Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI)

AIE-active Ir(III) Complexes Functionalized with a Cationic Schiff Base Ligand: Synthesis, Photophysical Properties and Their Applications in Photodynamic Therapy

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Supplementary Figures and Tables



Scheme S1 Synthetic routes of L1, L2, Ir-1-N⁺, and Ir-2-N⁺.

Synthesis of L1



Scheme S1. Synthetic route for L1.

Following the literature procedure,¹ 4-aminoacetophenone (0.540 g, 4 mmol) and *N*, *N*-diethyl-4-aminobenzaldehyde (0.708 g, 4 mmol) were dissolved in ethanol (40 mL) and 10% KOH solution (20 mL) was added. The reaction was stirred at RT for 24 h. After completion of the reaction, extraction was performed with CH₂Cl₂ to remove KOH, and the organic layer was dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄. The solvent was removed by a rotary evaporator. Using ethyl acetate (EA) and petroleum ether (PE) as eluents (EA/PE from 1/10 to 1/1, v/v), the crude product was purified by silica gel column chromatography to obtain a yellow solid. Yield: 43%. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, δ [ppm]): 7.95-7.89 (m, 2H), 7.76 (d, *J* = 15.4 Hz, 1H), 7.52 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.33 (d, *J* = 15.4 Hz, 1H), 6.72-6.63 (m, 4H), 4.10

(s, 2H), 3.41 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 4H), 1.20 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 6H).

Synthesis of L2



Scheme S2. Synthetic route for L2.

The auxiliary ligand **L2** was synthesized by a Schiff base reaction. A mixture of aminochalcone (0.088 g, 0.3 mmol) and *o*-hydroxybenzaldehyde (0.108 g, 0.9 mmol) in ethanol (30 mL) was refluxed with stirring for 8 h to give an orange precipitate. The reaction mixture was cooled to room temperature. The precipitate was filtered to obtain ligand **L2**. Yield: 90%. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, δ [ppm]): 13.03 (s, 1H), 8.67 (s, 1H), 8.13-8.07 (m, 2H), 7.82 (d, *J* = 15.3 Hz, 1H), 7.55 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.46-7.40 (m, 2H), 7.38-7.32 (m, 3H), 7.05 (d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 6.97 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 6.67 (t, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 3.43 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 4H), 1.21 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 6H).

Synthesis of the Cyclometallating ligand



Scheme S3. Synthetic route for the cyclometallating ligand.

1-Chloroisoquinoline (0.496 g, 3.06 mmol) and 4-triphenylamine boronic acid (0.972 g, 3.36 mmol) were dissolved in toluene (30 mL) and tetrakis(triphenylphosphine)palladium(0) (0.177 g, 0.15 mmol) was added as a catalyst. Sodium carbonate (20 mL of 2 mol L⁻¹ solution) was added and the mixture was refluxed for 48 h under N₂. The mixture was then left to cool and extracted with dichloromethane. The organic phase was separated, dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and evaporated. The crude product was purified by silica gel column chromatography (dichloromethane/petroleum ether, 10/3 v/v). A yellow solid was obtained in 74% yield. ¹H

NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, δ [ppm]): 8.60 (d, J = 5.6 Hz, 1H), 8.24 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 1H), 7.88 (d, J = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 7.70 (t, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.64-7.59 (m, 3H), 7.57 (t, J = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 7.32-7.27 (m, 4H), 7.25-7.8 (m, 6H), 7.07 (t, J = 8.1 Hz, 2H).

Synthesis of dichloro-bridged diiridium complex



Scheme S4. Synthetic route for the dichloro-bridged diiridium complex.

The cyclometallating ligand (0.930 g, 2.5 mmol) and IrCl₃•3H₂O (0.353 g, 1 mmol) were dissolved in a mixed solution of 2-ethoxyethanol (30 mL) and water (10 mL). The solution was heated to 120 °C and refluxed for 24 h under N₂. The solution was the cooled to room temperature and water was added to obtain a precipitate. The mixture was stirred for 5 min and filtered to obtain a red solid which was dried in an oven for 24 h. Yield 80%. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, δ [ppm]): 8.87 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 8.76 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.89 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.71-7.61 (m, 2H), 7.58 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 6.84 (t, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 4H), 6.79-6.74 (m, 4H), 6.70-6.66 (m, 2H), 6.49 (dd, *J* = 8.8, 2.5 Hz, 1H), 6.17 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 5.53 (d, *J* = 2.4 Hz, 1H).

