



Mar 11,
2020

Assembling LED Controller Electronics V.4 [↗](#)

Jakub Nedbal¹

¹King's College London

In Development

dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.bdiai4ae



Jakub Nedbal
King's College London



ABSTRACT

The LED controller electronics regulates the LED current, adjusting the irradiance of the sample according to the experimental needs. It also powers the fans cooling down the LEDs.

This document is part of the Illuminated Orbital Shaker for Microalgae Culture project:

- Procuring Parts for Algal Shaker
- Assembling LED Controller Electronics (*this document*)
- 3D Printing Case for LED Controller
- Assembling Cooled LED Illuminator
- Cutting and Drilling Clear Acrylic Sheet
- Assembling Algal Shaker

EXTERNAL LINK

<https://app.labstep.com/sharelink/3bb3a131-51c4-4d37-abab-cd5e75760140>

GUIDELINES

The LED controller electronics regulates the LED current, adjusting the irradiance of the sample according to the experimental needs. It also powers the fans cooling down the LEDs. The electronic circuit assembly requires surface-mount component soldering equipment and skills. The smallest parts used are in 0603 package. This size allows soldering with a decent soldering station, flux, watch-makers tweezers, and a bit of experience. The soldering should take no more than 2 hours. It is followed by testing the circuit and finally cleaning excess flux.

This document details the following steps:

- Function of the electronics circuit.
- Soldering strategy.
- Testing the circuit.
- Cleaning the PCB.

MATERIALS TEXT

The electronic parts required for the assembly are listed in the document:

- Procuring Parts for Algal Shaker

The printed circuit board design files including schematics are available for download from github:

- [LEDregulator Circuit](#) - KiCAD files

Tools required for assembly:

- Soldering iron
- Soldering flux
- Solder
- Watchmaker's tweezers

- Digital multimeter
- Isopropanol, denatured ethanol or PCB cleaner; a tub and a brush for PCB cleaning

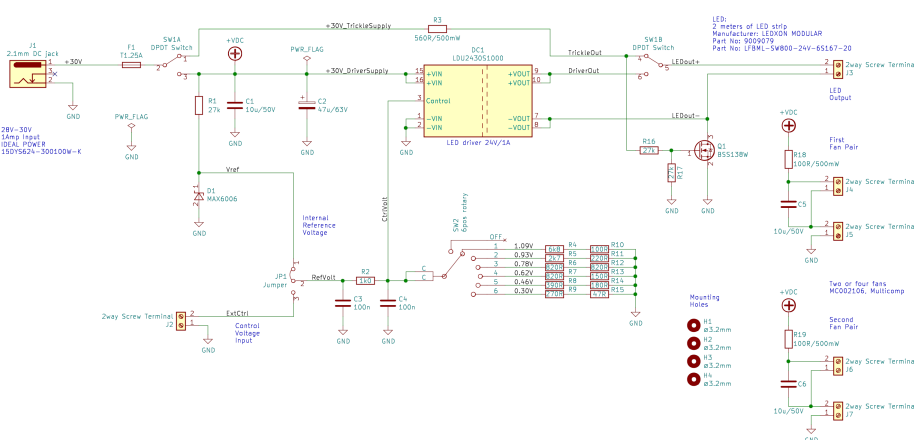
SAFETY WARNINGS

Consider the safety of the soldering process and observe local regulations. Soldering creates risks of fire, exposure to hazardous fumes, and skin exposure to the soldering flux. Take all necessary precautions. Keep the work area tidy, especially devoid of any combustible materials. Never leave the soldering iron unattended while hot. Use fume extractor during soldering and laboratory gloves when handling the flux-stained PCB.

