

Electronic Supporting Information

# Near thermal, selective liberation of hydrogen from formic acid catalysed by copper hydride ate complexes

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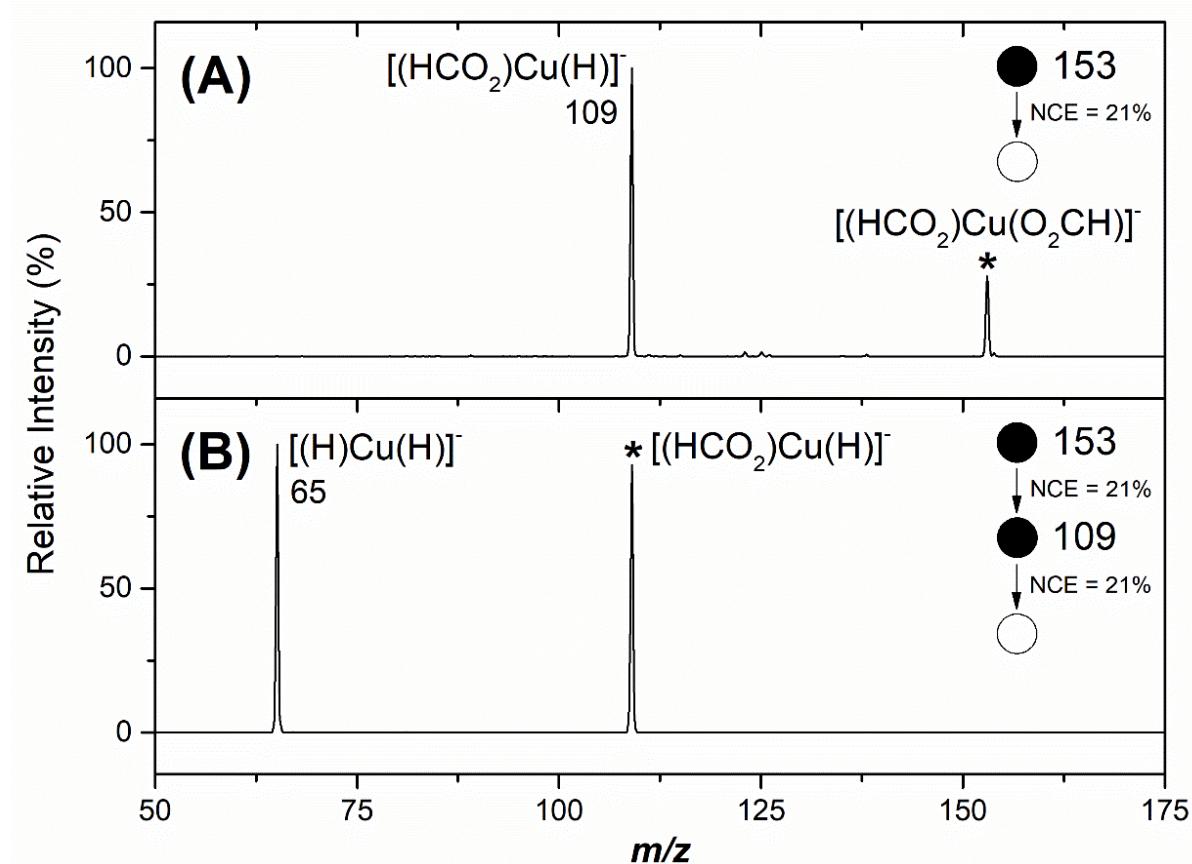
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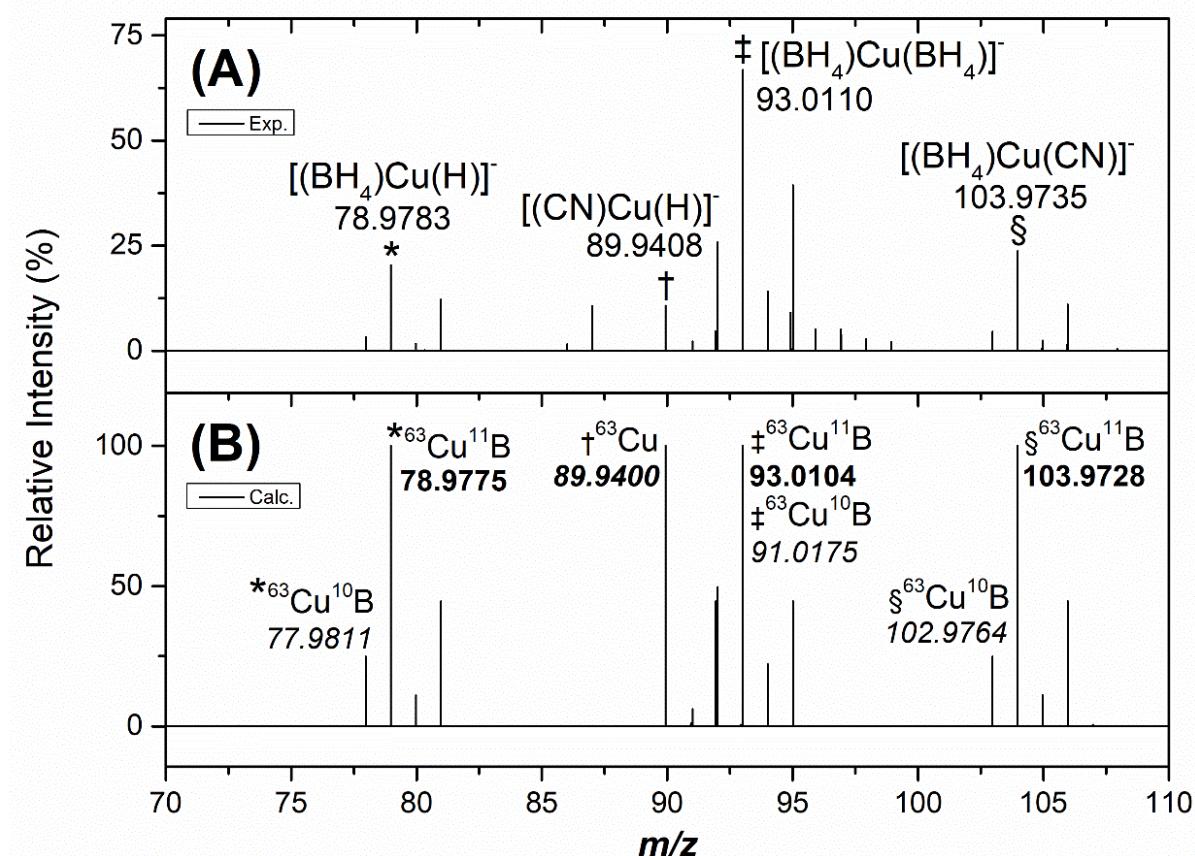
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## S1. Gas-phase characterisation of copper hydrides



**Figure S1.** LTQ ESI-MS<sup>n</sup> CID spectra showing decarboxylation from the precursor ion  $[\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})_2]^-$  ( $m/z$  153) formed from an acetonitrile mixture of copper(I) oxide and formic acid, obtained using a typical Q value of 0.25, an activation time of 10 ms with the stated Normalized Collision Energies (NCE): (A) CID-MS<sup>2</sup> spectrum of decarboxylation from  $[(\text{HCO}_2)\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  ( $m/z$  153) to give  $[(\text{HCO}_2)\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  ( $m/z$  109) (NCE = 21%); (B) CID-MS<sup>3</sup> spectrum of decarboxylation from  $[(\text{HCO}_2)\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  ( $m/z$  109) to give  $[(\text{H})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  ( $m/z$  65) (NCE = 21%). An asterisk (\*) denotes the mass selected precursor ion.



**Figure S2.** Orbitrap negative ion mode ESI-MS mass spectrum of an acetonitrile solution of copper(I) phenylacetylide with a 10-fold excess of sodium borohydride ( $\text{NaBH}_4$ ) showing the formation of mononuclear cuprates: (A) \*:  $[(\text{BH}_4)\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  ( $m/z$  78.9783), †:  $[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  ( $m/z$  89.9408), ‡:  $[(\text{BH}_4)\text{Cu}(\text{BH}_4)]^-$  ( $m/z$  93.0110) and §:  $[(\text{BH}_4)\text{Cu}(\text{CN})]^-$  ( $m/z$  103.9735).  $m/z$  values shown are of the most intense peak in the isotopic envelope of the complex; (B) Theoretical isotope patterns of the mentioned cuprates and their accurate masses (the monoisotopic mass is denoted in italics and the most abundant mass is denoted in bold).

## S2. High resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) data

**Table S1.** HRMS experiments (Orbitrap Elite ETD linear ion trap mass spectrometer) confirming assignments of key mononuclear cuprate complexes.