Synthesis of Ir-1-N



Scheme S5. Synthetic route for Ir-1-N. During the reaction the dichloro-bridged complex also acts as a catalyst to reduce the carbon-carbon double bond of the unsaturated ketone in

L2 to a carbon-carbon single bond.²

A mixture of the dichloro-bridged diiridium complex (0.0536 g, 0.05 mmol), Schiff base ligand L2 (0.0398 g, 0.1 mmol) and Na₂CO₃ (0.1745 g, 1.6 mmol) in 2-ethoxyethanol (25 mL). The was heated to 140 °C under nitrogen atmosphere and refluxed for 8 h. After the reaction was completed, it was cooled to room temperature. Na₂CO₃ was removed by adding ethyl acetate. Using CH₂Cl₂ and petroleum ether as eluents (CH₂Cl₂/petroleum ether from 1/10 to 10/1, v/v), the crude product was purified by silica gel column chromatography. The complex Ir-1-N was obtained as an orange solid. Yield: 60%. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, δ [ppm]): 8.88 (d, J = 6.7 Hz, 1H), 8.83 (d, J = 5.7 Hz, 1H), 8.08 (s, 1H), 7.88 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.72 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.69-7.64 (m, 1H), 7.58 (d, J = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 7.49 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.33 (d, J = 3.7 Hz, 1H), 7.31 (d, J = 3.7 Hz, 1H), 7.25 (d, J = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 7.13 (dd, J = 3.7 Hz, 1H), 7.31 (dd, J8.0, 6.1 Hz, 2H), 7.09-7.02 (m, 3H), 6.96 (dd, J = 5.9, 3.0 Hz, 1H), 6.85 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 6.74-6.67 (m, 3H), 6.65 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 6.46-6.51 (m, 2H), 6.40 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 1H), 6.25 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 6.18 (t, J = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 6.16-6.14 (m, 1H), 3.34 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 3H), 3.15 (q, J = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 3.03 (q, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 2.88-2.83 (m, 2H), 1.25 (t, J = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 1.15 (t, J = 7.0 Hz, 4H). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 197.89, 167.71, 167.36, 166.03, 160.07, 154.17, 148.82, 148.06, 147.29, 143.47, 143.03, 135.82, 135.76, 134.32, 133.57, 132.18, 132.15, 131.53, 128.35, 128.11, 128.04, 126.66, 123.90, 122.81, 122.49, 121.52, 120.67, 120.36, 120.34, 118.90, 117.98, 116.97, 112.70, 111.16, 43.39, 39.96, 28.42, 11.58. ESI-MS: $[m/z] = 901.31 (M^+ + H)$ [calcd for C₄₈H₄₃IrN₄O₂ (M⁺) 900.10]. The higher mass peak at 923 in Fig. S7 is from M^+ + Na. Anal. Calcd. for $C_{48}H_{43}IrN_4O_2$: C 64.05, H 4.82, N 6.22. Found C 64.02, H 4.80, N 6.24.

Synthesis of Ir-2-N



Scheme S6. Synthetic route for Ir-2-N. As in the synthesis of Ir-1-N, the dichloro-bridged complex also acts as a catalyst to reduce the carbon-carbon double bond in the unsaturated ketone of L2 to a carbon-carbon single bond.²

