

Journal of Organometallic Chemistry Library 16

Organotin Compounds in Modern Technology

COLIN J. EVANS AND STEPHEN KARPEL

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ELSEVIER

Amsterdam — Oxford — New York — Tokyo 1985

ELSEVIER SCIENCE PUBLISHERS B.V.
Molenwerf 1
P.O. Box 211, 1000 AE Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Distributors for the United States and Canada:

ELSEVIER SCIENCE PUBLISHING COMPANY INC.
52 Vanderbilt Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

ISBN 0-444-42422-9 (Vol. 16)
ISBN 0-444-41445-2 (Series)

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Printed in The Netherlands

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A Versatile Organometallic Hydride

PREFACE

In just a few decades organotin compounds have developed from being laboratory curiosities to large scale industrial chemicals. One of the first uses of organotins, and still the most important in terms of consumption, was as stabilisers for PVC. Following research into the biocidal properties of certain compounds, new avenues of application were opened, in the fields of wood preservation, crop protection and marine antifouling coatings. These uses for the most part arose out of intensive research, some of it sponsored by the International Tin Research Council and later continued in the Council's research laboratories. Today all over the world, there is a large body of research being conducted into organotin properties and many of the findings will no doubt eventually lead to further uses; a good example exists in the case of the mono-organotin compounds, which have low mammalian toxicity and are showing potential as water repellents for fabrics and building materials.

The interest in organotin chemicals is reflected in the enormous number of research papers which are published each year on this subject. There are also a number of excellent books covering the properties and general applications. When it comes to examining the industrial use of these compounds in more detail, a problem arises; this is due to the complexity of the technologies in which organotins are often used. To follow the use of organotin compounds in particular applications, one has to consult books on PVC technology, or on polyurethane polymers or wood preservation and hope to find the appropriate sections referring to the tin compounds used. When it comes to more wide-ranging topics such as agricultural chemicals or medicine it becomes even more difficult to find suitable coverage of organotin compounds.

It was in view of this, that the authors undertook the present book, in which the organotin compounds are firmly set in the context of their particular industrial usage. Basic chemistry is kept to a minimum and can be found in greater detail in other texts. Properties are only described inasmuch as they are relevant to a particular technology. What is attempted is to present an overall view of each field of application, giving as much of the specialised subject as is necessary for an understanding of the manner in which the organotin benefits the process or end use. Thus there are chapters on PVC stabilisation, polyurethane technology, wood preservation, antifouling coatings, agricultural chemicals, other biocidal uses and medical applications. Whilst not claiming by any means to be complete treatises on these subjects, it is hoped that enough information is provided to give a grasp of the subject and to allow access to more

specific sources when necessary. In this respect, the extensive references are indispensable. A basic introduction to organotin compounds, with brief details of manufacture is provided in the first chapter, in order to put their subsequent use in perspective. One chapter is devoted to the mono-organotins as a newly emerging group of industrial chemicals.

A very important aspect of organotins, as with many other organometallic compounds, is their impact on the environment. In this respect, organotin compounds have an advantage in that they are ultimately degraded to harmless, inorganic forms of tin. The entry into, and subsequent fate of, organotins in the environment are considered in the final chapter, which also contains information on the toxicology of organotin compounds and some toxicity data. Illustrations have been chosen to amplify the text wherever possible.

The authors have for a number of years been engaged in developing the uses of tin chemicals in industry, particularly the organotins and over that period have visited many companies and research organisations, and also held discussions at their Institute. Much of the information has been based on these contacts, and the friendly co-operation of many firms and other organisations who use organotin chemicals in some way is gladly acknowledged here, whether for allowing facilities for visits and photography or for providing photographs or technical assistance.

In particular the authors would like to thank the following:

Dr. A. O. Christie, International Paint plc., Mr. I. D. K. Dring, British Sanitized Ltd., Mr. R. M. Leach, Osmose, Inc., U.S.A., Mr. P. G. Salmon, M and T Chemicals Ltd. The help of colleagues at the International Tin Research Institute, has also been indispensable in producing this book, notably members of Chemistry Division; also Christine Wurm, who prepared many of the drawings, Mr. K. J. Edwards and Sue Miller of the Photographic Studio, who were responsible for many of the photographs in the book.

