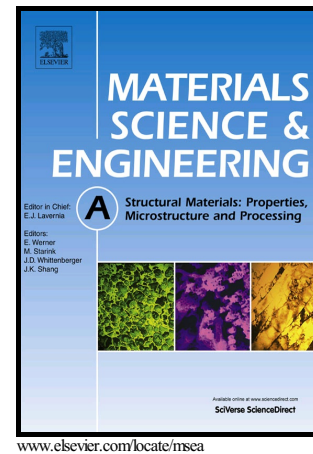


# Author's Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0921-5093(18)30563-X  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.msea.2018.04.065>  
Reference: MSA36385

To appear in: *Materials Science & Engineering A*

Received date: 11 February 2018  
Revised date: 13 April 2018  
Accepted date: 16 April 2018

Cite this article as: X.Z. Wei, Q. Zhou, K.W. Xu, P. Huang, F. Wang and T.J. Lu, Enhanced hardness via interface alloying in nanoscale Cu/Al multilayers, *Materials Science & Engineering A*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.msea.2018.04.065>

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# Enhanced hardness via interface alloying in nanoscale Cu/Al multilayers

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## Abstract

Ultrahigh hardness (yield strength) was achieved in magnetron sputtering nanoscale Cu/Al multilayers upon annealing. The microstructure and mechanical properties of the multilayers were systematically investigated by X-ray diffraction, transmission electron microscopy, energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy and nanoindentation. Annealing promoted diffusion of Cu and Al atoms in the interfaces and the sharp interface turned to mix, resulting in the formation of Cu/Al intermetallic compounds and its deformation at nanoscale. The Cu/Al intermetallic compounds mainly including Al<sub>2</sub>Cu grew toward to Al layers and would reducing the effective length between the reduced adjacent layers. As the annealing temperature was increased from 100°C to 500°C, various kinds and larger size Cu/Al intermetallic compounds emerged, causing the hardness to first increase, reaching an unusually high peak (never reached before in other thin metallic multilayer systems), and then remain

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