

= Superman ( 1978 film ) =

Superman ( informally titled Superman : The Movie in some listings and reference sources ) is a 1978 superhero film directed by Richard Donner . It is based on the DC Comics character of the same name and stars Marlon Brando , Gene Hackman , Christopher Reeve , Margot Kidder , Glenn Ford , Phyllis Thaxter , Jackie Cooper , Trevor Howard , Marc McClure , Terence Stamp , Valerie Perrine , and Ned Beatty . The film depicts Superman 's origin , including his infancy as Kal @-@ El of Krypton and his youthful years in the rural town of Smallville . Disguised as reporter Clark Kent , he adopts a mild @-@ mannered disposition in Metropolis and develops a romance with Lois Lane , while battling the villainous Lex Luthor .

Several directors , most notably Guy Hamilton , and screenwriters ( Mario Puzo , David and Leslie Newman , and Robert Benton ) , were associated with the project before Donner was hired to direct . Tom Mankiewicz was drafted in to rewrite the script and was given a " creative consultant " credit . It was decided to film both Superman and Superman II simultaneously , with principal photography beginning in March 1977 and ending in October 1978 . Tensions arose between Donner and the producers , and a decision was made to stop filming the sequel ? of which 75 percent had already been completed ? and finish the first film .

The most expensive film made up to that point , with a budget of \$ 55 million , Superman was released in December 1978 to critical acclaim and financial success , earning \$ 300 million during its original theatrical run . Reviewers particularly praised Reeve 's performance . It was nominated for three Academy Awards including Best Film Editing , Best Music ( Original Score ) , and Best Sound Mixing , and received a Special Achievement Academy Award for Visual Effects . Groundbreaking in its use of special effects and science fiction / fantasy storytelling , the film 's legacy presaged the mainstream popularity of Hollywood 's superhero film franchises .

= = Plot = =

On the planet Krypton , using evidence provided by scientist Jor @-@ El , the Council sentences attempted insurrectionists General Zod , Ursa , and Non to the Phantom Zone , for which Zod swears revenge on Jor @-@ El and his family . Jor @-@ El , despite his eminence , is unable to convince the Council that Krypton will soon be destroyed when its red supergiant sun goes supernova . To save his infant son , Kal @-@ El , Jor @-@ El launches a spacecraft containing him toward Earth , a planet with a suitable atmosphere where Kal @-@ El 's dense molecular structure will give him superhuman powers . Shortly after the launch , Krypton 's sun explodes , destroying the planet .

The ship crash lands on Earth near Smallville , Kansas . Kal @-@ El , who is now three years old , is found by Jonathan and Martha Kent , who are astonished when he is able to lift their truck . They take him to their farm and raise him as their own , naming him Clark after Martha 's maiden name .

At 18 , soon after Jonathan 's death due to a heart attack , Clark hears a psychic " call " and discovers a glowing crystal in the remains of his spacecraft . It compels him to travel to the Arctic , where the crystal builds the Fortress of Solitude . Inside , a holographic vision of Jor @-@ El appears and explains Clark 's origins , educating him on his powers and responsibilities . After 12 years of training , with his powers fully developed , he leaves the Fortress wearing a blue suit with the House of El family crest on his chest and becomes a reporter at the Daily Planet in Metropolis . He meets and develops an unrequited romantic attraction to coworker Lois Lane .

Lois becomes involved in a helicopter accident where conventional means of rescue are impossible , requiring Clark to use his powers in public for the first time to save her . That night , he thwarts a jewel thief attempting to scale a building using suction cups , captures robbers fleeing police , rescues a girl 's cat from a tree , and rescues Air Force One after it loses an engine , making the mysterious " caped wonder " an instant celebrity . He visits Lois at her home the next night and takes her for a flight over the city , allowing her to interview him for an article in which she names him " Superman " .

Meanwhile , criminal genius Lex Luthor has developed a plan to make a fortune in real estate by

buying large amounts of barren desert land and then diverting a nuclear missile test flight to the San Andreas Fault . It will sink California and leave Luthor 's desert as the new West Coast of the United States , greatly increasing its value . After his incompetent henchman , Otis , erroneously redirects the first rocket , Luthor 's girlfriend , Eve Teschmacher , successfully changes the course of a second missile while the military is distracted by a roadblock Luthor arranges .

Knowing Superman could stop his plan , Luthor lures him to an underground lair and exposes him to Kryptonite . As Superman weakens , Luthor taunts him by revealing that the first missile is a decoy , headed east toward Hackensack , New Jersey , realizing that even Superman can not stop both impacts . Teschmacher is horrified because her mother lives in Hackensack , but Luthor does not care and leaves Superman to a slow death . Knowing his reputation for keeping his word , Teschmacher rescues Superman on the condition that he will deal with the New Jersey missile first . After diverting the eastbound missile into outer space , the other one aimed at the West Coast explodes near the San Andreas Fault . He is able to mitigate the effects of the nuclear explosion , getting rid of the pollution from the fallout and shoring up the crumbling Earth , but the aftershocks are still devastating .

While Superman is busy saving others , Lois 's car falls into a crevice that opens due to an aftershock . It quickly fills with dirt and debris and she suffocates to death . Angered at being unable to save her , Superman ignores Jor @-@ El 's warning not to interfere with human history , preferring to heed Jonathan 's advice that he must be on Earth for " a reason " . He accelerates around the Earth , rewinding time , in order to save Lois . He then delivers Luthor and Otis to prison and flies into the sunrise for further adventures .

= = Cast = =

Marlon Brando as Jor @-@ El : Superman 's biological father on Krypton . He has a theory about the planet exploding , yet the Council refuses to listen . He dies as the planet explodes but successfully sends his infant son to Earth as a means to help the innocent . Brando sued the Salkinds and Warner Bros. for \$ 50 million because he felt cheated out of his share of the box office profits . This stopped Brando 's footage from being used in Richard Lester 's version of Superman II .

