Into the Depths:
The Technical Details Behind AV1

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Mile High Video Workshop 2018
July 31, 2018
North America Internet Traffic

82% of Internet traffic by 2021

Cisco Study
Goals of the Alliance:

- Produce a video codec for a broad set of industry use cases
  - Video on Demand / Streaming
  - Video Conferencing
  - Screen sharing
  - Video game streaming
  - Broadcast
- Open Source and Royalty Free
- Widely supported and adopted
- At least 30% better than current generation video codecs
AV1 Coding Tools Overview

- New high-level syntax
  - Easily parsed sequence header, frame header, tile header, etc
- New adaptive multi-symbol entropy coding
  - Up to 16 possible values per symbol
- New coefficient coder
  - LV-MAP exploits multi-symbol arithmetic coder
- More block sizes
  - Prediction blocks from 128x128 down to 4x4
    - Rectangular blocks
      - 1:2 and 2:1 ratios (4x8, 8x4, etc)
      - 1:4 and 4:1 ratios (4x16, 16x4, etc)
  - Transform sizes from 64x64 down to 4x4
    - Includes rectangular transforms 1:2, 2:1 and 1:4, 4:1 ratios
- More transform types
  - 16 possible transform types
    - Row and column chosen from: IDTX, DCT, DST, ADST
- More references
  - Up to 7 per frame (out of a store of 8)
- Spatial and temporal scalability
- Lossless mode
- Chroma subsampling
  - 4:4:4, 4:2:2, 4:2:0, monochrome

- More prediction modes
  - Intra
    - 8 main directions plus delta for up to 56 directions
    - Smooth HV modes interpolate across block
    - Palette mode with index map up to 8 colors
    - Chroma from Luma intra predictor
    - Intra Block Copy
  - Inter
    - Expanded reference list (up to 7 per frame)
    - Allow ZEROMV predictor, which isn’t always (0,0)
    - Compound mode
      - Inter-Intra prediction
        - Depends on difference between pixel prediction
    - Wedge codebook (Inter-Inter, or Inter-Intra)
  - Inter-Intra prediction
    - Smooth blending limited to certain intra modes
  - Warped motion local affine model with neighbors
  - Global motion affine model across entire frame
- Loop filtering
  - Deblocking filter
  - Constrained Directional Enhancement Filter
  - Loop restoration
  - Film grain synthesis

Full AV1 Specification: https://aomedia codec.github.io/av1-spec/
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Profiles

Main
● 8-bit and 10-bit
● 4:0:0 and 4:2:0 chroma subsampling

High
● 8-bit and 10-bit
● 4:0:0, 4:2:0 and 4:4:4 chroma subsampling

Professional
● 8-bit, 10-bit and 12-bit
● 4:0:0, 4:2:0, 4:2:2 and 4:4:4 chroma subsampling
Levels

For a given sequence, place limits on:

● frame size (width and height)
● maximum picture size (area in samples)
● maximum display rate (samples per second)
● maximum decode rate (samples per second)
● average rate (Mbits per second)
● high rate (Mbits per second)
● maximum number of tiles
● maximum number of tile columns
High Level Syntax

Sequence Header

Frame Header

Tile Group

Tile
Tile

Tile Group

Tile
Tile
Colors and HDR

- Colorspace, color matrix, transfer functions, etc. can be encoded directly in the bitstream
  - Chroma siting and levels too
- HDR metadata can be added through the Metadata OBU syntax
Codecs 101

Prediction → Transform → Quantization → Entropy Coding → Loop Filter
Multi-Symbol Entropy Coder

- Arithmetic Range Coder
- Code both binary symbols and multi-symbols
  - Alphabet sizes up to 16
- Improve EC throughput with high rate streams
  - Instead of 1 bit per cycle, decode up to 4
- Use 8x9 -> 17 bit multiples when coding
  - 15-bit CDFs shifted down before multiply
  - Adaptation still occurs with 15-bit precision
- Fast adaptation mode for first few symbols
Transform Types

VP9 has two types: DCT and ADST
- Chosen independently for horizontal / vertical directions
- Signaled once per prediction block

AV1 has four types:
- DCT
- ADST
- FlipADST (mirror image of ADST)
- Identity (no transform)

Still chosen independently for horizontal / vertical directions
- Total of 16 possible combinations
- Not all combinations allowed in all contexts (e.g., no FlipADST for intra)

