

## Supplementary Information

### **Incorporation of H<sub>2</sub>O and CO<sub>2</sub> into a BN-embedded**

### **3aH-3a<sup>1</sup>H-acphenanthrylene derivative**

#### **Contents**

1. Synthesis of compounds **2-5** and their spectral data
2. Control experiments
3. Crystallographic details
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## Method

**General.** All reactions were performed under an atmosphere of nitrogen by using standard Schlenk or dry box techniques; solvents were dried over Na metal, K metal or CaH<sub>2</sub>. <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>11</sup>B, <sup>13</sup>C and <sup>19</sup>F spectra were obtained with BRUKER AVANCE III HD 500MHz spectrometer at 298 K. NMR multiplicities are abbreviated as follows: s = singlet, d = doublet, t = triplet, m = multiplet, br = broad signal. Coupling constants *J* are given in Hz. Electrospray ionization (ESI) mass spectra were obtained at the Agilent Q-TOF6510 or Waters Q-ToF Premier Mass Spectrometers. Fourier transform infrared (FT-IR) spectra were recorded on a Bruker ALPHA II FTIR spectrometer. Melting points were measured on a X4 Melting Point apparatus (Beijing Tech, CN) in sealed capillaries and are uncorrected. H<sub>2</sub>O•B(C<sub>6</sub>F<sub>5</sub>)<sub>3</sub><sup>S1</sup> were synthesized according to literature procedures.

## Synthesis of compounds 2-5 and their spectral data

**Compound 2:** 0.428 g (0.5 mmol) **1** were dissolved in toluene (10 mL) and a toluene solution of H<sub>2</sub>O•B(C<sub>6</sub>F<sub>5</sub>)<sub>3</sub> (0.265 g, 0.5 mmol) was added dropwise at -60 °C. The solution turned from yellow to colourless immediately. The solvents were removed under vacuum at low temperature and the residue was washed with n-hexane to afford a pale yellow powder. The resulting solid was re-dissolved with toluene and co-product IPr<sub>2</sub>Me<sub>2</sub>-B(C<sub>6</sub>F<sub>5</sub>)<sub>3</sub> was present as yellow oil at the bottom of reaction flask after an addition of n-hexane. The upper clear solution was collected and vacuumed and the residue was extracted with hot n-hexane to afford a white powder of **2** in 90 % yield (0.311 g).

Mp: 122.1 °C (dec); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ = 7.38 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.26 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.17 (d, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.12 (d, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.01 (d,

*J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H, Ar-*H*), 6.97 (s, 2H, Ar-*H*), 6.92 (s, 1H, Ar-*H*), 6.83 (s, 2H, Ar-*H*), 6.80 (s, 1H, Ar-*H*), 6.76 (d, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 1H, Ar-*H*), 6.08 (s, 1H, Ar-*H*), 5.29 (s, 1H, C-*H*), 2.71 (s, 1H, O-*H*), 2.34 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.30 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.23 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.20 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.99 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.98 (s, 4H, CH<sub>3</sub> + CH), 1.93 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.90 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.89 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.75 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.50 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.42 (s, 1H, N-*H*), 0.69 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ = 145.5 (C<sup>q</sup>), 145.1 (C<sup>q</sup>), 144.0 (C<sup>q</sup>), 143.9 (C<sup>q</sup>), 140.4 (C<sup>q</sup>), 140.1 (C<sup>q</sup>), 139.2 (C<sup>q</sup>), 137.2 (C<sup>q</sup>), 137.2 (C<sup>q</sup>), 136.8 (C<sup>q</sup>), 136.7 (C<sup>q</sup>), 136.7 (C<sup>q</sup>), 136.25 (C<sup>q</sup>), 135.6 (C<sup>q</sup>), 135.4 (C<sup>q</sup>), 135.2 (C<sup>q</sup>), 135.0 (C<sup>q</sup>), 129.91 (C<sup>q</sup>), 129.0 (CH), 129.0 (CH), 128.9 (CH), 128.6 (CH), 128.5 (CH), 128.5 (CH), 128.1 (CH), 128.0 (CH), 128.0 (CH), 127.9 (CH), 126.8 (CH), 123.8 (C<sup>q</sup>), 121.2 (CH), 60.0 (N-C<sup>q</sup>), 48.2 (B-CH), 30.9 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.1 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 22.1 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.3 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.1 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.0 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.0 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.0 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.0 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 19.9 (CH<sub>3</sub>), B-C was not observed; <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ = 39.3 (br), 24.4 (br); HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd for C<sub>48</sub>H<sub>53</sub>B<sub>2</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O: 695.4344 [(M + H)]<sup>+</sup>; found: 695.4371.

**Compound 3:** 0.428 g (0.5 mmol) **1** were dissolved in toluene (30 mL) and a toluene solution of H<sub>2</sub>O•B(C<sub>6</sub>F<sub>5</sub>)<sub>3</sub> (0.265 g, 0.5 mmol) was added at room temperature. The mixture was stirred for 3.5 h and all volatiles were removed under vacuum. The residue was washed by cold toluene to afford a white solid of **3** (0.212g, 35 %).

Mp: 156.2 °C (dec); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ = 7.45–7.38 (m, 2H, Ar-*H*), 7.26 (d, 2H, Ar-*H*), 7.20 (d, 1H, Ar-*H*), 6.99 (s, 1H, Ar-*H*), 6.86 (s, 2H, Ar-*H*), 6.78 (d, 1H, Ar-*H*), 6.76 (s, 1H, Ar-*H*), 6.71 (m, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 2H, Ar-*H*), 6.48 (s, 1H, Ar-*H*), 5.87 (s, 1H, Ar-*H*), 5.49 (s, 1H, C-*H*), 3.77–3.63 (m, 2H, CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 2.30 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.25 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.24 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.23 (s, 6H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.21 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.94 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.90 (s, 1H, C-*H*), 1.88 (s, 3H,

*CH<sub>3</sub>*), 1.84 (s, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*), 1.79 (s, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*), 1.74 (s, 1H, N-*H*), 1.65 (s, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*), 1.63 (s, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*), 1.59 (s, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*), 1.27 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*), 1.05 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*), 0.81 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*), 0.79 (s, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*), 0.44 (d, *J* = 6.9 Hz, 3H, *CH<sub>3</sub>*); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ = 145.5 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 145.4 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 144.3 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 141.3 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 140.2 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 139.1 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 138.9 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 138.0 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 137.4 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 136.9 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 136.2 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 136.2 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 136.2 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 135.8 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 135.4 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 134.9 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 134.3 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 130.8 (CH), 129.8 (CH), 129.6 (CH), 129.4 (CH), 129.2 (CH), 129.1 (CH), 129.0 (CH), 129.0 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 128.3 (CH), 128.2 (CH), 127.7 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 127.2 (CH), 127.1 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 126.8 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 121.3 (CH), 64.3 (N-*C<sup>q</sup>*), 54.4 (CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 53.5 (CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 29.2 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 24.5 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 22.9 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.9 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.9 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.7 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.4 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.3 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.2 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.1 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 20.9 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 20.7 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 20.6 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 20.5 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 19.5 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 10.7 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 10.4 (CH<sub>3</sub>), B-CH was not observed; <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ = 44.6 (br), 26.5 (br), -3.8 (s); <sup>19</sup>F NMR (471 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ = -135.42 (d, *J* = 21.8 Hz), -163.12 (t, *J* = 20.3 Hz), -166.43 (m); HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd for C<sub>59</sub>H<sub>71</sub>B<sub>2</sub>N<sub>4</sub>: 857.5865 [(M)]<sup>+</sup>; found: 857.5861.

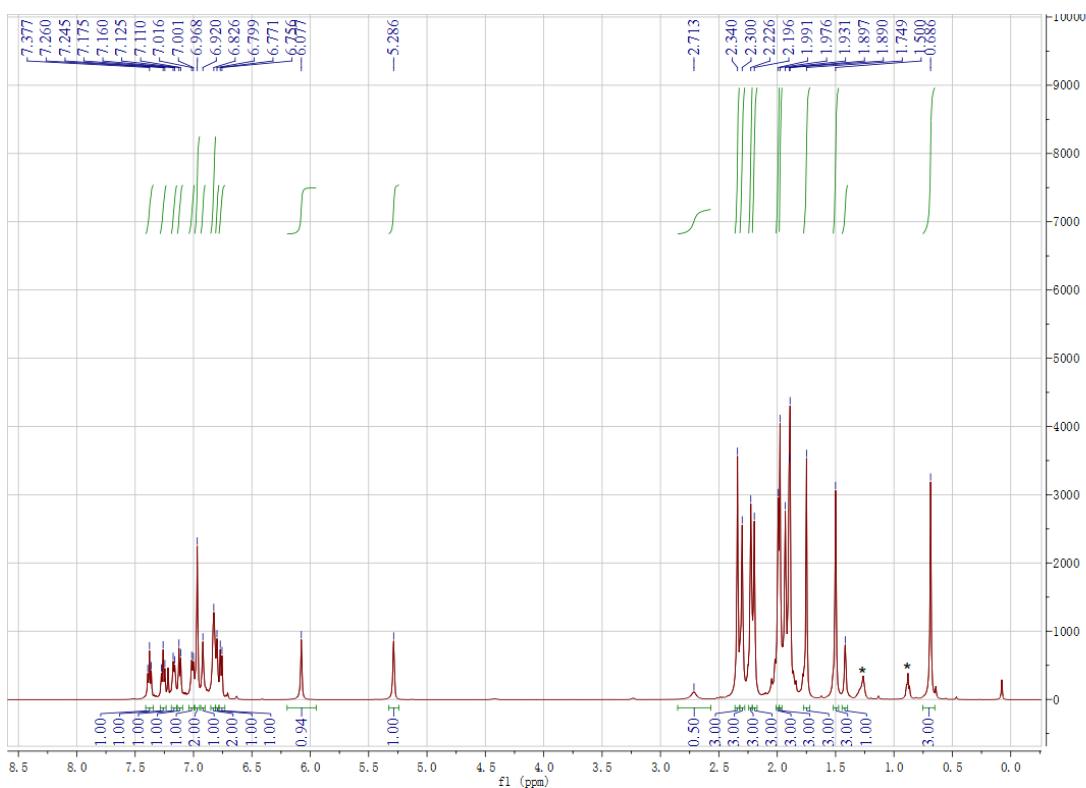
**Compound 4:** 0.428 g (0.5 mmol) **1** were dissolved in toluene (10 mL) and 2 mL of a 1 M THF solution (2 mmol) of H<sub>2</sub>O were added at room temperature. The mixture was stirred overnight and all volatiles were removed under vacuum. The residue was washed by n-hexane to afford a white solid of **4** (0.323 g, 72 %). All the NMR data were same as the reported literature.<sup>S2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>): δ = 7.32 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 2H, Ar-*H*), 7.05 (d, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 4H, Ar-*H*), 6.87 (s, 8H, Ar-*H*), 3.47 (sept, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 2H, CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 2.33 (s, 12H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.25 (s, 24H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.31 (s, 6H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.86 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 12H, CH<sub>3</sub>). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>): δ = 144.3 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 142.2 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 136.9 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 134.7 (*C<sup>q</sup>*), 128.4 (NCHN), 127.9 (CH), 127.6 (CH), 126.8

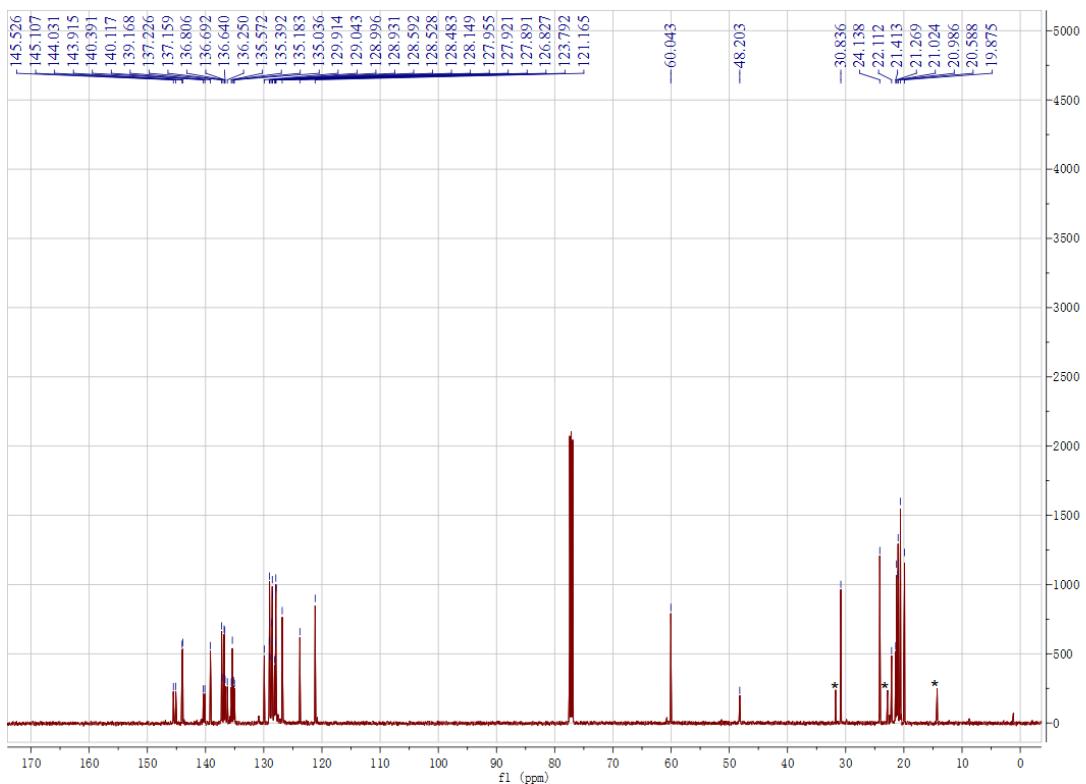
(CH), 50.9 (NCH(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>), 21.6 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.5 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.4 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 7.7 (CH<sub>3</sub>), B-C was not observed; <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>): δ = 30.6 (br).

