The introduction of conjugated isolation groups into the common acceptor cyanoacrylic acid: an efficient strategy to suppress the charge recombination in dye sensitized solar cells, and the dramatically improved efficiency from 5.89% to 9.44%

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Contents

1. Additional graphs .................................................................................................................................2

   Chart S1. Chemical structures and efficiencies of SM315, C288, and C275. .........................2

   Figure S1. Cyclic voltammograms of LI-75–LI-78 in CH2Cl2. ..................................................3

   Figure S2. Spectra of monochromatic IPCE for DSCs based on LI-75–LI-78 with CDCA. .................................................................3

   Figure S3. J–V characteristics of DSCs measured at simulated 100 mW cm⁻² AM 1.5 conditions with CDCA. .................................................................3

2. Experimental details ............................................................................................................................4

   2.1 Instrumentation .........................................................................................................................4

   2.2 Materials .........................................................................................................................................4

   2.3 Device fabrication ......................................................................................................................11

   2.4 Photovoltaic properties measurements ................................................................................12

3. Reference .............................................................................................................................................13
1. Additional graphs

**Chart S1.** Chemical structures and efficiencies of SM315, C288, and C275.
**Figure S1.** Cyclic voltammograms of LI-75–LI-78 in CH2Cl2.

**Figure S2.** Spectra of monochromatic IPCE for DSCs based on LI-75–LI-78 with CDCA.

**Figure S3.** $J–V$ characteristics of DSCs measured at simulated 100 mW cm$^{-2}$ AM 1.5 conditions with CDCA.
2. Experimental details

2.1 Instrumentation

$^1$H and $^{13}$C NMR spectroscopy study was conducted with a Varian Mercury 300 or 400 spectrometer or using tetramethylsilane (TMS; $\delta = 0$ ppm) as internal standard. HRMS (ESI) spectra were measured on a Finnigan LCQ advantage mass spectrometer. UV-visible spectra were obtained using a Shimadzu UV-2550 spectrometer. Electrochemical cyclic voltammetry was performed with a CHI 660 voltammetric analyzer with Pt disk, Pt plate, and Ag/Ag$^+$ electrode as working electrode, counter electrode, and reference electrode, respectively, in nitrogen-purged anhydrous CH$_2$Cl$_2$ with tetrabutylammonium hexafluorophosphate (TBAPF$_6$) as the supporting electrolyte (scanning rate: 100 mV/s). The ferrocene/ferrocenium redox couple was used for potential calibration. Elemental analyses were performed with a 73 CARLOERBA-1106 microelemental analyzer.

2.2 Materials

Tetrahydrofuran (THF) was dried over and distilled from K-Na alloy under an atmosphere of dry Argon. Compound 1$^{[1]}$ and 2-(5-bromothiophen-2-yl)acetonitrile$^{[2]}$ were prepared according to literature methods. Commercially available reagents were used as received.

**Synthesis of compound 2**

Under an atmosphere of nitrogen, to a mixture of 4,7-dibromobenzo[c][1,2,5]thiadiazole (882 mg, 3.0 mmol), compound 1 (1.14 g, 2.0 mmol) and Pd(PPh$_3$)$_4$ (0.05 eq) in THF (30 mL) was added a solution of K$_2$CO$_3$ (2.0 M, 5 mL) in water, the reaction solution was refluxed overnight.
Then the reaction mixture was poured into water, extracted with CH$_2$Cl$_2$ and dried over anhydrous Na$_2$SO$_4$. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel (petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 50/1) to give compound 2 as a red oil (910 mg, 69%). $^1$H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl$_3$) $\delta$ (ppm): 7.88 (d, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.74 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.51 (d, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.13 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 7.03 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 6.86 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 3.95 (t, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 4H, -OCH$_2$-), 1.81-1.74 (m, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.47 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.37-1.35 (m, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.92 (t, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 6H, -CH$_3$).

