



PHOTO BY JIM LUNNING

BACKSTAGE PASS: Ensemble member Tracy Letts behind the scenes at Steppenwolf.

# Buffalo Style

A 1975 award-winning play hits the stage at Steppenwolf

BY VICKI CRAIN

When speaking of Chicago's heavy hitters, one thinks of Oprah, Barack Obama or even Al Capone. But theatrically speaking, we have some of the heaviest hitters off Broadway at the Steppenwolf Theatre Company, which has earned worldwide acclaim and awards too numerous to count. Just look at the artists working on the current revival, *American Buffalo* (tickets \$20-\$77, Dec. 3-Feb. 7): writer David Mamet (Pulitzer Prize), director Amy Morton (Tony nomination), actor Tracy Letts (Pulitzer Prize, Tony award) and actor Francis Guinan (Drama Desk nomination). Not too shabby. Both darkly funny and deeply poignant, *American Buffalo*—first staged here in 1975 before several revivals on and off Broadway—is set in a Chicago junk shop in the '70s and revolves around three hustlers scrambling for a piece of the American Dream. Themes of trust, greed and extinction are explored within a botched robbery. Mamet's writing style (staccato and abrupt with obscenity-laced language) emerged with this play. "*American Buffalo* really put him on the map," says director Morton. "This is Mamet writing at his best." ■

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