

Solution Reactions of a Bis(pyrrolylaldiminate)copper(II)
Complex with Peralkyl Zinc, Aluminum and Boron
Reagents: Investigation of the Pathways Responsible for
Copper Metal Deposition

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RECEIVED DATE

Abstract: The solution reactions of bis(*N*-isopropylpyrrolylaldimine)copper(II) (CuL_2) with AlMe_3 , BEt_3 and ZnEt_2 have been studied. In all cases, reduction occurs in two stages via a stable copper(I) pyrrolylaldimine complex (Cu_2L_2), with each stage initiated by copper alkyl complex formation. Reduction from 'LCuR' (R = Me or Et) occurs with release R_2 or L-R, consistent with bimolecular C–C or C–N bond forming reductive elimination. At room temperature or below, copper deposition from 'CuMe' occurs exclusively via reductive elimination of ethane, while decomposition of 'CuEt' yields ethylene, ethane and hydrogen, indicative of both β -hydride elimination and reductive elimination. The reaction byproducts $[\text{Cu}_2\text{L}_2]$, $[\text{LAlMe}_2]$, $[\text{L}_2\text{AlMe}]$, $[\text{AlL}_3]$, $[\text{LBEt}_2]$, $[\text{LZnEt}]$, $[\text{ZnL}_2]$, L–Me and L–Et were synthesized independently and isolated as pure compounds. All compounds are thermally stable, with the exception of LZnEt which undergoes ligand redistribution to form ZnL_2 and ZnEt_2 in solution and as a solid at elevated temperatures. With the exception of $[\text{LZnEt}]$ and $[\text{Cu}_2\text{L}_2]$, these complexes are also volatile; mono-ligated $[\text{LAlMe}_2]$ and $[\text{LBEt}_2]$ are particularly volatile, and therefore more desirable as byproducts in ALD or pulsed-CVD.

Introduction: Atomic layer deposition (ALD) is a process of increasing industrial importance by which ultra-thin highly conformal films of uniform thickness may be deposited in a self-limiting fashion. In a typical process, this is achieved by performing multiple cycles of the following steps: (1) exposure of a substrate to vapors of a metal precursor, resulting in adsorption of a monolayer, (2) removal of any excess precursor with an inert gas purge, (3) exposure of the surface to an excess of a reactive co-reagent (e.g. H₂, H₂O or NH₃) selected to effect deposition of a desired material (e.g. a metal, metal oxide, or metal nitride) upon reaction with the adsorbed metal precursor, and (4) removal of any excess co-reagent and volatile reaction byproducts with an inert gas purge. So long as sufficient vapor doses of the metal precursor and co-reagent are delivered to ensure maximum surface coverage and complete reaction, film thickness will depend only on the number of precursor/purge/co-reagent/purge cycles; this is termed self-limiting behaviour.¹ However, if self-limiting behaviour cannot be achieved (even in cases where a primary ALD pathway is accompanied by a minor parasitic CVD process), the overall process is termed pulsed-CVD. Copper, which is the focus of this work, has now replaced aluminum as the primary interconnect metal for most microelectronics applications, and as device dimensions decrease, the conformality and uniformity of thin film deposition becomes increasingly important.² The development of new and improved copper metal ALD methods is therefore of great importance.

A preceding companion article³ described studies of copper metal deposition from solution and under ALD/pulsed-CVD conditions, with a focus on the reactions of AlMe₃, BEt₃ and ZnEt₂ with the copper(II) complexes [CuL₂] {L = acetylacetonate (acac; **1**), hexafluoroacetylacetonate (hfac; **2**), *N*-isopropyl-β-ketiminate (acnac; **3**), *N,N*-dimethyl-β-diketiminate (nacnac; **4**), 2-pyrrolylaldehyde (PyrAld; **5**), *N*-isopropyl-2-pyrrolylaldiminate (PyrIm^{iPr}; **6a**), *N*-ethyl-2-pyrrolylaldiminate (PyrIm^{Et}; **6b**) and *N*-isopropyl-2-salicylaldiminate (IPSA; **7**); Figure 1}. Solution reactions in this work provided a rapid and straightforward means to identify the most promising candidates for subsequent ALD/pulsed-CVD studies, which are much more time consuming and resource intensive, and require

the use of highly specialized equipment. Based on these studies, ALD/pulsed-CVD was attempted using **6b** in combination with BEt_3 , AlMe_3 and ZnEt_2 . No deposition was observed with BEt_3 , consistent with much lower reactivity observed in solution, and while copper-containing films were deposited using AlMe_3 at $130\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, they were non-conducting, presumably due to high Al_2O_3 content (after atmospheric exposure). However, with ZnEt_2 , pulsed-CVD of conductive copper metal films (containing $\sim 10\%$ Zn) was achieved at $130\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (lower temperatures were not accessible due to a minimum precursor delivery temperature of $120\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$). A related deposition process was reported by Sung and Fischer *et al.* during the course of this work; ALD of pure copper metal films using $[\text{Cu}(\text{OCHMeCH}_2\text{NMe}_2)_2]$ with ZnEt_2 at $100\text{-}120\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$.⁴ However, these authors also encountered substantial Zn incorporation above $120\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, presumably to the detriment of self-limiting behaviour.

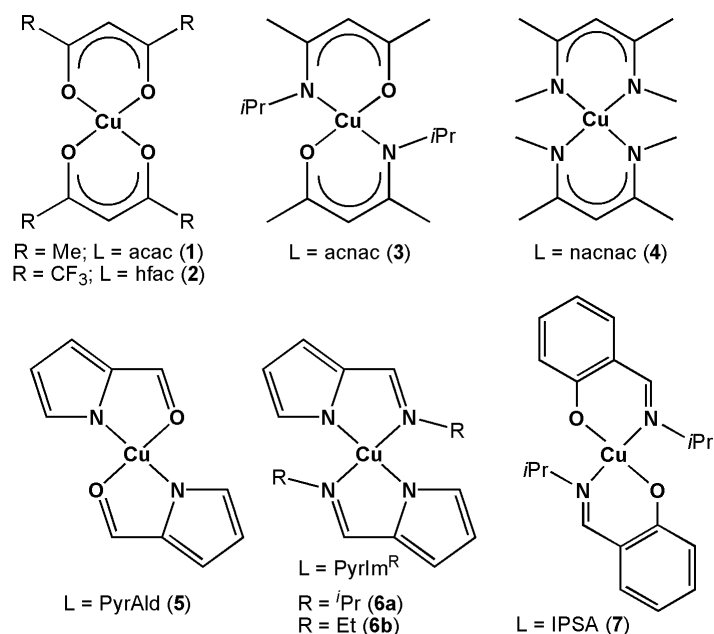


Figure 1. Homoleptic copper(II) complexes 1-7.

Beyond rapid screening of new metal precursor / co-reagent combinations, solution reactions are amenable to detailed mechanistic study using a range of powerful characterization techniques, such as NMR spectroscopy and X-ray crystallography. By contrast, the direct study of ALD/pulsed-CVD

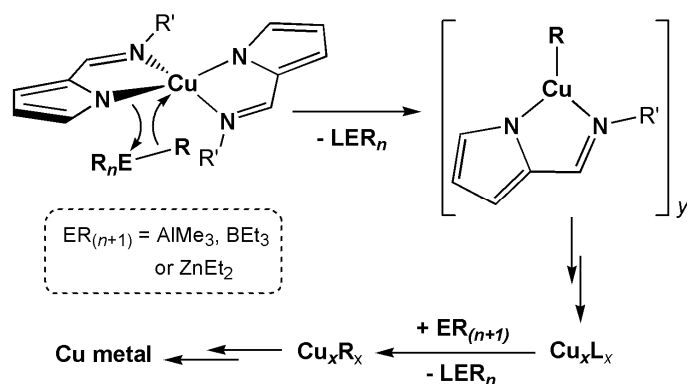
mechanisms faces many challenges due to the very small quantities of surface and vapor-phase species involved, and metrology restrictions placed on chemical analysis inside an ALD reactor. Solution studies therefore represent a powerful approach to gain initial insight into the mechanisms behind ALD/pulsed-CVD processes, especially for reactions occurring at low temperature (e.g. <150 °C); insight which can provide a starting-point for the development and study of new and improved ALD methods.

Solution studies have previously been employed for the study of CVD, and in a range of cases, comparison of volatile byproducts, deuterium labelling studies, and/or kinetic isotope effects have provided strong evidence for mechanistic parallels. For example: (1) Using $[\text{Ti}(\text{CH}_2^t\text{Bu})_4]$, both TiC CVD and solution thermolysis proceeded through initial α -hydrogen abstraction to release neopentane and form $[(^t\text{BuCH}_2)_2\text{Ti}=\text{CH}^t\text{Bu}]$. Furthermore, both in fluorocarbon solution and in the CVD process, this initial step was followed by further neopentane release *via* a mixture of α -hydrogen and γ -hydrogen abstraction pathways.⁵ (2) For $[\text{Pt}(\kappa^1, \eta^2\text{-CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}=\text{CH}_2)_2]$, hot-tube CVD and solution studies yielded platinum metal and the same mixture of pentene and pentadiene products, consistent with the following reaction sequence: initial β -hydride elimination to yield 1,4-pentadiene and $[\text{PtH}(\kappa^1, \eta^2\text{-CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}=\text{CH}_2)]$, catalytic olefin isomerization by this hydride intermediate (conversion of 1,4-pentadiene to 1,3-pentadiene and 1-pentene to 2-pentene), and eventual reductive elimination to afford platinum and 1-pentene.⁶ (3) In solution at room temperature, $[(\text{fod})\text{Pd}(\eta^3\text{-C}_6\text{H}_9)]$ (fod = $^t\text{BuCOCHCOC}_3\text{F}_7$; C_6H_9 = 2-cyclohexenyl) decomposed to form a palladium mirror, benzene, cyclohexene and H(fod), consistent with initial β -hydride elimination to form $[(\text{fod})\text{PdH}]$ and 1,4-cyclohexadiene (free or bound), reductive elimination of H(fod) to yield palladium metal, and conversion of 1,4-cyclohexadiene to 1,3-cyclohexadiene and benzene at the palladium surface. Similarly, thermolysis of $[(\text{fod})\text{Pd}(\eta^3\text{-CH}_2\text{CMeCMe}_2)]$ under CVD conditions with oxygen carrier gas gave palladium metal, H(fod) and $\text{CH}_2=\text{CMe}-\text{CMe}=\text{CH}_2$ as the major products, consistent with the same sequence of β -hydride elimination and reductive elimination.⁷

In this work, detailed spectroscopic investigations into the solution reactions of CuL_2 complex **6a** with AlMe_3 , BEt_3 and ZnEt_2 are reported, allowing the principle pathways involved in copper metal deposition to be proposed. Reactions were monitored primarily by NMR spectroscopy, and intermediates and byproducts with appreciable thermal stability were synthesized independently to allow conclusive spectroscopic identification.

