



The film's plot originates from two plays by Frank Wedekind, *Earth Spirit* (1895) and *Pandora's Box* (1904). Pabst took his time to find the perfect actress for the lead role. He had seen Louise Brooks in a small part in Howard Hawks' *A Girl in Every Port* (1928) and was interested. At the time she was under contract to Paramount, but had not landed any starring roles. Writing for *Sight & Sound* magazine in 1965, Brooks commented:

*"I had never heard of him, and knew nothing of his unsuccessful negotiations to borrow me from Paramount until I was called to the front office on the option day of my contract. Ben Schulberg told me that I could stay on at my old salary or quit. It was the time of the switchover to talkies, and studios were cutting actors' salaries just for the hell of it. And, just for the hell of it, I quit. Then he told me about the Pabst offer, which I was now free to accept. I said I would accept it and he sent off a cable to Pabst. All this took about ten minutes and left Schulberg somewhat dazed by my composure and quick decision. But if I had not acted at once I would have lost the part of Lulu. At that very hour in Berlin, Marlene Dietrich was waiting with Pabst in his office."*

The American dancer, showgirl and actress was a regular on the New York party scene with a reputation for a hedonistic lifestyle. She was renowned for being difficult, but her intelligence, independent spirit and determination to please herself in all aspects of her life have only added to her enigma. She famously said:

*"When I acted, I hadn't the slightest idea what I was doing. I was simply playing myself, which is the hardest thing in the world to do – if you know that it's hard. I didn't, so it seemed easy."*

After completing *Pandora's Box*, Brooks stayed working in Europe and starred in *Diary of a Lost Girl* (1929) also directed by G. W. Pabst and *Prix de Beauté* (Augusto Genina, 1930). These three European films remain her best-known. Disillusioned with the film business, after a relatively short career of 24 films made in 13 years, she retired in 1938. After living reclusively in New York as she got older, she established herself as a writer and the best-selling memoir *Lulu in Hollywood* was published in 1982. Just three years later she died of a heart attack aged 78.

There is no original negative or print of *Pandora's Box* in existence. In the years since its release, prints were often cut or edited for censorship reasons. Three different duplicate prints were the basis for this digital restoration, which was sponsored by the late Hugh Hefner.

Previously only shown on the big screen in the UK on 35mm, with cinemas having to hire a pianist or musicians to perform a live score, this new digital version features an orchestral score by the German composer Peer Raben, known for his work with Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

Now, for the first time, this landmark film, a cult classic, is available to cinemas anywhere in the UK, and Louise Brooks looks highly likely to captivate yet another generation.

-Ends-

**For further information please contact:**

Jill Reading, BFI Press Office

Tel: 020 7957 4759 E-mail: [jill.reading@bfi.org.uk](mailto:jill.reading@bfi.org.uk)

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More film information and screening venues: [www.bfi.org.uk/releases](http://www.bfi.org.uk/releases)

The BFI Film Classics book on *Pandora's Box* by Pamela Hutchinson, published by Palgrave Macmillan, is out now

A vast amount of information on Louise Brooks can be found on the Louise Brooks Society website at [www.pandorasbox.com](http://www.pandorasbox.com)

### **Notes to editors**

- *Pandora's Box* will screen on extended run as part of BFI Southbank's ongoing Big Screen Classics series, which in June is programmed around the theme of the 'it girls' of cinema history. From Clara Bow to Goldie Hawn, cinema 'it girls' have a certain je-ne-sais-quoi, an undeniable onscreen magnetism that draws in the audience. Films screening in **Big Screen Classics: It Girls** will include *It* (Clarence Badger, 1927), *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (Blake Edwards, 1961), *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972), and *Shampoo* (Hal Ashby, 1975). Big Screen Classics are the timeless films the BFI urge audiences to see on the big screen, and are shown on a daily basis for the special price of £8.

### **About the BFI**

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK
- Investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

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