**Compound 5:** 0.428 g (0.5 mmol) **1** were dissolved in toluene (10 mL) and CO<sub>2</sub> was passed for 5 min at room temperature. After filtration, the filtrate was removed under vacuum and the residue was washed by n-hexane to afford a white solid of **5** in 72 % yield (0.260 g).

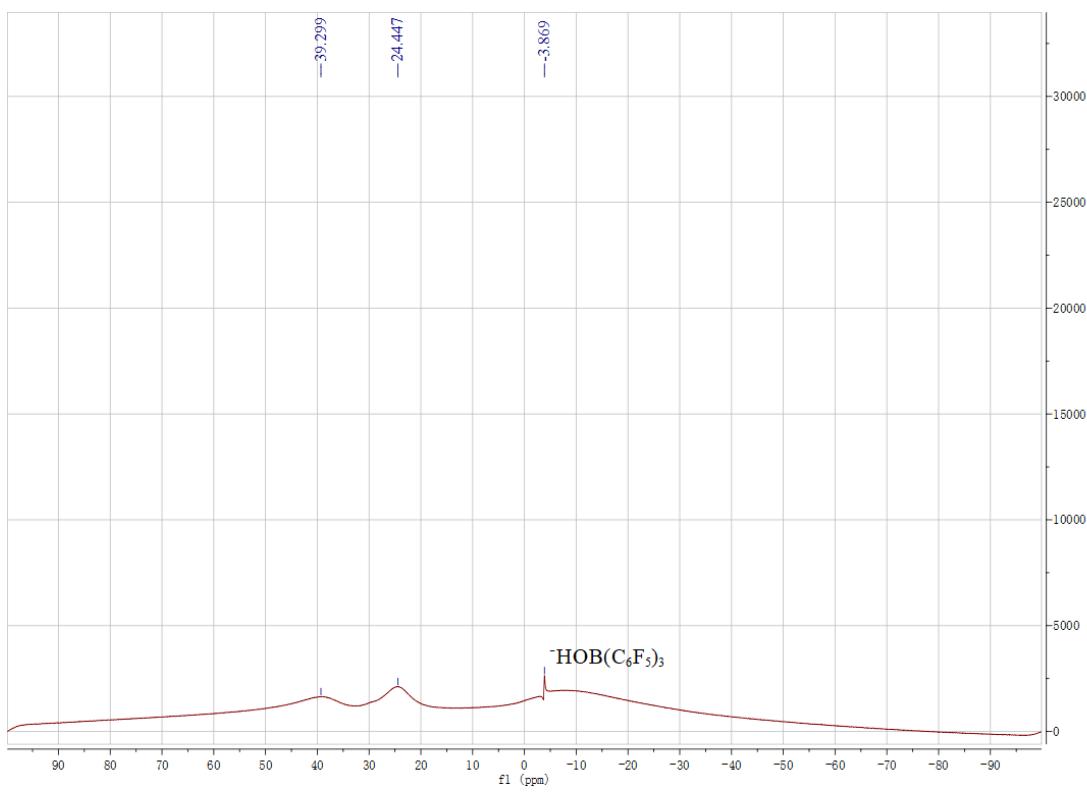
Mp: 154.8 °C (dec); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>): δ = 7.24 – 7.17 (m, 3H, Ar-H), 7.09 (dd, *J* = 7.5, 0.8 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.04 – 7.01 (m, 1H, Ar-H), 6.88 (m, 1H, Ar-H), 6.85 (s, 1H, Ar-H), 6.79 (s, 1H, Ar-H), 6.67 (m, 3H, Ar-H), 6.57 (s, 1H, Ar-H), 4.99 (s, 1H, C-H), 2.45 (s, 1H, C-H), 2.38 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.20 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.18 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.15 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.13 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.09 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.06 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.02 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.80 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.73 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.62 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.13 (s, 3H, CH<sub>3</sub>); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>): δ = 151.7 (CO), 146.4 (C<sup>q</sup>), 145.2 (C<sup>q</sup>), 144.4 (C<sup>q</sup>), 144.2 (C<sup>q</sup>), 139.1 (C<sup>q</sup>), 139.0 (C<sup>q</sup>), 138.8 (C<sup>q</sup>), 138.6 (C<sup>q</sup>), 137.0 (C<sup>q</sup>), 136.9 (C<sup>q</sup>), 136.8 (C<sup>q</sup>), 136.6 (C<sup>q</sup>), 136.2 (C<sup>q</sup>), 135.7 (C<sup>q</sup>), 135.4 (C<sup>q</sup>), 135.0 (C<sup>q</sup>), 131.6 (C<sup>q</sup>), 131.1 (CH), 129.9 (CH), 129.6 (CH), 129.1 (CH), 129.0 (CH), 128.7 (CH), 128.7 (CH), 128.6 (CH), 128.5 (CH), 128.4 (CH), 128.0 (CH), 127.9 (CH), 126.5 (C<sup>q</sup>), 122.9 (CH), 59.0 (C<sup>q</sup>), 56.4 (B-CH), 29.8 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 26.0 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 22.8 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 22.1 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.5 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.2 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.1 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 21.0 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 20.9 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 20.8 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 20.7 (CH<sub>3</sub>), 19.1 (CH<sub>3</sub>), B-C was not observed; <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz, C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>): δ = 48.9 (br), 32.6 (br); HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd for C<sub>49</sub>H<sub>51</sub>B<sub>2</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 721.4137 [(M + H)]<sup>+</sup>; found: 721.4127.



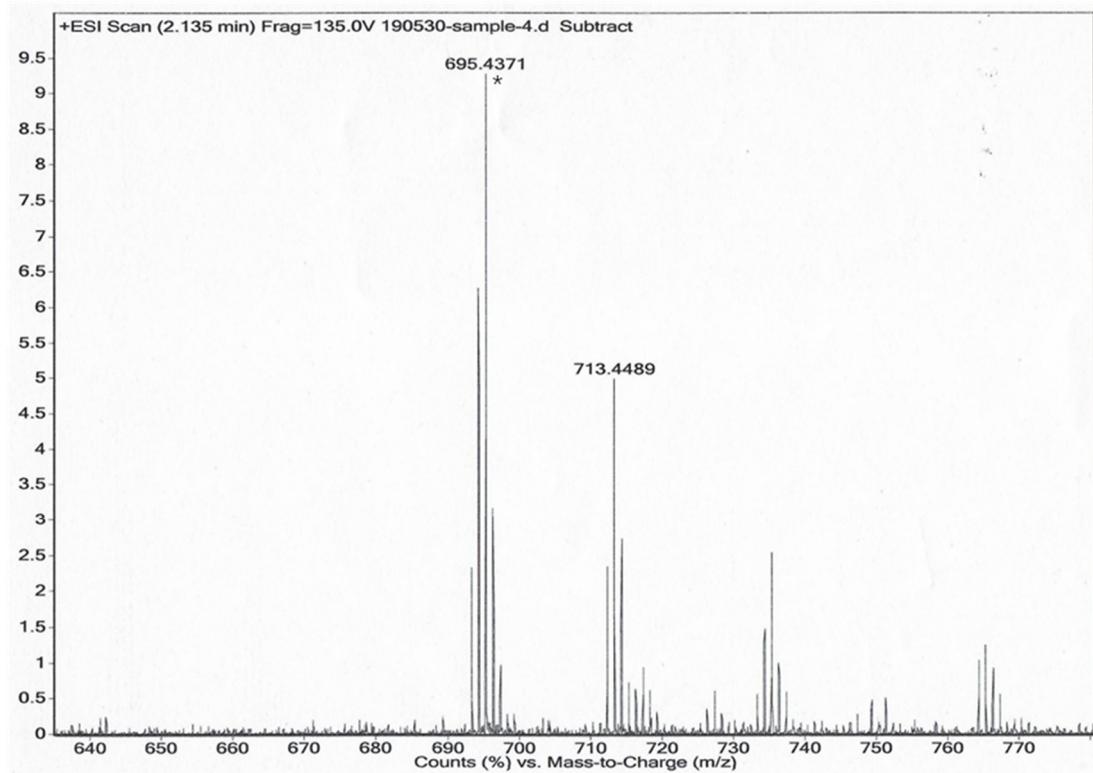
**Fig. S1**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of **2**. (\*n-hexane)



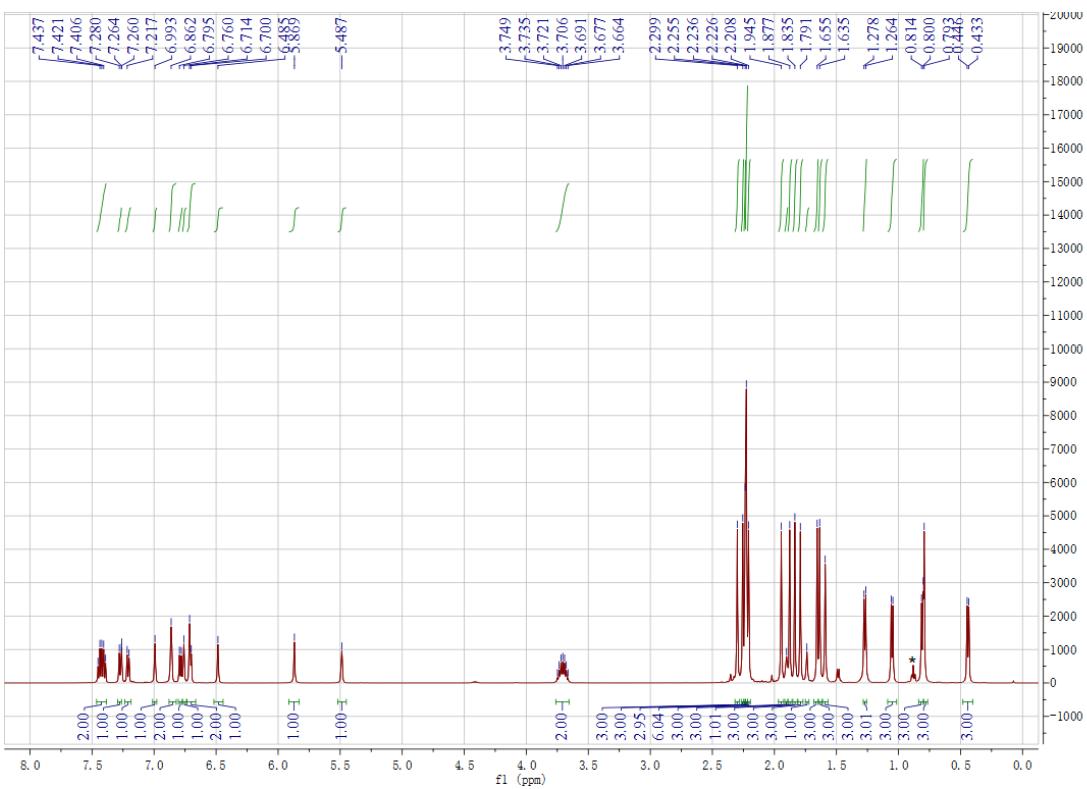
**Fig. S2**  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum of **2**. (\*n-hexane)



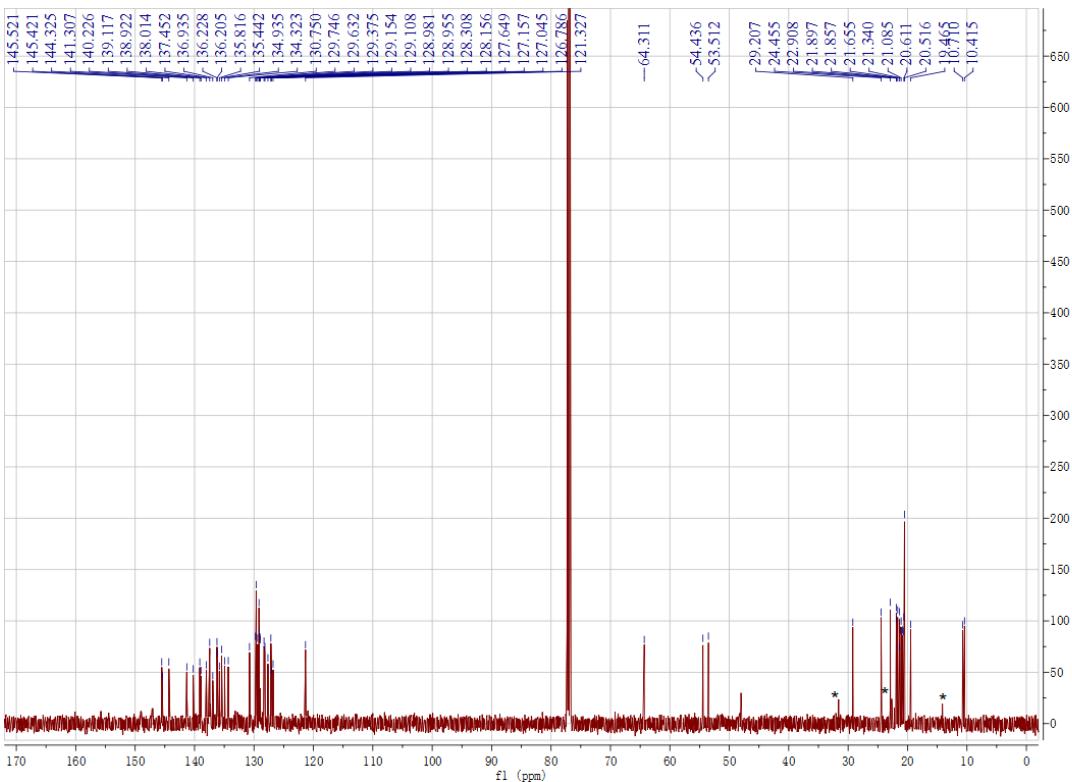
**Fig. S3**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of **2**.