Ion	Molecular Formula	Exact mass – calculated ( $m/z$ )	Exact mass – experimental ( $m/z$ )	Mass error (ppm)
$[(\text{BH}_4)\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$	Cu1 H5 B1	78.9775	78.9783	10.1
$[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$	Cu1 N1 C1 H1	89.9400	89.9408	7.8
$[(\text{BH}_4)\text{Cu}(\text{BH}_4)]^-$	Cu1 H8 B2	93.0104	93.0110	6.5

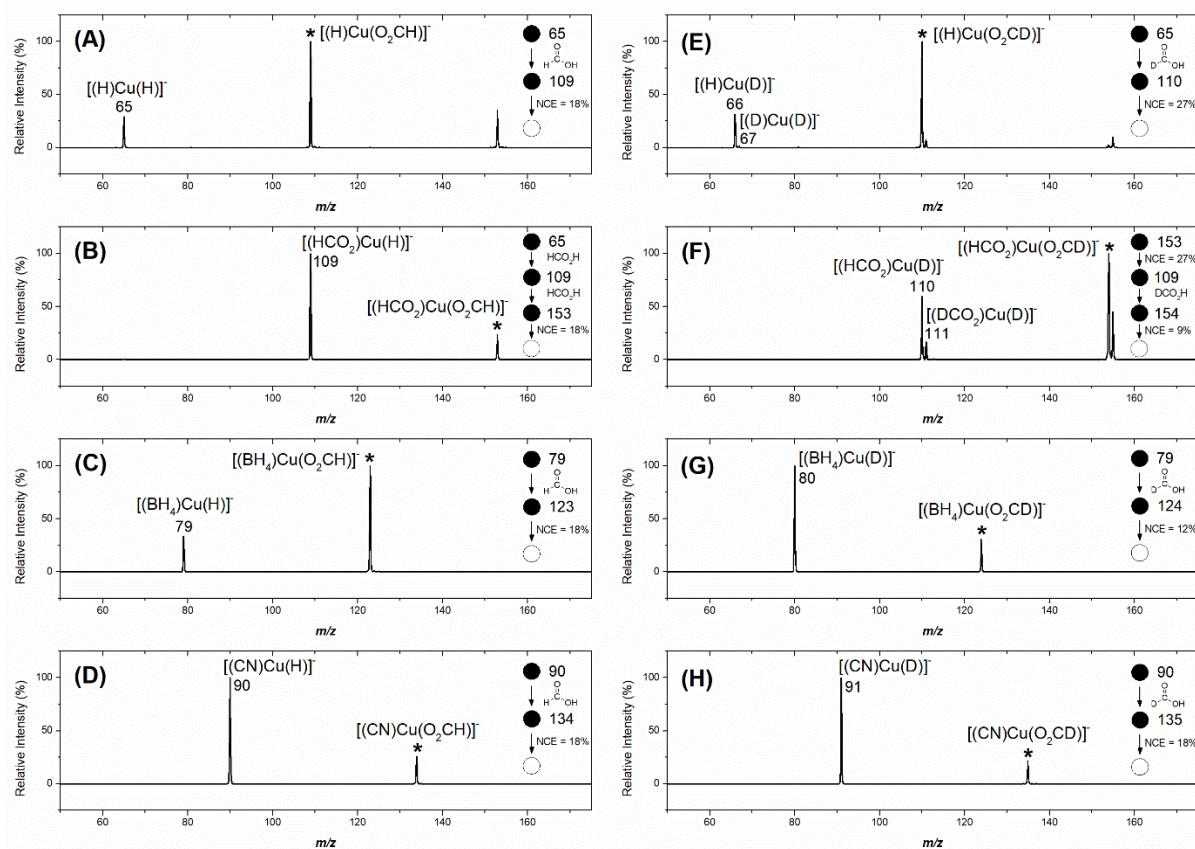
$[(BH_4)Cu(CN)]^-$	Cu1 H5 B1 N1 C1	103.9728	103.9735.	5.8
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**Table S2.** HRMS experiments (Orbitrap Elite ETD linear ion trap mass spectrometer) confirming assignments of key product ions formed in the ion-molecule reactions between  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$ , where L = H<sup>-</sup>, HCO<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup>, BH<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup> and CN<sup>-</sup>, with formic acid (HCO<sub>2</sub>H) and *d*<sub>1</sub>-formic acid (DCO<sub>2</sub>H).

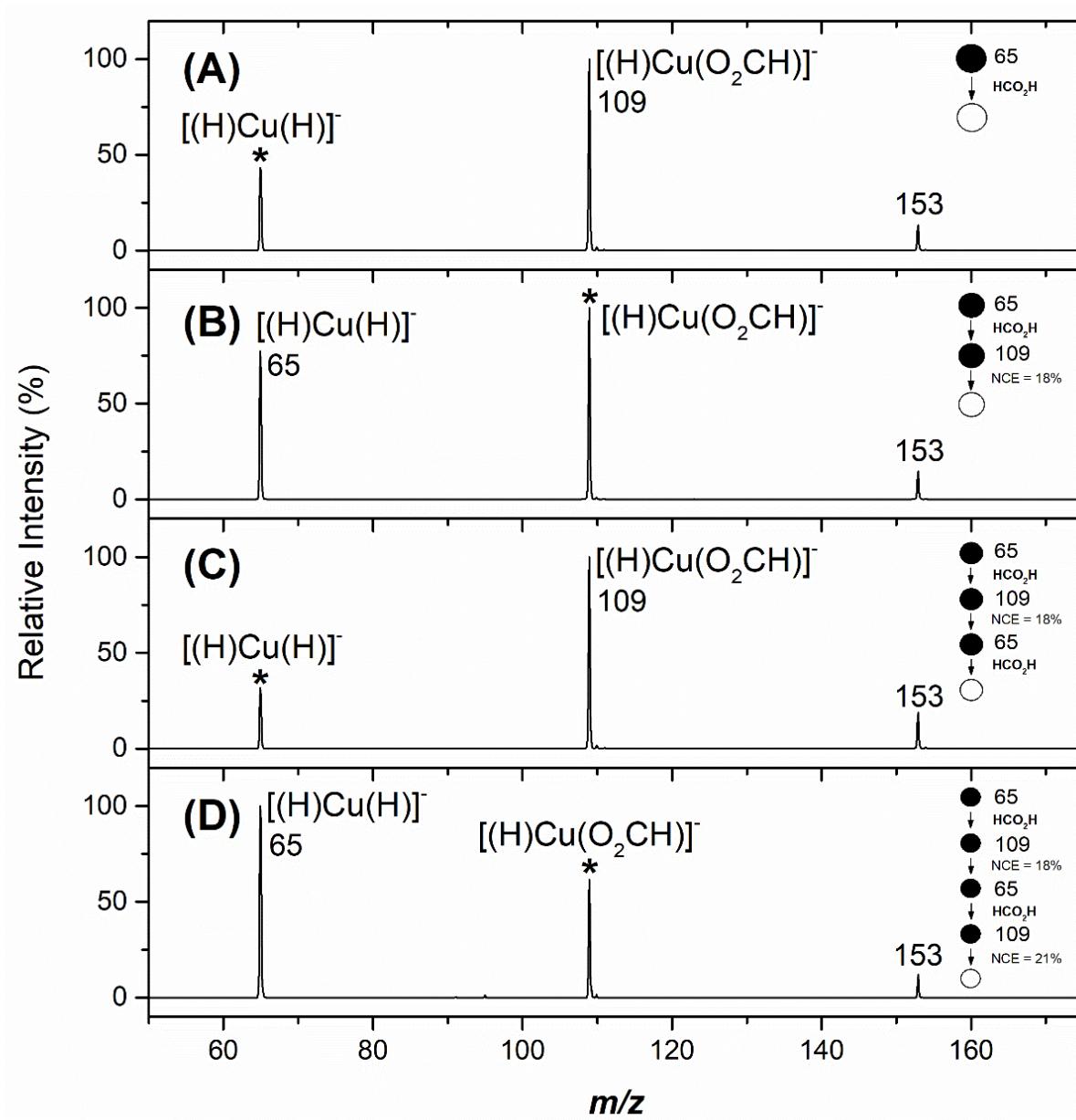
<b>Ion</b>	<b>Molecular Formula</b>	<b>Exact mass – calculated (m/z)</b>	<b>Exact mass – experimental (m/z)</b>	<b>Mass error (ppm)</b>
$[(H)Cu(H)]^-$	Cu1 H2	64.9447	64.9457	15.4
$[(H)Cu(D)]^-$	Cu1 H1 D1	65.9510	65.9520	15.2
$[(D)Cu(D)]^-$	Cu1 D2	66.9573	66.9583	14.9
$[(H)Cu(O_2CH)]^-$	Cu1 H1 O2 C1	108.9345	108.9353	7.3
$[(H)Cu(O_2CD)]^-$	Cu1 H1 D1 C1 O2	109.9408	109.9416	7.3
$[(D)Cu(O_2CD)]^-$	Cu1 D2 C1 O2	110.9471	110.9478	6.3
$[(DCO_2)Cu(O_2CD)]^-$	Cu1 D2 C2O4	154.9369	154.9377	5.2
$[(HCO_2)Cu(O_2CH)]^-$	Cu1 H2 O4 C2	152.9244	152.9252	5.2
$[(BH_4)Cu(H)]^-$	Cu1 H5 B1	78.9775	78.9783	10.1
$[(BH_4)Cu(D)]^-$	Cu1 H4 D1 B1	79.9838	79.9846	10.0
$[(BH_4)Cu(O_2CH)]^-$	Cu1 B1 H5 O2 C1	122.9673	122.9680	5.7
$[(BH_4)Cu(O_2CD)]^-$	Cu1 B1 H4 D1 O2 C1	123.9736	123.9743	5.6
$[(CN)Cu(H)]^-$	Cu1 N1 C1 H1	89.9400	89.9408	8.9
$[(CN)Cu(D)]^-$	Cu1 N1 C1 D1	90.9462	90.9470	8.8

