

## Supporting Information

### **Compound Shape Effects in Minor Groove Binding Affinity and Specificity for Mixed Sequence DNA**

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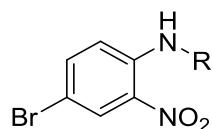
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## General materials and methods

### Synthesis

All commercial reagents were used without further purification. All melting points were determined on a Mel-Temp 3.0 melting point instrument, and are uncorrected. TLC analysis was carried out on silica gel 60 F254 precoated aluminum sheets using UV light for detection.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker 400 MHz spectrometer using the indicated solvents. Mass spectra were obtained from the Georgia State University Mass Spectrometry Laboratory, Atlanta, GA. Elemental analysis were performed by Atlantic Microlab Inc., Norcross, GA.

### Synthesis of 4-Bromo-N-alkyl (aryl)-2-nitroaniline (2a-n).



Amines (40 mmol) were added to 4-bromo-1-fluoro-2-nitrobenzene (4.4 g, 20 mmol) in ethanol (20 ml) and stirred at room temperature for 24 h. The reaction mixture was evaporated under vacuum. In case of aromatic amines,  $\text{Cs}_2\text{CO}_3$  (6.5 g, 20 mmol) was added to the reaction mixture and heated at 120 °C in DMA (20 ml) for 24 h, ice water was added and the formed solid was filtered and dried. The products resulting from both aromatic and aliphatic amines were chromatographed on silica gel using hexanes/ethyl acetate as solvent.

**4-Bromo-N-methyl-2-nitroaniline (2a).**<sup>1</sup>

**4-Bromo-N-ethyl-2-nitroaniline (2b).**<sup>2</sup>

Orange solid (3.47 g, 71 %), mp 92-93 °C ( reported mp 86-89 °C;  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO- $d_6$ ):  $\delta$  8.16 (br s, 1 H), 8.15 (br s, 1 H), 7.64 (dd,  $J$  = 2, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.03 (d,  $J$  = 9.2

Hz, 1 H), 3.38 (q,  $J$  = 6.8 Hz, 2 H), 1.29 (t,  $J$  = 7.2 Hz, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>8</sub>H<sub>10</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 244.9920, found: 244.9913 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-Bromo-N-isopropyl-2-nitroaniline (2c).**

Orange solid (3.67 g, 72 %), mp 97-98 °C ; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.15 (br s, 1 H), 7.88 (d,  $J$  = 7.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.64 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.08 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.92 (m, 1 H), 1.25 (d,  $J$  = 6 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>12</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 259.077, found: 259.066 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-Bromo-N-isobutyl-2-nitroaniline (2d).**

Orange solid (3.82 g, 70 %), mp 51-52 °C ; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.20 (br s, 1 H), 8.10 (br s, 1 H), 7.57 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 6.99 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.15 (d,  $J$  = 6 Hz, 2 H), 1.91 (m, 1 H), 0.93 (d,  $J$  = 6.4 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>13</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 295.0058, found: 295.0060 (M<sup>+</sup> + Na).

**4-Bromo-N-neopentyl-2-nitroaniline (2e).**

Orange solid (3.67 g, 64 %), mp 67-68 °C ; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.19 (t,  $J$  = 5.6 Hz, 1 H), 8.16 (d,  $J$  = 2 Hz, 1 H), 7.63 (dd,  $J$  = 2, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.16 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.20 (d,  $J$  = 5.6 Hz, 2 H ), 0.98 (s, 9 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>11</sub>H<sub>16</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 287.0390, found: 287.0378 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-Bromo-N-butyl-2-nitroaniline (2f).**

Orange oil (3.43 g, 63 %); <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.17 (br s, 1 H), 8.14 (br s, 1 H), 7.63 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.04 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.35 (m, 2 H), 1.58 (m, 2 H), 1.36 (m, 2 H ), 0.91 (t,  $J$  = 7.2 Hz, 3 H ); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>14</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 273.0233, found: 273.0221 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-Bromo-N-(3-Methoxypropyl)-2-nitroaniline (2g).**

Orange oil (4.1 g, 71 %); <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.36 (t,  $J$  = 5.2 Hz, 1 H), 8.14 (d,  $J$  = 2.4 Hz, 1 H), 7.64 (dd,  $J$  = 2.4, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.02 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.43 (m, 2 H), 3.37 (m, 2 H), 3.26 (s, 3H), 1.85 (p,  $J$  = 6 Hz, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>14</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>: 289.0182, found: 289.0169 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-Bromo-N-(2-methoxyethyl)-2-nitroaniline (2h).**

Orange solid (3.68 g, 67 %), mp 73-74 °C ; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.21 (m, 1 H), 8.16 (d, *J* = 2.4 Hz, 1 H), 7.65 (dd, *J* = 2.4, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.09 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.59 (m, 2 H), 3.52 (m, 2 H), 3.30 (s, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>11</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>Na: 296.9851, found: 296.9862 (M<sup>+</sup> + Na).

**4-Bromo-N-cyclobutyl-2-nitroaniline (2i).**

Orange solid (4.28 g, 79 %), mp 69-70 °C ; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.14 (t, *J* = 1.2 Hz, 1 H), 8.02 (d, *J* = 6 Hz, 1 H), 7.64 (dd, *J* = 2, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 6.89 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 4.12 (m, 1 H), 2.42 (m, 2 H), 2.01 (m, 2H), 1.77 (m, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>12</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 277.0077, found: 277.0064 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-Bromo-N-cyclopentyl-2-nitroaniline (2j).**

Orange solid (3.76 g, 66 %), mp 92-93 °C ; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.13 (br s, 1 H), 7.96 (d, *J* = 6 Hz, 1 H), 7.64 (d, *J* = 9 Hz, 1 H), 7.07 (d, *J* = 9 Hz, 1 H), 4.03 (m, 1 H), 2.05 (m, 2 H), 1.69 (m, 2 H), 1.55 (m, 4 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>11</sub>H<sub>14</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 285.0233, found: 285.0227 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-Bromo-N-cyclohexyl-2-nitroaniline (2k).<sup>3</sup>**

Orange solid (4.02 g, 67 %), mp 115-116 (reported mp 108.5-109.5 °C); <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.15 (t, *J* = 2 Hz, 1 H), 7.98 (d, *J* = 6 Hz, 1 H), 7.62 (dd, *J* = 2, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.12 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.63 (m, 1 H), 1.93 (m, 2 H), 1.60 (m, 2H), 1.57 (m, 1 H), 1.35 (m, 4 H), 1.25 (m, 1 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>16</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 299.0390, found: 299.0376 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-Bromo-N-(cyclopentylmethyl)-2-nitroaniline (2l).**

Orange solid (3.52 g, 59 %), mp 98-99 °C ; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.19 (t, *J* = 5.2 Hz, 1 H), 8.14 (d, *J* = 2 Hz, 1 H), 7.62 (dd, *J* = 2, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.06 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.26 (t, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 2 H ), 2.21 (m, 1 H), 1.73 (m, 2 H), 1.61 (m, 2 H), 1.53 (m, 2 H), 1.29 (m, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>16</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 299.0390, found: 299.0396 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

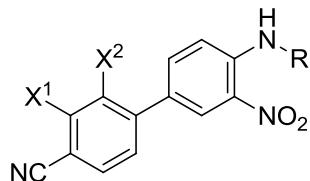
**4-Bromo-N-phenyl-2-nitroaniline (2m).<sup>4</sup>**

Orange solid (2.98 g, 51 %), mp 73-74 °C (reported mp 65-66 °C) ; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.44 (br s, 1 H), 8.23 (d, *J* = 2.8 Hz, 1 H), 7.63 (dd, *J* = 2.8, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.43 (m, 2 H), 7.32 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2 H), 7.23 (d, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 1 H), 7.11 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>10</sub>BrN<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 292.9920, found: 292.9906 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-Bromo-2-nitro-N-(o-tolyl)aniline (2n).**

Orange solid (2.51 g, 41 %), mp 74-75 °C ; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.41 (br s, 1 H), 8.22 (d, *J* = 1.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.57 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.38 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 1 H), 7.30 (m, 3 H), 6.58 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 2.17 (s, 3H).

**4'-(alkylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3a-q).<sup>5-9</sup>**



K<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub> (2.76 g, 20 mmol) in water (5 ml) and 4-cyanophenylboronic acid or its derivatives (11 mmol) methanol (10 ml) were added to a stirred solution of the bromo compound **2** (10 mmol) in dioxane (30 mL) and the mixture was deaerated under nitrogen for 20 min. Tetrakis(triphenylphosphine)palladium (0.46 g, 0.4 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was vigorously stirred at 100 °C for 24 h. The solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure, the solid was partitioned between ethyl acetate (200 mL) and 2 M aqueous Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub> (25 mL) containing 5 mL of concentrated ammonia, to remove palladium residues, then washed with water, passed through celite to remove the catalyst, dried (sodium sulfate) and evaporated. The product was purified using column chromatography on silica gel, and hexanes/ethyl acetate as an eluent.

**4'-(Methylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3a).<sup>1</sup>**

**4'-(Ethylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3b).**

Orange solid (2 g, 78 %), mp 121-122 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.40 (br s, 1 H), 8.26 (br s, 1 H), 7.97 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1 H), 7.87 (br s, 4 H), 7.17 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1 H), 3.45 (q, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 2 H), 1.25 (t, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>15</sub>H<sub>14</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 268.1081, found: 268.1074 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4'-(Isopropylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3c).**

Orange solid (1.99 g, 71 %), mp 110-111 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 8.49 (d, *J* = 2.4 Hz, 1 H), 8.17 (br s, 1H), 7.73 (m, 3 H), 7.67 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2 H), 7.01 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.93 (m, 1 H), 1.39 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>16</sub>H<sub>16</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 281.1243, found: 281.1250 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4'-(Isobutylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3d).**

Orange solid (2.09 g, 71 %), mp 157-158 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.41 (br s, 1 H), 8.36 (m, 1 H), 7.95 (d, *J* = 9 Hz, 1 H), 7.87 (m, 4H), 7.20 (d, *J* = 9 Hz, 1 H), 3.26 (t, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 2 H), 1.97 (m, 1 H), 0.97 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>18</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 296.1394, found: 296.1380 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4'-(Neopentylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3e).**

Orange solid (2.10 g, 68 %), mp 164-165 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.42 (br s, 1 H), 8.34 (d, *J* = 5.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.97 (d, *J* = 9 Hz, 1 H), 7.89 (m, 4H), 7.30 (d, *J* = 9 Hz, 1 H), 3.27 (d, *J* = 5.6 Hz, 2 H), 1.01 (s, 9 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>18</sub>H<sub>20</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 310.1550, found: 310.1539 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4'-(Butylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3f).**

Orange solid (2.15 g, 73 %), mp 130-131 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.42 (br s, 1 H), 8.30 (m, 1 H), 7.98 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.88 (m, 4H), 7.20 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1 H),

3.43 (m, 2 H), 1.63 (m, 2 H), 1.40 (m,  $J = 7.2$  Hz, 2 H), 0.94 (t,  $J = 7.2$  Hz, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for  $C_{17}H_{18}N_3O_2$ : 296.1394, found: 296.1379 ( $M^+ + 1$ ).

**4'-(3-Methoxypropyl)amino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3g).**

Orange solid (2.14 g, 69 %), mp 75-76 °C;  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>):  $\delta$  8.46 (t,  $J = 5.4$  Hz, 1 H), 8.40 (d,  $J = 2$  Hz, 1 H), 7.97 (d,  $J = 9.2$  Hz, 1 H), 7.87 (m, 4H), 7.16 (d,  $J = 9.2$  Hz, 1 H), 3.47 (m, 4 H), 3.28 (s, 3 H), 1.88 (m, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for  $C_{17}H_{18}N_3O_3$ : 312.1343, found: 312.1320 ( $M^+ + 1$ ).

**4'-(2-Methoxyethyl)amino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3h).**

Orange solid (1.81 g, 61 %), mp 118-119 °C;  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>):  $\delta$  8.38 (d,  $J = 1.6$  Hz, 1 H), 8.31 (br s, 1 H), 7.95 (d,  $J = 7.6$  Hz, 1 H), 7.86 (m, 4 H), 7.20 (m, 1 H), 3.59 (m, 4 H), 3.32 (s, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for  $C_{16}H_{15}N_3O_3Na$ : 320.1011, found: 320.1001 ( $M^+ + Na$ ).

**4'-(Cyclobutylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3i).**

Orange solid (2.31 g, 79 %), mp 159-160 °C;  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>):  $\delta$  8.39 (br s, 1 H), 8.14 (d,  $J = 5.2$  Hz, 1 H), 7.95 (d,  $J = 8.6$  Hz, 1 H), 7.87 (m, 4H), 7.03(d,  $J = 8.6$  Hz, 1 H), 4.20 (m, 1 H), 2.46 (m, 2 H), 2.04 (m, 2 H), 1.80 (m, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for  $C_{17}H_{16}N_3O_2$ : 294.1237, found: 294.1224 ( $M^+ + 1$ ).

**4'-(Cyclopentylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3j).**

Orange solid (2.19 g, 73 %), mp 166-167 °C;  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>):  $\delta$  8.40 (br s, 1 H), 8.09 (d,  $J = 6.8$  Hz, 1 H), 7.98 (d,  $J = 8.6$  Hz, 1 H), 7.88 (m, 4H), 7.22 (d,  $J = 8.6$  Hz, 1 H), 4.13 (m, 1 H), 2.09 (m, 2 H), 1.71 (m, 2 H), 1.64 (m, 4 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for  $C_{18}H_{17}N_3O_2$ : 307.1315, found: 307.1321 ( $M^+ + 1$ ).

**4'-(Cyclohexylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3k).**

Orange solid (2.50 g, 78 %), mp 192-193 °C;  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>):  $\delta$  8.42 (br s, 1 H), 8.11 (d,  $J = 7.8$  Hz, 1 H), 7.97 (d,  $J = 9$  Hz, 1 H), 7.89 (m, 4H), 7.26 (d,  $J = 9$  Hz, 1 H), 3.73 (m, 1 H), 1.98 (m, 2 H), 1.70 (m, 2 H), 1.59 (m, 1 H), 1.41 (m, 4H),

1.25 (m, 1H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>19</sub>H<sub>20</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 322.1550, found: 322.1535 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4'-(Cyclopentylmethyl)amino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile(3l).**

Orange solid (1.89 g, 59 %), mp 181-182 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 8.49 (d, J = 2 Hz, 1 H), 8.27 (br s, 1 H), 7.76-7.67 (m, 5 H), 7.00 (d, J = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.31 (m, 2 H), 2.32 (m, 1 H), 1.95 (m, 2 H), 1.68 (m, 2 H), 1.38 (m, 2 H), 0.87 (m, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>19</sub>H<sub>20</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 322.1550, found: 322.1558 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**3'-Nitro-4'-(phenylamino)-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3m).**

Orange solid (1.85 g, 59 %), mp 187-188 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.56 (br s, 1 H), 8.47 (d, J = 2 Hz, 1 H), 7.94 (dd, J = 2, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.90 (m, 4 H), 7.48 (br s, 1 H), 7.45 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 1 H), 7.37 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 2 H), 7.26 (m, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>19</sub>H<sub>14</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 316.1081, found: 316.1067 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**3'-Nitro-4'-(o-tolylamino)-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3n).**

Orange solid (1.80 g, 55 %), mp 157-158 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.53 (br s, 1 H), 8.48 (br s, 1 H), 7.88 (m, 5 H), 7.41 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 1 H), 7.32 (m, 3 H), 7.73 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 1 H), 2.21 (s, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>16</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 330.1237, found: 330.1221 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**3-Chloro-4'-(isopropylamino)-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3o).**

Orange solid (1.73 g, 55 %), mp 146-147 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.45 (d, J = 2 Hz, 1 H), 8.07 (br s, 1 H), 8.03 (m, 2 H), 7.98 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1 H), 7.85 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1 H), 7.21 (d, J = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 4.04 (m, 1 H), 1.29 (d, J = 6 Hz, 6 H), ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>16</sub>H<sub>15</sub>ClN<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 316.0847, found: 316.0833 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4'-(Isopropylamino)-3'-nitro-3-(trifluoromethyl)-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3p).**

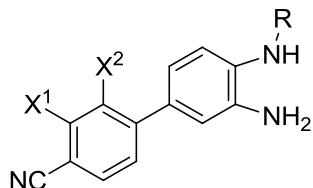
Orange solid (1.77 g, 51 %), mp 141-142 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.53 (d, J = 2 Hz, 1 H), 8.23 (br s, 1 H), 8.22 (m, 2 H), 8.08 (dd, J = 2, 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 8.04 (d, J =

7.6 Hz, 1 H), 7.24 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1 H), 4.05 (m, 1 H), 1.30 (d,  $J$  = 6 Hz, 6 H), ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>15</sub>F<sub>3</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 350.1111, found: 350.1102 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4'-(Isopropylamino)-2-methyl-3'-nitro-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-carbonitrile (3q).**

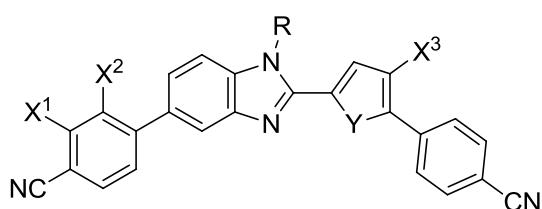
Orange solid (1.79 g, 61 %), mp 135-136 °C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.03 (d,  $J$  = 1.6 Hz, 1 H), 7.98 (d,  $J$  = 7.8 Hz, 1 H), 7.79 (br s, 1 H), 7.71 (d,  $J$  = 7.8 Hz, 1 H), 7.62 (dd,  $J$  = 1.6, 8.8 Hz, 1 H), 7.44 (d,  $J$  = 7.6 Hz, 1 H), 7.19 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1 H), 4.01 (m, 1 H), 2.31 (s, 3H), 1.30 (d,  $J$  = 6.8 Hz, 6 H), ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>18</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>2</sub>: 296.1394, found: 296.1379 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**Synthesis of the diamine (4a-q).**



SnCl<sub>2</sub>·2H<sub>2</sub>O (4.5 g, 20 mmol) was added to a suspension of the nitro compound **3** (5 mmol) in Ethanol (30 ml). The reaction mixture was refluxed for 12 h and concentrated under reduced pressure. The formed residue was neutralized by sodium hydroxide solution in an ice bath. The formed precipitate was filtered, dried under vacuum at room temperature and then dissolved in acetone (50 ml) and filtered. The filtrate was evaporated under reduced pressure and dried under vacuum at room temperature and used directly in the next step.

**Synthesis of the bisnitrile compounds (6a-t).**<sup>10-14</sup>



Sodium metabisulphite (1.14 g, 6 mmol) was added to a solution of the diamines **3a-r** (3 mmol) and the aldehydes<sup>15</sup> **5a-d** (3 mmol) in DMSO (10 mL) and the mixture was heated at 130 °C for 30 min. The reaction mixture was poured into water, filtered and dried. Purification was by crystallization from acetone.

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-methyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6a).**<sup>10</sup>

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-ethyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6b).**

Yellow solid (0.78 g, 61 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.06 (br s, 1 H), 7.97 (m, 9 H), 7.81 (m, 2 H), 7.71 (m, 1 H), 4.60 (br s, 2 H), 1.44 (br s, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>27</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 431.1325, found: 431.1320 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6c).**

Yellow solid (0.73 g, 55 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.08 (br s, 1 H), 7.98 (m, 3 H), 7.92 (m, 7 H), 7.64 (m, 2 H), 5.18 (m, 1 H), 1.69 (d, J = 6.4 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 445.1487, found: 445.1494 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-isobutyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6d).**

Yellow solid (0.70 gm, 51 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.06 (br s, 1 H), 7.95 (m, 8 H), 7.84 (m, 3 H), 7.69 (d, J = 7.2 Hz, 1 H), 4.43 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 2 H), 2.17 (m, 1 H), 0.89 (d, J = 4.8 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>23</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 459.1638, found: 459.1615 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-neopentyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6e).**

Yellow solid (0.86 gm, 61 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.07 (br s, 1 H), 7.96 (m, 4 H), 7.93 (m, 5 H), 7.85 (m, 2 H), 7.68 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1 H), 4.54 (s, 2

H), 0.83 (s, 9 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>25</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 473.1794, found: 473.1782 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(1-Butyl-2-(5-(4-cyanophenyl)thiophen-2-yl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-5-yl)benzonitrile (6f).**

Yellow solid (0.70 gm, 51 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.06 (br s, 1 H), 7.97 (m, 4 H), 7.93 (m, 4 H), 7.88 (d, J = 4 Hz, 1 H), 7.81 (d, J = 4 Hz, 1 H), 7.79 (br s, 1 H), 7.70 (d, J = 8 Hz, 1 H), 4.56 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 2 H), 1.79 (m, 2 H), 1.36 (m, 2 H), 0.90 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>25</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 459.1638, found: 459.1637 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-(3-methoxypropyl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6g).**

Yellow solid (0.69 gm, 49 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.05 (br s, 1 H), 7.92 (m, 9 H), 7.71 (m, 3 H), 4.59 (br s, 2 H), 3.36 (br s, 2 H), 3.22 (s, 3 H), 2.06 (br s, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>23</sub>N<sub>4</sub>OS: 475.1587, found: 475.1567 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-(2-methoxyethyl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6h).**

Yellow solid (0.92 gm, 67 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.06 (br s, 1H), 7.95 (m, 4 H), 7.92 (m, 4 H), 7.88 (m, 2 H), 7.78 (d, J = 8.8Hz, 1 H), 7.69 (d, J = 8 Hz, 1 H), 4.72 (br s, 2H), 3.81 (br s, 2 H), 3.21 (s, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>4</sub>OS: 461.1614, found: 461.1611 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-cyclobutyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6i).**

Yellow solid (0.83 gm, 61 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.10 (br s, 1 H), 8.02 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 2 H), 7.97 (m, 3 H), 7.92 (m, 4 H), 7.88 (d, J = 3.7 Hz, 1 H), 7.73 (d, J = 3.7 Hz, 1 H), 7.69 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 1 H), 5.44 (m, 1 H), 2.84 (m, 2 H),

2.56 (m, 2 H), 1.91 (m, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 457.1481, found: 457.1469 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-cyclopentyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6j).**

Yellow solid (0.63 gm, 45 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.09 (br s, 1 H), 7.93 (m, 8 H), 7.83 (m, 2 H), 7.73 (br s, 1 H), 7.65 (br s, 1 H), 5.31 (m, 1 H), 2.23 (m, 4 H), 2.06 (m, 2 H), 1.78 (m, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>23</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 471.1638, found: 471.1630 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-cyclohexyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6k).**

Yellow solid (0.83 gm, 61 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.07 (d, J = 6 Hz, 1 H), 7.98 (m, 9 H), 7.79 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 1 H), 7.62 (m, 2 H), 4.69 (m, 1 H), 2.35 (m, 2 H), 1.97 (m, 4 H), 1.69 (m, 1 H), 1.46 (m, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 485.1784, found: 485.1785 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-(cyclopentylmethyl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6l).**

Yellow solid (0.58 gm, 40 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.06 (br s, 1 H), 7.96 (m, 3 H), 7.93 (m, 4 H), 7.82 (m, 4 H), 7.69 (d, J = 7.2 Hz, 1 H), 4.55 (d, J = 4.8 Hz, 2 H), 2.38 (m, 1 H), 1.60 (m, 4 H), 1.45 (m, 2 H), 1.29 (m, 2 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>31</sub>H<sub>25</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 485.1794, found: 485.1791 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-phenyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6m).**

Yellow solid (0.71 gm, 50 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.15 (br s, 1 H), 7.93 (m, 4 H), 7.84 (m, 4 H), 7.73 (m, 3 H), 7.65 (m, 4 H), 7.15 (m, 1 H), 6.68 (m, 1 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>31</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 479.1325, found: 479.1314 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-(o-tolyl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6n).**

Yellow solid (0.60 gm, 41 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.17 (br s, 1 H), 7.94 (m, 4 H), 7.89 (d, *J* = 8 Hz, 2 H), 7.83 (d, *J* = 8 Hz, 2 H), 7.62 (m, 4 H), 7.56 (m, 2 H), 7.05 (d, *J* = 8 Hz, 1 H), 6.66 (br s, 1 H), 1.91 (s, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>32</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 493.1481, found: 493.1484 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**2-Chloro-4-(2-(4-cyanophenyl)thiophen-2-yl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-5-yl)benzonitrile (6o).**

Yellow solid (0.87 gm, 61 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.12 (m, 2H), 8.01 (d, *J* = 8 Hz, 1 H), 7.92 (m, 7 H), 7.65 (m, 2 H), 5.18 (m, 1 H), 1.69 (d, *J* = 6 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>20</sub>ClN<sub>4</sub>S: 479.1092, found: 479.1086 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(2-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)thiophen-2-yl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-5-yl)-2-(trifluoromethyl)benzonitrile (6p).**

Yellow solid (0.81 gm, 53 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.26 (m, 4H), 7.99 (m, 3 H), 7.94 (d, *J* = 8 Hz, 2 H), 7.89 (d, *J* = 3.6 Hz, 1 H), 7.75 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1 H), 7.69 (d, *J* = 3.6 Hz, 1 H), 5.20 (m, 1 H), 1.75 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3 H), 1.71 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>20</sub>F<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 513.1355, found: 513.1349 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(2-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)thiophen-2-yl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-5-yl)-3-methylbenzonitrile (6q).**

Yellow solid (0.85 gm, 62 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 7.99 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2 H), 7.93 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2 H), 7.90 (d, *J* = 4 Hz, 1 H), 7.84 (br s, 1 H), 7.81 (br s, 1 H), 7.76 (m, 2 H), 7.66 (d, *J* = 4 Hz, 1 H), 7.52 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 1 H), 7.25 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 1 H), 5.18 (m, 1 H), 2.35 (s, 3 H), 1.69 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>23</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 459.1638, found: 459.1633 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)-3-methylthiophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6r).**

Yellow solid (0.53 gm, 39 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.10 (br s, 1 H), 8.00 (m, 3 H), 7.96 (m, 3 H), 7.79 (m, 3 H), 7.64 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1 H), 7.58 (br s, 1 H), 5.23(m, 1 H), 2.43 (s, 3 H), 1.74 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>23</sub>N<sub>4</sub>S: 459.1638, found: 459.1615 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

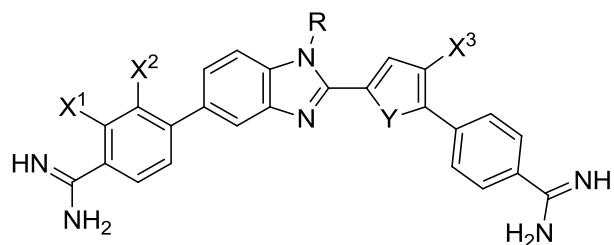
**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-methyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)selenophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6s).**

Yellow solid (0.84 gm, 61 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.05 (m, 3 H), 7.96 (d, *J* = 8 Hz, 2 H), 7.91 (m, 6 H), 7.76 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1 H), 7.70 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1 H), 4.09 (s, 3 H).