Gene Hackman as Lex Luthor : A scientific genius and businessman who is Superman 's nemesis . It is he who discovers Superman 's weakness and hatches a plan that puts millions of people in danger .

Christopher Reeve as Clark Kent / Superman : Born on Krypton as Kal @-@ El and raised on Earth , he is a being of immense power , strength and invulnerability who , after realizing his destiny to serve mankind , uses his powers to protect and save others . As a means to protect his identity , he works in Metropolis at the Daily Planet as mild @-@ mannered newspaper reporter Clark Kent and changes his clothes into a red @-@ blue red caped suit with an S shield on its chest and known for his dubbing as " Superman " by Lois . Reeve was picked from over 200 actors who auditioned for the role .

Ned Beatty as Otis : Lex Luthor 's bumbling henchman .

Jackie Cooper as Perry White : Clark Kent 's hot @-@ tempered boss at the Daily Planet . He assigns Lois to uncover the news of an unknown businessman purchasing a large amount of property in California . Keenan Wynn was originally cast , but dropped out shortly before filming because of heart disease . Cooper , who originally auditioned for Otis , was subsequently cast .

Glenn Ford as Jonathan Kent : Clark Kent 's adoptive father in Smallville during his youth . He is a farmer who teaches Clark skills that will help him in the future . He later suffers a fatal heart attack that changes Clark 's outlook on his duty to others .

Trevor Howard as the First Elder : Head of the Kryptonian Council , who does not believe Jor @-@ El 's claim that Krypton is doomed . He threatens Jor @-@ El , " Any attempt by you to create a climate of fear and panic amongst the populace must be deemed by us an act of insurrection . "

Margot Kidder as Lois Lane : A reporter at the Daily Planet , who becomes a romantic interest to Clark Kent . The producers and director had a very specific concept for Lois : liberated , hard @-@

nosed , witty and attractive . Kidder was cast because her performance had a certain spark and vitality , and because of her strong interaction with Christopher Reeve . Over 100 actresses were considered for the role . Margot Kidder ( suggested by Stalmaster ) , Anne Archer , Susan Blakely , Lesley Ann Warren , Deborah Raffin and Stockard Channing screen tested from March through May 1977 . The final decision was between Channing and Kidder , with the latter winning the role .

Jack O 'Halloran as Non : Large and mute , the third of the Kryptonian villains who are sentenced to be isolated in the Phantom Zone .

Valerie Perrine as Eve Teschmacher : Lex Luthor 's girlfriend and accomplice . Already cynical of his increasing grandiosity and disturbed by his cruelty , she saves Superman 's life after learning that Luthor has launched a nuclear missile toward her mother 's hometown of Hackensack , New Jersey . She shows a romantic interest in Superman , implied by her fixing her hair before she makes her presence known to him , and then by kissing him before she saves his life .

Maria Schell as Vond @-@ Ah : Like Jor @-@ El , a top Kryptonian scientist ; but she too is not swayed by Jor @-@ El 's theories .

Terence Stamp as General Zod : Evil leader of the three Kryptonian criminals who swears vengeance against Jor @-@ El when he is sentenced to the Phantom Zone .

Phyllis Thaxter as Martha Kent ( née Clark ) : Clark Kent 's faithful adoptive mother . A kindly woman who dotes on her adoptive son and is fiercely devoted to her husband , Jonathan . She is her son 's emotional support after Clark is devastated by Jonathan 's death . Thaxter was producer Ilya Salkind 's mother @-@ in @-@ law .

Susannah York as Lara : Superman 's biological mother on Krypton . She , after learning of Krypton 's fate , has apprehensions about sending her infant son to a strange planet alone .

Jeff East as the teenage Clark Kent : As a teenager , he is forced to hide his superhuman abilities , making him unpopular among his classmates and frustrating his efforts to gain the attention of classmate Lana Lang ( Diane Sherry ) . Following the death of his adoptive father , he travels to the Arctic to discover his Kryptonian heritage ( All of East 's dialogue in the film is dubbed over by Christopher Reeve ) .

Marc McClure as Jimmy Olsen : A teenage photographer at the Daily Planet . Jeff East , who portrayed the teenage Clark Kent , originally auditioned for this role , but outranked following his portrayal of the teen Clark .

Sarah Douglas as Ursa : General Zod 's second in command and consort , sentenced to the Phantom Zone for her unethical scientific experiments .

Harry Andrews as the Second Elder : Council member , who urges Jor @-@ El to be reasonable about plans to save Krypton .

Kirk Alyn and Noel Neill have cameo appearances as Lois Lane 's father and mother . Alyn and Neill portrayed Superman and Lois Lane in the film serials Superman ( 1948 ) and Atom Man vs. Superman ( 1950 ) , and were the first actors to portray the characters onscreen in a live @-@ action format . Neill reprised her role in the 1950s Adventures of Superman TV series , and also appeared as Lex Luthor 's elderly wife in the opening scene of the film Superman Returns ( 2006 ) . Neill thus not only originated the roles of both Lois and Ellen Lane , but began the tradition of former Lois actresses later portraying Ellen , a tradition followed by Phyllis Coates on Lois & Clark : The New Adventures of Superman , and Teri Hatcher on Smallville .

Larry Hagman and Rex Reed also make cameos ; Hagman plays an army major in charge of a convoy that is transporting one of the missiles , and Reed plays himself as he meets Lois and Clark outside the Daily Planet headquarters . A then @-@ unknown John Ratzenberger briefly appears as a missile control technician .

