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In Situ Mass Spectrometric Detection of Interfacial Intermediates in the Oxidation of RCOOH(aq) by Gas-Phase OH-Radicals

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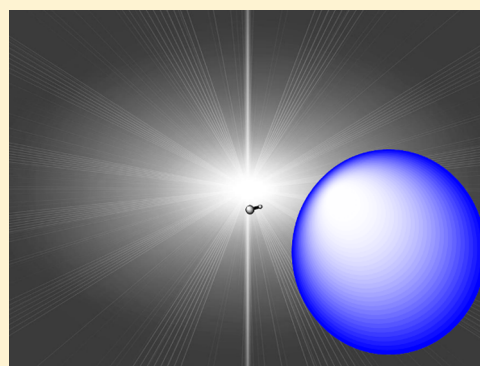
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S Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: Products and intermediates of the oxidation of aqueous alkanolic acids initiated by gas-phase hydroxyl radicals, $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$, at the air–water interface were detected by mass spectrometry in a novel setup under various experimental conditions. Exposure of submillimolar RCOOH ($\text{R} = \text{methyl}, n\text{-pentyl}, n\text{-heptyl}$) aqueous microjets to $\sim 10 \text{ ns}$ $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$ pulses from the 266 nm laser flash photolysis of $\text{O}_3(\text{g})/\text{O}_2(\text{g})/\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})$ mixtures yielded an array of interfacial species that were unambiguously and simultaneously identified in situ by online electrospray mass spectrometry. We found that peroxy radicals $\text{R}(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OO}\cdot$ react within $50 \mu\text{s}$ to produce alcohols $\text{R}(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OH}$ and carbonyls $\text{R}(-2\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)=\text{O}$ via competitive Russell and Bennett–Summers mechanisms. We confirmed the formation of hydroperoxides $\text{R}(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OOH}$ in experiments performed in D_2O . To our knowledge, this is the first report on the prompt and simultaneous detection of products and peroxy/peroxide intermediates in the heterogeneous oxidation of aqueous organics initiated by $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$.



INTRODUCTION

Environmental organic surfaces exposed to ambient air inevitably undergo oxidative degradation.¹ Prominent among such surfaces, on account of their large surface-to-volume ratios, are those of tropospheric organic aerosol particles.² Such particles typically consist of internally or externally mixed hydrophobic and amphiphilic substances within an aqueous matrix. Whereas unsaturated moieties are susceptible to direct attack by major gas-phase oxidants, such as ozone and nitrogen dioxide, the degradation of alkyl groups is initiated by more reactive trace species such as the short-lived gas-phase hydroxyl radicals, $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$. As the keystone of atmospheric chemistry,³ the reactions of $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$ with gas-phase organic species, and the processes triggered by such interactions have been investigated extensively.^{4,5} It has become increasingly apparent, however, that heterogeneous processes play unique and essential roles in the troposphere.^{6–9} For example, the progressive oxidation of saturated organics on the surfaces of aerosol particles in humid atmospheres increases their hygroscopicities and hydrophilicities,^{10–13} and, hence, their ability to nucleate water vapor. As a result, the oxidative aging of condensed-phase organics by $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$ has received much attention recently.^{14–25} However, most, if not all, such studies consisted of exposing organic solids in the form of particles or films to $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$ for prolonged periods, followed by product detection. The mechanisms proposed to account for the products detected in such gas–

solid events were generally assumed to be similar to those developed for the putatively similar processes in fluid solutions, which proceed via the intermediacy of alkyl peroxy radicals.

Previously, we have utilized the high sensitivity, surface selectivity and unambiguous identification capabilities of online electrospray mass spectrometry (ES-MS)^{26–29} to characterize in situ the intermediates and products formed on the surfaces of continuously flowing, uncontaminated liquid microjets exposed to gas-phase reactive gases (i.e., $\text{O}_3(\text{g})$) beams for $\sim 10\text{--}50 \mu\text{s}$ under ambient conditions (i.e., at 1 atm total pressure, 298 K).^{26,28,30–33} Herein, we extend the scope of our experiments to include short-lived, gas-phase radical reactants, which we generate via laser flash photolysis of appropriate precursor mixtures in the immediate vicinity of the liquid microjets.

EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

Methods. Figure 1 shows a schematic diagram of the experimental setup.

The prompt (within the $\sim 10\text{--}50 \mu\text{s}$ lifetime of the intact microjets; see below) formation of anionic products from the reaction of aqueous reactants with gaseous species at 1 atm at