**4-(5-(4-Cyanophenyl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)selenophen-2-yl)benzonitrile (6t).**

Yellow solid (0.75 gm, 51 %), mp > 300 °C; <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 8.08 (br s, 1H), 8.04 (br s, 1 H), 7.95 (m, 9 H), 7.85 (br s, 1 H), 7.65 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1 H), 5.21 (t, *J* = 5.8 Hz, 1 H), 1.70 (d, *J* = 5.8 Hz, 6 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>21</sub>N<sub>4</sub>Se: 493.0926, found: 493.0915 (M<sup>+</sup> + 1).

**Synthesis of the diamidines (7a-t).**



The above bis-nitriles (0.6 mmol) were suspended in freshly distilled THF (5 mL), and treated with a 1M LiN(TMS)<sub>2</sub><sup>16,17</sup> in THF solution (3.6 mL, 3.6 mmol) and the mixture was stirred for 48 h at room temperature. The reaction mixture was cooled to 0 °C and HCl saturated ethanol (3 mL) was added. The mixture was stirred for 4

h, and concentrated under reduced pressure, ether was added and the resultant solid was collected by filtration. The diamidine was purified by neutralization with 1M sodium hydroxide solution followed by filtration of the produced solid, washed with water and dried. The free base was stirred with ethanolic HCl for 24 h. The reaction mixture was concentrated under reduced pressure and acetone was added, the solid that formed was filtered and dried under vacuum at 100 °C for 24 h.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-methyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7a).**<sup>15</sup>

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-ethyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7b).**

Yellow solid (0.225 gm, 62 %), mp > 300 °C. <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.58 (s, 2 H), 9.54 (s, 2 H), 9.36 (s, 2 H), 9.34 (s, 2 H), 8.09 (br s, 1 H), 8.03 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 8.00 (m, 6 H), 7.94 (d, *J* = 4 Hz, 1H), 7.90 (d, *J* = 4 Hz, 1H), 7.85 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.76 (dd, *J* = 1.2, 8.4 Hz, 1H), 4.61 (m, 2 H), 1.46 (t, *J* = 7 Hz, 3H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>27</sub>H<sub>26</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 233.0964, found: 233.0957 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>27</sub>H<sub>24</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 1.75H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 53.67; H, 5.09; N, 13.91. Found: C, 53.69; H, 5.18; N, 13.72.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7c).**

Yellow solid (0.260 gm, 72 %), mp > 300 °C. <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.56 (s, 2 H), 9.51 (s, 2 H), 9.33 (s, 2 H), 9.30 (s, 2 H), 8.13 (s, 1 H), 8.06 (m, 3 H), 8.02 (m, 7 H), 7.79 (d, *J* = 3.2 Hz, 1H), 7.76 (d, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 1H), 5.22 (m, 1H), 1.73 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 6H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>27</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 479.2018, found: 479.2012 (Amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 1). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>26</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 1.5H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 54.79; H, 5.25; N, 13.70. Found: C, 54.91; H, 5.33; N, 13.36.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-isobutyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7d).**

Yellow solid (0.265 gm, 69 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.51 (s, 2 H), 9.47 (s, 2 H), 9.27 (s, 2 H), 9.24 (s, 2 H), 8.11 (s, 1 H), 8.05 (m, 4 H), 7.95 (m, 6H), 7.91 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 1H), 7.78 (d, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 4.49 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 2.20 (m, 1 H), 0.92 (d, *J* = 6 Hz, 6H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>30</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 247.1121, found: 247.1113 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 2.10H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 54.54; H, 5.56; N, 13.16. Found: C, 54.83; H, 5.69; N, 12.76.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-neopentyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7e).**

Yellow solid (0.050 gm, 13 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.55 (s, 2 H), 9.51 (s, 2 H), 9.33 (s, 2 H), 9.30 (s, 2 H), 8.12 (s, 1 H), 8.04 (m, 5 H), 7.97 (m, 5 H), 7.93 (d, *J* = 3.6 Hz, 1H), 7.81 (d, *J* = 8 Hz, 1H), 4.61 (s, 2H), 0.86 (s, 9H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>32</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 254.1199, found: 254.1192 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>30</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 3H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 53.87; H, 5.88; N, 12.57. Found: C, 53.50; H, 5.51; N, 12.47.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-butyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7f).**

Yellow solid (0.300 gm, 77 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.57 (s, 2 H), 9.53 (s, 2 H), 9.35 (s, 2 H), 9.32 (s, 2 H), 8.10 (br s, 1 H), 8.05 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 8.00 (m, 6 H), 7.98 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 7.93 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.82 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 4.64 (t, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 2H), 1.83 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 2H), 1.40 (m, 2H), 0.91 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 3H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>30</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 247.1121, found: 247.1112 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 2.25H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 54.31; H, 5.58; N, 13.11. Found: C, 53.92; H, 5.48; N, 12.90.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-(3-methoxypropyl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7g).**

Yellow solid (0.060 gm, 10 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>):  $\delta$  9.57 (s, 2 H), 9.53 (s, 2 H), 9.35 (s, 2 H), 9.32 (s, 2 H), 8.10 (br s, 1 H), 8.05 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 8.00 (m, 6 H), 7.98 (d,  $J$  = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 7.93 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.82 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 4.68 (t,  $J$  = 6.4 Hz, 2H), 3.40 (t,  $J$  = 5.2 Hz, 2H), 3.22 (s, 3H), 2.11 (m, 2H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>30</sub>N<sub>6</sub>OS: 255.1095, found: 255.1087 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>6</sub>OS. 3HCl. 1.25H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 54.49; H, 5.28; N, 13.15. Found: C, 54.40; H, 5.30; N, 12.97.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-(2-methoxyethyl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7h).**

Yellow solid (0.260 gm, 68 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>):  $\delta$  9.55 (s, 2 H), 9.50 (s, 2 H), 9.32 (s, 2 H), 9.29 (s, 2 H), 8.11 (br s, 1 H), 8.04 (m, 5H), 7.99 (m, 3H), 7.95 (m, 2H), 7.89 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.80 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 4.78 (br s, 2H), 3.85 (t,  $J$  = 4.8 Hz, 2H), 3.22 (s, 3 H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>27</sub>N<sub>6</sub>OS: 495.1967, found: 495.1985 (amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 1). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>26</sub>N<sub>6</sub>OS. 3HCl. 2H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 52.65; H, 5.21; N, 13.16. Found: C, 52.63; H, 5.49; N, 13.00.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-cyclobutyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7i).**

Yellow solid (0.162 gm, 40 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>):  $\delta$  9.57 (s, 2 H), 9.54 (s, 2 H), 9.36 (s, 2 H), 9.34 (s, 2 H), 8.15 (br s, 1 H), 8.11 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.05 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 8.02 (m, 5 H), 7.97 (m, 2H), 7.85 (d,  $J$  = 3.6 Hz, 1H), 7.81 (d,  $J$  = 9.2 Hz, 1H), 5.48 (m, 1H), 2.84 (m, 2H), 2.60 (m, 2H), 1.96 (m, 2H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 246.1043, found: 246.1035 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>26</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 2H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 54.87; H, 5.24; N, 13.24. Found: C, 54.54; H, 5.12; N, 13.52.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-cyclopentyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7j).**

Yellow solid (0.200 gm, 53 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.57 (s, 2 H), 9.53 (s, 2 H), 9.34 (s, 2 H), 9.31 (s, 2 H), 8.15 (d,  $J$  = 1.2 Hz, 1 H), 8.06 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 2 H), 8.02 (m, 5 H), 7.97 (m, 2H), 7.85 (m, 2H), 7.77 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1 H), 5.34 (m, 1H), 2.26 (m, 4H), 2.06 (m, 2H), 1.81 (m, 2H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>30</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 253.1121, found: 253.1116 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 2.75H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 54.40; H, 5.55; N, 12.69. Found: C, 54.62; H, 5.42; N, 12.43.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-cyclohexyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7k).**

Yellow solid (0.230 gm, 58 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.61 (s, 2 H), 9.58 (s, 2 H), 9.39 (s, 2 H), 9.37 (s, 2 H), 8.20 (m, 1 H), 8.14 (br s, 1H), 8.07 (m, 3 H), 8.02 (m, 6 H), 7.86 (m, 1H), 7.81 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 4.77 (m, 1H), 2.37 (m, 2H), 2.08 (m, 2H), 1.91 (m, 2H), 1.71 (m, 1H), 1.49 (m, 3H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>31</sub>H<sub>32</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 260.1199, found: 260.1190 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>31</sub>H<sub>30</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 2.5H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 55.42; H, 5.70; N, 12.51. Found: C, 55.17; H, 5.49; N, 12.29.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-(cyclopentylmethyl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7l).**

Yellow solid (0.300 gm, 74 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.60 (s, 2 H), 9.55 (s, 2 H), 9.36 (s, 2 H), 9.34 (s, 2 H), 8.10 (br s, 2 H), 8.06 (m, 2 H), 8.01 (m, 8 H), 7.83 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1 H), 4.64 (d,  $J$  = 6.8 Hz, 2 H), 2.41 (m, 1H), 1.63 (m, 4H), 1.47 (m, 2H), 1.33 (m, 2H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>31</sub>H<sub>30</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 260.1199, found: 260.1194 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>31</sub>H<sub>32</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 2.75H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 55.05; H, 5.74; N, 12.43. Found: C, 55.09; H, 5.59; N, 12.38.

**4-(5-(4-carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-phenyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7m).**

Yellow solid (0.225 gm, 66 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.48 (s, 4 H), 9.25 (s, 4 H), 8.21 (d,  $J$  = 1.2 Hz, 1H), 8.02 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.97 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.91 (br s, 4 H), 7.75 (m, 3H), 7.69 (m, 4H), 7.19 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 6.73 (d,  $J$  = 3.6 Hz, 1H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>31</sub>H<sub>26</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 257.0964, found: 257.0975 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>31</sub>H<sub>24</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 0.5H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 59.13; H, 4.48; N, 13.35. Found: C, 59.01; H, 4.72; N, 13.16.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-(o-tolyl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)thiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7n).**

Yellow solid (0.165 gm, 42 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.52 (s, 4 H), 9.31 (s, 4 H), 8.21 (br s, 1H), 8.01 (m, 4H), 7.93 (d,  $J$  = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 7.88 (d,  $J$  = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 7.72 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.65 (m, 3 H), 7.60 (m, 2H), 7.11 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.80 (d,  $J$  = 3.6 Hz, 1H), 1.95 (s, 3H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>32</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 264.1043, found: 264.1038 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>32</sub>H<sub>26</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 0.5H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 59.70; H, 4.70; N, 13.06. Found: C, 60.02; H, 5.09; N, 13.01.

**4-(2-(5-(4-carbamimidoylphenyl)thiophen-2-yl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-5-yl)-2-chlorobenzimidamide (7o).**

Yellow solid (0.110 gm, 28%), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.60 (br s, 4 H), 9.33 (br s, 4 H), 8.14 (br s, 1H), 8.07 (m, 4H), 8.00 (m, 2H), 7.98 (d,  $J$  = 3.2 Hz, 1H), 7.95 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.81 (d,  $J$  = 3.2 Hz, 1H), 7.76 (m, 2H), 5.22 (m, 1H), 1.73 (d,  $J$  = 6.8 Hz, 6H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>27</sub>ClN<sub>6</sub>S: 257.0848, found: 257.0837 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>25</sub>ClN<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 2.5H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 50.51; H, 5.00; N, 12.63. Found: C, 50.12; H, 4.75; N, 12.46.

**4-(2-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)thiophen-2-yl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-5-yl)-2-(trifluoromethyl)benzimidamide (7p).**

Yellow solid (0.320 gm, 76 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.62 (br s, 4 H), 9.59 (s, 2 H), 9.38 (s, 2 H), 8.26 (br s, 2H), 8.19 (s, 1H), 8.05 (m, 3H), 7.98 (m, 3H), 7.88 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.79 (m, 2H), 5.23 (br s, 1H), 1.73 (d,  $J$  = 4.8 Hz, 6H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>27</sub>F<sub>3</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 274.0980, found: 274.0971 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>25</sub>F<sub>3</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 2.5H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 49.77; H, 4.75; N, 12.01. Found: C, 49.72; H, 4.69; N, 11.86.

**4-(2-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)thiophen-2-yl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-5-yl)-3-methylbenzimidamide (7q).**

Yellow solid (0.16 gm, 42 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.58 (s, 4 H), 9.40 (s, 4 H), 8.07 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 8.02 (m, 4H), 7.95 (br s, 1H), 7.91 (m, 2H), 7.86 (d,  $J$  = 8 Hz, 1H), 7.58 (d,  $J$  = 8 Hz, 1H), 7.47 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 5.22 (m, 1H), 2.38 (s, 3H), 1.74 (d,  $J$  = 6.8 Hz, 6H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>30</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 247.1121, found: 247.1114 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 1.5H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 55.48; H, 5.46; N, 13.39. Found: C, 55.45; H, 5.38; N, 13.06.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)-3-methylthiophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7r).**

Yellow solid (0.14 gm, 38 %), mp > 300 °C.  $^1\text{H}$ NMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.56 (s, 2 H), 9.54 (s, 2 H), 9.36 (s, 2 H), 9.32 (s, 2 H), 8.14 (br s, 1H), 8.07 (d,  $J$  = 8 Hz, 2H), 8.00 (m, 4H), 7.84 (d,  $J$  = 8 Hz, 2H), 7.81 (br s, 1H), 7.71 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.64 (br s, 1H), 5.26 (m, 1H), 2.46 (s, 3H), 1.77 (d,  $J$  = 6.8 Hz, 6H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>30</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S: 247.1121, found: 247.1112 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>29</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>6</sub>S. 3HCl. 1.5H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 55.48; H, 5.46; N, 13.39. Found: C, 55.48; H, 5.52; N, 13.19.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-methyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)selenophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7s).**

Yellow solid (0.150 gm, 39 %), mp > 300 °C. <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.56 (s, 2 H), 9.52 (s, 2 H), 9.31 (s, 2 H), 9.29 (s, 2 H), 8.24 (d, *J* = 3.6 Hz, 1H), 8.15 (d, *J* = 3.6 Hz, 1H), 8.10 (br s, 1H), 7.99 (m, 9H), 7.85 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 4.15 (s, 3H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>26</sub>H<sub>24</sub>N<sub>6</sub>Se: 250.0608, found: 250.0599 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>26</sub>H<sub>22</sub>N<sub>6</sub>Se. 3HCl. 2H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 48.59; H, 4.55; N, 13.08. Found: C, 48.48; H, 4.39; N, 13.10.

**4-(5-(4-Carbamimidoylphenyl)-1-isopropyl-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)selenophen-2-yl)benzimidamide (7t).**

Yellow solid (0.325 gm, 79%), mp > 300 °C. <sup>1</sup>HNMR (DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 9.56 (s, 2 H), 9.53 (s, 2 H), 9.40 (s, 2 H), 9.32 (s, 2 H), 8.11 (m, 3H), 8.09 (m, 9H), 7.79 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 5.19 (m, 1H), 1.73 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 6H); ESI-HRMS: m/z calculated for C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>6</sub>Se: 264.0765, found: 264.0756 (Double charged amidine base M<sup>+</sup> + 2). Anal. Calcd. For C<sub>28</sub>H<sub>26</sub>N<sub>6</sub>Se. 3HCl. 2.5H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 49.47; H, 5.04; N, 12.37. Found: C, 49.16; H, 5.13; N, 12.12.

## Biophysical Experimental

### Materials

In the DNA thermal melting (*T<sub>m</sub>*), circular dichroism (CD) experiments, the hairpin oligomer sequences were used as shown in Figure 1. In SPR experiments, 5'-biotin labeled hairpin DNA oligomers were used. All DNA oligomers were obtained from

Integrated DNA Technologies, Inc. (IDT, Coralville, IA) with reverse-phase HPLC purification and mass spectrometry characterization.

The buffer used in  $T_m$  and CD experiments was 50 mM Tris-HCl, 100 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, pH 7.4 (TNE 100). The biosensor-surface plasmon resonance (SPR) experiments were performed in filtered, degassed TNE 100 with 0.05% (v/v) surfactant P20.

### **UV-vis Thermal Melting ( $T_m$ )**

DNA thermal melting experiments were performed on a Cary 300 Bio UV-vis spectrophotometer (Varian). The concentration of each hairpin DNA sequence was 3  $\mu$ M in TNE 100 using 1 cm quartz cuvettes. The solutions of DNA and ligands were tested with the ratio of 2:1 [ligand] / [DNA]. All samples were increased to 95 °C and cooled down to 25 °C slowly before each experiment. The spectrophotometer was set at 260 nm with a 0.5 °C/min increase beginning at 25 °C, which is below the DNA melting temperature and ending above it at 95 °C. The absorbance of the buffer was subtracted, and a graph of normalized absorbance versus temperature was created using KaleidaGraph 4.0 software. The  $\Delta T_m$  values were calculated using a combination of the derivative function and estimation from the normalized graphs.

### **Biosensor-Surface Plasmon Resonance (SPR)**

SPR measurements were performed with a four-channel Biacore T200 optical biosensor system (GE Healthcare, Inc., Piscataway, NJ). A streptavidin-derivatized (SA) CM5 sensor chip was prepared for use by conditioning with a series of 180 s

injections of 1 M NaCl in 50 mM NaOH (activation buffer) followed by extensive washing with HBS buffer (10 mM HEPES, 150 mM NaCl, 3 mM EDTA, and 0.05% P20, pH 7.4). Biotinylated-DNA samples (AAATT, AAAGTT and AAAGCTT hairpins, Figure 1) of 25–30 nM were prepared in HBS buffer and immobilized on the flow cell surface by noncovalent capture. Flow cell 1 was left blank as a reference, while flow cells 2–4 were immobilized separately by manual injection of biotinylated-DNA stock solutions (flow rate of 1  $\mu$ L/min) until the desired amount of DNA response units (RU) was obtained (250–300 RU). Ligand solutions were prepared with degassed and filtered TNE 100 with 0.05% (v/v) surfactant P20 by serial dilutions from a concentrated stock solution. Typically, a series of different ligand concentrations (2 nM to 500 nM) were injected over the DNA sensor chip at a flow rate of 100  $\mu$ L/min for 180 s, followed by buffer flow for ligand dissociation (600–1800 s). After each cycle, the sensor chip surface was regenerated with a 10 mM glycine solution (pH 2.5) for 30 s followed by multiple buffer injections to yield a stable baseline for the following cycles.  $RU_{obs}$  was plotted as a function of free ligand concentration ( $C_{free}$ ), and the equilibrium binding constants ( $K_A$ ) were determined either with a one-site binding model, where  $r = (RU_{obs}/RU_{max})$  represents the moles of bound compound/mol of DNA hairpin duplex and  $K$  is macroscopic binding constant.

$$r = K * C_{free} / (1 + K * C_{free}) \quad (1)$$

$RU_{max}$  can be used as a fitting parameter, and the obtained value compared to the predicted maximal response per bound ligand can also be used to independently evaluate the stoichiometry. Kinetic analyses were performed by globally fitting the binding results for the entire concentration series using a standard 1:1 kinetic model with integrated mass transport-limited binding parameters as described previously.

<sup>18,19</sup> To obtain the optimized kinetic constants ( $k_a, k_d$ ), we have immobilized different amount of the target DNAs on CM5 chip surfaces in three independent experiments with different sensor chips.

### **Circular Dichroism (CD)**

Circular dichroism experiments were performed on a Jasco J-810 CD and Jasco J-1500 CD spectrometer in 1 cm quartz cuvette at 25 °C. A buffer scan as a baseline was collected first in the same cuvette and subtracted from the scan of following samples. The hairpin DNA sequence AAAGTTT (5  $\mu$ M), Figure 1, in TNE 100 was added to the cuvette prior to the titration experiments and then the compound was added to the DNA solution and incubated for 10 min to achieve equilibrium binding for the DNA-ligand complex formation. For each titration point, four spectra were averaged from 500 to 230 nm wavelength with scan speed of 50 nm/min, with a response time of 1 s. Baseline-subtracted graphs were created using the KaleidaGraph 4.0 software.

### **Structural Calculations**

Molecular torsional angle map calculations of the compounds were performed in the Spartan'16 software. The “constrain dihedral” command was used with selected compounds to restrain four atoms to define the middle rotation bond and two terminal bonds which formed the dihedral as the calculation targets. The calculation range was set from 0° to 100° or 180° through 11 or 19 steps. Calculations were carried out with the energy profile method at ground state with density functional B3LYP/6-31G\* in vacuum. After the calculations, the relative energy (rel. E) (kJ/mol) was displayed in a spreadsheet. The torsional angle map can be created with

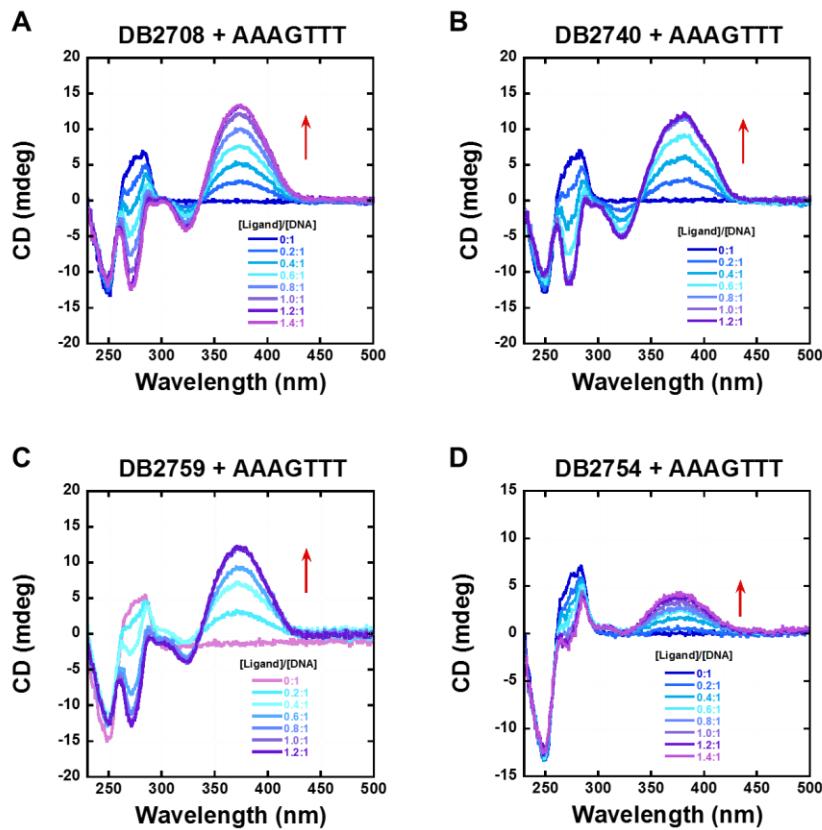
the constraint of the torsional angle as the X-axis and rel. E as the Y-axis by using KaleidaGraph 4.0 software.