$[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CD})]^-$	Cu1 C2 N1 O2 D1	134.9361	134.9369	5.9
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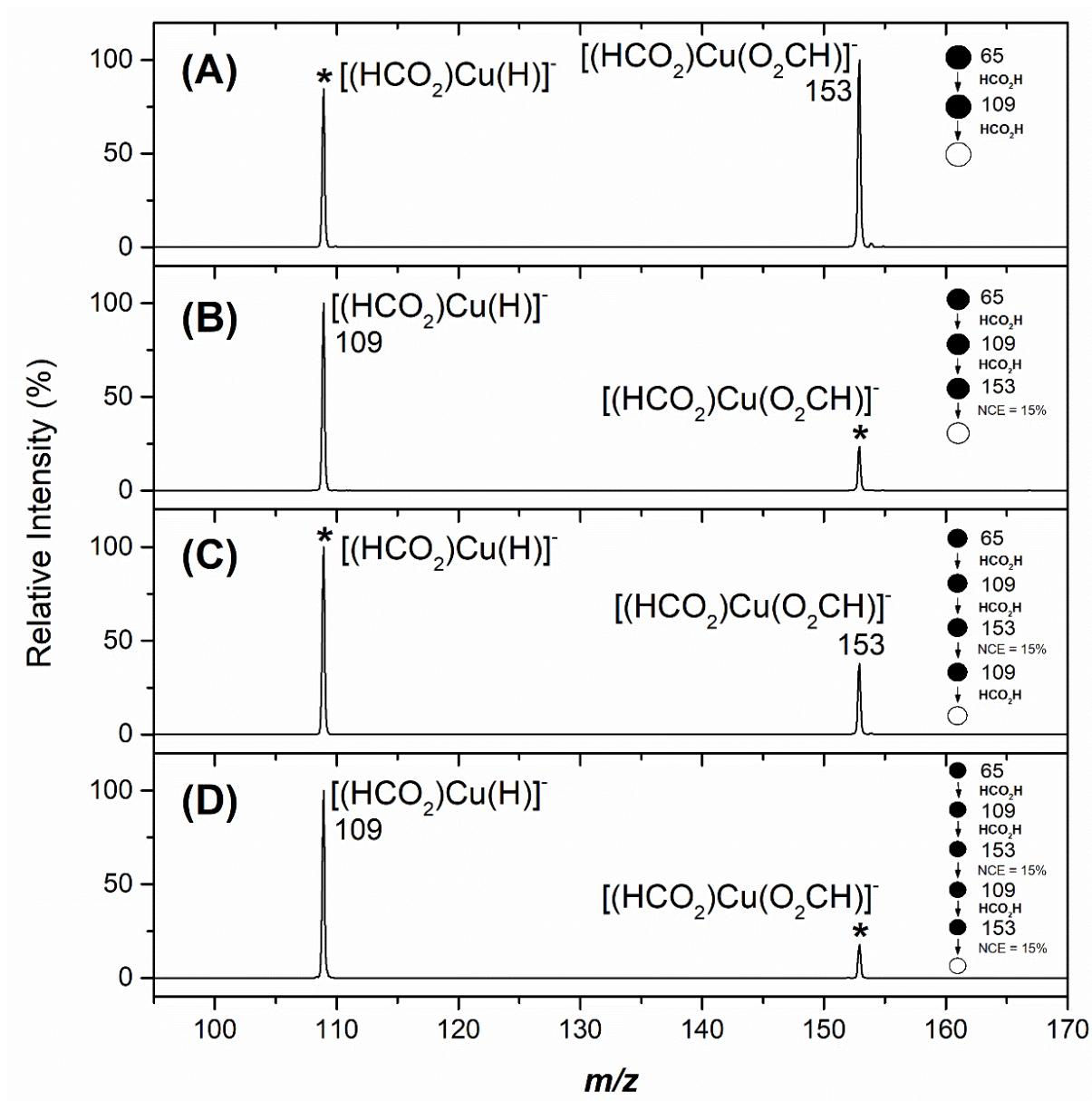
### S3. MS<sup>n</sup> spectra for the IMR with HCO<sub>2</sub>H



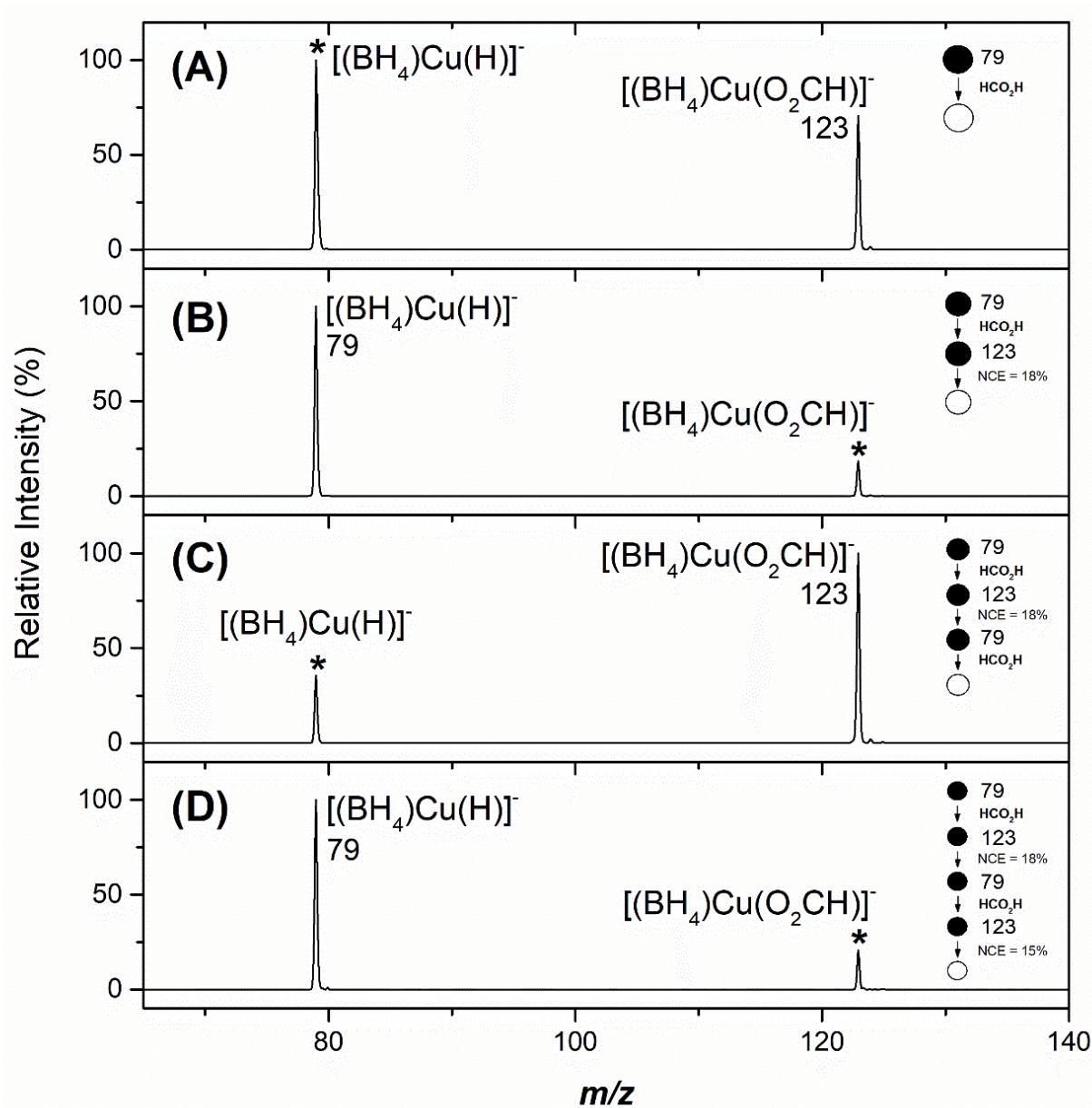
**Figure S3.** Low energy ion trap collision-induced dissociation (CID) experiments on coordinated formate copper ‘ate’ complexes  $[(\text{L})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  or  $[(\text{L})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CD})]^-$ , where L = H<sup>-</sup>, O<sub>2</sub>CH<sup>-</sup>, BH<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup>, CN<sup>-</sup>, obtained using a typical Q value of 0.25, an activation time of 10 ms with the stated Normalized Collision Energies (NCE). (A) MS<sup>3</sup> on  $[(\text{H})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  ( $m/z$  109) (NCE = 18%); (B) MS<sup>4</sup> on  $[(\text{HCO}_2)\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  ( $m/z$  153) (NCE = 18%); (C) MS<sup>3</sup> on  $[(\text{BH}_4)\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  ( $m/z$  123) (NCE = 18%); (D) MS<sup>3</sup> on  $[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  ( $m/z$  134) (NCE = 18%); (E) MS<sup>3</sup> on  $[(\text{H})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CD})]^-$  ( $m/z$  110) (NCE = 27%); (F) MS<sup>4</sup> on  $[(\text{HCO}_2)\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CD})]^-$  ( $m/z$  154) (NCE = 9%); (G) MS<sup>3</sup> on  $[(\text{BH}_4)\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CD})]^-$  ( $m/z$  124) (NCE = 12%), and; (H) MS<sup>3</sup> on  $[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CD})]^-$  ( $m/z$  135) (NCE = 18%). An asterisk (\*) denotes the mass selected precursor ion.