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Ilya Salkind had first conceived the idea for a Superman film in late 1973 . In November 1974 , after

a long , difficult process with DC Comics , the Superman film rights were purchased by Ilya , his father Alexander Salkind , and their partner Pierre Spengler . DC wanted a list of actors that were to be considered for Superman , and approved the producer 's choices of Muhammad Ali , Al Pacino , James Caan , Steve McQueen , Clint Eastwood and Dustin Hoffman . The filmmakers felt it was best to film Superman and Superman II back @-@ to @-@ back , simultaneously , and to make a negative pickup deal with Warner Bros. William Goldman was approached to write the screenplay , while Leigh Brackett was considered . Ilya hired Alfred Bester , who began writing a film treatment . Alexander felt , however , that Bester was not famous enough , so he hired Mario Puzo ( The Godfather ) to write the screenplay at a \$ 600 @,@ 000 salary . Francis Ford Coppola , William Friedkin , Richard Lester , Peter Yates , John Guillermin , Ronald Neame and Sam Peckinpah were in negotiations to direct . Peckinpah dropped out when he produced a gun during a meeting with Ilya . George Lucas turned down the offer because of his commitment to Star Wars .

Ilya wanted to hire Steven Spielberg to direct , but Alexander was skeptical , feeling it was best to " wait until [ Spielberg 's ] big fish opens " . Jaws was very successful , prompting the producers to offer Spielberg the position , but by then Spielberg had already committed to Close Encounters of the Third Kind . Guy Hamilton was hired as director , while Puzo delivered his 500 @-@ page script for Superman and Superman II in July 1975 . Jax @-@ Ur appeared as one of General Zod 's henchmen , with Clark Kent written as a television reporter . Dustin Hoffman , who was previously considered for Superman , turned down Lex Luthor .

In early 1975 , Brando signed on as Jor @-@ El with a salary of \$ 3 @.@ 7 million and 11 @.@ 75 % of the box office gross profits , totaling \$ 19 million . He horrified Salkind by proposing in their first meeting that Jor @-@ El appear as a green suitcase or a bagel with Brando 's voice , but Donner used flattery to persuade the actor to portray Jor @-@ El himself . Brando hoped to use some of his salary for a proposed 13 @-@ part Roots @-@ style miniseries on Native Americans in the United States . Brando had it in his contract to complete all of his scenes in 12 days . He also refused to memorize his dialogue , so cue cards were compiled across the set . Fellow Oscar winner Hackman was cast as Lex Luthor days later . The filmmakers made it a priority to shoot all of Brando and Hackman 's footage " because they would be committed to other films immediately " . Though the Salkinds felt that Puzo had written a solid story for the two @-@ part film , they deemed his scripts too long and so hired Robert Benton and David Newman for rewrite work . Benton became too busy directing The Late Show , so David 's wife Leslie was brought in to help her husband finish writing duties . George MacDonald Fraser was later hired to do some work on the script , but he says he did little .

Their script was submitted in July 1976 , and carried a camp tone , including a cameo appearance by Telly Savalas as his Kojak character . The scripts for Superman and Superman II were now at over 400 pages combined . Pre @-@ production started at Cinecittà Studios in Rome , with sets starting construction and flying tests being unsuccessfully experimented . " In Italy , " producer Ilya Salkind remembered , " we lost about \$ 2 million [ on flying tests ] . " Marlon Brando found out he could not film in Italy because of a warrant out for his arrest , a sexual obscenity charge from Last Tango in Paris . Production moved to England in late 1976 , but Hamilton could not join because he was a tax exile .

Mark Robson was strongly considered and was in talks to direct , but after seeing The Omen , the producers hired Richard Donner . Donner had previously been planning Damien : Omen II when he was hired in January 1977 for \$ 1 million to direct Superman and Superman II . Donner felt it was best to start from scratch . " They had prepared the picture for a year and not one bit was useful to me . " Donner was dissatisfied with the campy script and brought in Tom Mankiewicz to perform a rewrite . According to Mankiewicz " not a word from the Puzo script was used " . " It was a well @-@ written , but still a ridiculous script . It was 550 pages . I said , ' You can 't shoot this screenplay because you 'll be shooting for five years ' , " Donner continued . " That was literally a shooting script and they planned to shoot all 550 pages . You know , 110 pages is plenty for a script , so even for two features , that was way too much . " Mankiewicz conceived having each Kryptonian family wear a crest resembling a different letter , justifying the ' S ' on Superman 's costume . The Writers Guild of America refused to credit Mankiewicz for his rewrites , so Donner gave him a creative consultant

credit , much to the annoyance of the Guild .

### === Casting of Superman ===

It was initially decided to first sign an A-list actor for Superman before Richard Donner was hired as director . Robert Redford was offered a large sum , but felt he was too famous . Burt Reynolds also turned down the role , while Sylvester Stallone was interested , but nothing ever came of it . Paul Newman was offered his choice of roles as Superman , Lex Luthor or Jor-El for \$ 4 million , turning down all three roles .

When it was next decided to cast an unknown actor , casting director Lynn Stalmaster first suggested Christopher Reeve , but Donner and the producers felt he was too young and skinny . Over 200 unknown actors auditioned for Superman .

Olympic champion Bruce Jenner had auditioned for the title role . Patrick Wayne was cast , but dropped out when his father John Wayne was diagnosed with stomach cancer .

Both Neil Diamond and Arnold Schwarzenegger lobbied hard for the role , but were ignored . James Caan , James Brolin , Lyle Waggoner , Christopher Walken , Nick Nolte , Jon Voight , and Perry King were approached . Kris Kristofferson and Charles Bronson were also considered for the title role .

James Caan said he was offered the part but turned it down . " I just couldn 't wear that suit . "

" We found guys with fabulous physique who couldn 't act or wonderful actors who did not look remotely like Superman , " creative consultant Tom Mankiewicz remembered . The search became so desperate that producer Ilya Salkind 's wife 's dentist was screen tested .

Stalmaster convinced Donner and Ilya to have Reeve screen test in February 1977 . Reeve stunned the director and producers , but he was told to wear a " muscle suit " to produce the desired muscular physique . Reeve refused , undertaking a strict physical exercise regime headed by David Prowse . Prowse had wanted to portray Superman , but was denied an audition by the filmmakers because he was not American . Prowse also auditioned for Non . Reeve went from 188 to 212 pounds during pre-production and filming . Reeve was paid a mere \$ 250,000 for both Superman and Superman II , while his veteran co-stars received huge sums of money : \$ 3.7 million for Brando and \$ 2 million for Hackman for Superman I. However , Reeve felt , " ' Superman ' brought me many opportunities , rather than closing a door in my face . " Jeff East portrays teenage Clark Kent . East had his voice overdubbed by Reeve . " I was not happy about it because the producers never told me what they had in mind , " East commented . " It was done without my permission but it turned out to be okay . Chris did a good job but it caused tension between us . We resolved our issues with each other years later . " East also tore several thigh muscles when performing the stunt of racing alongside the train . He applied 3 to 4 hours of prosthetic makeup daily to facially resemble Reeve .