### **Ab-Initio Calculations and Molecular Dynamic (MD) Simulation**

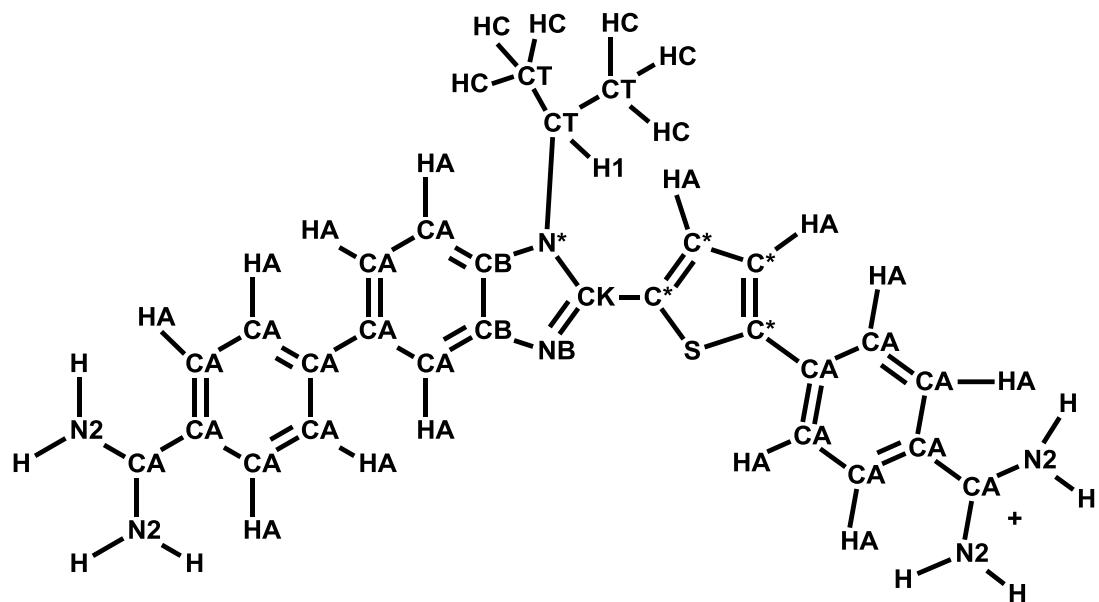
Optimization and electrostatic potential calculations were performed for the DB2708 molecule using DFT/B3LYP theory with the 6-31+G\* basis set in Gaussian 09 (Gaussian, Inc., 2009, Wallingford, CT) with Gauss-view 5.09.<sup>20</sup> Partial charges were derived using the RESP fitting method (Restrained Electrostatic potential).<sup>21,22</sup> AMBER 14 (Assisted Model Building with Energy Refinement) software suite was used to perform molecular dynamic (MD) simulations.<sup>23</sup> Canonical *B*-form *ds*[(5'-CCAAAGTTGG-3')(5'-CCAAACTTGG-3')] DNA was built in Nucleic Acid Builder (NAB) tool in AMBER. AMBER preparation and force field parameter files required to run molecular dynamic simulations for DB2708 molecule were produced using ANTECHAMBER.<sup>24</sup> Specific atom types assigned for DB2708 molecule were adapted from the ff99 force field. Most of the force field parameters for DB2708 molecule were derived from the existing set of bonds, angles and dihedrals for the similar atom types in parm99 and GAFF force fields.<sup>25</sup> Some dihedral angle parameters were obtained from previously reported parametrized data.<sup>26,27</sup> Parameters of DB2708 in frmod file are listed at the Table S1.

AutoDock Vina program was used to dock the DB2528 in the minor groove of DNA to obtain the initial structure for DB2708-DNA complex.<sup>28</sup> MD simulations were performed in explicit solvation conditions where the DNA-DB2708 complex was placed in a truncated octahedron box filled with TIP3P water using xleap program in AMBER. Sodium ions were used to neutralize the system. A 10 Å cutoff was applied on all van der Waals interactions. The MD simulation was

carried out using the Sander module with SHAKE algorithm applied to constrain all bonds. Initially, the system was relaxed with 500 steps of steepest-descent energy minimization. The temperature of the system was then increased from 0 K to 310 K for over 10 ps under constant-volume conditions. In the final step, the production run on the system was subsequently performed for 500 ns under NPT (constant-pressure) conditions. Coordinate file of DB2708-DNA complex along with water molecules in proximity is also attached.



**Figure S1.** Circular dichroism spectra for the titration of representative compounds, A) DB2708, B) DB2740, C) DB2759 and D) 2754 with a 5  $\mu$ M AAAGTTT sequence in Tris-HCl buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, 100 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, pH 7.4) at 25°C. Arrows indicate the changes.



**Figure S2.** Molecular structure with specific atom types used for the DB2708 molecule.

**Table S1.** Thermal melting studies ( $\Delta T_m$ , °C) of DB2457 and analogues with pure AT and mixed DNA sequences.<sup>a</sup>

Compounds	R <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>2</sub>	R <sub>3</sub>	X	Y	$\Delta T_m$ AAATT (70°C)	$\Delta T_m$ AAAGTTT (66°C)	$\Delta T_m$ AAAGCTTT (67°C)
DB2457 (7a)	H	H	H	Me	S	6	14	5
DB2737 (7b)	H	H	H	Et	S	7	15	7
DB2708 (7c)	H	H	H	i-Pr	S	4	14	5
DB2711 (7d)	H	H	H		S	5	13	5
DB2718 (7e)	H	H	H		S	2	11	4
DB2715 (7f)	H	H	H		S	5	13	5
DB2728 (7g)	H	H	H		S	4	13	5
DB2764 (7h)	H	H	H		S	3	13	5
DB2726 (7i)	H	H	H		S	4	14	4
DB2714 (7j)	H	H	H		S	4	13	5
DB2727 (7k)	H	H	H		S	4	13	3
DB2738 (7l)	H	H	H		S	4	13	5
DB2740 (7m)	H	H	H		S	5	17	7
DB2747 (7n)	H	H	H		S	7	16	9
DB2759 (7o)	Cl	H	H	i-Pr	S	3	12	3
DB2762 (7p)	CF <sub>3</sub>	H	H	i-Pr	S	1	8	3
DB2753 (7q)	H	Me	H	i-Pr	S	1	3	2
DB2754 (7r)	H	H	Me	i-Pr	S	1	4	2
DB2673 (7s)	H	H	H	Me	Se	7	12	5
DB2712 (7t)	H	H	H	i-Pr	Se	5	13	6

a.  $\Delta T_m = T_m$  (the complex) -  $T_m$  (the free DNA). 3  $\mu$ M DNA sequences were studied in Tris-HCl buffer (50 mM Tris-HCl, 100 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, pH 7.4) with the ratio of 2:1 [ligand]/[DNA]. An average of two independent experiments with a reproducibility of 0.5 °C. Full DNA sequences: AAATT: 5'-CCAAATTCGCTCTGCAAATTGG-3'; AAAGTTT: 5'-CCAAAGTTGCTCTCAAACCTTGG-3'; AAAGCTTT: 5'-CCAAAGCTTGCTCTCAAAGCTTGG-3'.

**Table S2.** Frcmod file of the DB2708 molecule

remark goes here

MASS

N2	14.01	0.530	parm99
CA	12.01	0.360	parm99
CB	12.01	0.360	parm99
C*	12.01	0.360	gaff SP2 carbon at non-pure aromatic system
CK	12.01	0.360	parm99
CT	12.01	0.878	parm99
HA	1.008	0.167	parm99
H	1.008	0.161	parm99
HC	1.008	0.135	parm99
H1	1.008	0.135	parm99
N*	14.01	0.530	parm99
NB	14.01	0.530	parm99
S	32.06	2.900	gaff

BOND

CA-CA	469.0	1.400	parm99
CA-CB	469.0	1.404	parm99
CB-CB	520.0	1.370	parm99
CB-N*	436.0	1.374	parm99
CB-NB	414.0	1.391	parm99
CT-N*	337.0	1.475	parm99
CT-CT	310.0	1.526	parm99
CA-HA	367.0	1.080	parm99
CT-H1	340.0	1.090	parm99
CT-HC	340.0	1.090	parm99
CK-N*	440.0	1.371	parm99
CK-NB	529.0	1.304	parm99
CK-C*	418.3	1.4290	SOURCE1 740 0.0069 cc-cc gaff similar to gaussian bond
C*-C*	418.3	1.4290	SOURCE1 740 0.0069 gaff
C*-SS	279.3	1.7370	SOURCE3 52 0.0194 gaff
C*-HA	347.2	1.0850	SOURCE3 7400.0039 gaff
CA-C*	411.7	1.4340	SOURCE1 80 0.0000 gaff
CA-N2	481.0	1.340	parm99
S-C*	279.3	1.7370	SOURCE3 52 0.0194 gaff

ANGLE

CA-CA-CA	63.0	120.00	parm99
CA-CA-CB	63.0	120.00	parm99
CA-CA-HA	50.0	120.00	parm99
CA-CB-CB	63.0	117.30	parm99
CB-CA-HA	50.0	120.00	parm99
CA-CB-NB	70.0	132.40	parm99
CA-CB-N*	70.0	132.40	parm99 CA-CB-NB parm99
CB-CB-N*	70.0	106.20	parm99
CB-CB-NB	70.0	110.40	parm99
CT-CT-CT	40.0	109.50	parm99
CT-CT-H1	50.0	109.50	parm99

CB-N*-CT	70.0	125.80	parm99
CT-CT-N*	50.0	109.50	parm99
N*-CK-NB	70.0	113.90	parm99
CB-NB-CK	70.0	103.80	parm99
CB-N*-CK	70.0	105.40	parm99
C*-CK-NB	67.53	121.69	CORR    105 cc-cc-nc GAFF
C*-CK-N*	67.53	121.69	CORR    105 cc-cc-nc GAFF
C*-C*-CK	66.24	121.77	CORR c2-cc-cc GAFF
C*-C*-C*	67.880	110.700	SOURCE3    54 3.4091 gaff
CK-N*-CT	70.0	128.80	parm99
CB-N*-CT	70.0	125.80	parm99
H1-CT-N*	50.0	109.50	parm99
HC-CT-HC	35.0	109.50	parm99
HC-CT-CT	50.0	109.50	parm99
C*-C*-HA	47.14	120.86	CORR    1751 cc-cc-ha GAFF
C*-S -C*	41.930	89.910	SOURCE3    11 2.2164 cc-ss-cc gaff
CA-C*-S	78.690	120.980	SOURCE4    28 1.8865 ca-cc-ss gaff
S -C*-C*	80.780	115.020	SOURCE3    2 0.0000 cc-cc-ss gaff
CA-C*-C*	67.660	111.040	SOURCE3    9 7.9455 ca-cc-cc gaff
CA-CA-N2	70.0	119.99	parm99, CM-CA-N2, Gaussian-angle
N2-CA-N2	70.0	120.00	parm99
H -N2-H	35.0	120.00	parm99
CA-N2-H	50.0	120.00	parm99
CA-CA-C*	5.99	120.10	SOURCE3    103 0.3451 ca-ca-cc
CK-C*-S	78.460	120.940	SOURCE4    31 1.2422 ce-cc-ss--gaff

#### DIHE

N2-CA-N2-H	4	9.60	180.0	2.0	parm 99, X -CA-N2-X
H -N2-CA-CA	4	9.60	180.0	2.0	parm 99, X -CA-N2-X
N2-CA-CA-CA	4	-3.118	0.000	-2.0	DB921
N2-CA-CA-CA	4	0.609	90.000	1.0	DB921
CA-CA-CA-CA	4	14.50	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CA-X
CA-CA-CA-HA	4	14.50	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CA-X
HA-CA-CA-HA	4	14.50	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CA-X
CA-CA-CA-CB	4	14.50	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CA-X
CB-CA-CA-HA	4	14.50	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CA-X
CA-CA-CB-CB	4	14.00	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CB-X
HA-CA-CB-N*	4	14.00	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CB-X
HA-CA-CB-NB	4	14.00	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CB-X
HA-CA-CB-CB	4	14.00	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CB-X
CB-CB-N*-CK	4	6.60	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CB-N*-X
CB-CB-N*-CT	4	6.60	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CB-N*-X
H1-CT-N*-CB	1	0.00	000.0	-2.	parm98, TC,PC,PAK FOR OS-CT-N*CK
H1-CT-N*-CB	1	2.50	0.0	1.	parm98, TC,PC,PAK FOR OS-CT-N*CK
CA-CB-N*-CT	4	6.60	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CB-N*-X
CA-CB-CB-NB	4	21.80	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CB-CB-X
CA-CB-CB-N*	4	21.80	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CB-CB-X
CB-N*-CT-CT	1	0.00	000.0	-2.	parm98, TC,PC,PAK FOR OS-CT-N*CK
CB-N*-CT-CT	1	2.50	0.0	1.	parm98, TC,PC,PAK FOR OS-CT-N*CK
N*-CT-CT-HC	9	1.40	0.0	3.	JCC,7,(1986),230, X -CT-CT-X
CA-CA-CB-NB	4	14.00	180.0	2.	intrpol.bsd.on C6H6, X -CA-CB-X

CA-CB-NB-CK	2	5.10	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CB-NB-X
CA-CB-N*-CK	4	6.60	180.0	2.	JCC,7,(1986),230, X -CB-N*-X
NB-CK-N*-CB	4	6.80	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CK-N*-X
N*-CK-NB-CB	2	20.00	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CK-NB-X
C*-CK-NB-CB	2	20.00	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CK-NB-X
C*-CK-NB-CB	2	20.00	180.0	2.	JCC,7,(1986),230, X -CK-NB-X
NB-CK-C*-S	4	-0.6	180.0	-4.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
NB-CK-C*-S	4	3.1	180.0	-2.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
NB-CK-C*-S	4	-0.7	360.0	1.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
CB-N*-CK-C*	4	6.80	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CK-N*-X
NB-CK-C*-C*	4	3.1	180.0	-2.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
NB-CK-C*-C*	4	-0.6	180.0	-4.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
NB-CK-C*-C*	4	-0.7	360.0	1.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
N*-CK-C*-C*	4	3.42	180.0	2.0	New parameter for N*-CK-CA-CA
N*-CK-C*-S	4	-0.6	180.0	-4.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
N*-CK-C*-S	4	3.1	180.0	-2.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
N*-CK-C*-S	4	-0.7	360.0	1.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
CT-N*-CK-C*	4	6.80	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CK-N*-X
CK-C*-C*-C*	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	stat value of parm94 X -cc-cc-X
CK-C*-C*-HA	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	stat value of parm94 X -cc-cc-X
C*-C*-C*-HA	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	stat value of parm94 X -cc-cc-X
C*-S-C*-CA	2	2.200	180.000	2.0	X -c2-ss-X
S-C*-CA-CA	4	3.42	180.0	2.0	New parameter for N*-CK-CA-CA
HA-CA-CA-C*	4	14.50	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CA-X
CA-CA-CA-C*	4	14.50	180.0	2.0	parm99, X -CA-CA-X
CA-CA-C*-C*	4	3.1	180.0	-2.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
CA-CA-C*-C*	4	-0.6	180.0	-4.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
CA-CA-C*-C*	4	-0.7	360.0	1.0	DB921 for NB-CK-CA-CA
CA-C*-C*-HA	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	stat value of parm94 X cc-cc-
S-C*-C*-HA	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	statistic value of parm94 X -cc-cc-X
S-C*-C*-C*	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	stat value of parm94 X -cc-cc-X
C*-C*-C*-C*	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	stat value of parm94 X -cc-cc-X
CA-C*-C*-C*	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	stat value of parm94 X -cc-cc-X
HA-C*-C*-HA	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	stat value of parm94 X -cc-cc-X
CK-C*-C*-S	4	16.000	180.000	2.0	stat value of parm94 X -cc-cc-X
C*-S-C*-C*	1	1.100	180.000	2.000	same as X -c2-ss-X, cc-ss-cc-cd
C*-S-C*-CK	1	1.100	180.000	2.000	same as X -c2-ss-X, cc-ss-cc-cc
HC-CT-CT-HC	1	0.15	0.0	3.000	Junmei et al, 199
HC-CT-CT-CT	1	0.16	0.0	3.	Junmei et al, 1999
H1-CT-N*-CK	1	0.00	000.0	-2.000	parm98,TC,PC,PAK OS-CT-N*-CK
H1-CT-N*-CK	1	2.50	0.0	1.000	parm98, TC,PC,PAK FOR OS-CT-N*-CK

#### IMPROPER

CA-CB-CB-NB	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CA-CA-CA-HA	1.1	180.0	2.0	General improper torsional angle (2 general atom types)
CA-CA-CA-C*	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CA-CA-CA-C*	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
C*-C*-C*-HA	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CA-CA-CA-HA	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CA-CA-CA-CA	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value

CA-N2-CA-N2	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CT-CK-N*-CB	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CA-CB-CB-N*	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CK-N*-CK-NB	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
C*-C*-C*-S	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CA-C*-C*-S	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CA-CA-CA-CA	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value
CA-CA-CA-CA	1.1	180.0	2.0	Using default value

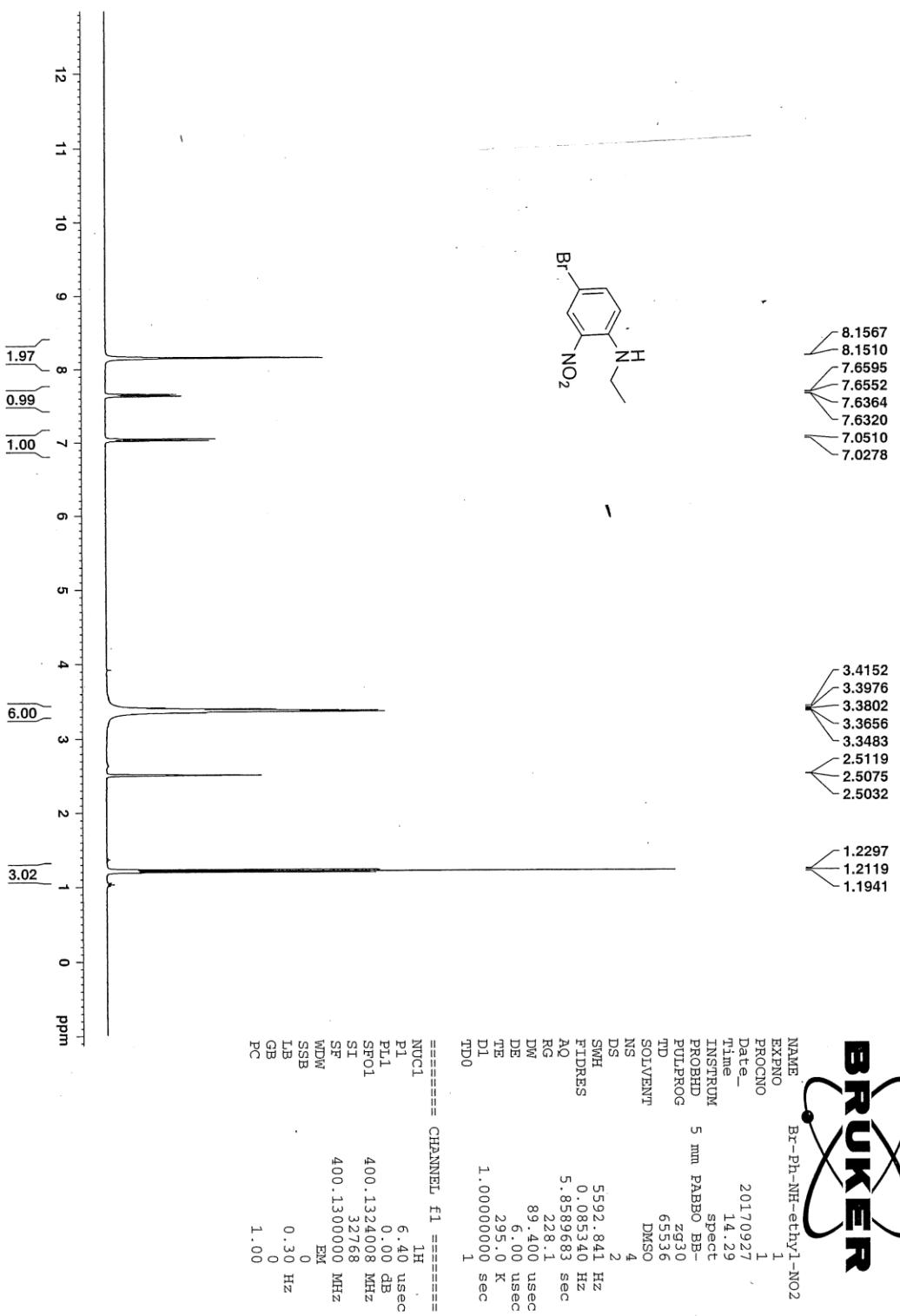
## NONBON

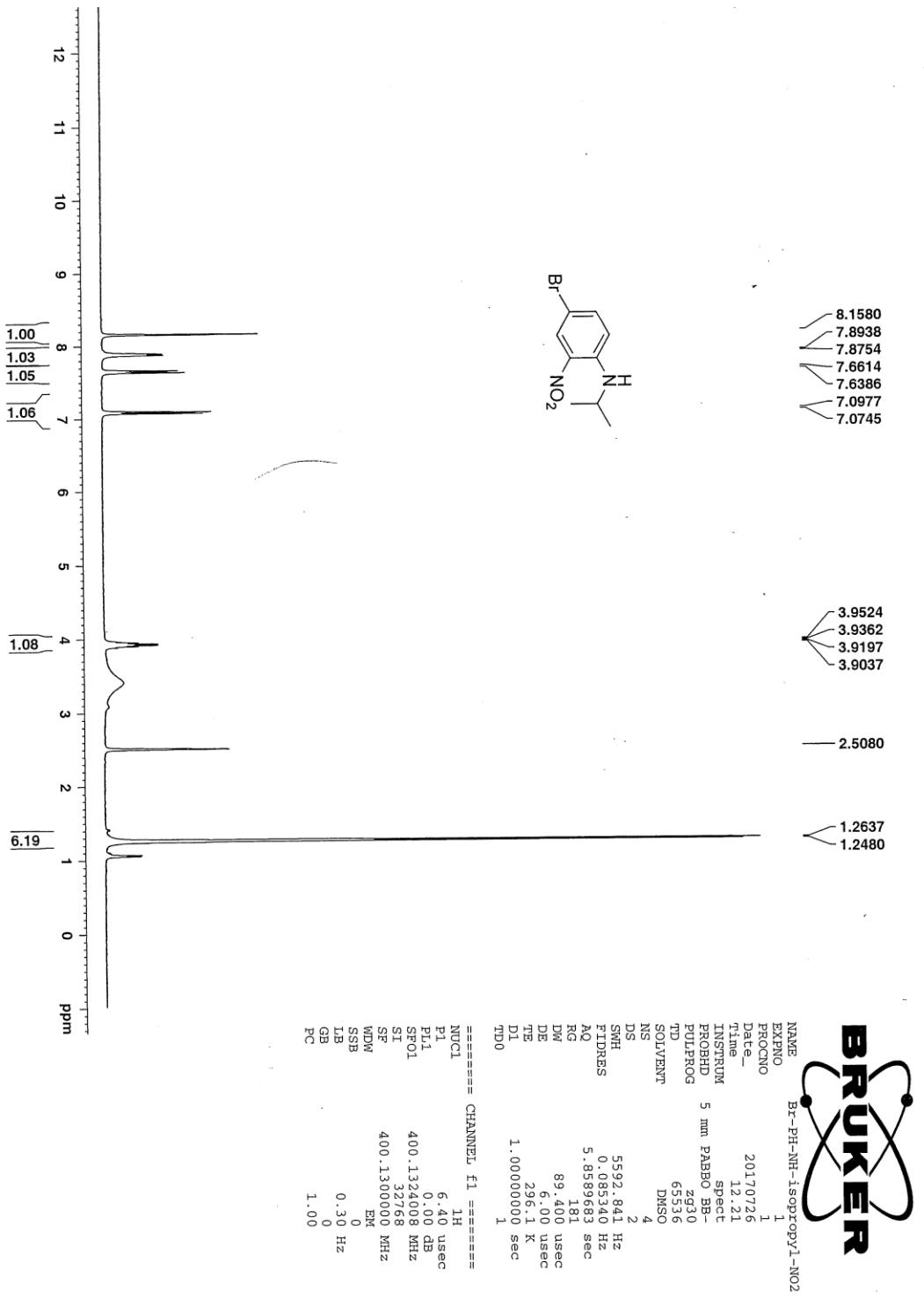
H1	1.3870	0.0157	parm99
H	0.6000	0.0157	parm99
HA	1.4590	0.0150	parm99
CT	1.9080	0.1094	parm99
CA	1.9080	0.0860	parm99 (C*)
CB	1.9080	0.0860	parm99 (C*)
CK	1.9080	0.0860	parm99 (C*)
N*	1.8240	0.1700	parm99 (N)
NB	1.8240	0.1700	parm99 (N)
N2	1.8240	0.1700	parm99 (N)
C*	1.9080	0.0860	parm99
S	2.0000	0.2500	parm9
HC	1.4870	0.0157	OPLS