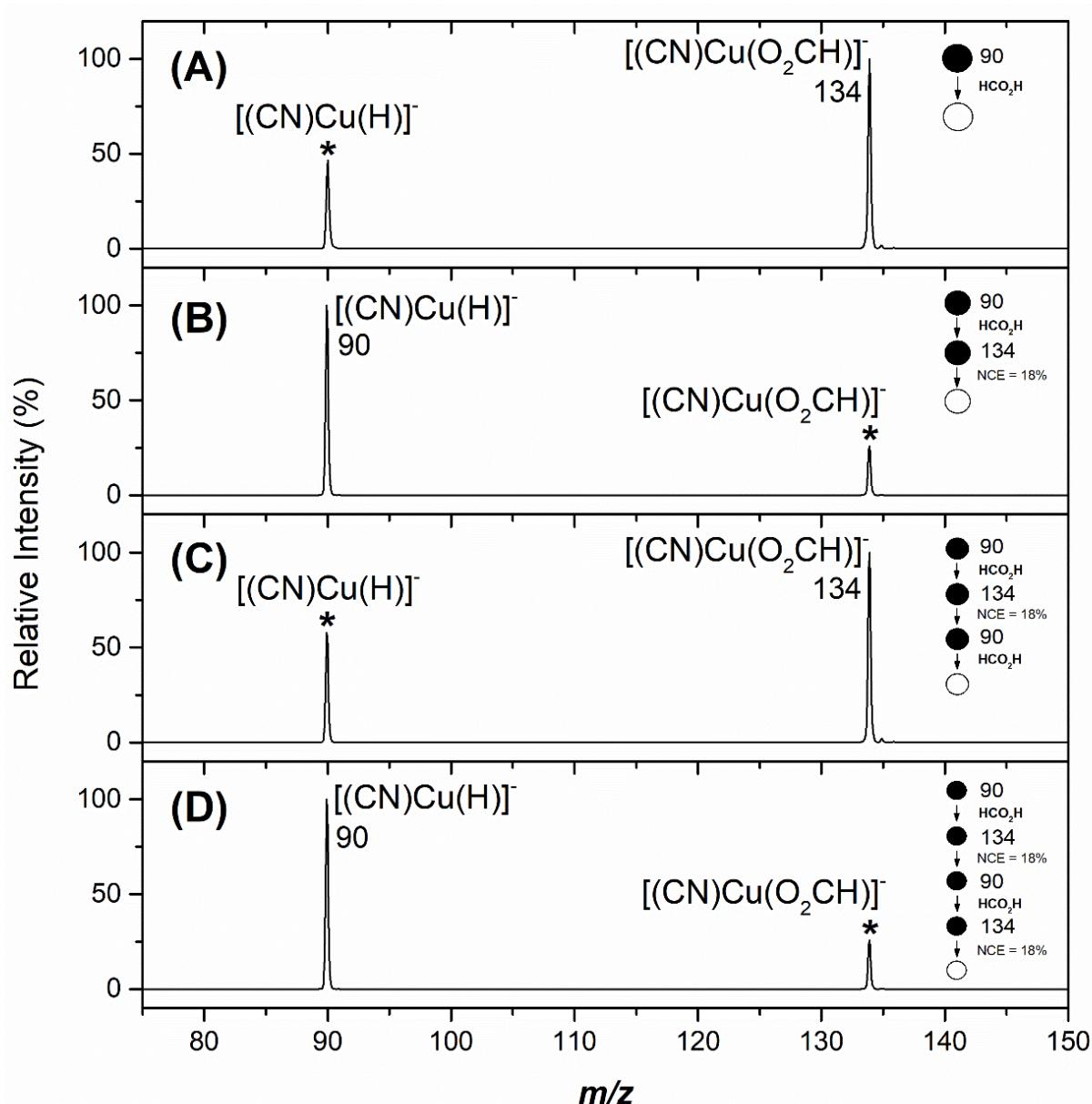
**Figure S4.** Multistage mass spectrometry ( $\text{MS}^n$ ) on  $[(\text{L})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$ ,  $\text{L} = \text{H}^-$ , demonstrating its involvement in a two-step gas-phase catalytic cycle for the selective decomposition of formic acid: (A)  $\text{MS}^2$  IMR experiment of  $[(\text{H})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  ( $m/z$  65),  $\mathbf{1}_{-\text{H}}$ , with  $\text{HCO}_2\text{H}$ ; (B)  $\text{MS}^3$  low energy ion trap collision-induced dissociation (CID) experiment on  $[(\text{H})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  ( $m/z$  109); (C)  $\text{MS}^4$  IMR experiment of  $[(\text{H})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  ( $m/z$  65),  $\mathbf{1}_{-\text{H}}$ , with  $\text{HCO}_2\text{H}$ , and; (D)  $\text{MS}^5$  low energy ion trap collision-induced dissociation (CID) experiment on  $[(\text{H})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  ( $m/z$  109). An asterisk (\*) denotes the mass selected precursor ion. The peak at  $153\text{ }m/z$  is the product ion  $[(\text{HCO}_2)\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$ .



**Figure S5.** Multistage mass spectrometry ( $MS^n$ ) on  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$ ,  $L = O_2CH^-$ , demonstrating its involvement in a two-step gas-phase catalytic cycle for the selective decomposition of formic acid: (A)  $MS^3$  IMR experiment of  $[(HCO_2)Cu(H)]^-$  ( $m/z$  109), **1\_O<sub>2</sub>CH**, with  $HCO_2H$ ; (B)  $MS^4$  low energy ion trap collision-induced dissociation (CID) experiment on  $[(HCO_2)Cu(O_2CH)]^-$  ( $m/z$  153); (C)  $MS^5$  IMR experiment of  $[(HCO_2)Cu(H)]^-$  ( $m/z$  109), **1\_O<sub>2</sub>CH**, with  $HCO_2H$ , and; (D)  $MS^6$  low energy ion trap collision-induced dissociation (CID) experiment on  $[(HCO_2)Cu(O_2CH)]^-$  ( $m/z$  153). An asterisk (\*) denotes the mass selected precursor ion.