BEFORE STARTING

Description of the Circuit Diagram

Using a few images, the LED and Fan Controller circuit function is explained below. The overall circuit diagram is here (click on the image to blow it up):



Schematics diagram of the LED controller for the illuminated orbital shaker

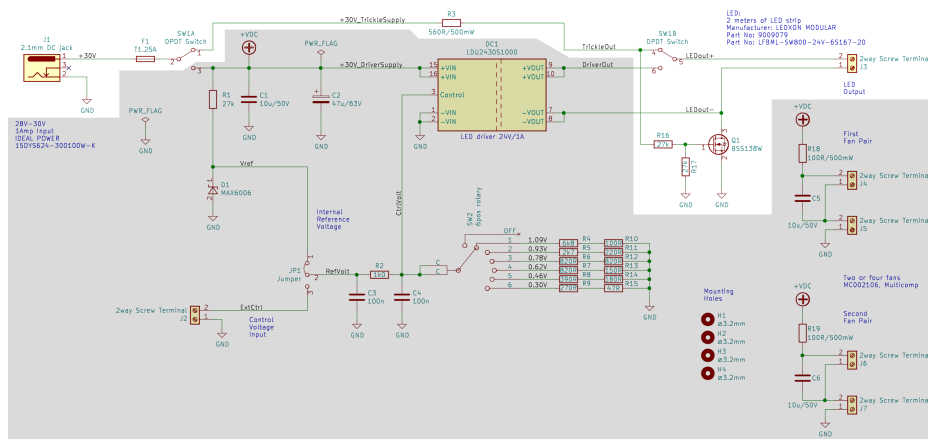
The circuit serves two functions. It regulates the current through the LEDs illuminating the algae cultures. It controls the fans cooling the heatsink holding the LEDs. The LEDs generate heat and it is essential to draw this heat out to prevent overheating of the cultures.

The circuit operates in two principal modes, which can be switched between using a toggle switch:

- **Trickle current mode:** Maintains a slow-growing algae culture
- **Regulated current mode:** Provides variable illumination of the algae culture

Trickle Current Mode

The illuminator is set to a low power in the trickle current mode. Electrical current through the LED strip is limited by a high-power resistor R3 (560 Ω/500 mW). The fans are off, as there is very little heat generated by the LEDs in this mode. The cathode of the LED strip is connected to ground by MOSFET transistor Q1. The part of the circuit responsible for the trickle current mode is in the image below:



Part of the circuit supplying trickle (26 mA) current into the LEDs for slow growth during culture maintenance.

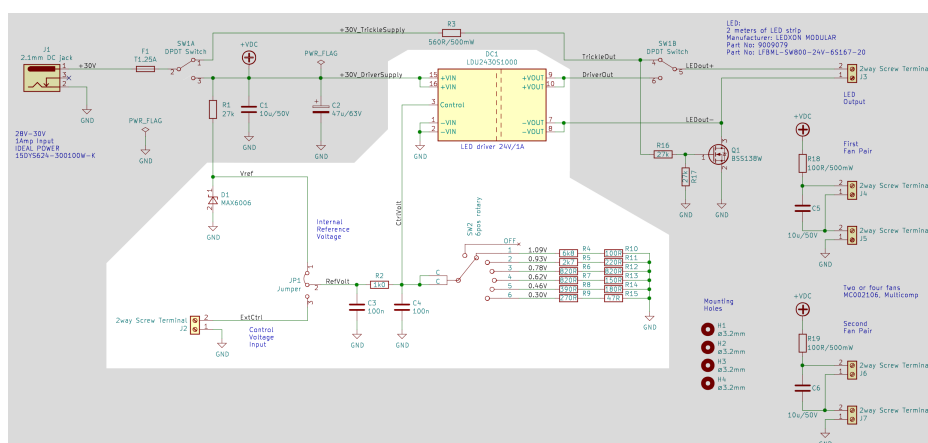
Regulated Current Mode

The regulated current mode provides variable algae culture illumination. Electrical current through the LED strip is regulated by the DC1 LED driver (LDU2430S1000), delivering up to 1 Amp. The LED current regulation is achieved by applying a Voltage to the "Control" input of DC1.

There is an internal 1.25 Voltage reference created by a shunt regulator D1 (MAX6006). This generates 1.25 V. This Voltage is then lowered by a variable resistor divider selected by a rotary switch (SW2). This switch has 7 positions, which give Voltages of 1.25 V, 1.09 V, 0.93 V, 0.78 V, 0.62 V, 0.46 V, and 0.30 V. These control the current through the LED strip to 1000 mA, 870 mA, 740 mA, 620 mA, 500 mA, 370 mA, and 240 mA, respectively.