**Synthesis of compound 3**

Under an atmosphere of nitrogen, to a mixture of compound 2 (882 mg, 3.0 mmol) and Pd(PPh$_3$)$_4$ (0.05 eq) in THF (20 mL) was added a solution of K$_2$CO$_3$ (2.0 M, 5 mL) in water. Then the reaction solution was heated at 45 $^\circ$C for 0.5 h, followed by the addition of a solution of 5-formylthiophene-2-boronic acid (248 mg, 1.59 mmol) in THF (10 mL). The resulting reaction solution was refluxed overnight. Then the reaction mixture was poured into water, extracted with CH$_2$Cl$_2$ and dried over anhydrous Na$_2$SO$_4$. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel (petroleum ether/ethyl acetate/CHCl$_3$ = 15/1/5) to give compound 3 as a red oil (360 mg, 49%). $^1$H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl$_3$) $\delta$ (ppm): 9.97 (s, 1H, -CHO), 8.21 (d, $J = 3.9$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 8.04 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.85-7.82 (m, 3H, ArH), 7.71 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.13 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 7.04 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 6.86 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 3.95 (t, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 4H, -OCH$_2$-), 1.81-1.74 (m, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.47 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.35 (s, br, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.91 (m, 6H, -CH$_3$).

**Synthesis of dye LI-75**
Under an atmosphere of nitrogen, a solution of compound 3 (230 mg, 0.33 mmol), cyanoacrylic acid (85 mg, 1.0 mmol) and piperidine (0.1 mL) in the mixture of THF (4 mL) and CH$_3$CN (8 mL) was refluxed overnight. Then the mixture was poured into a solution of HCl (1.0 M, 20 mL) and stirred for 0.5 h. The resulting solution was extracted with CH$_2$Cl$_2$ and dried over anhydrous Na$_2$SO$_4$. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel (CHCl$_3$/methanol = 20/1) to give dye **LI-75** as a black solid (190 mg, 75%). $^1$H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-$d_6$) δ (ppm): 8.33 (s, 1H, -CH=), 8.24-8.22 (m, 2H, ArH), 7.94 (d, J = 3.6 Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.90-7.83 (m, 3H, ArH), 7.08 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 4H, ArH), 6.93 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 4H, ArH), 6.86 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H, ArH), 3.94 (t, J = 6.3 Hz, 4H, -OCH$_2$-), 1.72-1.68 (m, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.41 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.30 (s, br, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.88 (t, J = 6.6 Hz, 6H, -CH$_3$). $^{13}$C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-$d_6$) δ (ppm): 164.82, 155.87, 153.22, 152.16, 149.04, 146.40, 144.30, 139.74, 137.59, 137.07, 133.28, 130.04, 127.72, 127.54, 127.28, 126.36, 123.14, 118.66, 117.93, 115.62, 103.33, 68.01, 31.50, 29.20, 25.68, 22.53, 14.25. HRMS (m/z): [M-H] calcd for C$_{44}$H$_{43}$N$_4$O$_4$S$_2$, 755.2726; Found, 755.2731. Anal. Calcd for C$_{44}$H$_{44}$N$_4$O$_4$S$_2$: C, 69.81; H, 5.86; N, 7.40. Found: C, 69.51; H, 6.28; N, 7.43.

**Synthesis of compound 4**

Under an atmosphere of nitrogen, a solution of compound 3 (207 mg, 0.30 mmol), methyl-4-(cyanomethyl)benzoate (279 mg, 1.59 mmol) and piperidine (0.1 mL) in the mixture of THF (4 mL) and CH$_3$CN (8 mL) was refluxed overnight. Then the solution was diluted with CH$_2$Cl$_2$ (50 mL), washed with water and dried over anhydrous Na$_2$SO$_4$. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel (petroleum ether/DCM = 1/2) to give
compound 4 as a red solid (220 mg, 87%). $^1$H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl$_3$) $\delta$ (ppm): 8.23 (d, $J = 3.6$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 8.10 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 8.03 (d, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.84 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.79-7.68 (m, 5H, ArH and –CH=), 7.13 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 7.05 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 6.86 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 3.97-3.93 (m, 7H, -OCH$_2$- and -COOCH$_3$), 1.81-1.74 (m, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.47 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.37-1.35 (m, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.92 (t, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 6H, -CH$_3$).