The authors are grateful to the Director of the International Tin Research Institute and the International Tin Research Council for permission to prepare the book.

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July, 1984

Colin J. Evans
Stephen Karpel

CONTENTS

Preface

Chapter 1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.1	Historical development	2
1.2	Methods of manufacture	4
1.2.1	Grignard method	4
1.2.2	Wurtz synthesis	6
1.2.3	Aluminium alkyl route	6
1.2.4	Direct synthesis	6
1.2.5	Coproportionation	7
1.3	Range of applications	7
	References	10
Chapter 2	PVC STABILISATION	12
2.1	Introduction	12
2.1.1	The production of PVC	13
(i)	Suspension polymerisation	14
(ii)	Emulsion polymerisation	15
(iii)	Mass polymerisation	16
2.1.2	Vinyl chloride, PVC, and toxicity	16
2.2	Organotin stabilisers	18
2.2.1	Historical development	18
2.2.2	Compounds employed	23
2.3	The thermal degradation of PVC	23
2.3.1	Degradation processes	23
2.3.2	The mechanism of dehydrochlorination	26
2.3.3	Autoxidation	27
2.3.4	The light stability of PVC	28
2.3.5	Stabilisation mechanisms	29
2.4	Processing of PVC	31
2.4.1	Formulation	31
2.4.2	Mixing	32
2.4.3	Processing	33
(i)	Calendering	33
(ii)	Extrusion	36
(iii)	Injection moulding	37
(iv)	Blow moulding	38
(v)	Other techniques	40
2.5	Applications of tin-stabilised PVC	40
2.5.1	Benefits of using organotins	40
2.5.2	Packaging	42
2.5.3	Building	46
2.5.4	Other areas	50
2.6	Suppliers of organotin stabilisers	53
	References	55

Chapter 3	CATALYSIS	56
3.1	Polyurethanes	56
3.1.1	Introduction	56
3.1.2	The chemistry of polyurethanes	57
3.1.3	Historical development	59
3.1.4	Catalysts for foam production	60
3.1.5	Foam formulation	62
(i)	Polyols	63
(ii)	Isocyanates	65
(iii)	Catalysts	66
(iv)	Water	68
(v)	Blowing agent	68
(vi)	Surfactant	68
3.1.6	Production processes	69
(i)	Continuous flexible slabstock	70
(ii)	Reaction injection moulding	73
(iii)	Rigid foam techniques	74
3.1.7	Applications	77
(i)	Flexible foams	77
(ii)	Rigid foams	79
(iii)	Rebonded composites	80
(iv)	Elastomers	81
3.2	Silicones	83
3.2.1	Introduction	83
3.2.2	Silicone chemistry	83
3.2.3	Catalytic mechanism	85
3.2.4	Applications	86
(i)	Encapsulation and potting	87
(ii)	Sealing and caulking	89
(iii)	Anti-stick coatings	89
(iv)	Moulding and casting	92
(v)	Water-repellent treatments	92
(vi)	Other special applications	93
3.3	Esters and other products	95
3.3.1	Industrial esterification processes	95
3.3.2	Organic silicate binders	98
3.3.3	Olefin polymerisation and other reactions	99
	References	100
Chapter 4	WOOD PRESERVATION	101
4.1	Introduction	101
4.2	Organotin compounds in wood preservation	102
4.2.1	Bis(tributyltin) oxide	102
4.2.2	Other tributyltin compounds	105
4.2.3	Laboratory testing of fungicides	106
4.3	Mechanisms of fungal attack	110
4.3.1	Structural aspects of wood	110
4.3.2	Fungal attack	112
4.3.3	Principal types of fungi	113
4.4	Fungicidal mechanisms of organotins	116
4.4.1	Stability of organotins in wood	119
4.5	Protection against insect attack	121
4.5.1	Wood-boring insects	121
4.5.2	Insecticidal treatments	123
4.6	Methods of application of preservatives	124
4.6.1	Pretreatments for wood	124
4.6.2	Remedial treatments	129

