

Moonfire

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Originally published as a hugely expensive special edition, complete with a piece of moon rock, the publisher's lower-price 35th anniversary 'popular edition' is a steal at the RRP above, and a total bargain at the discounted prices you'll see on the high street and online. It must be some kind of anniversary fatigue that means that Moonflight - The Epic Journey of Apollo 11 appears to be so undervalued: if you regard manned space flight as the ultimate flying experience as we do, you'll be blown away by this wonderful book. The text is by an American literary giant. Originally commissioned to cover the Apollo 11 story by Life magazine, Mailer was there to report first-hand, and his was very much an informed perspective (he graduated from Harvard as engineer). Combine this with photographs from NASA's vast archive, many of them previously unpublished, and art publisher Taschen's design expertise, and you have a titanic alliance. Moonflight is so all-encompassing in its scope and so brilliantly done that in one volume it eclipses the entire library of even the most ardent admirer of the space programme. While it would be worth the asking price for the text alone, the pictures - several of them gate-fold panoramas - are simply breathtaking. You don't just get images from the Apollo 11 mission - everything is there, from portraits of the scientists and engineers to pictures of the astronaut's family lives. The effect is to really put you there, replaying in near totality the events of July 1969. There has been nothing to match the Apollo programme - mankind's greatest adventure - in the 40-odd years since, and Moonflight is assuredly the definitive record.

