

there."

"I take pride in telling people that we don't have one series or movie in our library that doesn't show a profit," Saban says.

Each production is planned to turn a profit in its first three-to-five-year "cycle," Saban says. "We're not in the deficit-financing business, nor will we ever be," he says. "With the shrinking syndication market, it is our belief that the second, third and fourth cycles—if they are there—should be added profit."

That Saban sees the world as "one big boundaryless marketplace" derives from his background. Saban got his start in his native Israel and Paris before setting up shop in Hollywood eight years ago.

"We have this picture puzzle of various countries around the world, with each being able to generate a certain amount of money for certain products. And if we can make sense out of a production by mixing Korean and Luxembourgish investments that would cover the production costs, then the rest of the world is open for sales."

### Going public?

It's not a coincidence that Saban works in a mention of Luxembourg. European broadcast CLT of Luxembourg purchased a 25% equity stake in Saban Entertainment in 1989. Although CLT has largely remained a silent partner, the company often participates in or



Saban's new 'Cybertron'

brokers international co-production and licensing arrangements.

Media analysts in New York and Hollywood think that Saban may utilize its CLT connection to engineer further expansion in the domestic and international markets, but there is also talk that he may take the company public in the near future. John Shuman, executive vice president of Allen & Co., a New York-based investment banking/management firm retained by Saban, says that "Haim is examining quite a few options."

"I think he basically wants to continue the movement toward being a full-service software provider, not a

[delivery system] carrier," says Shuman, who also sits on Saban Entertainment's board of directors. "I think as time goes on, his plan is clearly calculated at exploiting the children's market internationally."

"What Saban has done with *Power Rangers* is nothing short of brilliant," says Allen Bohbot, chairman of competing kids distributor Bohbot Entertainment. "Basically, he has taken *Power Rangers* to the next level, far beyond that of *Ultraman*, the last live-action kids series from Japan."

"It has just really clicked with kids on so many levels, not just on television but also in the toy stores," Bohbot says.

In fact, nearing the close of the Christmas sales season, sole toy licensee Bandai Co. has sold close to one million of the *Power Ranger* action figures, putting it on a faster early pace than the record sales of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* dolls five years ago, according to merchandising sources.

Most children's program suppliers find their real bread-and-butter profits in the merchandising of the series and characters (see accompanying story, page 31).

And unlike other major independent suppliers, Saban tries to maintain a high level of control over all facets of the merchandising. "I would say that in 95% of the cases we control the merchandising," Saban says.

Despite the sometimes fickle taste of kid viewers, which can reduce a hit to a has-been in a single season, Saban insists that *Power Rangers* is a "ten-plus-year, multibillion dollar franchise."

"I don't think it is a flash in the pan," he says. "Our whole approach—our investments, our expectations for the return on investment—is based on a ten-year plan and not a two-year plan. If *Power Rangers* is a five-year franchise, we would have felt that we failed."

### New strips and upgrades

*Power Rangers'* freshman 50-plus share scores have been achieved despite an early-bird 7:30-8 a.m. slotting in most markets, Saban says. The series could exceed those expectations should Fox affiliates get the green light to schedule it in the higher HUT level afternoon time periods.

Fox Children's Network President

## More 'Power' to them

As the saying goes, "Imitation is the sincerest form of television." Given the breakout ratings and merchandising success of Saban Entertainment's *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, it was only a matter of time before another live-action kids sci-fi series appeared in the broadcast market. Veteran kids series producer DIC Animation City, in conjunction with the creator and producer of one of the original kids live-action series, *Ultraman*, is looking to syndicate *Power Boy* for fall 1994. *Power Boy* is based on a Japanese television series, *Gridman*, according to a major kids syndication executive. Like Saban's co-production arrangement with Tokyo-based production house Toei Co., DIC will be co-producing *Power Boy* with Ultracom, the production company founded by *Ultraman* creator Noboru Tsuburyaya (whose father created the "Godzilla" monster movies).

Although DIC Animation President and CEO Andy Heyward would confirm only that "something is in the works," he said he wasn't at liberty to talk about the *Power Boy* project. Sources also say that All American Television, which already distributes a number of DIC-produced animated series, will handle syndication of the proposed morning and early fringe strip.

—MF, JF