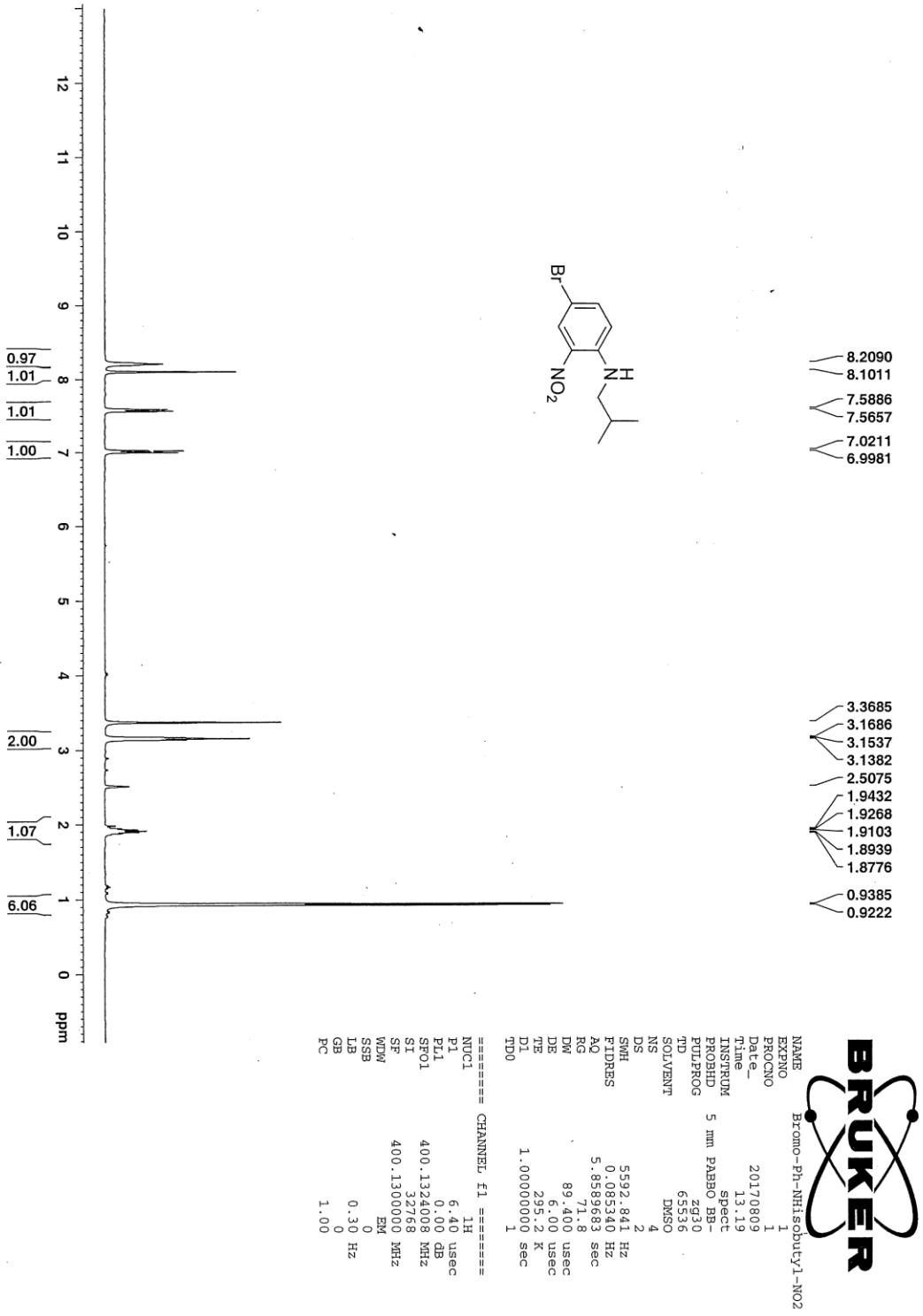
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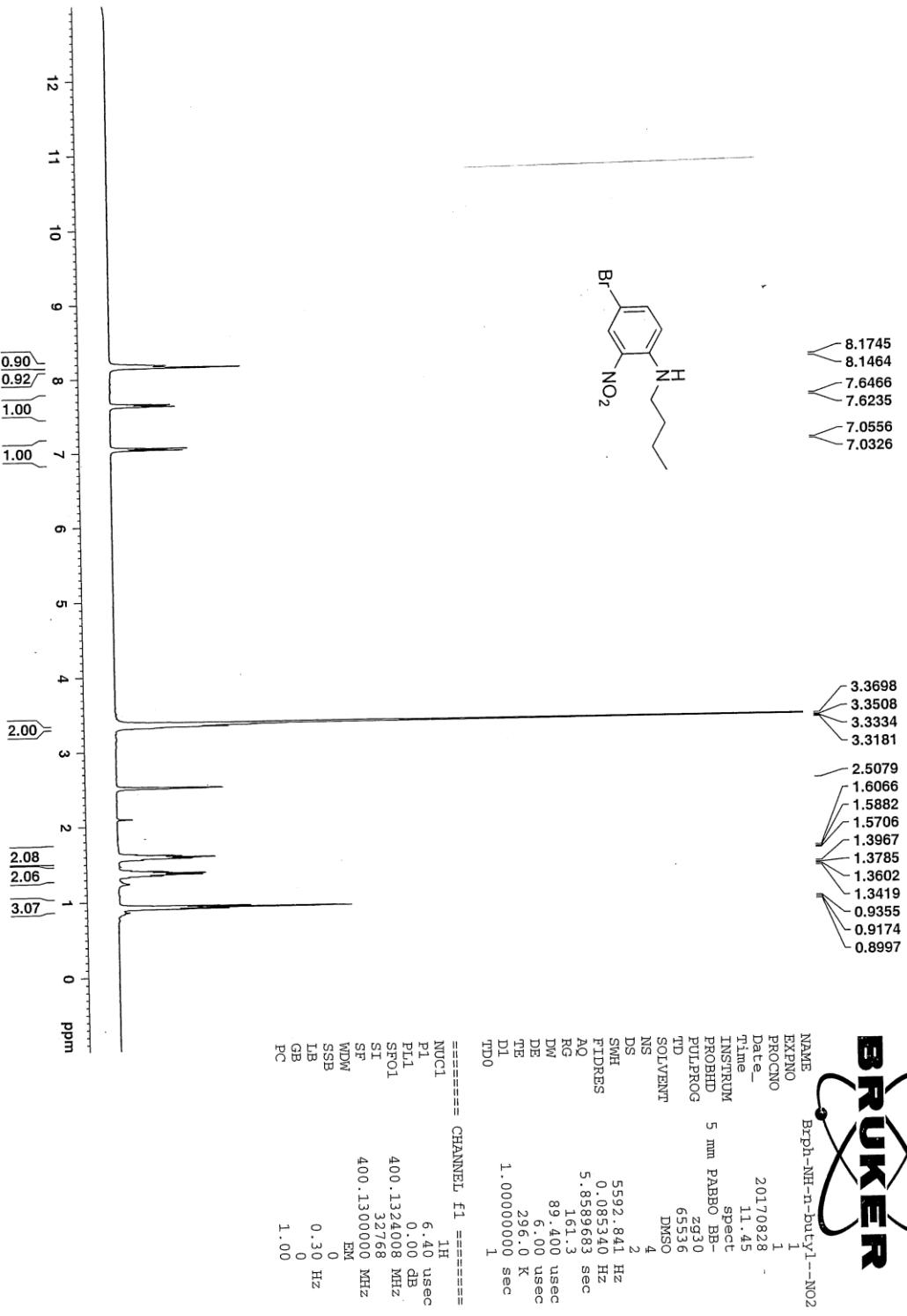
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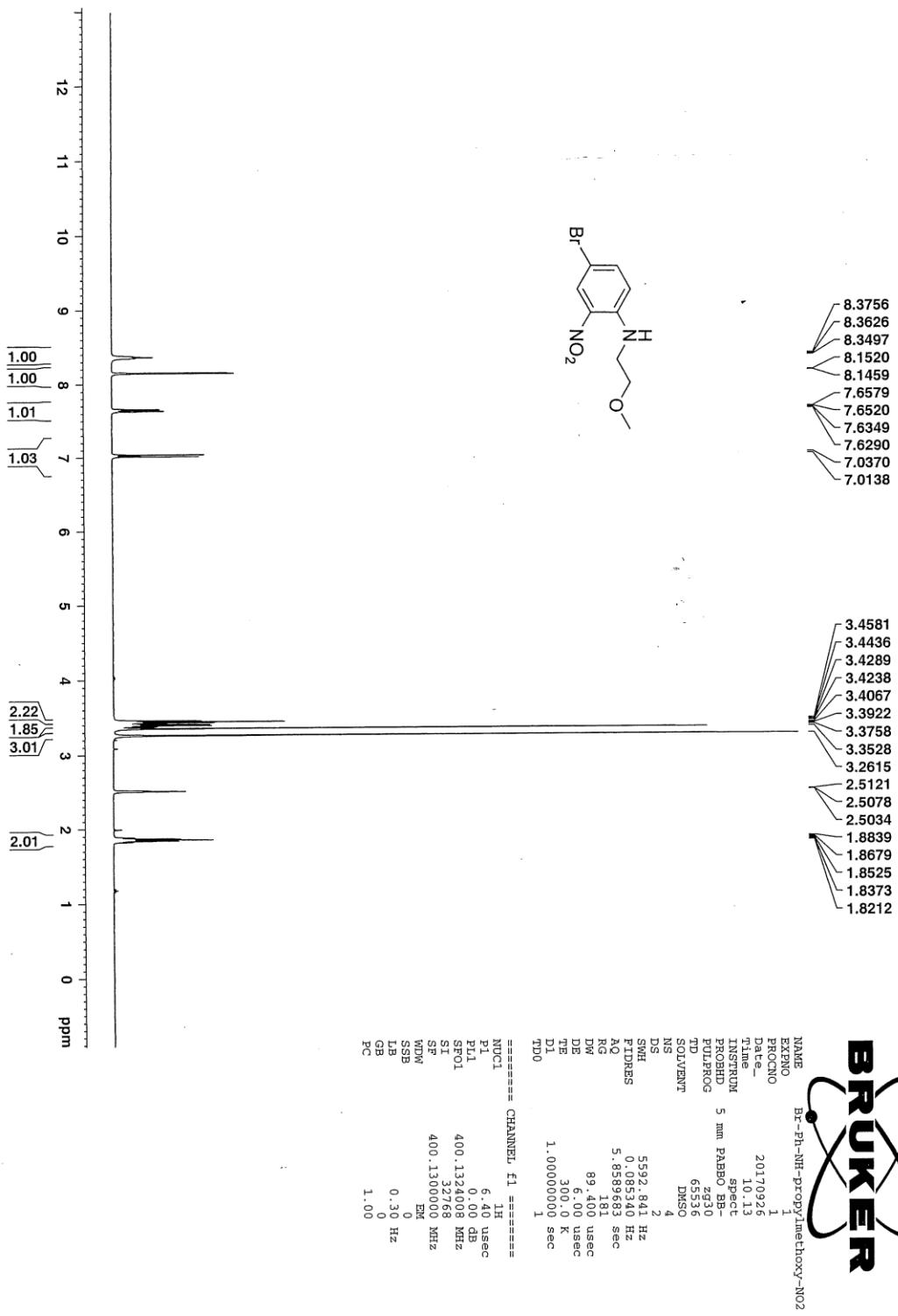
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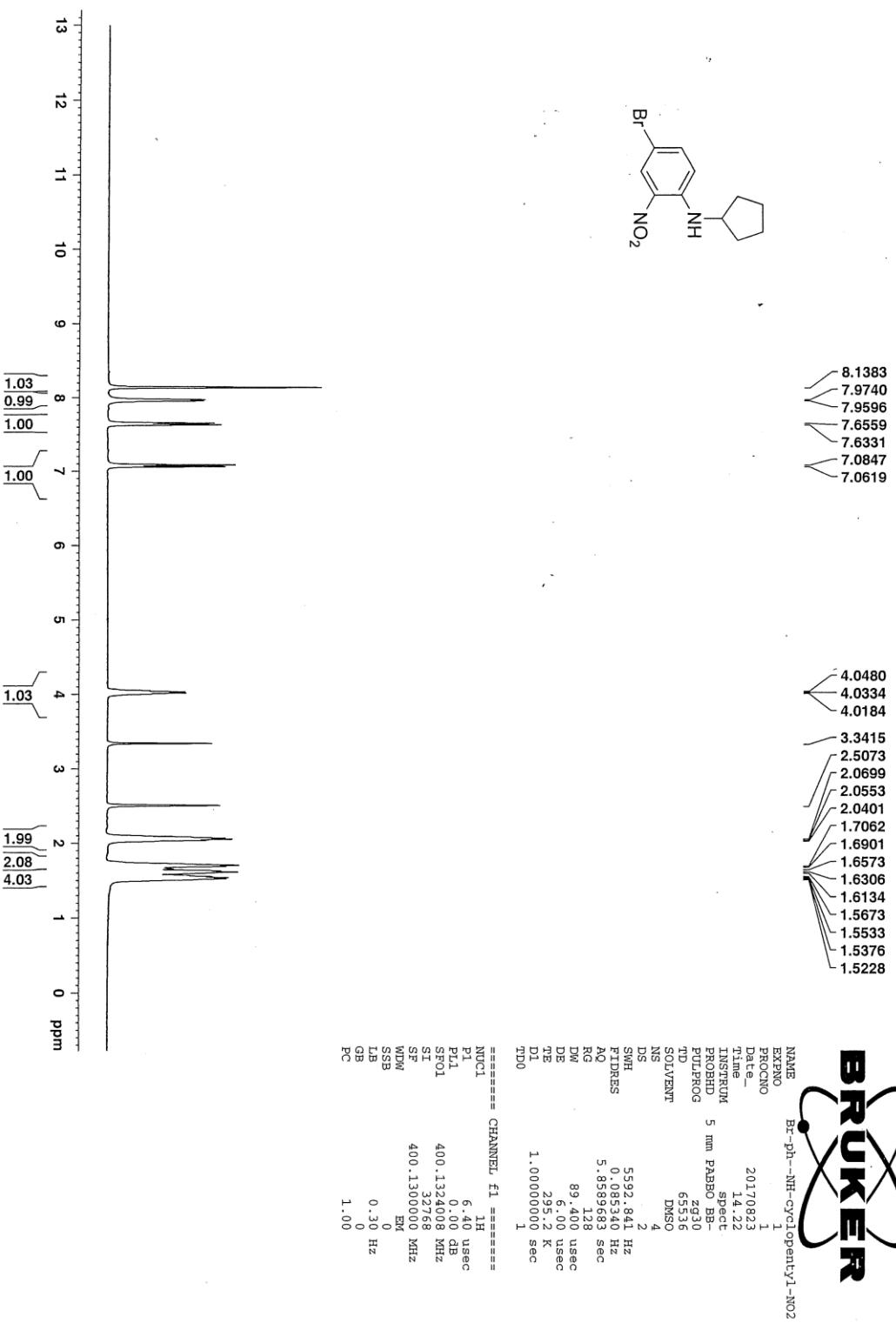


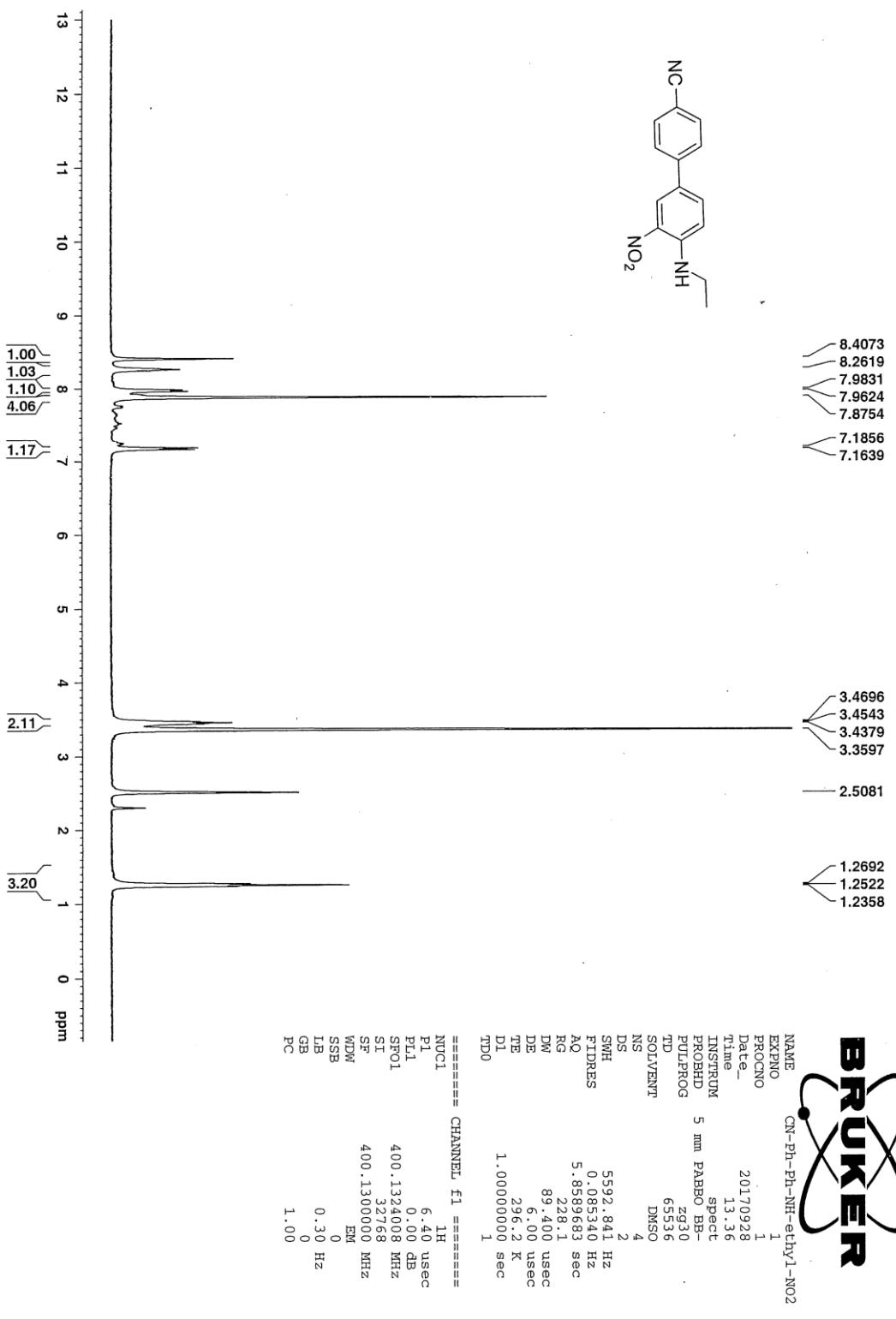


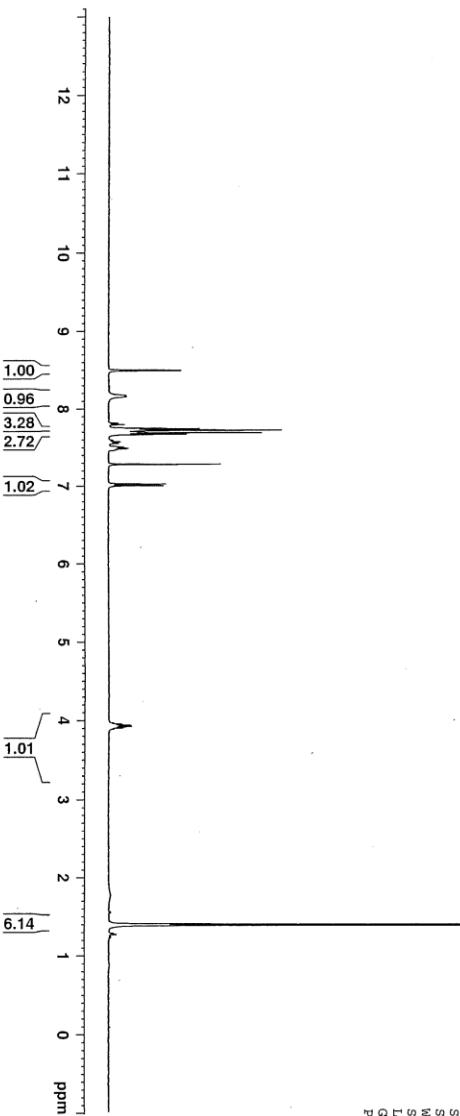




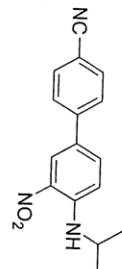








=====
 CHANNEL f1 =====  
 NUCL 1H  
 PL 6.40 usec  
 PLL 0.00 dB  
 SPOL 400.11324008 MHz  
 SI 32768  
 SF 400.13000000 MHz  
 WDW BM  
 SSB 0  
 LB 0.30 Hz  
 GB 0  
 PC 1.00