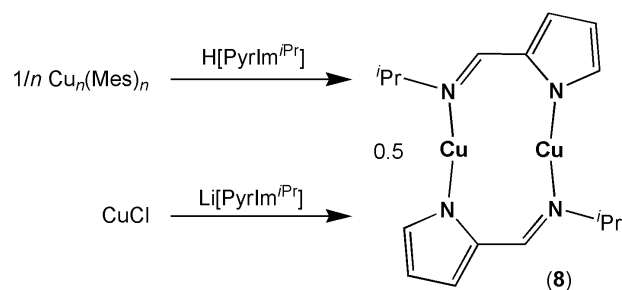
Results and Discussion

Copper(I) Intermediates En-Route to Copper Metal Deposition from 6a, 6b or 7: In the screening reactions of copper(II) complexes **1-7** with AlMe_3 , BEt_3 and ZnEt_2 ,³ solution colour changes were in many cases observed prior to metal deposition. This observation indicates disappearance of $[\text{CuL}_2]$ prior to metal deposition, rather than concurrent with metal deposition, and indeed a common diamagnetic intermediate was observed by ^1H NMR spectroscopy in the reactions of **6a**, **6b** or **7** with ≤ 1 equiv. of AlMe_3 , BEt_3 and ZnEt_2 . These reactions are consistent with stepwise reduction via a copper(I) intermediate, $[\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{L}_n]$, as shown in Scheme 1.⁸



Scheme 1. Generalized reaction scheme for the formation of $[\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}\text{L}_x]$ as an intermediate in the reactions of $[\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}\text{L}_2]$ complexes with AlMe_3 , BEt_3 and ZnEt_2 . The example shown here uses a pyrrolylaldimine precursor complex [e.g. **6a** ($\text{R}' = i\text{Pr}$) or **6b** ($\text{R}' = \text{Et}$)].⁸

The copper(I) intermediate formed in the reactions of **6a** with AlMe_3 , BEt_3 and ZnEt_2 was synthesized independently from either mesitylcopper(I) with $\text{H}[\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}]$ in toluene, or CuCl with $\text{Li}[\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}]$ in THF (Scheme 2), and was identified as $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**) by ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectroscopy, combustion elemental analysis, and X-ray crystallography (Figure 2). In the solid state, complex **8** adopts a dinuclear structure reminiscent of Gordon's $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{amidinate})_2]$ complexes.^{9,10} However, in **8**, 4-atom bridges between the two copper(I) centres result in a non-planar structure with approximate C_2 symmetry [$\text{N}(1)\text{--Cu}(1)\text{--Cu}(2)\text{--N}(2) = 33.3(1)^\circ$; $\text{N}(11)\text{--Cu}(2)\text{--Cu}(1)\text{--N}(12) = 31.4(1)^\circ$] and a longer $\text{Cu}\cdots\text{Cu}$ distance than in $[\text{Cu}_2\{(\text{iPrN})_2\text{CMe}\}_2]$ [$2.5312(4) \text{ \AA}$ vs $2.424(1) \text{ \AA}$].^{10,11} The pyrrolyl nitrogen atom in **8** is non-planar [$\text{cent}\text{--N}(1)\text{--Cu}(1) = 168^\circ$; $\text{cent} = \text{centroid of N}(1)/\text{C}(2)/\text{C}(3)/\text{C}(4)/\text{C}(5)$], and $\text{Cu}(1)\text{--N}(1)$ is only marginally shorter than $\text{Cu}(2)\text{--N}(2)$ [$1.866(2) \text{ \AA}$ vs $1.883(2) \text{ \AA}$]. Significantly non-planar structures were also observed for several dinuclear copper(I) guanidinate complexes reported recently by Barry *et al.*¹²



Scheme 2. Independent synthesis of complex **8**.

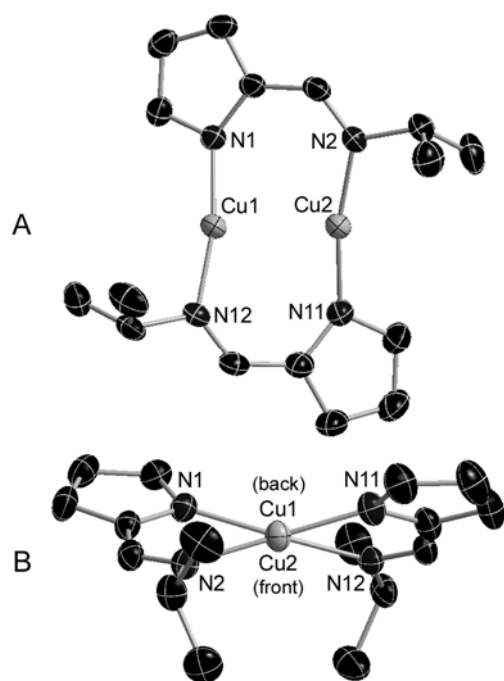


Figure 2. Solid state structure of **8**·0.5toluene with thermal ellipsoids at 50 % probability. All hydrogen atoms and solvent are omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (deg): Cu(1)–N(1) = 1.866(2), Cu(2)–N(2) = 1.883(2), Cu(2)–N(11) = 1.863(2), Cu(1)–N(12) = 1.884(2), Cu(1)–Cu(2) = 2.5312(4), N(1)–Cu(1)–N(12) = 169.07(8), N(2)–Cu(2)–N(11) = 168.41(8).

In solution, complex **8** is stable for days, even at 120 °C. By contrast, other copper(I) intermediates in this work were much less stable; for example, the copper(I) complex observed in metal deposition reactions from [Cu(IPSA)₂] (**7**) decomposed to copper metal over several hours in solution at room temperature. Observation of copper(I) intermediates in the reactions of **6a**, **6b** and **7** with ZnEt₂, AlMe₃ and BEt₃ highlights the potential for the formation of [Cu^I_xL_x] complexes *in-situ* during metal ALD, avoiding problems associated with the direct delivery of many copper(I) complexes due to low thermal stability.

Mechanistic Investigations: The reactions of **6a** with AlMe₃, BEt₃ and ZnEt₂ were studied by ¹H NMR spectroscopy over a range of temperatures with various copper precursor / ER_n co-reagent ratios,

and are discussed in detail below. The formation or absence of hydrogen, methane, ethane, ethylene¹³ and/or *n*-butane¹⁴ was determined by comparison of ¹H and/or ¹³C NMR chemical shifts with literature values (using gas-tight J. Young NMR tubes), and ¹H NMR after purging with argon gas. All other stable intermediates and by-products in these reactions (Figure 3) were assigned by comparison with independently synthesized and characterized samples (*vide infra*).

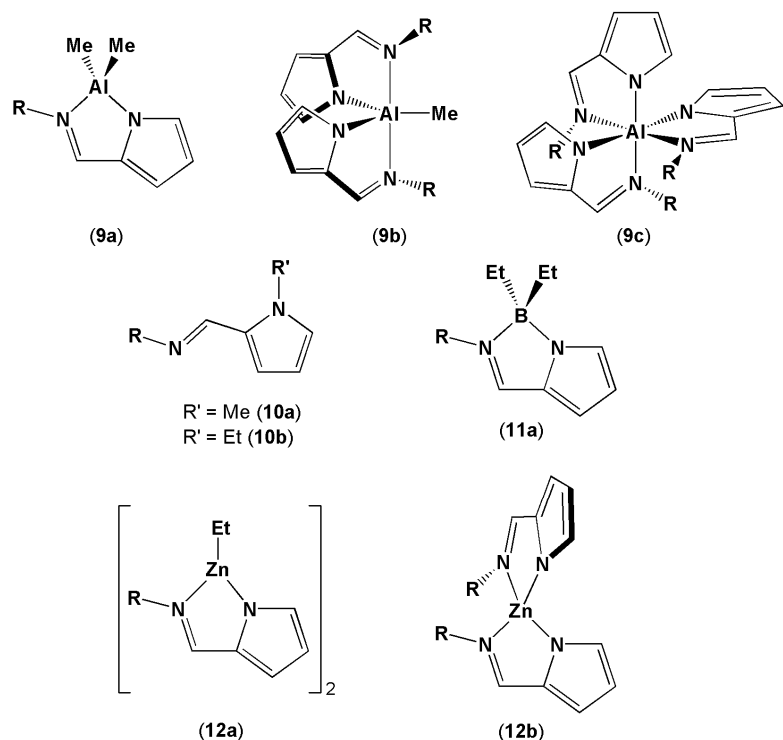


Figure 3. Pyrrolyaldimine ligand-containing byproducts ($R = i\text{Pr}$) from the reactions of **6a** with AlMe_3 , BEt_3 and ZnEt_2 (*vide infra*).

Reactions of $[\text{Cu}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (6a**) and $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**) with AlMe_3 :** Reaction of dark-green, paramagnetic **6a** with 1.0 equiv. of AlMe_3 in C_6D_6 at room temperature resulted in immediate formation of a pale yellow solution and a small amount of a thermally unstable yellow precipitate. This precipitate was identified as $[\text{CuMe}]_n$ ^{15,16} by reaction with $\text{EtC}(\text{CH}_2\text{PPh}_2)_3$ (triphos) to form soluble and thermally stable $[(\kappa^3\text{-triphos})\text{CuMe}]$, which was characterised by ¹H NMR spectroscopy in d_8 -THF at 20 and -40 °C.¹⁷ At room temperature, slurries of $[\text{CuMe}]_n$ in C_6D_6 or d^8 -toluene (in the presence or absence of

AlMe₃) decomposed over several hours to form finely divided copper metal and C₂H₆ (no methane was detected). Ikariya and Yamamoto reported the clean formation of ethane from slow decomposition of dry [CuMe]_n at 0 °C¹⁸ or phosphine-stabilized [(Cy₃P)CuMe].^{19,20} However, these and other researchers reported the formation of both methane and ethane in the rapid or explosive decomposition of solid [CuMe]_n, with^{18,19,21} or without¹⁵ the formation of small amounts of ethylene and hydrogen or propane. Release of methane and ethane was also reported for the thermal decomposition of various [(R₃P)_xCuMe] [(R₃P)_x = PEt₃, PⁿBu₃, PMe₂Ph, dppe, (PPh₃)₃] complexes.²⁰

After 15 minutes, a ¹H NMR spectrum of the 1:1 reaction of **6a** with AlMe₃ showed the formation of [Cu₂(PyrIm^{iPr})₂] (**8**), [(PyrIm^{iPr})AlMe₂] (**9a**), PyrIm^{iPr}-Me (**10a**), ethane and a small amount of [(PyrIm^{iPr})₂AlMe] (**9b**). No AlMe₃ remained, and complete consumption of **6a** was evident by the absence of a broad ¹H NMR peak at 3.2 ppm, and a pale yellow solution colour (**6a** is dark green). The primary route to **9a** must therefore be the reaction of AlMe₃ with **6a**, with **9b** formed subsequently in the reaction of **9a** with **8**. Based on the observed product distribution, the intermediate copper alkyl complexes, '(PyrIm^{iPr})CuMe' and [CuMe]_n, must decompose to afford **8** [with loss of ethane or **10a**] and copper metal [with loss of ethane], respectively (Scheme 3); the reactions responsible for **10a** formation are discussed further below. Over the next 48 hours at room temperature, deposition of a copper film occurred on the walls of the NMR tube, and ¹H NMR signals for **9b** grew in intensity at the expense of those for **8** and **9a**. A small amount of a new byproduct, [Al(PyrIm^{iPr})₃] (**9c**), was also formed. No further changes were observed even after 24 hours at 100 °C.

Reactions of **6a** with an excess or deficit of AlMe₃ were also investigated. Such conditions are relevant to ALD/pulsed-CVD process development where reaction stoichiometry is dependent on precursor and co-reactant pulse durations. In comparison to the 1:1 reaction of **6a** with AlMe₃, which deposited a copper film slowly over several days at room temperature, the 1:5 reaction resulted in immediate formation of a bright yellow precipitate of [CuMe]_n, and only [(PyrIm^{iPr})AlMe₂] (**9a**), ethane and remaining AlMe₃ were observed in solution. Formation of these products requires rapid reaction of

AlMe₃ with **6a**, and subsequent reaction of AlMe₃ with either in-situ generated '(PyrIm^{iPr})CuMe' or [Cu₂(PyrIm^{iPr})₂] (**8**).