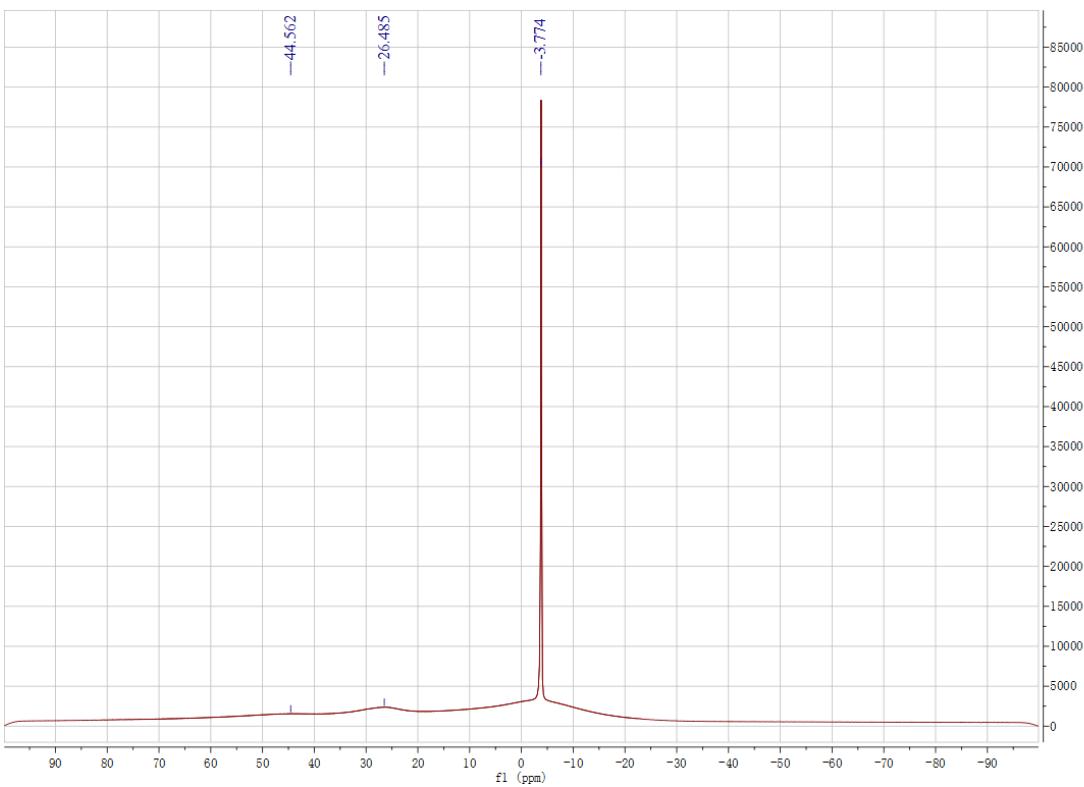
**Fig. S4** HRMS spectrum of **2**.



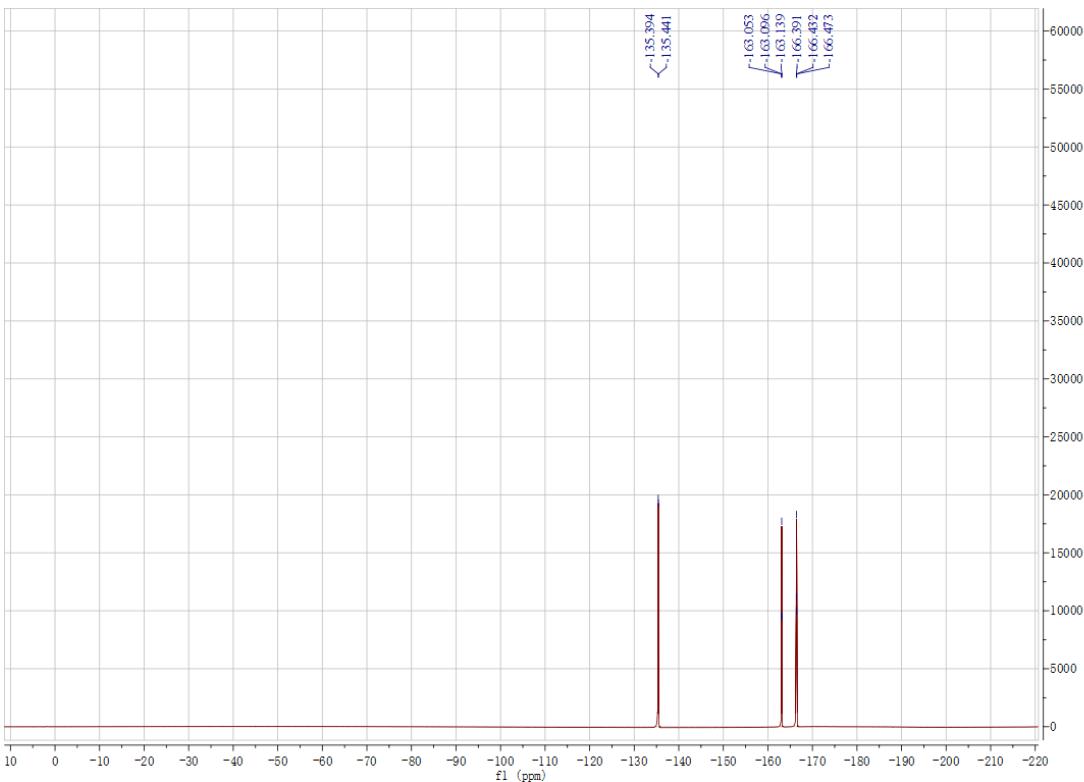
**Fig. S5**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of **3**. (\**n*-hexane)



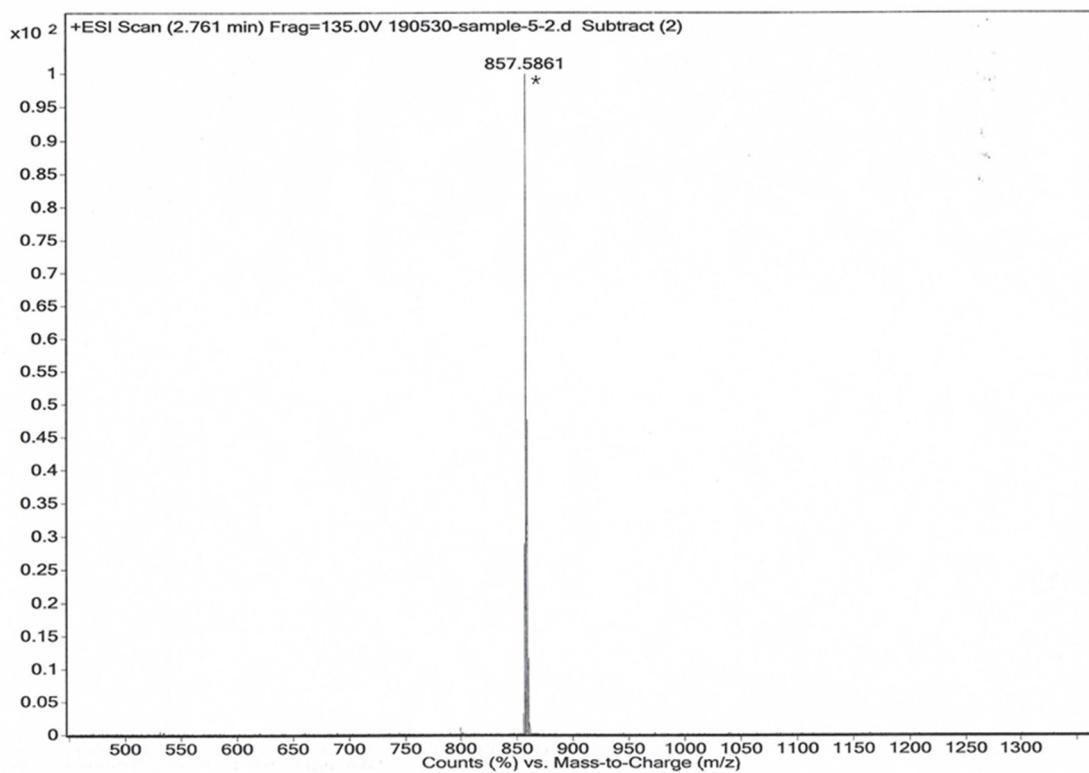
**Fig. S6**  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum of **3**. (\**n*-hexane)



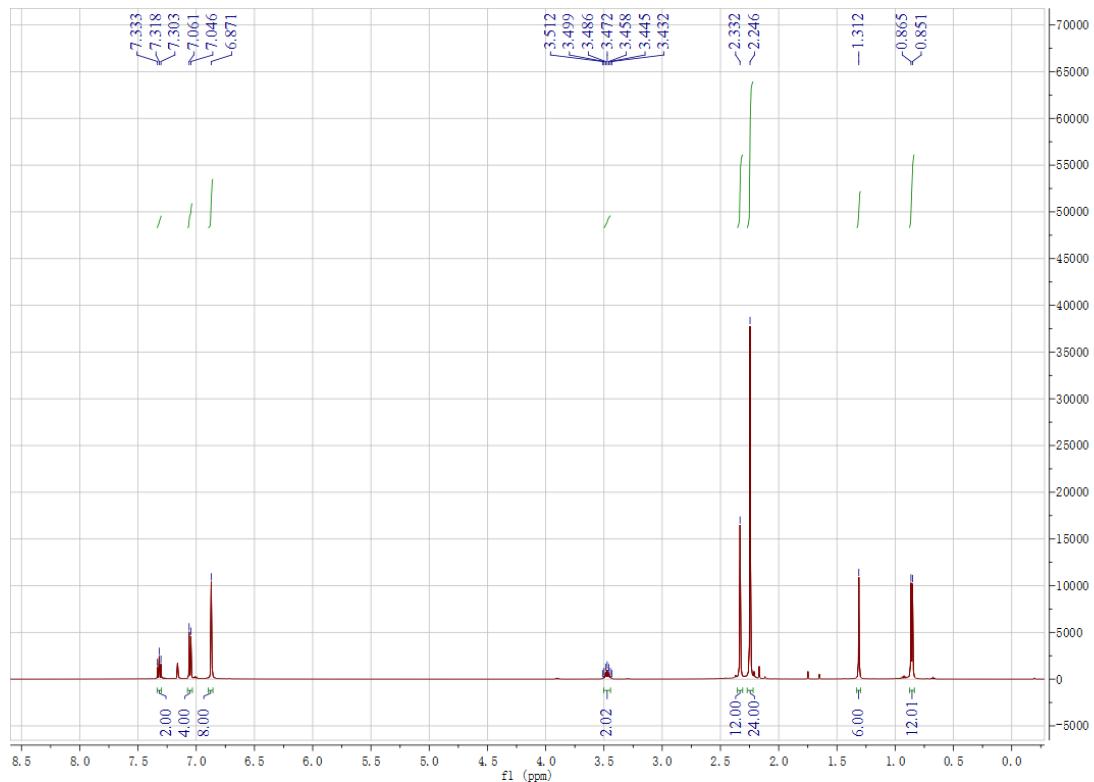
**Fig. S7** <sup>11</sup>B NMR spectrum of **3**.



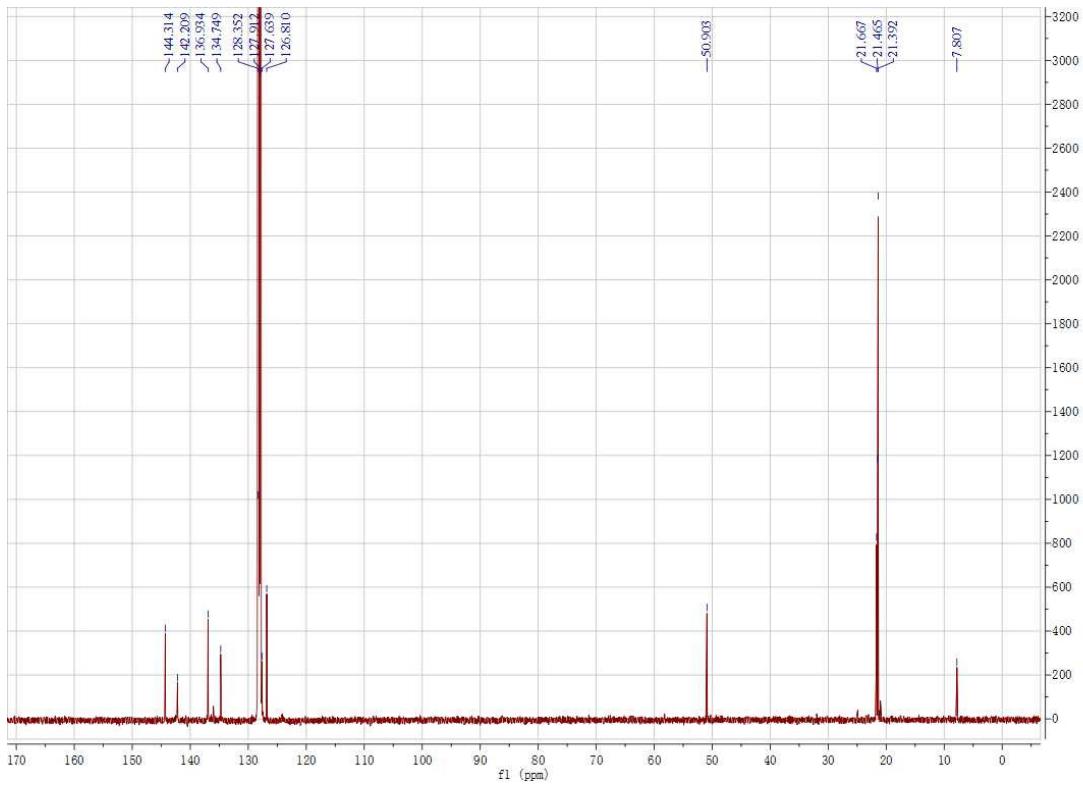
**Fig. S8** <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectrum of **3**.