4.7	Precautions when handling organotin preservatives	130
4.8	New developments in organotin preservatives	130
4.8.1	Water-borne organotin preservatives	131
4.8.2	Wood preservation by organotin polymers	132
4.9	The future for organotin wood preservatives	133
	References	133
Chapter 5 ANTIFOULING SYSTEMS		135
5.1	Introduction	135
5.2	Problems of marine fouling	136
5.2.1	Primary film	136
5.2.2	Principal fouling organisms	137
5.2.3	Effect of environmental conditions	140
5.3	Mode of action of organotins	141
5.4	The slow release concept	143
5.4.1	Conventional paint systems	143
5.4.2	Elastomeric systems	149
5.4.3	Polymeric systems for long-term protection	152
5.5	Testing of antifouling systems	160
5.5.1	Laboratory studies	160
5.5.2	Immersion tests	163
5.5.3	Monitoring actual performance	165
5.6	Environmental aspects of antifouling systems	166
5.6.1	Handling of organotin-based antifouling systems	166
5.6.2	Effects of leached organotins on aquatic life	167
5.6.3	Long-term environmental effects	169
5.7	Commercial developments	171
	References	174
Chapter 6 AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS		178
6.1	Introduction	178
6.1.1	Introduction of organotin compounds	179
6.2	Development of an agricultural chemical	180
6.3	Organotin-based pesticides	183
6.3.1	Triphenyltin compounds	183
6.3.2	Organotin miticides	188
6.3.3	Experimental organotin pesticides	194
6.4	Practical aspects of organotins in crop protection	196
6.4.1	Methods of application	196
6.4.2	Use of triphenyltins on potatoes	198
6.4.3	Control of Cercospora leaf spot and powdery mildew on sugar beet	199
6.4.4	Control of leaf spot on celery	200
6.4.5	Protection of coffee crops	200
6.4.6	Triphenyltin compounds to protect rice fields	201
6.4.7	Protection of other crops against fungal diseases	202
6.4.8	Applications of organotin acaricides	203
6.5	Experimental studies on organotin pesticides	204
6.5.1	Fungicidal studies	204
6.5.2	Insecticidal studies	207
6.5.3	Studies in mite control	208
6.6	New approaches to pest control	210
6.6.1	Organotins as antifeedants	210
6.6.2	Organotins as chemosterilants	213
6.6.3	Integrated control schemes	214
6.6.4	Slow release systems	215
	References	215

VIII

Chapter 7	MEDICAL USES	218
7.1	Therapeutic drugs based on organotins	218
7.1.1	Anti-tumour drugs	218
7.1.2	Other possible uses of organotin-based drugs	223
7.2	Preventive measures based on organotins	225
7.2.1	Eradication of schistosomiasis	225
7.2.2	Mosquito larvicides	229
	References	230
Chapter 8	MISCELLANEOUS BIOCIDAL USES	232
8.1	Introduction	232
8.2	Materials protection	232
8.2.1	Protecting masonry and stonework	232
8.2.2	Paint additives	234
8.2.3	Textile protection	236
8.2.4	Protection of other materials	239
8.3	Slime prevention in the paper industry	241
8.4	Organotin-based disinfectants	241
8.5	Organotins in animal husbandry	245
	References	248
Chapter 9	MONO-ORGANOTINS	249
9.1	Introduction	249
9.1.1	Manufacture	250
9.2	Applications	250
9.2.1	Stabilisation of polyvinyl chloride	250
9.2.2	Treatments for glass surfaces	251
9.2.3	Homogeneous catalysts	253
9.2.4	Textile treatments	254
9.2.5	Fungicidal properties	257
	References	257
Chapter 10	ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF ORGANOTINS	258
10.1	Introduction	258
10.2	Structure/biocidal activity relationships	258
10.3	Toxicology of organotin compounds	261
10.3.1	Tetra-alkyltin compounds	261
10.3.2	Trialkyltin compounds	261
10.3.3	Triphenyltin compounds	262
10.3.4	Dialkyltin compounds	263
10.3.5	Metabolic fate of organotin compounds	263
10.4	Effects of organotin in the environment	264
10.4.1	Stability of organotin compounds	264
10.4.2	Sources of entry of organotins into the environment	266
10.4.3	Biomethylation of organotins	269
	References	274
	INDEX OF TIN COMPOUNDS	275

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Organotin compounds can be defined as compounds in which at least one direct tin-carbon bond exists. The great majority of organotin compounds have tin in the IV+ oxidation state although a few are known which have tin in the II+ oxidation state. Tin-carbon bonds are in general weaker and more polar than those formed in organic compounds of carbon, silicon or germanium and organic groups attached to tin are more readily removed. This higher reactivity does not, however, imply any instability of organotin compounds under ordinary conditions.

