# DeVito should have stayed in background for 'Hoffa'



Danny DeVito made it perfectly clear that his new screen blog raphy of Jimmy Holfa would depict the labor leader as an American hero. So I entered this movie armed justifications that Holfa's original supporters probably didtampor with the same justifications that Holfa's original supporters probably didtampor with the facts, negotiate with the powerful, but get the job done. What bothers me most about "Holfa," which opened at area theaters on Christmas Day, is the mojor role that director DeVito has written into the film for bim seef. As Bobby, a composite of many of Holfa's actual right-hand men, he's supposed to fill in the narrative gaps, maybe even give us some background about the Teamsters, but he only drags the film out longer than necessary.

give Nicholson the breathing room to turn this almost mythical character into a real person.

David Mamet has proven himself an uncompromising playwright and director, but he caves in on screenplays for big-budget pictures like this and "The Untouchables." When a union demonstration turns violent, he tries to personalize the scene with a young boy separated from his mother, she may or may not have been stomped in the mayhem.

The opening and closing narrative device, where Hoffa and Bobby wait in the spot we know will be Hoffa's last stand, is used effectively, if predictably. Bobby's memories are rekindled by a business card presented during heir first meeting when Hoffa, a scrappy young union organize, hitches a ride on Bobby's truck.

DeVite doesn't try to gloss over Hoffa's mob connections, although he does hint that in you set the

See HOFFA, NEXT PAGE



Trusted ally: Danny DeVito plays Bobby Ciaro, trusted ally of Teamsters boss Jimmy Hoffa, played by Jack Nicholson in "Hoffa."

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