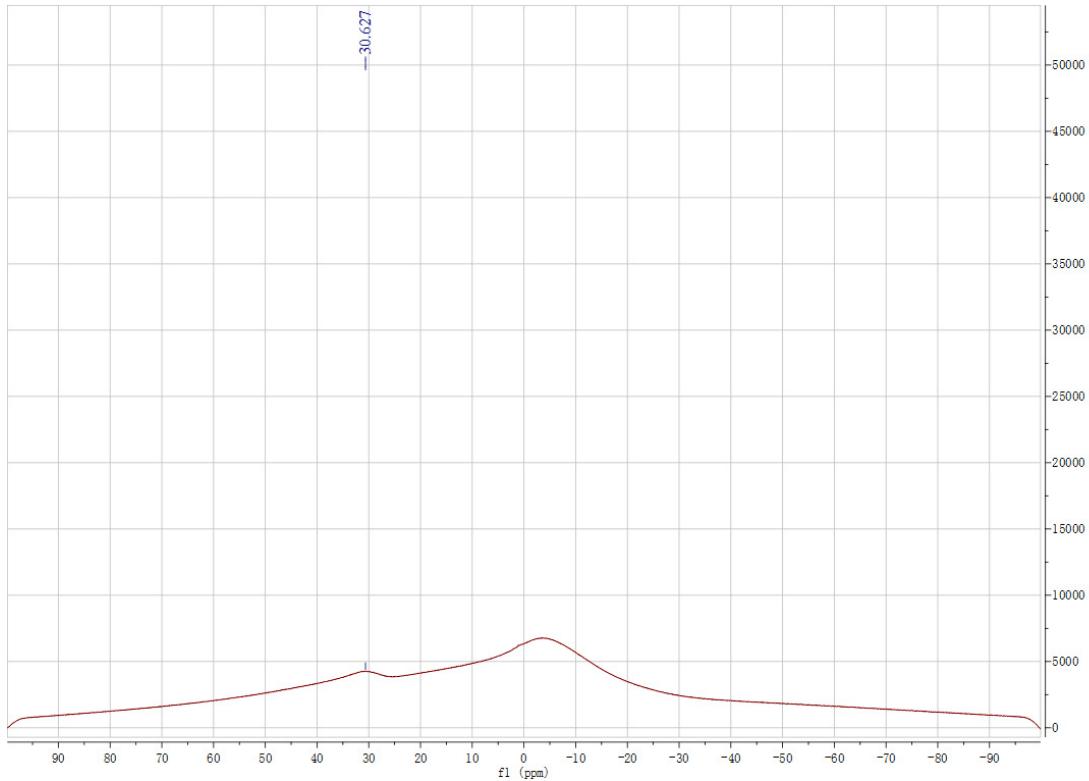
**Fig. S9** HRMS spectrum of **3**.



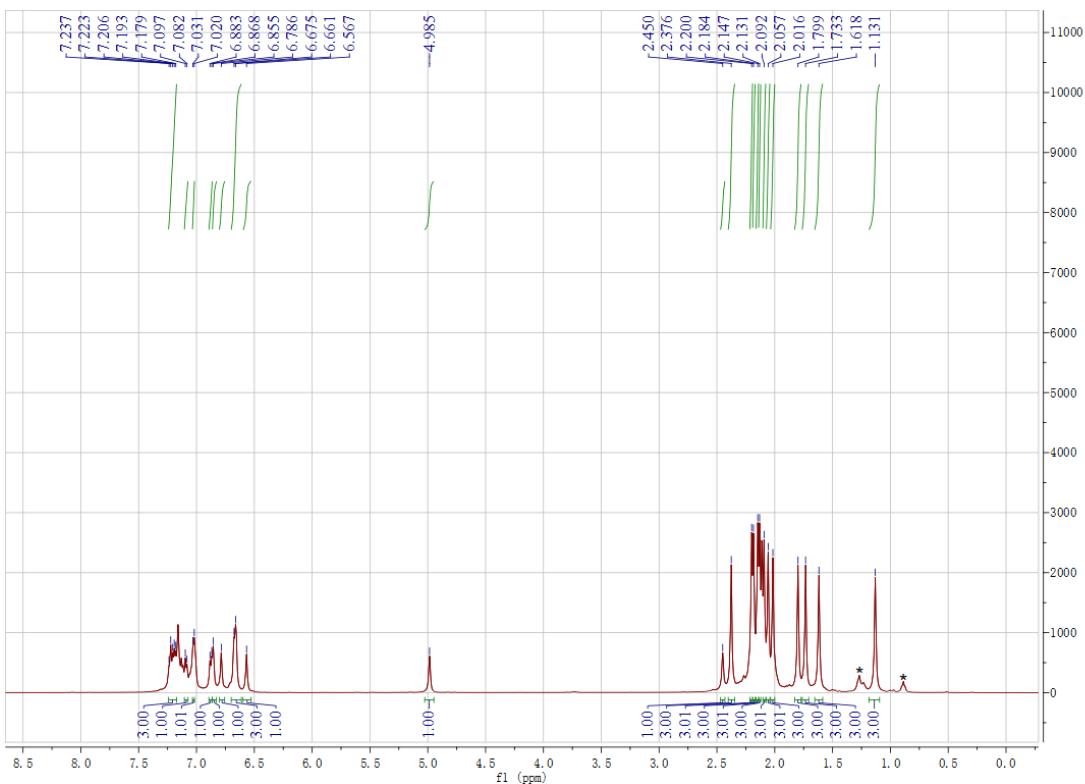
**Fig. S10** <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of **4**.



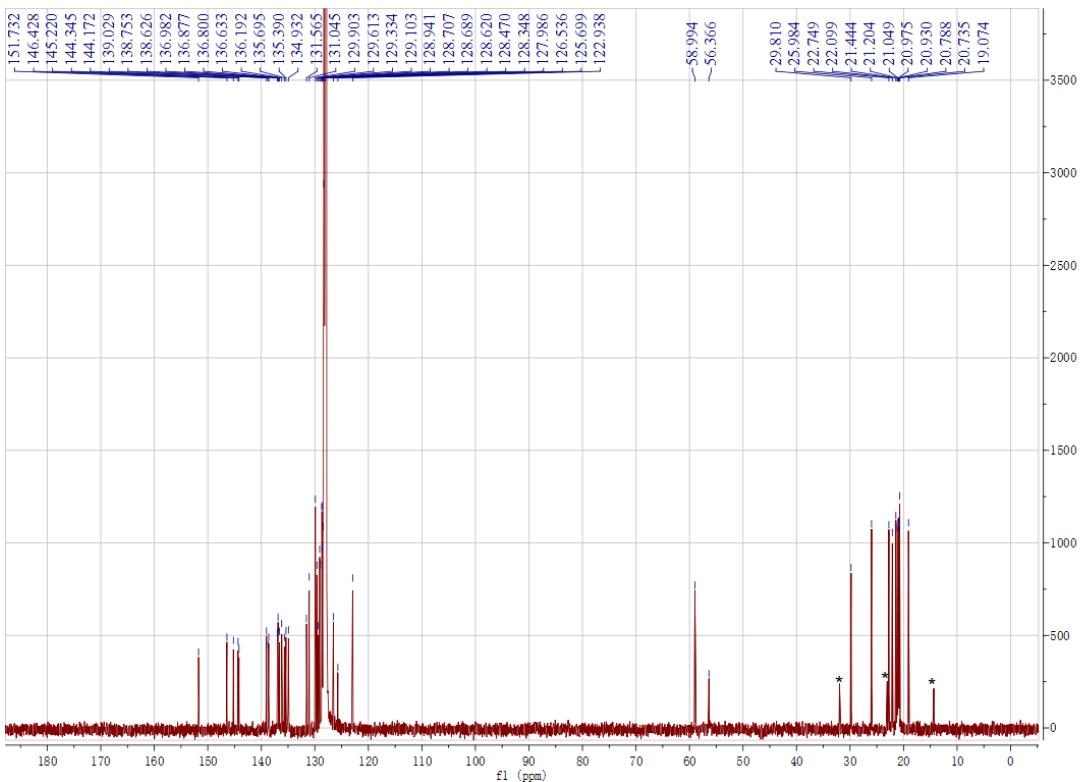
**Fig. S11**  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum of **4**.



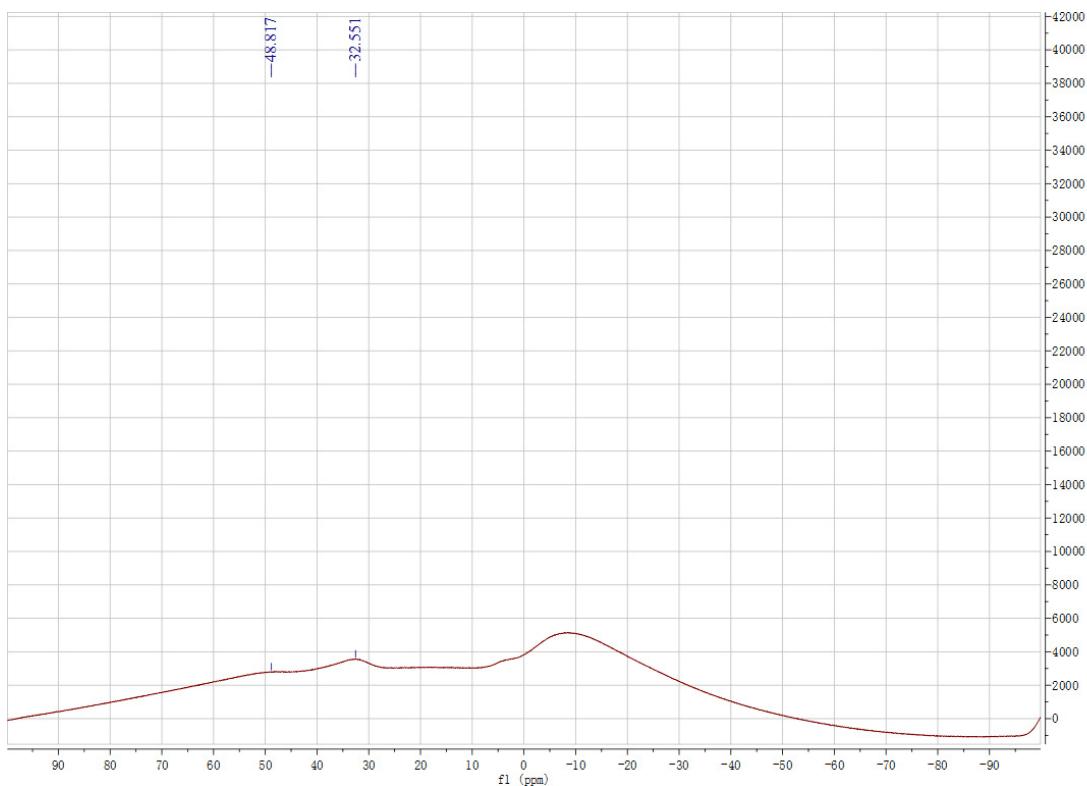
**Fig. S12**  $^{11}\text{B}$  NMR spectrum of **4**.



**Fig. S13**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of **5**. (\*n-hexane)



**Fig. S14**  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum of **5**. (\*n-hexane)



**Fig. S15** <sup>11</sup>B NMR spectrum of **5**.

### Elemental Composition Report

#### Single Mass Analysis

Tolerance = 10.0 PPM / DBE: min = -5.0, max = 50.0

Element prediction: Off

Number of isotope peaks used for i-FIT = 3

#### Monoisotopic Mass, Even Electron Ions

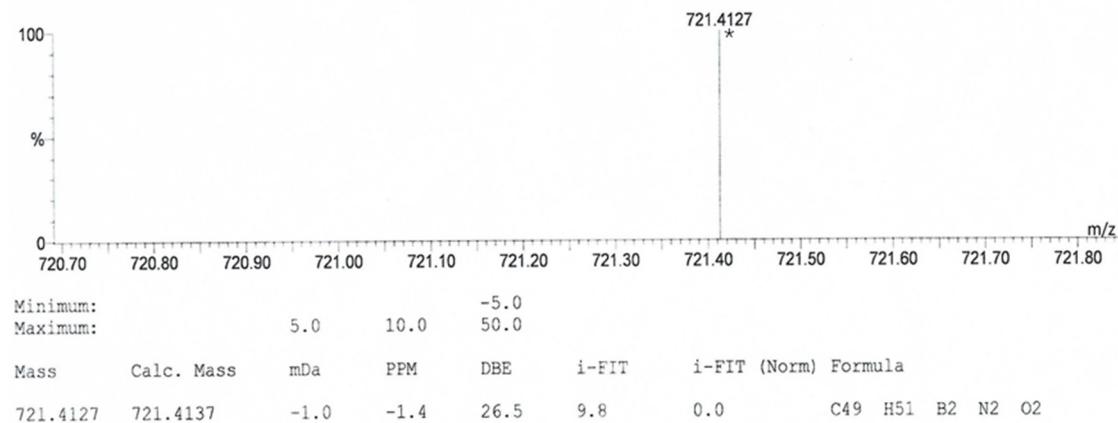
66 formula(e) evaluated with 1 results within limits (up to 50 closest results for each mass)

Elements Used:

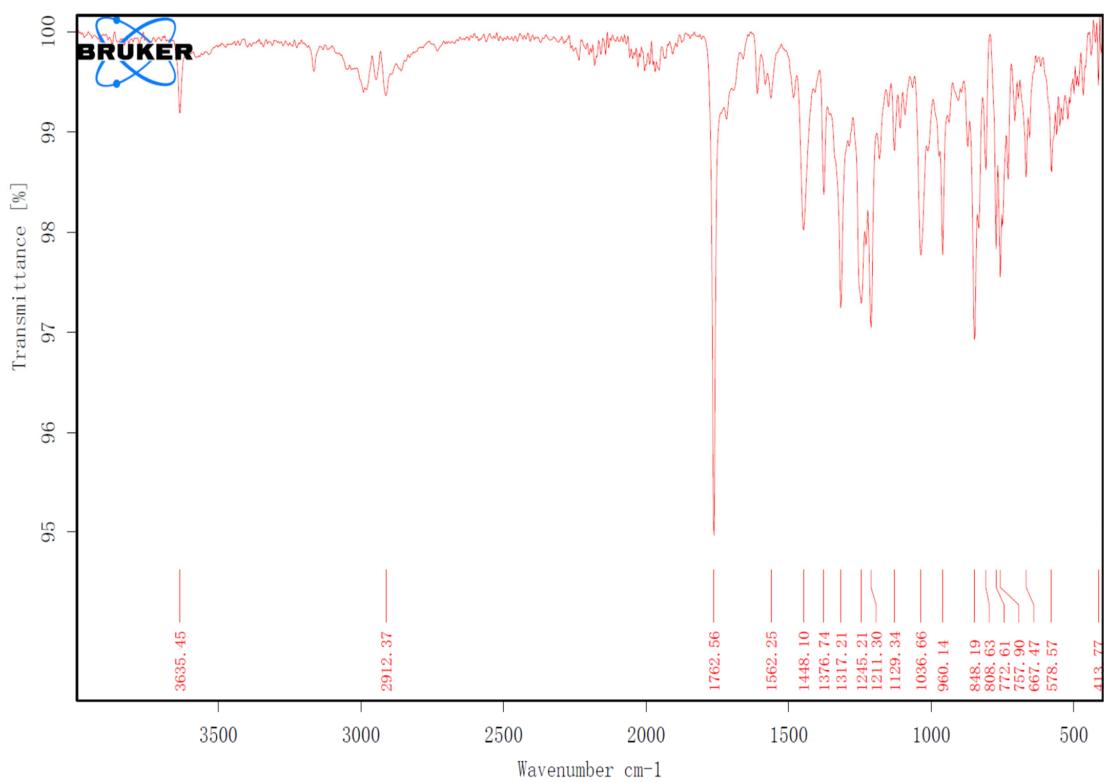
C: 49-59 H: 51-71 B: 1-6 N: 2-4 O: 2-2 Si: 0-4

C49H51B2N2O2

LW4A 15 (0.332)



**Fig. S16** HRMS spectrum of **5**.

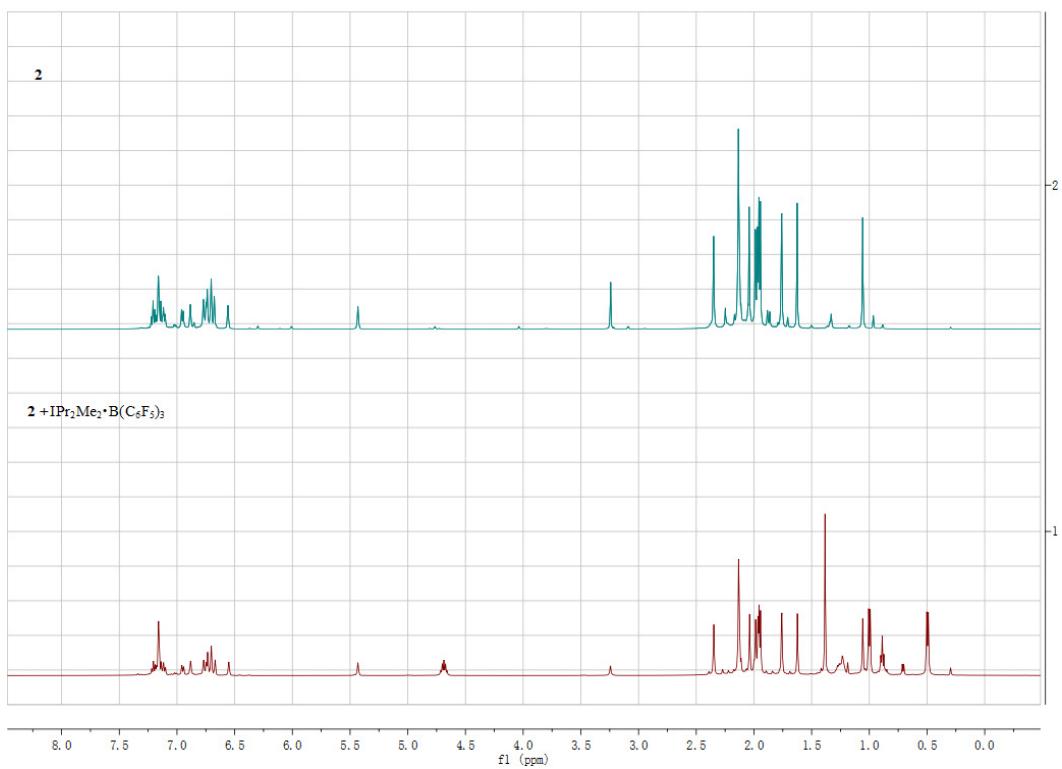


**Fig. S17** IR spectrum of **5**.

### Control experiments



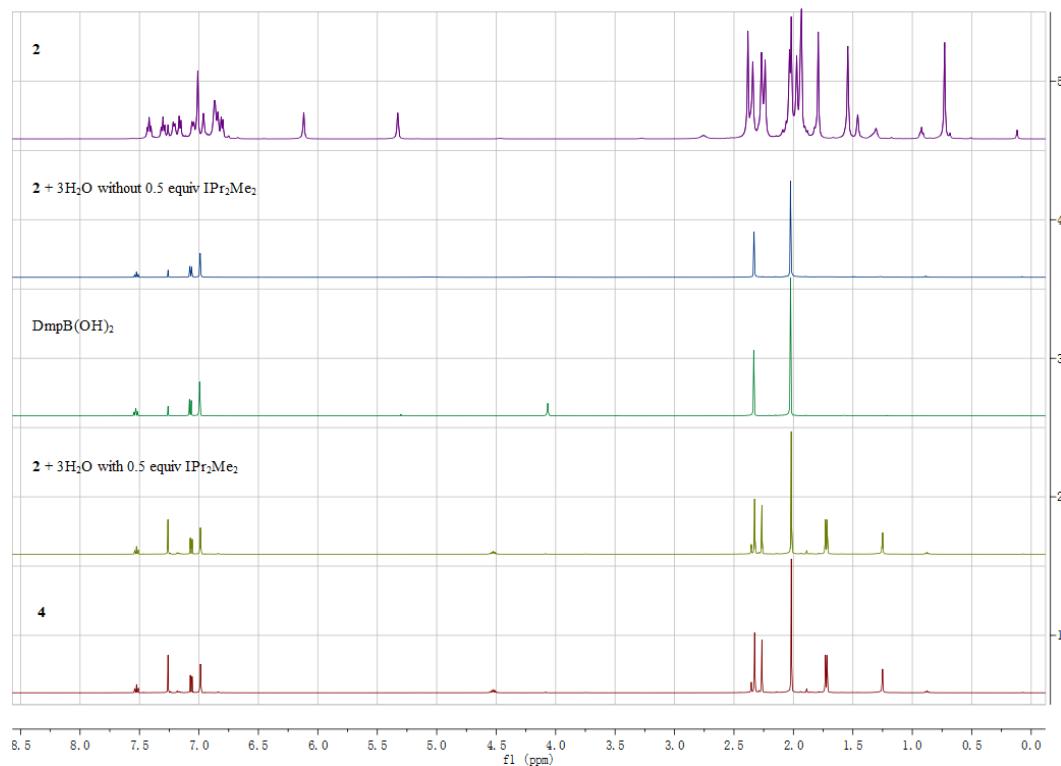
**Fig. S18** Control experiment between **2** and IPr<sub>2</sub>Me<sub>2</sub>.



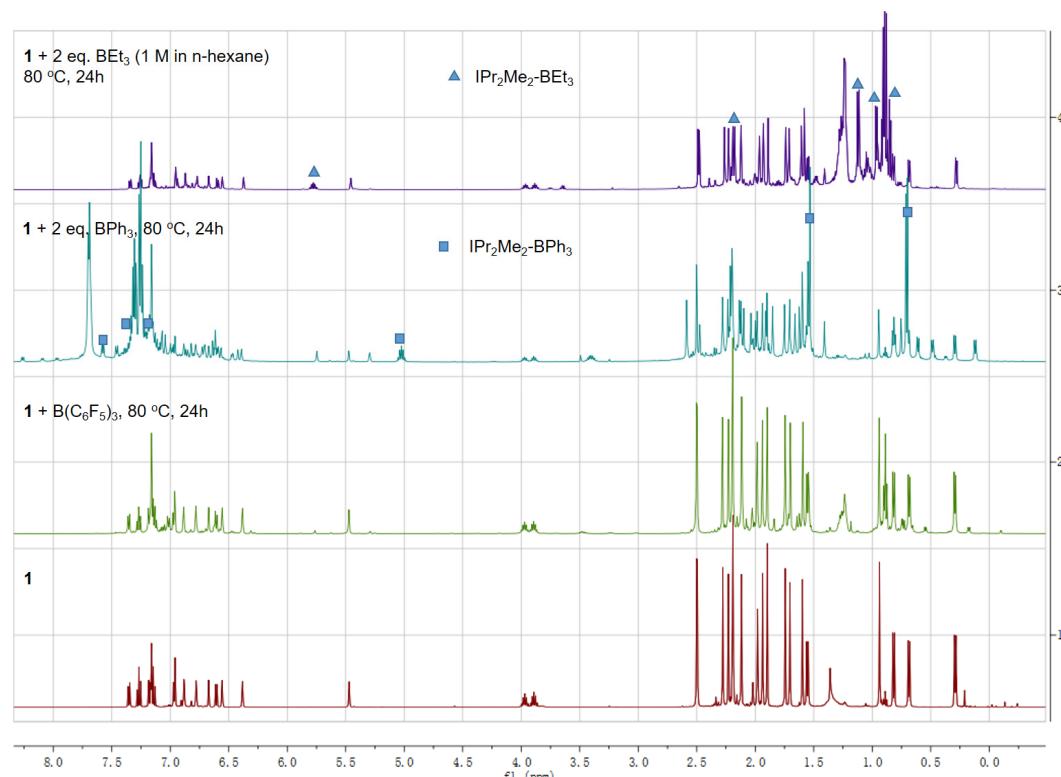
**Fig. S19** Control experiment between **2** and IPr<sub>2</sub>Me<sub>2</sub>•B(C<sub>6</sub>F<sub>5</sub>)<sub>3</sub>.



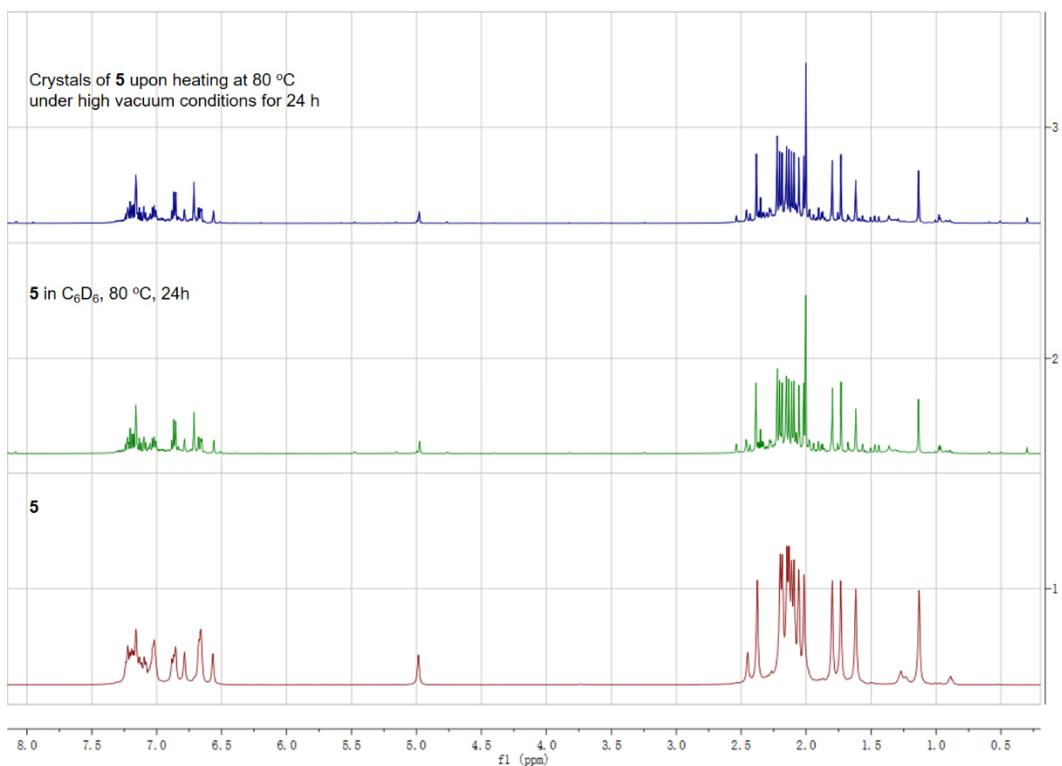
**Fig. S20** Control experiment between **3** and H<sub>2</sub>O•B(C<sub>6</sub>F<sub>5</sub>)<sub>3</sub>.