**Synthesis of dye LI-76**

Under an atmosphere of nitrogen, to a solution of compound 4 (127 mg, 0.15 mmol) in THF (15 mL) was added a solution of NaOH (60 mg, 1.5 mmol) in ethanol (3 mL). The resulting solution was refluxed overnight. Then the solvent was removed under reduced pressure and the solid was dissolved in CHCl$_3$ (50 mL). The solution was poured into a solution of HCl (1.0 M, 20 mL) and stirred for 0.5 h. The mixture was extracted with CHCl$_3$ and dried over anhydrous Na$_2$SO$_4$. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel (CHCl$_3$/methanol = 20/1) to give dye LI-76 as a black solid (115 mg, 92%). $^1$H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-$d_6$) $\delta$ (ppm): 8.42 (s, 1H, -CH=), 8.20-8.18 (m, 2H, ArH), 8.02 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.88-7.82 (m, 6H, ArH), 7.06 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 6.92 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 6.84 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 3.93 (t, $J = 6.3$ Hz, 4H, -OCH$_2$-), 1.72-1.67 (m, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.41 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.30 (s, br, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.88 (s, br, 6H, -CH$_3$). $^{13}$C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-$d_6$) $\delta$ (ppm): 167.18, 155.78, 153.44, 152.32, 149.00, 144.64, 139.73, 137.77, 137.62, 135.66, 135.08, 133.31, 130.88, 130.20, 129.73, 127.58, 127.49, 127.08, 126.88, 126.12, 125.19, 123.39, 118.73, 117.79, 115.33, 105.86, 68.02, 31.43, 29.15, 25.60, 22.45, 14.06. HRMS ($m/z$): [M]$^+$ calcd for C$_{50}$H$_{48}$N$_4$O$_4$S$_2$,
832.3117; Found, 832.3166. Anal. Calcd for C_{96}H_{48}N_{4}O_{4}S_{2}: C, 72.09; H, 5.81; N, 6.73. Found: C, 71.92; H, 6.21; N, 7.00.

**Synthesis of compound 5**

To a solution of compound 3 (340 mg, 0.49 mmol) and 2-(5-bromothiophen-2-yl)acetonitrile (149 mg, 0.74 mmol) in THF (6 mL) was added a solution of NaOH (40 mg, 1.0 mmol) in ethanol (2 mL). The resulting solution was stirred at room temperature overnight. The solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The residue was dissolved in CHCl_3 (50 mL), washed with water and dried over anhydrous Na_2SO_4. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel (petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 15/1) to give compound 5 as a black solid (260 mg, 60%). ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 8.20 (d, J = 3.9 Hz, 1H, ArH), 8.01 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.83 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.70-7.68 (m, 2H, ArH), 7.37 (s, 1H, -CH=), 7.14-7.12 (m, 5H, ArH), 7.06-7.03 (m, 3H, ArH), 6.86 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 4H, ArH), 3.95 (t, J = 6.6 Hz, 4H, -OCH_2-), 1.81-1.74 (m, 4H, -CH_2-), 1.47 (s, br, 4H, -CH_2-), 1.35 (s, br, 8H, -CH_2-), 0.92 (t, J = 6.3 Hz, 6H, -CH_3).

**Synthesis of compound 6**

Compound 6 was prepared according to the similar procedure as described for compound 2 (150 mg, 77%). ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 8.22 (d, J = 3.9 Hz, 1H, ArH), 8.02-8.00 (m, 3H, ArH), 7.83 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.70-7.62 (m, 4H, ArH), 7.52 (s, 1H, -CH=), 7.36-7.35 (m, 2H, ArH), 7.12 (s, br, 4H, ArH), 7.06 (s, br, 2H, ArH), 6.86 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 4H, ArH), 3.95
(s, br, 4H, -OCH$_2$-), 1.81-1.77 (m, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.62 (s, 9H, -CH$_3$), 1.47 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.35 (s, br, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.92 (s, br, 6H, -CH$_3$).