Signaled once per transform block
Prediction Block Structure

10 different splitting modes

- Last (4-way) split is recursive
Transform Block Sizes: Intra

Signaling mostly unchanged from VP9

- One transform size per prediction block
- For rectangular prediction blocks, largest rectangular transform that fits allowed, e.g., 1:2, 2:1, 4:1 and 1:4 ratio transform blocks
- Transform sizes go up to 64x64
  - Only upper left 32x32 region allowed to be non-zero
Transform Block Sizes: Inter

Signaling completely different from VP9

- Four way quad tree splitting
- For rectangular prediction blocks, largest rectangular transform that fits also allowed
- Available sizes same as intra
Intra Prediction Modes

● More directional modes
  ○ 8 main directions plus delta for up to 56 directions
  ○ Not all modes available at smaller sizes

● Smooth H + V modes
  ○ Smoothly interpolate between values in left column (resp. above row) and last value in above row (resp. left column)

● Paeth predictor mode

● Palette mode
  ○ Color index map with up to 8 colors
  ○ Separate palettes for Y, U and V planes
  ○ Palette index coded using context model for each pixel in the block
  ○ Pixels predicted in ‘wavefront’ order to allow parallel computation

● Chroma from Luma
Chroma from Luma Intra Prediction

- Predict chroma channel based on decoded luma
  - Encoder signals best correlation constants: $\alpha_{cb}$ and $\alpha_{cr}$
- Good for screen content or scenes with fast motion
Chroma from Luma Algorithm

- Reconstructed Luma Pixels
  - Subsample
  - Average
  - Transform-Sized Averages (Q3)
  - Contribution to the AC (in the spatial domain)
- Signaled Scaling Factor $\alpha$ (Q3)
- DC_PRED (Q0)
  - Scaled Values (Q0)
- CfL Prediction
UV Mode Selection Example (https://goo.gl/6tKaB8)

- CFL_PRED 17%
- DC_PRED 44.36%
- TM_PRED 7.98%
- SMOOTH_PRED 4.85%

Ohashi0806shield.y4m
QP = 55
### Awesome for Gaming (Twitch dataset)

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<th>BD-Rate (%)</th>
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<td></td>
<td>PSNR</td>
<td>PSNR-HVS</td>
<td>SSIM</td>
<td>CIEDE2000(^1)</td>
<td>PSNR Cb</td>
<td>PSNR Cr</td>
<td>MS SSIM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
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<td>-0.90</td>
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<td>-15.55</td>
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<td>-0.81</td>
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https://arewecompressedyet.com/?job=no-cfl-twitch-cpu2-60frames%402017-09-18T15%3A39%3A17.543Z&job=cfl-inter-twitch-cpu2-60frames%402017-09-18T15%3A40%3A24.1817

### Notable Mentions

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<td>GTA V</td>
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<td>-1.11</td>
<td>-1.01</td>
<td>-5.88</td>
<td>-15.39</td>
<td>-5.57</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
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<td>Starcraft</td>
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<td>-6.18</td>
<td>-6.21</td>
<td>-1.43</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Minecraft**

MINECRAFT_10_120f.y4m

**GTA V**

GTAV_0_120f.y4m

**Starcraft**

STARCRAFT_10_120f.y4m
Motion Vector Coding

- Each frame has a list of 7 previous frames to reference (out of a pool of 8)
  - Can reference non-displayed frames, so many possible structures
- Construct list of top 4 MVs for a given reference / reference pair from neighboring area
- Complicated entropy coding scheme
Compound Prediction

$(\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$ weights like VP9

Inter-inter compound segment
- Pixel weights depend on difference between prediction pixels

Inter-intra gradual weighting
- Smoothly blends from inter to intra prediction
- Only a limited set of intra modes allowed (DC, H, V, Smooth)

Wedge codebook (inter-inter or inter-intra)
Global Motion

- Defines up to a 6-parameter affine model for the whole frame (translation, rotation and scaling)
- Blocks can signal to either use the global motion vector or code a motion vector like normal
  - If global motion isn’t used, default is 0,0
Warped Motion

- Use neighboring blocks to define same motion model within a block
  - Decomposed into two shears with limited range
    - Similar complexity to subpel interpolation
Segmentation IDs

