

**AFRO-LATIN JAZZ FROM L.A. INDIE LABEL:** **BILL LASTER** is a name as familiar to most record distributors around the country as it is to discerning fans of Afro-Latin jazz everywhere. Laster and his band **Shades of Jade** have just released his fourth album *From the Edge* on the L.A. indie label **Absolute Pitch Records and Videos**.

With three previous albums and a one-hour performance video under his belt, Laster compares his entrepreneurial achievements to those of musician **Paul Horn of Golden Flute Records**. Horn formed his own label with a distribution network spanning throughout Canada and the States, and he produced and owned the masters for eight of his own recordings before going back to a major label. Similarly, Laster has learned what Horn aptly called "the other side of the record business." Yet Laster's success in producing four records (with a fifth in the works) is also an intriguing phenomenon in itself. "It's been a difficult process in dealing with record distributors," says Laster. "Most of them don't respect a small independent label. Producing the album was the easiest piece in the puzzle, but even that can be hard to do since you deal with so many personalities."



### Shades of Jade

Originally from New York City, Laster took timbale lessons from the master, **Willie Rosario**. He played with **Ross Carnegie** in every major ballroom in N.Y.C and performed with jazz greats like **Art Pepper**, **Frank Rehak** and the **Afro-Blues Quintet Plus One**.

The past and present personnel of Shades of Jade is indeed impressive. There's bass player **Al McKibbon**, who has played with **Dizzy Gillespie**, **Miles Davis**, **George Shearing**, **Cal Tjader**, **Sammy Davis, Jr.** and **Frank Sinatra**, among others. The late **Ed Jones**, **Clare** and son **Brent Fischer**, **Rebecca Mauleon**, **Eddie Resto** and **Karen Briggs** have all played with Laster's band. The regular band consists of **Art Webb**, **Art "Tu Re" Oliva**, **David Romero**, **David Torres**, **Dick Mitchell**, **Ernie Nunez**, **Armondo Morales** and **Louis Taylor**.

Laster has been doing his own marketing and promotion, and he is currently looking for a Latin distributor for his product. "Having my own ad specialty business," explains Laster, "has allowed me to travel to cities like New York, Philadelphia and Washington." Laster is selective about where he gigs, but the band does perform regularly at prisons. It pays well," admits Laster.

Perhaps one day Bill Laster will break even as **Paul Horn** did, with albums like *From the Edge*, though, **Shades of Jade** sizes up as a pretty strong long-term investment.

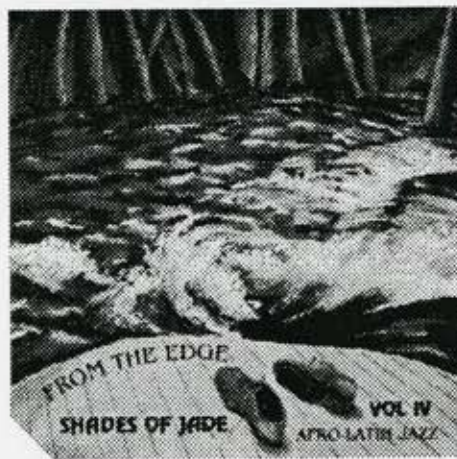
# CASH BOX

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**THE  
LATIN  
LOWDOWN**  
By Hector Rosendez

## PICK OF THE WEEK



**SHADES OF JADE:** *From the Edge, Vol. IV* (Absolute Pitch Records 5549) Producer: Bill Laster with Bobby Rodriguez, co-producer.

The late "salsiologist" **Vernon W. Boggs** of New York wrote the insightful liner notes on the fourth volume by the Afro-Latin Jazz group **Shades of Jade**. Its director, **Bill Laster**, is described by **Boggs** as "a little-known secret in the music world" ...not for long, hopefully. This group's music echoes memories of the **Cal tjader** influence on not only Afro-Cuban jazz but **Salsa** as well. **Boggs**

called it the "unforgettable legacy of California's cool jazz...tumbao meets jazz." **WBAI's Chico Alvarez**, in a recent interview with Laster, also commented on the evolving West Coast sound being fostered by such groups as Laster's **Shades of Jade**. **Salsa**, **Mambo**, **Jazz** and **Bolero** fans alike (even aging **Palladium** dancers per **Boggs**) will greatly enjoy all of the eight rich selections found on *From the Edge*.