

# Salkinds 'Super'-sized it in '78

By **TED JOHNSON**

**Ilya Salkind** can talk for hours about the days making "Superman."

"It's crazy," he says, chuckling about commentary he provided for an upcoming Warner Home Video DVD. "It's almost like psychoanalysis."

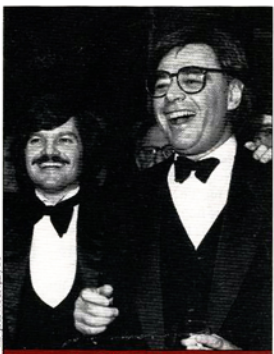
He and his father, Alexander Salkind, were the larger-than-life producers behind 1978's "Superman: The Movie" and its two sequels.

To promote the project, the duo filled the skies over Cannes with airplanes trailing ad banners. They signed an unprecedented

\$3.7 million deal (with an 11.75% backend) to land Marlon Brando for the role of Jor-El. And following a highly publicized rift with director **Richard Donner** over costs and production delays, they handed the directing reins of "Superman II" to **Richard Lester**.

Now 58 and staging a producing comeback, Salkind muses about that time: "I was in my 'inflated balloon' stage. I am 28, 29 years old and I am thinking I am Selznick or Zanuck."

Salkind grew up watching his father and grandfather, producer Michael Salkind, struggle to come up with money to finance their projects, and to make ends meet. "Team



Producer **Ilya Salkind** and director **Richard Donner** at the Washington premiere of "Superman" in 1978

Salkind," as they were called, scored with "The Three Musketeers" in 1973 and its sequel "The Four Musketeers" in

1974 before they tried to sell the idea of a new Man of Steel movie.

They acquired rights from National Periodical Publications, but sister company Warner Bros. wasn't interested until Brando signed on. Salkind recalls the first meeting with Brando, when the actor suggested that Jor-El be a talking suitcase or green bagel. Salkind's heart sank, but Donner convinced the Brando to appear as himself.

After "Superman III," the franchise flagged and the Salkinds went on to other projects like "Santa Claus: The Movie" and "Supergirl," as well as the TV series "Superboy."

Father and son had a bitter falling out over a loan that Ilya's then-wife **Jane Chaplin** gave to her father-in-law to

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SALKIND

## Salkind eyes 'Super' times

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finish 1992's "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery." Ilya sued his father, and saw the \$8.5 million suit all the way to the Supreme Court, which ruled in his favor.

Salkind says he "made total peace" with his father before the elder's death in 1997, but he wanted to produce on his own.

His first major production was "Alexander the Great From Macedonia," a \$10 million coming-of-age take on the Greek legend shot in 2004. He's working with Emmett/Furla Films

on the big-budget "The Abominable Snowman," as well as a Jules Verne inspired megapic called "The Nautilus."

He hasn't seen "Superman Returns" yet, but he offers nothing but praise for **Bryan Singer** and the new Superman, **Brandon Routh**.

"I am rooting for this new film," he says. "We need it now. We need a hero."



Ilya Salkind and his father produced 1978's "Superman" and its two sequels. Now he's back in the limelight producing a pair of his own pics.