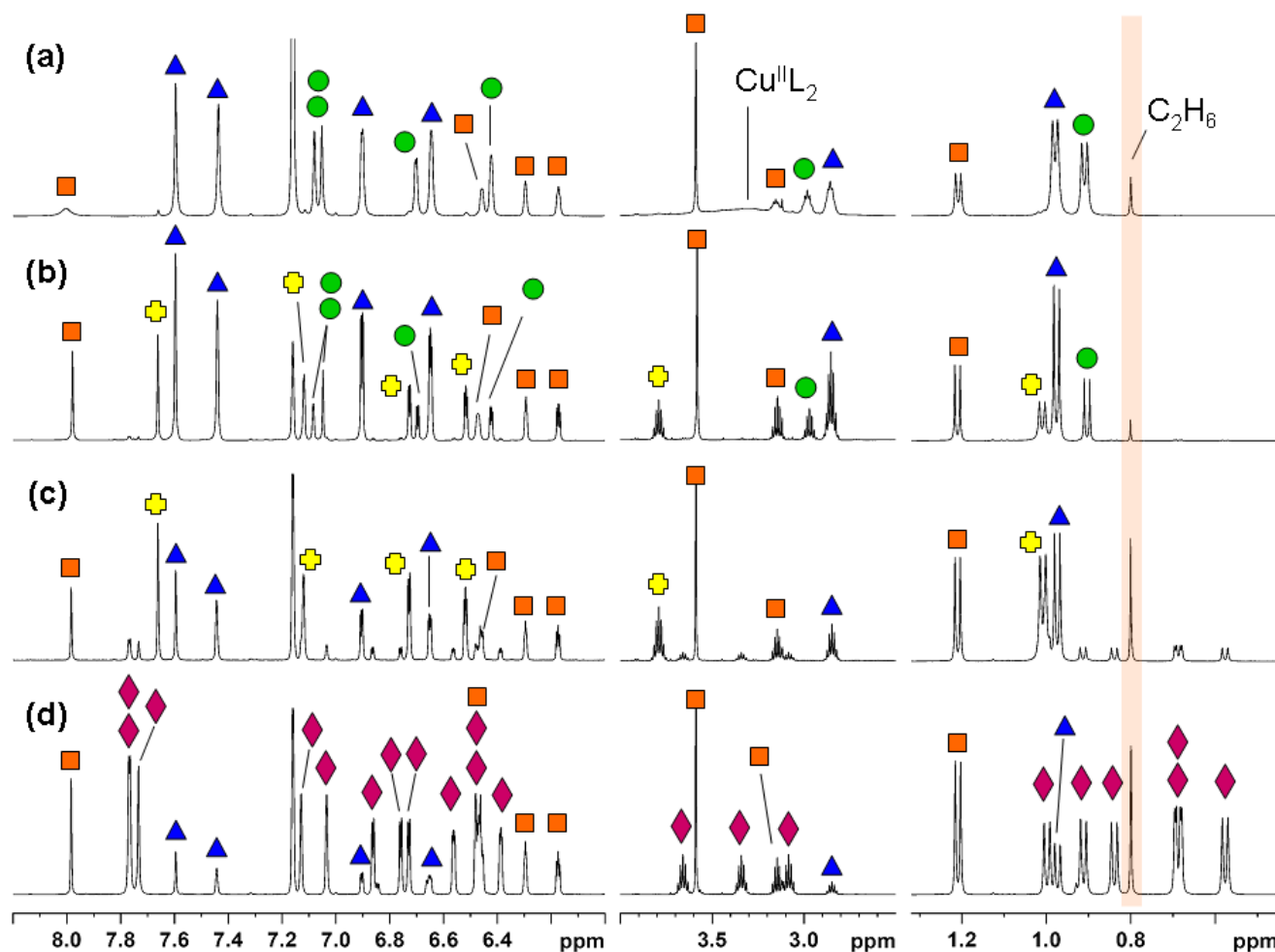
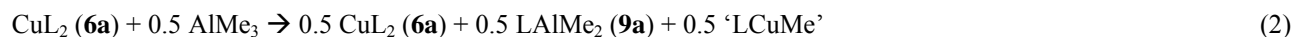
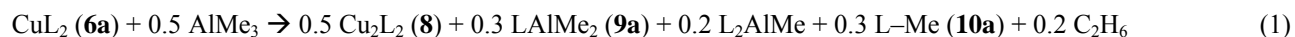


Figure 4. Selected regions of the 500 MHz ¹H NMR spectra for the 1:0.5 reaction of **6a** with AlMe₃ in C₆D₆: (a) 15 minutes at 20 °C, (b) 4 hours at 20 °C, (c) 3 days at 20 °C, (d) 3 days at 20 °C followed by 2 days at 60 °C. In spectra (a)-(c), the AlCH₃ peak for **9a** and **9b** (−0.32 ppm) is not shown. The shaded area highlights the chemical shift position of ethane. Symbols mark different reaction intermediates and byproducts: triangle (blue) = [Cu₂(PyrIm)₂] (**8**), circle (green) = [(PyrIm)AlMe₂] (**9a**), cross (yellow) = [(PyrIm)₂AlMe] (**9b**), diamond (purple) = [Al(PyrIm)₃] (**9c**), square (orange) = PyrIm-Me (**10a**).

A ^1H NMR spectrum of the 1:0.5 reaction of **6a** with AlMe_3 taken after 15 minutes showed formation of $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{AlMe}_2]$ (**9a**), $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ (**10a**), ethane and leftover **6a** (Figure 4). No copper metal or other precipitate was observed, and as expected, no AlMe_3 remained unreacted. After 4 hours, all **6a** had been consumed, despite the release of only 0.3 equivalents of **9a** and 0.2 equiv. of $[(\text{PyrIm})_2\text{AlMe}]$ (**9b**). Equation 1 shows the major products formed in this reaction:



The 1:1 ratio of $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**) to $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ (**10a**), absence of leftover **6a**, and only small amounts of ethane and $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2\text{AlMe}]$ (**9b**) observed under these conditions imply a mechanism in which $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuMe}$ is formed via equation 2, and reacts with remaining **6a** to form **8** and **10a**, as shown in equation 3. Equation 3 is therefore the dominant pathway *en-route* to complex **8** in the 1:0.5 reaction of **6a** with AlMe_3 . By contrast, in the 1:1 reaction of **6a** with AlMe_3 (*vide supra*), equation 3 accounts for approximately 30% of complex **8** formed, and elimination of ethane from $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuMe}$ (equation 4) accounts for the other 70%. The formation of **10a** presumably occurs via bimolecular C–N bond forming reductive elimination, since it is not accompanied by copper metal deposition. This reactivity is quite unusual; for example, it lies outside of the range of mechanisms typically proposed for copper-catalyzed C–N bond forming Ullmann reactions.²²

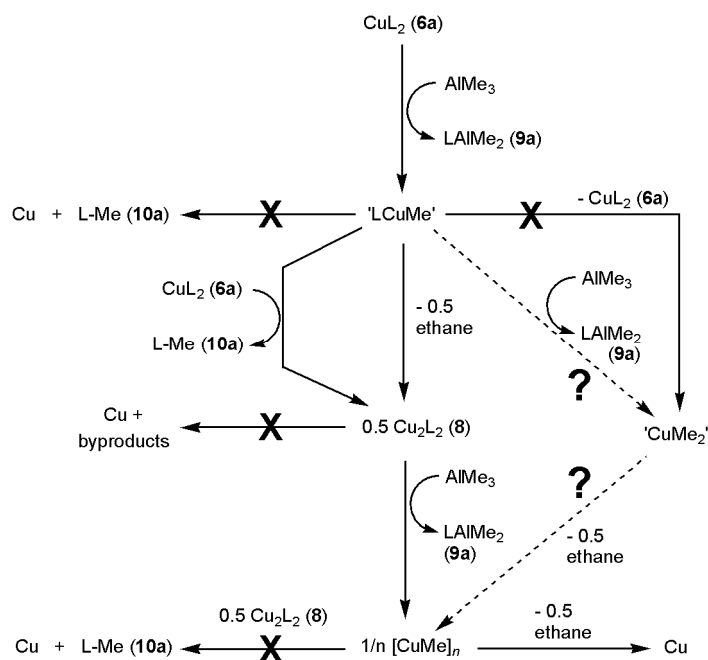
Over 72 hours at room temperature, the 1:0.5 reaction of **6a** with AlMe_3 resulted in deposition of a copper mirror, formation of a significant quantity of ethane, and an approximate 3:3:1:2 ratio of $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ (**10a**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2\text{AlMe}]$ (**9b**), $[\text{Al}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_3]$ (**9c**) and $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**) (Figure 4). Subsequent heating at 60 °C for 48 hours effected complete conversion to **10a**, copper metal, ethane and **9c**, with only 0.075 equiv. of dinuclear **8** remaining (Figure 4).²³

Reaction of isolated $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**) with 1 to 5 equiv of AlMe_3 resulted in precipitation of $[\text{CuMe}]_n$ and formation of $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{AlMe}_2]$ (**9a**) as the only soluble byproduct. By contrast, reaction of **8** with 0.5 equiv of AlMe_3 resulted in precipitation of $[\text{CuMe}]_n$, leaving a 1:1 mixture of **9a** and remaining **8**. Complex **8** was then consumed over 48 hours to give a copper mirror, ethane, and a mixture of **9a**, $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2\text{AlMe}]$ (**9b**) and $[\text{Al}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_3]$ (**9c**). The C–N coupling product $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ (**10a**) was not observed in any reactions of **8** with AlMe_3 .

Scheme 3 shows reaction pathways for copper deposition from $[\text{Cu}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**6a**) and $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**) with AlMe_3 . Reactions marked with an “X”, can be ruled out based on the following arguments: (1) Formation of copper metal from thermal decomposition of $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**) does not occur; complex **8** is thermally stable in solution for days at 120 °C. (2) Decomposition of ‘ $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuMe}$ ’ to form $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ (**10a**) and copper metal does not occur; $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ is formed only in reactions with low AlMe_3 stoichiometries, and is formed *in the absence of* Cu metal deposition. Furthermore, the ratio of (**9a+9b+9c**) to L-Me remains constant after all **6a** has been consumed. (3) Based on observed product distributions, decomposition of ‘ $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuMe}$ ’ to form **10a** without consumption of **6a** does not occur. (4) Ligand redistribution from ‘ $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuMe}$ ’ to form **6a** and ‘ CuMe_2 ’ does not occur since ‘ CuMe_2 ’ would provide access to $[\text{CuMe}]_n$ and/or copper metal without the intermediacy of **8**; a pathway which is not supported by observed product distributions. (5) Reaction of $[\text{CuMe}]_n$ with **8** to form **10a** and copper metal can be ruled out since reactions of **8** with AlMe_3 do not provide **10a**.

The major reactions responsible for copper metal deposition (Scheme 3) are therefore: (1) Reaction of **6a** with AlMe_3 to form ‘ $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuMe}$ ’. (2) Decomposition of ‘ $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuMe}$ ’ by reaction with **6a** to eliminate $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ (**10a**) (at low AlMe_3 reaction stoichiometries) or bimolecular reductive elimination of ethane (at higher AlMe_3 stoichiometries);²⁴ both pathways yield $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**). (3) Reaction of **8** with AlMe_3 to form $[\text{CuMe}]_n$. (4) Decomposition of $[\text{CuMe}]_n$ (to form only ethane in C_6D_6 or d_8 -toluene) *via* bimolecular reductive elimination. However, in reactions of

6a with a significant excess of AlMe₃, the intermediacy of ‘CuMe₂’ en route to ‘CuMe’ cannot be ruled out (*vide infra*).

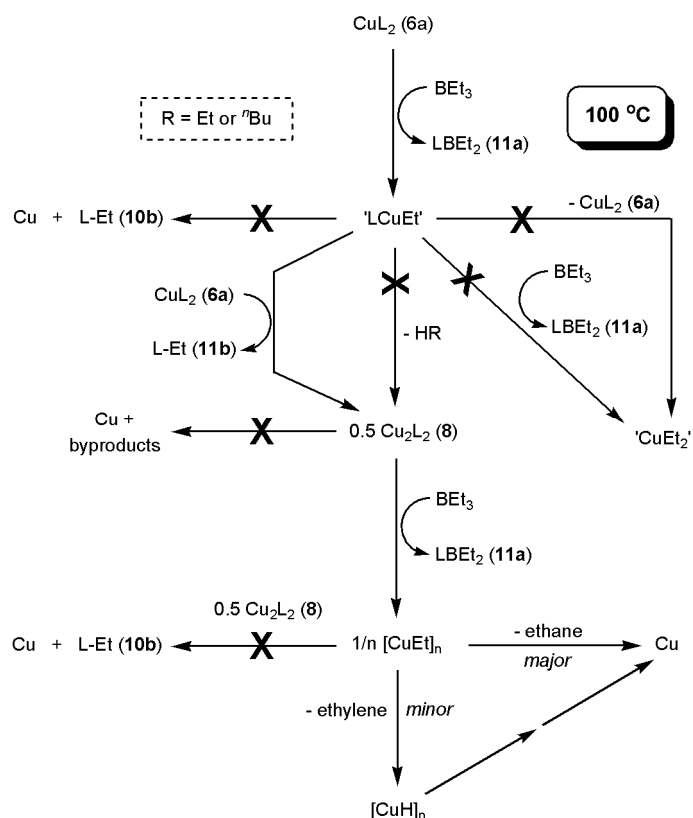


Scheme 3. Reaction Pathways Responsible for Copper Metal Deposition from **6a** and **8** with AlMe₃ (L = PyrIm^{iPr}). Reactions marked with an X do not occur. Dotted arrows represent reactions that cannot be ruled out in the presence of a large excess of AlMe₃.