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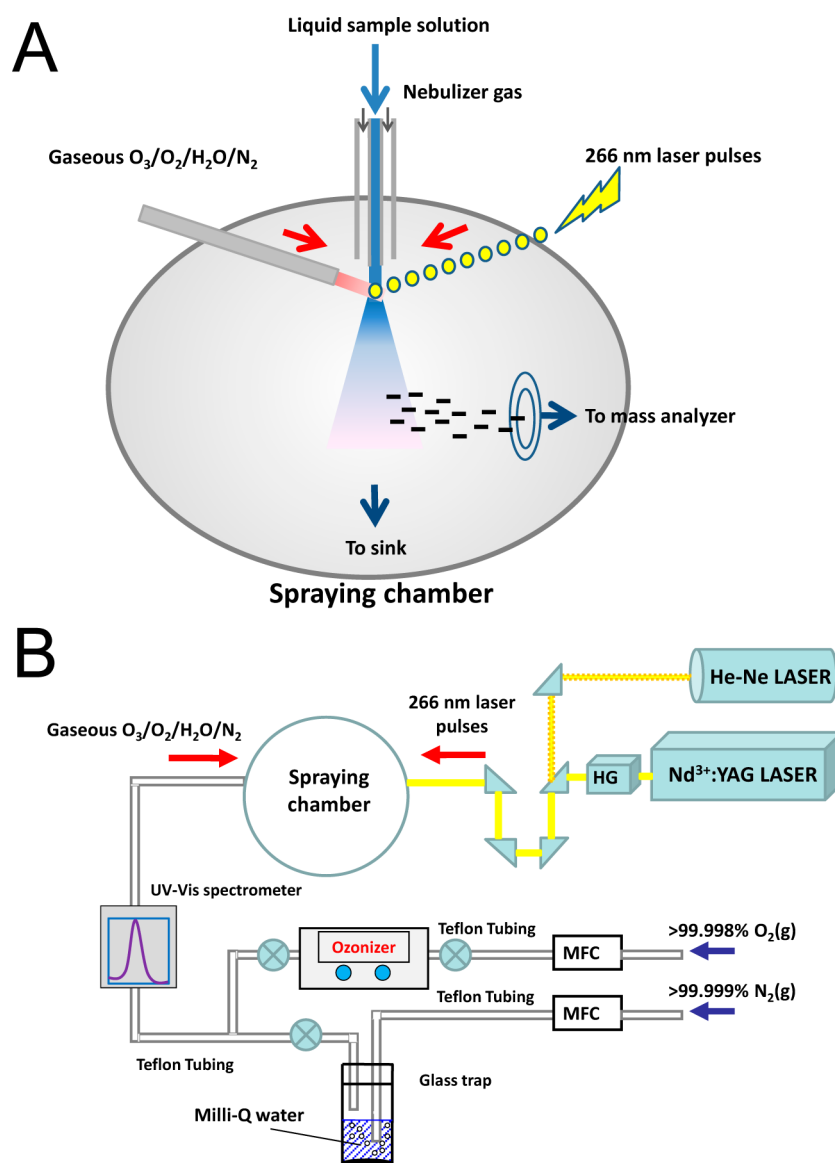


Figure 1. Schematic diagram of our setup. It allows for the in situ monitoring of reactions of laser-generated gas-phase radical species on the surface of aqueous solutions. HG stands for harmonic generator; MFC, for mass flow controller.

298 K are monitored in situ by an electrospray mass spectrometry (ES-MS, Agilent 6130 Quadrupole LC/MS Electrospray System, Kyoto University). Aqueous solutions are pumped ($100 \mu\text{L min}^{-1}$) into the spraying chamber of the mass spectrometer through a grounded stainless steel needle ($100 \mu\text{m}$ bore) coaxial with a sheath issuing nebulizer $\text{N}_2(\text{g})$ at high gas velocity ($v_g \sim 160 \text{ m/s}$).²⁶ The surface specificity of our experiments had been previously demonstrated by showing that (i) anion signal intensities I in the mass spectra of *equimolar* salt solutions adhere to a normal Hofmeister series rather than being identical, e.g., $I(\text{ClO}_4^-) > I(\text{I}^-) > I(\text{Br}^-)$,^{27,34–37} (ii) the depth of the sampled interfacial layers can be controlled by varying the nebulizer gas velocity v_g , as evidenced by the fact that ion signal intensities *and* relative anion surface affinities increase with higher gas velocities v_g and extrapolate to zero as $v_g \rightarrow 0$,²⁶ and (iii) they allow the detection of products of gas–liquid reactions that could only be formed at the air–water interface.^{28,30,31,33,38} Note that the products we observe are formed when gaseous reactants collide with the intact aqueous jets as they emerge from the nozzle, i.e.,

before jets are broken up into submicrometer droplets by the nebulizer gas (see the Supporting Information for further details).³³

Ozone is produced from ultrapure $\text{O}_2(\text{g})$ (purity $>99.998\%$) flowing at 1.0 standard liters per minute through a high-pressure discharge ozonizer (KSQ-050, Kotohira). The $\text{O}_3(\text{g})$ concentration is quantified online by a UV–vis absorption spectrophotometry at 250 and 300 nm, (absorption cross sections $\sigma = 1.1 \times 10^{-17}$ and $3.9 \times 10^{-19} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ molecule}^{-1}$, respectively)³⁹ prior to entering the reaction chamber (Figure 1). Throughout, the reported $[\text{O}_3(\text{g})]$ values correspond to the concentrations actually sensed by the microjets in the reaction chamber, which are ~ 11 times smaller than those determined upstream UV absorbances due to dilution by the drying gas. $\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})$ is carried into the chamber via a known flow of $\text{N}_2(\text{g})$ saturated by sparging milli-Q water (Figure 1). We assume that the chamber was saturated with $\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})$ at 298 K throughout.

