



## Dance Of The Infidels: A Portrait Of Bud Powell

By Francis Paudras

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What Charlie Parker was to the saxophone, Bud Powell (1924–1966) was to the piano: No jazz pianist can rival his brilliance. But his life was filled with tragedy, including years of electroshock therapy in psychiatric institutions, illnesses, physical and mental abuse from people who fed him dangerous drugs to control him, and the indifference of his contemporaries to his genius. Francis Paudras, a young jazz fan who met Powell in the late 1950s, released him from his unfavorable surroundings, encouraged him to create some of his finest music, and took care of him as if he were his child. Powell's story, *Dance of the Infidels*, is one of the most moving of jazz memoirs—and served as the basis for Bertrand Tavernier's film *'Round Midnight*, starring Dexter Gordon. Here, for the first time in English, is a portrait of a friendship as surprising and heartbreaking as Bud Powell's timeless music.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Film buffs will remember that, before *Shine*, there was *'Round Midnight*, the Bertrand Tavernier bio pic loosely based on the lives of jazzmen Bud Powell and Lester Young. The intersection of artistic success and personal instability is something of a cliché; but the two do collide occasionally, as is the case here. Bud Powell (1924-1966) was a brilliant, badly damaged composer and pianist who is revered as one of the greats by his peers yet who was so down and out that he was often seen panhandling between gigs at Paris's legendary Blue Note club so he could gather enough francs to buy another "vin rouge" (almost the only French he knew). Paudras, who committed suicide last year, was a young French jazz fan who discovered the musician in the 1950s and took him in, forcefully separating Powell from the horrendous Buttercup, a self-appointed "wife" who used him as a meal ticket, drugging him and even taking his clothes so he couldn't get away. *Dance of the Infidels* is a real-time memoir that covers the last eight years of Powell's life, a period of transcendent creation and abysmal suffering. Although it doesn't have the arc of a definitive biography, this is an intimate account told by one who, if ultimately unable to explain Powell either to himself or to his readers, loved and cared for him as no one else did. 191 b&w photos not seen by PW.

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From [Booklist](#)

It is amazing that this notorious book, published in France in 1986, had never been published in the U.S. It is the story of the Frenchman Francis Paudras who came to the aid of U.S. jazz pianist Earl "Bud" Powell and helped him regain his life, to a degree, for a short time. Powell is a mythical jazz figure, a major innovator. Many people unsuspectingly learned aspects of the story of Bud and Francis from Bertrand Tavernier's *'Round Midnight*, the film that cast saxophonist Dexter Gordon in the Powell role. A central element of the film was the adulation of things jazz that permeated every foot of the action, as it does in the pages of this book--a photograph of Lester Young nailed to the wall of the Blue Note in Paris or Chet Baker playing his horn seated and mesmerizing listeners nonetheless. Yet *Dance* is about something else; mainly, it's about love between two friends. One horrendous episode, and there are many, occurred in 1963, when Powell became tired and listless and was diagnosed with tuberculosis; Francis had to have him hospitalized. Powell's recovery was amazing, and on the first Christmas since the friends were parted, Powell was able to come home (with Francis and his fiancée, Nicole): "Now it was his turn to give us his Christmas present, the best present of all. He walked to the piano. The moment was sublime." The book is a gem. *Bonnie Smothers*

Review

[*Dance of the Infidels*] resonates with unbridled passion, yet aside from photographs never before published, passion is about all this florid remembrance has going for it. -- *The Los Angeles Times Sunday Book Review*, Grover Sales

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**Michael Colburn:**

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