- Up to 8 possible segment labels (3 bits)
  - Value set per label, e.g., filter strength, quantizer, reference frame, skip
  - Signaled per prediction block, down to 8x8
- Can either predict segment ID temporally or spatially (chosen per frame)
  - Spatial prediction
    - Used to change quantizer/loop filter strength
    - Useful for adaptive quantization, e.g., for activity masking
    - Useful for temporal RDO, e.g., MV-tree
  - Temporal prediction
    - Useful for predicting temporal properties, e.g., skip
Deblocking Filter

- Similar to what is in VP9
- Changed the order edges are filtered to make hardware easier
- More flexible strength signaling
  - Separate H + V strength for luma
  - Separate C_b and C_r strengths for chroma
  - Can be adjusted on a per-super block basis
- NB: deblocking filter crosses tile boundaries
Constrained Directional Enhancement Filter (CDEF)

- Merge of Daala’s directional deringing filter (DERING) and Thor’s constrained lowpass filter (CLPF)
  - Both encoder and decoder search for the direction that best matches
  - Primary filter run along direction, and secondary conditional replacement filter run orthogonally
  - Strength is signaled in the bitstream
- Results exceed both DERING and CLPF alone, as well as applying DERING + CLPF sequentially
Loop Restoration

- Enhanced and simplified loop filters from VP10
- Two filter choices per superblock
  - Separable Wiener filter with explicitly coded coefficients
  - Self-guided filter
- Runs in a separate pass after CDEF
  - Showed best metrics of any approach tested
  - Uses deblocking filter output outside of superblock boundaries to minimize line buffers
Spatial and Temporal Scalability

- Each frame can have a `spatial_id` and a `temporal_id`
  - When `spatial_id = 0` and `temporal_id = 0` it is called a base layer
  - When `spatial_id > 0` and `temporal_id > 0` it is called an enhancement layer
- Idea is that decoder will simply display the frames from the highest layer
  - Higher layer frames can reference lower layer frames
- Designed to be used by a special “Selective Forwarding Unit” server that hands out the appropriate scalable layer to a client
Frame Super-Resolution

- Not actually super-resolution
- Instead
  - Code at reduced resolution
    - Run deblocking filter and CDEF, but not Loop Restoration filter
  - Upsample with simple upscaler
  - Run Loop Restoration filter at full resolution
- Only horizontal resolution reduction allowed
  - Simplifies hardware (no new line buffers)
- Allows for gradual bitrate scaling
Film Grain Synthesis

- Grain parameters signaled per frame
- Synthesized film grain applied after decoding (not in loop)
- Could be applied using GLSL + PRNG based texture
AOM Members
AOM Members / Hardware

- Adobe
- Allegro
- Amazon
- AMD
- Amlogic
- Apple
- Argon Design
- ARM
- Ceteme
- BBC Research & Development
- Bitmovin
- Broadcom
- Chips & Media
- Cisco
- Facebook
- Google
- Hulu
- IBM
- Intel
- Ittiam
- Microsoft
- Mozilla
- Netflix
- NGCodec
- NVIDIA
- Polycom
- Realtek
- Sigma Designs
- SaciOne
- VeriSilicon
- VideoLAN
- Vidyo
- Xilinx
Designed for Hardware Implementations

Hardware members involved from the very beginning
Feedback incorporated into a number of tools
- Per symbol probability adaptation
- Smaller multipliers in entropy coder
- Single pass bitstream writing
- Fewer line buffers in CDEF and LR
- Only allow horizontal scaling for super-resolution
Designed for Low-Latency

Per symbol adaptation replaces symbol counts in VP9
Can write bitstream with subframe latency
Removed signaling from frame header that forced whole frame buffering
Designed for Broadcasters?

- Decoder rate model
  - Guarantee buffer size
  - Limit the use of alt-ref’s to ensure decodability
  - Verifiable (See Annex E of the spec document)

- Support for AV1 coming to hardware
  - Smart TV’s will want to play Netflix, Hulu, YouTube, etc.

- Start with AV1 in the broadcasting stack
  - Can leverage industry investment in hardware, software, tooling, etc.
  - Easier to expand into streaming market
Moscow State University (SSIM - June 2017)

Facebook Study (April 2018)

AV1 Compression History
AV1 Complexity History
Questions?