The 266 nm beam emitted by our $\text{Nd}^{3+}:\text{YAG}$ laser setup (LOTIS TII, LS-2131M-10 with a harmonic generator assembly HG-TF, pulse duration $8 \pm 1 \text{ ns}$, 266 nm beam

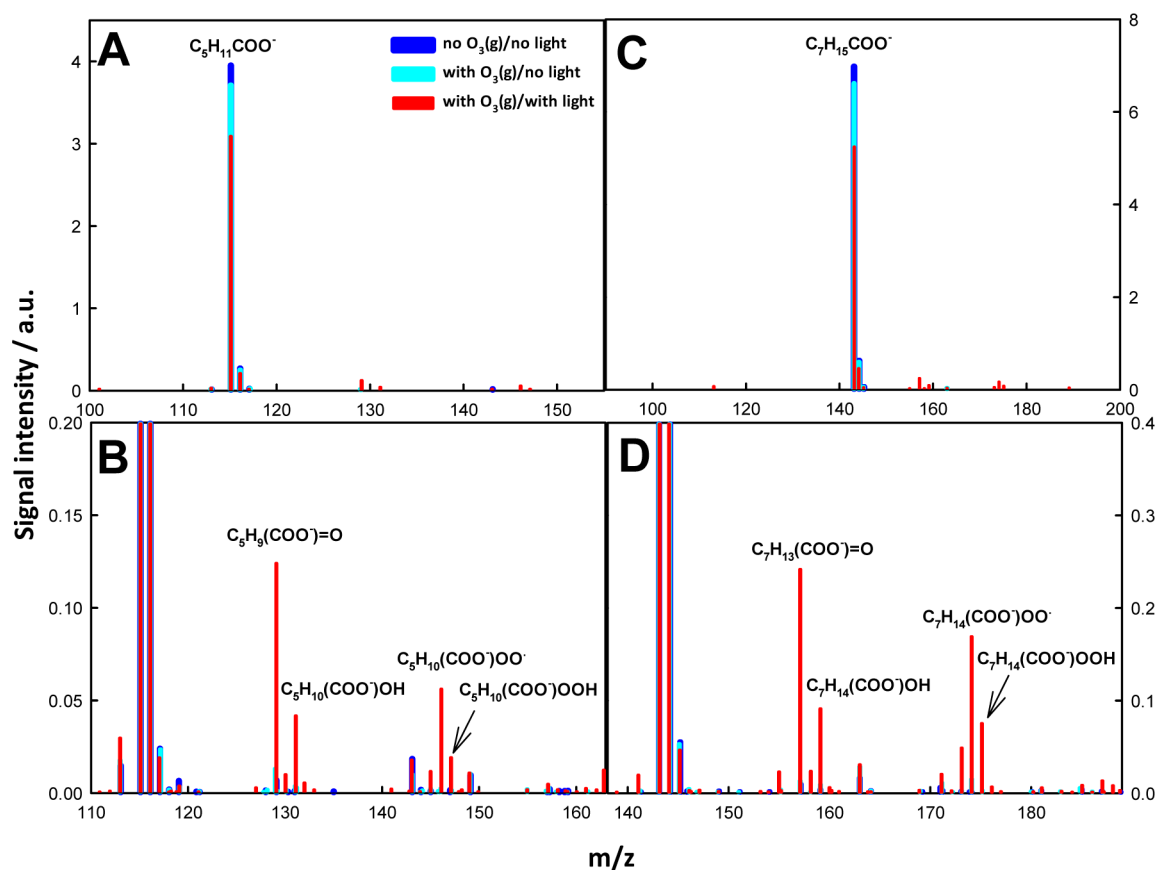


Figure 2. Negative ion electrospray mass spectra of 0.1 mM (pH 4.8) hexanoic acid (A, B) or octanoic acid (C, D) microjets exposed to 650 ppmv $\text{O}_3(\text{g})$ in $\text{O}_2(\text{g})/\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})/\text{N}_2(\text{g})$ mixtures at 1 atm and 298 K. Cyan: laser off. Red: under 40 mJ, ~ 8 ns pulses (at 10 Hz) of 266 nm radiation. 1 ppmv = 2.46×10^{13} molecules cm^{-3} .

diameter 10.0 ± 1.0 mm, beam divergence ≤ 1.5 mrad, 10 Hz) is used to generate $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$ at or near the gas–liquid interface (Figure 1). The 266 nm laser beam energies are measured with a power meter (OPHIR, NOVA II, sensor:3A-P-V1-ROHS). The 266 nm beam energy can be tuned up to 40 mJ pulse $^{-1}$. The laser beam is introduced into the spraying chamber via quartz prisms (synthetic fused silica, refractive index $n_d = 1.458$) on kinematic prism holders (SIGMAKOKI Co., Ltd., Japan) and finely aligned with a He–Ne laser (Melles Griot, 05-LHP-111, 632.8 nm CW) beam, which becomes visible as it is scattered upon hitting the liquid jet.

Experimental conditions were as follows: drying gas flow rate, 13 L min^{-1} ; drying gas temperature, 340 $^{\circ}\text{C}$; inlet voltage, + 3.5 kV relative to ground; fragmentor voltage value, 80 V. CH_3COOH (purity >99.7%), $\text{C}_5\text{H}_{11}\text{COOH}$ (>99%), and $\text{C}_7\text{H}_{15}\text{COOH}$ (>98%) were purchased from Nacalai Tesque (Kyoto, Japan). D_2O (99.9%) and H_2^{18}O (97%) were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich and Santa Cruz Isotope, respectively. All solutions were prepared in purified water (Resistivity ≥ 18.2 M Ω cm at 298 K) from a Millipore Milli-Q water purification system. The pH of solution was measured by a calibrated pH meter, Horiba LAQUA F-74, before the experiments. All experiments were performed at 298 ± 2 K.

