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Elrawemi, Mohamed, Blunt, Liam, Fleming, Leigh, Muhamedsalih, Hussam and Gao, F.

Wavelength Scanning Interferometry for PV Production In-line Metrology

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Background
Flexible PV modules are manufactured using roll to roll (R2R) technology. These modules require a flexible barrier material to prevent water vapor ingress.

Fig. 1 Roll to Roll technology [1]

Thin Film PV Modules
Flexible solar modules comprise four functional layer groupings. The main focus of the investigation in this work is the barrier layer, this layer is typically formed from a planarised Polyethylene Naphthalate (PEN) sheet with an amorphous Al₂O₃ barrier coating <50 nm thick.

Fig. 2 Flexible PV modules [Courtesy of Flisom, Switzerland]

Al₂O₃ ALD Barrier Film
Thin layers of Al₂O₃ of deposited via the atomic layer deposition technique (ALD) using R2R technology, have been introduced to allow PV modules transparency, flexibility and to provide an effective barrier layer. The process uses Trimethyl Aluminium (TMA) and water precursors and the tuned process temperature is 105 °C

Fig. 3 Beneq WCS 500 roll-to-roll ALD reactor

Problem Statement
Micro and nano scale defects that occurs during the deposition process of PV barrier films not only degrade the PV module performance over time but lead to the scrapping of high value products. The overall aim of this study is to develop in process metrology systems to detect the PV barrier films defects.

Experimental work
Two representative Al₂O₃ ALD samples processed by the Centre for Process Innovations (CPI). These samples have an 80 mm diameter area that has been ALD coated with 40nm Al₂O₃.

The WVTRs of the study were carried out at the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) using a traceable in house developed instrument.

Surface Characterisation
This study provides a performance comparison between a newly developed in process instrument based on wavelength scanning interferometer (WSI) and off-line coherence correlation interferometer (CCI) to detect micro-scale defects. This is done in order to verify the applicability of WSI to be installed in R2R technology.

Defect extraction and statistics

Results & Conclusion
- The analysis of the results appears to indicate that sample with higher density of large defects exhibit inferior barrier properties.
- WSI results compare favorably with Coherence Correlation Interferometry (CCI) results.
- The results provide basis for development of a proof of concept system.

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References