### === Filming ===

Principal photography began on March 28 , 1977 at Pinewood Studios for Krypton scenes , budgeted as the most expensive film ever made at that point . Since Superman was being shot simultaneously with Superman II , filming lasted 19 months , until October 1978 . Filming was originally scheduled to last between seven and eight months , but problems arose during production . John Barry served as production designer , while Stuart Craig and Norman Reynolds worked as art directors . Derek Meddings and Les Bowie were credited as visual effects supervisors . Stuart Freeborn was the make-up artist , while Barry , David Tomblin , John Glen , David Lane , Robert Lynn and an uncredited Peter Duffell and André de Toth directed second unit scenes . Vic Armstrong was hired as the stunt coordinator and Reeve 's stunt double ; his wife Wendy Leech was Kidder 's double . Superman was also the final complete film by cinematographer Geoffrey Unsworth , who died during post-production while working on Tess for director Roman Polanski . The Fortress of Solitude was constructed at Shepperton Studios and at Pinewood 's 007 Stage . Upon viewing the footage of Krypton , Warner Bros. decided to distribute in not only North

America , but also in foreign countries . Due to complications and problems during filming , Warner Bros. also supplied \$ 20 million and acquired television rights .

New York City doubled for Metropolis , while the New York Daily News Building served as the location for the offices of the Daily Planet . Brooklyn Heights was also used . Filming in New York lasted five weeks , during the time of the New York City blackout of 1977 . Production moved to Alberta for scenes set in Smallville , with the cemetery scene filmed in the canyon of Beynon , Alberta , the high school football scenes at Barons , Alberta , and the Kent farm constructed at Blackie , Alberta . Brief filming also took place in Gallup , New Mexico , Lake Mead and Grand Central Terminal . Director Donner had tensions with the Salkinds and Spengler concerning the escalating production budget and the shooting schedule . Creative consultant Tom Mankiewicz reflected , " Donner never got a budget or a schedule . He was constantly told he was way over schedule and budget . At one point he said , ' Why don 't you just schedule the film for the next two days , and then I 'll be nine months over ? ' . " Richard Lester , who worked with the Salkinds on The Three Musketeers and The Four Musketeers , was then brought in as a temporary co @-@ producer to mediate the relationship between Donner and the Salkinds , who by now were refusing to talk to each other . With his relationship with Spengler , Donner remarked , " At one time if I 'd seen him , I would have killed him . "

Lester was offered producing credit but refused , going uncredited for his work . Salkind felt that bringing a second director onto the set meant there would be someone ready in the event that Donner could not fulfill his directing duties . " Being there all the time meant he [ Lester ] could take over , " Salkind admitted . " [ Donner ] couldn 't make up his mind on stuff . " On Lester , Donner reflected , " He 'd been suing the Salkinds for his money on Three and Four Musketeers , which he 'd never gotten . He won a lot of his lawsuits , but each time he sued the Salkinds in one country , they 'd move to another , from Costa Rica to Panama to Switzerland . When I was hired , Lester told me , ' Don 't do it . Don 't work for them . I was told not to , but I did it . Now I 'm telling you not to , but you 'll probably do it and end up telling the next guy . ' Lester came in as a ' go @-@ between ' . I didn 't trust Lester , and I told him . He said , ' Believe me , I 'm only doing it because they 're paying me the money that they owe me from the lawsuit . I 'll never come onto your set unless you ask me ; I 'll never go to your dailies . If I can help you in any way , call me . "

It was decided to stop shooting Superman II and focus on finishing Superman . Donner had already completed 75 % of the sequel . The filmmakers took a risk : if Superman was a box office bomb , they would not finish Superman II . The original climax for Superman II had General Zod , Ursa and Non destroying the planet , with Superman time traveling to fix the damage . In the original ending for Superman , the nuclear missile that Superman pushed into outer space happens to strike the Phantom Zone , freeing the three Kryptonian supervillains . The final shot was originally going to be General Zod , Non and Ursa all flying towards Earth , in an ominous sequel hook moment . The sequence can be seen in its entirety at the beginning of Donner 's edit of Superman II where it was fully restored .

Donner commented , " I decided if Superman is a success , they 're going to do a sequel . If it ain 't a success , a cliffhanger ain 't gonna bring them to see Superman II . "

= = = Effects = = =

Superman is well known for its large @-@ scale visual effects sequences , all of which were created before the digital age . The Golden Gate Bridge scale model stood 70 feet long and 20 feet wide . Other miniatures included the Krypton Council Dome and the Hoover Dam . Slow motion was used to simulate the vast amount of water for the Hoover Dam destruction . The Fortress of Solitude was a combination of a full @-@ scale set and matte paintings . Young Clark Kent 's long @-@ distance football punt was executed with a wooden football loaded into an air blaster placed in the ground . The Superman costume was to be a much darker blue , but the use of blue screen made it transparent .

The first test for the flying sequences involved simply catapulting a crash test dummy out of a cannon . Another technique had a remote control cast of Superman flying around . Both were

discarded due to lack of movement . High @-@ quality , realistic @-@ looking animation was tried , with speed trails added to make the effect more convincing .

As detailed in the Superman : The Movie DVD special effects documentary ' The Magic Behind The Cape ' , presented by optical effects supervisor Roy Field , in the end , three techniques were used to achieve the flying effects .

