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EARTHRISE

BACKGROUND

Earthrise is the name of one of the most iconic photographs in history. The original NASA image numbered AS8-14-2383 was one of a series of photographs taken by William Anders and the Apollo 8 crew on 24 December 1968 during the first manned mission to the Moon. Astronaut Michael Collins, who was later to take part in the Apollo 11 mission that first landed on the Moon and who was working on the ground as capsule communicator for the Apollo 8 team, called their mission “more awe-inspiring than landing on the Moon”.

The sight of the Earth rising above the Moon took the Apollo 8 crew by surprise. It came into view on the fourth orbit as they emerged from the far side of the Moon. The excitement of the crew members Frank Borman, Bill Anders and James Lovell was captured on audio:-

Frank Borman:

Oh my God! Look at that picture over there! Here's the Earth coming up. Wow, is that pretty!

Bill Anders:

Hey, don't take that, it's not scheduled.

Frank Borman: (laughing)

You got a color film, Jim?

Bill Anders:

Hand me that roll of color quick, will you

James Lovell:

Oh man, that's great!

Bill Anders:

Hurry. Quick

James Lovell:

Take several of them! Here, give it to me

Frank Borman:

Calm down, Lovell.



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James Lovell recalled after the mission “There’s no colour. In the whole universe wherever we looked, the only bit of colour was back on Earth.

It was the most beautiful thing there was to see in all the heavens. People down here don’t realize what they have”. These sentiments reflected those of the first man in space Yuri Alexeyevich Gagarin in his autobiography “Circling the earth in the orbital spaceship I marvelled at the beauty of our planet. People of the world, let us safeguard and enhance this beauty not destroy it!” The crew were not briefed by NASA to take photographs of the Earth on their mission but of the Moon, anything extra was described as a *target of opportunity* so it is extraordinary that the most famous image to be captured on their mission was the photograph AS8-14-2383 and not the Moon! In 1969 the ‘**Earthrise**’ photograph was featured on a US Postal Service stamp commemorating the achievements of Apollo 8.