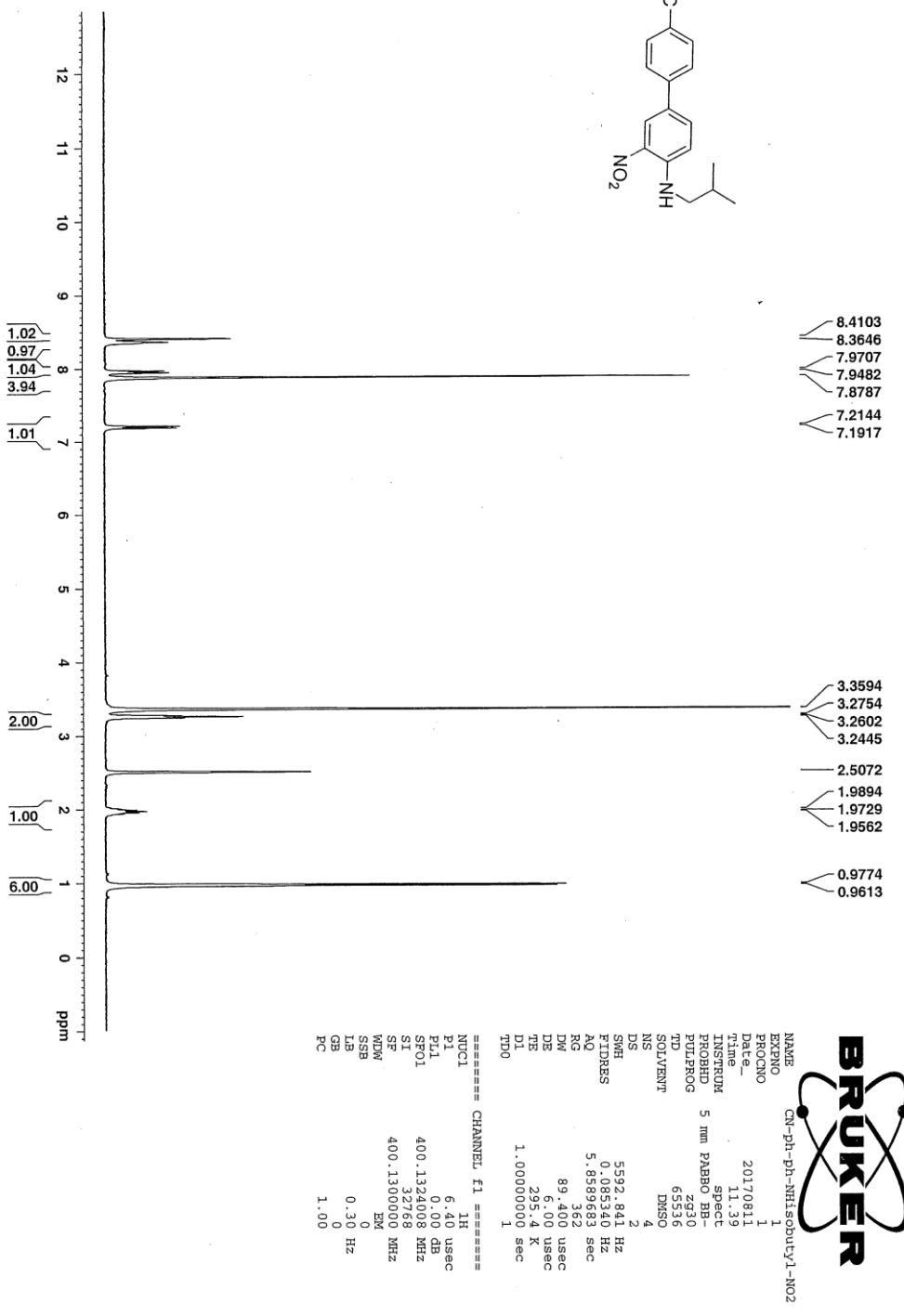


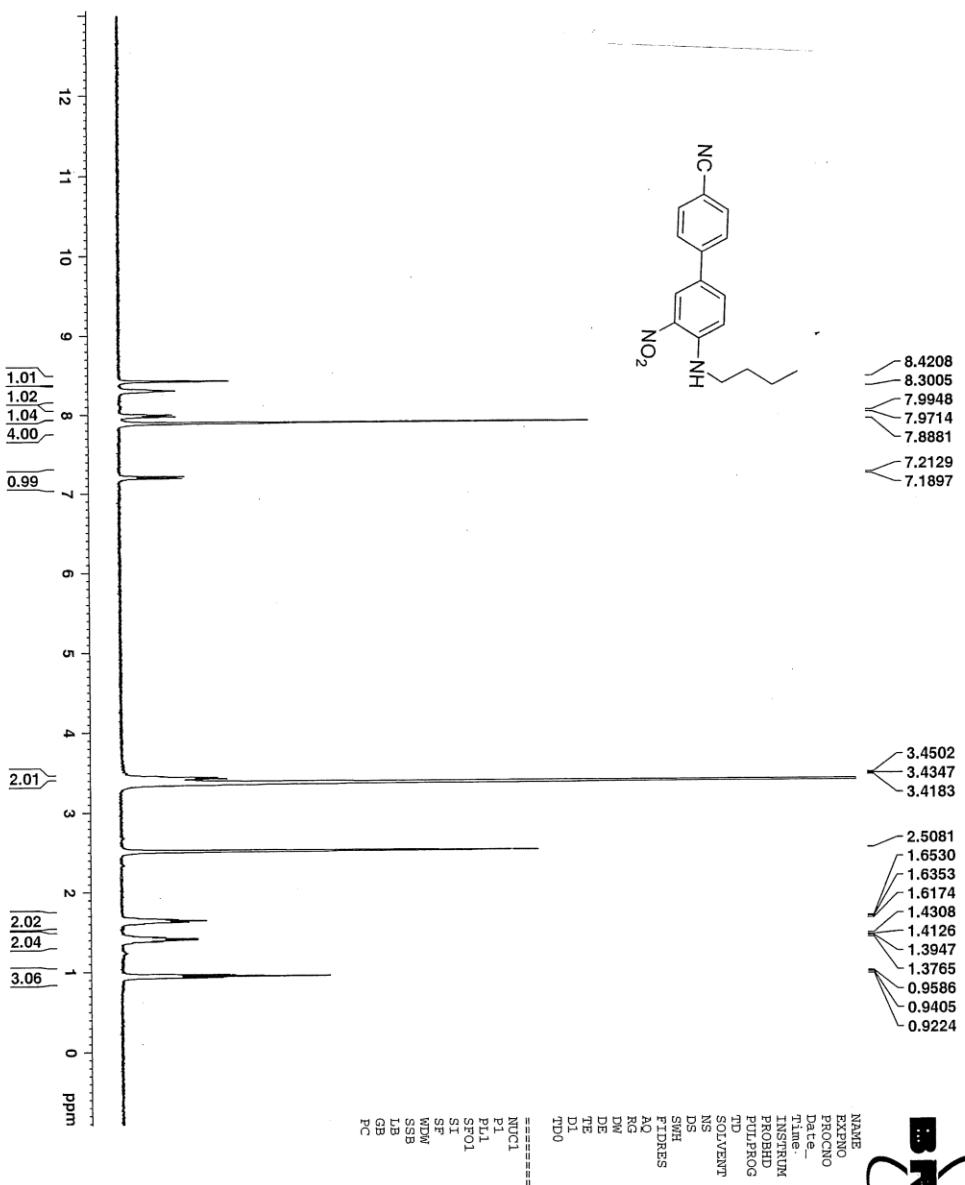
8.4982  
 8.4927  
 7.7443  
 7.7242  
 7.6898  
 7.6688  
 7.2843  
 7.0276  
 7.0049