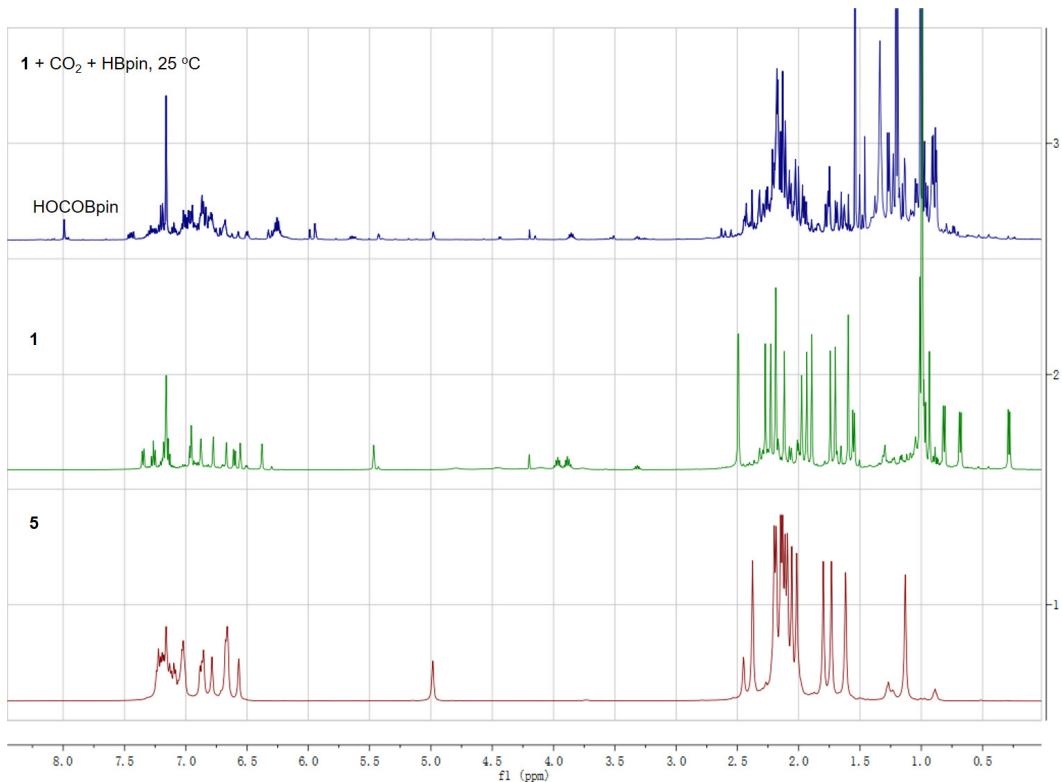
**Fig. S21** Control experiments between **2** with 3 equiv of H<sub>2</sub>O with or without IPr<sub>2</sub>Me<sub>2</sub> (0.5 equiv).



**Fig. S22** Control experiments between **1** and Lewis acids.



**Fig. S23** Thermal stability of **5**.



**Fig. S24** Control experiment of **1** with CO<sub>2</sub> in the presence of HBpin.

## Crystallographic details

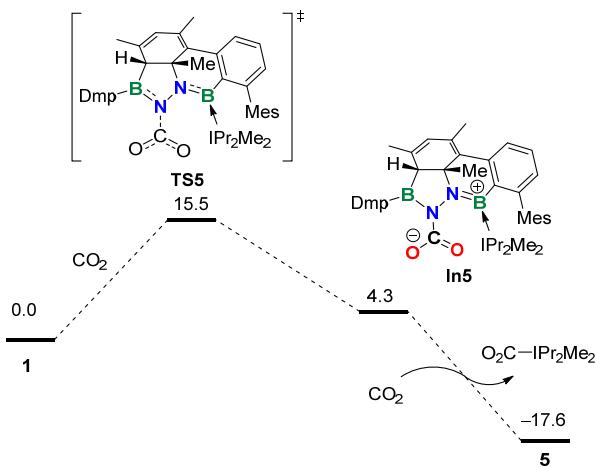
All crystallographic intensity data was collected using a Rigaku Oxford Diffraction XtaLAB Synergy-S diffractometer equipped with a HyPix-6000HE Hybrid Photon Counting (HPC) detector, and PhotonJet-S microfocus sealed tube X-ray sources for generating Cu K $\alpha$  radiation ( $\lambda = 1.54184 \text{ \AA}$ ). A suitable single crystal identified by microscopy was mounted on a Nylon loop with paratone oil, and then quickly placed onto the instrument. The crystal temperature was held at 173 K using an Oxford Cryosystems CryostreamPlus 800 open-flow N<sub>2</sub> cryostat. Reflections were recorded, indexed and corrected for absorption with the *CrysAlis<sup>pro</sup>* software suit.<sup>S3</sup> All structures were solved by intrinsic phasing (ShelXT-2015),<sup>S4,S5</sup> and refined to convergence by full-matrix least squares methods based on  $F^2$  (SHELX-2018)<sup>S6</sup> embedded in the Olex2.<sup>S7</sup> All non-hydrogen atoms were refined with anisotropic displacement parameters (ADPs). Hydrogen atoms attached to carbon (CH) were placed in calculated positions and refined within a riding model, with  $U_{\text{iso}}(\text{H}) = 1.2 U_{\text{eq}}(\text{C})$  of the carrier atom ( $U_{\text{iso}}(\text{H}) = 1.5 U_{\text{eq}}(\text{C})$  for methyl groups). Hydrogen atoms bonded to nitrogen (NH) were located in geometrically idealized positions and then fixed with  $d(\text{N-H}) = 0.90 \text{ \AA}$  and  $U_{\text{iso}}(\text{H}) = 1.2 U_{\text{eq}}(\text{N})$ . Hydrogen atom bonded to oxygen (OH) was located and then fixed with  $U_{\text{iso}}(\text{H}) = 1.5 U_{\text{eq}}(\text{O})$ . The threshold  $(I_{\text{obs}} - I_{\text{calc}})/\sigma(\text{W}) > 10$  was chosen for omitting these reflections.

**Table S1.** X-ray data for compounds **2**, **3** and **5**.

Compounds	<b>2•toluene</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5•(0.5benzene)</b>
Formula	C <sub>55</sub> H <sub>60</sub> B <sub>2</sub> N <sub>2</sub> O	C <sub>77</sub> H <sub>72</sub> B <sub>3</sub> F <sub>15</sub> N <sub>4</sub> O	C <sub>52</sub> H <sub>53</sub> B <sub>2</sub> N <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub>
Formula weight	786.67	1386.81	759.58
Temperature (K)	172.99(10)	173.00(10)	172.99(10)
Wavelength (Å)	1.54184	1.54184	1.54184
Crystal system	triclinic	triclinic	triclinic
Space group	P-1	P-1	P-1
a (Å)	11.6024(4)	11.1752(4)	8.1757(3)
b (Å)	12.4641(4)	14.7860(5)	13.4922(6)
c (Å)	17.0448(5)	21.3743(7)	19.8843(8)
α (°)	111.154(3)	81.940(3)	86.111(4)
β (°)	91.945(3)	77.947(3)	83.103(3)
γ (°)	97.305(3)	88.914(3)	72.919(4)
V (°)	2271.64(13)	3419.6(2)	2080.25(15)
Z	2	2	2
Density (calcd. g/cm <sup>3</sup> )	1.150	1.347	1.213
Absorption coeff. (mm <sup>-1</sup> )	0.509	0.910	0.552
Reflections collected	22282	33871	19731
Independent reflections	7966	12111	7330
	[R <sub>int</sub> = 0.0485]	[R <sub>int</sub> = 0.0359]	[R <sub>int</sub> = 0.0876]
Data/restraints/parameters	7966/1/555	12111/1/923	7330/0/535
R <sub>1</sub> [I>2sigma(I)]	0.0618	0.0420	0.0743
wR <sub>2</sub> [all data]	0.1601	0.1230	0.2211
GOF	1.074	1.075	1.040
CCDC No	2041862	2041863	2041864

## Computational details

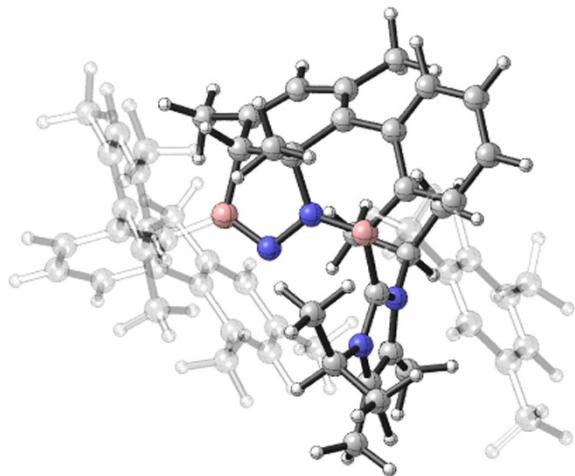
DFT calculations were carried out employing Gaussian 09 program package.<sup>S8</sup> Geometry optimizations and frequency calculations were calculated at M06-2X<sup>S9</sup> functional level combined with the def2-SVP basis set. Full optimization was applied in the reactants, intermediates, transition states, and the corresponding products of the research system. At the same level, the harmonic vibrational frequency calculations were implemented for all optimized geometries to verify the character of stationary points. Additionally, the solvent effects were taken into account in toluene using the SMD<sup>S10</sup> model (PhMe solvent,  $\varepsilon = 2.3741$ ). NBO analysis was carried out using NBO 3.1 in Gaussian 09 package. All values in the square brackets of figures are the optimized bond distances in solution unless indicated. To refine the energetic accuracy of all the species, we recalculated the single point energies based on the optimized structures with M06-2X/def2-TZVP/SMD level of theory. In order to correct the overestimated entropies,<sup>S11,S12</sup> we used an empirical approach to correct the entropies: we estimated the total entropy in solution at 50%.<sup>S13-S15</sup>



**Fig. S25** Proposed reaction pathway for the generation of **5**.

**Table S2.** Calculated geometries (atom, x-, y-, z-positions in Å).

1



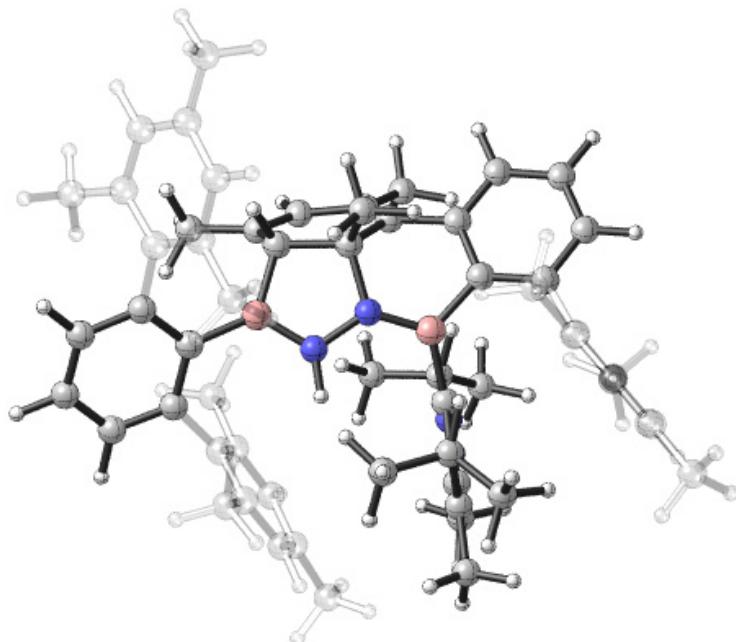
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C	-0.2890180	-0.7870120	3.9278580
C	-1.7365330	-0.5616140	3.8506320
C	-2.4744690	-0.8300720	2.7564790
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N	0.1338980	-0.4802120	0.6276800
C	1.8617330	-1.3436060	2.7518140
C	2.6415890	-1.9758860	3.7217910
C	2.4654160	-0.7349380	1.6090630
C	4.0289400	-2.0131270	3.5959200
H	2.1520120	-2.4564480	4.5710510
C	3.8657120	-0.8316230	1.4697420
C	4.6281650	-1.4543450	2.4739490
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H	5.7112760	-1.5213980	2.3455980
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H	-2.3239500	-2.4391940	1.4093780
C	1.2099230	3.4924980	-0.6756920
C	1.4207440	2.8460740	-1.8593740
C	0.8968840	2.8700210	1.7146020
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C	1.8630660	0.4944920	-2.6045360
H	1.0783530	0.6985690	-3.3496650
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[1-H]<sup>+</sup>

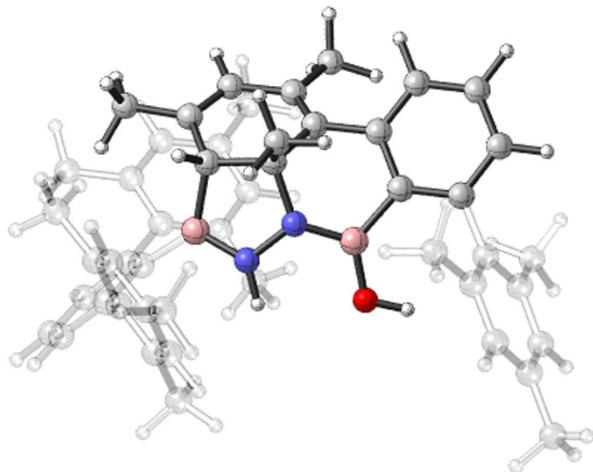


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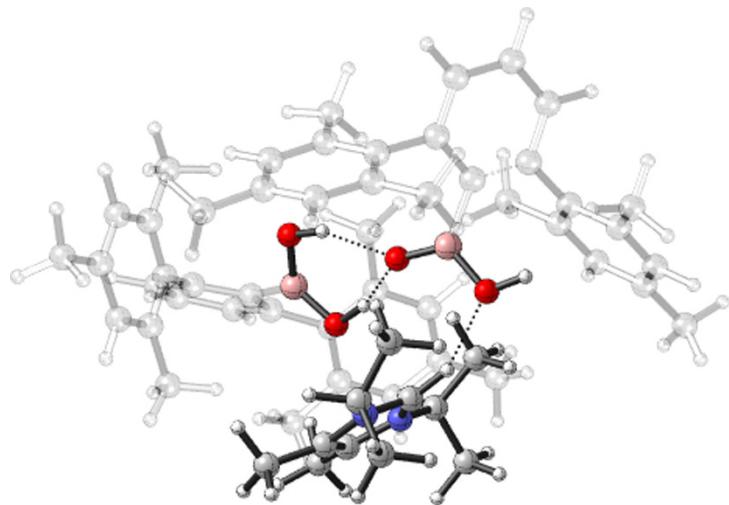