For landings and take @-@ offs , wire flying riggings were devised and used . On location , these were suspended from tower cranes , whereas in the studio elaborate rigs were suspended from the studio ceilings . Some of the wire @-@ flying work was quite audacious considering computer @-@ controlled rigs were not then available ? the penultimate shot where Superman flies out of the prison yard for example . Although stuntmen were used , Reeve did much of the work himself , and was suspended as high as 50 ft in the air . Counterweights and pulleys were typically used to achieve flying movement , rather than electronic or motorized devices . The thin wires used to suspend Reeve were typically removed from the film in post @-@ production using rotoscope techniques , although this wasn 't necessary in all shots ( in certain lighting conditions or when Superman is very distant in the frame , the wires were more or less imperceptible ) .

For stationary shots where Superman is seen flying toward or away from the camera , blue screen matte techniques were used . Reeve would be photographed suspended against a blue screen . While a special device made his cape flap to give the illusion of movement , the actor himself would remain stationary ( save for banking his body ) . Instead , the camera would use a mixture of long zoom @-@ ins and zoom @-@ outs and dolly in / dolly outs to cause him to become larger or smaller in the frame . The blue background would then be photochemically removed and Reeve 's isolated image would be ' inserted ' into a matted area of a background plate shot . The zoom @-@ ins or zoom @-@ outs would give the appearance of flying away or toward the contents of the background plate . The disparity in lighting and color between the matted image and the background plate , the occasional presence of black matte lines ( where the matte area and the matted image ? in this case Superman ? do not exactly match up ) , and the slightly unconvincing impression of movement achieved through the use of zoom lenses is characteristic of these shots .

Where the shot is tracking with Superman as he flies ( such as in the Superman and Lois Metropolis flying sequence ) , front projection was used . This involved photographing the actors suspended in front of a background image dimly projected from the front onto a special screen made by 3M that would reflect light back at many times the original intensity directly into a combined camera / projector . The result was a very clear and intense photographic reproduction of both the actors and the background plate , with far less image deterioration or lighting problems than occur with rear projection .

A technique was developed that combined the front projection effect with specially designed zoom lenses . The illusion of movement was created by zooming in on Reeve while making the front projected image appear to recede . For scenes where Superman interacts with other people or objects while in flight , Reeve and actors were put in a variety of rigging equipment with careful lighting and photography . This also led to the creation of the Zoptic system .

The highly reflective costumes worn by the Kryptonians are made of the same 3M material used for the front projection screens and were the result of an accident during Superman flying tests . " We noticed the material lit up on its own , " Donner explained . " We tore the material into tiny pieces and glued it on the costumes , designing a front projection effect for each camera . There was a little light on each camera , and it would project into a mirror , bounce out in front of the lens , hit the costume , [ and ] millions of little glass heads would light up and bring the image back into the camera . "

= = Music = =

Jerry Goldsmith , who scored Donner 's The Omen , was originally set to compose Superman . Portions of Goldsmith 's work from Capricorn One were used in Superman 's teaser trailer . He dropped out over scheduling conflicts and John Williams was hired . Williams conducted the London Symphony Orchestra to record the soundtrack . The music was one of the last pieces to come into

place . Williams liked that the film did not take itself too seriously and that it had a theatrical camp feel to it . Kidder was supposed to sing " Can You Read My Mind ? , " the lyrics to which were written by Leslie Bricusse , but Donner disliked it and changed it to a composition accompanied by a voiceover . Maureen McGovern eventually recorded the single , " Can You Read My Mind ? , " in 1979 , although the song did not appear on the film soundtrack . It became a mid @-@ chart hit on the Billboard Hot 100 that year ( # 52 ) , spending three weeks at number five on the U.S. Adult Contemporary chart , as well as making lesser appearances on the corresponding Canadian charts . It was also a very minor hit on the U.S. Country chart , reaching # 93 . The score earned John Williams an Academy Award nomination , but he lost to Giorgio Moroder 's score for Midnight Express .

= = = = 2000 Rhino Complete album = = = =

\* Previously unreleased selection

\* \* Contains previously unreleased material

= = Themes = =

Superman is divided into three basic sections , each having a distinct theme and visual style . The first segment , set on Krypton , is meant to be typical of science fiction films , but also lays the groundwork for an analogy that emerges in the relationship between Jor @-@ El and Kal @-@ El . The second segment , set in Smallville , is reminiscent of 1950s films , and its small @-@ town atmosphere is meant to evoke a Norman Rockwell painting . The third ( and largest ) segment , set mostly in Metropolis , was an attempt to present the superhero story with as much realism as possible ( what Donner called " verisimilitude " ) , relying on traditional cinematic drama and using only subtle humor instead of a campy approach .

In each of the three acts , the mythic status of Superman is enhanced by events that recall the hero 's journey ( or monomyth ) as described by Joseph Campbell . Each act has a discernible cycle of " call " and journey . The journey is from Krypton to Earth in the first act , from Smallville to the Fortress of Solitude in the second act , and then from Metropolis to the whole world in the third act .

Many have noted the examples of apparent Christian symbolism . Donner , Tom Mankiewicz and Ilya Salkind have commented on the use of Christian references to discuss the themes of Superman . Mankiewicz deliberately fostered analogies with Jor @-@ El ( God ) and Kal @-@ El ( Jesus ) . Donner is somewhat skeptical of Mankiewicz ' actions , joking " I got enough death threats because of that . "

Several concepts and items of imagery have been used in Biblical comparisons . Jor @-@ El casts out General Zod from Krypton , a parallel to the casting out of Satan from Heaven . The spacecraft that brings Kal @-@ El to Earth is in the form of a star ( Star of Bethlehem ) . Kal @-@ El comes to Jonathan and Martha Kent , who are unable to have children . Martha Kent states , " All these years how we 've prayed and prayed that the good Lord would see fit to give us a child , " which was compared to the Virgin Mary .