Reactions of [Cu(PyrIm^{iPr})₂] (6a) and [Cu₂(PyrIm^{iPr})₂] (8) with BEt₃: Complex **6a** reacted with 0.5 to 1.0 equiv. of BEt₃ over 10 weeks at room temperature to form a 1:1:1 mixture of [Cu₂(PyrIm^{iPr})₂] (**8**), PyrIm^{iPr}-Et (**10b**) and [(PyrIm^{iPr})BEt₂] (**11a**). The absence of copper metal or volatile byproducts (ethylene, ethane, *n*-butane or H₂) in this reactivity rules out direct decomposition of ‘(PyrIm^{iPr})CuEt’ to give Cu metal and **10b**, as well as any mechanism involving CuEt₂ formation. The observed product distribution is however consistent with the initial formation of ‘(PyrIm^{iPr})CuEt’, and subsequent reaction with **6a** to eliminate **10b** in preference to bimolecular reductive elimination of *n*-butane or β-

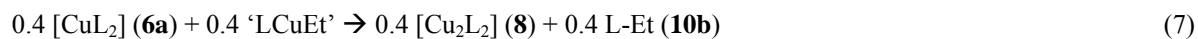
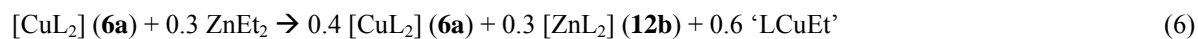
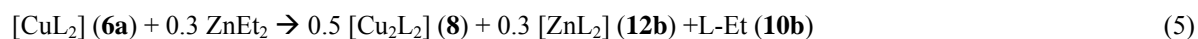
hydride elimination to release ethylene. Identical reactivity was observed with 5.0 equiv. of BEt₃ at 100 °C for 3 hours.

At room temperature, isolated dinuclear [Cu₂(PyrIm^{iPr})₂] (**8**) reacted only very slowly with BEt₃. However, at 100 °C, the reaction of **8** with BEt₃ (10 equiv.) was complete after 24 hours, cleanly forming a copper mirror, [(PyrIm^{iPr})BEt₂] (**11a**), ethane, and a very small amount of ethylene (hydrogen or PyrIm^{iPr}-Et (**10b**) formation was not observed; Figure S1 in supporting information). The nature of these byproducts is suggestive of initial ‘CuEt’ formation, with decomposition at 100 °C taking place primarily by bond homolysis and a small amount of β-hydride elimination. The preference for bond homolysis likely arises due to slow formation of ‘CuEt’ (as a consequence of the greatly reduced reactivity of **8** with BEt₃, relative to AlMe₃), leading to very low concentrations of ‘CuEt’ (and ‘CuH’ via β-hydride elimination) in solution, which would disfavor bimolecular reactivity, such as reductive elimination of H₂ or *n*-butane. Pathways responsible for copper metal deposition in the reactions of **6a** and **8** with BEt₃ are summarized in Scheme 4. The significantly lower reactivity of BEt₃ relative to AlMe₃ (and ZnEt₂; *vide infra*) may be attributed to the reduced Lewis acidity of trialkylboranes relative to trialkylalanes,²⁵ an increase in E–C bond strength in the order Zn < Al < B,²⁶ and reduced bond polarity²⁷ (pauling electronegativity values: C = 2.55, B = 2.04, Al = 1.61, Zn = 1.65).²⁶

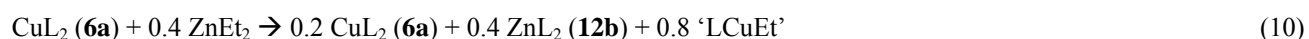
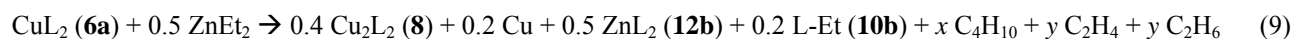


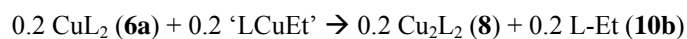
Scheme 4. Reaction Pathway for Copper Metal Deposition from **6a** and **8** with BEt_3 at $100\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ ($\text{L} = \text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}$). Reactions marked with an X do not occur.

Reactions of $[\text{Cu}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (6a**) and $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**) with ZnEt_2 :** At room temperature, complex **6a** reacted immediately with 0.3 equiv. of ZnEt_2 to form an orange solution which turned pale yellow over a period of ~ 1 minute. This reaction proceeded cleanly to form a 0.5 : 0.4 : 0.3 mixture of $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**), $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Et}$ (**10b**) and $[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**12b**), and was accompanied by the formation of a small amount of *n*-butane (spectrum ‘a’ in Figure 5), but no copper metal. Ethylene was not detected, indicating that β -hydride elimination from $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuEt}$ does not occur to any significant extent. ‘Equation 5 provides the overall stoichiometry of the reaction, which is consistent with the reaction steps presented in equations 6–8.



By contrast, reaction of **6a** with 0.5 equiv. of ZnEt_2 afforded an orange solution from which a black precipitate of copper metal was deposited over ~ 1 minute. Byproducts in this reactivity were $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**), $[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**12b**) and $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Et}$ (**10b**) in a 0.4 : 0.5 : 0.2 ratio, *n*-butane, ethylene and ethane. The overall stoichiometry of these reactions is shown in equation 9, which may be explained through the series of reactions in equations 10-14 (note: *n*-butane is not formed in reactions of **8** with ZnEt_2 ; *vide infra*). Similar observations were made with 1.0 equiv. of ZnEt_2 (spectrum 'b' in Figure 5), although in this case, only very small amounts of **8** and **10b** were present. Upon increasing the amount of ZnEt_2 to 5.0 equiv., complexes **8** and **10b** disappeared from the product mixture, $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnEt}]$ (**12a**) was now observed (in equilibrium with **12b** and ZnEt_2 ; *vide infra*), and a small amount of hydrogen was also produced (spectrum 'c' in Figure 5). In the latter reaction, the absence of **10b** as a reaction product is consistent with rapid **6a** depletion (due to fast reaction with excess ZnEt_2), rendering **6a** unavailable for reaction with *in-situ* generated '(PyrIm^{iPr})CuEt' (*cf.* equation 11), and the absence of **8** is readily explained by reaction of **8** with remaining ZnEt_2 (as in equation 13). However, an alternative route to copper metal which circumvents complex **8** is the reaction of *in-situ* generated '(PyrIm^{iPr})CuEt' with ZnEt_2 to form 'CuEt₂', rather than decomposition of '(PyrIm^{iPr})CuEt' by *n*-butane elimination or reaction with **6a**. The resulting 'CuEt₂' species would undoubtedly be highly unstable, decomposing to copper metal directly or through the intermediacy of 'CuEt' (*vide infra*).





(11)



The isolated copper(I) intermediate $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**) reacted instantly with 1.0 or 5.0 equiv. of ZnEt_2 (spectrum 'd' in Figure 5) to form $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnEt}]$ (**12a**) and/or $[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**12b**), and to deposit a thermally unstable bright orange powder which decomposed to copper metal in less than one minute at room temperature. This unstable orange powder is presumably $[\text{CuEt}]_n$, by analogy with $[\text{CuMe}]_n$. Volatile byproducts of the reaction between **8** and ZnEt_2 are ethane, ethylene, and small amounts of H_2 (*n*-butane was not formed), consistent with $[\text{CuEt}]_n$ decomposition by β -hydrogen elimination and reductive elimination.²⁴ This decomposition mode for $[\text{CuEt}]_n$ contrasts that observed in reactions of **8** with BEt_3 , presumably because $[\text{CuEt}]_n$ is generated at room temperature, rather than at 100 °C in reactions with BEt_3 , and in significantly higher concentrations (due to the much greater reactivity of ZnEt_2 , compared with BEt_3). A compound formulated as $[\text{CuEt}]_n$ has previously been prepared in the reactions of: (1) CuI with EtMgBr in OEt_2 ,¹⁵ and (2) CuCl with EtMgBr in THF,²⁸ and in both cases was reported to decompose readily by β -hydride elimination of ethylene and subsequent reductive elimination of ethane and hydrogen. Analogous reactivity has also been reported for $[\text{Cu}^n\text{Pr}]_n$ and $[\text{Cu}^n\text{Bu}]_n$,²⁸ as well as phosphine-coordinated $[(\text{R}'_3\text{P})_x\text{CuR}]$ ($\text{R} = \text{Et}, ^n\text{Pr}, ^n\text{Bu}$ or ^iBu ; $\text{R}'_3\text{P} = \text{PPh}_3, \text{PCy}_3$ or P^nBu_3) complexes.^{18,20,29}

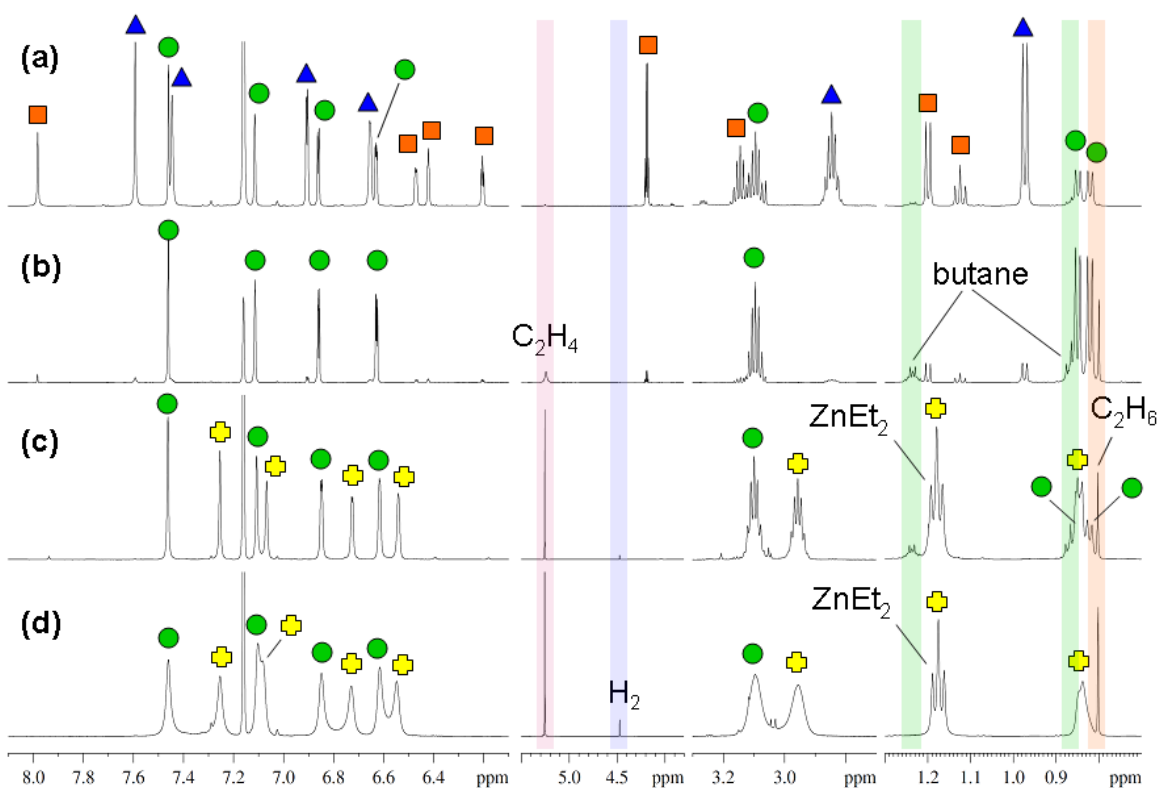
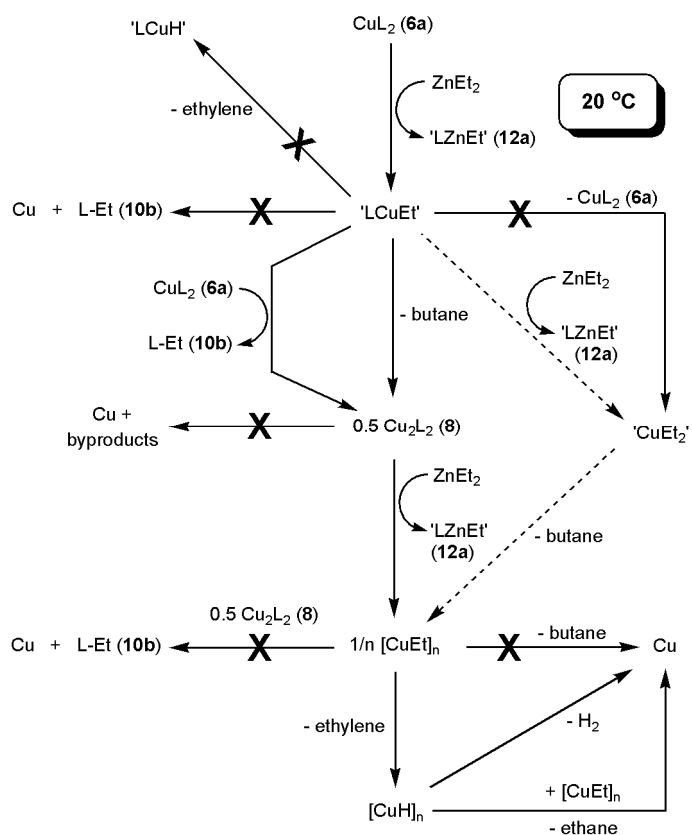


