

PANDORA'S BOX (Die Buechse Der Pandora) (1928)

Cast: Louise Brooks (Lulu), Gustav Diessl (Jack The Ripper),
Fritz Kortner, Francis Lederer

Production: Nero Film

Director: G.W. Pabst

It is not without irony that Louise Brooks is generally better known and remembered today for her two appearances in 'Pandora's Box' and the subsequent 'Diary of a Lost Girl' (1929) than the German director of these classics. They were for him just part of a long and distinguished list of directorial credits stretching over a period of 30 years. Louise Brooks, on the other hand, made 24 movies between 1925 and 1938 and most of them are best forgotten.

There's no doubt that Louise Brooks can thank Pabst for creating the legend which she has become - he was truly her Svengali. Faced with the melodramatic story line of 'Pandora's Box' and quickly appreciating the potential of the beautiful Miss Brooks, who had been brought over from America to play the title role of Lulu, Pabst made the plot secondary to a close examination of the leading character - something which had never before been done.

No one served Pabst better in this unique approach than his leading lady. Her beauty, acting skill and ability to convey psychological ambiguities and transitions make her portrayal of the innocently depraved heroine an intriguing and unforgettable experience.

'Pandora's Box' made Louise Brooks a star. For Pabst it was another success in which he tried to show that there are no absolute black and white characters, no outright heroes and no complete villains - a theme which has prevailed in his films from 'Joyless Street' (1925) through 'Westfront 1918' (1930), 'The Threepenny Opera' and 'Kameradschaft' (1931) up to 'The Last Act' (1954) and 'The Jackboot Mutiny' (1955).

Pabst died in 1967 at the age of 82. But what of Louise Brooks? Refusing to toe the Hollywood line on her return there, she gradually faded into obscurity only to be rediscovered in the 1950's when articles written by her were published in various film magazines. Now there is renewed interest in this "incarnation of intelligent eroticism" (as described by Steven M. Scheuer) with the recent publication of those articles in book form under the collective title 'Lulu in Hollywood'. And so Lulu lives on - like the character in her greatest film Louise Brooks has lived off rich society men and been on skid row - but it looks as if in real life she may get the happy ending she richly deserves.

TONY ROZELAAR

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