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Published in:

2013 Conference on Lasers & Electro-Optics Europe & the International Quantum Electronics Conference (CLEO/Europe-IQEC)

Link to article, DOI:

[10.1109/CLEOE-IQEC.2013.6801508](https://doi.org/10.1109/CLEOE-IQEC.2013.6801508)

Publication date:

2013

[Link back to DTU Orbit](#)

Citation (APA):

Liu, X., Niu, H., Liu, W., Chen, D., Zhou, B., & Bache, M. (2013). Completely background free broadband coherent anti-Stokes Raman scattering spectroscopy. In *2013 Conference on Lasers & Electro-Optics Europe & the International Quantum Electronics Conference (CLEO/Europe-IQEC)* IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/CLEOE-IQEC.2013.6801508>

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Completely background free broadband coherent anti-Stokes Raman scattering spectroscopy

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3-color coherent anti-Stokes Raman scattering (CARS) can be used to measure the dynamics of vibrationally excited states by controlling the time delay between the broadband and narrowband pulses. It is promising to simultaneously obtain the CARS spectra in time-frequency domains and monitor vibration dephasing times of multiple Raman modes, which is especially favourable in the studies of molecular dynamics, supra-molecular structure, chemistry and material science [1]. However, the often present instantaneous nonresonant background (NRB) signal interferes with and typically dominates the much weaker resonant signals, leading to significant reduction [2].

Fig. 1 (a) simulated CARS spectrogram (b) the retrieved CARS spectrogram (C) non-NRB CARS spectrogram

Here we for the first time propose a numerical approach to obtain non-NRB time-frequency CARS spectrograms. In order to evaluate the validity of the CARS spectrogram for background free broadband CARS spectroscopy, we numerically constructed a CARS spectrogram for an assumed Gaussian probe pulse of 500fs (FWHM) according to equation $I_{t-cars}(\omega_{as}, \tau) = \left| \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} R(t) E_{pr}(t - \tau) \exp(-i\omega t) dt \right|^2$ (1); the time-frequency CARS

spectrogram is shown in Fig. 1(a). The molecular time response $R(t)$, includes two parts, namely resonant vibration population decay ($t > 10$ fs) and a nonresonant background ($t < 10$ fs). In addition, the time-delay control allows separation of nonresonant background (NRB) contribution from the resonant signal by taking advantage of different time scales of NRB (< 10 fs) and vibrational coherence (0.5 ps $\sim$ 10 ps). However, time-resolved CARS largely reduces the resonant signal. We can retrieve the $R(t)$ from the simulated CARS spectrogram, and we implemented an iterative Fourier-transform algorithm with a generalized projection method [3]. By complete separation of the time evolution of the CARS signals and the NRB, we define the step functions $R'(t) = R(t)$ (if $t > 10$ fs), otherwise $R'(t) = 0$. We numerically constructed a non-NRB CARS according to equation (1), which used the $R'(t)$ instead of $R(t)$. The spectrogram in Fig.1(c) clearly shows that we are able to simultaneously obtain multiple Raman modes (covering 500 cm^{-1} to 4000 cm^{-1}) with no NRB noise in a single measurement both in the time and frequency domain. Concluding we demonstrated a way of removing NRB signal from broadband CARS spectroscopy. Using a numerical approach, the background-free vibrational spectrum can be measured from 500-4000 cm^{-1} in the time and frequency domain, and significantly increases the detection sensitivity of CARS spectroscopy. This novel simple method should be useful for probing a local chemical identity.

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