3.9380  
 3.9219

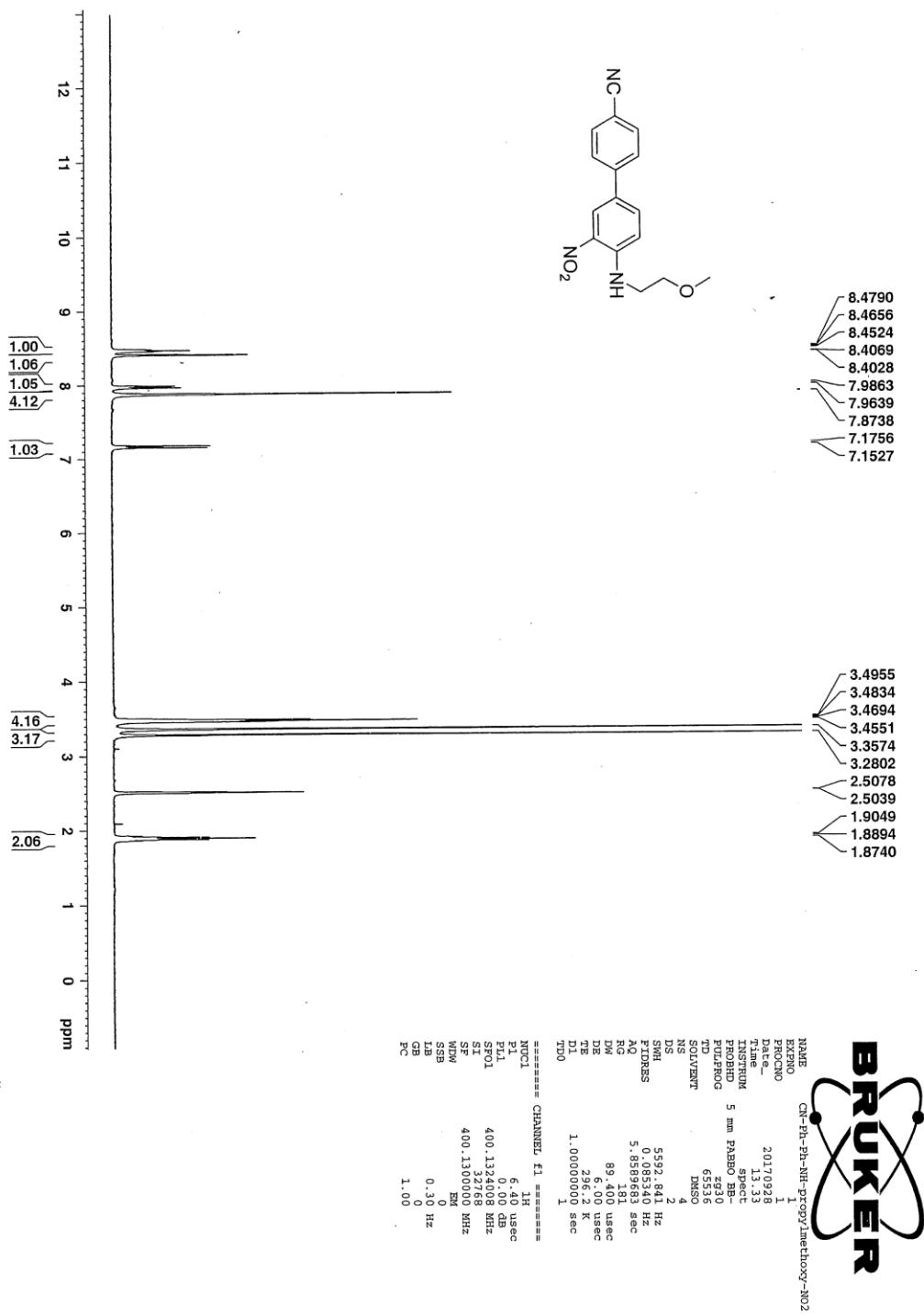
1.4053  
 1.3894

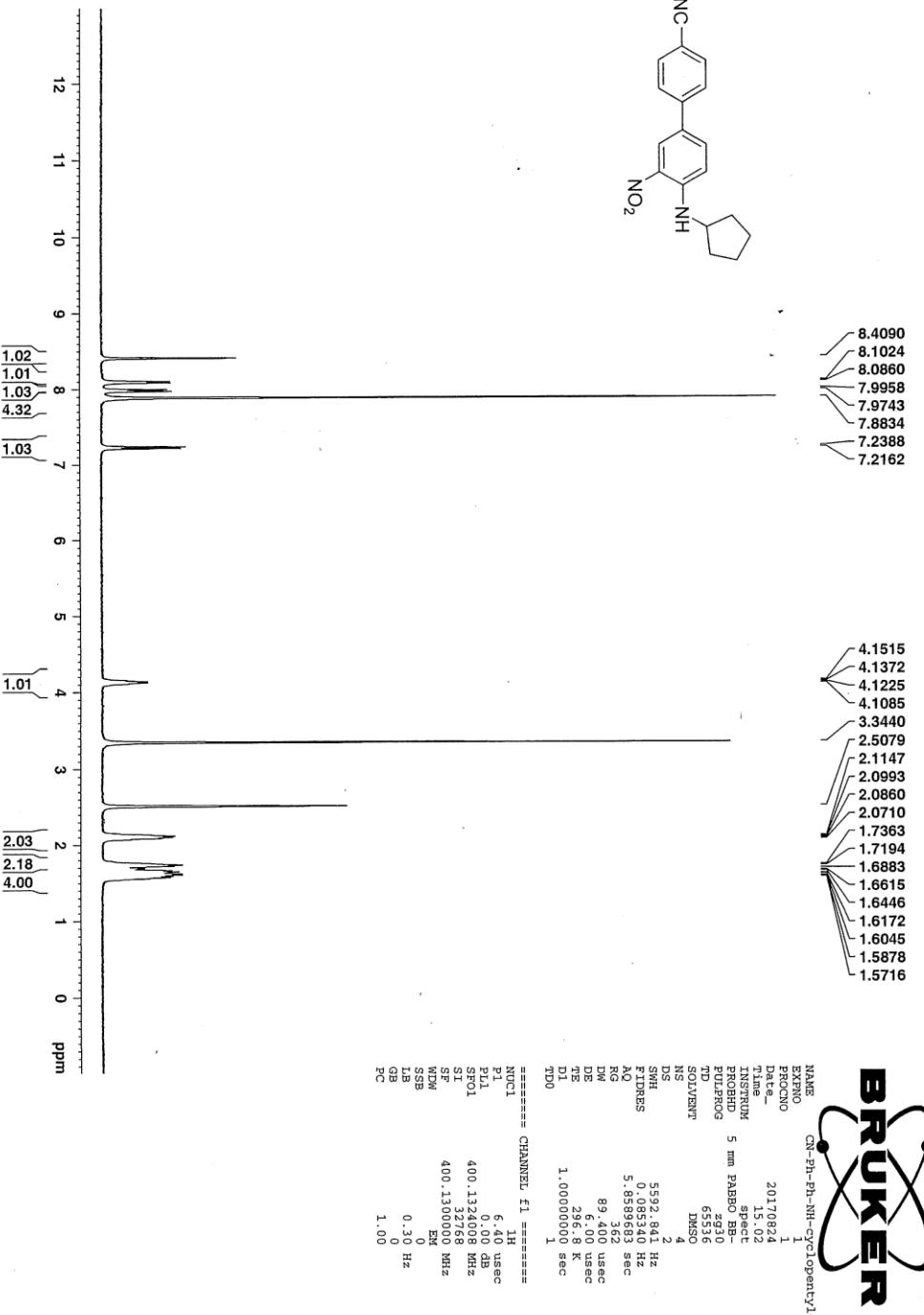


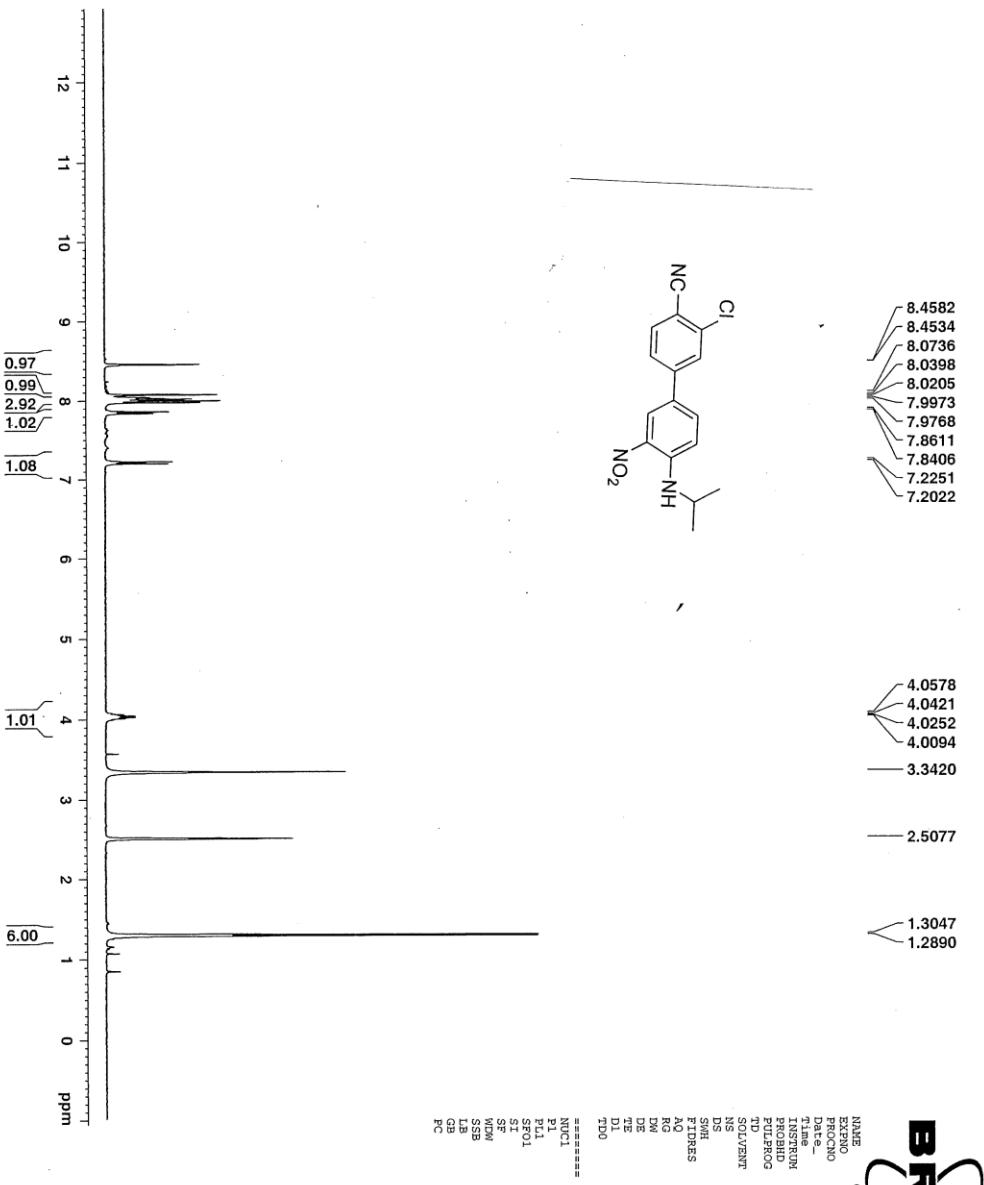


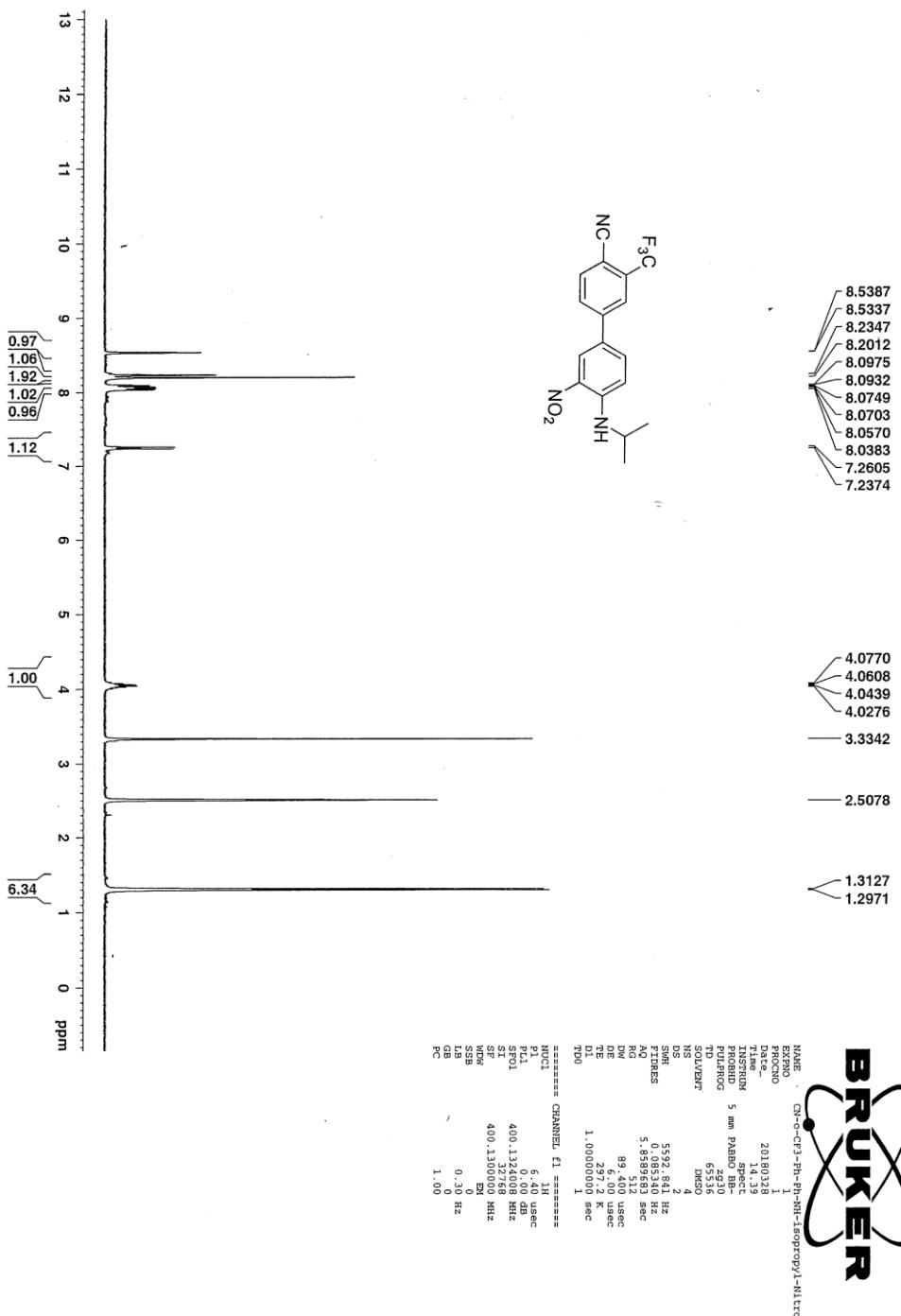


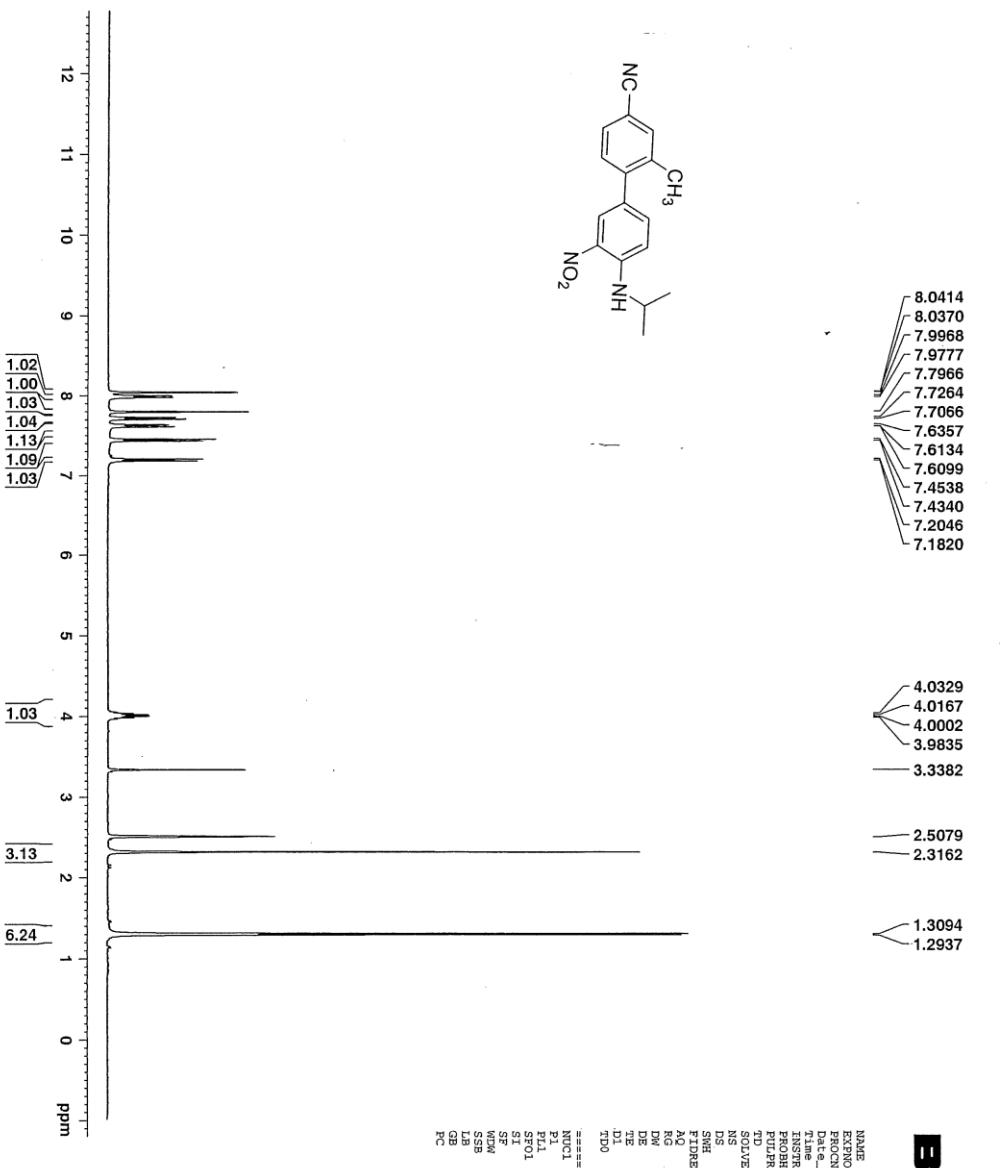
**BRUKER**



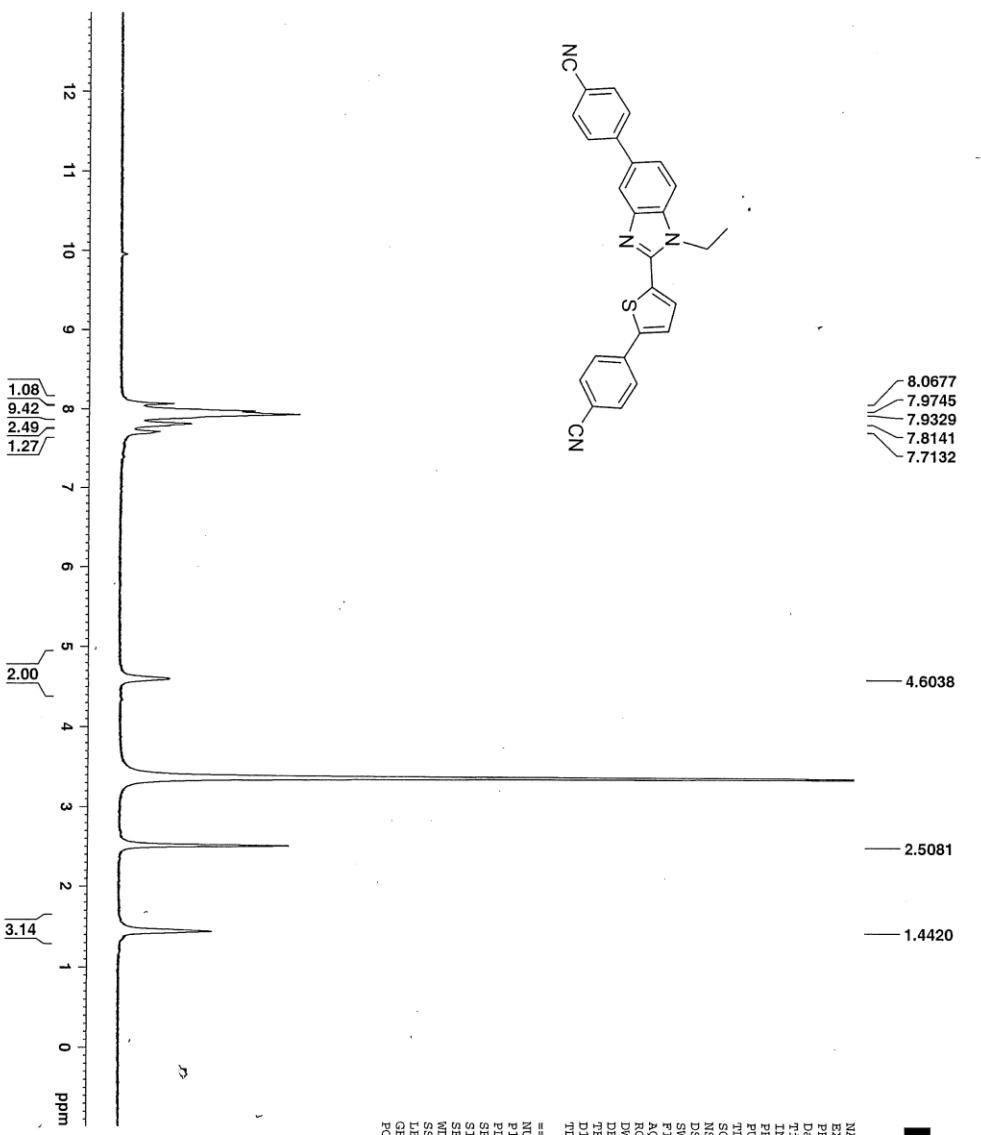






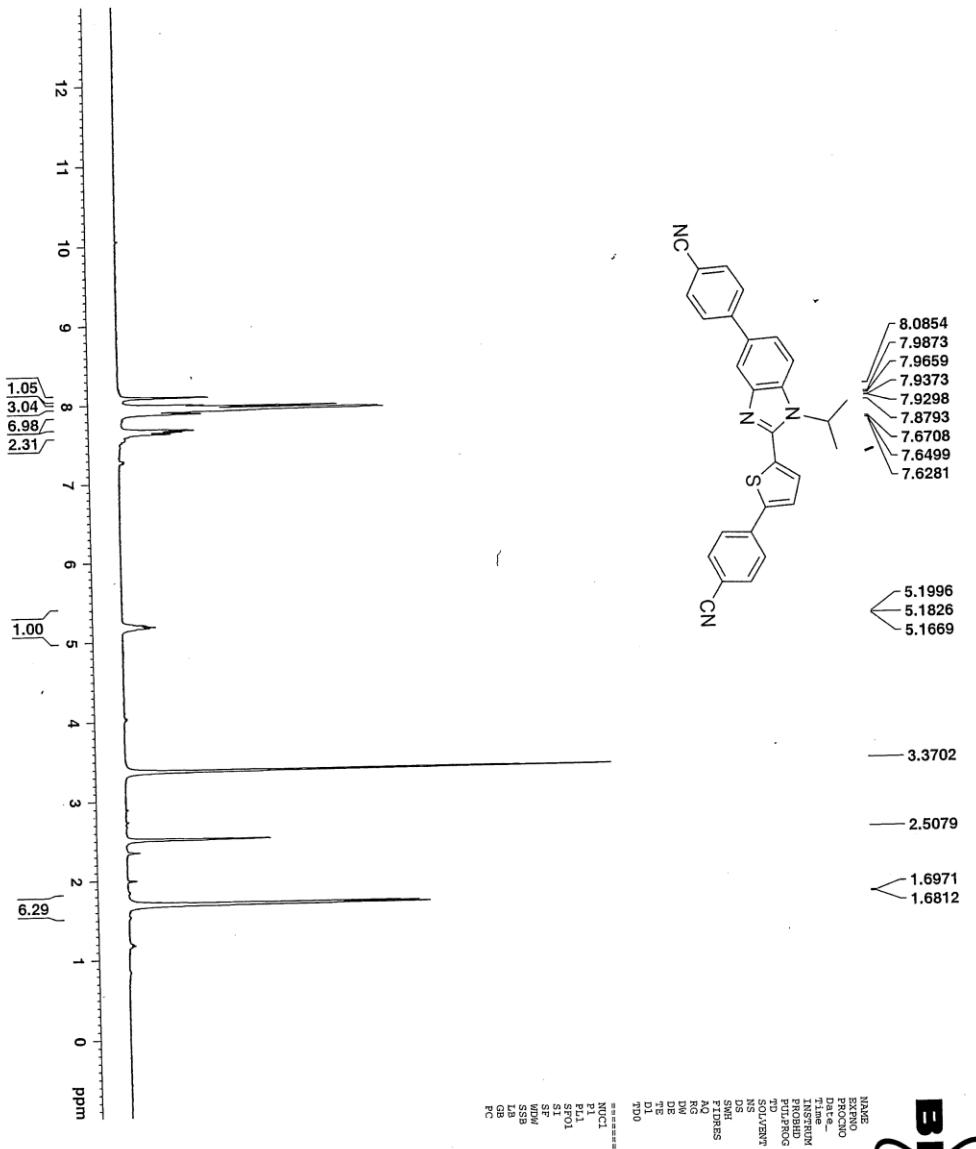


**BRUKER**



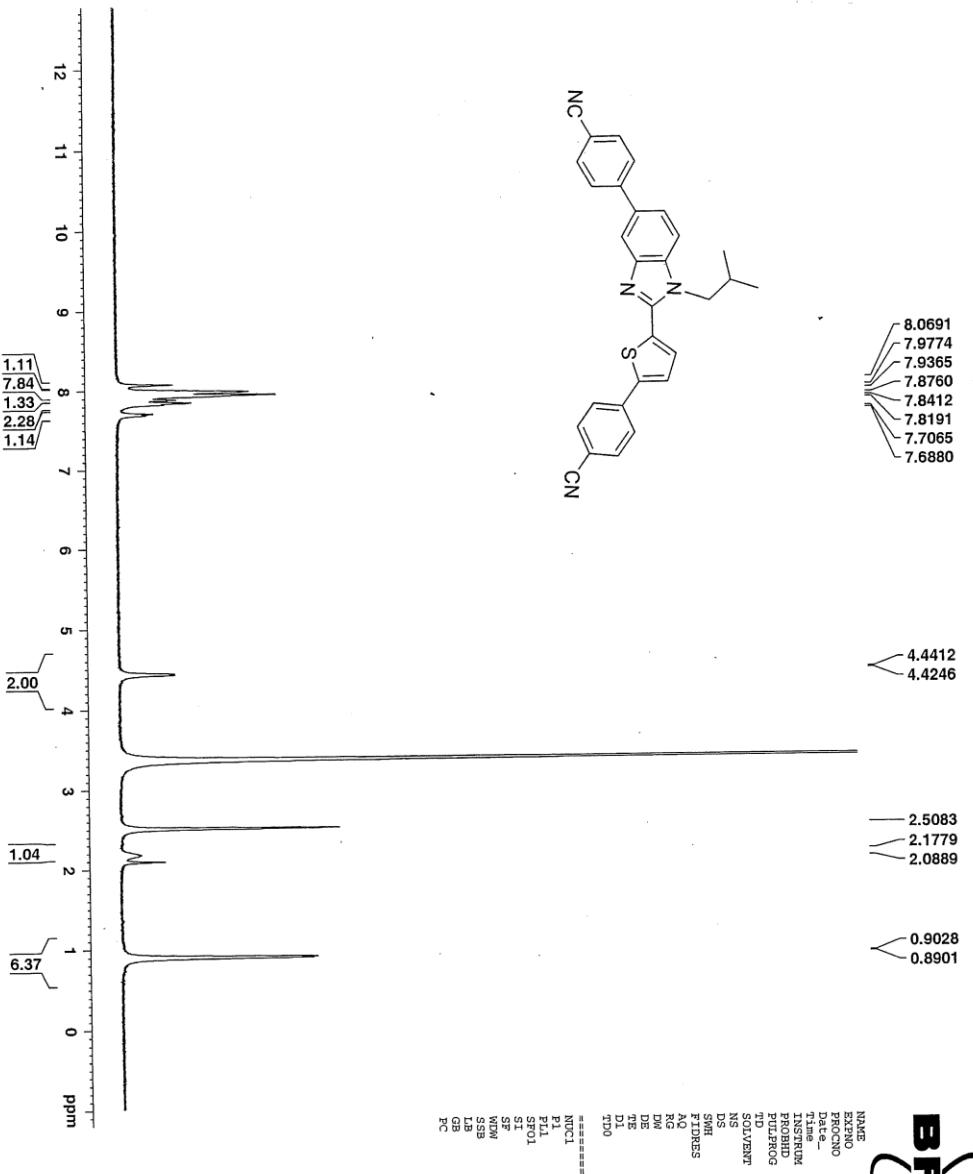
NAME CN-Ph-Bi-N-Ethyl-Thi-Ph-Cn  
 EXPNO 1  
 PRONO 1  
 Date 2017/04  
 Time 13.21  
 INSTRUM spect  
 PROBD 5 mm PARBO BB-  
 FULLPROG z30  
 TD 65536  
 SOLVENT DMSO  
 NS 4  
 SWH 5592.841 Hz  
 FIDRES 0.005340 Hz  
 AQ 5.859963 sec  
 RG 228.1  
 DW 89.400 usec  
 DE 6.00 usec  
 TE 297.0 K  
 D1 1.000000 sec  
 TDO 1  
  
 ===== CHANNEL fil =====  
 NUCL 1H  
 PL 6.40 usec  
 P1L 0.00 dB  
 PFL 400.1324008 MHz  
 SFO1 32768 MHz  
 SI 400.1300000 MHz  
 WDW EM  
 SSB 0  
 LB 0.30 Hz  
 GB 0  
 PC 1.00





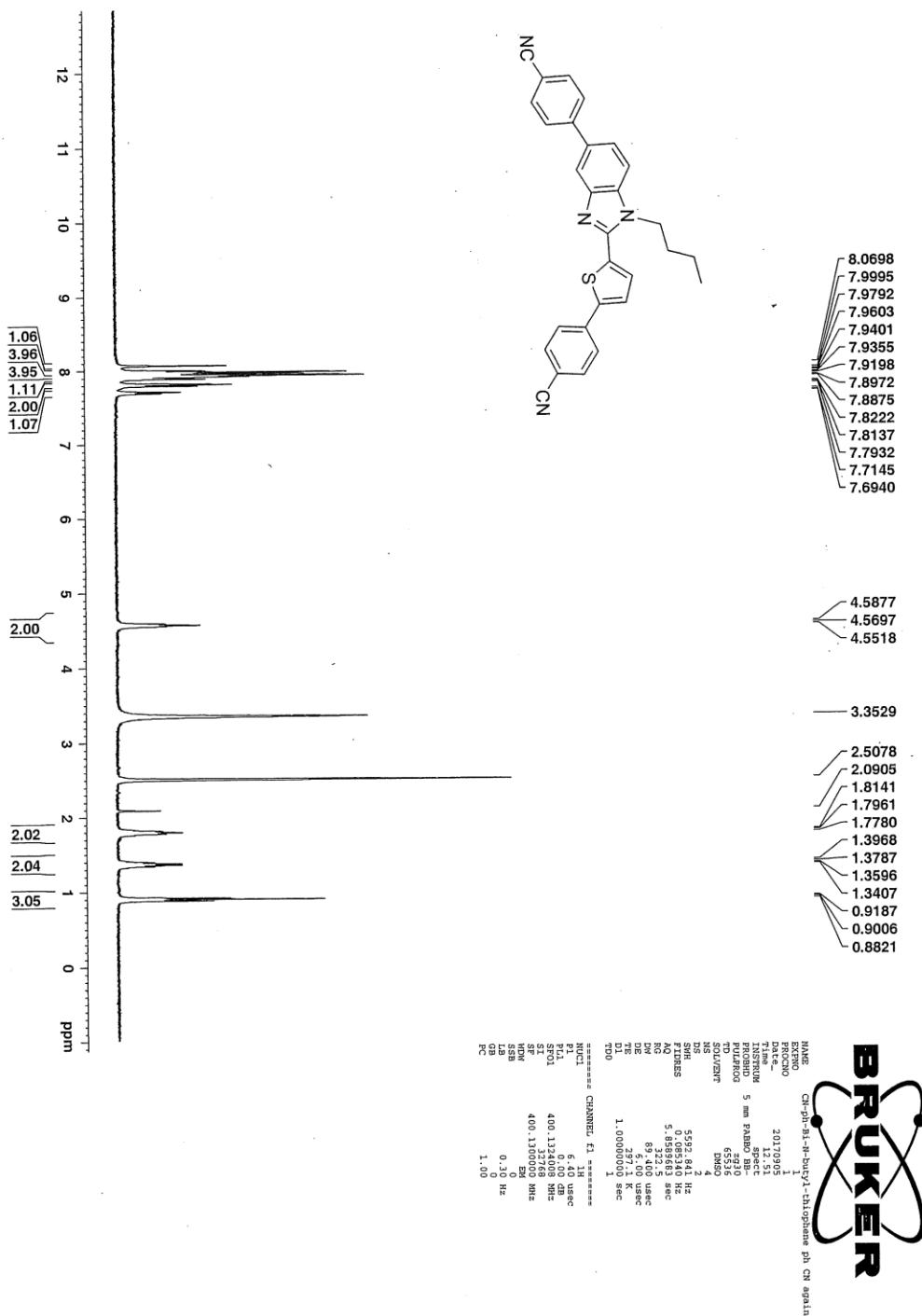
NAME	CH-Ph-Br-CH <sub>2</sub> - <i>n</i> -hexylphenyl-Ph-CN-CH <sub>2</sub> -Br
PROD	1
DATE	2017/09/27
TIME	20:25:42
PROBD	5 mm PABBO BB-
PULPROG	2030
TD	65336
SOLVENT	D2S
DS	4
SNH	2
TDRES	5592.841 Hz
AQ	0.005340.00
ACQ	181.00 sec
DM	89.400 usec
DE	6.000 usec
TE	295.3 sec
DI	1.000000.00
TDD	1 sec
===== CHANNEL f1 =====	
NUCL	1H
PL	6
SW	0.00 dB
SPOL	40.0-1324008 MHz
SI	32768
SF	400.1300000 MHz
SWB	40
LBW	0.30 Hz
GB	0.0
PC	1.00

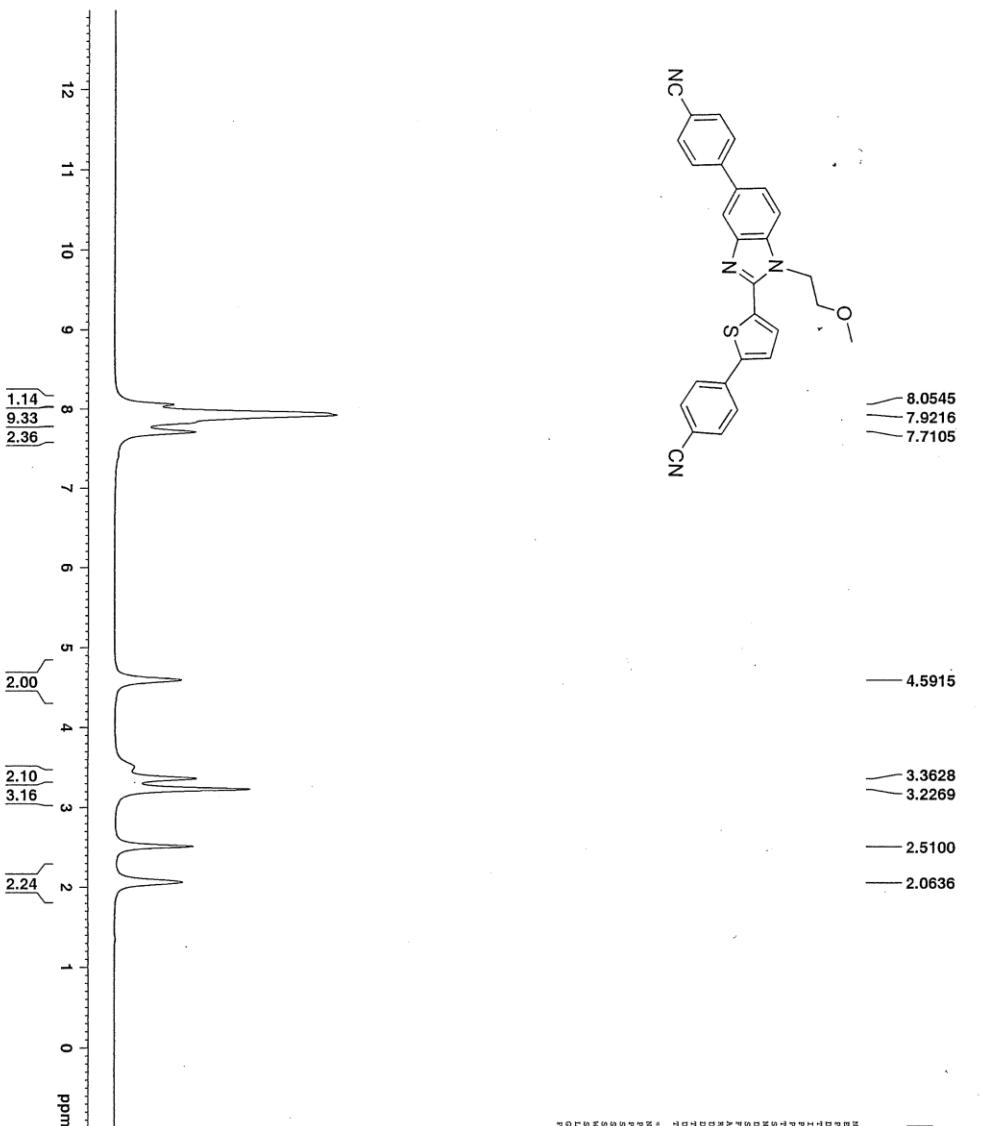
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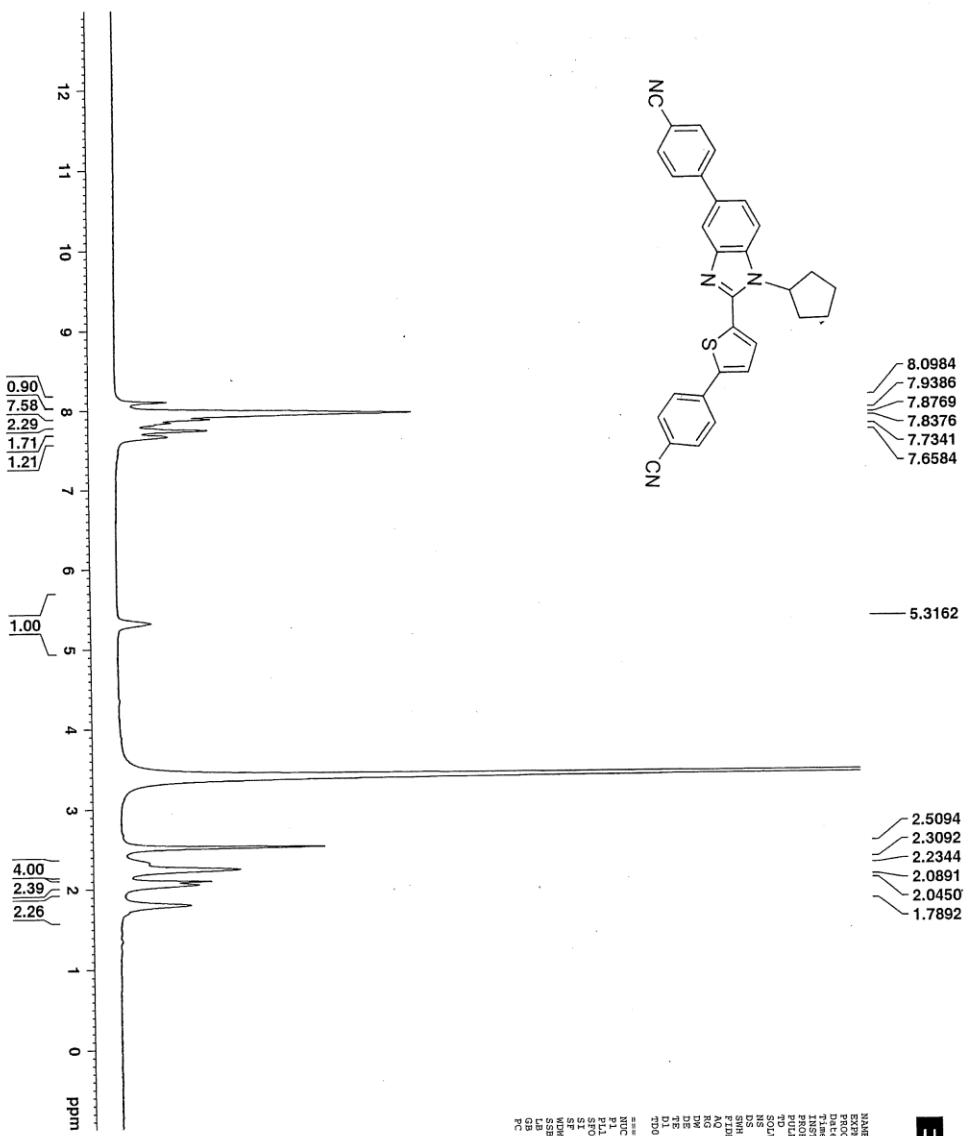


NAME	Cr-Ph-Bi-NH-isobutyl-
PROCNO	1
DATE...	20170815
TIME	15.58
INSTRUM	SPEC1
PROMOD	5 mm PABCO
PROBODG	430
SOLVENT	65536
NS	65536
DS	4
SWH	5592.841
FIDRES	Hz
AQ	0.085450
RG	5.858983
DW	sec
DE	89.400
TE	6.000
TM	25.0
DL	0.000001
TDD	1 sec
===== CHANNEL F1 =====	
NZT1	1H
PL1	6.40 uspec
PLL	0.000001
SI1	400.132408 MHz
SF1	32268
WTW	400.130000 MHz
SSB	EMD
LDB	0.30 Hz
GB	1.00
PC	