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4



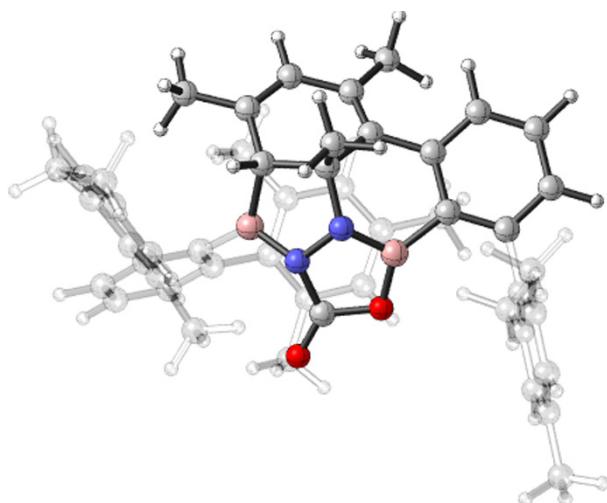
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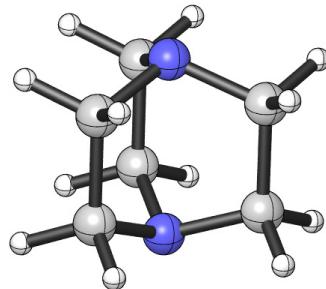


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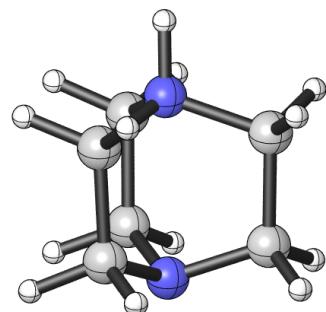
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H	2.6594020	3.0582450	-3.1051730
H	2.1271410	1.4188000	-2.6841160
H	1.4048490	2.8252180	-1.8772100
C	4.9572710	5.0141100	1.1279340
H	4.6426270	4.9342750	2.1802390
H	6.0263350	5.2712460	1.1263270
H	4.4029420	5.8466230	0.6745310

DABCO.



N	-1.2707520	-0.0033700	0.0014580
C	-0.7755700	-1.2582540	0.5634480
C	-0.7811290	0.1387420	-1.3684680
N	1.2707930	0.0030190	-0.0009210
C	-0.7814600	1.1136820	0.8071220
C	0.7772560	1.1170740	0.8063850
C	0.7778300	0.1434690	-1.3698030
C	0.7830560	-1.2546190	0.5613140
H	-1.1770910	-1.3646070	1.5826460
H	-1.1768470	-2.0894750	-0.0361160
H	-1.1821050	-0.6918160	-1.9689640
H	-1.1870090	1.0720400	-1.7872810
H	-1.1864370	2.0471530	0.3878660
H	-1.1841680	1.0096620	1.8260950
H	1.1776470	2.0527850	0.3876690
H	1.1811860	1.0140230	1.8249670
H	1.1773710	1.0795820	-1.7883710
H	1.1828480	-0.6841020	-1.9717120
H	1.1876930	-1.3599210	1.5793820
H	1.1867240	-2.0834250	-0.0399310

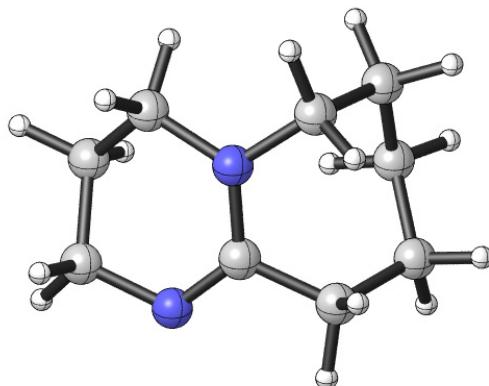
[DABCO-H]<sup>+</sup>.



N	1.2798370	0.0123150	-0.0040990
C	0.8114050	0.8307800	1.1032510
C	0.8061410	0.5529800	-1.2684030

N	-1.2148030	-0.0118540	0.0037590
C	0.8297270	-1.3610440	0.1577980
C	-0.7205280	-1.4237950	0.1355380
C	-0.7457660	0.5866060	-1.2907300
C	-0.7401680	0.8173830	1.1618790
H	-2.2396990	-0.0231800	0.0071930
H	1.2297590	0.4415770	2.0401990
H	1.1798870	1.8560150	0.9708480
H	1.2097950	1.5648440	-1.4000020
H	1.1872560	-0.0701700	-2.0874870
H	1.2460340	-1.9739270	-0.6516130
H	1.2146570	-1.7543680	1.1071280
H	-1.1180430	-1.9826420	-0.7201630
H	-1.1518820	-1.8313120	1.0577250
H	-1.1559870	1.6025680	-1.3392240
H	-1.1808260	-0.0128050	-2.0995110
H	-1.1345050	0.3501560	2.0721830
H	-1.1865510	1.8125570	1.0491030

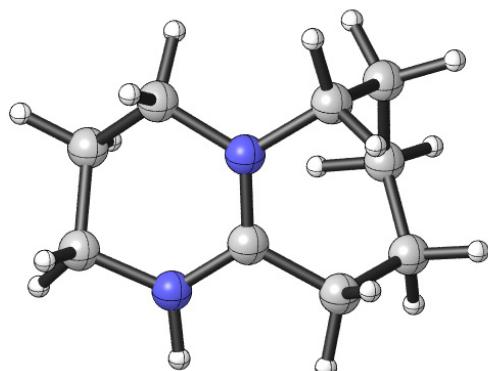
DBU



N	-0.2753860	-0.5573980	-0.5707810
C	-0.3285180	0.8085810	-0.3852190
N	-1.3679800	1.4725510	-0.0326630
C	-2.5935010	0.7291310	0.1795070
C	-2.3352700	-0.6623990	0.7476340
C	-1.3913270	-1.4087780	-0.1811820
C	0.9635570	-1.2158260	-0.9437820
C	1.9438920	-1.3651610	0.2278180
C	1.9855580	-0.1101420	1.0993760
C	2.1311560	1.2037490	0.3265840
C	0.9648880	1.5574030	-0.6337470
H	-3.2456930	1.3054950	0.8529410

H	-3.1426090	0.6372250	-0.7769590
H	-3.2690040	-1.2291870	0.8704890
H	-1.8726820	-0.5594660	1.7424570
H	-1.9347980	-1.7553930	-1.0791670
H	-0.9920000	-2.3063590	0.3186250
H	0.7093170	-2.1998020	-1.3647790
H	1.4427580	-0.6562210	-1.7588630
H	1.6604370	-2.2278980	0.8519970
H	2.9439630	-1.5869730	-0.1790140
H	1.0660730	-0.0642090	1.7050460
H	2.8143040	-0.1955100	1.8186850
H	3.0764490	1.1903560	-0.2394350
H	2.2296760	2.0128620	1.0645250
H	1.2666030	1.3908130	-1.6784970
H	0.7081620	2.6188620	-0.5458690

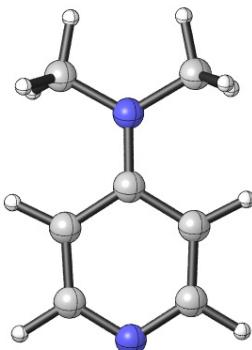
[DBU-H]<sup>+</sup>



N	-0.2378980	-0.5803370	-0.5416120
C	-0.2695350	0.7334760	-0.4009640
N	-1.3774750	1.3588880	-0.0375640
C	-2.6429290	0.6830290	0.2277730
C	-2.3460520	-0.7217020	0.7232980
C	-1.4038360	-1.4224000	-0.2400710
C	1.0146800	-1.2517030	-0.9099120
C	1.9723720	-1.3631850	0.2783760
C	2.0301150	-0.0783310	1.1053190
C	2.1665330	1.2059450	0.2844140
C	0.9732730	1.5411180	-0.6537400
H	-1.3329950	2.3693510	0.0425760
H	-3.1881450	1.2656620	0.9796770
H	-3.2474440	0.6602180	-0.6919740
H	-3.2765470	-1.2959610	0.8112570

H	-1.8878210	-0.6693150	1.7222320
H	-1.9110800	-1.6719890	-1.1853250
H	-1.0274750	-2.3573850	0.1961790
H	0.7483070	-2.2385400	-1.3085210
H	1.4794520	-0.6943790	-1.7330950
H	1.6749110	-2.2013400	0.9262280
H	2.9679970	-1.6109000	-0.1194120
H	1.1299240	-0.0080690	1.7382570
H	2.8753620	-0.1388510	1.8049010
H	3.0826100	1.1620320	-0.3220790
H	2.2983440	2.0433960	0.9819170
H	1.2488430	1.3770550	-1.7054440
H	0.7056390	2.6016760	-0.5700950

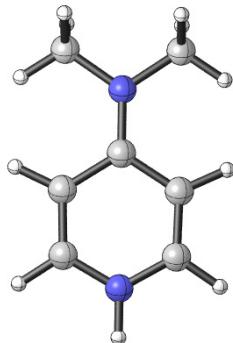
### DMAP



C	0.5648320	1.1988270	0.0005710
C	1.9518820	1.1308550	0.0005890
N	2.6585070	0.0000030	0.0000000
C	1.9518910	-1.1308540	-0.0005850
C	0.5648410	-1.1988380	-0.0005710
C	-0.1872830	-0.0000070	-0.0000070
N	-1.5498720	-0.0000020	-0.0000230
C	-2.2686590	1.2545090	-0.0010160
C	-2.2686850	-1.2545000	0.0010290
H	0.0823590	2.1741980	0.0012490
H	2.5255820	2.0640300	0.0011480
H	2.5255990	-2.0640240	-0.0011390
H	0.0823790	-2.1742130	-0.0012370
H	-2.0364680	1.8596870	0.8915610
H	-2.0327940	1.8601350	-0.8922900
H	-3.3453210	1.0531540	-0.0034700
H	-2.0328650	-1.8600810	0.8923470
H	-3.3453420	-1.0531200	0.0034320

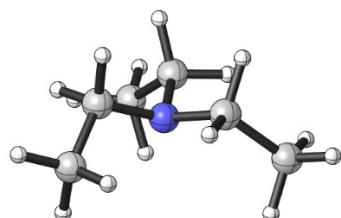
H -2.0364780 -1.8597340 -0.8915040

[DMAP-H]<sup>+</sup>



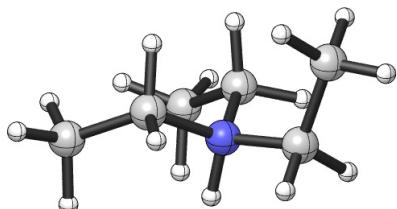
C	-0.5484480	1.2119500	0.0000000
C	-1.9136180	1.1727230	-0.0000080
N	-2.5820500	0.0000170	-0.0000050
C	-1.9136660	-1.1727100	0.0000040
C	-0.5484930	-1.2119960	0.0000100
C	0.2239660	-0.0000390	0.0000060
N	1.5590800	-0.0000140	0.0000110
C	2.3775350	1.2040060	0.0000030
C	2.3776400	-1.2039660	-0.0000130
H	-3.5990630	0.0000390	-0.0000030
H	-0.0900410	2.1959110	-0.0000020
H	-2.5167880	2.0799760	-0.0000170
H	-2.5168690	-2.0799420	0.0000060
H	-0.0901490	-2.1959850	0.0000160
H	1.7811360	2.1160120	-0.0000790
H	3.0203120	1.2064490	0.8919710
H	3.0204350	1.2063440	-0.8918770
H	1.7813410	-2.1160300	0.0001320
H	3.0203620	-1.2063700	-0.8920220
H	3.0206030	-1.2062290	0.8918220

NEt<sub>3</sub>



N -0.0010460 0.0008760 -0.0338200

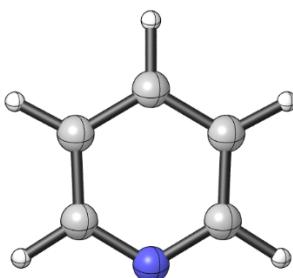
C	-2.2792370	0.8635480	0.4443420
C	-1.3971880	0.0048830	-0.4497400
C	0.3889870	-2.4035320	0.4424470
C	0.6948620	-1.2096180	-0.4497210
C	1.8943140	1.5331490	0.4409620
C	0.6990830	1.2107880	-0.4436090
H	-3.3273000	0.8217450	0.1135930
H	-2.2242280	0.5057610	1.4824500
H	-1.9725340	1.9197090	0.4351950
H	-1.4941910	0.3276350	-1.5101480
H	-1.7689100	-1.0295130	-0.4133590
H	0.9527850	-3.2894580	0.1155480
H	0.6644510	-2.1758980	1.4821590
H	-0.6786980	-2.6673180	0.4276970
H	0.4669670	-1.4538020	-1.5111140
H	1.7764100	-1.0149240	-0.4100090
H	2.3718250	2.4709500	0.1215640
H	1.5696740	1.6419060	1.4857260
H	2.6603530	0.7449160	0.4058610
H	1.0146670	1.1462460	-1.5088660
H	-0.0088830	2.0505990	-0.3876330



N	-0.4471010	0.0649330	0.0000000
H	-1.2893400	-0.5267340	0.0000000
C	0.2969990	-1.7295570	1.6277650
C	0.2969990	-0.2557180	1.2706760
C	0.1542210	2.5172510	0.0000000
C	-0.9529240	1.4861920	0.0000000
C	0.2969990	-1.7295570	-1.6277650
C	0.2969990	-0.2557180	-1.2706760
H	0.6291040	-1.8296680	2.6693880
H	-0.7139830	-2.1579210	1.5620070
H	0.9758130	-2.3246390	1.0082870

H	1.3131560	0.1427680	1.1559570
H	-0.2059840	0.3194110	2.0588190
H	-0.3070670	3.5135840	0.0000000
H	0.7864700	2.4495180	0.8955180
H	0.7864700	2.4495180	-0.8955180
H	-1.5894050	1.5811620	-0.8892240
H	-1.5894050	1.5811620	0.8892240
H	0.6291040	-1.8296680	-2.6693880
H	0.9758130	-2.3246390	-1.0082870
H	-0.7139830	-2.1579210	-1.5620070
H	-0.2059840	0.3194110	-2.0588190
H	1.3131560	0.1427680	-1.1559570

Py.