**Synthesis of dye LI-77**

A solution of compound 6 (75 mg, 0.08 mmol) in the mixture of CH$_2$Cl$_2$ (10 mL) and CF$_3$COOH (1 mL) was stirred at room temperature overnight. Then the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The solid was dissolved in CH$_2$Cl$_2$ (50 mL), washed with water and dried over anhydrous Na$_2$SO$_4$. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel (CHCl$_3$/methanol = 20/1) to give dye LI-77 as a black solid (66 mg, 93%). $^1$H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-$d_6$) $\delta$ (ppm): 8.14-8.11 (m, 2H, ArH), 7.99 (s, 1H, ArH), 7.94 (d, $J$ = 7.2 Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.83-7.73 (m, 6H, ArH), 7.65 (s, 1H, ArH), 7.38 (s, 1H, -CH=), 7.04 (d, $J$ = 8.1 Hz, 4H, ArH), 6.91 (d, $J$ = 8.1 Hz, 4H, ArH), 6.82 (d, $J$ = 7.8 Hz, 2H, ArH), 3.92 (s, br, 4H, -OCH$_2$-), 1.70 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.40 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.30 (s, br, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.88 (s, br, 6H, -CH$_3$).

$^{13}$C NMR (100 MHz, THF-$d_8$) $\delta$ (ppm): 167.11, 157.08, 154.71, 153.61, 150.23, 145.35, 144.29, 141.14, 140.65, 139.07, 138.21, 134.90, 134.40, 132.58, 131.28, 131.12, 130.73, 129.07, 128.70, 128.53, 127.90, 127.70, 127.04, 126.50, 125.89, 124.72, 119.99, 117.26, 116.05, 103.04, 68.76, 32.60, 30.32, 26.76, 23.55, 14.42. HRMS (m/z): [M+H]$^+$ calcd for C$_{54}$H$_{51}$N$_4$O$_4$S$_3$, 915.3072; Found, 915.3076. Anal. Calcd for C$_{54}$H$_{50}$N$_4$O$_4$S$_3$: C, 70.87; H, 5.51; N, 6.12. Found: C, 71.25; H, 5.72; N, 6.19.

**Synthesis of compound 7**
Compound 7 was prepared according to the similar procedure as described for compound 5 (520 mg, 96%). $^1$H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl$_3$) $\delta$ (ppm): 8.22 (d, $J = 3.9$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 8.02 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.84 (d, $J = 8.7$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.71-7.68 (m, 2H, ArH and -CH=), 7.60-7.52 (m, 4H, ArH), 7.13 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 7.05 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 6.86 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 3.95 (t, $J = 6.3$ Hz, 4H, -OCH$_2$-), 1.81-1.74 (m, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.48 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.37-1.35 (m, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.92 (t, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 6H, -CH$_3$).

**Synthesis of compound 8**

Compound 8 was prepared according to the similar procedure as described for compound 6 (220 mg, 98%). $^1$H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl$_3$) $\delta$ (ppm): 8.22 (d, $J = 3.9$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 8.08 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 8.02 (d, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 1H, ArH), 7.83 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.77-7.74 (m, 4H, ArH), 7.13 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 7.05 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 6.86 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 3.95 (t, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 4H, -OCH$_2$-), 1.81-1.76 (m, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.47 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.40 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.37-1.35 (m, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.92 (s, br, 6H, -CH$_3$).

