

Robbie Benson plays a part-time cab driver chased by an assortment of oddball characters in "Die Laughing." Newcomer Linda Grovenor is his girlfried and Monkey-Do, atop Benson's head, is the cause of the murder and may-

Laughs missing in 'Die Laughing', comedy-thriller

"Die Laughing" (PG)? Hardly. A misnamed movie when you consider that it's hard to even find a chuckle lurking anywhere between the first and last red.

This is a movie for a totally passive audience (trained on television) or those who harbor some special affection for the male lead, Robby Benson — his mother, maybe.

Robby was not bad in "One on One." But "not bad" is asking too much of "Die Laughing," where acting is only one among several meager talents which Benson lends to the film. He also surfaces as co-producer, co-writer and composer of the movie's three almost medicore songs.

mediocre songs.

From the disjointed look of this feature, you wouldn't think that one person had so much overall responsibility. In fact, you might not only assume different persons with different production ideas, but you might suspect that the film editor and the director were working from different scripts.

SOMEONE SEEMS to think that by repeated cross-cutting between various ludicrous scenes, the result would be a snappy, suspenseful movie. It isn't. The result is a juinble which cannot be compensated by Benson's "cuteness."

The plot centers about a chase. Russian agents and the police are after Benson. He is the innocent bystander involved in foul play (like a male Goldie Hawn).

When a passenger is shot in his taxi, he panics and runs away. First, however, he picks up the murder weapon and makes a spectacle of himself as he stands over the victim and waves the gun around. This assures that the police will be hunting him. But why the Russians, you ask? Simple. Because Benson took a box that the murdered man, a famous scientist, was carrying. The box has the murdered man, a famous scientist, was carrying. The complication convertes programmed to punch out on a computer a formula for convertey programmed to punch out on a computer a formula for convertey programmed to punch out on a computer a formula for convertey programmed to punch out on a computer a formula for convertey programmed to punch out on a computer a formula for convertey programmed to punch out on a computer a formula for convertey programmed to punch out on a computer at the school of the punch of the punch

THE SONGS he writes for the group are real xingers like "Mr. Weisman's Barber Shop." For some reason, this propels them into the finals of the contest. Imagine the scrambling as the hero tiers to evade his pursuers and still show up for performances on time. Oh, yes. Forgot to mention. The police and the Russians aren't the only ones chasing him. Benson and his monkey are also the object of a demented computer expert who wants the monkey so he can blackmail world powers. Well, that's it in a banana peel. Less of Robby Benson and more of the monkey might have helped this movie, but I doubt it.



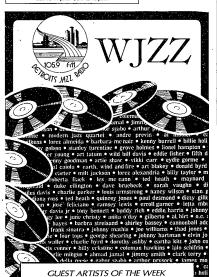
An aspiring rock musician is another side of Benson's . life in the Orion Pictures release.

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