

RF Signature article content, Frontline winter '93;

Robben Ford merges jazz, blues, rock and pop to redefine the term "fusion" music. But make no mistake; his sound, delivery and conception are all his own – as unmistakable and personal as a fingerprint. He chose a deliberate reinterpretation of the unusual Fender Esprit Ultra as the basis for his instrument (the Fender Robben Ford Signature model), which reflects Robben's discriminating and diverse as both a soloist and rhythm player.

Designed in the mid-1980's, the Esprit effectively reconciled the differences between a blues, jazz and rock guitar, making it ideal for Robben's varied musical tangents. He was originally drawn to the smaller body size, double-cutaway comfort and remarkable playability of the Esprit as an alternative to the larger, honky-sounding semi-hollow-body he had been playing. Though the Esprit was discontinued by the late 1980's, Robben remained an ardent user.

In its present incarnation, it has retained many of the Ultra's significant features and deluxe appointments, as specified by Robben, including the Ebony fingerboard with fancy Mother-of-Pearl split-block inlays, Ebony tuning key pegs, multiple binding on the headstock, neck and body and gold-plated hardware. The solid Alder body with a carved Spruce top and built-in acoustical tone chambers is a clever variation on the classic solid-body construction theme of mahogany-and-maple and is a vital component in producing the rich and consistent sustaining Robben Ford solo guitar voice. Another is the two-humbucker pickup configuration which yields both a mellow, neck-pickup jazz sound as well as a robust, bridge-pickup blues-rock tone. The coil-splitting switch provides interesting thinner and twangier single-coil timbres ideal for rootsy rock and roll, R&B and funky rhythm comping.