A mixture of the dichloro-bridged diiridium complex (0.0970 g, 0.05 mmol), Schiff base ligand L2 (0.0398 g, 0.1 mmol) and Na₂CO₃ (0.1745 g, 1.6 mmol) in 2-ethoxyethanol (25 mL) was heated to 140 °C under nitrogen and refluxed for 8 h. After the reaction was completed, it was cooled to room temperature. Na₂CO₃ was removed by adding ethyl acetate. The obtained crude product was purified by column chromatography with ethyl acetate and petroleum ether as eluents (ethyl acetate /petroleum ether from 1/10 to 10/1, v/v), and a red solid of complex **Ir-2-N** was obtained. Yield: 60%. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, δ [ppm]): 8.72 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 8.56 (d, *J* = 6.3 Hz, 1H), 8.45 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 8.34 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 8.04 (s, 1H), 7.95 (d, J = 8.9 Hz, 1H), 7.73 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.69 (d, J = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 7.64-7.52 (m, 4H), 7.49 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.39 (d, J = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 7.24-7.20 (m, 1H), 7.10 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H), 7.03 (t, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 3H), 6.98-6.93 (m, 4H), 6.89 (dd, *J* = 8.5, 7.1 Hz, 4H), 6.85-6.81 (m, 4H), 6.79-6.75 (m, 4H), 6.75-6.71 (m, 3H), 6.66 (dd, *J* = 8.1, 6.7 Hz, 2H), 6.61 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 2H), 6.58 (dd, J = 8.8, 2.5 Hz, 1H), 6.39-6.35 (m, 1H), 6.32 (dd, J = 8.8, 2.5 Hz, 1H), 6.22 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 5.88 (d, J = 2.5 Hz, 1H), 5.66 (d, J = 2.4 Hz, 1H), 3.32 (q, J = 7.0 Hz, 4H), 3.08-3.01 (m, 2H), 2.88 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H), 1.14 (t, J = 7.0 Hz, 6H). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151) MHz, CDCl₃) δ 197.59, 167.45, 166.72, 165.83, 159.82, 154.83, 146.44, 145.75, 145.70, 140.18, 139.21, 137.91, 135.74, 135.59, 134.34, 133.43, 132.28, 129.33, 129.02, 128.73, 128.31, 128.15, 127.66, 127.54, 126.82, 126.61, 125.97, 125.21, 124.97, 124.61, 124.43, 124.29, 123.94, 123.73, 122.19, 121.98, 121.88, 120.37, 117.30, 117.25, 112.57, 112.37,

112.24, 111.19, 43.38, 40.01, 28.67, 28.39, 11.59. ESI-MS: $[m/z] = 1335.4860 (M^+ +H)$ [calcd for C₈₀H₆₅IrN₆O₂ (M⁺) 1334.63]. Anal. Calcd. for C₈₀H₆₅IrN₆O₂: C 71.99, H 4.91, N 6.30. Found C 72.02, H 4.88, N 6.32.

Synthesis of Ir-1-N⁺

The complex Ir-1-N (0.0450 g, 0.05 mmol) and acetonitrile were mixed under nitrogen atmosphere. Iodomethane (1 mL) was added dropwise and the mixture was heated for 12 h. After the reaction was completed, it was cooled to room temperature. The mixture was poured into diethyl ether to obtain a yellow precipitate. The precipitate was filtered and dissolved in acetone (10 mL). Saturated KPF₆ (5 mL) was added to the solution with stirring for 2 h. KPF₆ was filtered and the filtrate solution was evaporated to obtain Ir-1-N⁺ as a yellow solid. Yield: 90%. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, δ [ppm]): 8.86 (d, J = 5.6 Hz, 1H), 8.81 (d, J = 5.7 Hz, 1H), 8.07 (s, 1H), 7.86 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.71 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.68 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 7.56 (d, J = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 7.53 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 7.43 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 7.38 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 7.32 (d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 7.23 (d, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.11 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 2H), 7.05 (t, J = 6.5 Hz, 1H), 6.99-6.94 (m, 1H), 6.82 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 1H), 6.67 (dd, J = 8.6, 8.0 Hz, 2H), 6.48-6.44 (m, 2H), 6.39 (t, J = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 6.22 (d, J = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 6.19 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 6.13 (d, J = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 5.34 (t, J = 4.8 Hz, 1H), 3.85 (q, J = 7.0 Hz, 2H),3.70 (q, J = 6.9 Hz, 2H), 3.29 (s, 3H), 3.10 (d, J = 6.9 Hz, 2H), 3.03 (d, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.21 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 2.02 (t, J = 7.0 Hz, 4H). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 196.37, 168.13, 155.87, 154.12, 145.36, 144.80, 144.36, 139.39, 130.84, 130.57, 130.46, 127.89, 124.85, 123.03, 122.32, 122.26, 121.76, 121.50, 121.44, 113.50, 113.00, 63.60, 53.71, 46.25, 38.31, 29.61, 8.68. ESI-MS: [m/z] = 915.3269 (M⁺) (calcd: 915.32). Anal. Calcd. for C₄₉H₄₆IrN₄O₂⁺: C 64.31, H 5.07, N 6.12. Found C 64.32, H 5.05, N 6.14.