There is a shunt jumper JP1 in the circuit, which allows connecting an external Voltage source on input screw terminal (J2) to control the LED strip current. This functionality has been added to enable automated control of the LED current, but has never been used or tested. Observe the information in the datasheet for the DC1 LED driver (LDU2430S1000) function, if choosing to control the LED current externally through input screw terminal (J2).

The circuit part which is responsible for the control of the LED current is highlighted in the image below:



Part of the trickle mode supplying variable regulated current to the LEDs.

Cooling Fans in the Regulated Current Mode

The regulated current mode requires active cooling of the LED strips by a set of fans. There are two pairs of fans connected to four screw terminals J4-J7. The current through the fans is limited by high-power resistors J18 and J19 (100 Ω /500 mW). The circuit includes start-up capacitors C5 and C6 (10 μ F/50V) in parallel with screw terminals J4 and J6. These capacitors ensure that the fans connected to screw terminals J5 and J7 start turning regardless of the orientation of the fan rotors. Without these capacitors, the

There is enough air pulled through the LED strip heatsink to keep the culture temperature within a degree of the ambient temperature with just one pair of fans. There are two pairs added to the system for the reason of redundancy. Small axial fans are prone to failure and failure will result in dangerous overheating of the algae cultures within minutes. Two pairs mean that if one pair fails, there should be time and opportunity to spot the failure and replace the failed fans with new ones before the second pair fails.

