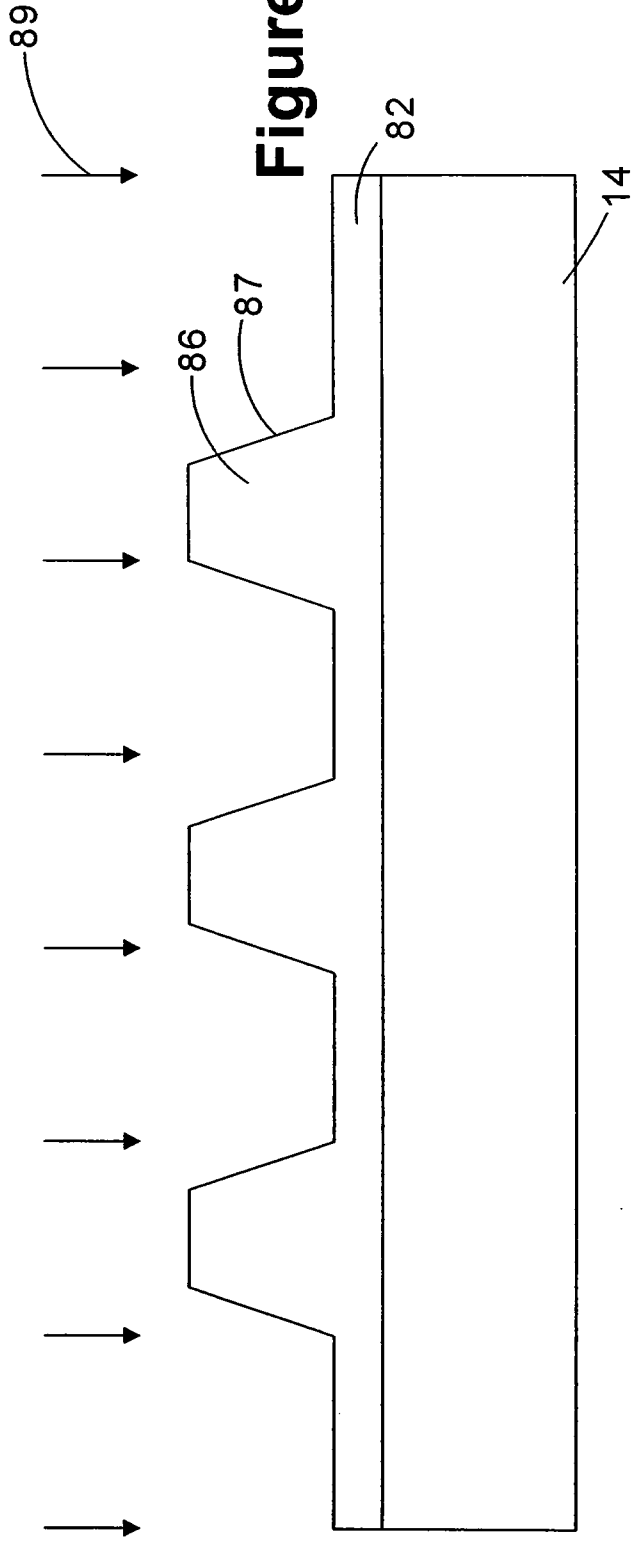


Figure 5C

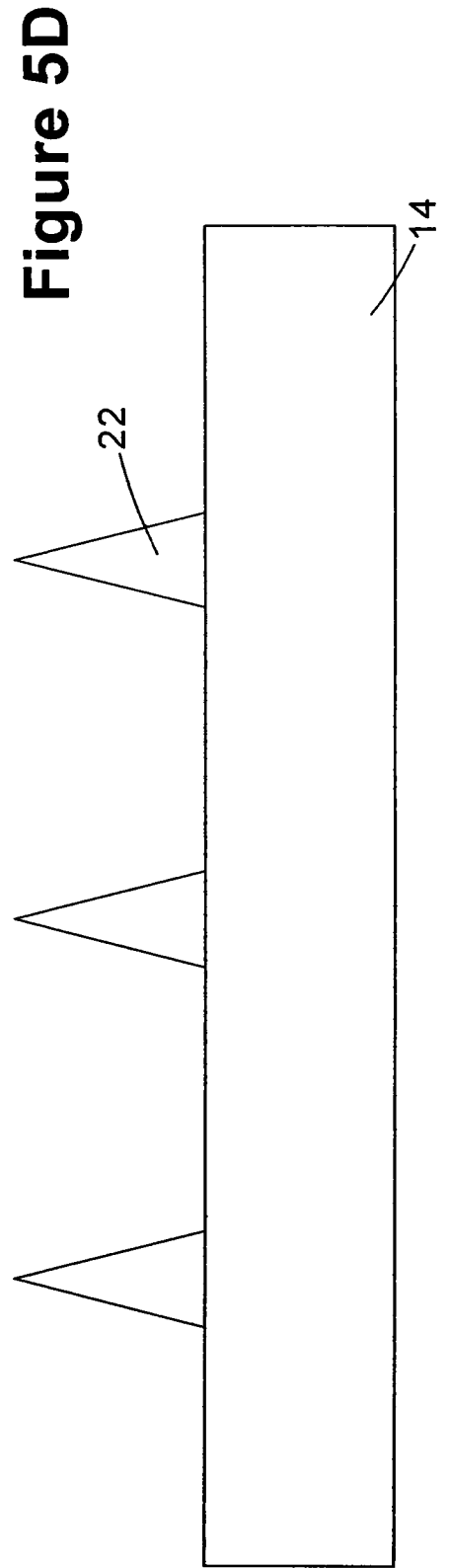


Figure 5D

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No

PCT/US2008/085433

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

INV. H05K3/40

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

H05K H01L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2003/216023 A1 (WARK JAMES M [US] ET AL) 20 November 2003 (2003-11-20) abstract; figures 2,3,7,9 paragraph [0011] paragraphs [0044] - [0047] paragraph [0050]	1-22
A	LEE TECK ET AL: "Instantaneous fluxless bonding of Au with Pb-Sn solder in ambient atmosphere" JOURNAL OF APPLIED PHYSICS, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF PHYSICS. NEW YORK, US, vol. 98, no. 3, 4 August 2005 (2005-08-04), pages 34904-034904, XP012078319 ISSN: 0021-8979 cited in the application section 'Experimental Procedure' figure 1	2-6,8, 10-16



Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.



See patent family annex.

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- *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

18 February 2009

Date of mailing of the international search report

13/03/2009

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Deconinck, Eric

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International application No
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Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 2003216023	A1	NONE	