Figure 5. Selected regions of the 600 MHz ^1H NMR spectra for reactions between **6a** or **8** with ZnEt_2 at 20 °C in C_6D_6 : (a) **6a** + 0.3 equiv. ZnEt_2 after 15 minutes, (b) **6a** + 1 equiv. ZnEt_2 after 15 minutes, (c) **6a** + 5 equiv. ZnEt_2 after 1 hour, (d) **8** + 5 equiv. ZnEt_2 after 15 minutes. In spectra (c) and (d), the ZnCH_2 peak (0.18 ppm) for ethyl groups exchanging between $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnEt}]$ and ZnEt_2 (vide infra) is not shown. Shaded areas highlight chemical shift positions for gaseous byproducts (H_2 , ethylene, ethane and *n*-butane). Symbols mark different reaction intermediates and byproducts: triangle (blue) = $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**), square (orange) = $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Et}$ (**10b**), cross (yellow) = $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnEt}]$ (**12a**), circle (green) = $[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**12b**).

The NMR studies outlined above are consistent with the following sequence of reactions for copper metal deposition from $[\text{Cu}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**6a**) with ZnEt_2 (Scheme 5): (1) Reaction of **6a** with ZnEt_2 to form ‘ $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuEt}$ ’ and $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnEt}]$ (**12a**) or $[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**12b**). (2) Decomposition of ‘ $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuEt}$ ’ by reaction with **6a** to eliminate $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Et}$ (**10b**) (at low ZnEt_2 reaction

stoichiometries) or bimolecular reductive elimination of *n*-butane (at higher ZnEt₂ stoichiometries); both pathways provide access to [Cu₂(PyrIm^{iPr})₂] (**8**). (3) Reaction of **8** with ZnEt₂ to form 'CuEt'. (4) β-Hydride elimination of ethylene from [CuEt]_n to form 'CuH'. (5) Decomposition of 'CuH' via binuclear reductive elimination of ethane (major product *via* reaction of 'CuH' with 'CuEt') or hydrogen (minor product formed from 2 molecules of 'CuH'). However, as discussed above, the intermediacy of 'CuEt₂' cannot be ruled out at higher ZnEt₂ stoichiometries; this possibility is discussed further below.



Scheme 5. Reaction Pathways for Copper Metal Deposition from **6b** with ZnEt₂ (L = PyrIm^{iPr}). Reactions marked with an X do not occur. Dotted arrows represent reactions that cannot be ruled out in the presence of a large excess of ZnEt₂.

Possible Intermediacy of a dialkylcopper(II) species in the reactions of CuL₂ (6a) with excess AlMe₃ or ZnEt₂. Based on the experiments described above, it is not possible to rule out the intermediacy of ‘CuR₂’ (R = Me or Et) in the reactions of **6a** with a large excess of AlMe₃ or ZnEt₂. The accessibility of ‘(PyrIm^{iPr})CuR’ for reaction with **6a** or ‘(PyrIm^{iPr})CuR’ (resulting in PyrIm^{iPr}-R, or R₂ elimination, respectively) demonstrates some persistence of ‘(PyrIm^{iPr})CuR’ in solution, making the reaction of ‘(PyrIm^{iPr})CuR’ with excess AlMe₃ or ZnEt₂ at least feasible. This is particularly the case for AlMe₃ and ZnEt₂, given the observed order of reactivity: ZnEt₂ ~ AlMe₃ >> BEt₃.

To further investigate the potential intermediacy of ‘CuR₂’ (R = Me or Et), the reactions of **6a** with 5 equiv. of AlMe₃ and ZnEt₂ were investigated in *d*₈-toluene at –80 °C in the presence of O(SiMe₃)₂ as an internal standard for integration.²⁴ The low temperature ¹H NMR spectrum of the AlMe₃ reaction (generated in situ at –80 °C and maintained at this temperature) showed release of 2 equivalents of [(PyrIm^{iPr})AlMe₂] (**9a**) per equivalent of **6a** consumed. However, a significant quantity of ethane was also detected (comparable with identical reactions conducted at room temperature), indicating that reduction to copper(I) had already occurred. Furthermore, broad signals suggestive of a paramagnetic copper(II) complex were conspicuously absent from the ¹H NMR spectrum, and the only species³⁰ detected in solution were [(PyrIm^{iPr})AlMe₂] [δ –0.16 (s, AlMe)] and (AlMe₃)₂ [δ 0.00 (s, 6H, μ -Me), –0.52 (s, 12H, Me)]. Similar observations were made in low temperature reactions of **6a** with ZnEt₂. These reactions also show that only *n*-butane (not ethylene or ethane) is produced when reactions of **6a** with excess ZnEt₂ are maintained below –20 °C where [CuEt]_{*n*} is stable (very rapid ethylene evolution was observed upon warming the reaction above 10 °C).

Dialkyl copper(II) intermediates (‘CuR₂’) remain viable intermediates en route to ‘CuR’, especially in the presence of a large excess of AlMe₃ or ZnEt₂. However, given that reduction to copper(I) proceeds rapidly, even at –80 °C, this possibility was not investigated further. The thermal instability of copper(II) alkyl complexes is well documented. For example, reaction of CuCl₂ with RMgBr (R = Me or Et), MgMe₂ or MeLi has been reported to yield only the copper(I) alkyl product

$[\text{CuR}]_n$ and R_2 (ethane or *n*-butane), presumably *via* in-situ generated ‘ ClCuR ’ or ‘ CuR_2 ’.^{15,28} Similarly, reaction of LiCu^nBu_2 with O_2 or nitrobenzene was reported to yield $[\text{Cu}^n\text{Bu}]_n$ with *n*-octane as the primary byproduct,³¹ and oxidation of $[(\text{NHC})\text{CuR}]$ ($\text{R} = \text{Me}$ or Et) with AgOTf resulted in rapid formation of $[(\text{NHC})\text{Cu}(\text{OTf})]$ and R_2 (ethane or *n*-butane) through a mechanism which does not involve alkyl group transfer to silver(I), and does not appear to involve alkyl radicals.³² However, it is of note that several instances of copper(II) alkyl species with appreciable stability have appeared in the recent literature. For example, the copper(II) complexes $[(\kappa^4\text{CN}_3\text{-C}(\text{S-C}_5\text{H}_4\text{N})_3)\text{CuX}]$ ($\text{X} = \text{F}, \text{Cl}, \text{Br}, \text{I}$),³³ $[(\kappa^4\text{CN}_3\text{-C}(\text{S-C}_5\text{H}_4\text{N})_3)\text{Cu}(\text{NCMe})][\text{PF}_6]$ ³⁴ and $[(\text{NCP})\text{Cu}]$ ($\text{NCP} = \text{N-confused porphyrin}$)³⁵ were isolated as stable solids, and an electrochemical study of $[\text{Cu}_2\{\mu\text{:}\kappa^2\text{CN-C}(\text{SiMe}_3)_2(\text{C}_5\text{H}_4\text{N})\}_2]$ revealed reversible oxidation to a cationic copper(II) alkyl species in solution.³⁶

Independent Synthesis and Characterization of By-products from Copper Deposition Studies:

The complexes $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{AlMe}_2]$ (**9a**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2\text{AlMe}]$ (**9b**), $[\text{Al}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_3]$ (**9c**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{BEt}_2]$ (**11a**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnMe}]$ (**12a**) and $[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**12b**) (Figure 3) were prepared by reaction of $\text{H}[\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}]$ with AlMe_3 , BEt_3 or ZnEt_2 in the appropriate ratio. Complex **12b** has previously been reported (synthesis from $\text{H}[\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}]$ with ZnSO_4 and KOH in methanol),³⁷ but NMR data in C_6D_6 was not provided. The complexes $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ (**10a**) and $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Et}$ (**10b**) formed slowly in the 1:1 reactions of MeI or EtI with $\text{Li}(\text{THF})_x[\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}]$ ³⁸ at 80 °C in benzene. However, they were more conveniently prepared by condensation of isopropylamine with the appropriate *N*-alkyl-2-pyrrolylaldehyde under Dean-Stark conditions with ZnCl_2 in benzene; **10a** and **10b** were isolated as colourless oils and characterized by NMR spectroscopy and HRMS.

All of the byproduct complexes discussed above are stable in solution with the exception of **12a**, which undergoes ligand redistribution to form an approximate 1 : 1.4 : 1.4 mixture of **12a**, **12b** and ZnEt_2 in benzene. Exchange of the $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}$ ligands in **12a** and **12b**, and exchange of the ethyl groups in **12a** and ZnEt_2 was confirmed by 2D EXSY NMR spectroscopy at room temperature (Figure 6) and

variable temperature ^1H and ^{13}C spectroscopy (ZnEt signals for **12a** and ZnEt_2 only become inequivalent below *ca.* -30°C). However, slow evaporation from pentane provided crystals of pure **12a**, which were analyzed by single crystal and powder (for the bulk sample) X-ray diffraction as well as combustion elemental analysis.

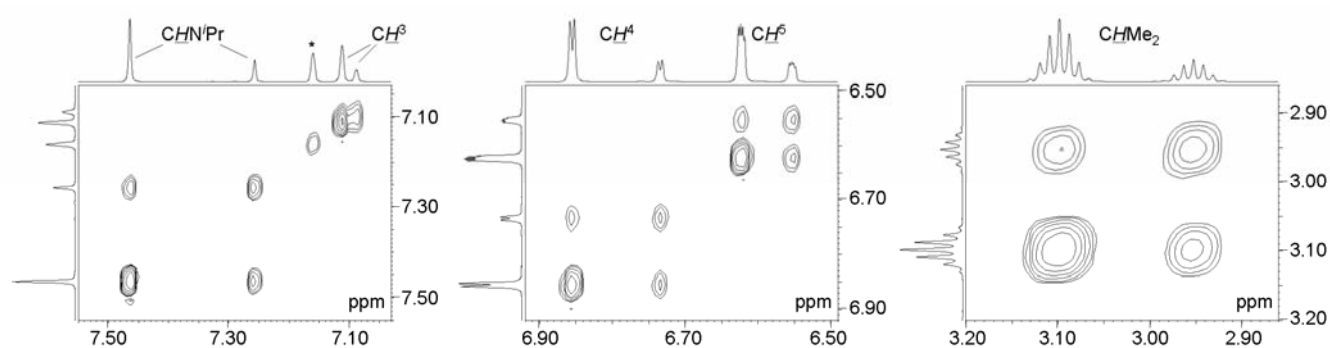


Figure 6. Selected regions of the 2D EXSY NMR spectrum after dissolution of solid $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnEt}]$ (**12a**) in C_6D_6 ; in solution, **12a** exists in equilibrium with $[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**12b**) and ZnEt_2 . For each $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}$ ligand proton, the more intense peak corresponds to **12b**, and the less intense peak to **12a**.

