
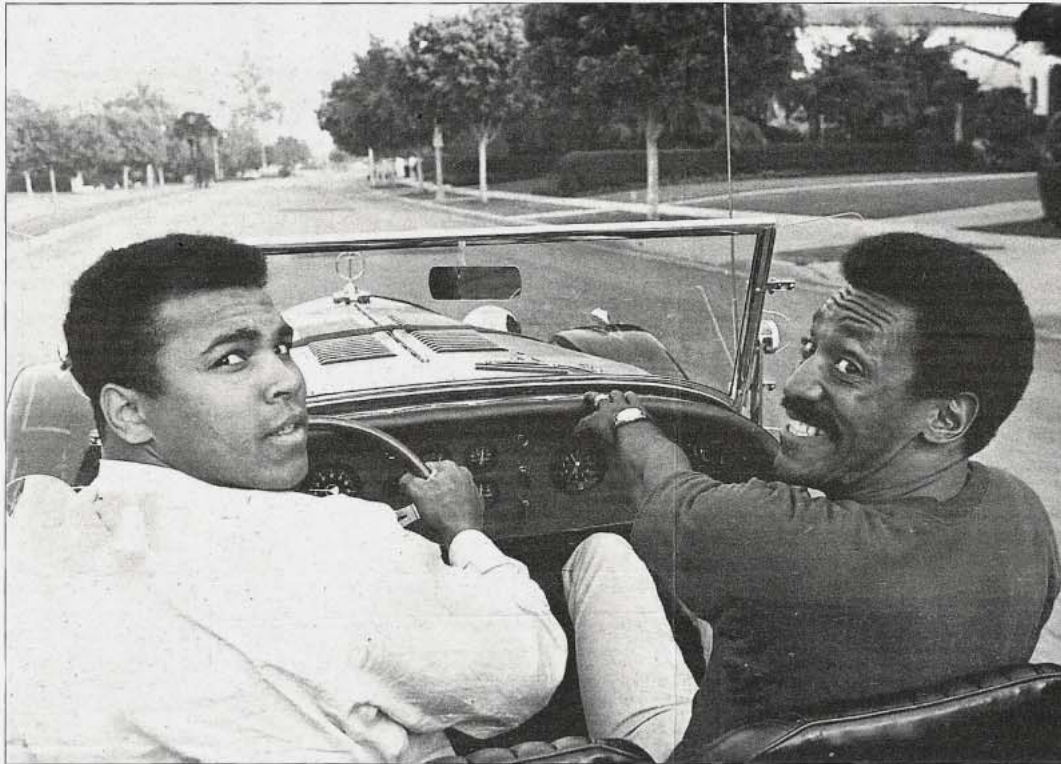


**SUNDAY**



**NEW YORK POST**



"Immortal in his own lifetime": Celebrated boxer Muhammad Ali, the subject of a new \$3,000 tribute book, with Bill Cosby in 1971. Howard L. Bingham/Taschen

# Hail to the Champ

**\$3,000  
Ali book  
packs a  
punch**

By **LOGAN HILL**

**W**hen I was a child in Germany, I fell in love with Muhammad Ali," says book publisher Benedikt Taschen, who convinced Ali to collaborate with artist Jeff Koons on "GOAT" — Greatest of All Time — a \$3,000, 75-pound, limited-edition book (a special "Champ's" edition with a sculpture by Koons goes for \$7,500) that serves as a tribute to the beloved boxing great.

"My father and I," Taschen adds, "would wake up in the middle of the night to watch him fight on live TV."

Released yesterday and available (to those who can afford it) at

chen.com, "GOAT" is a heavyweight spectacle that's almost as stunning as Ali's incredible career — and self-promotion.

Yesterday, Ali was scheduled to ride into Miami with members of his entourage and Will Smith (who played the fighter in "Ali") to recreate the celebration in the streets when he upset Sonny Liston in 1964 — the moment he became "the world's greatest."

The audacious book trumps even 2000's "Sumo," Taschen's giant coffee table book of Helmut Newton photography that had a \$1,500 price tag and came with its own coffee table. In fact, Taschen used the Newton book — filled with the photographer's famous high-fashion

bondage and S&M pictures — to woo Ali.

"The Champ said, 'Why did this guy send me a book with all naked girls in it?'" Taschen recalls. "I said, 'Tell the Champ he got it completely wrong — they're just poor girls who had no money to buy clothes.'"

Ali, a legendary wisecracker himself, appreciated the joke and signed onto the project — agreeing to sign all 10,000 copies, even though he suffers from the tremors caused by his Parkinson's disease.

It took over four years and \$12 million to put the book together. "I wanted to bring two great people together, the greatest of all time and the most important artist working today," explains Taschen.

Housed in an elaborate silk-topped box, the book has "G.O.A.T." sewn in bold hot-pink letters that match the pink patent leather spine — inspired by Ali's first pink Cadillac. Crack the cover, and a photo-essay of Ali's life unspools like the sweeping epic it is.

Photos reveal a teenage

Ali working out at Miami's Fifth Street Gym, then speed through the 1960 Olympics, the defining fights billed as "The Thrilla in Manila," and "The Rumble in the Jungle," his conscientious objection to serving in Vietnam (which cost him his title and his license to fight at the peak of his career), and his recent world tours for humanita-

rian causes. It's an impressive mix of personal reminiscence, inspired journalism (including prints of pieces by George Plimpton and Norman Mailer), and aggressive graphic design.

The book honors Ali's life with the same mix of humor, grace and grandeur that has made him, as Thomas Hauser put it, "immortal in his own lifetime." Apparently, the book's even good enough for Ali. After seeing it, he said to Taschen, "I didn't know I was so great."