Printed Circuit Board Assembly

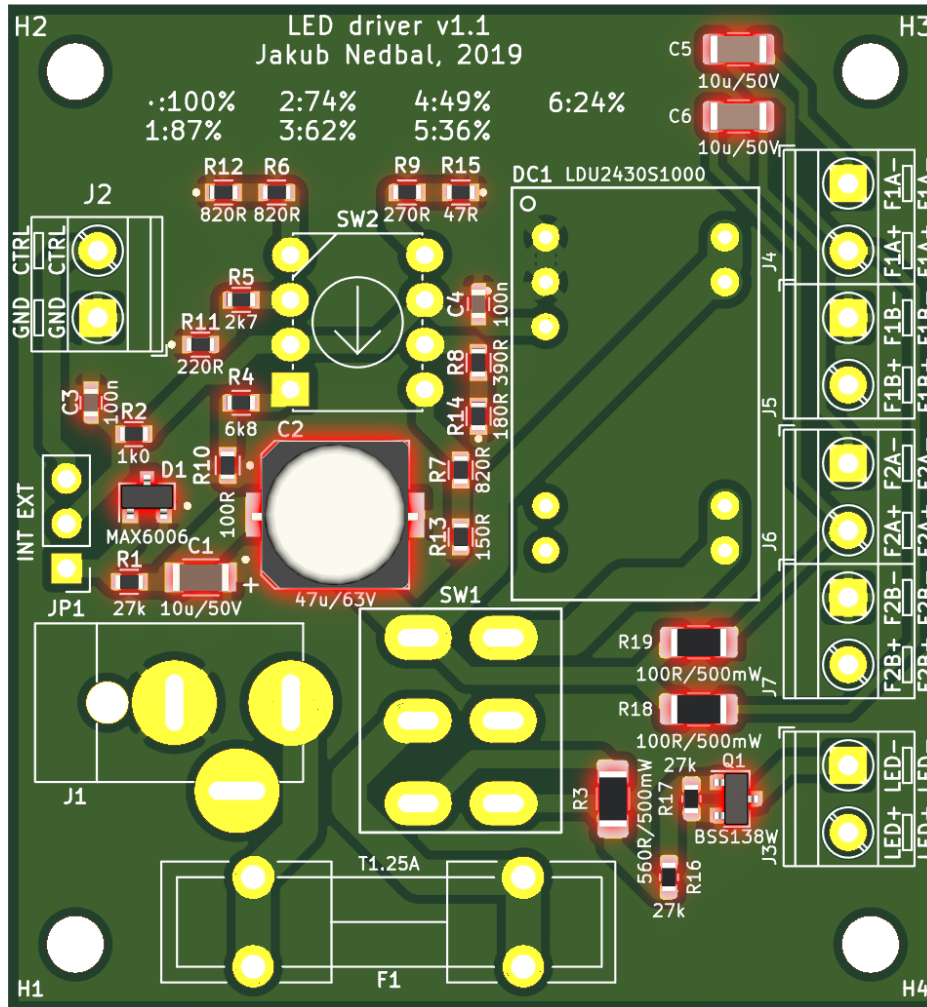
- Procuring Parts for Algal Shaker

This is an open access protocol distributed under the terms of the **Creative Commons Attribution License** (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

1 Assembly of SMD Components

Start the assembly with all the SMD components first.

Use a thin solder wire, solder flux, and watchmaker's tweezers to help with the soldering. The SMD components that need to be soldered are highlighted in the image below:

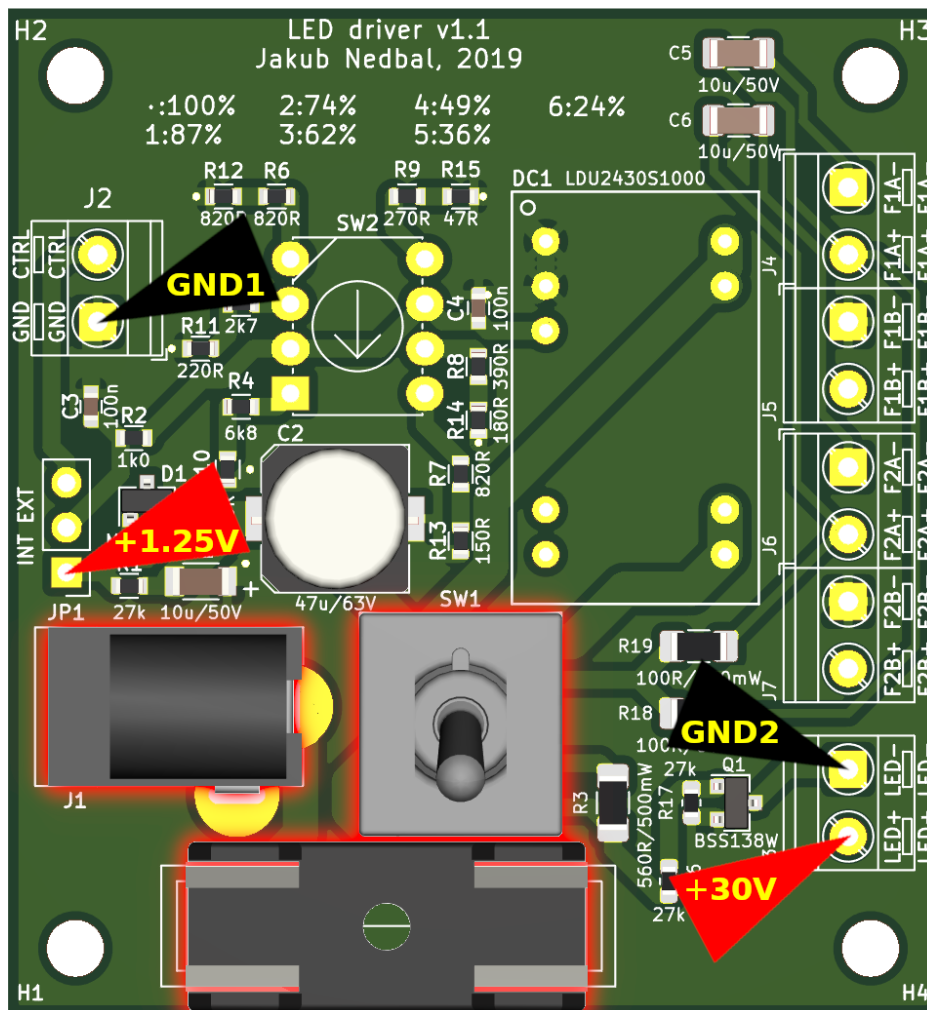


SMD components, highlighted in red, are assembled first. This way the larger through-hole components do not restrict the access to the soldering pads.

