

## Book Review for the International Association of Auto Theft Investigators

Michael Bender's "**The Fast, The Fraudulent & The Fatal**" published March, 2009

In 2002, I caught Mike Bender's class on Street Racing at the IAATI Conference in Albuquerque. It was an excellent class, but we didn't feel as though we had a problem in Maryland. Upon my return, I started seeing street racers everywhere. We opened an investigation into a Volkswagen theft/ insurance fraud ring, only to learn that there were a dozen shops in Maryland that catered to Volkswagen street racers (and those weren't the common street racers). Of course we saw many Hondas and Acuras, but started seeing Dodge Neons, Nissans, Mitsubishis, etc. We even found an importer of Japanese engines and transmissions. Later, we saw Nissan Skylines and other Gray-market Japanese cars. Then we started seeing fatal accidents (they were happening, but we didn't understand the street racing scene and how it related to auto theft and more importantly, insurance fraud. Everything in Mike's class was apparent in Baltimore. I just hadn't seen it until Mike pointed it out.

We were notified that this book was available in March and we immediately purchased two copies: one for the insurance industry and one for us. Last week I read this book over a four hour period. You need to get a copy of this book for several reasons:

1. This is a book that has one foot in the auto theft arena, looking at a growing trend of theft of vehicle accessories rather than the entire vehicle. It is a side of commercial vehicle theft that every auto theft detective needs to learn.
2. The other foot firmly stands on the growing issue of insurance fraud and the various schemes used by the street racing set. These frauds are also driving our auto theft numbers with false theft numbers.
3. Throughout the book, Mike gives the reader websites to check for information, whether the sites be governmental (NHSTA) or the sites that street racers use. This book can be a useful reference book for you to use to get fast and up-to-the minute facts. It is well-documented should you be challenged in court.
4. The book is well-written and illustrated. It was easy to read, and I will read it second time in a few weeks.

The good news over the past ten years is that a number of useful resource books have been published for auto theft investigators, including the Certification Manuals that are available to IAATI members through the members-only section of the website.

The bad news is that these sources can also be used by defense counsel (what if they get these books and read them, and our members don't?). The information in these books is dead-on accurate info that targets today's realities and emerging trends.

Again, the good news is that obtaining and reading these books arms you with the information, coupled with your experience, to defeat insurance cheats, car thieves and their counsels.

If you have attended one of Mike Bender's Street Racing classes, this book updates the information that Mike has given, and it provides you with many of the resource sites that Mike uses for his classes. If you are blessed with the opportunity to see Mike's Street Racing class and read this book, you will be fully ready to start to address this growing problem. Mike has a second class: "The Future of Auto Theft" that is also a "must-attend" event. We were able to have the insurance industry pay for Mike to come to Maryland and teach his class for 100 insurance and law enforcement investigators. That class is so well-documented with video that it would be difficult to write that into a paper book format. I strongly recommend that you attend these classes, particularly insurance investigators as so much of street racing starts off with insurance fraud.

Mike Bender is a great resource for auto theft and fraud investigators. We are lucky to have members such as Mike Bender, to help us to counter the growing problem of professional car thieves and insurance cheats (including organized criminal groups) that are showing up everywhere. Get your agency to purchase this book. Borrow it from an insurance investigator. Don't be caught in a trial without it.

Sergeant Bob Jagoe, Baltimore Regional Auto Theft Team