Synthesis of Ir-2-N⁺

Following the procedure to obtain $Ir-1-N^+$, the complex Ir-2-N (0.0450 g, 0.05 mmol) and acetonitrile were mixed under nitrogen atmosphere. Iodomethane (1 mL) was added dropwise

and the mixture was heated for 12 h. After the reaction was completed, it was cooled to room temperature. The mixture was poured into diethyl ether to obtain a precipitate. The precipitate was filtered and dissolved in acetone (10 mL). Saturated KPF₆ (5 mL) was added into the solution with stirring for 2 h. KPF₆ was filtered and the filtrate solution was evaporated to obtain Ir-2-N⁺ as a red solid in 89% yield. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, δ [ppm]): 8.69 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 8.55 (d, J = 6.3 Hz, 1H), 8.42 (d, J = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 8.55 (d, J = 6.3 Hz, 1H), 8.37 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 1H), 8.02 (s, 1H), 7.92 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.72 (d, J = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 7.68 (d, J = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 7.64 (d, J = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 7.61 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 7.58 (d, J = 4.8 Hz, 1H), 7.55 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.49 (d, J = 8.9 Hz, 1H), 7.42 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.40-7.34 (m, 4H), 7.22 (t, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.08 (t, J = 6.5 Hz, 2H), 7.01 (d, J = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 6.95 (t, J = 7.7 Hz, 3H), 6.88 (t, J = 7.7 Hz, 3H), 6.82 (d, J = 7.9 Hz, 4H), 6.77-6.73 (m, 6H), 6.69 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 1H), 6.66 (d, J = 7.3 Hz, 2H), 6.56 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 6.36 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 1H), 6.30 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 6.30 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 5.84 (d, J = 2.4 Hz, 1H), 5.61 (d, J = 2.4 Hz, 1H), 5.35 (t, J = 4.9 Hz, 1H), 3.92 (q, J = 6.3 Hz, 2H), 3.88 (q, J = 6.9 Hz, 2H), 3.38 (s, 3H), 3.11 (q, J = 6.1 Hz, 2H), 3.06 (d, J = 6.6 Hz, 2H), 2.02 (t, J = 6.7 Hz, 6H). ${}^{13}C{}^{1}H$ NMR (151 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 196.32, 154.15, 147.17, 146.39, 146.27, 144.39, 143.82, 139.40, 136.90, 130.83, 130.58, 129.39, 127.94, 125.84, 125.22, 124.85, 124.08, 123.78, 122.30, 122.26, 112.99, 63.59, 46.22, 38.30, 29.61, 26.82, 8.69. ESI-MS: $[m/z] = 1349.5000 (M^+)$ (calcd: 1349.50). Anal. Calcd. for C₈₁H₆₇IrN₆O₂⁺: C 72.14, H 5.01, N 6.23. Found C 72.15, H 5.03, N 6.24.



Fig. S1. ¹H NMR spectrum of L1 in CDCl₃ at room temperature.



Fig. S2. ¹H NMR spectrum of L2 in CDCl₃ at room temperature.



Fig. S3 ¹H NMR spectrum of Ir-1-N in CDCl₃



Fig. S4¹H NMR spectrum of Ir-2-N in CDCl₃



Fig. S6 ¹H NMR spectrum of Ir-2-N⁺ in CDCl₃.