2 Adding the Power Supply Connection

In this step, the power supply connection is added and the first test of the circuit is performed.

Solder the power supply connector (J1), toggle switch (SW1), the fuse holder (F1), and insert T1.25A fuse into the fuse holder according to the image below:



The DC power supply connector, fuse in a fuseholder, and toggle switch are soldered next. The partial circuit functionality is tested by connecting the power supply to the DC power supply connector and ensuring the expected voltages are measured at the test points highlighted by the black and red arrows in the diagram.

With the components soldered in place, connect the +30V power supply to DC power jack (J1). Make sure the T1.25A fuse is in the fuse holder (F1). Use a digital multimeter in the DC Voltage mode to probe the Voltages on test points of the board.

Make sure the toggle switch (SW1) is in the position as shown in the image above. Connect the multimeter ground lead (black) to the test point labelled **GND1** in the image above. Connect the positive lead (red) to the test point labelled **+1.25V** in the image above. The multimeter should show a value close to 1.25 V on the display. If it does not, check the soldering. On an occasion, we found the shunt reference D1 (MAX6006) failed after assembly and had to replace it. It may be that this component is quite sensitive to mishandling and so you may need to replace it if it does not work before proceeding to the next steps.

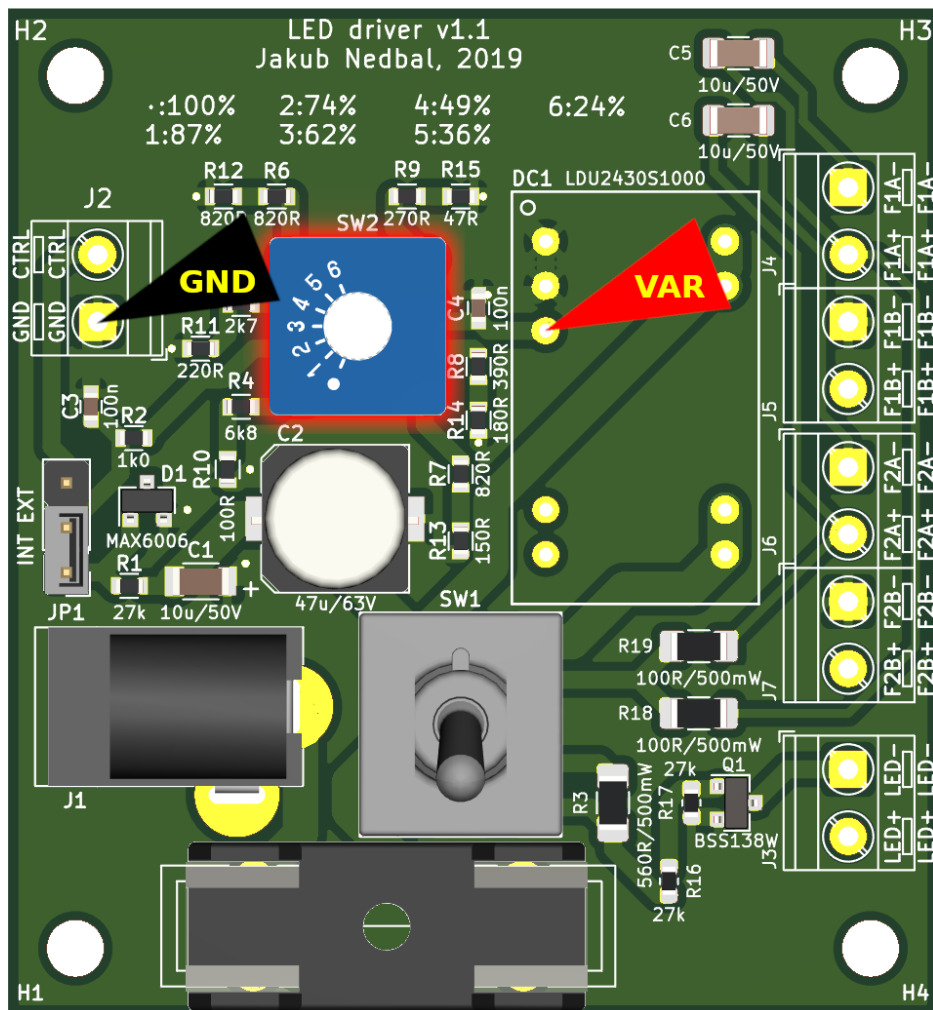
Switch the toggle switch (SW1) to the opposite position to the one shown in the image above. With the multimeter ground lead connected to the **GND2** test point, probe the Voltage at the testpoint labelled **+30V**. Make sure the measured Voltage is close to +30 V. If not, check the soldering. The only component that may be susceptible to failing due to mishandling is Q1. Check if it works and replace it if required.