In the solid state, **12a** is dinuclear with two 3-coordinate $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnEt}]$ units interacting through contacts between zinc and C(2) of the pyrrolyl ring (Figure 7). This same unusual bonding motif was recently reported for $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{Zn}(\text{CMe}_3)]$,³⁹ although in **12a** the $\text{Zn}-\text{C}(2)$ contact is shorter [2.664(3) vs 2.715(3) Å] and Zn is slightly more distorted towards pyramidal geometry [cent-Zn-C_{alkyl} = 157.3° vs 160.2°; cent = centroid of N(1) and N(2)], presumably due to reduced steric hindrance in **12a**. However, the $\text{Zn}-\text{C}_{\text{alkyl}}$, $\text{Zn}-\text{N}_{\text{pyrrolyl}}$ and $\text{Zn}-\text{N}_{\text{imine}}$ distances of 1.967(3), 1.989(2) and 2.106(2) Å in **12a**, respectively, are very similar to those in the *tert*-butyl analogue. Structurally related and thermally stable $[\text{LZnR}]$ complexes (R = Et or *t*Bu) were also reported using the 2,2'-(1'-pyrrolinyl)-pyrrole ligand, but in this case the crystal structure of the *tert*-butyl complex revealed dimer formation via $\text{Zn}\cdots\text{N}_{\text{pyrrolyl}}$ contacts, rather than $\text{Zn}\cdots\text{C}$ contacts.⁴⁰

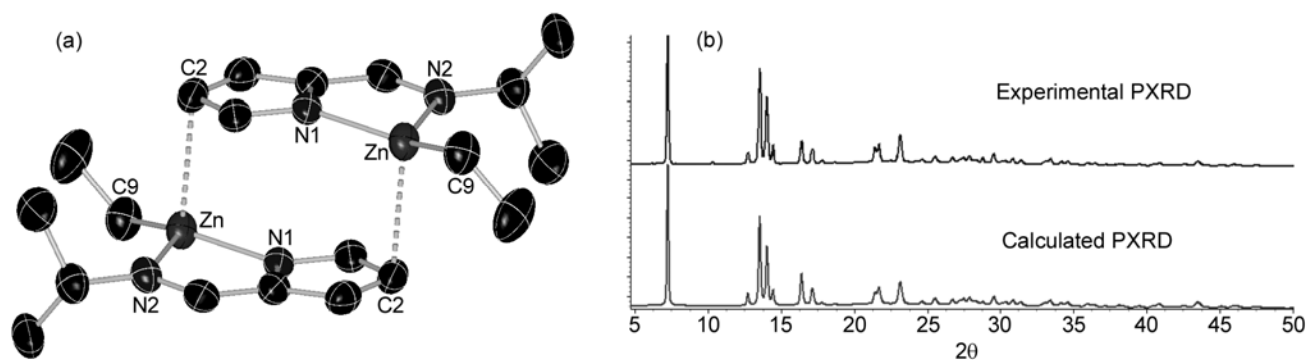


Figure 7. (a) Solid state structure of **12a** with thermal ellipsoids at 50 % probability. All hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity. (b) Experimental and calculated PXRD data. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (deg): Zn–N(1) = 1.989(2), Zn–N(2) = 2.106(2), Zn–C(9) = 1.967(3), Zn⋯C(2) = 2.664(3), N(1)–Zn–N(2) 82.62(7), N(1)–Zn–C(9) 142.09(10), N(2)–Zn–C(9) 127.07(12).

Complexes **9a** and **9b** are presumably tetrahedral and trigonal bipyramidal, respectively, and all methyl groups [^1H NMR δ –0.32 ppm (**9a** and **9b**); ^{13}C NMR δ –8.8 ppm (**9a**) and –7.3 ppm (**9b**)] and PyrIm^{iPr} ligands are equivalent by ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectroscopy. Single crystals of **9b** suitable for X-ray crystallography were grown from pentane at 20 °C and revealed a distorted trigonal bipyramidal geometry with all three anionic donors coordinated in equatorial positions (Figure 8; the unit cell contains two independent but isostructural molecules). By contrast, in the more sterically hindered $[(\text{L}^{\text{DIPP}})_2\text{AlCl}]$ (L^{DIPP} = *N*-2,6-diisopropylphenyl-2-pyrrolylaldimine) complex, the anionic pyrrolyl groups occupy apical sites of the trigonal bipyramid.⁴¹ Presumably due to different arrangements of the ligands, the Al–N_{pyrrolyl} distances in **9b** [1.913(2)–1.922(2) Å] are shorter than the corresponding distances in $[(\text{L}^{\text{DIPP}})_2\text{AlCl}]$ [1.962(1) Å], while the Al–N_{imine} bonds [2.081(2)–2.088(2) Å] are longer than those in $[(\text{L}^{\text{DIPP}})_2\text{AlCl}]$ [1.993(1) Å], despite reduced steric hindrance at the imine donor of the PyrIm^{iPr} ligand. These data are indicative of decreased delocalization of negative charge onto the imine groups in **9b**. The Al(1)–C(10) bond lengths of 1.973(2) and 1.967(2) Å in **9b** fall within the usual range for an aluminium alkyl complex (*cf.* 1.936(7) and 1.950(7) Å in $[(\text{L}^{\text{DIPP}})\text{AlMe}_2]$ and 1.969(2) Å in $[\{\text{MeC}(\text{N}^i\text{Pr})_2\}_2\text{AlMe}]$).⁴²

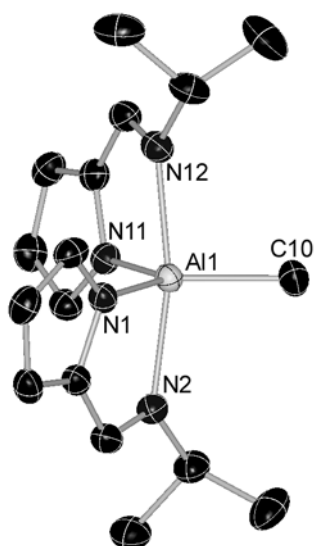


Figure 8. Solid state structure of **9b** with thermal ellipsoids at 50 % probability. Only one of the two independent molecules in the unit cell is shown. All hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (deg): Al(1)–N(1) = 1.922(2), Al(1)–N(11) = 1.918(2), Al(1)–N(2) = 2.088(2), Al(1)–N(12) = 2.084(2), Al(1)–C(10) = 1.973(2), N(1)–Al(1)–N(2) = 80.66(7), N(11)–Al(1)–N(12) = 80.51(7), N(2)–Al(1)–N(12) = 167.81(7), N(1)–Al(1)–N(11) = 115.87(7), N(1)–Al(1)–C(10) = 121.16(9), N(11)–Al(1)–C(10) = 122.97(9). Al(2)–N(21) = 1.916(2), Al(2)–N(31) = 1.913(2), Al(2)–N(22) = 2.086(2), Al(2)–N(32) = 2.081(2), Al(2)–C(20) = 1.967(2), N(21)–Al(2)–N(22) = 80.83(7), N(31)–Al(2)–N(32) = 80.98(8), N(22)–Al(2)–N(32) = 169.83(7), N(21)–Al(2)–N(31) = 116.89(8), N(21)–Al(2)–C(20) = 120.39(9), N(31)–Al(2)–C(20) = 122.70(9). In molecule #2 in the unit cell, Al(2), N(21), N(22), N(31), N(32) and C(20) are equivalent to Al(1), N(1), N(2), N(11), N(12) and C(10) in molecule #1.

In contrast to complex **9b** in which both PyrIm^{iPr} ligands are equivalent, three distinct PyrIm^{iPr} ligand environments were observed in the ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of **9c**. These data are consistent with *mer*- rather than *fac*-octahedral geometry (Figure 3). A trigonal bipyramidal structure in which one PyrIm^{iPr} ligand is κ^1 -coordinated in an equatorial position, and the anionic pyrrolyl donors of the two κ^2 -coordinated ligands occupy axial and equatorial sites is also consistent with the NMR data. However,

such a structure is unlikely given that the three PyrIm^{iPr} ligands in **9c** show no signs of exchange, even at 80 °C.

Complexes **11a** and **12b** must adopt tetrahedral geometries,⁴³ and for **11a**, although both ethyl groups are equivalent, two doublets of quartets were observed in the ^1H NMR spectrum at 0.87 and 0.69 ppm due to diastereotopic BCH_2 protons. However, while **11a** was readily prepared by reaction of $\text{H}[\text{PyrIm}^{iPr}]$ with BEt_3 , reaction of BEt_3 with more than one equivalent of $\text{H}[\text{PyrIm}^{iPr}]$ did not result in the formation of $[(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})_2\text{BEt}]$ or $[\text{B}(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})_3]$ at temperatures up to 110 °C. This observation is in keeping with the inability of **11a** to react with either $[\text{Cu}(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})_2]$ (**6a**) or $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})_2]$ (**8**) at temperatures up to 100 °C. By contrast, $\text{H}[\text{PyrIm}^{iPr}]$ reacted readily with AlMe_3 and ZnEt_2 to form **9a-9c**, **12a** and **12b**. The low reactivity of **11a** may be attributed to the typical inability of boron to adopt a coordination number greater than four, combined with tight chelation of the PyrIm^{iPr} ligand in **11a**.

Reaction Byproduct Thermal Stability: The thermal stability and volatility of complexes $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})_2]$ (**8**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})\text{AlMe}_2]$ (**9a**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})_2\text{AlMe}]$ (**9b**), $[\text{Al}(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})_3]$ (**9c**), $\text{PyrIm}^{iPr}\text{-Me}$ (**10a**), $\text{PyrIm}^{iPr}\text{-Et}$ (**10b**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})\text{BEt}_2]$ (**11a**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})\text{ZnEt}]$ (**12a**) and $[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{iPr})_2]$ (**12b**) were investigated by distillation or sublimation *in vacuo*. The results of these investigations are summarized in Table 1, and are of importance to ALD performance due to the requirement for reaction byproducts to be removed *in vacuo* without thermal decomposition to non-volatile byproducts.

Compound	Volatility / Thermal Stability Data at 1×10^{-3} Torr
$[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (8)	Decomposes at 180 °C without sublimation
$[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{AlMe}_2]$ (9a)	Melts and distills at 60 °C
$[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2\text{AlMe}]$ (9b)	Sublimes at 90 °C
$[\text{Al}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_3]$ (9c)	Sublimes at 110 °C
$\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ (10a)	Distills at ~ 45 °C
$\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Et}$ (10b)	Distills at ~ 45 °C
$[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{BEt}_2]$ (11a)	Distills at < 20 °C
$[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnEt}]$ (12a)	Attempted sublimation at 70 °C yielded only 12b : ligand redistribution to ZnEt_2 and 12b therefore occurs in the solid state at ≤ 70 °C.
$[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (12b)	Sublimes slowly at 70 °C, rapidly at 85 °C

Table 1. Volatility and thermal stability data for byproducts **8**, **9a-9c**, **10a-10b**, **11a**, and **12a-12b**.