Estimation of $\cdot\text{OH}$ Radical Concentration. The dissociation of $\text{O}_3(\text{g})$ by 266 nm photons into $\text{O}(^1\text{D})$, followed by the reaction of $\text{O}(^1\text{D})$ with $\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})$, in competition with its deactivation by $\text{N}_2(\text{g})$ and $\text{O}_2(\text{g})$ into $\text{O}(^3\text{P})$, promptly yields $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$.⁴⁰ We estimate that under our experimental conditions 0.1–10% $\text{O}_3(\text{g})$ is converted in $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$ (see below). The

concentration of $\cdot\text{OH}$ hitting the microjet is derived from the $\text{O}_3(\text{g})$ absorption cross sections, laser fluence, and reported gas-phase kinetic parameters. Because the number of photons is always larger than the number of $\text{O}_3(\text{g})$ molecules under present conditions, we estimate the initial $\text{O}(^1\text{D})$ concentrations from 266 nm photolysis from Beer's law:

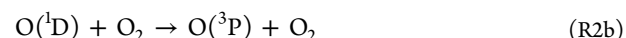
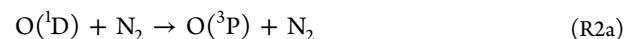
$$\ln(N_0/N) = I_0 \sigma \Phi_{\text{dis}} \quad (\text{E1})$$

$$N = N_0 \exp(-I_0 \sigma \Phi_{\text{dis}}) \quad (\text{E2})$$

where σ is the absorption cross section, Φ_{dis} is the dissociation quantum yield, I_0 is the laser fluence in number of photons per unit area, N_0 is the number of molecules before laser irradiation, and N is the number of molecules after laser irradiation.⁴¹ We derive $N/N_0 \sim 0.5$, meaning $[\text{O}(^1\text{D})]_0 \approx 0.5[\text{O}_3(\text{g})]$ at the highest 266 nm laser pulse energy ~ 40 mJ pulse $^{-1}$. $\text{O}(^1\text{D})$ reacts with excess $\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})$ ($[\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})] \sim 7.6 \times 10^{17}$ molecules cm^{-3}) to form $\cdot\text{OH}$ radical within ~ 6 ns (from $k_1 = 2.2 \times 10^{-10}$ $\text{cm}^3 \text{ molecule}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$), reaction R1,^{39,42}



or is competitively deactivated by N_2 and O_2 , reactions R2a and R2b



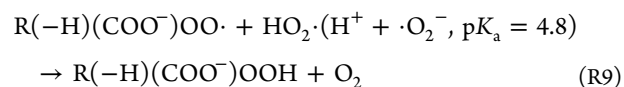
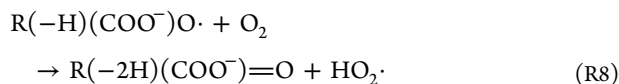
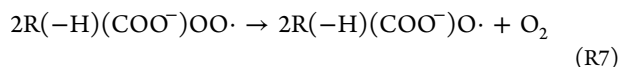
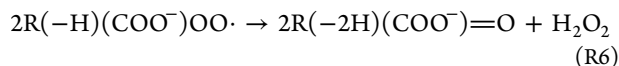
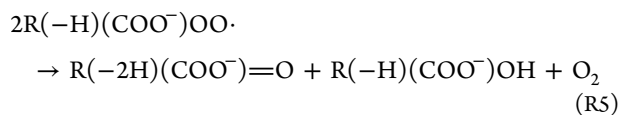
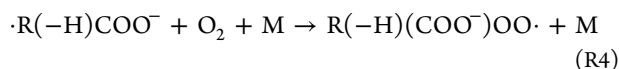
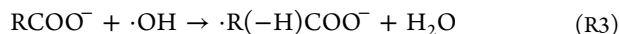
where $k_{2a} = 2.6 \times 10^{-11}$ and $k_{2b} = 4.0 \times 10^{-11}$ $\text{cm}^3 \text{ molecule}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$, respectively.^{39,42} We estimate that $\sim 20\%$ $\text{O}(^1\text{D})$ is

converted into $\cdot\text{OH}$ radicals under present conditions. In this manner, $[\cdot\text{OH}]_0$ can be varied from a few tens of ppbv to 100 ppmv. Note that the reaction of $\text{O}(^1\text{D})$ with $\text{RCOOH}(\text{aq})$ is negligible. By assuming a rate constant for such process as large as $k = 6 \times 10^{-10} \text{ cm}^3 \text{ molecule}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$,⁴³ we estimate that this $\text{O}(^1\text{D})$ reaction channel at $[\text{RCOOH}(\text{aq})] = 0.1 \text{ mM} = 6.02 \times 10^{16} \text{ molecules cm}^{-3}$, is >20 times slower than the gas-phase reactions R1, R2a, and R2b. $\text{O}(^3\text{P})$ is largely consumed by O_2 to regenerate O_3 ($\tau \sim 36 \mu\text{s}$) under present conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 2 shows typical negative ion electrospray mass spectra of 0.1 mM aqueous *n*-hexanoic acid (HA) or *n*-octanoic acid (OA) microjets exposed to $\text{O}_3(\text{g})/\text{O}_2(\text{g})/\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})/\text{N}_2(\text{g})$ mixtures with the 266 nm laser on and off.

