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Criminals muscle in on old cars

Barry Park
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CRIMINALS are cashing in on the muscle car fad, with Victoria Police reporting an increase in the number of second-hand cars being passed off as their high-performance stablemates.

And it doesn't end there. Professional thieves are also targeting well-maintained base models from last decade as potential sources of replacement parts for the high-performance vehicles, Detective Sergeant Gerry Bashford says.

Muscle cars from the 1970s are fetching big money. A 1971 Ford Falcon GTHO Phase III sold for \$750,000 at auction recently, while a 1968 Holden Monaro GTS fetched \$220,000.

Detective Sergeant Bashford, a senior member of the organised motor vehicle theft squad, said police had seen an increase in the number of sellers trying to pass off imitation cars as the genuine thing.

"It's simply people knocking up an old V8 Falcon and turning it into a GT Falcon simply because the dollars are so huge," he said.

"You're deceiving the buyer into believing it's a genuine GT. Unfortunately the money that is floating around with those cars at the moment, the financial incentive to do it is just huge. You can turn a \$20,000 to \$30,000 car into a \$200,000 or \$300,000 car."

Detective Sergeant Bashford said enthusiasts would be able to pick most of the imitation performance cars.

"But there's still a lot of people out there that want to look like they're driving a genuine GT and are prepared to pay a lot of money for replicas.

"The whole muscle car movement has caused a change of focus in those vehicles."

But Detective Sergeant Bashford also had a warning for owners of older cars in good condition to be wary of falling prey to the stolen car parts rackets for the performance models.

"Say there's a genuine Falcon GT that is a rust bucket, and you see a really nice Falcon GL of the same vintage on the side of the road, well, hey, all those bits will go really well on the GT.

"People who have old cars in very good condition need to be very careful." -- BARRY PARK