CLAIMS:

1. A multi-stage solvent extraction process comprising:

passing a heavy hydrocarbon feed stream and a first fresh solvent to a first extraction column to generate a first overhead stream and a first bottom stream;

passing the first overhead stream to a first stripping column to generate a first product stream and a first stripped solvent stream;

passing the first bottom stream from the first extraction column directly to a second extraction column and passing a second fresh solvent to the second extraction column to generate a second overhead stream and a second bottom stream;

passing the second overhead stream to a second stripping column to generate a second product stream and a second stripped solvent stream

passing the first stripped solvent stream from the first stripping column and the second stripped solvent stream from the second stripping column to a solvent recovery column to generate a first recovered solvent stream and a second recovered solvent stream;

recycling a portion of the first recovered solvent stream to the first extraction column; and

recycling a portion of the second recovered solvent streams to the second extraction column.

2. The process of claim 1 further comprising passing the second bottom stream from the second extraction column to a pitch stripper to generate a pitch stream from a bottom of the pitch stripper and a heavy stripped solvent stream from an overhead of the pitch stripper.

3. The process of claim 2 further comprising passing the heavy stripped solvent stream from the pitch stripper to the solvent recovery column to generate a heavy recovered solvent stream.

4. The process of claim 1 further comprising:

passing the first overhead stream from the first extraction column to a first separation vessel prior to passing the first overhead stream to the first stripping column to generate a first recycle solvent stream from an overhead of the first separation vessel and a first separator bottoms stream from a bottom of the first separation vessel; and

passing the first separator bottoms stream to the first stripping column to generate the first product stream from a bottom of the first stripping column and the first stripped solvent stream from an overhead of the first stripping column.

5. The process of claim 4 further comprising passing the first recycle solvent stream from the overhead of the first separation vessel to the first extraction column.

6. The process of claim 1 further comprising:

passing the second overhead stream from the second extraction column to a second separation vessel prior to passing the second overhead stream to the second stripping column to generate a second recycle solvent stream from an overhead of the second separation vessel and a second effluent stream from a bottom of the second separation vessel; and

passing the second effluent stream to the second stripping column to generate the second product stream from a bottom of the second stripping column and the second stripped solvent stream from an overhead of the second stripping column.

7. The process of claim 6 further comprising passing the second recycle solvent stream from the overhead of the second separation vessel to the second extraction column.

8. An apparatus for multi-stage solvent extraction comprising:

a first extraction column to produce a first overhead stream and a first bottom stream;

a first stripping column in downstream communication with an overhead line of the first extraction column to produce a first product stream and a first stripped solvent stream from the first overhead stream;

a second extraction column in direct downstream communication with a bottoms line of the first extraction column to produce a second overhead stream and a second bottom stream from the first bottom stream;

a second stripping column in downstream communication with an overhead line of the second extraction column to produce a second product stream and a second stripped solvent stream from the second overhead stream; and

a solvent recovery column in communication with the first stripping column and the second stripping column to receive the first stripped solvent stream and the second stripped solvent stream to generate a first recovered solvent stream and a second recovered stream and to recycle the first

recovered solvent stream to the first extraction column and recycle the second recovered solvent stream to the second extraction column.