Note that at the same 0.1 mM concentration, octanoate ($n\text{-C}_7\text{H}_{15}\text{COO}^-$, R_7COO^-) $m/z = 143$ signals are 1.8 times larger than the $m/z = 115$ hexanoate ($n\text{-C}_5\text{H}_{11}\text{COO}^-$, R_5COO^-) signals (cf. Figure 2A,C), as expected from the direct dependence of anion affinities for the air–water interface on anion size.^{35,44,45} This observation supports the tenet that our experiments effectively sample interfacial layers rather than the bulk liquid, in accordance with previous results.^{26,27,32,34,46,47} Exposure to >600 ppmv $\text{O}_3(\text{g})$ in $\text{O}_2(\text{g})/\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})/\text{N}_2(\text{g})$ does not generate new signals, thereby confirming the inertness of these anions toward O_3 .^{48,49} Then, upon irradiation with 266 nm pulses we observe, as expected, the partial depletion of reactant anions and the formation of new species, which we ascribe to reactions involving $\cdot\text{OH}$. We estimate $[\cdot\text{OH}]_0 \sim 62$ ppmv in the experiments of Figure 2A–D. The molecular identity and progeny of the products can be readily inferred from their mass-to-charge ratios. In Figure 2B, the $m/z = 146 = 115 - 1 + 32$ signal is assigned to peroxy radicals $\text{R}_5(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OO}\cdot$, $m/z = 129 = 146 - 16 - 1$ to $\text{R}_5(-2\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)=\text{O}$ carbonyls, and $m/z = 131 = 146 - 16 + 1$ to $\text{R}_5(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OH}$ alcohols. Similarly, $m/z = 174 = 143 - 1 + 32$ corresponds to $\text{R}_7(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OO}\cdot$, $m/z = 157 = 174 - 16 - 1$ to $\text{R}_7(-2\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)=\text{O}$, and $m/z = 159 = 174 - 16 + 1$ to $\text{R}_7(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OH}$. We emphasize that the same products were observed on aqueous RCOOH microjets in the 0.01–1.0 mM range (Figure S1, Supporting Information). These results are consistent with the following mechanism, reactions R3–R9:



Reaction R3, the initiation step, is an H atom abstraction from the alkyl chain by $\cdot\text{OH}$. The issue of whether (R3) involves the direct participation of $\cdot\text{OH}(\text{g})$ (i.e., an Eley–Rideal mechanism) or an $\cdot\text{OH}$ species already accommodated at the interface (i.e., a Langmuir–Hinshelwood mechanism) is discussed below. Note that O_2 is always in excess ($[\text{O}_2(\text{g})] = 1.9 \times 10^{18} \text{ molecules cm}^{-3}$) over other reactants. The self-reactions of peroxy radical (R5)–(R7) in bulk aqueous media are known to be extremely fast, with typical rate constants $>10^9 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$.⁵⁰ Experiments in D_2O show that the $(\text{M} + 1) = 175$ peak for $\text{R}_7(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OO}\cdot$ is not only the ^{13}C satellite of M but includes a significant contribution from the hydroperoxides $\text{R}_7(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OOH}$ because it partially shifts to $m/z = 176$ upon deuteration (Figure 3).

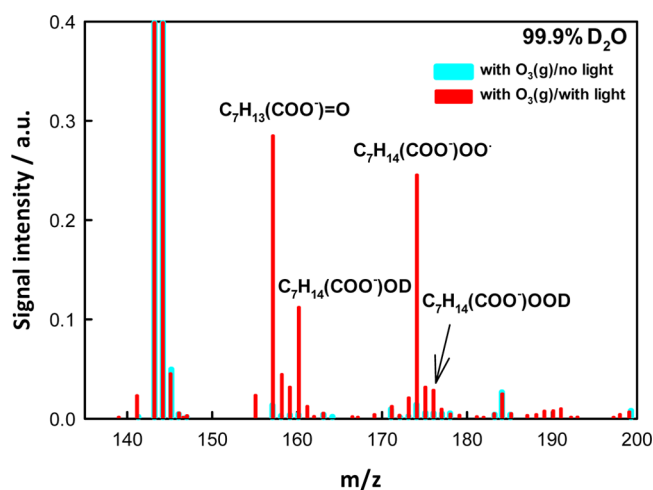


Figure 3. Negative ion electrospray mass spectra of 0.1 mM octanoic acid in 99.9% D_2O microjets exposed to 600 ppmv $\text{O}_3(\text{g})$ in $\text{O}_2(\text{g})/\text{H}_2\text{O}(\text{g})/\text{N}_2(\text{g})$ mixtures at 1 atm and 298 K. Cyan: laser off. Red: under 40 mJ, ~ 8 ns pulses (at 10 Hz) of 266 nm radiation ($[\cdot\text{OH}]_0 \sim 57$ ppmv). $1 \text{ ppmv} = 2.46 \times 10^{13} \text{ molecules cm}^{-3}$.