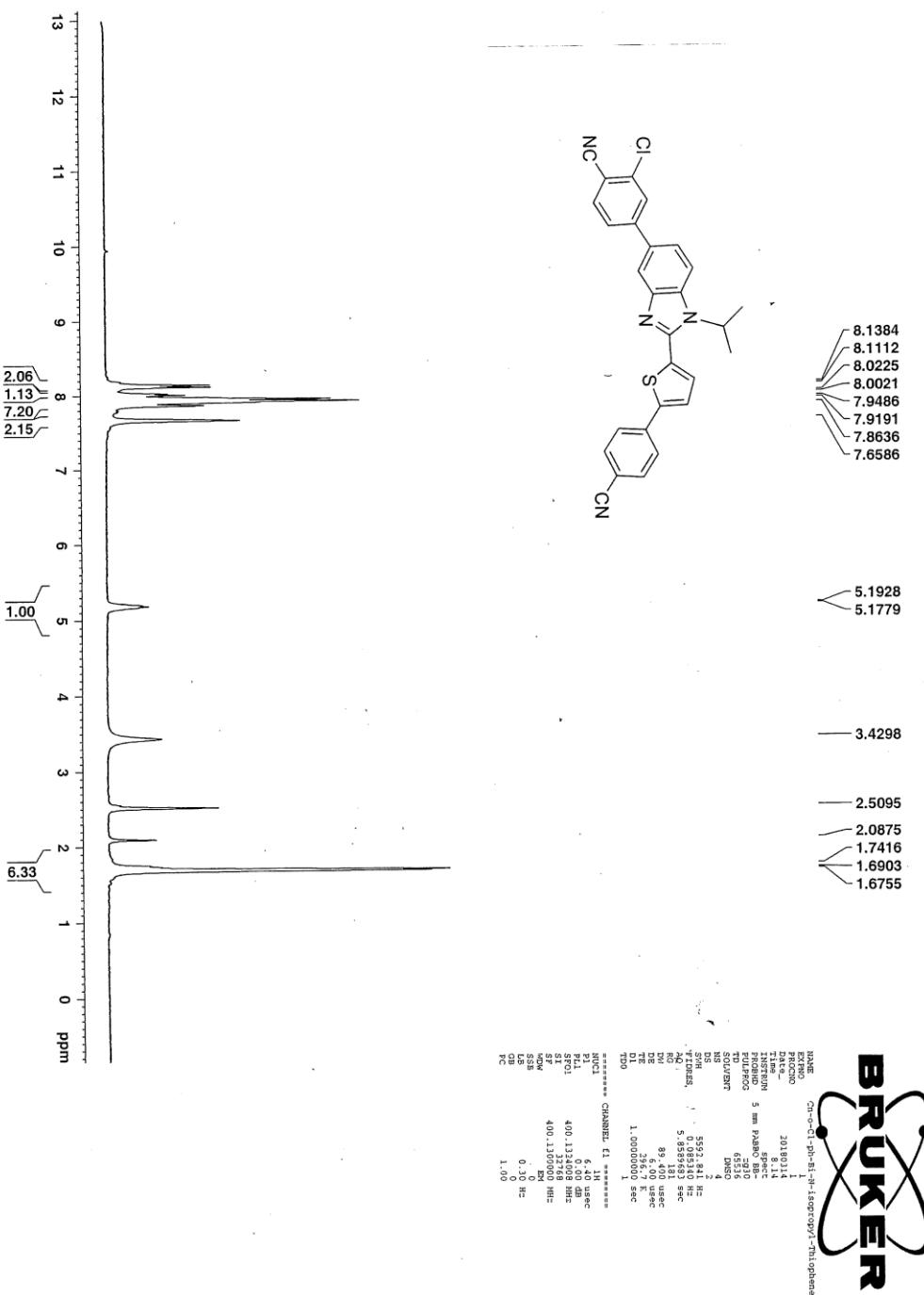
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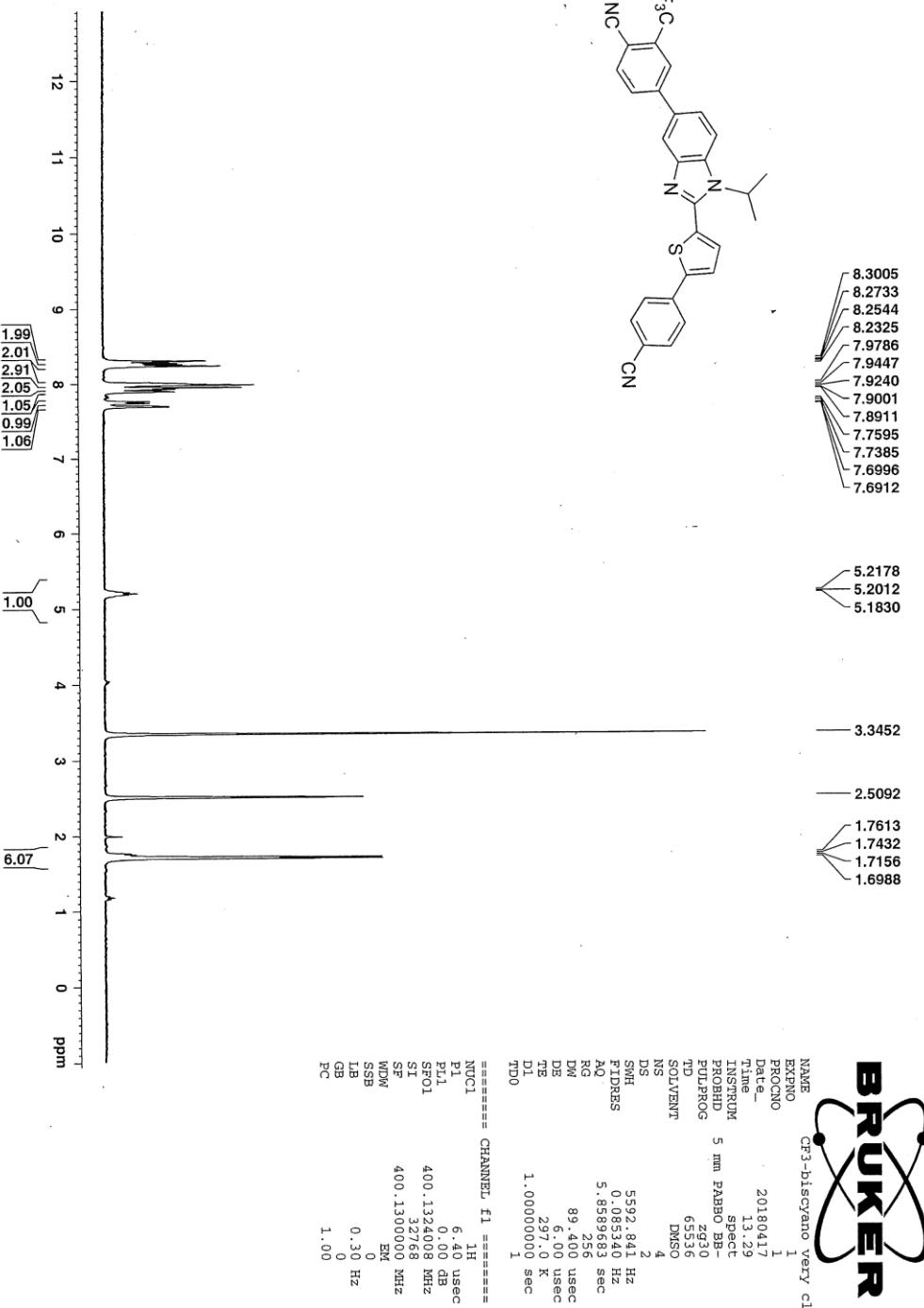


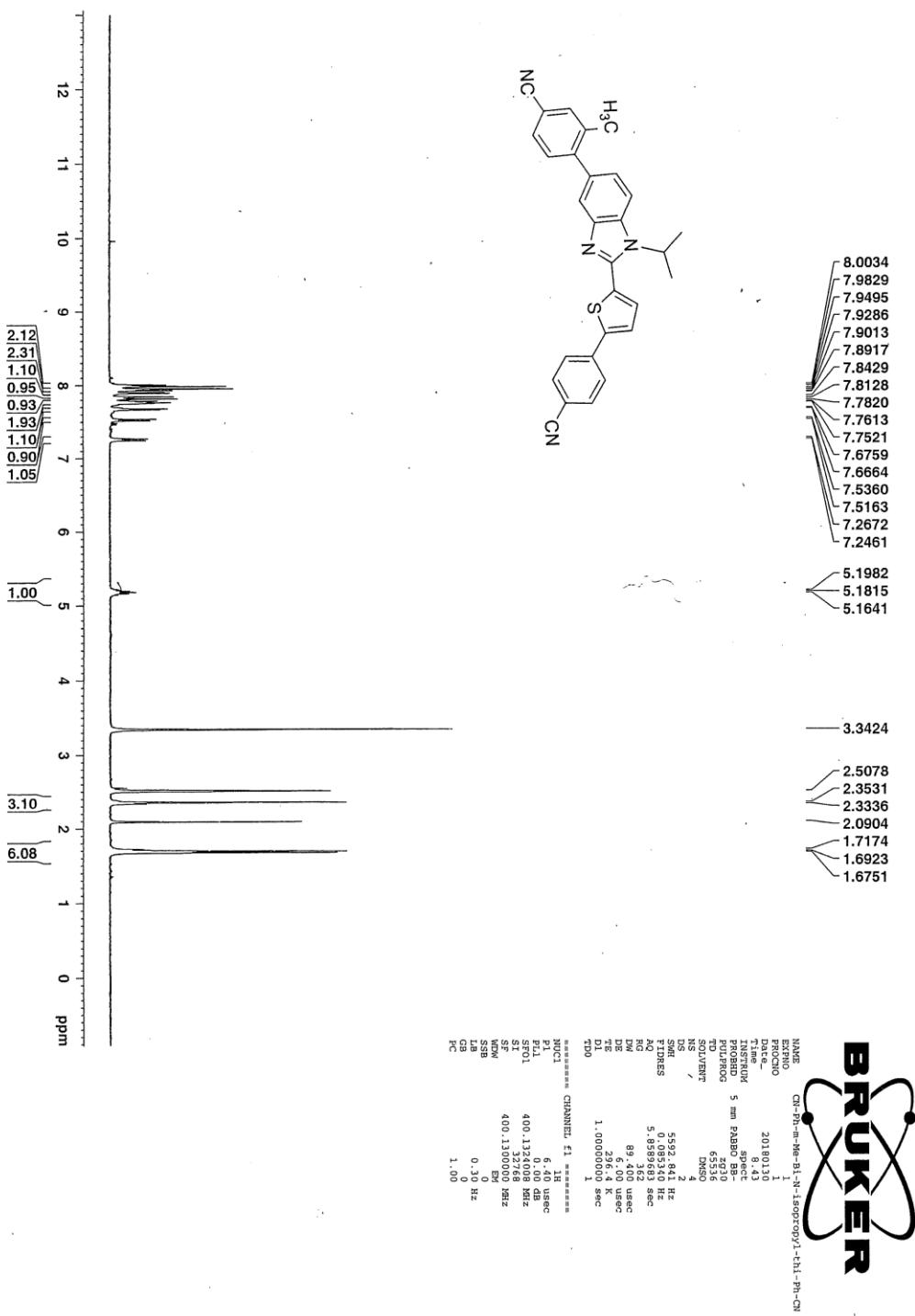


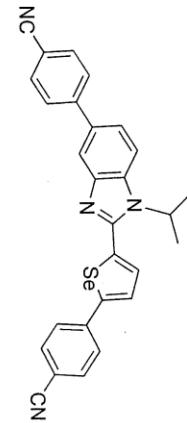
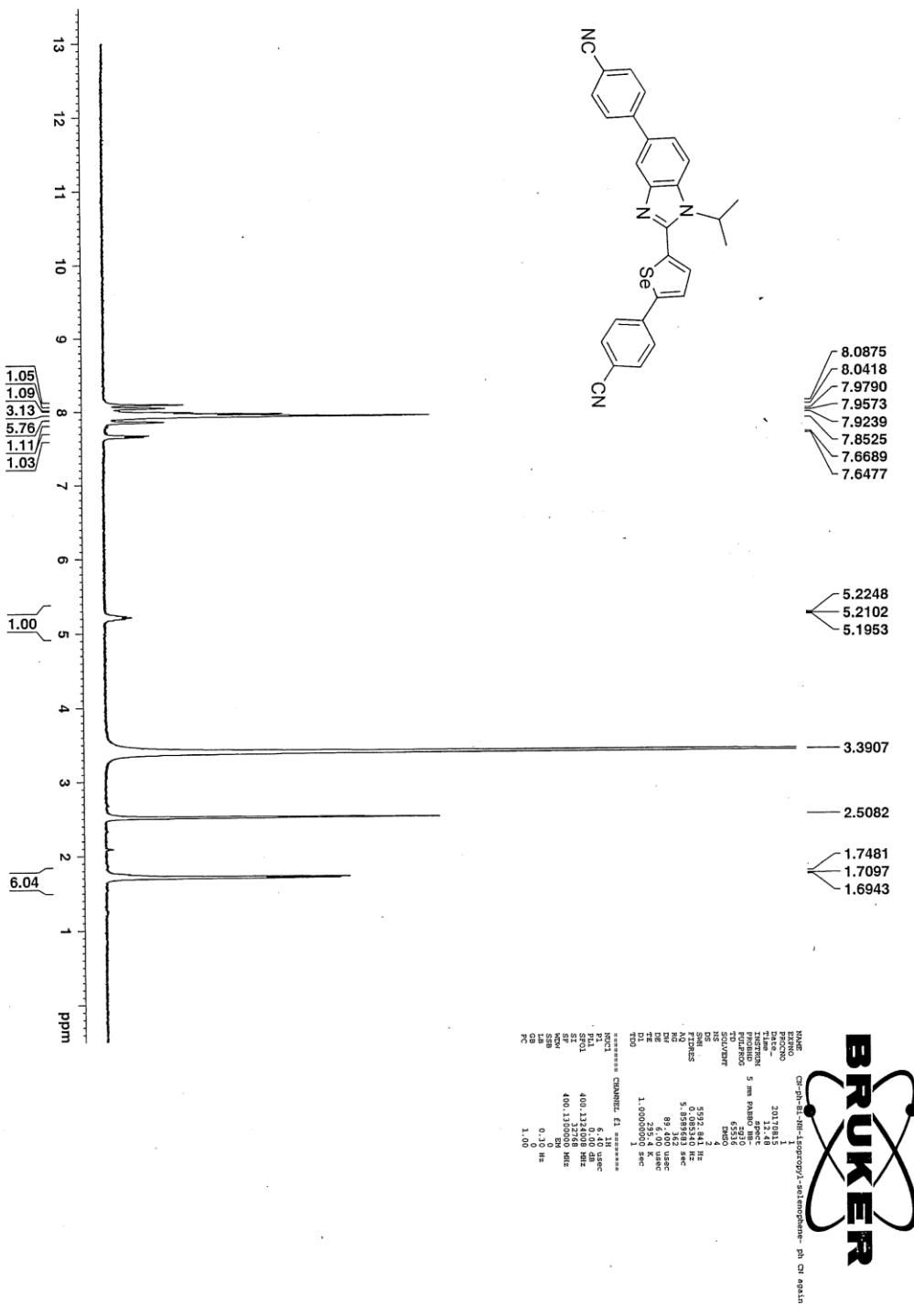


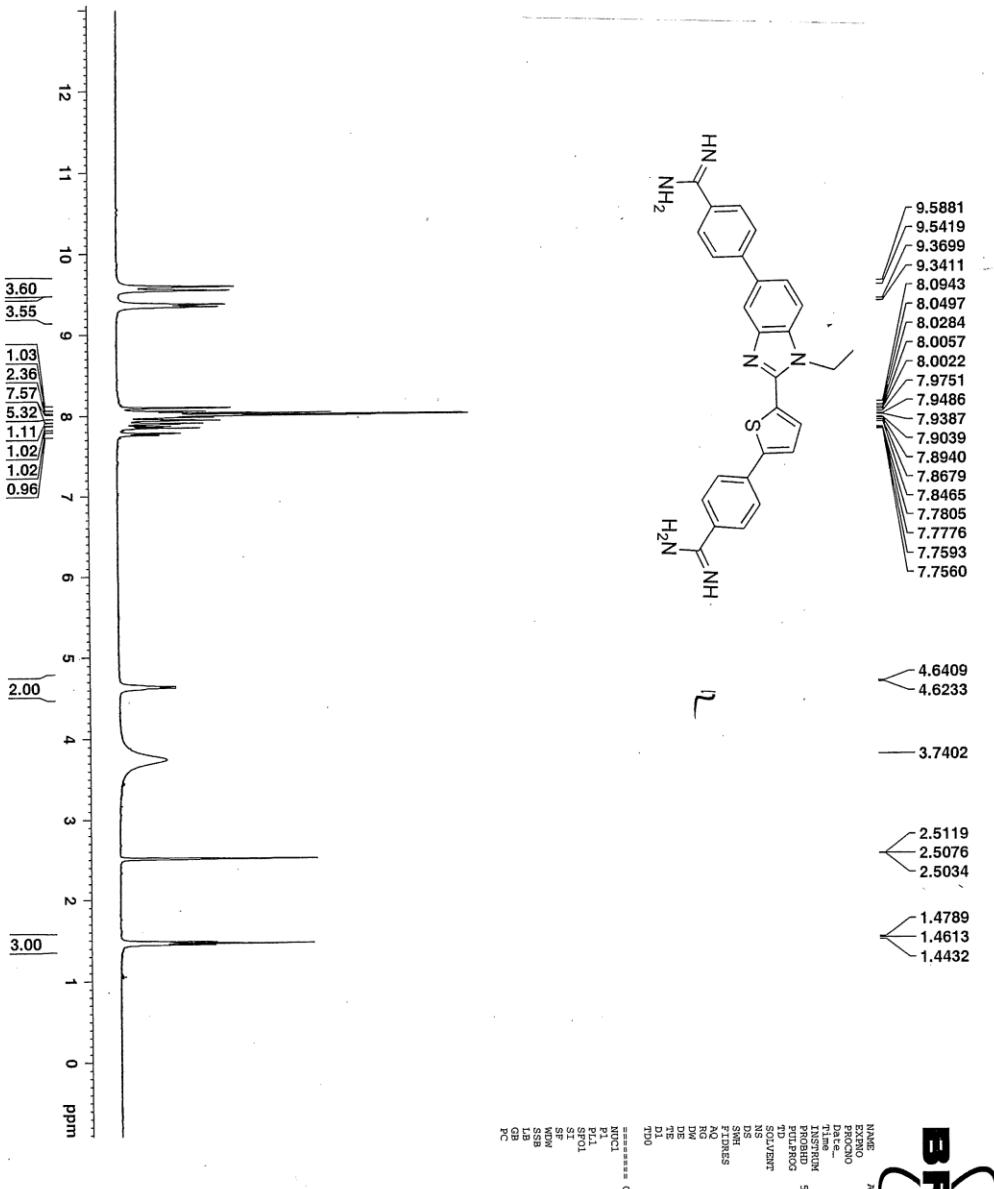
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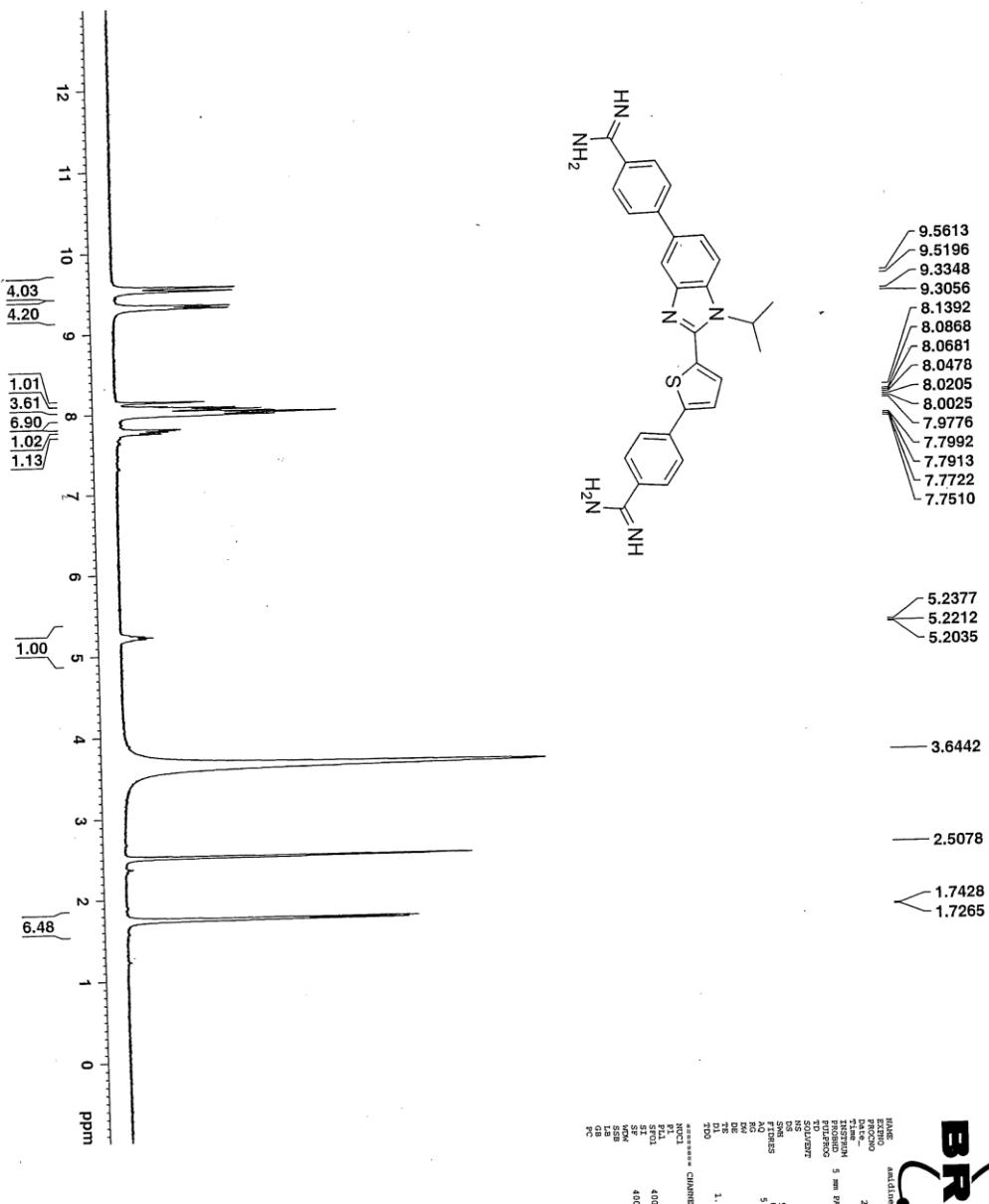