Just as little is known about Jesus during his middle years , Clark travels into the wilderness to find out who he is and what he has to do . Jor @-@ El says , " Live as one of them , Kal @-@ El , to discover where your strength and power are needed . But always hold in your heart the pride of your special heritage . They can be a great people , Kal @-@ El , and they wish to be . They only lack the light to show the way . For this reason above all , their capacity for good , I have sent them you , my only son . " The theme resembles the Biblical account of God sending his only son Jesus to Earth in hope for the good of mankind . More were seen when Donner was able to complete Superman II : The Richard Donner Cut , featuring the fall , resurrection and his battle with evil . Another vision was that of The Creation of Adam .

The Christian imagery in the Reeve films has provoked comment on the Jewish origins of Superman . Rabbi Simcha Weinstein 's book Up , Up and Oy Vey : How Jewish History , Culture and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero , says that Superman is both a pillar of society and



one whose cape conceals a " nebbish " , saying " He 's a bumbling , nebbish Jewish stereotype . He 's Woody Allen . " Ironically , it is also in the Reeve films that Clark Kent 's persona has the greatest resemblance to Woody Allen , though his conscious model was Cary Grant 's character in Bringing Up Baby . This same theme is pursued about 1940s superheroes generally in Disguised as Clark Kent : Jews , Comics , and the Creation of the Superhero by Danny Fingeroth .

In the scene where Lois Lane interviews Superman on the balcony , Superman replies , " I never lie . " Salkind felt this was an important point in the film , since Superman , living under his secret identity as Clark Kent , is " telling the biggest lie of all time . " His romance with Lois also leads him to contradict Jor @-@ El 's orders to avoid altering human history , time traveling to save her from dying . Superman instead takes the advice of Jonathan Kent , his father on Earth .

= = Release = =

Superman was originally scheduled to be released in June 1978 , the 40th anniversary of Action Comics 1 , which first introduced Superman , but the problems during filming pushed the film back by six months . Editor Stuart Baird reflected , " Filming was finished in October 1978 and it is a miracle we had the film released two months later . Big @-@ budgeted films today tend to take six to eight months . " Donner , for his part , wished that he had " had another six months ; I would have perfected a lot of things . But at some point , you 've gotta turn the picture over . " Warner Bros. spent \$ 7 million to market and promote the film .

Superman premiered at the Uptown Theater in Washington , D.C. on December 10 , 1978 , with director Richard Donner and several cast members in attendance . Three days later , on December 13 , it had a European Royal Charity Premiere at the Empire , Leicester Square in London in the presence of HM Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Andrew . It went on to gross \$ 134 @.@ 21 million in North America and \$ 166 million internationally , totaling \$ 300 @.@ 21 million worldwide . Superman was the second highest @-@ grossing film of 1978 ( behind only Grease ) , and became the sixth @-@ highest grossing film of all time after its theatrical run . It was also Warner Bros. ' most successful film at the time .

= = = Critical reception = = =

Based on 53 reviews collected by Rotten Tomatoes , 93 % of reviewers enjoyed Superman , with the consensus " Superman deftly blends humor and gravitas , taking advantage of the perfectly cast Reeve to craft a loving , nostalgic tribute to an American pop culture icon . " By comparison , Metacritic collected an average score of 88 , resulting in " universal acclaim " , based on 12 reviews . The film was widely regarded as one of top 10 films of 1978 . Superman creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster gave a positive reaction . Shuster was " delighted to see Superman on the screen . I got chills . Chris Reeve has just the right touch of humor . He really is Superman " .

Roger Ebert gave a very positive review . " Superman is a pure delight , a wondrous combination of all the old @-@ fashioned things we never really get tired of : adventure and romance , heroes and villains , earthshaking special effects and wit . Reeve is perfectly cast in the role . Any poor choice would have ruined the film " . Ebert placed the film on his 10 best list of 1978 . He would later go on to place it on his " Great Movies " list . James Berardinelli believed " there 's no doubt that it 's a flawed movie , but it 's one of the most wonderfully entertaining flawed movies made during the 1970s . It 's exactly what comic book fans hoped it would be . Perhaps most heartening of all , however , is the message at the end of the credits announcing the impending arrival of Superman II . " Harry Knowles is a longtime fan of the film , but was critical of elements that did not represent the Superman stories as seen in the comics . Dave Kehr felt " the tone , style , and point of view change almost from shot to shot . This is the definitive corporate film . It is best when it takes itself seriously , worst when it takes the easy way out in giggly camp , When Lex Luthor enters the action , Hackman plays the arch @-@ villain like a hairdresser left over from a TV skit . " Neal Gabler similarly felt that the film focused too much on shallow comedy . He also argued that the film should have adhered more to the spirit of Mario Puzo 's original script , and referred to the first three Superman films

collectively as " simply puffed @-@ up TV episodes " .

= = = Beyond theatrical release = = =

The Salkinds prepared a three @-@ hour @-@ plus version for worldwide television reincorporating some 45 minutes of footage and music deleted from the theatrical cut , and specially prepared so that networks and stations can re @-@ edit their own version at their discretion . American Broadcasting Company aired the broadcast television debut of Superman in 1982 , with a majority of the unused footage . A syndicated version of the film aired in local television stations in Los Angeles and Washington , D.C. in the 1990s included two additional scenes never seen before , in addition to what had been previously reinstated . When Michael Thau and Warner Home Video started working on a film restoration in 2000 , some of the extra footage was not added because of poor visual effects . Thau felt " the pace of the film 's storyline would be adversely affected . This included timing problems with John William 's musical score . The cut of the movie shown on TV was put together to make the movie longer when shown on TV because ABC paid per minute to air the movie . The special edition cut is designed for the best viewing experience in the true spirit of movie making . " There was a special test screening of the Special Edition in 2001 in Austin , Texas , on March 23 with plans for a possible wider theatrical release later that year , which did not occur . In May 2001 , Warner Home Video released the special edition on DVD . Director Donner also assisted , working slightly over a year on the project . The release included making @-@ of documentaries directed by Thau and eight minutes of restored footage .