The alcohols $\text{R}_7(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OH}$, which possess exchangeable hydroxyl H atoms with the solvent, are also converted into $\text{R}_7(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OD}$ in D_2O .

The ensuing reactions R4–R9 are deemed to take place in interfacial layers. Because the peroxy radicals $\text{R}(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OO}\cdot$ cannot abstract H atoms from the reactant $\text{R}(\text{COO}^-)$ for thermochemical reasons because $D(\text{ROO}-\text{H}) \sim 90 \text{ kcal mol}^{-1}$ vs $D(\text{R}-\text{H}) \sim 98 \text{ kcal mol}^{-1}$,⁵¹ we consider that the hydroperoxides $\text{R}(-\text{H})(\text{COO}^-)\text{OOH}$ are produced via reaction R9, which involves $\text{HO}_2\cdot$, $D(\text{OO}-\text{H}) \sim 50 \text{ kcal mol}^{-1}$. This argument is also consistent with kinetic considerations, because radical–radical reactions $\text{RO}_2\cdot + \text{HO}_2\cdot$ are relatively fast ($k > 10^7 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$),⁵⁰ whereas H-abstractions by $\text{RO}_2\cdot$ from C–H bonds are much slower (viz., $k = 0.6 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ for the linoleate peroxy radical + cumene reaction in organic solvent).⁵² $\text{O}(^3\text{P})$ may also abstract H atoms,⁵³ but with rate constants >50 times smaller than those for $\cdot\text{OH}$.⁴² The fate of $\text{O}(^3\text{P})$ is to react with $\text{O}_2(\text{g})$ to regenerate O_3 within 50 μs under present conditions.⁴² Additional experiments in (1:1) $\text{H}_2^{16}\text{O}:\text{H}_2^{18}\text{O}$ mixtures reveal that the O atoms present in the products exclusively arise from gas-phase O-species, because

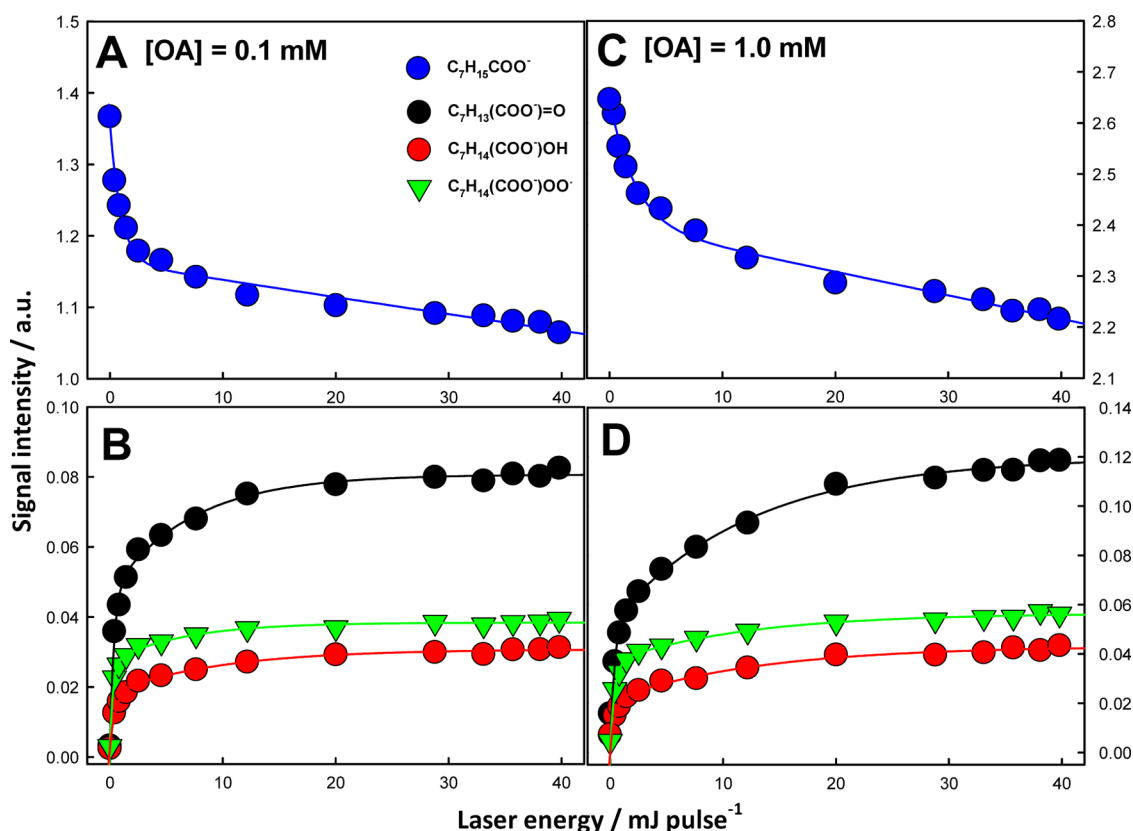


Figure 4. Electrospray mass spectral signal intensities from aqueous 0.1 mM (A, B) or 1.0 mM (C, D) octanoic acid microjets exposed to O₃(g)/O₂(g)/H₂O(g)/N₂(g) mixtures, [O₃(g)] ~ 600 ppmv, irradiated with 266 nm laser beams as functions of laser energy (in mJ pulse⁻¹). 1 ppmv = 2.46 × 10¹³ molecules cm⁻³.