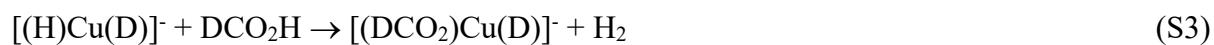
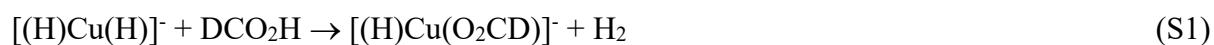


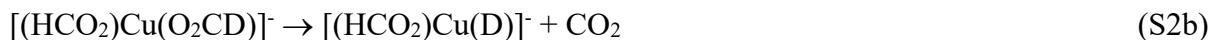
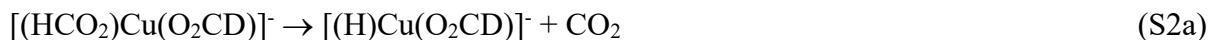
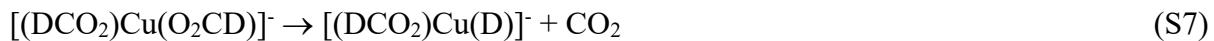
**Figure S6.** Multistage mass spectrometry ( $MS^n$ ) on  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$ ,  $L = BH_4^-$ , demonstrating its involvement in a two-step gas-phase catalytic cycle for the selective decomposition of formic acid: (A)  $MS^2$  IMR experiment of  $[(BH_4)Cu(H)]^-$  ( $m/z$  79), **1\_BH<sub>4</sub>**, with  $HCO_2H$ ; (B)  $MS^3$  low energy ion trap collision-induced dissociation (CID) experiment on  $[(BH_4)Cu(O_2CH)]^-$  ( $m/z$  123); (C)  $MS^4$  IMR experiment of  $[(BH_4)Cu(H)]^-$  ( $m/z$  79), **1\_BH<sub>4</sub>**, with  $HCO_2H$ , and; (D)  $MS^5$  low energy ion trap collision-induced dissociation (CID) experiment on  $[(BH_4)Cu(O_2CH)]^-$  ( $m/z$  123). An asterisk (\*) denotes the mass selected precursor ion.



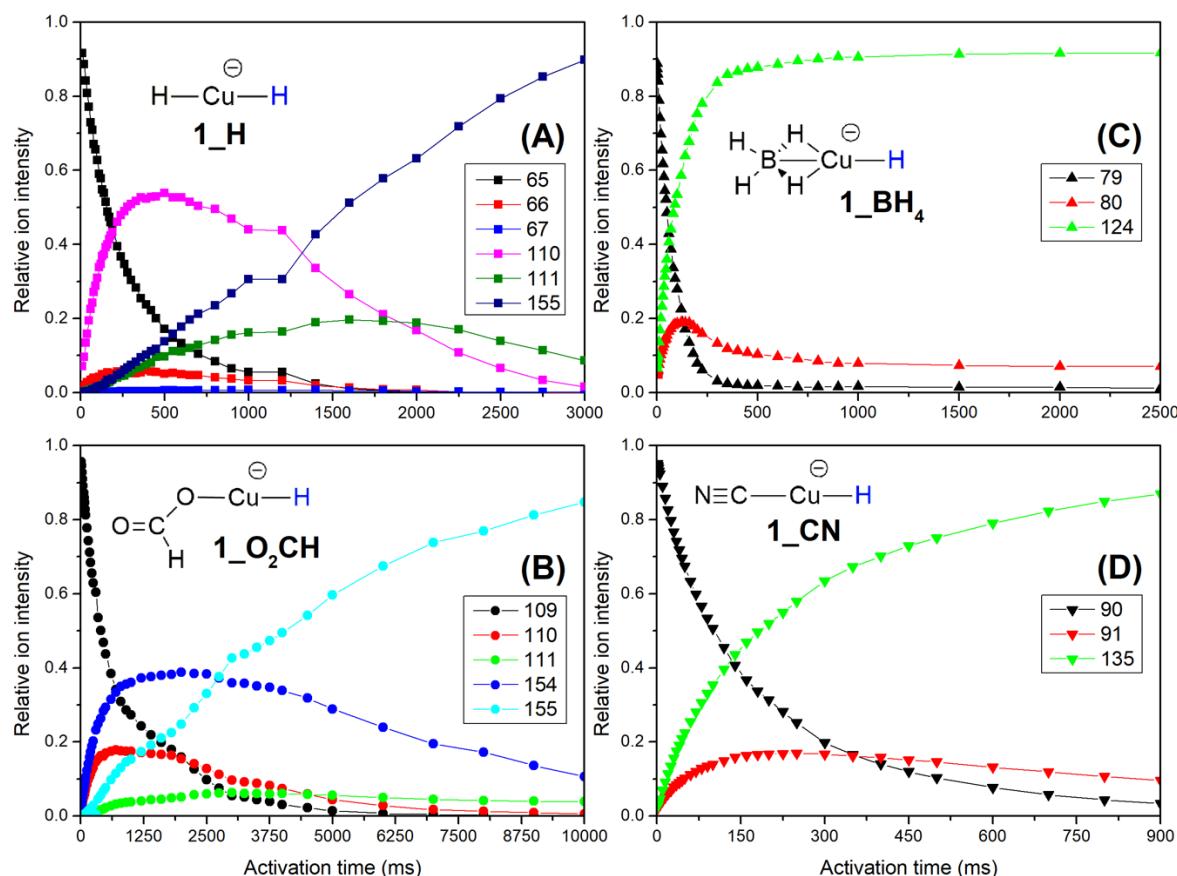
**Figure S7.** Multistage mass spectrometry ( $\text{MS}^n$ ) on  $[(\text{L})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$ ,  $\text{L} = \text{CN}^-$ , demonstrating its involvement in a two-step gas-phase catalytic cycle for the selective decomposition of formic acid: (A)  $\text{MS}^2$  IMR experiment of  $[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  ( $m/z$  90), **1\_CN**, with  $\text{HCO}_2\text{H}$ ; (B)  $\text{MS}^3$  low energy ion trap collision-induced dissociation (CID) experiment on  $[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  ( $m/z$  134); (C)  $\text{MS}^4$  IMR experiment of  $[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  ( $m/z$  90), **1\_CN**, with  $\text{HCO}_2\text{H}$ , and; (D)  $\text{MS}^5$  low energy ion trap collision-induced dissociation (CID) experiment on  $[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{O}_2\text{CH})]^-$  ( $m/z$  134). An asterisk (\*) denotes the mass selected precursor ion.