Thau explained , " I worked on Ladyhawke and that 's how I met Donner and Tom Mankiewicz . I used to hear those wonderful stories in the cutting room that Tom , Donner and Stuart would tell about Superman and that 's how I kind of got the ideas for the plots of Taking Flight and Making Superman . Donner commented , " There were a few shots where the Superman costume looked green . We went in and cleaned that up , bringing the color back to where it should be . " Thau wanted to make the film shorter , " I wanted to take out the damn flying sequence where Lois is reciting a poem [ " Can You Read My Mind " ] when they 're flying around . I also wanted to take out where it was just generic action . It was like a two @-@ minute car chase . Donner protested and the stuff stayed in . " It was followed by a box set release in the same month , containing " bare bones " editions of Superman II , Superman III and Superman IV : The Quest for Peace . In November 2006 , a four @-@ disc special edition was released , followed by an HD DVD release and Blu @-@ ray . Also available ( with other films ) is the nine @-@ disc " Christopher Reeve Superman Collection " and the 14 @-@ disc " Superman Ultimate Collector 's Edition " .

= = = Broadcast television version details = = =

When the rights to the first Superman film reverted to the Salkinds in 1981 , it was their intention to prepare a television cut longer than what was released theatrically , for the aforementioned reasons . The so @-@ called " Salkind International Extended Cut " , which ended up running 3 hours , 8 minutes , was shown internationally on television , and it is from this cut that later domestic TV versions were derived .

The first network American television broadcast took place on Sunday , February 7 and Monday , February 8 , 1982 on ABC . The principal sponsor for the telecasts was Atari . At the time , ABC had a contract with Alexander Salkind for the television rights to his films . ABC 's 3 @-@ hour @-@ 2 @-@ minute cut of Superman was broadcast over the course of two nights . On the first night it premiered , the film stopped when Lois Lane was falling from the helicopter ( the picture froze , creating a cliffhanger @-@ type of ending for part one ) . The next evening , there was naturally a recap before the film continued . This expanded version was repeated in November of the same year , only this time , shown in one night . The next two ABC showings after that were the original theatrical version . Apparently , in their contract with ABC , the Salkinds were able to get money for every minute of footage shown on TV . So as a result , they crammed in as much footage as possible for the TV networks in order to maximize their revenues . During production of the film ,

Alexander and Ilya had been relegated to having to sell more and more of their rights back to Warner Bros. in exchange for financial help . Director Richard Donner was not consulted on any of the extended versions . However , due to a clause in his contract , Donner 's name remains in the credits .

Also as previously mentioned , some 40 minutes of footage were reinstated for the initial ABC @-@ TV telecasts of the film . Among the highlighted moments :

A subplot of an Executioner ( a Kryptonian security officer ) being sent by the council to hunt down and capture Jor @-@ El ( while the beginning of the scene is shown in the 2000 director 's cut restoration , the " payoff " [ with him getting killed ] is not in the latter version ) .

When Superman is trying to get to Lex Luthor 's underground hideout , he is subjected to machine gun fire , a giant blow torch , and is frozen in ice . A tiny fraction of this footage was used in the theatrical version Superman II ( directed by Richard Lester ) , in the scene where Superman 's powers are stripped away by the molecule chamber in the Fortress of Solitude .

Lex Luthor plays the piano in several scenes ; when he has Otis drop Eve Teschmacher into the lions ' den at the end he is singing " You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby " .

After Superman saves Lois at the end and flies off , he 's seen rescuing Eve Teschmacher from the lions ' den , in which Lex had previously dropped her ; he pointedly notes for Luthor to hear , " By the way , Miss Teschmacher , your mother sends her love , " a reference to Luthor 's boast about Hackensack , NJ .

The little girl who sees the teenage Clark Kent running faster than the train is revealed to be Lois Lane , a fact revealed when her parents ( Kirk Alyn and Noel Neill ) talk to her by name . This revelation scene is not present in the shorter theatrical release . Only in the ABC version are young Lois Lane and her father seen in the train . Also in the ABC version , Otis ' walk down the street is longer .

Nearly all of John Williams ' score is restored ( some of which was dialed out of the theatrical cut ) .

However , at least one noticeable removal occurred : the recording of " Rock Around the Clock " by Bill Haley & His Comets , heard in the original film in the minutes before the death of Glenn Ford 's character , is replaced with a generic piece of instrumental music in the ABC cut .

When the rights reverted to Warner Bros. in 1985 , CBS aired the film one last time on network television in its theatrical version . When the movie entered the syndication market in 1988 ( following a play @-@ out run on pay cable ) TV stations were offered the extended cut or the theatrical cut . The stations that showed the extended cut edited the second half to squeeze in commercials and ' What happened yesterday flashbacks ' .

In May 1994 ( following a pay cable reissue and obligatory run on USA Network ) , Warner Bros. offered the aforementioned " Salkind International Extended Cut " ( a 3 @-@ hour , 8 @-@ minute version , prepared by the Salkinds , and from which the ABC version was derived ) , which was shown in Los Angeles on KCOP . This version also surfaced outside of Los Angeles . For example , WJLA Channel 7 , an ABC affiliate out of Washington , D.C. , aired the " Salkind International Extended Cut " in July 1994 . Part one aired from 9 : 30 p.m. to 11 : 30 p.m. before breaking for 30 minutes of news . Part two was then aired from 12 : 00 a.m. to 2 : 00 a.m.

The extended version has never been broadcast in the United Kingdom . The first showing of the theatrical version on UK television appeared on January 4 , 1983 on ITV . In 1985 , Ireland 's RTÉ television aired the extended versions of Superman and Superman II in one night . The films ran from roughly 3 : 00 until 9 : 00 including the odd commercial and a break for the 6 : 00 news .

The quality of the extended network TV version is inferior to any theatrical or current home video release because it was mastered in 16mm ( using the " film chain system " ) and a mono sound mix done , as by the time the extended cut was prepared in 1981 , stereo was not available in television broadcasts . Eight of the 45 minutes of extended scenes that were used in the later 2000 director 's cut restoration were taken from restored elements .