Only complexes **8** and **12a** fail to sublime or distill in vacuo; complex **8** is insufficiently volatile and decomposes at high temperature, while **12a** undergoes facile ligand redistribution at 70 °C or below. For the remaining complexes, an important observation is that products containing a single $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}$ ligand (**9a**, **10a**, **10b** and **11a**) are substantially more volatile than those bearing multiple $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}$ ligands, so are more desirable as byproducts of ALD. The inability of $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{BEt}_2]$ (**11a**) to react further with **6a** or **8** to form bis- or tris-ligand complexes may therefore be a beneficial feature for ALD of pure metal films. However, this advantage is offset by the greatly reduced reactivity of BEt_3 (relative to AlMe_3 and ZnEt_2), which has rendered this co-reagent ineffective for copper metal ALD or pulsed-CVD.³ That said, the bis-ligand complexes **9b** and **12b** (and to a lesser extent tris-ligand complex **9c**) are still sufficiently volatile to allow their removal during an ALD process operating in the 110-130 °C regime.

Summary and Conclusions: To provide a starting point for the analysis and understanding of surface reactivity responsible for metal ALD/pulsed-CVD, the solution reactions of bis(*N*-isopropylpyrrolylaldimine)copper(II) ($[\text{Cu}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$; **6a**) with AlMe_3 , BEt_3 and ZnEt_2 have been studied. In each case, reduction occurs in two stages via a stable dinuclear copper(I) pyrrolylaldimine complex (**8**), with each stage initiated by copper alkyl complex formation. Reduction from ' $(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{CuR}$ ' ($\text{R} = \text{Me}$ or Et) occurs with release of R_2 or $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-R}$, consistent with bimolecular C–C or C–N bond forming reductive elimination. At room temperature or below, copper deposition from ' CuMe ' occurs exclusively via reductive elimination of ethane, while decomposition of ' CuEt ' yields ethylene, ethane and hydrogen, indicative of both β -hydride elimination and reductive elimination. In the presence of an excess of the more reactive reagents AlMe_3 and ZnEt_2 , it was not possible to rule out initial double alkylation to form a highly unstable copper(II) dialkyl species. However, if ' CuR_2 ' does form, it must decompose to ' CuR ' rather than to copper metal, since under these conditions (an excess of AlMe_3 or ZnEt_2), copper metal formation is not observed at temperatures where ' CuR ' is stable. The intermediates and byproducts $[\text{Cu}_2(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**8**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{AlMe}_2]$ (**9a**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2\text{AlMe}]$ (**9b**), $[\text{Al}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_3]$ (**9c**), $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Me}$ (**10a**), $\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}}\text{-Et}$ (**10b**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{BEt}_2]$ (**11a**), $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{ZnEt}]$ (**12a**) and $[\text{Zn}(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})_2]$ (**12b**) were prepared independently in pure form, and characterized by NMR spectroscopy and in some cases X-ray crystallography. All byproducts are thermally stable, with the exception of **12a** which undergoes ligand redistribution to form **12b** and ZnEt_2 at elevated temperatures and in solution. Of the stable organometallic complexes, mono-ligated $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{AlMe}_2]$ (**9a**) and $[(\text{PyrIm}^{i\text{Pr}})\text{BEt}_2]$ (**11a**) are particularly volatile, so are more desirable as byproducts in ALD or pulsed-CVD.

Experimental Section: An argon-filled MBraun UNIlab glove box was employed for the manipulation and storage of all oxygen and moisture sensitive compounds, and air-sensitive preparative reactions were performed on a double manifold high vacuum line using standard techniques.⁴⁴ Residual oxygen

and moisture was removed from the argon stream by passage through an Oxisorb-W scrubber from Matheson Gas Products. A Fisher Scientific Ultrasonic FS-30 bath was used to sonicate reaction mixtures where indicated, and a Fischer Scientific Model 228 Centrifuge in combination with air-tight Kimble-Kontes 15 mL conical centrifuge tubes was used when required. Vacuum was measured using a Varian Model 531 Thermocouple Gauge Tube with a Model 801 Controller. Combustion elemental analyses were performed on a Thermo EA1112 CHNS/O analyzer. Single crystal X-ray crystallographic analyses were performed on crystals coated in Paratone oil and mounted on a SMART APEX II diffractometer with a 3 kW Sealed tube Mo generator. Powder X-Ray Diffraction (PXRD) experiments were performed on a Bruker D8 Advance Powder diffractometer with Cu K α radiation ($\lambda = 0.154$ nm) operated at 40 kV and 40 mA. The powder pattern for **12a** was calculated from the low temperature single crystal data, and then refined using Topas 4.2 (Bruker software).⁴⁵

Anhydrous diethyl ether was purchased from Aldrich. Hexanes, toluene and THF were initially dried and distilled at atmospheric pressure from CaH₂, sodium and sodium benzophenone ketyl respectively. Unless otherwise noted, all anhydrous solvents were stored over an appropriate drying agent prior to use (OEt₂, THF, d₈-THF, toluene, d⁸-toluene, C₆D₆ = Na/Ph₂CO; pentane, hexanes = Na/Ph₂CO/tetraglyme). 2-pyrrolylaldehyde, *N*-methyl-2-pyrrolylaldehyde, isopropylamine, MeI, EtI, ^{*n*}BuLi (1.6 M in hexane), ZnCl₂ and CuCl were purchased from Aldrich or Strem Chemicals. *N*-ethyl-2-pyrrolylaldehyde,⁴⁶ *N*-isopropyl-2-pyrrolylaldimine (H[PyrIm^{*i*Pr}]),³⁷ mesityl copper(I),⁴⁷ **6a**⁴⁸ and **7**⁴⁹ were prepared as described in the literature. AlMe₃ (98%), ZnEt₂ (min. 95%) and BEt₃ (98%) were purchased in Sure-Pak cylinders from Strem chemicals and stored within an argon-filled glove box. **NOTE:** AlMe₃, ZnEt₂ and BEt₃ are strongly pyrophoric liquids so must only be handled under strict air-free conditions.

[[Cu(Pyrim^{*i*Pr})]₂] (8): Method A. A solution of H[Pyrim^{*i*Pr}] (0.136 g, 1.0 mmol) in toluene (10 mL) was added to the toluene solution (10 mL) of mesityl copper(I) (0.181 g, 0.33 mmol). The solution

changed color to bright yellow and stirring was continued for 2 hours. The solvent was removed *in vacuo*, and the residue was redissolved in toluene (5 mL). The mixture was then centrifuged to remove any insoluble material, and the centrifugate was layered with hexanes at -30 °C to yield a pale yellow solid which was dried *in vacuo* (0.170 g, 0.427 mmol, 85 %). **Method B.** Li[PyrIm^{iPr}] (0.100 g, 0.704 mmol) and CuCl (0.767 g, 0.775 mmol) in THF (10 mL) were stirred overnight at room temperature. The solvent was completely removed *in vacuo*, and the residue was redissolved in toluene (5 mL). The mixture was then centrifuged to discard insoluble LiCl and the centrifugate was layered with hexanes at -30 °C to yield X-ray quality pale yellow crystals of **8**·0.5toluene which were dried *in vacuo* to yield toluene-free **8** (0.115 g, 0.289 mmol, 82 %). **¹H NMR** (C₆D₆, 600 MHz): δ 7.59 (broad s, 1H, CHN^{iPr}Pr₂), 7.45 (broad s, 1H, CH⁵), 6.91 (dd, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 3.5, 1.0 Hz, CH³), 6.66 (broad s, 1H, CH⁴), 2.84 (sept, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 6 Hz, CHMe₂), 0.97 (d, 6H, ³J_{H,H} 6 Hz, CHMe₂). **¹³C{¹H} NMR**: δ 159.22 (CHN^{iPr}Pr₂), 138.18 (CH⁵), 135.06 (C²), 125.20 (CH³), 112.55 (CH⁴), 62.35 (CHMe₂), 25.66 (CHMe₂). **Anal. Calcd. for C₁₆H₂₂N₄Cu₂**: C 48.35, H 5.58, N 14.10. Found: C 48.82, H 5.66, N 13.80 %.

[(PyrIm^{iPr})AlMe₂] (9a): A solution of AlMe₃ in 2 mL toluene (0.053 g, 0.735 mmol) was added to H[PyrIm^{iPr}] (0.100 g, 0.735 mmol) in toluene (3 mL) at -30 °C. The solution was warmed to room temperature to give a bright yellow solution and stirred for 1 h. It was then evaporated to dryness *in vacuo*, redissolved in pentane, and cooled to -30 °C to yield **9a** as a pale yellow crystalline solid (0.115 g, 0.598 mmol, 81%). **¹H NMR** (C₆D₆, 600 MHz): δ 7.08 (broad s, 1H, CH⁵), 7.04 (s, 1H, CHN^{iPr}Pr₂), 6.69 (d, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 3.5 Hz, CH³), 6.42 (dd, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 3.5, 1.9 Hz, CH⁴), 2.96 (sept, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 7 Hz, CHMe₂), 0.09 (d, 6H, ³J_{H,H} 7 Hz, CHMe₂), -0.32 (s, 6H, AlMe₂). **¹³C{¹H} NMR** (C₆D₆, 151 MHz): δ 158.19 (CHN^{iPr}Pr₂), 135.35 (C²), 134.82 (CH⁵), 118.65 (CH³), 114.78 (CH⁴), 55.63 (CHMe₂), 23.92 (CHMe₂), -8.8 (broad s, AlMe₂). **Anal. Calcd. for C₁₀H₁₇N₂Al**: C 62.48, H 8.91, N 14.57. Found: C 62.26, H 9.02, N 14.44 %.

[(PyrIm^{iPr})₂AlMe] (9b): A solution of H[PyrIm^{iPr}] (0.340 g, 2.500 mmol) in hexanes (4 mL) was added dropwise to AlMe₃ in 5 mL hexanes (0.100 g, 1.390 mmol) at -78 °C. The solution was warmed to room temperature over 2 h to give a colorless solution, which was evaporated to dryness and dried *in vacuo* overnight. The crude product was then redissolved in hot hexanes and cooled to -30 °C to obtain **9b** as a colorless crystalline solid (0.290 g, 0.928 mmol, 81%). **¹H NMR** (C₆D₆, 600 MHz): δ 7.67 (s, 1H, CHN^{iPr}₂), 7.12 (broad s, 1H, CH⁵), 6.73 (m, 1H, CH³), 6.52 (m, 1H, CH⁴), 3.79 (sept, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 7 Hz, CHMe₂), 1.01 (d, 6H, ³J_{H,H} 7 Hz, CHMe₂), -0.32 (s, 3H, AlMe). **¹³C{¹H} NMR** (C₆D₆, 151 MHz): δ 155.39 (CHN^{iPr}₂), 136.93 (C²), 133.59 (CH⁵), 116.49 (CH³), 113.12 (CH⁴), 50.16 (CHMe₂), 23.5 (CHMe₂), -7.3 (broad s, AlMe). **Anal. Calcd. for C₁₇H₂₅N₄Al:** C 65.36, H 8.07, N 17.93. Found: C 65.06, H 8.24, N 18.24 %.

[(PyrIm^{iPr})₃Al] (9c): A solution of AlMe₃ in 2 mL toluene (0.018 g, 0.245 mmol) was added to H[PyrIm^{iPr}] (0.100 g, 0.735 mmol) in toluene (3 mL) at -30 °C. The solution was warmed to room temperature to give a pale yellow solution and stirred for 1 h. It was then dried *in vacuo* overnight, redissolved in hot hexanes, and cooled to -30 °C to obtain the product as a colorless crystalline solid (0.093 g, 0.212 mmol, 87%). **¹H NMR** (C₆D₆, 600 MHz): δ 7.77, 7.76, 7.74 (s, 3 × 1H, CHN^{iPr}₂), 7.13, 7.04, 6.48 (dd, 3 × 1H, ³J_{H,H} 1.8 Hz, ⁴J_{H,H} 1 Hz, CH⁵), 6.86, 6.76, 6.73 (dd, 3 × 1H, ³J_{H,H} 3.5 Hz, ⁴J_{H,H} 1 Hz, CH³), 6.56, 6.46, 6.38 (dd, 3 × 1H, ³J_{H,H} 3.5, 1.8 Hz, CH⁴), 3.66, 3.34, 3.08 (sept, 3 × 1H, ³J_{H,H} 7 Hz, CHMe₂), 1.00, 0.91, 0.84, 0.69, 0.68, 0.54 (d, 3 × 6H, ³J_{H,H} 7 Hz, CHMe₂). **¹³C{¹H} NMR** (C₆D₆, 151 MHz): δ 156.27, 155.55, 154.43 (CHN^{iPr}₂), 135.56, 135.23, 135.04 (C²), 134.37, 132.58, 132.30 (CH⁵), 116.34, 115.99, 115.95 (CH³), 113.31, 112.58, 112.30 (CH⁴), 50.89, 49.94, 49.57 (CHMe₂), 25.00, 24.14, 24.01, 22.52, 21.91 (CHMe₂). **Anal. Calcd. for C₂₄H₃₃N₆Al:** C 66.64, H 7.69, N 19.43. Found: C 66.53, H 7.83, N 19.54 %.

