

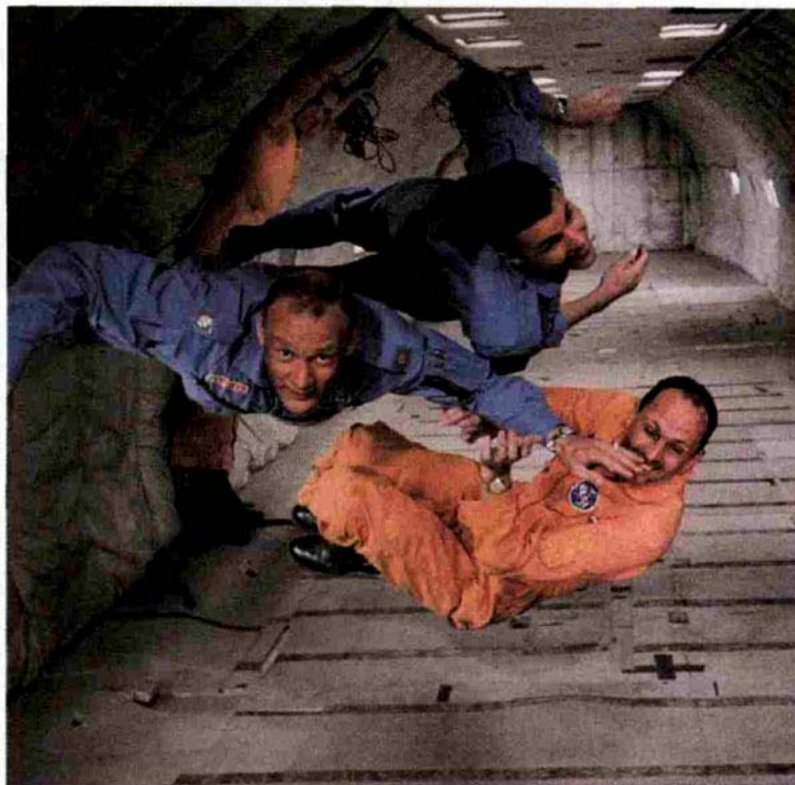


**W**ith the heart of a novelist, Norman Mailer knew that mankind was transformed in the instant that the Lunar Landing Module, nicknamed Eagle, came to rest in the Sea of Tranquility, on July 20, 1969. In his 1970 book *Of a Fire on the Moon*, Mailer told the tale of the Apollo 11 mission, in his own fashion. He saw the greatness of the endeavor, but was astonished by the corporate blandness of NASA. In Neil Armstrong, Mailer found a character whose goal was not individual glory, but a team player whose dry scientific jargon undercut the drama of the moment.

Mailer understood that it would require storytellers, himself foremost, to put the grand adventure of Apollo 11 into a human context. In one respect, however, astronauts Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin *did* capture and communicate the astounding nature of their feat: The photographs they made on the moon 40 years ago remain powerful statements about human spirit and vulnerability.

In August, Taschen Books released a remarkable photography book combining images from NASA's archive and other private collections with the text from Mailer's book. The 350-page *Norman Mailer, MoonFire: The Epic Journey of Apollo 11*, will come with a signed, framed, and numbered image of Buzz Aldrin. The price? \$1,000, except for the as-yet unpriced final 12 copies of the 1,969 limited edition, which will contain fragments of actual moon rocks. On the following pages we present Mailer's account of the landing. —DAVID SCHONAUER

Left: Buzz Aldrin on the moon, 1969, photo by Neil Armstrong.  
Below: New astronaut Aldrin (left) in training in 1964.



