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Humbuckers of the Holy

HOW DOES JIMMY PAGE GET SO MANY different sounds out of his Les Paul?

—Christian Wheeler, Chesapeake, VA.

Jimmy Page has used a bunch of different guitars over the years: Teles, Les Pauls, Danelectros, and Strats to name a few. But live, he relies on a modified Les Paul for many of his tones. This, the mother of all wiring mods, comes as close as it gets to putting all of those sounds into one two-humbucker instrument. The individual wiring aspects of this mod are not particularly complicated, but there are a heap of them. For those of you with adequate soldering chops (and patience), have at it and have fun. The accompanying diagram has all the info you need to trick your guitar out. For the rest of you, bring this

article and your guitar to a qualified tech.

You will need four 500k push/pull pots to allow the selection and combination of the different sounds this mod provides. Your pickups must have four-conductor lead wire to work in this configuration. One caveat: The color-coded wires in the diagram are for Seymour Duncan pickups, but this mod works with any four-conductor humbuckers. (For a wire-color translation chart for several pickup manufacturers, go to seymourduncan.com/pdfs/support/schematics/color_codes.pdf.)

VOLUME POTS

The push/pull Volume pots will be used for coil-split switches for each pickup. This alone will give you tons of tonal

variety that stock LP's are not capable of, by letting you switch either pickup from a humbucker to a single-coil.

BRIDGE TONE CONTROL

The bridge pickup's push/pull Tone control is a phase switch that, when pulled up, electronically reverses the phase of the bridge pickup. For those not hip to pickup phase switching, this function only works when both pickups are selected (meaning the 3-way switch is in the middle). Putting two pickups out of phase with each other takes most of the sound that the pickups have in common and eliminates or phase cancels it from your signal. The resulting sound will be thin and nasal, and can be a bit unsettling at first. Once you've had the chance to play with it a bit, though, you will discover how the out-of-phase sounds can really arouse your creativity. To take full advantage of the possibilities, however, try slightly backing off either neck or bridge Volume control. Then, try the same thing with the Tone controls. As you turn down either pickup's Volume or Tone, the phasing effect decreases. A Zap track that sounds conspicuously out of phase is "The Ocean," and Page has also taken to pulling the phase knob up during live performances of "Since I've Been Loving You," in the verses of the song.

NECK TONE CONTROL

This push/pull pot puts the pickups in series with one another, which means a boost in both output and low end. Essentially, this switch connects all selected pickups into one big pickup, which is great for adding a bit of beef to any solo tone. One important note is that, when in series mode, the neck Volume control is the only volume that will work (the bridge Volume will do nothing). This is normal, so don't let it freak you out.

By mixing and matching these functions you'll have access to a huge number of new sounds. You'll have to breathe a lot of solder fumes, but the payoff in tone will be well worth it. —Scott Miller

Scott Miller is the Technical Support Lead at Seymour Duncan.

