Buzz Aldrin, **part** of the Apollo XI crew

"Super Mario Galaxy will inspire us to keep looking up to space"

November 2007. Aldrin & Mario enjoy a Zero-gravity flight in Las Vegas (USA)

Madrid, November 13th, 2007.- He is a part of the history of humanity. He may possibly be one of the most photographed people in the 20th century. Everyone knows that Neil Armstrong, commander for the legendary Apollo XI mission, was the first human being to step on the Moon. But the astronaut photographed in the famous sequence is Buzz Aldrin, pilot of the lunar module the "Eagle." (Amstrong was holding the camera.) Aldrin, who is now 77 years old, spent twenty hours working on the lunar surface and has dedicated his whole life to the space adventure. Now, he goes over his experience in space and compares it to the sensations he's felt when taking the controls of **Super Mario Galaxy**.

Q. What do you think about the most popular hero in the history of videogames launching into space?

B.A. I am glad that Mario is now exploring this final frontier of space, because even if it doesn't mean to represent a realistic space environment, **Super Mario Galaxy** can inspire our imagination of what it might be like and what it might feel like to explore other planets. When I was a youth, the word "astronaut" did not exist. It was the stories of Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers that inspired us to reach for the stars. And ultimately we did!

July 1969. Dr. Aldrin's official picture for the Apollo XI mission

Q. You piloted the vehicle that landed on the Moon on July 20th, 1969. What is the first sensation one has when arriving at a place nobody has seen before?

B.A. As I set my foot in the talcum-like powder of the lunar dust that rippled out with each step, I gazed at the horizon. The landscape was gray and barren in the daylight sun, but the sky was black because there is no atmosphere on the Moon. The words came to my mind, "Beautiful, beautiful. Magnificent desolation." That feeling of surprise I felt upon contemplating an unimaginable landscape is somewhat similar to what you feel when travelling from planet to planet in **Super Mario Galaxy**. The game's scenarios are different and so imaginative that they make you want to keep on discovering new planets. In addition, the fact that you can see on the horizon celestial bodies that you have not yet visited, incites you to keep on looking for new experiences.

Dr. Aldrin descending from the lunar module the "Eagle" he piloted

Q. You know, both in theory (you earned a Doctorate in Astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Manned Space Rendezvous) and in practice, what it is like to move in environments with different physical laws. Does Super Mario Galaxy manage to resemble those sensations felt by the changes in physical laws?

Dr. Aldrin inside Apollo XI while orbiting over the Earth

B.A. The physics in the game scenarios change a lot from one galaxy to the other. In real life, working in the absence of gravity is not as easy as you may think. In fact, we trained during a year for that eight-day mission... and we did part of our training underwater. The best way I can describe this kind of training for working in space is that the less resistance you put forward, the more effective you are as you move through the water in a buoyant environment. This proved to be true in space as well: both in our zero gravity "spacewalks" and in our moonwalks with a $1/6^{th}$ gravity. In spite of the nearly 200 lb pressurized air-tight space suits we wore, I was able to leap, skip, veer from side to side at intensified angles, and even do the so-called "kangaroo hop" in a slow-motion kind of movement (very similar to Mario's small jumps in the game). **Super Mario Galaxy** manages to simulate different levels of gravity: lucky for us, we don't have to put so much time into it to get used to them!

Q. The most innovating thing about Super Mario Galaxy is how it manages to create a three-and-a-half dimensions sensation thanks to the spherical scenarios. This translates into the gamer (who is used to a three-dimensional world) having to change the way he sees things. Is this similar to what you experience as an astronaut?

Dr. Aldrin's moonwalk

B.A. The question of physics is important when traveling to space, but the most significant change we had to face, and the one anyone who plays **Super Mario Galaxy** will also enjoy, is the change of perspective. There was one moment on the Gemini XII mission during one of my spacewalks outside the spacecraft that I saw the Earth below me as I was working on a task. But a few moments later, I looked down and the Earth was no longer there! It was above me! For me it was more surprising than disorienting. It's a change of your perspective. And that same sensation is what **Super Mario Galaxy**'s gaming experience centers on... stop thinking in three dimensions only and go one step further!