Do not proceed to the next steps, until you verified the circuit works as described above. Replacing components will become hard or impossible once the remaining large through-hole components are soldered to the PCB.

3 Adding the LED Current Regulation

In the next steps, the rotary switch and the input control jumper will be installed and tested.

Solder in the 3-way header (JP1). Insert a jumper shunt across onto the two lower pins of the three way header (JP1) labelled **INT**. Solder a DIP-8 socket into the place for the rotary switch SW2, according to the image below (**do not solder the rotary switch directly into the PCB**):



Plug a 6-position rotary switch into the DIP-8 socket. Connect the power supply into the DC power supply connector. Check the voltage between the test points highlighted by the black and red arrows. The voltage should change with the rotary switch position.

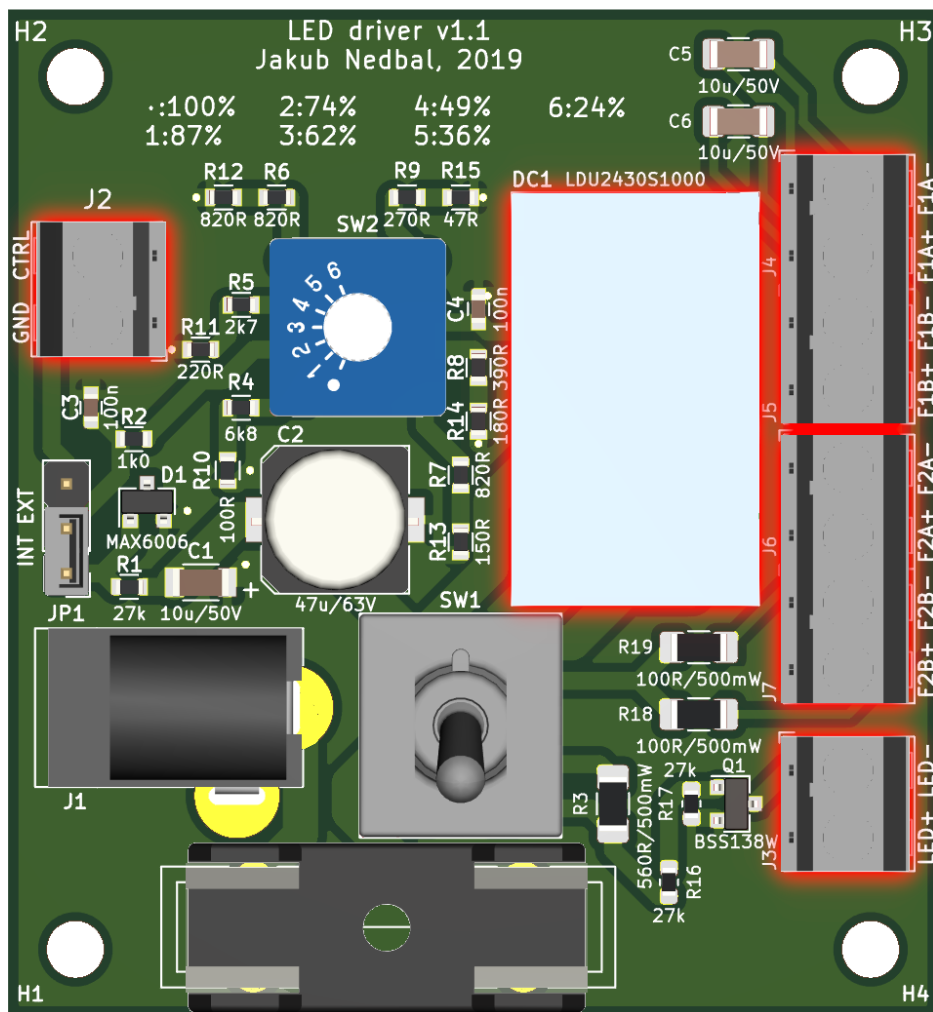
With the switch in place and the +30V power supply connected to DC jack (J1), use a multimeter to test the Voltage between test points labelled **GND** and **VAR**. The Voltage measured should vary in steps of 1.25 V, 1.09 V, 0.93 V, 0.78 V, 0.62 V, 0.46 V, and 0.30 V, which are respective to rotary switch positions of •, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Check these Voltages for every rotary switch position. If any vary significantly, check the soldering and measure the resistances of the SMD resistors. Fix any loose soldering joints or erroneous component placement. If no Voltage can be measured at any position, make sure there is a jumper shunt in the correct position on the 3-way jumper (JP1), as described above.