PyrIm^{iPr}-Me (10a): To 1-Methyl-1*H*-pyrrole-2-carboxaldehyde (0.200 g, 1.833 mmol) and isopropylamine (0.19 mL, 2.199 mmol) in benzene (10 mL) in a Dean-Stark apparatus, a catalytic

amount of ZnCl_2 was added. The mixture was refluxed at $85\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ for 2 h to remove the benzene-water azeotrope. It was then filtered and the solvent was removed to give yellow oil, which was distilled at $45\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (1 mtorr) to collect the product as a colorless oil. Yield: 0.259 g, 94%. $^1\text{H NMR}$ (C_6D_6 , 500 MHz): δ 7.99 (s, 1H, CHN^iPr_2), 6.44 (m, 1H, CH^3), 6.31 (broad s, 1H, CH^5), 6.15 (app t, 1H, $J_{\text{H,H}}$ 3 Hz, CH^4), 3.61 (s, 3H, NCH_3), 3.15 (sept, 1H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, CHMe_2), 1.21 (d, 6H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, CHMe_2). $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (C_6D_6 , 125 MHz): δ 150.11 (CHN^iPr_2), 130.33 (C^2), 127.65 (CH^5), 116.78 (CH^3), 108.22 (CH^4), 62.52 (CHMe_2), 36.56 (s, NCH_3), 24.94 (CHMe_2). HRMS for $\text{C}_9\text{H}_{14}\text{N}_2$: (M^+); Found 150.1163, Calcd. 150.1157.

PyrIm^{iPr}-Et (10b): Compound **10b** was prepared following the procedure for **10a**, but using 1-ethyl-1*H*-pyrrole-2-carboxaldehyde (0.200 g, 1.624 mmol) and isopropylamine (0.17 mL, 1.949 mmol). The product was obtained as colorless oil (0.250 g, 94%) after distillation at $45\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (1 mtorr). $^1\text{H NMR}$ (C_6D_6 , 500 MHz): δ 7.97 (s, 1H, CHN^iPr_2), 6.44 (dd, 1H, $J_{\text{H,H}}$ 3.7, 1.8 Hz, CH^3), 6.42 (dd, $J_{\text{H,H}}$ 2.6, 1.8 Hz, 1H, CH^5), 6.17 (dd, 1H, $J_{\text{H,H}}$ 3.7, 2.6 Hz, CH^4), 4.19 (q, 2H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, NCH_2), 3.14 (sept, 1H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, CHMe_2), 1.19 (d, 6H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, CHMe_2), 1.12 (t, 3H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, NCH_2CH_3). $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (C_6D_6 , 125 MHz): δ 150.10 (CHN^iPr_2), 129.76 (C^2), 126.51 (CH^5), 117.76 (CH^3), 108.67 (CH^4), 62.76 (CHMe_2), 44.05 (s, NCH_2), 25.18 (CHMe_2), 17.19 (NCH_2CH_3). HRMS for $\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{16}\text{N}_2$: (M^+); Found 164.1309, Calcd. 164.1313.

[(PyrIm^{iPr})BEt₂] (11a): A solution of BEt_3 in 2 mL hexanes (0.080 g, 0.809 mmol) was added to $\text{H}[\text{PyrIm}^i\text{Pr}]$ (0.100 g, 0.735 mmol) in toluene (3 mL) at $-30\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$, and the solution was warmed to room temperature and stirred for 18 h. The resulting yellow solution was evaporated to dryness *in vacuo* at $0\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ to obtain the product as a pale yellow oil (0.128 g, 0.627 mmol, 85%). $^1\text{H NMR}$ (C_6D_6 , 600 MHz): δ 7.13 (s, 1H, CHN^iPr_2), 7.12 (broad s, 1H, CH^5), 6.65 (d, 1H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 3.5 Hz, CH^3), 6.53 (dd, 1H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 3.4, 1.7 Hz, CH^4), 3.42 (sept, 1H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, CHMe_2), 0.82 (d, 6H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, CHMe_2), 0.73 (app t, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, 6H, BCH_2CH_3), 0.87, 0.68 (dq, $^2J_{\text{H,H}}$ 14 Hz, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, 4H, BCH_2CH_3). $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR

(C₆D₆, 151 MHz): δ 149.90 (CHN^{*i*}Pr₂), 135.05 (C²), 128.39 (CH⁵), 115.05 (CH⁴), 110.80 (CH³), 48.80 (CHMe₂), 23.54 (CHMe₂), 14.80 (BCH₂CH₃), 9.17 (BCH₂CH₃). **HRMS** for C₁₂H₂₁N₂B: (M⁺); Found 204.1797, Calcd. 204.1798.

[(PyrIm^{*i*}Pr)⁺ZnEt] (12a): A solution of H[PyrIm^{*i*}Pr] (0.200 g, 1.470 mmol) in pentane (2 mL) was added dropwise over 3-5 min to ZnEt₂ in 5 mL pentane (150 μ L, 1.470 mmol) at -78 °C. The solution was warmed slowly over 1h to room temperature to give a peach colored solution. It was then dried *in vacuo* at 0 °C, redissolved in pentane, and cooled to -30 °C to obtain the product as a colorless crystalline solid (0.240 g, 1.048 mmol, 78%). Upon dissolution, solid **12a** undergoes ligand redistribution to form a mixture of **12a**, **12b** and ZnEt₂ (1 : 1.4 : 1.4 ratio at 20 °C). NMR data is given only for **12a** unless otherwise indicated. **¹H NMR** (C₆D₆, 600 MHz): δ 7.26 (s, 1H, CHN^{*i*}Pr₂), 7.09 (broad s, 1H, CH⁵), 6.73 (d, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 3.5 Hz, CH³), 6.55 (m, 1H, CH⁴), 2.95 (sept, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 7 Hz, CHMe₂), 1.22 (broad s, 6H, ZnCH₂CH₃ with fast ethyl group exchange between **12a** and ZnEt₂), 0.84 (d, 6H, ³J_{H,H} 7 Hz, CHMe₂), 0.24 (broad s, 4H, ZnCH₂ with fast ethyl group exchange between **12a** and ZnEt₂). **¹³C{¹H} NMR** (C₆D₆, 151 MHz): δ 157.64 (CHN^{*i*}Pr₂), 137.07 (C²), 135.32 (CH⁵), 117.47 (CH³), 113.21 (CH⁴), 56.79 (CHMe₂), 24.32 (CHMe₂), 11.31 (ZnCH₂CH₃ with fast ethyl group exchange between **12a** and ZnEt₂). **¹H NMR** (C₇D₈, 500 MHz, -70 °C): δ 1.78 (broad s, 6H, ZnCH₂CH₃), 0.72 (broad s, 4H, ZnCH₂). **¹³C{¹H} NMR** (C₇D₈, 125 MHz, -70 °C): δ 14.11 (ZnCH₂CH₃), 1.81 (ZnCH₂). **Anal. Calcd. for C₁₀H₁₆N₂Zn**: C 52.30, H 7.02, N 12.20. Found: C 52.24, H 7.01, N 12.41 %.

[(PyrIm^{*i*}Pr)₂Zn] (12a): A solution of ZnEt₂ in 2 mL hexanes (0.045 g, 0.367 mmol) was added to H[PyrIm^{*i*}Pr] (0.100 g, 0.735 mmol) in hexanes (3 mL) at -30 °C. The solution was warmed to room temperature to give a colorless solution and stirred for 1 h. It was then evaporated to dryness *in vacuo*, redissolved in pentane, and cooled to -30 °C to obtain the product as a colorless solid (0.215 g, 0.640 mmol, 87%). **¹H NMR** (C₆D₆, 600 MHz): δ 7.48 (s, 1H, CHN^{*i*}Pr₂), 7.09 (broad s, 1H, CH⁵), 6.84 (d, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 3.5 Hz, CH³), 6.60 (dd, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 3.5, 1.8 Hz, CH⁴), 3.12 (sept, 1H, ³J_{H,H} 6.5 Hz, CHMe₂),

0.85 (d, 6H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 6.4 Hz, CHMe_2). $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (C_6D_6 , 151 MHz): δ 157.64 (CHN^iPr_2), 136.60 (C^2), 135.25 (CH^5), 117.50 (CH^3), 113.41 (CH^4), 57.27 (CHMe_2), 24.52 (CHMe_2). **Anal. Calcd. for $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{22}\text{N}_4\text{Zn}$:** C 57.25, H 6.56, N 16.69. Found: C 56.93, H 6.65, N 16.47 %.

Li[Pyrim^{iPr}]: A 1.6 M solution of $^n\text{BuLi}$ in hexane (5.06 mL, 8.088 mmol) was added to H[Pyrim^{iPr}] (1.000 g, 7.353 mmol) in hexanes (30 mL) at -78°C . After stirring for 10 min the solution was warmed to room temperature to give a colorless solution with large amount of white precipitate. It was then filtered, washed with hexanes (x2) and dried *in vacuo* to obtain the product as a white solid (0.910 g, 6.408 mmol, 87%). ^1H NMR (d_8 -THF, 600 MHz): δ 7.88 (s, 1H, CHN^iPr_2), 6.82 (broad s, 1H, CH^5), 6.29 (m, 1H, CH^3), 5.93 (m, 1H, CH^4), 3.33 (sept, 1H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, CHMe_2), 1.16 (d, 6H, $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ 7 Hz, CHMe_2). $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (d_8 -THF, 151 MHz): δ 158.56 (CHN^iPr_2), 139.38 (C^2), 134.59 (CH^5), 115.75 (CH^3), 109.29 (CH^4), 59.71 (CHMe_2), 25.81 (CHMe_2). **Anal. Calcd. for $\text{C}_8\text{H}_{11}\text{N}_2\text{Li}$:** C 67.61, H 7.80, N 19.71. Found: C 67.03, H 7.87, N 18.87 %.

Acknowledgements. DJHE is grateful for funding provided by Intel Corporation and the Emerging Materials Knowledge (EMK) program of Ontario Centres of Excellence (OCE), Canada. We also thank Vicky Jarvis of the McMaster Analytical X-Ray Diffraction Facility for collection and refinement of PXRD data.

Supporting Information Available: NMR spectra and tables of crystallographic data. This material is available free of charge via the internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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Solution Reactions of a Bis(pyrrolylaldimine)copper(II) Complex with Peralkyl Zinc, Aluminum and Boron Reagents: Investigation of the Pathways Responsible for Copper Metal Deposition

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TOC Text: Reactions of bis(*N*-isopropylpyrrolylaldimine)copper(II) with AlMe₃, BEt₃ and ZnEt₂ have been investigated to probe the pathways responsible for copper metal deposition in solution. Reduction occurs in two stages via a stable dinuclear copper(I) pyrrolylaldimine complex, with each stage initiated by ligand exchange between copper and zinc. With the co-reagent ZnEt₂, reduction from 'LCuEt' occurs with release of *n*-butane and/or L-Et, consistent with bimolecular C–C or C–N bond forming reductive elimination. Copper deposition from 'CuEt' then yields ethylene, ethane and hydrogen, indicative of β-hydride elimination and reductive elimination.

TOC Graphic