Four series of organotin compounds are known; those with one tin-carbon bond are known as mono-organotins, those with two tin-carbon bonds are diorganotins whilst triorganotins and tetra-organotins have, respectively, three and four tin-carbon bonds. The properties of these classes of compound differ; thus whilst monoorganotins have low toxicity the triorganotins are characterised by high biocidal activity and diorganotins find use in the plastics industry as stabilisers and catalysts. The tetra-organotins have not found much commercial use to date.

The tin-carbon bond is stable to water and to atmospheric oxygen at normal temperatures and is quite stable to heat (many organotins can be distilled under reduced pressure with little decomposition). Strong acids, halogens and other electrophilic reagents readily cleave the tin-carbon bond. Tin forms predominantly covalent bonds to other elements but these bonds exhibit a high degree of ionic character, with tin usually acting as the electropositive member. Triorganotin hydroxides behave not as alcohols but more like inorganic bases, although strong bases remove the proton in certain triorganotin hydroxides since tin is amphoteric. Thus, bis(triorganotin) oxides, $(R_3Sn)_2O$, are strong bases and react with both inorganic and organic acids, forming normal salt-like but non-conducting and water-insoluble compounds. Tin doubly bonded to oxygen does not exist and diorganotin oxides, R_2SnO , are polymers, usually highly cross-linked via intermolecular tin-oxygen bonds. Unlike the halo-carbons, organotin halides are reactive compounds and because of their ionic character, readily enter into metathetical substitution reactions resembling the inorganic tin halides. Unlike carbon, tin shows much less tendency to form chains of tin atoms bonded to each other. Although tin-tin bonded compounds are known (for example hexa-organoditins) the tin-tin bond is easily cleaved by

oxygen, halogens and acids.

1.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The first organic compound of tin was prepared in 1852 by Lowig, but credit for the first comprehensive study of organotins belongs to Sir Edward Frankland (1825-1899). In 1853 he prepared "di-iodo diethylstannane" (diethyltin diiodide) and in 1859 "tetraethylstannane" (tetra-ethyltin); other compounds followed. Despite this early discovery, organotin compounds remained little more than laboratory curiosities for nearly a century.

The first commercially significant property of organotins to become recognised, was the ability of diorganotins to inhibit the degradation, under the influence of heat and UV light, of polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Diorganotin compounds were introduced as PVC stabilisers in the U.S.A. in the 1940s, in the U.K. in 1951 and in the rest of Europe and Japan in the mid-1950s. Developments in this field have been reviewed by Verity-Smith [1]. World production of organotin compounds was stated to be running at 1000-2000 tonnes by 1957, mainly for dibutyltin stabilisers for PVC. More sophisticated compounds were soon developed, in particular, thiotin compounds were shown to be extremely efficient heat stabilisers for PVC. Early in 1955, non-toxic octyltin stabilisers for PVC were discovered and following extensive testing, Government approval was obtained in the U.S.A. and elsewhere for the use of tin-stabilised PVC in food-contact applications. PVC bottles for squash and for food products were marketed in the late 1960s and represented a new outlet for octyltin compounds.

The biocidal uses of organotins stemmed from the systematic study of these compounds sponsored at the Institute for Organic Chemistry, TNO, Utrecht, by the International Tin Research Council in 1950. The research team at TNO under the leadership of Professor G.J.M. van der Kerk made important contributions to the study of the organometallic chemistry of tin, synthesising new compounds and establishing their characteristics [2-10]. In particular the powerful biocidal properties of the trialkyltin and triaryl tin derivatives were established. In 1957 the German company Hoechst developed an important agricultural fungicide tradenamed "Brestan", based on triphenyltin acetate. This was particularly effective against the damaging potato blight phytophthora infestans. Subsequently in 1961 Philips-Duphar marketed a crop protectant based on triphenyltin hydroxide (which had not been covered in the earlier triphenyltin patent filed by Hoechst). By the mid-1960s world annual production of organotins had risen to around 10,000 tonnes.

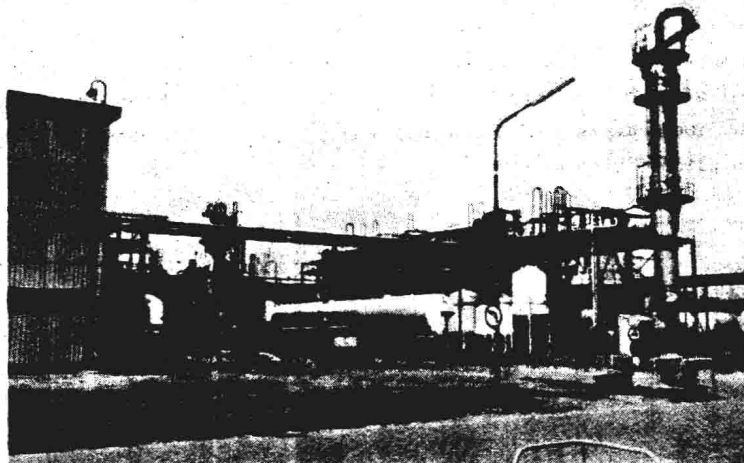


Fig. 1.1. The M & T Chemicals b.v. plant at Vlissingen-Oost, The Netherlands. Photograph courtesy: M & T Chemicals b.v.

In 1959 the seeds of another important use of organotin compounds were sown, when the Osmose Wood Preserving Company of America began active investigation into the possibilities of organotins for wood preservation. As a result of these studies, the company marketed a commercial organotin-based wood preservative in 1960. This stimulated major developments in Europe and organotins became firmly established in the field of wood preservation over the next decade in many parts of the world. In the early 1960s organotin compounds began to find use in antifouling paint systems for ships in view of their biological activity against a wide spectrum of fouling organisms. By 1970 International Red Hand Marine Coatings had applied organotin-based coatings to some 200 vessels, representing 5 m gross tonnes of shipping. The subsequent development of more effective coatings with long-term activity has led to a marked increase in the use of organotins for antifouling systems and today this market is a growth area.

In the late 1960s the miticidal properties of tricyclohexyltin hydroxide were discovered and a commercial product based on this compound has been found extremely effective in protecting a wide range of crops and ornamentals. In the following years a number of other active organotin miticides were developed, namely bis(trineophyltin) oxide and 1-tricyclohexylstannyl - 1,2,4-triazole.

Growth of organotin usage has been considerable over the last few decades as Fig. 1.2 shows. A current estimate of consumption is over 30,000 tonnes per year. Table 1.1 lists principal uses of organotin compounds; these are discussed in depth in the remaining chapters of this book. It should be noted that three general areas of application account between them for over 95% of the total usage. These areas are: PVC stabilisers, agricultural uses and industrial biocides (in paints, timber, etc.).

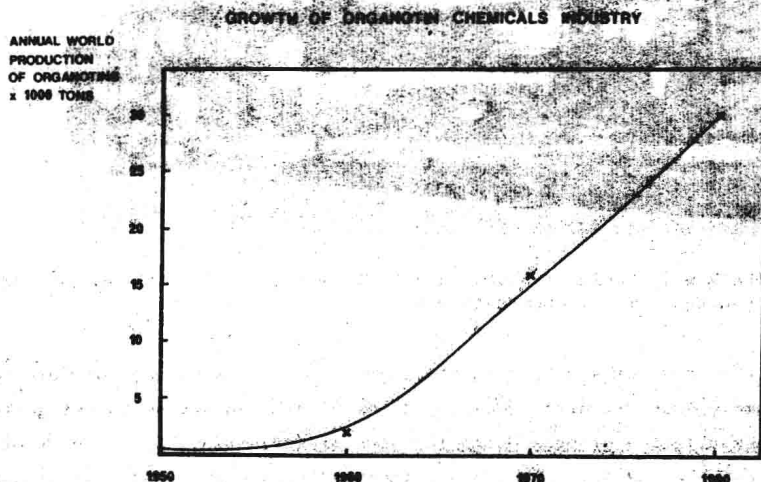


Fig. 1.2. Growth of consumption of organotin compounds.

