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Update of Fastcam, the lucky imaging instrument at the Observatorios de Canarias (OOCC)

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FastCam is an instrument designed to obtain high spatial resolution images in the optical wavelength range from ground-based telescopes by using the Lucky Imaging technique. This technique is based on the idea of registering the instants of atmospheric stability, typically lasting just some milliseconds, using very short exposures. The instrument consists of a very low noise and very fast readout speed EMCCD camera capable of reaching the diffraction limit of medium-sized telescopes from 380 to 1000 nm.

At the beginning of 2019, a new camera was commissioned. Now the instrument makes use of an Andor iXon DU-888U3-CSO#BV back-illuminated system containing a 1024x1024 pixel frame transfer CCD sensor from E2V Technologies. The pixel size is 13 microns and the camera allows up to 30 exposures per second. A new update of the camera acquisition software is currently being worked on. A complete characterisation of the detector is also being carried out in order to better understand and exploit all the performances of the instrument, applying particular configurations for each scientific case. A standard reduction of the data is also being implemented in order to offer it to all users of the instrument.

The first FastCam was an instrument jointly developed by the Spanish Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (IAC) and the Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena which started in 2006. Since then, the IAC assumed the instrument and tested it on several telescopes of the OOCC, among them the Nordic Telescope (NOT) where images were obtained in the optical domain diffraction-limited with high contrast, reaching a resolution of 0.1”/px.
Currently FastCam is a common-user instrument at the Cassegrain focus of the 1.52-meter Carlos Sánchez Telescope (TCS, Teide Observatory) where observations are being made to calibrate the detector with sky tests. The idea is that in the near future it will be installed in the NOT to finish the commissioning process of the new camera and the whole acquisition system so that this instrument can be used by the international community.

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