they do not exchange O with the solvent, as expected from the proposed mechanism and their chemical nature (Figure S2, Supporting Information). We confirmed that reactant depletion and product formation require both the participation of O₃(g) and actinic 266 nm photons (Figure S3, Supporting Information). Because the microjets break up within 10–50 μs after being ejected from the nozzle whereas the laser pulses every 100 ms, we assume the phenomena we observe take place in pristine solutions. Figures 4 and 5 show electrospray mass spectral signals acquired from aqueous 0.1 mM or 1.0 mM OA microjets exposed to irradiated gaseous O₃/O₂/H₂O/N₂ mixtures as functions of laser energy per pulse and [O₃(g)], respectively.

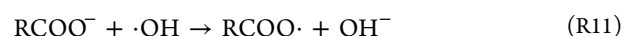
In Figure 4, 1, 5, 10, 20, 30, and 40 mJ pulse⁻¹ laser pulse energies correspond to [·OH]₀ ≈ 2, 9, 18, 33, 46, and 57 ppmv colliding with the air–water interface, respectively. It is apparent that reactant losses and concomitant product formation display biexponential behaviors. Significant initial effects are followed by attenuated responses. We interpret these findings as evidence that ·OH rapidly reacts with, and therefore depletes, alkyl chains in the outermost interfacial layers. Thus, above a certain threshold dose, most ·OH would recombine into H₂O₂ in the outermost layers via reaction R10, whereas a only a small fraction reaches the underlying layers to account for the observed attenuated alkyl depletion.



Because similar behaviors are observed for acetic acid and hexanoic acid (Figure S4 and S5, Supporting Information), we infer that the proposed reaction mechanism applies to all R

groups. The ratio of carbonyls to alcohols, R(–2H)(COO⁻)=O/R(–H)(COO⁻)OH, is larger than 1 under all conditions (Figures 4 and 5). This is taken as evidence of the simultaneous occurrence of the competitive reactions R5, the Russell disproportionation,⁵⁴ vs reaction R6, the Bennett–Summers elimination of H₂O₂.⁵⁵ The observation that the alcohol R(–H)(COO⁻)OH plateaus while the carbonyl R(–2H)(COO⁻)=O keeps increasing as a function of laser energy is consistent with the proposed mechanism, in which the alcohol is produced only from R(–H)(COO⁻)OO· + R(–H)(COO⁻)OO· (R5) whereas the carbonyl is formed not only via (R5) but also from R(–H)(COO⁻)O· via (R7) and (R8).

Total mass balances (TMB) evaluated before and after laser pulses provide further information on the reactions course. We define TMB as the sum of the products mass signal intensities, which include those of the carbonyls, alcohols, peroxy radicals, and hydroperoxides, divided by octanoate losses, [OA]_{without266nm} – [OA]_{with266nm}. We found that TMB ~ 0.5 is nearly constant between 0.01 and 1.0 mM [OA] (Figure S6, Supporting Information). This result implies that ~50% of the products are undetectable via negative ion electrospray mass spectrometry, thereby implying that they escape to gas phase and/or turn neutral. Thus, our results do not exclude the partial fragmentation of reaction intermediates into volatile products either prior to or during detection.¹⁹ We note that neutral products could be formed by electron transfer from the carboxylates to ·OH.⁵⁶