#### S4. Equations for the IMR between **1\_H**, **1\_O<sub>2</sub>CH** and **DCO<sub>2</sub>H**



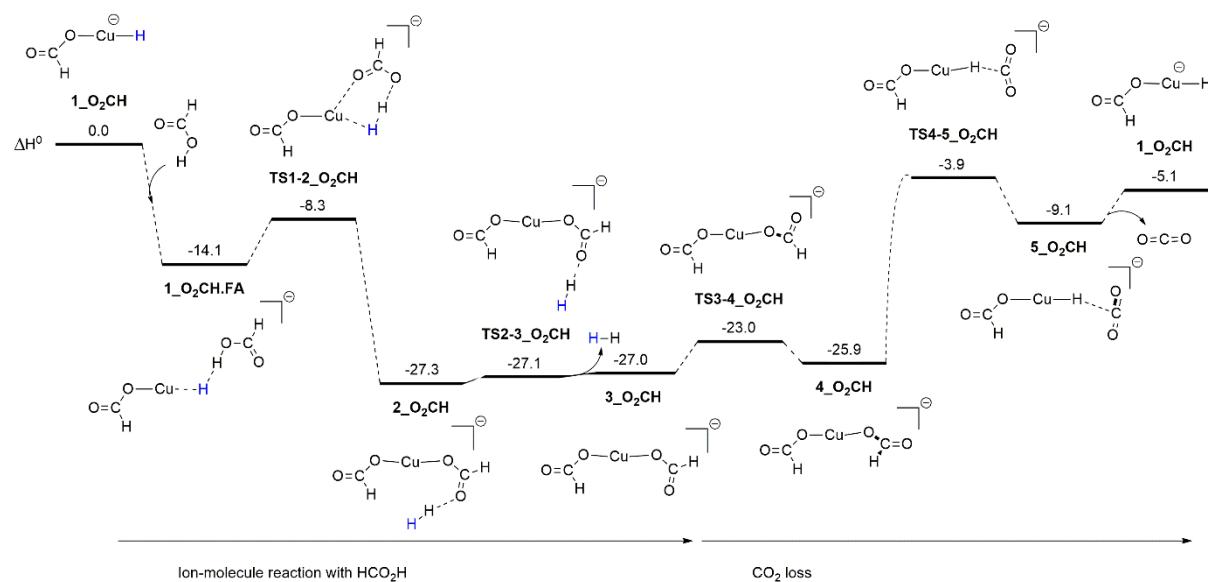


## S5. MS<sup>n</sup> IMR spectra with DCO<sub>2</sub>H and temporal plots

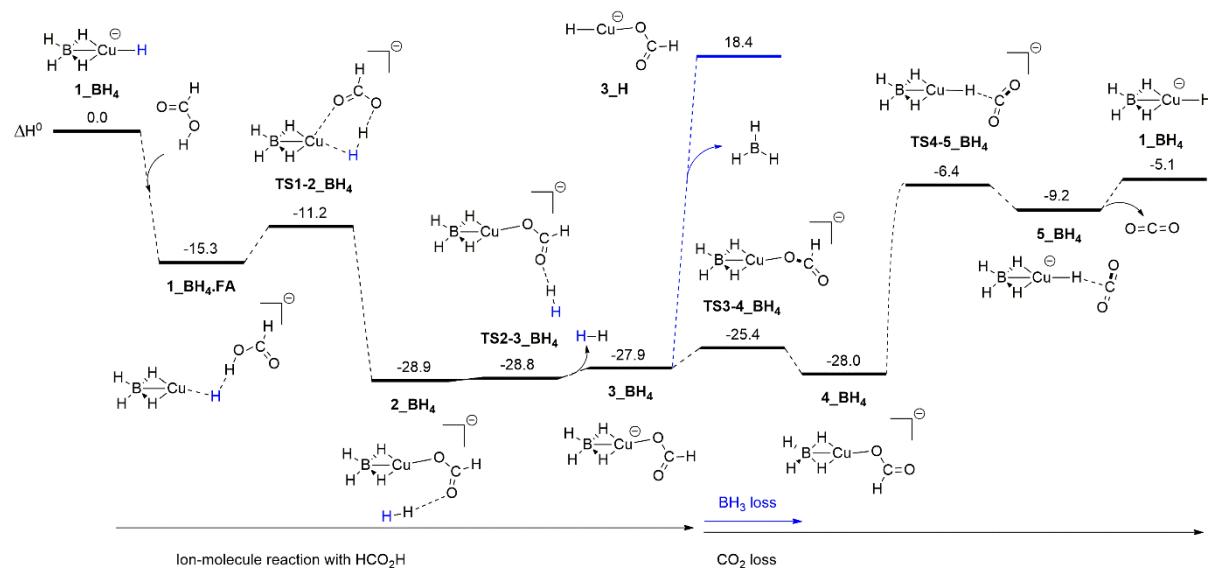


**Figure S8.** Representative temporal plots for the IMR between  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$  with  $DCO_2H$ . Relative ion intensities versus time (ms) for (A)  $1_H$ ,  $[(H)Cu(H)]^-$  ( $m/z$  65); (B)  $1_{O_2CH}$ ,  $[(HCO_2)Cu(H)]^-$  ( $m/z$  109); (C)  $1_{BH_4}$ ,  $[(BH_4)Cu(H)]^-$  ( $m/z$  79); (D)  $1_{CN}$ ,  $[(CN)Cu(H)]^-$  ( $m/z$  90).

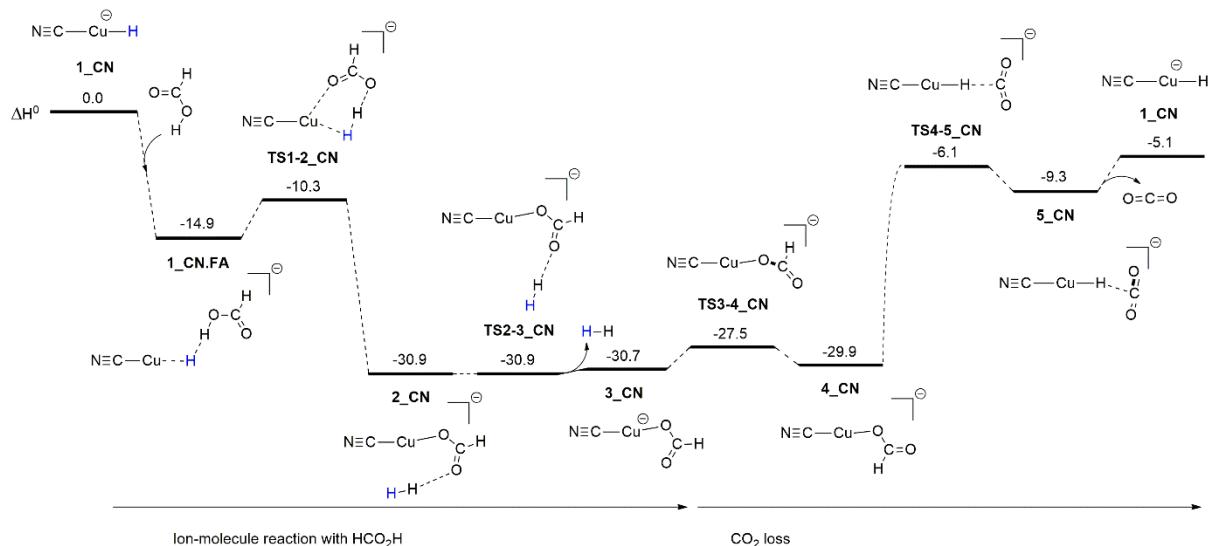
## S6. DFT calculated structures and potential energy surfaces



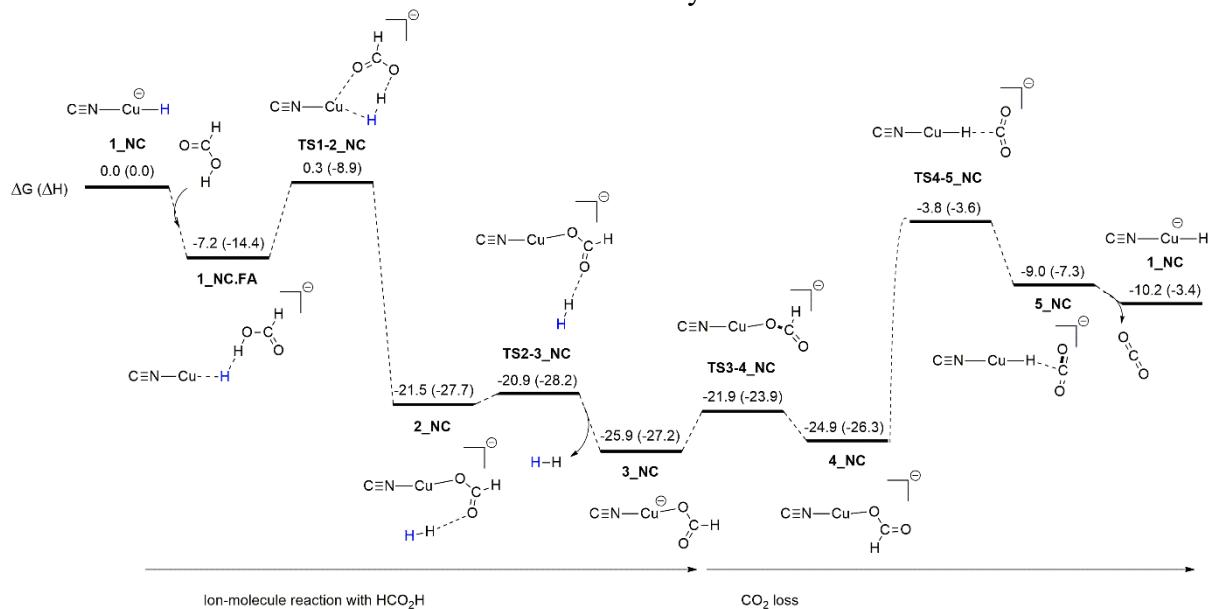
**Figure S9.** DFT calculated energy surface for the two reaction steps in the catalytic cycle for  $[(\text{HCO}_2)\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$ . Ion-molecule reaction of  $[(\text{HCO}_2)\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  with  $\text{HCO}_2\text{H}$  followed by subsequent  $\text{CO}_2$  loss. The relative enthalpies  $\Delta H^0$  (0 K), in parentheses, are given in kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> and are calculated at the  $\omega\text{B97XD}/\text{def}2\text{TZVPP}$  level of theory.