Do not proceed to the next steps, until you verified the circuit works as described above.

4 Adding the LED Controller

In the final assembly step, the adjustable LED driver (DC1) is added together with the screw terminal connectors (J2-J7).

Solder in all these components according to the image below:



Solder the last through hole components to the PCB. These include the screw terminal connectors and the adjustable LED driver.

This completes the circuit assembly. Do not test the function of the circuit with the LEDs just yet. The LED strip needs to be mounted onto the heatsink first, to avoid overheating of the LEDs at full power.

5 Cleaning the PCB

Cleaning the PCB from residual flux is important to avoid long-term corrosion and possible future reliability issues. There are professional PCB cleaners in spray, which dissolve the flux that can be wiped off together with the solvent. Instead, I use a widely available solvent **isopropanol** (isopropyl alcohol, IPA, propan-2-ol) for cleaning. Get a small tub just about fitting the PCB with a lid (an old margarine tub works fine).

- Place the PCB into the tub and cover it completely with the solvent (the parts do not need to be completely submerged).
- Close the lid and let it soak for at least 10 minutes (or even overnight). This should soften the flux.
- Use a toothbrush and a toothpick to rub and scrape off any flux deposits from the PCB.
- Empty the tub with the solvent according to local waste disposal regulations.
- Place the PCB back into the tub, cover it with fresh isopropanol, close the tub lid and let the board soak for additional 10 minutes.
- Brush and pick any residual flux.
- Flick any residual solvent from the board and let it dry.

The above steps explained how to clean the flux from the printed circuit board for long-term reliability of the LED regulator circuit.

6 Summary

This document described the assembly process for the LED controller electronic circuit. The assembly took place in steps, each followed by test instructions to verify the function of the circuit before embarking on the next assembly steps. By the end, the circuit board is ready to be installed into a custom case, which is described in the 3D printing case for LED controller document.

7 References

- [LEDregulator Circuit](#): KiCAD files with the circuit diagram and PCB design files.
- [OrbitalShaker_ElectronicsPartsList.xlsx](#): Excel document listing all electronics and electrical parts, and fixing required in the assembly of the illuminated Orbital Shaker.
- [KiCAD](#): Cross platform and open source electronics design automation suite.

8 This document is part of the Illuminated Orbital Shaker for Microalgae Culture project:

- Procuring Parts for Algal Shaker
- Assembling LED Controller Electronics (*this document*)
- 3D Printing Case for LED Controller
- Assembling Cooled LED Illuminator
- Cutting and Drilling Clear Acrylic Sheet
- Assembling Algal Shaker



This is an open access protocol distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited