You’ve heard of Peter Green? After replacing Eric Clapton in John Mayall’s Bluesbreakers, he formed the seminal blues band Fleetwood Mac (this was in 1967: pre- Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham). Green owned a 1959 sunburst Les Paul that had one of the pickups out of phase with the other. This may have been accidental; legend has it that one of the pickups was incorrectly repaired.

In any case, the out-of-phase pickups lent the guitar a distinctive tone in the middle switch position. This is easy to achieve with any dual-humbucker guitar, so after a little urging from a customer, we decided to document this wiring.

There are a couple of different ways to reverse a pickup’s phase: you can reverse the current flow or the magnet orientation. Both sound the same, despite what you might read on the Internet. If you do it by reversing one pickup’s magnet then you cannot toggle between the normal and out-of-phase settings. So we reverse the phase electrically so that in the middle switch position (both pickups on) you can toggle between normal (pushbutton “up”) and out-of-phase (pushbutton “down”) tones.

Hey, a Tele’s not a Les Paul. And it doesn’t have two volume controls, so you can’t play with subtle changes to the phase shift. But this wiring adds tonal versatility to a dual-humbucker Tele and that’s a good thing, right? We thought so.
PUSHBUTTON USED IN VOLUME POSITION

NOTES
The color codes shown are Lindy Fralin’s. For both pickups, the red and green wires will be tied together and then taped off. The junction of these wires shouldn’t touch anything else.

The two bare wires must be connected to ground. They can be connected to the same switch lug as the neck pickup ground, or they can be connected to the back of a pot. Be sure that none of the excess bare wire touches anything in the control cavity. The easiest way to do this is to cover it with heat-shrink tubing.