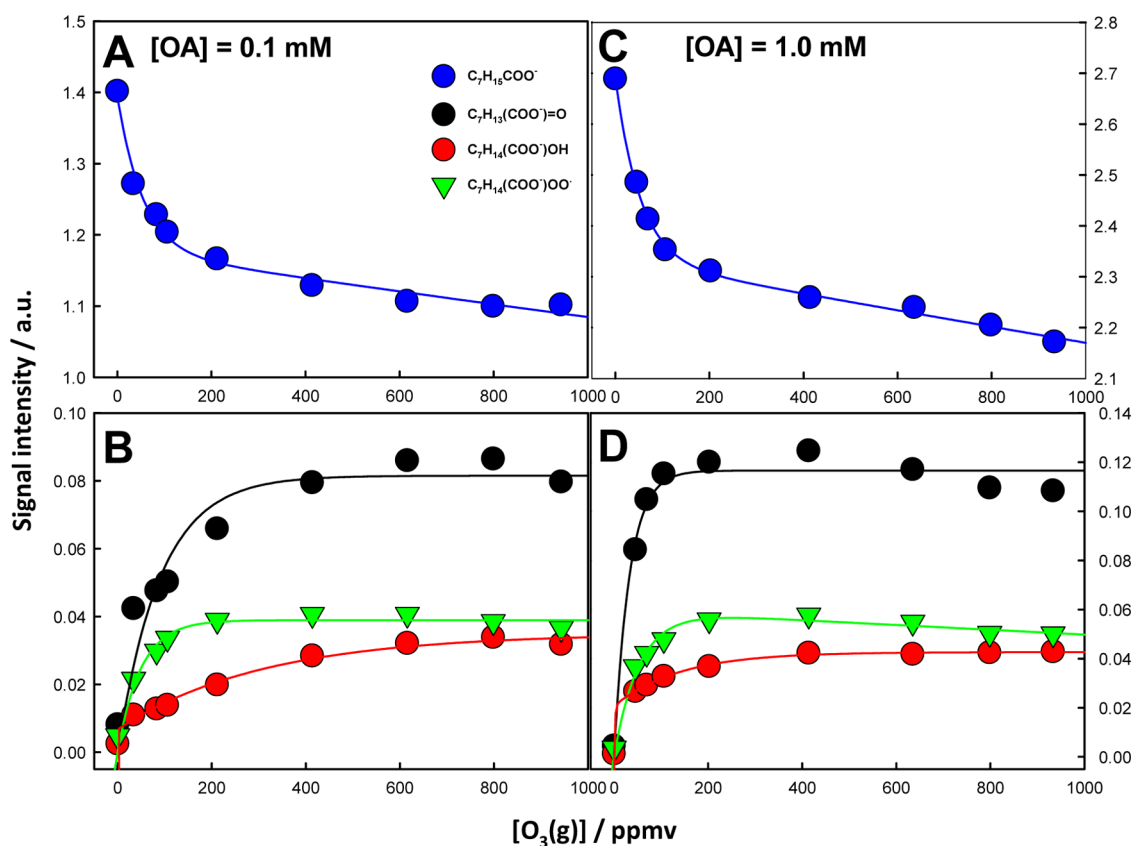


Figure 5. Electro spray mass spectral signal intensities from aqueous 0.1 mM (A, B) or 1.0 mM (C, D) octanoic acid microjets exposed to $O_3(g)/O_2(g)/H_2O(g)/N_2(g)$ mixtures under irradiation by 266 nm laser beams (40 mJ pulse^{-1}) as a function of the $O_3(g)$ mixing ratio; $1 \text{ ppmv} = 2.46 \times 10^{13} \text{ molecules cm}^{-3}$.

Several experimental and theoretical studies have addressed how $\cdot OH(g)$ is incorporated into interfacial gas–liquid layers. Reported bulk mass accommodation coefficient α values for $\cdot OH(g)$ on water vary between 0.0035⁵⁷ and 0.95,⁵⁸ and a surface mass accommodation $S = 0.83$.⁵⁸ Molina et al. reported uptake coefficients $\gamma \sim 0.3$ on reactive humid surfaces of atmospheric importance.⁵⁹ If we assume a high $S \sim 0.5$ value on water, it can be shown that on $<100 \mu\text{M}$ OA solutions, $\cdot OH(g)$ will initially stick to the surface of water and then react with the sparse alkyl chains. The preference of $\cdot OH$ for the interfacial layers over the bulk⁵⁸ should enhance the probability of such events. From the reported adsorption isotherms of OA at the air–water interface,⁶⁰ at $50 \mu\text{M}$ a surface excess $\Gamma \sim 2 \times 10^{-11} \text{ mol cm}^{-2} = 1.2 \times 10^{13} \text{ molecules cm}^{-2}$ and a surface demand per molecule $A_c \sim 3 \times 10^{-15} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ molecule}^{-1}$, lead to a fractional surface coverage of $\theta \sim 3\%$. Even at $500 \mu\text{M}$, where $\theta \sim 70\%$, the surface is not saturated with alkyl chains. By assuming that the radius of a water molecule is $1.4 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}$, a coverage of $\theta \sim 3\%$ implies that OA molecules at the interface are separated on average by $\sim 4 \times 10^{-7} \text{ cm}$. This is the minimal separation at which the $R_7(-H)(COO^-)OO^\bullet$ radical pairs could be formed on the surface via reactions R3 and R4. By assuming a surface diffusion coefficient $D = 2 \times 10^{-6} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ s}^{-1}$,^{61,62} proximal peroxy radicals would encounter and react via reactions R5–R7 in $0.04 \mu\text{s}$, which is about 10^3 times shorter than the lifetime of the microjets on which they reside. Furthermore, because the maximum extent of OA depletion is $\sim 20\%$ at both 0.1 mM and 1.0 mM, we infer that there is always an excess of $\cdot OH$ available in the outermost interfacial layers. In a plausible scenario a constant fraction of OA

partitions to such layers, regardless of its total concentration, and all such fraction ultimately reacts with excess $\cdot OH$. Thus, our results are consistent with a Langmuir–Hinshelwood mechanism rather than an Eley–Rideal mechanism, in agreement with previous studies.^{1,19,63}

CONCLUSION

Summing up, we have shown how our novel experimental setup, which combines laser flash photolytic generation of gaseous reactants and surface-sensitive electro spray ionization mass spectrometric detection, lends itself to the study of fast reactions of very reactive, short-lived gas-phase radical species with a wide variety of substrates at the air–water interface. These experiments are conducted under ambient temperature and pressure, in solutions covering a wide concentration range down to the micromolar and provide the unmatched advantage of simultaneous, unambiguous, and mass-based in situ identification of products and intermediates. In this manner, we were able to detect, for the first time, peroxy and peroxide species in the initial oxidation of organic substrates on aqueous surfaces.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

Additional data and experimental details. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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