Generation of supersonic plasma jets from pulsed-power driven x-pinch experiments

D. Mariscal, S.C.Bott, David M. Haas, J. Kim, G.Collins, K. Gunasekera, F.N.Beg

University of California San Diego, 9500 Gilman Drive, La Jolla, CA 9209
Email: dmarisca@ucsd.edu

Astrophysical jets and supersonic outflows are associated with a wide range of phenomena. Determination of the processes which dominate jet behaviour can be used to infer the properties of their sources which include Young Stellar Objects (YSO) and Active Galactic Nuclei (AGN). Limited observational data makes the construction of theoretical descriptions problematic, and accurately scaled laboratory experiments represent an important test-bed for assessing the important physical processes.

We present laboratory experiments studying the generation of hydrodynamic super-sonic plasma jets in x-pinches on a highly compact pulsed power generator. Currently, these experiments take place on 1 MA machines, which necessitate a laboratory footprint > 100 m2. In contrast the x-pinches discussed here are driven by a low current (80 kA), compact (<1 m2) pulser. The possibility of producing astrophysically relevant plasma jets on such devices opens the way for smaller scale experiments to contribute to the growing field of laboratory astrophysics. Jets are analyzed using both laser interferometry and time-resolved self emission and estimations of the dimensionless scaling parameters (Mach number, jet/ambient density ratio, cooling parameter) will be given. The relatively low density of the jets produced in these experiments allows continuous 2-dimensional quantitative measurements of the electron density, which was not possible in previous experiments, and this may allow a closer examination of the jet structure during an interaction event.

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