C	-1.1979880	0.6697270	-0.0000040
C	-1.1404700	-0.7240360	-0.0000180
N	0.0010160	-1.4100650	0.0000110
C	1.1412630	-0.7229470	0.0000040
C	1.1970300	0.6714000	-0.0000050
C	-0.0007860	1.3816500	0.0000060
H	-2.1617430	1.1801220	0.0000100
H	-2.0639830	-1.3117270	0.0000240
H	2.0656590	-1.3092670	-0.0000130
H	2.1599970	1.1832930	-0.0000230
H	-0.0013370	2.4732720	0.0000250

[PyH]<sup>+</sup>



C	0.7138220	-1.2103810	0.0000000
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C	-0.6686300	-1.1828090	0.0000010
N	-1.3022390	0.0016440	-0.0000010
C	-0.6658710	1.1843630	-0.0000010
C	0.7169550	1.2086710	0.0000010
C	1.4121150	-0.0017140	0.0000010
H	-2.3241680	0.0027020	0.0000000
H	1.2323570	-2.1682020	-0.0000050
H	-1.2945470	-2.0750150	0.0000030
H	-1.2896060	2.0781450	-0.0000010
H	1.2379920	2.1651280	0.0000030
H	2.5033020	-0.0030420	-0.0000040

**Table S3.** The NPA charges of **1**.

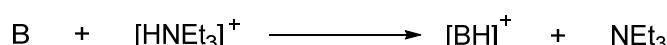
Atom	No	Charge	Natural Population				Total
			Natural	Core	Valence	Rydberg	
C	1	-0.61889	1.99914	4.59922	0.02053	6.61889	
C	2	0.11931	1.99923	3.85806	0.02341	5.88069	
C	3	-0.03360	1.99886	4.01376	0.02097	6.03360	
C	4	0.00084	1.99898	3.98256	0.01762	5.99916	
C	5	-0.29292	1.99895	4.27552	0.01845	6.29292	
C	6	0.10554	1.99910	3.87798	0.01737	5.89446	
H	7	0.20324	0.00000	0.79493	0.00182	0.79676	
N	8	-0.80027	1.99926	5.76956	0.03146	7.80027	
N	9	-0.53803	1.99925	5.51240	0.02638	7.53803	
C	10	-0.01175	1.99905	3.99256	0.02014	6.01175	
C	11	-0.22086	1.99911	4.20370	0.01805	6.22086	
C	12	-0.40260	1.99891	4.37915	0.02454	6.40260	
C	13	-0.20969	1.99921	4.19314	0.01734	6.20969	
H	14	0.22142	0.00000	0.77713	0.00144	0.77858	
C	15	-0.01810	1.99904	3.99663	0.02244	6.01810	
C	16	-0.22709	1.99912	4.20986	0.01811	6.22709	
H	17	0.22121	0.00000	0.77778	0.00102	0.77879	
H	18	0.21920	0.00000	0.77951	0.00130	0.78080	
B	19	0.91369	1.99854	2.06050	0.02727	4.08631	
H	20	0.24504	0.00000	0.75234	0.00262	0.75496	
C	21	0.13762	1.99894	3.84528	0.01815	5.86238	
C	22	0.13440	1.99892	3.84877	0.01790	5.86560	
C	23	-0.03016	1.99933	4.01603	0.01479	6.03016	
H	24	0.20860	0.00000	0.78930	0.00210	0.79140	
C	25	-0.02962	1.99934	4.01507	0.01520	6.02962	
H	26	0.21251	0.00000	0.78528	0.00222	0.78749	

N	27	-0.30852	1.99932	5.28456	0.02464	7.30852
N	28	-0.29866	1.99932	5.27390	0.02544	7.29866
C	29	0.18907	1.99895	3.78341	0.02856	5.81093
C	30	-0.06186	1.99891	4.04204	0.02091	6.06186
C	31	0.00729	1.99909	3.97480	0.01882	5.99271
C	32	-0.00019	1.99908	3.98263	0.01848	6.00019
C	33	-0.22974	1.99903	4.21414	0.01657	6.22974
C	34	-0.23050	1.99904	4.21503	0.01642	6.23050
C	35	-0.01489	1.99916	3.99847	0.01726	6.01489
H	36	0.21243	0.00000	0.78609	0.00148	0.78757
H	37	0.21109	0.00000	0.78740	0.00150	0.78891
B	38	0.88023	1.99897	2.08954	0.03126	4.11977
C	39	-0.34171	1.99888	4.31857	0.02426	6.34171
C	40	-0.02039	1.99905	4.00059	0.02076	6.02039
C	41	-0.01895	1.99906	3.99899	0.02090	6.01895
C	42	-0.22270	1.99911	4.20597	0.01762	6.22270
C	43	-0.22417	1.99910	4.20710	0.01798	6.22417
C	44	-0.22098	1.99920	4.20412	0.01766	6.22098
H	45	0.21664	0.00000	0.78203	0.00134	0.78336
H	46	0.21729	0.00000	0.78132	0.00139	0.78271
H	47	0.21881	0.00000	0.78015	0.00104	0.78119
C	48	-0.61145	1.99941	4.59798	0.01407	6.61145
H	49	0.21117	0.00000	0.78745	0.00138	0.78883
H	50	0.21560	0.00000	0.78342	0.00098	0.78440
H	51	0.23080	0.00000	0.76773	0.00146	0.76920
C	52	-0.64191	1.99944	4.63031	0.01216	6.64191
H	53	0.21666	0.00000	0.78213	0.00121	0.78334
H	54	0.22328	0.00000	0.77557	0.00115	0.77672
H	55	0.22559	0.00000	0.77346	0.00095	0.77441
C	56	-0.63472	1.99941	4.62258	0.01272	6.63472
H	57	0.23026	0.00000	0.76814	0.00159	0.76974
H	58	0.21658	0.00000	0.78201	0.00141	0.78342
H	59	0.21397	0.00000	0.78489	0.00114	0.78603
C	60	-0.63853	1.99944	4.62668	0.01241	6.63853
H	61	0.21866	0.00000	0.78047	0.00086	0.78134
H	62	0.23035	0.00000	0.76841	0.00123	0.76965
H	63	0.22819	0.00000	0.77050	0.00131	0.77181
C	64	-0.62807	1.99945	4.61705	0.01156	6.62807
H	65	0.22248	0.00000	0.77656	0.00096	0.77752
H	66	0.22153	0.00000	0.77732	0.00115	0.77847
H	67	0.21787	0.00000	0.78127	0.00086	0.78213
C	68	-0.63324	1.99944	4.62157	0.01224	6.63324
H	69	0.22020	0.00000	0.77842	0.00137	0.77980
H	70	0.22849	0.00000	0.77035	0.00116	0.77151

H	71	0.21968	0.00000	0.77940	0.00092	0.78032
C	72	-0.65108	1.99942	4.63896	0.01271	6.65108
H	73	0.23556	0.00000	0.76341	0.00103	0.76444
H	74	0.23732	0.00000	0.76180	0.00088	0.76268
H	75	0.23165	0.00000	0.76701	0.00135	0.76835
C	76	-0.65251	1.99942	4.64012	0.01298	6.65251
H	77	0.23723	0.00000	0.76189	0.00088	0.76277
H	78	0.23711	0.00000	0.76158	0.00131	0.76289
H	79	0.23199	0.00000	0.76682	0.00119	0.76801
C	80	-0.05533	1.99892	4.03620	0.02021	6.05533
C	81	0.00486	1.99909	3.97871	0.01734	5.99514
C	82	0.02689	1.99908	3.95643	0.01761	5.97311
C	83	-0.22798	1.99904	4.21300	0.01595	6.22798
C	84	-0.23866	1.99903	4.22267	0.01696	6.23866
C	85	-0.02481	1.99914	4.00848	0.01718	6.02481
H	86	0.20747	0.00000	0.79116	0.00137	0.79253
H	87	0.20234	0.00000	0.79522	0.00244	0.79766
C	88	-0.05725	1.99892	4.03758	0.02074	6.05725
C	89	0.01319	1.99908	3.96912	0.01861	5.98681
C	90	0.00104	1.99908	3.98127	0.01861	5.99896
C	91	-0.23050	1.99903	4.21547	0.01600	6.23050
C	92	-0.22883	1.99904	4.21301	0.01678	6.22883
C	93	-0.01561	1.99916	3.99945	0.01701	6.01561
H	94	0.20813	0.00000	0.79021	0.00166	0.79187
H	95	0.20929	0.00000	0.78921	0.00151	0.79071
C	96	-0.63571	1.99944	4.62414	0.01213	6.63571
H	97	0.22485	0.00000	0.77398	0.00117	0.77515
H	98	0.21776	0.00000	0.78138	0.00087	0.78224
H	99	0.22440	0.00000	0.77418	0.00141	0.77560
C	100	-0.62700	1.99945	4.61604	0.01150	6.62700
H	101	0.21624	0.00000	0.78291	0.00085	0.78376
H	102	0.21908	0.00000	0.77992	0.00100	0.78092
H	103	0.22194	0.00000	0.77691	0.00115	0.77806
C	104	-0.64509	1.99944	4.63314	0.01251	6.64509
H	105	0.21034	0.00000	0.78869	0.00097	0.78966
H	106	0.22492	0.00000	0.77390	0.00118	0.77508
H	107	0.24573	0.00000	0.75216	0.00211	0.75427
C	108	-0.64336	1.99945	4.63140	0.01251	6.64336
H	109	0.23009	0.00000	0.76907	0.00084	0.76991
H	110	0.22303	0.00000	0.77591	0.00106	0.77697
H	111	0.22222	0.00000	0.77671	0.00107	0.77778
C	112	-0.63079	1.99945	4.61954	0.01180	6.63079
H	113	0.21439	0.00000	0.78471	0.00090	0.78561
H	114	0.22398	0.00000	0.77504	0.00097	0.77602

H	115	0.21807	0.00000	0.78074	0.00119	0.78193
C	116	-0.66356	1.99943	4.65241	0.01172	6.66356
H	117	0.20092	0.00000	0.79755	0.00153	0.79908
H	118	0.27182	0.00000	0.72558	0.00260	0.72818
H	119	0.22212	0.00000	0.77617	0.00171	0.77788
C	120	-0.62738	1.99944	4.61433	0.01360	6.62738
H	121	0.22014	0.00000	0.77715	0.00271	0.77986
H	122	0.25828	0.00000	0.73896	0.00276	0.74172
H	123	0.22483	0.00000	0.77424	0.00094	0.77517
C	124	-0.62035	1.99945	4.60763	0.01327	6.62035
H	125	0.21976	0.00000	0.77941	0.00082	0.78024
H	126	0.21015	0.00000	0.78885	0.00100	0.78985
H	127	0.23265	0.00000	0.76590	0.00145	0.76735
C	128	-0.62349	1.99944	4.61071	0.01333	6.62349
H	129	0.23610	0.00000	0.76135	0.00256	0.76390
H	130	0.22314	0.00000	0.77572	0.00114	0.77686
H	131	0.22445	0.00000	0.77472	0.00083	0.77555
C	132	-0.62545	1.99944	4.61143	0.01458	6.62545
H	133	0.22982	0.00000	0.76878	0.00140	0.77018
H	134	0.24191	0.00000	0.75498	0.00311	0.75809
H	135	0.21544	0.00000	0.78371	0.00085	0.78456
<hr/>						
* Total *		0.00000	129.94603	330.78940	1.26458	462.00000

**Table S4.** Comparison of the basicity of **1** with typical bases.



Species	Sum of electronic and thermal Enthalpies (Hartree)	$\Delta H$ (kcal/mol)
NEt <sub>3</sub>	-291.823482	0
[HNEt <sub>3</sub> ] <sup>+</sup>	-292.241923	
Py	-247.901192	7.4
[Py-H] <sup>+</sup>	-248.307898	
DABCO	-344.729960	-0.4
[DABCO-H] <sup>+</sup>	-345.149102	
DMAP	-381.639614	-3.5
[DMAP-H] <sup>+</sup>	-382.063603	
DBU	-461.287903	-16.2
[DBU-H] <sup>+</sup>	-461.732175	
<b>1</b>	-2555.114983	-37.4
<b>[1-H]<sup>+</sup></b>	-2555.593102	

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