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8.5

7

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00.86

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2.03

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6

3.5

6

4.0





Fig. S8 ${}^{13}C{}^{1}H$ NMR spectrum of Ir-1-N⁺ in CDCl₃



Fig. S9 High Resolution Mass Spectrometry (HRMS) of Ir-1-N



Fig. S10 High Resolution Mass Spectrometry (HRMS) of Ir-2-N



Fig. S11 High Resolution Mass Spectrometry (HRMS) of Ir-1-N $^+$



Fig. S12 High Resolution Mass Spectrometry (HRMS) of Ir-2-N⁺



Fig. S13 UV-vis absorption spectra of A) **Ir-1-N**⁺ and B) **Ir-2-N**⁺ at different concentrations in CH₃CN-water (v/v) =4/1. C) Standard plots of **Ir-1-N**⁺ and **Ir-2-N**⁺ in CH₃CN-water (v/v) =4/1.



Fig. S14 TEM image of nanoaggregates of **Ir-1-N**⁺ formed in CH₃CN-water mixtures with A) 0% and B) 99% water fraction. TEM image of nanoaggregates of **Ir-2-N**⁺ formed in CH₃CN-water mixtures with C) 0% and D) 99% water fraction.



Fig. S15 Absorption spectra of A) **Ir-1-N**⁺ and B) **Ir-2-N**⁺ in CH₃CN-water mixtures (complex concentration = 1.0×10^{-5} M) with different water fractions (0-99%, v/v).



Fig. S16. DLS results of A) Ir-1-N⁺ and B) Ir-2-N⁺.



Fig. S17 UV-vis absorption spectra of ICG (5 μ g mL⁻¹) in the presence of A) **Ir-1-N**⁺, B) **Ir-2-N**⁺, C) **Ir-1-N**⁺ NPs and D) **Ir-2-N**⁺ NPs (15 μ g mL⁻¹) at different times under dark conditions. The time interval of spectral recording = 30 s.



Fig. S18 UV-vis absorption spectra of A) **Ir-1-N**⁺, B) **Ir-2-N**⁺, C) **Ir-1-N**⁺ NPs and D) **Ir-2-N**⁺ NPs (15 μ g mL⁻¹) at different times upon irradiation of a 425 nm LED at 20 mW cm⁻². The time interval of spectral recording = 30 s.



Fig. S19 UV-vis absorption spectra of ICG (5 μ g mL⁻¹) in the presence of A) **Ir-1-N**⁺, B) **Ir-2-N**⁺, C) **Ir-1-N**⁺ NPs and D) **Ir-2-N**⁺ NPs (15 μ g mL⁻¹) at different times upon irradiation with a 425 nm LED at 20 mW cm⁻². The time interval of spectral recording = 30 s.



Fig. S20 UV-vis absorption spectra of ICG (5 μ g mL⁻¹) upon irradiation with a 425 nm LED at 20 mW cm⁻². The time interval of spectral recording = 30 s.

Table S1 Photophysical data of Ir-1-N⁺ and Ir-2-N⁺

	λ_{abs} (nm)	$\lambda_{em}(nm)$	Φ_{p} (%)	$\tau_{P}(ns)$
Ir-1-N ^{+[a]}	255; 400	640	17	542.2
Ir-2-N ^{+[a]}	300; 415	660	19	551.3

^[a] Measured in MeCN/water (v/v = 1/9); concentration: 1.0×10^{-5} M; $\lambda_{ex} = 425$ nm

Table S2 The equation of time-dependent ¹O₂ generation kinetics in Fig. 4f.

Equation	y-=a=b*x		
	Adj. R- Square	Intercept	Slope
Ir-1-N ⁺	0.99664	0.01865	0.00043
Ir-2-N ⁺	0.99406	0.04084	0.00178
Ir-1-N ⁺ NPs	0.98024	0.04794	0.00114
Ir-2-N ⁺ NPs	0.98684	0.1019	0.00253

References for SI

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