Electron Behaviour of (Nd$_{0.33}$Eu$_{0.2}$Gd$_{0.47}$)Ba$_2$Cu$_3$O$_y$

Studied by Infrared Measurements

M. RAMEŠ$^{a,*}$, V. ŽELEZNY$^a$, V.T. PHUOC$^b$, F. GERV AIS$^b$, T. WOLFE$^c$ and M. JIRSA$^a$

$^a$Institute of Physics ASCR, Na Slovance 2, CZ-182 21, Praha 8, Czech Republic
$^b$Université F. Rabelais, UFR Sciences, Parc de Grandmont, 37200 Tours, France
$^c$Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe GmbH, Institute of Solid State Physics, D-76021 Karlsruhe, Germany

Optical properties of a (Nd$_{0.33}$Eu$_{0.2}$Gd$_{0.47}$)Ba$_2$Cu$_3$O$_y$ single crystal are interpreted in terms of the extended Drude model.

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1. Introduction

We report here on the optical properties of a (Nd$_{0.33}$Eu$_{0.2}$Gd$_{0.47}$)Ba$_2$Cu$_3$O$_y$ (NEG-123) single crystal interpreted in terms of the extended Drude model [1]. This work is an extension and continuation of our previous work [2].

The NEG-123 single crystal of approximately rectangular shape and 1.5 × 2.0 × 0.5 mm$^3$ size was grown from melt in air and oxygenated at 683 K. Its reflectivity was measured from 50 to 8000 cm$^{-1}$ in both the normal and superconducting states. The real parts of the dielectric function, ε$_1$, and the electrical conductivity, σ$_1$, were determined from the Kramers–Kronig (K–K) analysis of the reflectance data. The appropriate reflectance extrapolation in the low- and high-frequency range was done using YBa$_2$Cu$_3$O$_7$ (YBCO) data [3] from 8000 to 40000 cm$^{-1}$, $R$ ∼ ω$^{-0.1}$ between 40000 and 10$^6$ cm$^{-1}$ and $R$ ∼ ω$^{-4}$ above 10$^6$ cm$^{-1}$[4]. The classical Drude–Lorentz model with constant parameters, describing free carriers, phonons and other spectral features, was used to fit the σ$_1$(ω) and ε$_1$(ω) functions resulting from K–K analysis, in both the normal and superconducting state [2]. Then, reflectivity was calculated from the functions and compared with the experimental data. This procedure was repeated until a self-consistent result was obtained.

We can subtract the contributions of phonons from σ$_1$(ω) and ε$_1$(ω) and the remaining part of dispersion describes the contribution of free carriers and middle infrared band. The phonons are modelled by a set of damped harmonic oscillators and no coupling between them and other excitations (e.g. electron–phonon) is assumed. The remaining part of conductivity, σ$_r$ = σ$_{r1}$ + iσ$_{r2}$, can be analyzed using an extended Drude (single-component) model, where the relation between the scattering rate $1/\tau(\omega)$, mass enhancement $m^*(\omega)/m$ [5] and conductivity is given

$$\frac{1}{\tau(\omega)} = \varepsilon_0\omega_p^2 \left( \frac{\sigma_{r1}}{\sigma_{r1}^2 + \sigma_{r2}^2} \right);$$

$$\frac{m^*(\omega)}{m} = \frac{\varepsilon_0\omega_p^2}{\omega} \left( \frac{\sigma_{r2}}{\sigma_{r1}^2 + \sigma_{r2}^2} \right).$$

2. Results

Figure 1 shows the frequency dependence of $1/\tau(\omega)$ and $m^*(\omega)/m$ for four selected temperatures, calculated using Eq. (1). The $1/\tau(\omega)$ spectrum in Fig. 1a exhibits a significant peak in both the normal state and the superconducting state. The maximum of the peak in the normal state shifts with decreasing temperature from 1594 cm$^{-1}$ to 33 cm$^{-1}$, at $T$ = 10 K, i.e. in the superconducting state, at $T$ = 10 K. The peak further sharpens especially at its low-frequency side and $1/\tau(\omega)$ is practically zero below 200 cm$^{-1}$. For higher frequencies, above 900 cm$^{-1}$, the $1/\tau(\omega)$ spectrum exhibits a plateau, whose level increases on cooling from 1594 cm$^{-1}$ to 2418 cm$^{-1}$ and the peak sharpens with decreasing temperature. At 10 K, the peak further sharpens especially at its low-frequency side and $1/\tau(\omega)$ is practically zero below 200 cm$^{-1}$. For higher frequencies, above 500 cm$^{-1}$, the $1/\tau(\omega)$ spectrum exhibits a plateau, whose level increases on cooling from 350 to 530 cm$^{-1}$ with decreasing temperature in the normal state and drops to 410 cm$^{-1}$ in the superconducting state.

The mass enhancement, $m^*(\omega)/m$, in Fig. 1b exhibits a resonance-like frequency dependence and it becomes negative in a certain frequency range. The lower limit of this interval shifts with decreasing temperature from 290 to 380 cm$^{-1}$ in the normal state and it drops to 350 cm$^{-1}$ in the superconducting state, at $T$ = 10 K. The upper limit of this region decreases on cooling from 930 to 810 cm$^{-1}$ and it rises again slightly up to 830 cm$^{-1}$ at $T$ = 10 K.
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The functions \(1/\tau(\omega)\) and \(m^*(\omega)/m\) substantially differ from those known from literature, where the data of more oxygenated YBCO crystals have been presented. The higher density of free carriers leads to a higher screening of spectral features like phonons and middle infrared absorption. In contrary, in our case the middle infrared absorption peak is strongly enhanced. It has character of a distinct resonance, which presses the function \(m^*(\omega)/m\) downward, to negative values. All these features are consequence of the under-doped regime, where we expect the oxygen concentration, \(y \approx 6.4\). This is also in agreement with the results of our previous work [2], where we reported a significant middle-infrared band in \(R(\omega)\). We found that this band was composed of two highly damped Lorentz oscillators.

Similar effect like the negative \(m^*(\omega)/m\) has been observed also in other materials. In heavy fermions \((\text{UCu}_3\text{Pd}_1\text{Sb}_2)\) [6] and \((\text{CeRu}_4\text{Sb}_12)\) [7], the opening of hybridization gap due to mixing \(f\)-electrons and conducting carriers leads to a similar picture below a characteristic temperature.

Single-component model extended by the memory functions has been successfully used for YBCO [8, 9] with a high oxygen content. When the oxygen content decreases, the middle infrared absorption stands out from the Drude background and its resonance character prevails. As a consequence, \(m^*(\omega)/m\) becomes negative and the single-component model has problems with describing this behaviour. The multi-component model could give more realistic picture, but it is not easy to separate contributions arising from free and bound carriers. On the other hand, the sharpening of the low-frequency side of the \(1/\tau(\omega)\) peak illustrates opening of pseudogap on cooling.

3. Conclusions

In summary, we calculated the frequency dependences of scattering rate and mass enhancement in the crystal NEG-123 both in the normal and superconducting state. We found low contribution of free carriers and consequently enhanced role of mid-infrared band, which is not sufficiently screened out. On cooling the spectra of \(\sigma_1(\omega)\) and \(1/\tau(\omega)\) show a gap-like depression below 350 cm\(^{-1}\), which is similar to opening of pseudogap.

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