**Synthesis of dye LI-78**

Dye LI-78 was prepared according to the similar procedure as described for dye LI-77 (130 mg, 92%). $^1$H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-$d_6$) $\delta$ (ppm): 8.33 (s, 1H, ArH), 8.18-8.14 (m, 2H, ArH), 8.02 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.82 (s, br, 10H, ArH and -CH=), 7.04 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 6.91 (d, $J = 8.1$ Hz, 4H, ArH), 6.83 (d, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 2H, ArH), 3.93 (t, $J = 6.3$ Hz, 4H, -OCH$_2$-), 1.72-1.68 (m, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.40 (s, br, 4H, -CH$_2$-), 1.30 (s, br, 8H, -CH$_2$-), 0.88 (s, br, 6H, -CH$_3$).

$^{13}$C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-$d_6$ / THF-$d_8$ = 2/1) $\delta$ (ppm): 168.16, 157.03, 154.59, 153.54,
2.3 Device fabrication

The double layer TiO$_2$ films were prepared according to the reported procedures.$^{[3]}$ Before being immersed into the dye solutions, the films were soaked in the 0.04 M aqueous TiCl$_4$ solution at 70 °C for 30 min. After being washed with water and ethanol, they were heated at 500 °C for 30 min. Subsequently, the films were dipped into a 3×10$^{-4}$ M CH$_3$CN/t-BuOH/CHCl$_3$ (V/V/V = 2/2/1) solution of the sensitizers for 24 h at room temperature. For the coadsorption, chenodeoxycholic acid (CDCA) was added. The counter electrode was made by a conducting glass substrate (FTO, 2.2 mm thickness, 9 ohms/sq, 1.25 cm × 2.0 cm) with dropping a solution of H$_2$PtCl$_6$ in isopropyl alcohol (10 mM, 10 μL), which was drilled two small holes to allow the injection of the liquid electrolyte, followed by heating at 400 °C for 120 min. The dye-loaded TiO$_2$ electrode and Pt counter electrode were assembled into a sealed sandwich-type cell with a Surlyn sheet. The redox electrolyte, which was composed of 0.05 M I$_2$, 0.2 M LiI, 0.6 M DMPII, 0.1 M GuNCS and 0.5 M 4-TBP in acetonitrile, was injected into the cell through a pre-drilled hole at the counter electrode. Finally, the hole was sealed using a Surlyn sheet and a thin glass.
2.4 Photovoltaic properties measurements

Photovoltaic performances were tested under AM 1.5 G simulated sunlight (100 mW cm\(^{-2}\)) provided by a solar simulator ((Model 94023A equipped with a 450W xenon arc lamp, Newport Co.) with a 450 W xenon light source. The light intensity was determined using a Si solar cell (Model 91150, Newport Co.) as a reference. The current-voltage (\(J-V\)) curves of the DSCs were obtained by using a Keithley digital source meter (Model 2400). The electrochemical impedance spectra (EIS) measurement was measured by a Modulab XM PhotoEchem system under dark or 0.5 SUN conditions with a series of applied voltages and recorded over a frequency range from 0.1 Hz to 100 KHz (amplitude: 25 mV). Intensity-modulated photovoltage spectroscopy (IMVS) and charge extraction (CE) method measurement were performed using the same electrochemical workstation. Incident photon-current conversion efficiency (IPCE) was recorded in a solar cell QE/IPCE measurement system equipped (Model 2931-C equipped with a 300W xenon arc lamp, Newport Co.) under irradiation with a motorized monochromator (Oriel). All the measurements mentioned above were taken under ambient conditions.

2.5 IMVS and CE measurements

Intensity-modulated photovoltage spectroscopy (IMVS) was measured by a Modulab XM PhotoEchem system at an open-circuit condition. A white light, controlled by a Labview system, was utilized to obtain the photovoltaic response induced by the modulated light. The modulated light was driven with a 10% AC perturbation current superimposed on a DC current, in the frequency ranging from \(10^{-1}\) to \(10^{5}\) Hz. The CE was performed with the same monochromatic light source. First, the solar cell was illuminated at an open-circuit condition for 10 s to attain a
steady state; then the light source was switched off, and simultaneously, the device was switched to a short-circuit condition for the extraction of the charges generated at that light intensity.

3. Reference