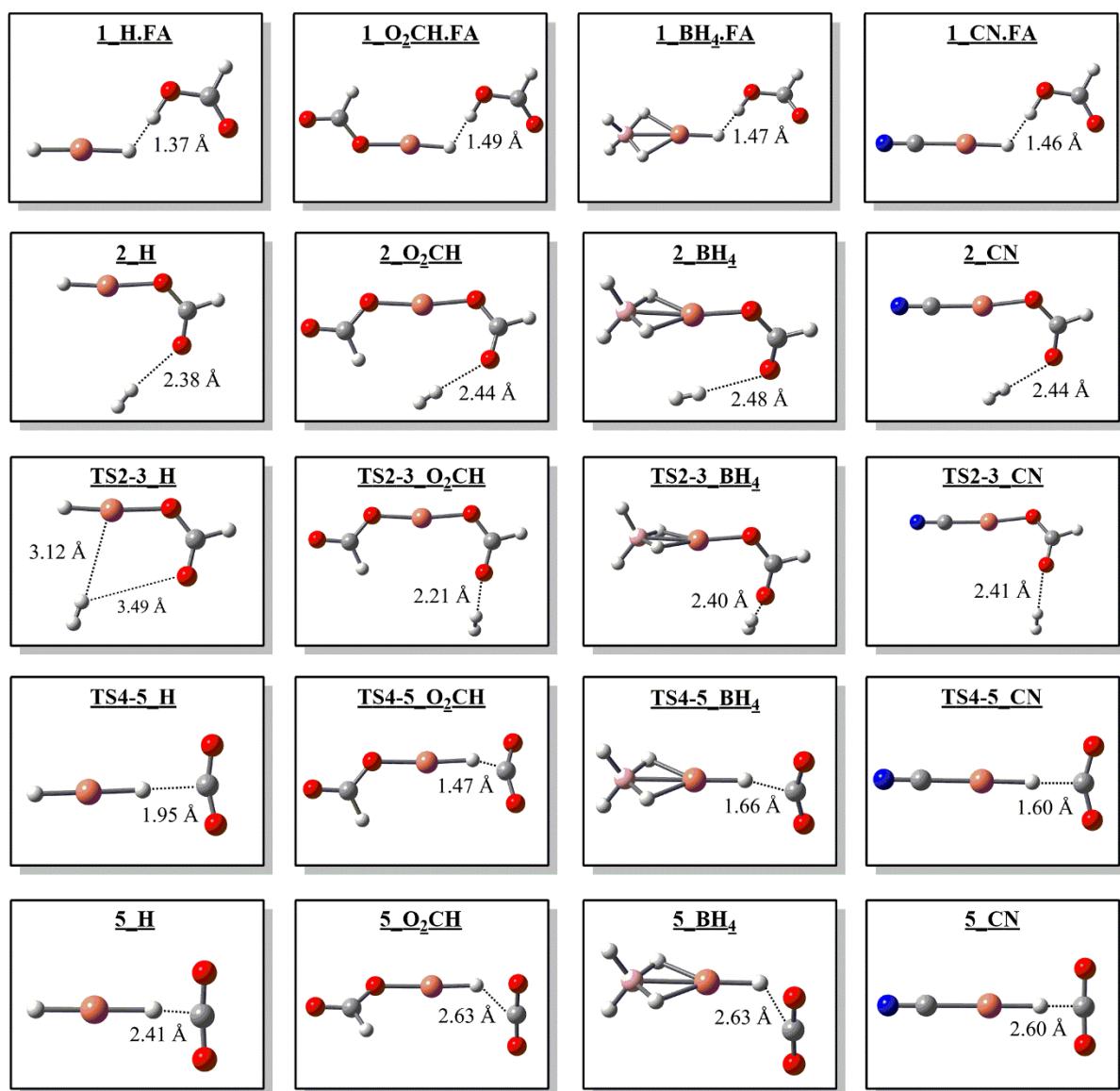
**Figure S10.** DFT calculated energy surface for the two reaction steps in the catalytic cycle for  $[(\text{BH}_4)\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$ . Ion-molecule reaction of  $[(\text{BH}_4)\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  with  $\text{HCO}_2\text{H}$  followed by subsequent competing  $\text{CO}_2$  or  $\text{BH}_3$  (in blue) loss. The relative enthalpies  $\Delta H^0$  (0 K), in parentheses, are given in kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> and are calculated at the  $\omega\text{B97XD}/\text{def}2\text{TZVPP}$  level of theory.



**Figure S11.** DFT calculated energy surface for the two reaction steps in the catalytic cycle for  $[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$ . Ion-molecule reaction of  $[(\text{CN})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  with  $\text{HCO}_2\text{H}$  followed by subsequent  $\text{CO}_2$  loss. The relative enthalpies  $\Delta H^0$  (0 K), in parentheses, are given in kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> and are calculated at the  $\omega\text{B97XD}/\text{def}2\text{TZVPP}$  level of theory.



**Figure S12.** DFT calculated energy surface for the two reaction steps in the catalytic cycle for  $[(\text{isoCN})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$ . Ion-molecule reaction of  $[(\text{isoCN})\text{Cu}(\text{H})]^-$  with  $\text{HCO}_2\text{H}$  followed by subsequent  $\text{CO}_2$  loss. The relative Gibbs free energies  $\Delta G$  and enthalpies  $\Delta H$ , in parentheses, are given in kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> and are calculated at the  $\omega\text{B97XD}/\text{def}2\text{TZVPP}$  level of theory



**Figure S13.** Bond distances of weak interactions in structures **1.FA**, **2**, **TS2-3**, **TS4-5** and **5** for each copper hydride anion species.

## S7. Comparison of DFT calculated energies between $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$ with $HCO_2H$

**Table S3.** Comparison of DFT calculated energies  $\Delta G$  ( $\Delta H^0$ ) for the ion-molecule reactions of  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$  (where L =  $H^-$ ,  $O_2CH^-$ ,  $BH_4^-$ ,  $CN^-$  and  $NC^-$ ) with formic acid ( $HCO_2H$ ), followed by decarboxylation to give  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$ ,  $CO_2$  and  $H_2$ . Energies are given in kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> and are calculated at the  $\omega$ B97XD/def2TZVPP level of theory. \* $\Delta H$  values were used for L =  $NC^-$  instead.

	$H^-$	$O_2CH^-$	$BH_4^-$	$CN^-$	$NC^-$ *
<b>1 + HCO<sub>2</sub>H</b>	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)
<b>1.FA</b>	-12.5 (-19.1)	-5.3 (-14.1)	-8.0 (-15.3)	-7.6 (-14.9)	-7.2 (-14.4)
<b>TS1-2</b>	-7.8 (-15.4)	1.7 (-8.3)	-1.1 (-11.2)	-1.3 (-10.3)	-0.3 (-8.9)
<b>2</b>	-31.9 (-36.8)	-19.2 (-27.3)	-21.4 (-28.9)	-23.6 (-30.9)	-21.5 (-27.7)
<b>TS2-3</b>	-30.4 (-36.6)	-18.5 (-27.1)	-20.3 (-28.8)	-23.0 (-30.9)	-20.9 (-28.2)

<b>3 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-34.7 (-36.3)	-23.9 (-27.0)	-24.6 (-27.9)	-28.1 (-30.7)	-25.9 (-27.2)
<b>TS3-4 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-31.9 (-33.9)	-20.8 (-23.0)	-21.7 (-25.4)	-24.5 (-27.5)	-21.9 (-23.9)
<b>4 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-34.7 (-36.4)	-22.8 (-25.9)	-24.9 (-28.0)	-27.1 (-29.9)	-24.9 (-26.3)
<b>TS4-5 +H<sub>2</sub></b>	-10.9 (-10.7)	-2.0 (-3.9)	-4.7 (-6.4)	-5.8 (-6.1)	-3.8 (-3.6)
<b>5 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-11.0 (-10.7)	-8.6 (-9.1)	-8.2 (-9.2)	-9.1 (-9.3)	-9.0 (-7.3)
<b>1 + CO<sub>2</sub> + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-10.2 (-5.1)	-10.2 (-5.1)	-10.2 (-5.1)	-10.2 (-5.1)	-10.2 (-3.4)

**Table S4.** Comparison of DFT calculated energies  $\Delta G$  ( $\Delta H^0$ ) for the ion-molecule reactions of  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$  (where L = H<sup>-</sup>, O<sub>2</sub>CH<sup>-</sup>, BH<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup>, CN<sup>-</sup> and NC<sup>-</sup>) with formic acid (HCO<sub>2</sub>H), followed by decarboxylation to give  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$ , CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>. Energies are given in kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> and are calculated at the M06-2x-D3/def2TZVP level of theory. \* $\Delta H$  values were used for L = NC<sup>-</sup> instead.