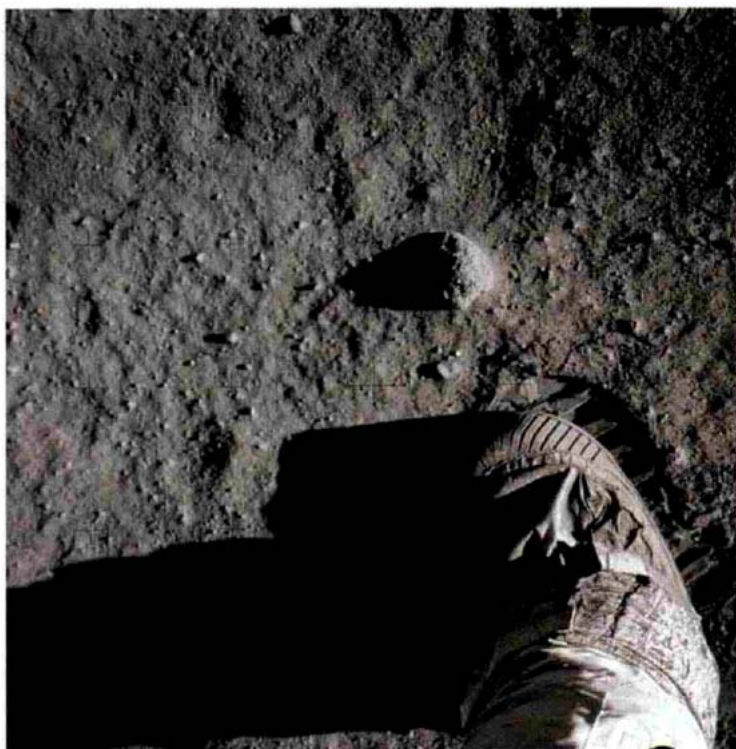
## NEW BOOKS

AN ASTONISHING  
LIMITED-EDITION  
VOLUME TELLS THE EPIC  
STORY OF THE  
JOURNEY OF APOLLO 11  
IN PHOTOS AND THE  
WORDS OF  
NORMAN MAILER

Left: The Lunar Module "Eagle" lifts off from the moon, July 21, 1969. Below: A historic footprint and President Kennedy in 1962.

# DESTINY WITH HISTORY

## THE APOLLO LANDING TEXT BY NORMAN MAILER



**S**o one got ready for the climax of the greatest week since Christ was born....The LEM having flown around the moon and gone behind it again, the braking burn for the Descent Orbit Initiation would be begun in radio silence....

Phrases came through the general static of the public address system. "Eagle looking great, you're go," came through, and statements of altitude. "You're go for landing, over!" "Roger, understand. Go for landing. 3,000 feet." "We're go, hang tight, we're go. 2,000 feet." So the voice came out of the box. Somewhere a quarter of a million miles away, ten years of engineering and training, a thousand processes and a million parts, a huge swatch out of 25 billion dollars and a hovering of machinery were preparing to

Left: Armstrong photographs the Sea of Tranquility. Below: An early space program image.

## IT WAS THE VOICE OF THE BEST BOY IN TOWN

go through the funnel of a historical event whose significance might yet be next to death itself, and the reporters who would interpret this information for the newsprint readers of the world were now stirring in polite, if mounting, absorption with the calm cryptic technological voices which came droning out of the box. Was it like that as one was waiting to be born? Did one wait in a modern room with strangers while numbers were announced—"Soul 77-48-16—you are on call. Proceed to Staging Area CX—at 16:04 you will be conceived."

So the words came. And the moon came nearer. "3½ down, 220 feet, 13 forward, 11 forward, coming down nicely, 200 feet, 4½ down, 5½ down, 160, 6½ down, 5½ down, 9 forward, 5 percent. Quantity light. 75 feet. Things looking good. Down a half. 6 forward.

"Sixty seconds," said another voice.

Was that a reference to fuel? Had that been the Capcom? Or was it Aldrin or Armstrong? Who was speaking now? The static was a presence. The voice was almost dreamy. Only the thinnest reed of excitement quivered in the voice.

"Lights on. Down 2½. Forward. Forward. Good. 40 feet down. Down 2½. Picking up some dust. 30 feet, 2½ down. Faint shadow. 4 forward. Drifting to the right a little. 6...down a half."

Another voice said, "Thirty seconds." Was that thirty seconds of fuel? A modest stirring of anticipation came from the audience.

"Drifting right. Contact light.

Okay," said the voice as even as before, "engine stop. ACA out of détente. Modes control both auto, descent engine command override, off. Engine arm, off. 423 is in."

A cry went up, half jubilant,

half confused. Had they actually landed?

The Capcom spoke. "We copy you down, Eagle." But it was a question.

"Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed." It was Armstrong's voice, the quiet voice of the best boy in town, the one who pulls you drowning from the sea and walks off before you can offer a reward. The Eagle has landed.

*Excerpt from Norman Mailer, MoonFire: The Epic Journey of Apollo 11, courtesy Taschen Books.*