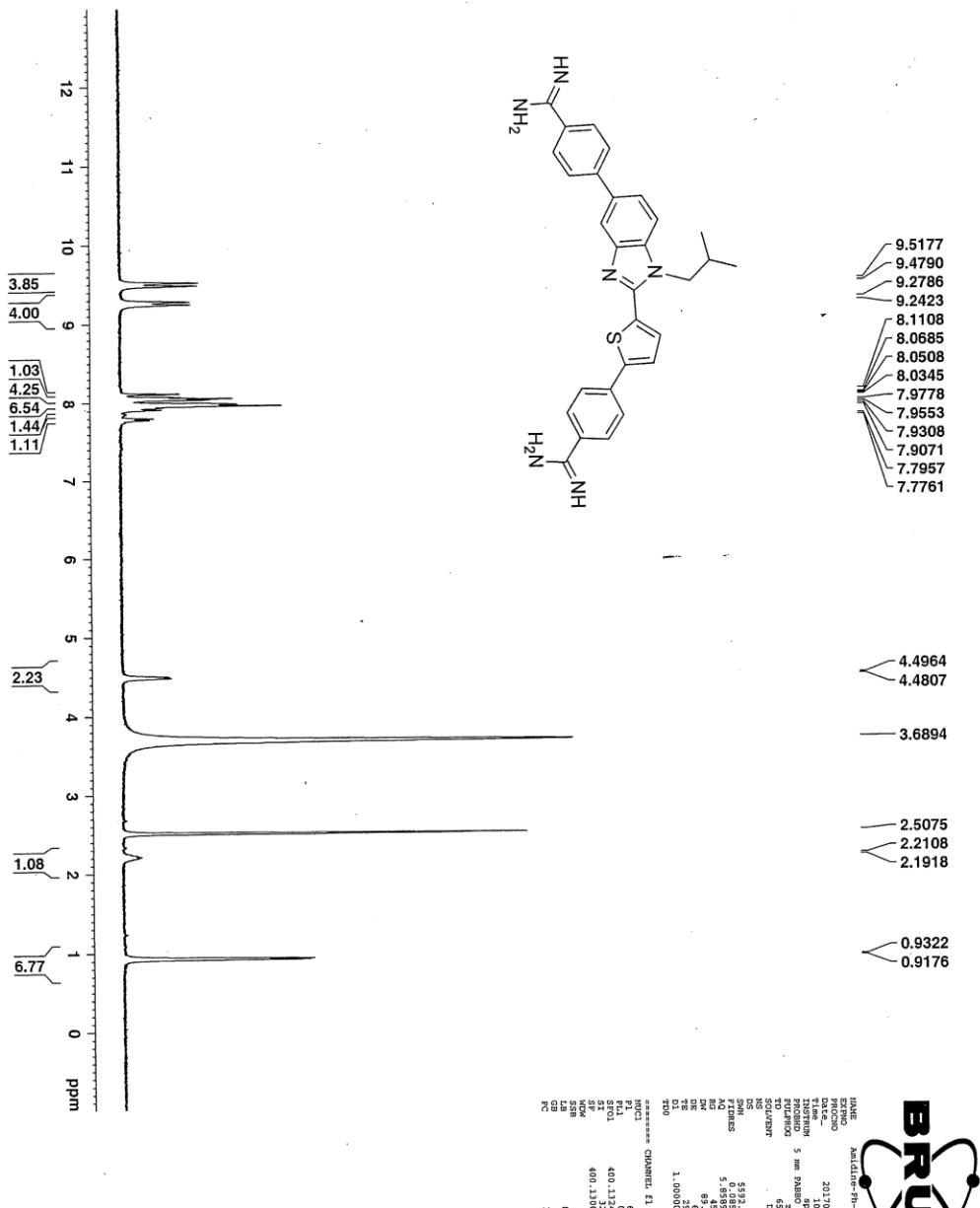


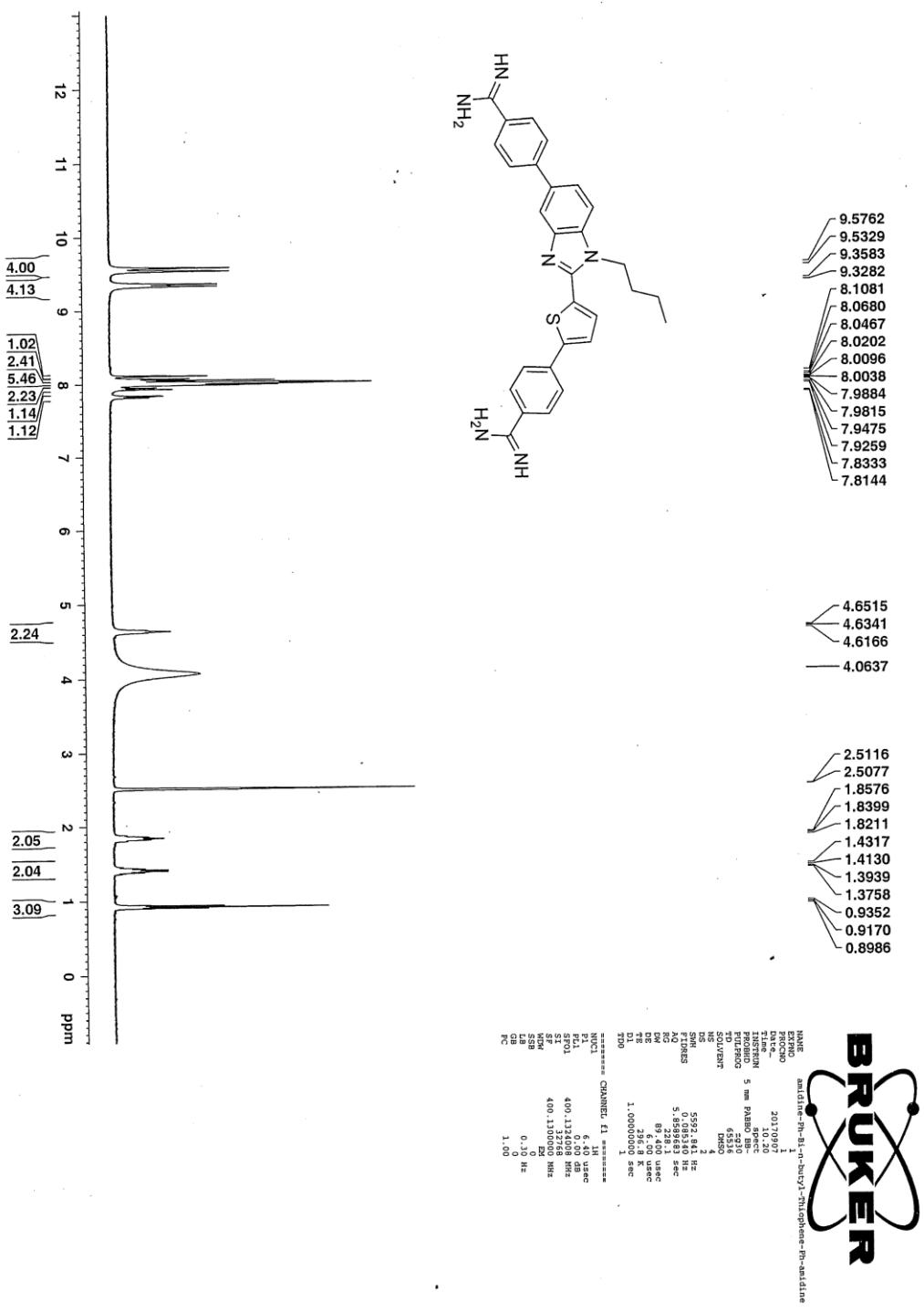


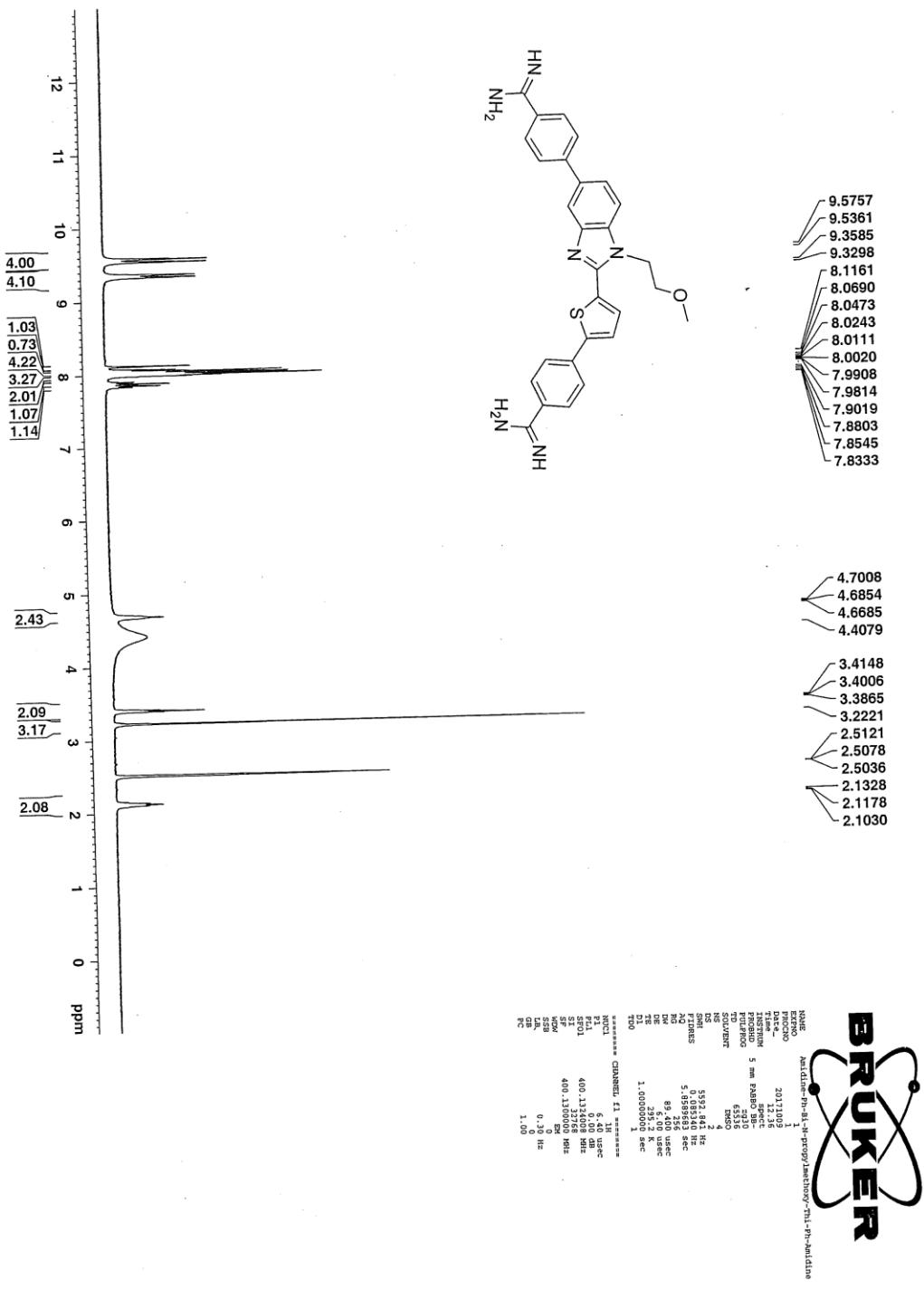


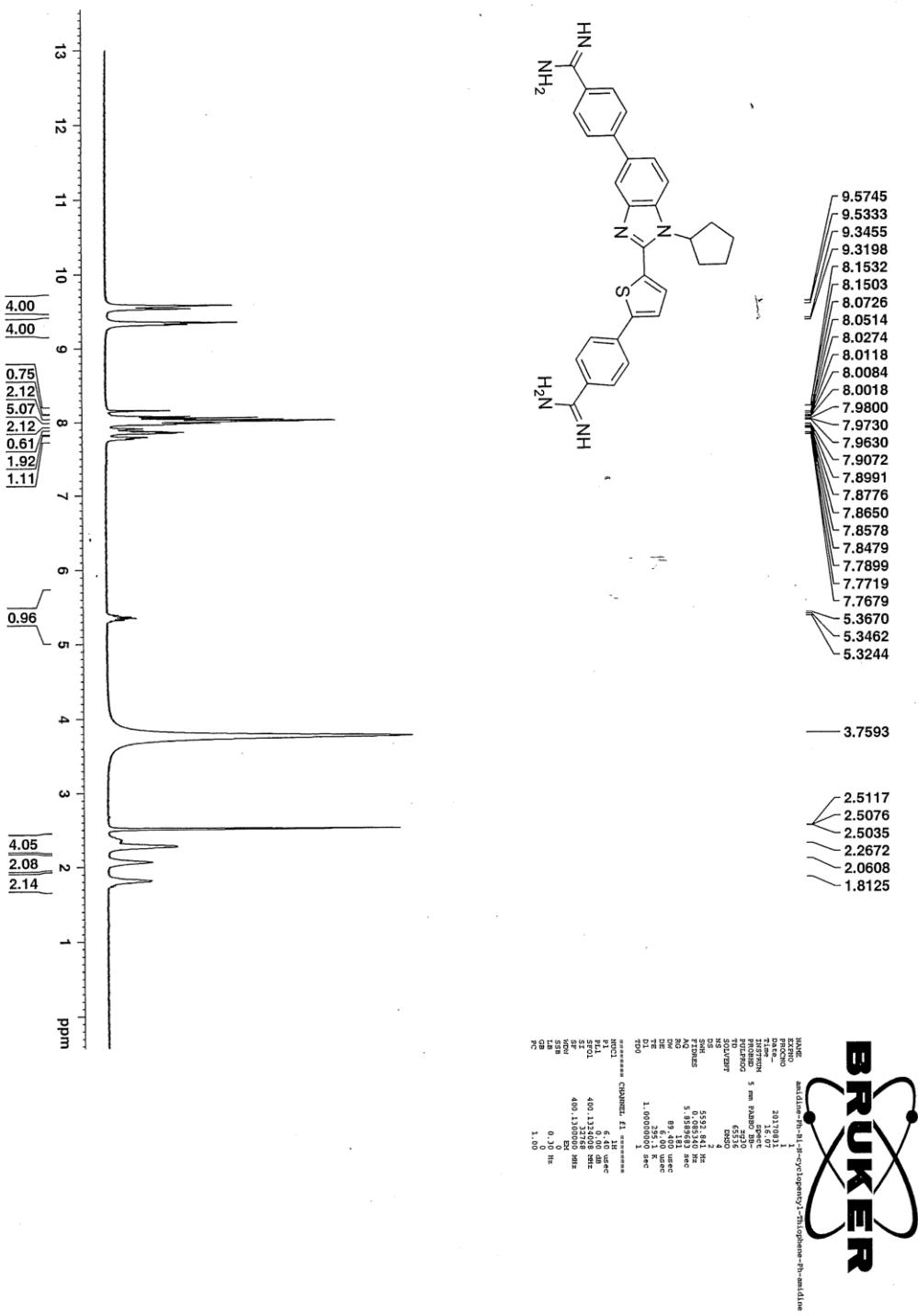
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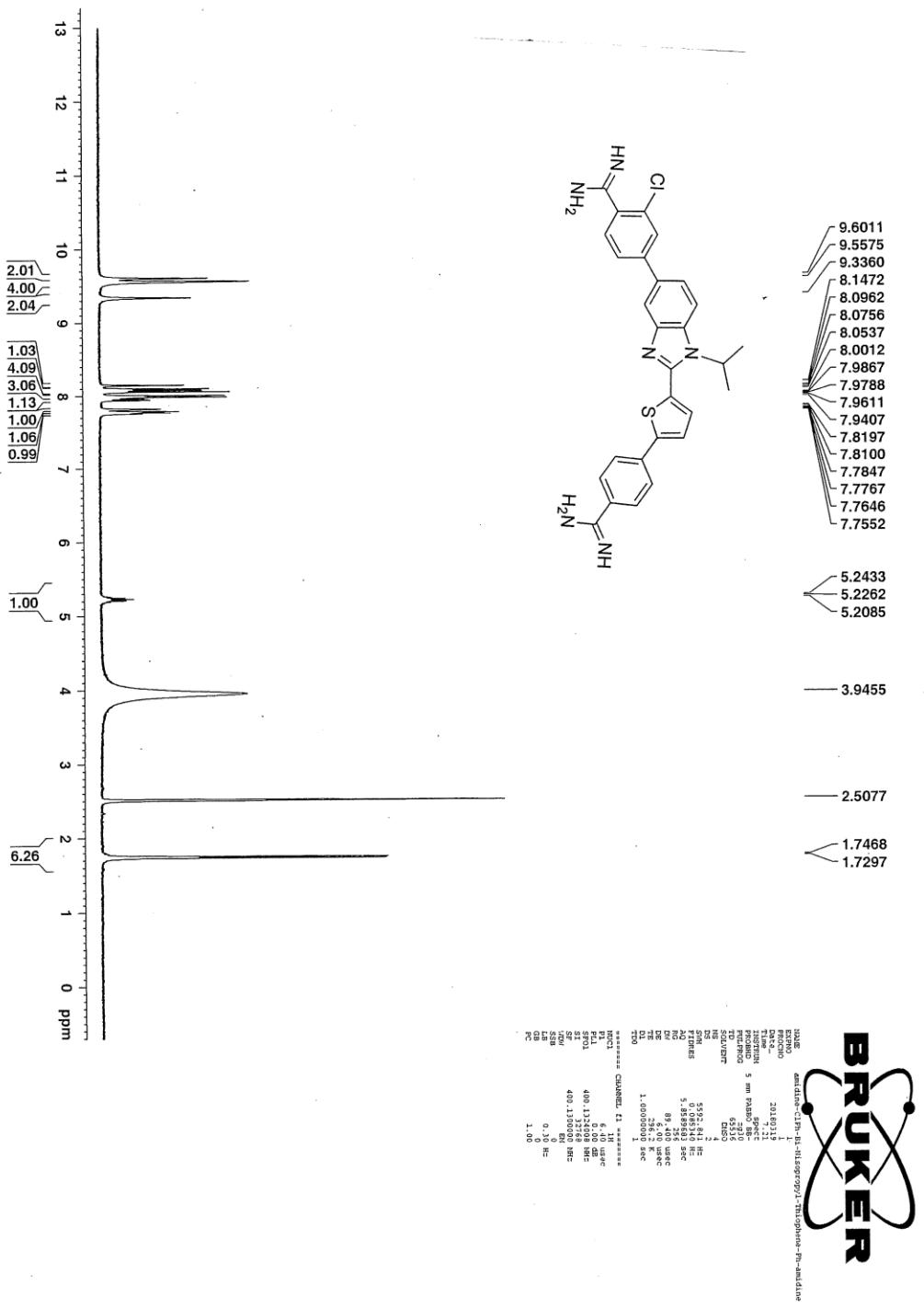


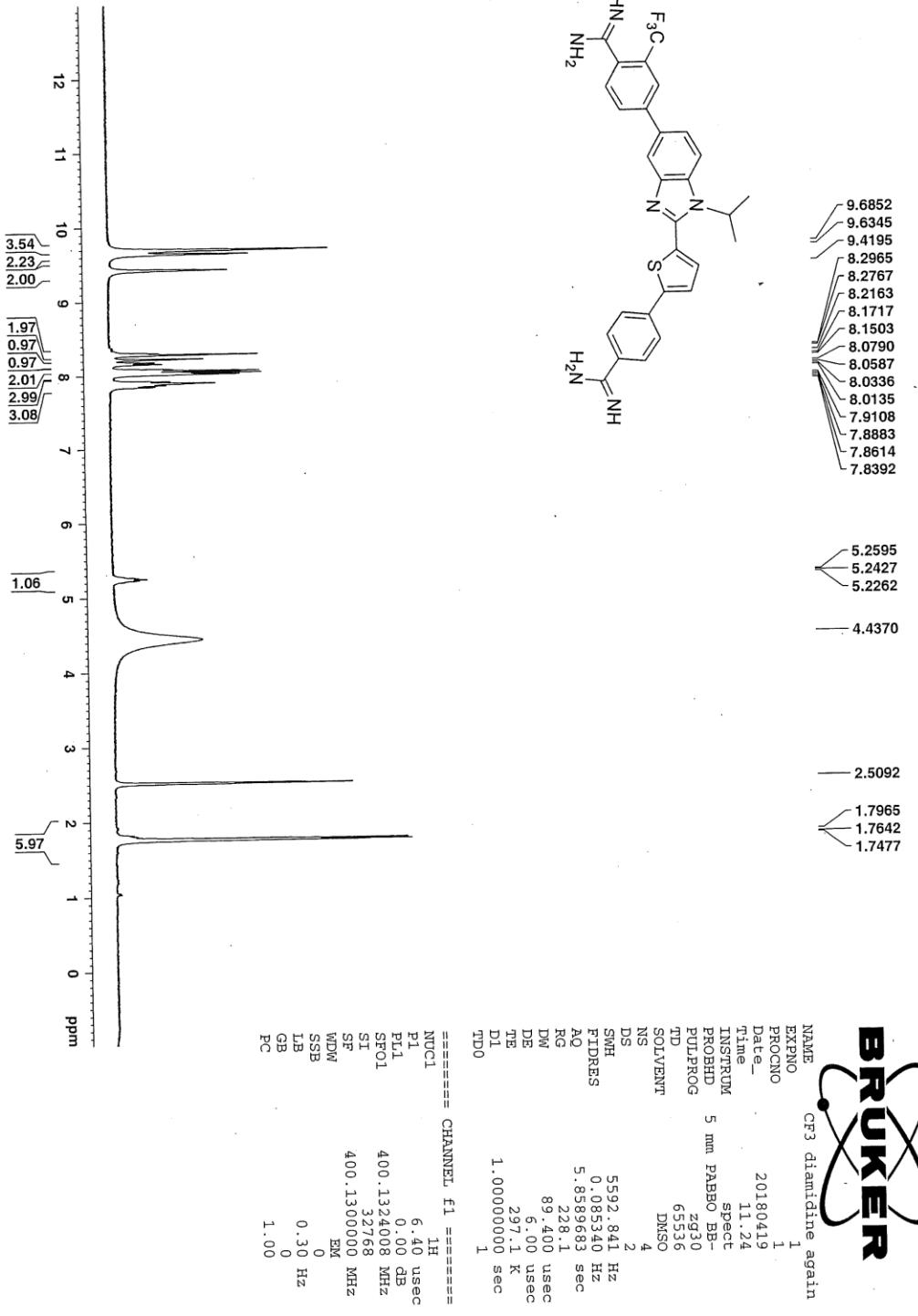


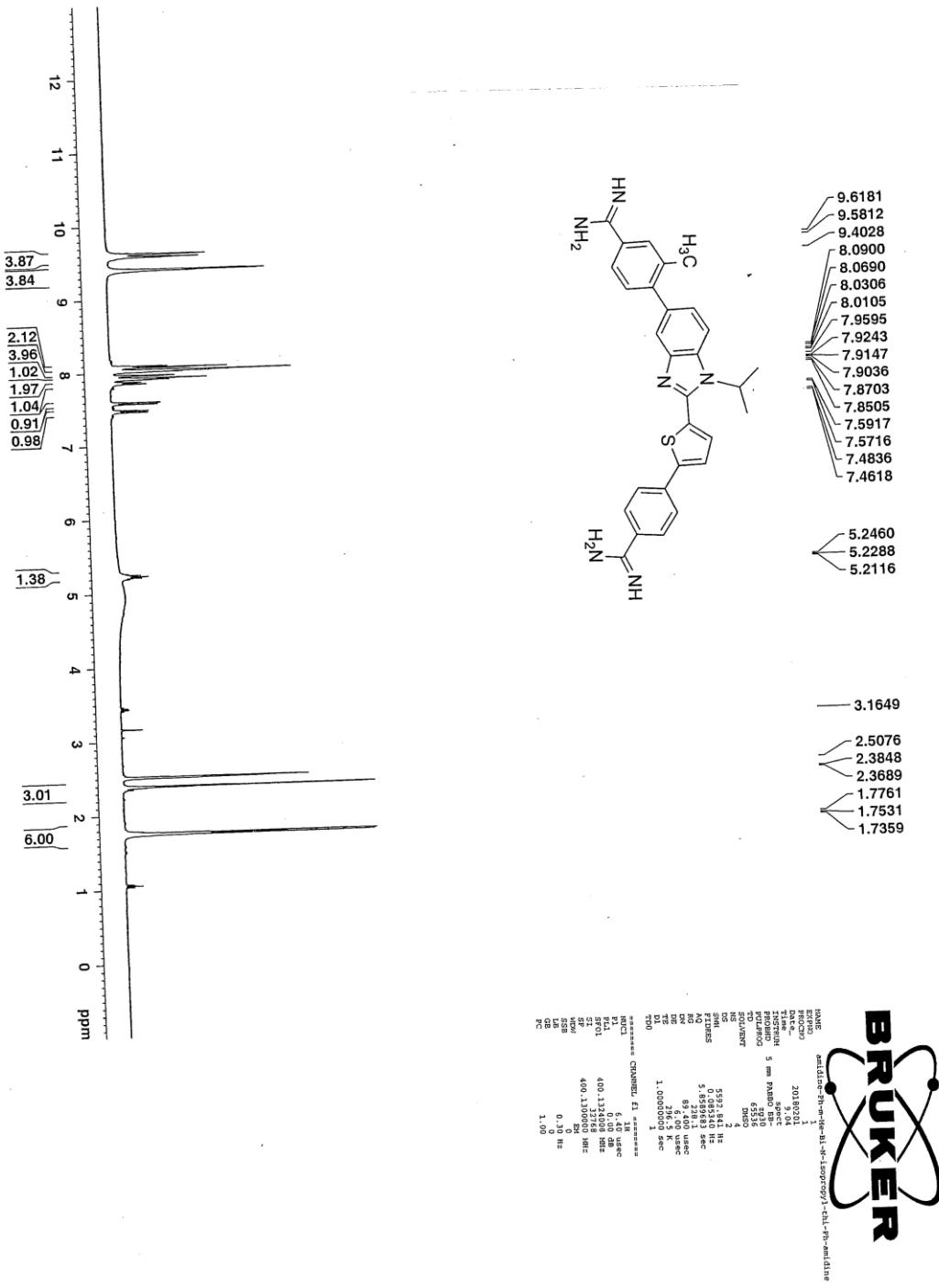


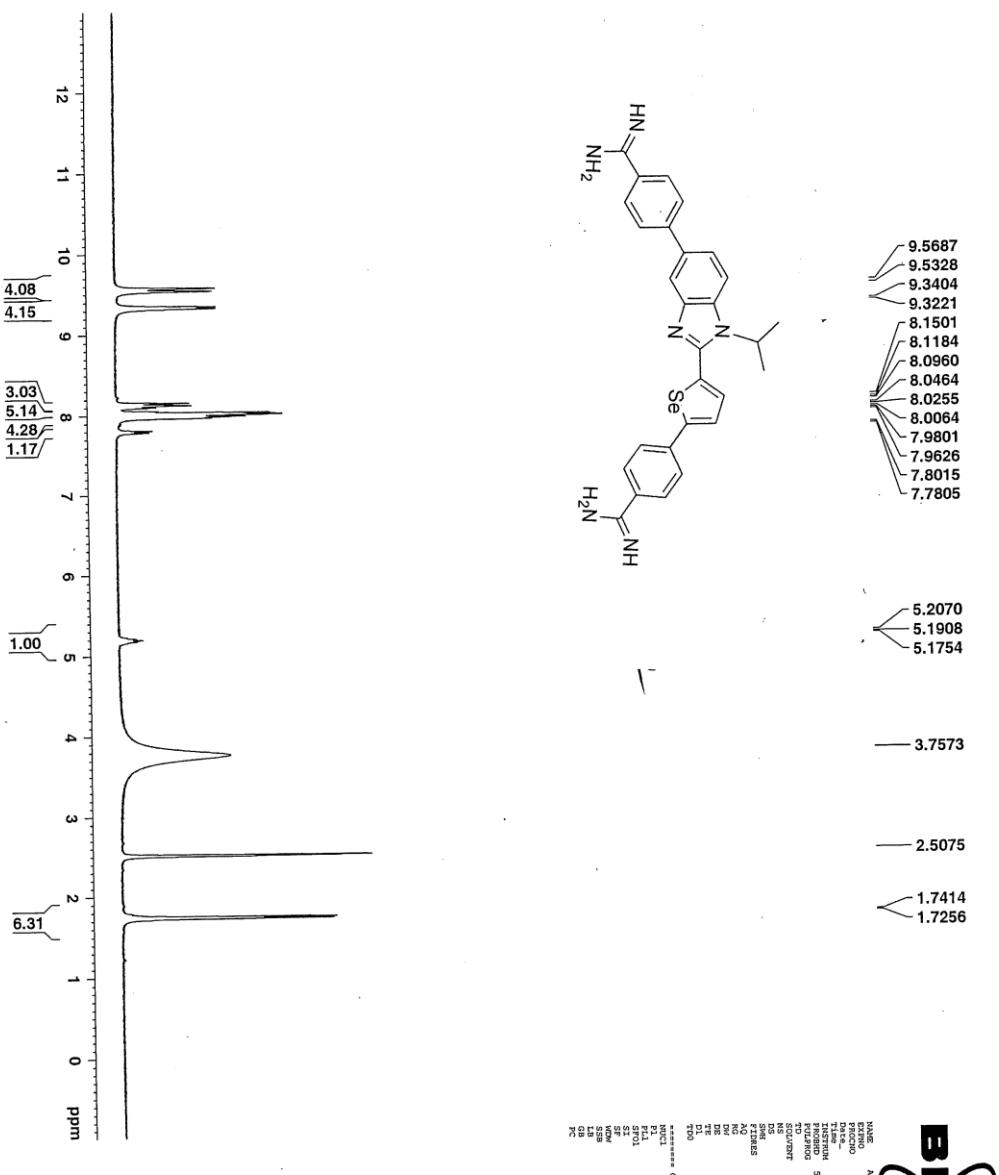












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