	H <sup>-</sup>	O <sub>2</sub> CH <sup>-</sup>	BH <sub>4</sub> <sup>-</sup>	CN <sup>-</sup>	NC <sup>-*</sup>
<b>1 + HCO<sub>2</sub>H</b>	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)
<b>1.FA</b>	-15.5 (-19.8)	-8.2 (-15.0)	-7.0 (-16.3)	-8.0 (-15.8)	-6.8 (-16.1)
<b>TS1-2</b>	-15.5 (-19.0)	-4.0 (-13.6)	-6.1 (-16.2)	-7.0 (-14.9)	-5.2 (-14.3)
<b>2</b>	-39.7 (-42.2)	-26.3 (-34.8)	-27.6 (-36.2)	-30.4 (-36.9)	-28.2 (-34.8)
<b>TS2-3</b>	-38.9 (-41.9)	-26.7 (-34.6)	-27.8 (-36.1)	-30.3 (-36.9)	-28.3 (-35.2)
<b>3 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-43.4 (-41.7)	-31.8 (-34.5)	-33.7 (-36.0)	-35.2 (-36.7)	-33.0 (-34.2)
<b>TS3-4 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-40.4 (-38.9)	-26.9 (-30.1)	-28.7 (-32.1)	-31.2 (-33.0)	-28.8 (-30.6)
<b>4 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-42.7 (-41.1)	-29.3 (-32.2)	-31.3 (-34.3)	-33.5 (-35.0)	-31.2 (-32.3)
<b>TS4-5 +H<sub>2</sub></b>	-14.4 (-11.2)	-6.1 (-7.6)	-7.9 (-9.1)	-9.0 (-8.5)	-7.4 (-6.8)
<b>5 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-15.1 (-10.9)	-9.6 (-9.8)	-9.0 (-10.3)	-10.9 (-9.8)	-10.0 (-8.1)
<b>1 + CO<sub>2</sub> + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-10.2 (-5.1)	-10.2 (-5.1)	-10.2 (-5.1)	-10.2 (-5.1)	-10.2 (-3.3)

**Table S5.** Comparison of DFT calculated energies  $\Delta G$  ( $\Delta H^0$ ) for the ion-molecule reactions of  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$  (where L = H<sup>-</sup>, O<sub>2</sub>CH<sup>-</sup>, BH<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup>, CN<sup>-</sup> and NC<sup>-</sup>) with formic acid (HCO<sub>2</sub>H), followed by decarboxylation to give  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$ , CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>. Energies are given in kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> and are calculated at the MN15/def2TZVP level of theory. \* $\Delta H$  values were used for L = NC<sup>-</sup> instead.

	H <sup>-</sup>	O <sub>2</sub> CH <sup>-</sup>	BH <sub>4</sub> <sup>-</sup>	CN <sup>-</sup>	NC <sup>-</sup>
<b>1 + HCO<sub>2</sub>H</b>	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)
<b>1.FA</b>	-12.5 (-19.3)	-6.9 (-14.2)	-7.7 (-15.2)	-8.6 (-14.5)	-7.5 (-14.5)
<b>TS1-2</b>	-9.2 (-17.2)	-1.5 (-11.3)	-3.5 (-13.9)	-4.6 (-12.5)	-2.5 (-11.6)
<b>2</b>	-32.9 (-39.2)	-22.3 (-30.5)	-23.6 (-31.8)	-26.8 (-33.1)	-24.3 (-30.5)
<b>TS2-3</b>	-31.9 (-38.8)	-21.5 (-29.7)	-23.1 (-31.3)	-26.5 (-32.8)	-23.8 (-30.6)
<b>3 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-36.3 (-38.3)	-26.2 (-29.4)	-27.7 (-30.9)	-30.9 (-32.4)	-28.2 (-29.5)
<b>TS3-4 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-33.4 (-35.7)	-21.9 (-25.2)	-23.9 (-27.4)	-27.3 (-29.1)	-24.2 (-26.0)
<b>4 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-36.1 (-38.2)	-24.8 (-27.9)	-26.6 (-30.0)	-29.9 (-31.4)	-27.0 (-28.2)
<b>TS4-5 +H<sub>2</sub></b>	-11.4 (-11.9)	-4.2 (-5.6)	-5.6 (-7.5)	-6.8 (-6.8)	-5.0 (-4.8)
<b>5 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-11.5 (-11.9)	-9.5 (-10.1)	-9.2 (-10.4)	-10.8 (-9.7)	-10.0 (-8.2)
<b>1 + CO<sub>2</sub> + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-10.3 (-5.2)	-10.3 (-5.2)	-10.3 (-5.2)	-10.3 (-5.2)	-10.3 (-3.5)

**Table S6.** Comparison of DFT calculated energies  $\Delta G$  ( $\Delta H^0$ ) for the ion-molecule reactions of  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$  (where L = H<sup>-</sup>, O<sub>2</sub>CH<sup>-</sup>, BH<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup>, CN<sup>-</sup> and NC<sup>-</sup>) with formic acid (HCO<sub>2</sub>H), followed by decarboxylation to give  $[(L)Cu(H)]^-$ , CO<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>. Energies are given in kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> and are

calculated at the CAM-B3LYP-D3BJ/def2TZVP level of theory.  $^*\Delta H$  values were used for L = NC<sup>-</sup> instead.

	<b>H<sup>-</sup></b>	<b>O<sub>2</sub>CH<sup>-</sup></b>	<b>BH<sub>4</sub><sup>-</sup></b>	<b>CN<sup>-</sup></b>	<b>NC<sup>-</sup></b>
<b>1 + HCO<sub>2</sub>H</b>	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)	0.0 (0.0)
<b>1.FA</b>	-14.3 (-21.0)	-7.9 (-15.3)	-8.9 (-16.5)	-10.5 (-15.8)	-10.1 (-15.2)
<b>TS1-2</b>	-10.4 (-17.9)	-1.1 (-10.8)	-3.4 (-13.6)	-5.4 (-12.4)	-3.8 (-11.1)
<b>2</b>	-34.0 (-39.9)	-22.6 (-30.2)	-24.1 (-31.9)	-29.1 (-33.3)	-26.7 (-30.2)
<b>TS2-3</b>	-33.2 (-39.4)	-22.0 (-30.2)	n/a <sup>†</sup>	-27.8 (-33.4)	-25.5 (-30.8)
<b>3 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-37.5 (-39.2)	-26.7 (-29.7)	-28.4 (-31.3)	-32.2 (-32.9)	-30.0 (-29.5)
<b>TS3-4 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-34.8 (-36.7)	-22.4 (-25.7)	-24.4 (-28.0)	-28.7 (-29.7)	-26.1 (-26.2)
<b>4 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-37.5 (-39.2)	-25.4 (-28.5)	-27.3 (-30.6)	-31.3 (-32.1)	-29.0 (-28.4)
<b>TS4-5 +H<sub>2</sub></b>	n/a <sup>‡</sup>	-3.1 (-5.1)	-6.0 (-7.5)	-8.3 (-6.7)	-6.0 (-4.2)
<b>5 + H<sub>2</sub></b>	n/a <sup>‡</sup>	-9.0 (-9.1)	-8.8 (-9.4)	-11.0 (-8.9)	-10.6 (-6.9)
<b>1 + CO<sub>2</sub> + H<sub>2</sub></b>	-9.6 (-4.5)	-9.6 (-4.5)	-9.6 (-4.5)	-9.6 (-4.5)	-9.6 (-2.8)

<sup>†</sup> TS2-3\_BH<sub>4</sub> could not be located at the CAM-B3LYP-D3BJ/def2TZVP level of theory. IRC calculations on TS1-2\_BH<sub>4</sub> suggest that upon forming the coordinated formate, the H<sub>2</sub> immediately dissociates from the [(BH<sub>4</sub>)Cu(O<sub>2</sub>CH)]<sup>-</sup> ion without requiring TS2-3\_BH<sub>4</sub>. <sup>‡</sup> TS4-5\_H and 5\_H could not be located at the CAM-B3LYP-D3BJ/def2TZVP level of theory.

## S8. Comparison of energetics for BH<sub>3</sub> vs. CO<sub>2</sub> loss in the PES between **1\_BH<sub>4</sub>** and **HCO<sub>2</sub>H**

**Table S7.** DFT calculated energetics ( $\Delta H^0$ ,  $\Delta H$  and  $\Delta G$ ) for BH<sub>3</sub> loss vs. CO<sub>2</sub> loss from **3\_BH<sub>4</sub>** [(BH<sub>4</sub>)Cu(O<sub>2</sub>CH)]<sup>-</sup> at different levels of theory. Energies are given in kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>.

	<b><math>\Delta H^0</math></b>		<b><math>\Delta H</math></b>		<b><math>\Delta G</math></b>	
	<u>BH<sub>3</sub> loss</u>	<u>CO<sub>2</sub> loss</u>	<u>BH<sub>3</sub> loss</u>	<u>CO<sub>2</sub> loss</u>	<u>BH<sub>3</sub> loss</u>	<u>CO<sub>2</sub> loss</u>
<b>oB97XD</b>	46.3	22.8	47.0	23.0	37.3	14.4
<b>M06-2X-D3</b>	49.7	30.9	50.3	31.0	41.8	33.5
<b>MN15</b>	53.5	25.7	54.1	25.9	44.7	17.5
<b>CAM-B3LYP-D3BJ</b>	47.0	26.8	47.6	26.9	38.4	18.8