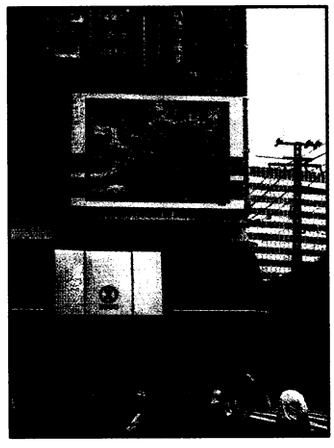
from green to blue with quantum efficiencies of about 5%, at prices as low as $1.25 per diode in large quantities; Matsushita gets its diodes from Toyoda Gosei, with which Akasaki was working). Late in 1995, the Nakamura group reported the achievement of laser diodes (LDs), which at this writing have lifetimes of several tens of hours. This is short by a factor of 100 or more of being useful for most applications, but recently progress in nitride light emission has been remarkably rapid. These accomplishments have major implications for such diverse applications as traffic lights, general illumination (since white light can be obtained), large high-resolution flat-panel and projection displays, high-density storage of information, and even energy conservation.

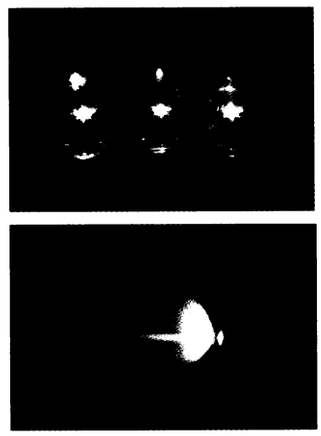
It is amazing that Nakamura's group in particular, and the laboratories in Japan in general, have managed to maintain a substantial lead over scientists and engineers in the rest of the world. This is in marked contrast to earlier major achievements in this field such as the invention of the semiconductor p-n junction laser itself in 1962, when several U.S. laboratories (this reviewer was the lead researcher at IBM on that project) made initial observations within days or weeks of one another that were followed in the next several years by reports of related results from around the world.



Light-emitting diode full-color display. The blue and green LEDs are InGaN single-quantum-well LEDs; only the red are GaAlAs LEDs. [Courtesy S. Nakamura]

The recent startling results from Japan did not come out of the blue, as it were. Efforts in the field go back at least to 1970 when Jacques Pankove, H. P. Maruska, and others at RCA in the United States obtained blue light from a metal-insulator-semiconductor GaN structure. Akasaki, H. Amano, K. Hiramatsu, Nakamura (who is actually a relative newcomer to the field), and others in Japan worked diligently throughout the 1980s and early '90s developing the requisite materials technology for group III nitrides and their alloys, while these materials were largely ignored in the rest of the world. In the United States Mike Haase and co-workers at 3M in 1991 reported blue-green LDs made from group II-VI compound semiconductors, and Bob Gunshor's group at Purdue University and Arto Nurmikko's group at Brown University have made substantial contributions to these devices. However, though at present the lifetime of the II-VI LDs devices is comparable to or even greater than that of the nitride LDs, the II-VI materials are not very robust, and substantial further progress with them thus appears improbable.

Japan's lead over the United States in light emission in the nitrides, which has persisted for almost a decade, is a testimonial to the value of sustained materials science research and to the sophistication of the technology—it is just not easy to play catch-up in semiconductor light emission any more.



Top, Blue light-emitting diodes. [Courtesy S. Nakamura] *Bottom*, InGaN multi-quantum-well structure violet laser diode operated under a pulsed current at room temperature. [From *The Blue Laser Diode*]

The Blue Laser Diode, which offers an account of the work at Nichia, was authored by Nakamura and Gerhard Fasol, a scientist also working in Japan. The first two chapters give some history and tell us that Nobuo Ogawa, the chief executive officer of Nichia, put unprecedented resources, 1.5% of annual sales, into Nakamura's research. Ogawa is to be commended for that and Nakamura for having the guts to take the resources and do something worthwhile with them. The book describes, sketchily, Nakamura's crystal growth system. It gives the physical and optoelectronic properties of the nitrides. It next gives results for p-n junction and heterojunction LEDs. Then it details the structure and optoelectronic properties of the first LDs and the "long"-lived ones. Finally, it gives some speculations about quantum dot lasers.

The book will be of value mainly to students and practitioners working with the group III nitrides, for whom it will be a source of much useful information. It claims to be a lot more, namely "a manual to fabricate blue light emitting diodes"; an explanation of the details behind the "amazing success story" of the development of the GaN-based LEDs and LDs; "a case study of successful research" for use in research management; and a source for scientists and engineers "to start a career in the III-V nitrides." In these respects it falls short for a variety of reasons. It is virtually impossible to transfer a technology by means of a book; it is hard enough to do it by transferring people between laboratories. As a guide to management more generally, the book seems naïve: the real problems are how you find a guy like Nakamura and know it when you have done so. Not the least trouble with the book is that the editing is poor—for example, the references are cited out of order in the early part of the book, and long passages, including tables are needlessly repeated verbatim—so that the book is difficult to use. It is to be hoped that the editing will be better in the second edition, on which the authors are already working, according to the Web page for the book (www.euro-technology.com/bluelaserbook.html). In the meantime the shortcomings of the present edition are more than offset by its timeliness. Overall, it is a very useful, stimulating, and at times amusing book for those working in or close to the large–band-gap semiconductor field.

(The reviewer acknowledges helpful discussions with Hadis Morkoc concerning the history of blue and green light emission.)

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Reprints of Books Previously Reviewed

Blondes in Venetian Paintings, the Nine-Banded Armadillo, and Other Essays in Biochemistry. Konrad Bloch. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT, 1997. Paper, $16. ISBN 0-300-07055-1. *Reviewed* **273**, 1672 (1996).

The Demon-Haunted World. Science as a Candle in the Dark. Carl Sagan. Ballantine, New York, 1997. Paper, $14 or C$19.50. ISBN 0-345-40946-9. *Reviewed* **273**, 442 (1996).

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