There are various extended TV versions each broadcast in various countries . Most of these are in pan and scan , as they were made in the 1980s , when films were not letterboxed to preserve the theatrical aspect ratio on old TVs . None of the various extended versions have ever been made available officially on home video / DVD , although they have been widely bootlegged .

= = Legacy = =

Superman was nominated for three Academy Awards ( Best Film Editing ? ( Stuart Baird ) , Best Music ( Original Score ) ? ( John Williams ) and Best Sound Mixing ? ( Gordon K. McCallum , Graham V. Hartstone , Nicolas Le Messurier and Roy Charman ) ) , and received a Special Achievement Academy Award for its visual effects . Donner publicly expressed disgust that production designer John Barry and cinematographer Geoffrey Unsworth had not been recognized by the Academy .

Superman was successful at the 32nd British Academy Film Awards . Reeve won Best Newcomer , while Hackman , Unsworth , Barry and the sound designers earned nominations . The film won the Hugo Award for Best Dramatic Presentation . At the Saturn Awards , Kidder , Barry , John Williams and the visual effects department received awards , and the film won Best Science Fiction Film . Reeve , Hackman , Donner , Valerie Perrine and costume designer Yvonne Blake were nominated for their work as well . In addition , Williams was nominated at the 36th Golden Globe Awards and won the Grammy Award for Best Score Soundtrack for Visual Media . In 2007 , the Visual Effects Society listed Superman as the 44th most influential use of visual effects of all time . In 2008 , Empire magazine named it the # 174 greatest film of all @-@ time on its list of 500 . The film also received recognition from the American Film Institute . Superman was selected as the 26th greatest film hero of all time . The film was considered for the AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Cheers list , but did not make it past the ballot . In 2009 , Entertainment Weekly ranked Superman 3rd on their list of The All @-@ Time Coolest Heroes in Pop Culture .

With the film 's success , it was immediately decided to finish Superman II . Ilya and Alexander Salkind and Pierre Spengler did not ask Donner to return because Donner had criticized them during the film 's publicity phase . Donner commented in January 1979 , " I 'd work with Spengler again , but only on my terms . As long as he has nothing to say as the producer , and is just liaison between Alexander Salkind and his money , that 's fine . If they don 't want it on those terms , then they need to go out and find another director , it sure as shit ain 't gonna be me . " Kidder , who portrayed Lois Lane , was dissatisfied by the producers ' decision , and also criticized the Salkinds during publicity . As a result , Kidder was only given a cameo appearance for Superman III , and not a main supporting role . Jack O 'Halloran , who portrayed Non , stated , " It was great to work with Donner . Richard Lester was as big an asshole as the Salkinds . " Two more films , Superman III ( 1983 ) and Superman IV : The Quest for Peace ( 1987 ) , were produced . Superman Returns was released in 2006 . Director Bryan Singer credited the 1978 Superman as an influence for Superman Returns , and used restored footage of Brando as Jor @-@ El . Superman II : The Richard Donner Cut also was released in 2006 .

The film 's final sequence , which features Superman flying high above the Earth at sunrise , and breaking the fourth wall to smile briefly at the camera , featured at the end of every Superman film starring Reeve and was re @-@ shot with Brandon Routh for Superman Returns .

The series was rebooted with Man of Steel in 2013 .

Because Superman went into production prior to the releases of Star Wars ( May 1977 ) and Close Encounters of the Third Kind ( November 1977 ) , some observers credit the three films collectively for launching the reemergence of a large market for science fiction films in the 1980s . This is certainly the view of Superman producer Ilya Salkind and some who have interviewed him , as well as of film production assistant Brad Lohan . Other observers of film history tend to credit the resurgence of science fiction films simply to the Lucas and Spielberg productions , and see Superman as the first of the new cycle of films launched by the first two . Ilya Salkind denies any connection between Superman ? which began filming in March 1977 ? and the other films , stating that " I did not know about ' Star Wars ' ; ' Star Wars ' did not know about ' Superman ' ; ' Close Encounters ' did not know about ' Superman . ' It really was completely independent ? nobody knew anything about anybody . " Superman also established the superhero film genre as viable outside the production of low @-@ budget Saturday matinee serials . Director Christopher Nolan cited Richard Donner 's vision and scope of Superman when pitching the concept for Batman Begins to

Warner Bros. in 2002 .

The movie inspired The Kinks ' 1979 song " ( Wish I Could Fly Like ) Superman " , when the band 's main songwriter , Ray Davies , watched the film in late 1978 .

American Film Institute Lists

AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Heroes & Villains :

Superman ? # 26 Hero

Lex Luthor ? Nominated Villain

AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Songs :

Can You Read My Mind ? Nominated

AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Movie Quotes :

" I 'm here to fight for truth , justice , and the American way . " ? Nominated

AFI 's 100 Years of Film Scores ? Nominated

AFI 's 100 Years ... 100 Cheers ? Nominated

AFI 's 10 Top 10 ? Nominated Fantasy Film

In 2006 the " Last Son " comic book story arc debuted in Action Comics , co @-@ written by Superman director Richard Donner .

= = = Comic book continuity = = =

Elements of the Superman mythos which originated in the film have since been incorporated into the regular continuity of the DC Comics universe :

The crystalline @-@ based technology of the planet Krypton .

Superman 's " S " logo originates as the El family crest .

Ursa and Non ? characters created specifically for the film ? are imprisoned in the Phantom Zone with General Zod .

A computer @-@ generated simulacrum of Jor @-@ El survives in the Fortress of Solitude to advise his adult son Kal @-@ El .

Clark Kent commences his public superhero career as the adult Superman , rather than the teenage Superboy .

Lois Lane first meets Superman when he rescues her as she falls from a disabled helicopter in Metropolis .

Lois is the one who first names the hero " Superman " .

Jonathan Kent dies of a heart attack , but Martha survives as his widow .

Although she is an excellent reporter , Lois frequently misspells words .

Smallville is located in the state of Kansas .