1.2 METHODS OF MANUFACTURE

Only a brief summary is given here of the manufacturing techniques employed for organotin compounds; more detailed accounts of the chemistry [11] and the process technology [12] have been published. The principal routes are summarised in Fig. 1.3.

1.2.1 Grignard method

A very large proportion of the industrially important organotin compounds is prepared by the Grignard method:



The route provides certain problems in control, since mixed solvent systems are needed and large volumes are involved. However, the process is very

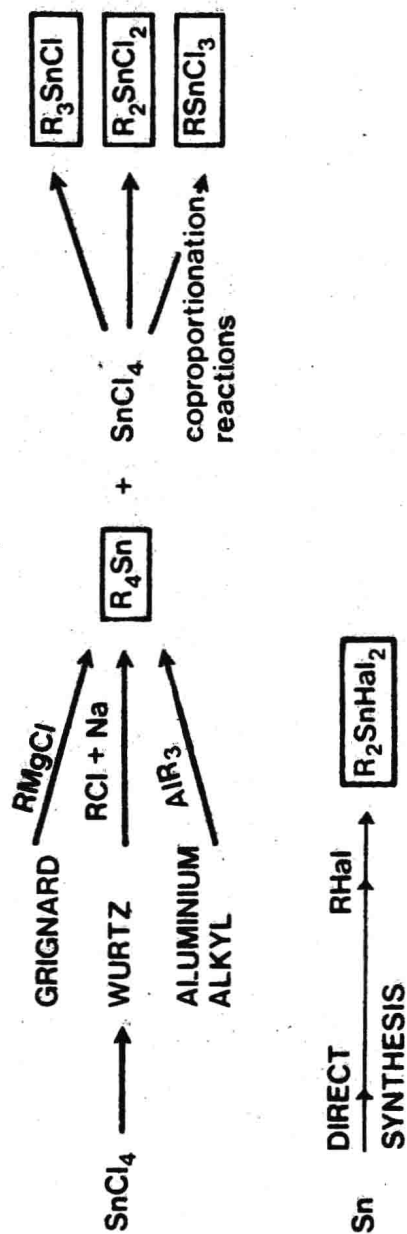
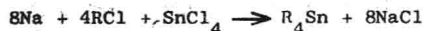


Fig. 1.3. Principal synthesis routes for producing compounds with direct tin-carbon bonds (organotin).

flexible and produces high yields; it is the only industrial method currently feasible for producing phenyltin compounds and it is also employed to produce propyl-, butyl- and octyltin compounds.

1.2.2 Wurtz synthesis

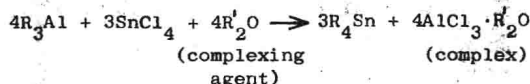
In the Wurtz synthesis, sodium is used in place of magnesium:



Again, large quantities of solvent are required and competing side reactions are a problem in achieving a satisfactory yield. Better results are obtained when the Wurtz synthesis is carried out with alkyltin chlorides rather than with tin tetrachloride. A starting amount of dibutyltin dichloride is first converted by the Wurtz synthesis to tetrabutyltin which then yields twice the amount of dibutyltin dichloride with tin tetrachloride. Half of the dibutyltin compound is then used to produce more tetrabutyltin for further reaction. To date the only company known to be making commercial use of this process is in the German Democratic Republic [13].

1.2.3 Aluminium alkyl route

The aluminium alkyl route to organotins has certain advantages over the other two processes, namely only a small reaction space is required, the process can be operated continuously and no solvents are needed. The method is used in F.R. Germany to produce tetra-alkyltins, particularly tetra-octyltins. Complete transfer of all the alkyl groups bound to the aluminium requires the presence of a complexing agent such as sodium chloride, ethers or tertiary amines. The alkylation to tetra-alkyltin then proceeds smoothly and completely:



The aluminium alkyl method is as versatile as the Grignard reaction with regard to the nature of the alkyl groups concerned.

1.2.4 Direct synthesis

Direct synthesis involves reaction between metallic tin and alkyl halide:

