



Rumrunners

Eric Beetner

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Smokey and the Bandit and The Dukes of Hazzard meet Justified and Fargo in this crime-family saga.

Meet the McGraws. They're not criminals. They're outlaws. They have made a living by driving anything and everything for the Stanleys, the criminal family who has been employing them for decades. It's ended with Tucker. He's gone straight, much to the disappointment of his father, Webb.

When Webb vanishes after a job, and with him a truck load of drugs, the Stanleys want their drugs back or their money. With the help from his grandfather, Calvin—the original lead foot—Tucker is about to learn a whole lot about the family business in a crash course that might just get him killed.

Praise for RUMRUNNERS:

“A killer. If you dug Bull Mountain, you’ll love it.”—Brian Panovich, author of Bull Mountain

“The best word to sum up this book is ‘FUN’, in capital letters.”—Stuart MacBride, author of The Missing and the Dead

“Buckle up...RUMRUNNERS is a fast and furious read.”—Samuel W. Gailey, author of Deep Winter

“Few contemporary writers do justice to the noir tradition the way Eric Beetner does. Others try to emulate and mimic; Beetner just takes the form and cuts his own jagged, raw and utterly readable path.”—Gar Anthony Haywood, author of Assume Nothing, Cemetery Road and the Aaron Gunner series

“Rumrunners just never lets up. It’s a fuel-injected, mile-a-minute thrill ride. I had a blast.”—Grant Jenkins, author of A Very Simple Crime and Done In One

Rumrunners Details

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Author : Eric Beetner

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From Reader Review Rumrunners for online ebook

Max Everhart says

Is Elmore Leonard still alive and writing under a pseudonym? By page ten or so of Eric Beetner's latest book Rumrunners, that was the question I was asking myself, which is high praise indeed considering Leonard is on the Mount Rushmore of crime novelists.

The plot: Webb McGraw, an aging rumrunner, is given a lucrative pick-up-and-drop-off gig by Hugh Stanley, who presides over a criminal empire "running anything and everything illegal." Used to driving American muscle cars, McGraw enlists the help of a long-haul trucker to drive the eighteen-wheeler, which, of course, turns out to be a huge mistake. McGraw gets highjacked, barely escaping with his hide in tack, but now he's faced with a dilemma: run and hide, or go back to Hugh Stanley and admit failure? But before the reader learns his decision, Webb McGraw goes missing. Enter Calvin Webb, the 86-year old father. Calvin Webb, a legendary rumrunner, is retired, but still hard-as-a-coffin nail, and he's hell-bent on locating his only son. He just needs a little help from Tucker Webb, the grandson who steered clear of the family business, opting for the (eww!) insurance game instead. The two McGraw men set out to find Webb, and this sends them deeper and deeper into Hugh Stanley's pocket, the stakes rising at every turn.

Even more than the cracker-jack-of-a-plot, which runs just as fast as the Fast and Furious-like cars that litter this excellent book, I enjoyed the characters. The Stanleys and McGraws are as synonymous as the Hatfields and McCoys, and their collective histories are inextricably linked. The Stanleys, particularly Hugh Stanley, is the classic patriarchal villain, smiling and condescending from the relative safety of his ergonomic chair behind his large desk. With a stash of Iowa corn liquor in the drawer, he is devious, and calculating, and his exchanges with Calvin Webb are a pure joy to read. However, it is the McGraws that really stuck with me, especially Calvin Webb. Not since Buck Schatz in Daniel Friedman's fantastic book *Don't Ever Get Old*, have I encountered such a grizzled, foul-mouthed old coot as Calvin Webb. Rather than rattle off a list of inadequate superlatives, I'll just let the man speak for himself. Here's a snippet from chapter one where Calvin is sitting in a fancy donut shop, retired and bored, and he's hassled by a hipster.

"Listen kid," Calvin tugged the finger closer to breaking. "Just take your green tea dusted donut with quince paste filling and fuck off out of here. I'm drinking coffee and watching the cars go by. I ain't hurting you." Great dialogue such as that is everywhere in this book, as is cinematic writing: car chase scenes so tense I had to puff my inhaler, hilariously realistic fighting involving gardening equipment. . .but I digress. Back to the characters. Perhaps the best thing I like about the McGraw men is they are outlaws, not criminals. They, unlike the Stanleys, have a strong moral compass, and this not only endears them to the reader, but also makes them heroes. There is, too, like in all great genre novels, a wonderful intertextuality to Rumrunners. The movies *Smokey and the Bandit* (because of the chase scenes and witty dialogue) and *The Godfather* (because of the Michael Corleone-esque way Tucker Webb is dragged into the family business) spring to mind. Also, I kept thinking of Leonard Elmore characters, like Chii Palmer in *Get Shorty*, for example, because of the tough-guy-with-a-heart way Calvin Webb and, toward the end of the story, Tucker Webb go about their business.

The ending of the book leaves it open to future McGraw men adventures, and I, for one, sure hope Beetner sticks with them a while. Oh, and this one has an awesome book cover (all 280 Steps books do), and the price is right (only \$2.99 on Kindle). Highly recommended.

Benoit Lelièvre says

It's going to take me a little while to fall back to Earth after such an awesome novel. RUMRUNNERS begins as a classic crime novel, almost cliché even, but that's before Eric Beetner starts throwing in Lansdalesque turns of events and themes that will dig up your fondest memories of BREAKING BAD and standout novel BULL MOUNTAIN. RUMRUNNERS gradually won me over, page by page, until I could not let go anymore and neglected Josie for hours at the time. It's not the kind of novel that you read deliberately slow in order to make it last, the prose is too down to Earth, but it's the next best thing.

RUMRUNNERS revisits old themes of family, justice and loyalty, but does it with a fresh and invigorating eye. It's not just a pretty cover, that book's packing under the hood and stood out to me in a rather crowded reading month. If you're looking for a book that's as surprising as it is satisfying, get yourself acquainted with the incredible talent of Eric Beetner and his novel RUMRUNNERS.

Derrick says

Eric Beetner seems to have a formula that he has used for every book he has published:

Fun plot + believable characters + witty dialogue + breakneck pace = novel that knocks you socks off.

I am more than pleased to say his latest, Rumrunners, shows that he is fine-tuning this formula. He has written many good books, but dare I say, this book is his best yet, which is saying a lot. His latest offering is being published by independent publisher, 280 Steps, and is due for release on May 12, 2015.

The plot is a simple one that just seems to get more enjoyable as the book progresses. It is amazing how Beetner handles this story in such a masterful manner. It starts like it is shot from a gun and never seems to slow down until the very end.

The men from the McGraw clan have been drivers for the more wealthier Stanley family for the past 3 generations. The McGraws have driving in their blood and are excited to drive any cargo anywhere it needs to go. As the Stanley's have their fingers in less than desirable dealings, the cargo is usually of an illegal nature. The latest job calls for Webb McGraw to pick up some cargo and deliver it to an anxious buyer who will be using it to cook meth. What should be a simple job goes off the rails and Webb and the cargo disappear without a trace. In an attempt to locate both Webb and their missing cargo, the Stanleys seek out Webb's son Tucker, the one McGraw who doesn't want to live the illegal life of a illegal cargo transporter, and tell him he either finds and delivers the missing cargo for them or pays them the 10 million dollars the cargo is worth.

Tucker is out of his league in this world, but he knows someone who can handle this and more. He seeks out his grandfather, Calvin, and together they search for answers to exactly what happened to Webb and the cargo. They rule out that Webb disappeared on his own volition because "Webb operated under a strict code of ethics on an unethical profession." They both know that Webb lived for the driving, not for making profit off the cargo. Calvin is convinced the answers they seek can be found if they know who to shake down and how hard to shake them down.

As the story unfolds Tucker learns that sometimes our family is not just connected to us through blood, but

their genes can be hidden in our blood and give us the ability to do things we never thought we could. As Tucker slowly discovers he is a McGraw at heart, the reader gets to take an amazing adventure with him and an amazingly tough old man.

This book was an outstanding read that can be read in a few sittings. Beetner has some dialogue that made me laugh out loud and he has a great knack for making his characters come to life. He deserves a wide audience and certainly deserves credit for crafting a great book. I highly recommend everyone grab a copy of this book and all of his previous works.

Richard says

This is the third Eric Beetner book I've read this year and for the third time in a row, he delivers thrilling, pulpy, criminal entertainment. *Rumrunners*, which so far might actually be his most popular book, follows the McGraw family, who for generations have been working as talented wheelmen for the Stanley's, an Iowa crime family. Tucker McGraw has been set on ending this outlaw legacy by going to college and becoming an insurance salesman. But when his father Webb goes missing with the Stanley's latest package, the Stanley's put the debt on him. So Tucker must reluctantly get involved in the family business, and with the help of his OG grandfather Calvin, find out the truth about Webb's disappearance, and get out from under the thumb of the Stanley's.

Like in *Dig Two Graves* and *Run For The Money*, in this one Beetner once again shows a knack for creating engaging criminal characters. Calvin McGraw stole the show here as the 84-year-old whose fondness for beer is only eclipsed by his love for American muscle cars, and who is growing tired of his retirement and jumps at a chance for reliving his glory days outrunning the Feds on the open road. Also, seeing the McGraw side of straight-man Tucker gradually emerge from within as he begins to embrace the outlaw life was fun to see as well. And Beetner has a talent for crafting great action scenes, with the fist-fights and car chases properly standing out the way they should in a book like this. And when you include Beetner's trademark wit and humor, you won't be disappointed with this classic crime thriller.

"Well, Milo. You're really going from zero to McGraw in one shot tonight. Tell you what, cops and our family are like magnets and wood—they don't stick. Lose this son of a bitch and we'll add your name to the wall of honor."

Kevin Catalano says

This novel has an original, funny conceit: an 80-year-old man, his grandson, and his great-grandson are on the hunt for the murderer of said octogenarian's son. Beetner executes this premise with some really funny lines, great action description, and a fast pace. For these reasons, I "liked" the novel.

Incidentally, *Rumrunners* was recommended to me by the publisher because of my high praise for Brian Panowich's *Bull Mountain*, which is also a novel about a family's drug-running legacy. What *Rumrunners*

lacks that made me love Bull Mountain was heart -- an emotional story that fuels the action. I understand that this is an issue of taste. The reviewers who gave Rumrunners 5 stars may not require this. On a story level, however, consider the fact that Calvin, the 80-year-old protagonist, has lost his son. The reader is simply told this, but never feels it since Calvin hardly ever reflects on this. So maybe he's an unemotive guy. Then what about Tucker, who lost his father? No feelings from him, either. The only emotion that the characters express is revenge, and even that is only revealed to us through the action of the plot.

Again, this is just an issue of taste. If you're looking for a straight-up, entertaining action novel without much depth of character, then you'll love this.

Neliza Drew says

Beetner's always entertaining. Fast-paced action with just enough heart to keep a haggard Bruce Willis from falling out of the book.

Francis says

Gritty crime and suspense in this story about four generations of some willing and some unwilling outlaws!

Col says

Synopsis/blurb....

Smokey and the Bandit meets Justified and Fargo in this violent crime-family saga.

Meet the McGraws. They're not criminals. They're outlaws. They have made a living by driving anything and everything for the Stanleys, the criminal family who has been employing them for decades. It's ended with Tucker. He's gone straight, much to the disappointment of his father, Webb.

When Webb vanishes after a job, and with him a truck load of drugs, the Stanleys want their drugs back or their money. With the help from his grandfather, Calvin-the original lead foot-Tucker is about to learn a whole lot about the family business in a crash course that might just get him killed.

My take.....

Best book ever? No, but one I really enjoyed. Fast-paced, funny, plenty of action and enough story and characters to carry it through.

We have two families - the Stanleys and the McGraws. The Stanley's are the bosses and the McGraw's are the grunts, doing the heavy lifting, in this case collecting and delivering loads of contraband of whatever description, no questions asked, no interference with the cargo, delivery guaranteed.

Webb McGraw has taken on a job, which in hindsight he should have turned down, picking up a lorry load of pharmaceuticals. A driver he brought in to help with the run has ripped him off and disappeared with the

vehicle. Webb himself is scarce. The Stanleys are furious and straight-laced, Tucker McGraw, the man who broke with tradition and his family heritage has just been given an ultimatum - the load back or \$10 million in compensation. Tucker, a failed husband and unsuccessful insurance salesman doesn't have a spare 10 mil. Time to call on Grandpa Calvin for a bit of advice.

Calvin, a spunky octogenarian and the original McGraw outlaw driver comes to the rescue. In between consuming copious amounts of beer and dispensing unwelcome marital advice, Calvin and Tucker team up to drive for the Stanleys in an effort to work off the debt while trying to find out what happened to Webb and his load.

Webb's fate soon becomes clear and it's then a case of finding out who was responsible and getting some form of justice for Webb. Our two families are on a collision course.

Family, loyalty, criminality, death, beer, an angry ex-wife, an unhappy teenage son, more beer, an investigation of sorts, a repossessed car with consequences, a late addition to the family business, more than a few close shaves, and an eventual resolution.

Great driving scenes, great humour and dialogue particularly when the bullish Calvin is feeling confrontational, decent characters who bond and grow closer as the book unfolds.

My kind of reading.

4 from 5

I've enjoyed a few from Eric Beetner in the past - White Hot Pistol, The Year I died Seven Times and the co-written Over Their Heads with J.B. Kohl.

I'm looking forward to reading more from him in the future, including the Rumrunners prequel - Leadfoot.

Read in December, 2018

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Format - kindle

[https://col2910.blogspot.com/2018/12/...](https://col2910.blogspot.com/2018/12/)

Adam Howe says

The blurb describes Eric Beetner's RUMRUNNERS as Smokey and the Bandit meets Justified meets Fargo, and it's that and more. (It was written before Fargo S2 aired, but there are welcome shades of the Gerhardt/Kansas City firm feud.) This tale of feuding outlaw clans moves pedal-to-the-metal fast. Fun characters (elderly wheelman Calvin McGraw steals the show), great dialogue, and a cinematic prose style. Beetner works his similes/metaphors like Lansdale his own self. Yeah, I liked this a lot. Oh, and these covers from publisher 280 Steps are just terrific.

Michelle Turlock isler says

Rumrunners was a dark, action packed novel about two guys teaming up and taking on one of Iowa's most feared crime families. Welcome to the life of the McGraws versus the Stanleys. This is going to be a bumpy ride, no doubt. But, Eric Beetner knows how to take a mixture of violence, crime, fast cars, tough men, and a perfect amount of wit and turn it into a great book.

Calvin McGraw is a crusty, 86-year-old man who spent his youth as a rumrunner for the Stanley clan. Years later, Webb McGraw, Calvin's son, is a driver for the Stanleys. Times have changed and Webb is driving trucks filled with drugs instead of liquor. He makes a call to his son, Tucker McGraw, asking if he would like to make the run with him. Tucker has no interest in continuing the family tradition of criminal activity and refuses to have anything to do with his father or grandfather. All that is about to change when Webb and the Stanley truck go missing. Now, the Stanley family come to Tucker's house to claim their ten million dollars.

Tucker has to call a grandfather that he has avoided for three years to search for the help needed to get these bad guys out of his life. Calvin shows up and the fun begins.

Beetner entertains you with a fast paced dialogue, quick wit, and the perfect amount of violence. This novel was gritty and dark with a layer of family bonding and love. His characters are so likable and I found myself hoping the ride would continue into another book. I loved the McGraw guys. They were a fun team that I missed as soon as I finished that last page.

Elizabeth A. says

Calvin McGraw has seen and done a lot in his 86 years, a great bit of it illegal. Let's get one thing clear up front though: Calvin McGraw is no criminal—he's an outlaw. It's a distinction that makes all the difference in the world to the McGraw family, who have been the go-to drivers for the Stanley clan's off-the-books enterprise for almost a century.

Now though, there's trouble in outlaw paradise, in more ways than one. For starters, the McGraw-Stanley connection already looked to be coming to an end. Though Calvin had successfully passed the shifter to his son, Webb, Calvin's grandson, Tucker, decided to break the chain, opting instead to go into the insurance business. It was a move Calvin and Webb found both disappointing and embarrassing, but in the end they could live with it.

A bigger problem has taken center stage, however, one the McGraws may not be able to live with. Tapped by Stanley patriarch Hugh for a high-stakes and well-paying job, Webb is reluctant to admit he can't drive an eighteen-wheeler. Instead, Webb enlists the aid of a driver he barely knows, and things go very badly indeed—the cargo is hijacked from Webb, who takes a few hard bumps in the process. Now Webb has two choices: go on the run, or go back to Hugh and admit he lost the precious cargo.

Cut to Tucker's living room, where he receives a visit from his Stanley family counterpart. Unlike Tucker, the young Stanley is all-in with his family's business, and informs Tucker that Webb has gone missing, along with a tremendously important cargo. Being family, Tucker is told the responsibility now belongs to him and is given an ultimatum: deliver the cargo or the financial equivalent—ten million dollars. Unable to get in contact with Webb, Tucker does the only thing he can think of, which is to team up with octogenarian Calvin, who's more than up for one last wild ride—he's gonna find out what happened to his son, or die trying.

Rumrunners, the latest from author Eric Beetner, is a wild ride indeed. As he's demonstrated so skillfully in his previous work, Beetner has a rare talent for combining breakneck action, pitch-black noir, and razor-sharp wit. The McGraw clan is one of the most charismatic and engaging set of characters I've come across in quite some time, with beer-guzzling, never say die old coot Calvin gleefully leading the charge. And Beetner has given Calvin his equal in Stanley patriarch Hugh, a man who has amassed a fortune by playing every angle possible, even if it means selling out and betraying old allies.

Loaded to the gills with muscle cars engaged in frantic chases, guns-blazing shootouts, drug lab arson, and some laugh-out-loud funny improvised hand-to-hand combat—you'll never look at your garden shed quite the same way again—Rumrunners is a visual bonanza that reads like it was made for the screen. Not entirely surprising given that LA-based Beetner's day job just happens to be that of TV show editor and producer. Not lost in the madhouse shuffle, however, is the fact the McGraw family genuinely cares for each other, and does live by a strict moral compass. It's one that may run afoul of the law on occasion, but never of the outlaw code.

The ending of Rumrunners leaves open the possibility of more McGraw action down the road, and I for one sure hope to get another chance to buckle up with Calvin and the gang and go for another wild ride.

Scott Cumming says

An endorsement of this book might be that it wasn't even the one I intended to read next. I just happened to pick it up and have a look over the first few lines as I am sometimes wont to do. This look turned into reading the first chapter, then the second chapter and then I was reeled in.

The book introduces us to the McGraw family, who have been driving and delivering goods for the Stanley crime family for a century. Octogenarian, Calvin McGraw, is the patriarch of the family and is struggling with his retirement out in Omaha. His son, Webb, still works for the Stanleys and is tasked with delivering a truckload of unprocessed meth. Tucker McGraw, Webb's son, has diverged from the family tradition and is a divorced insurance salesman with visitation rights every other weekend.

Webb goes missing with his cargo and this brings one of Stanley's men to Tucker's door to inform him the \$10 million debt is now his. Tucker calls his Granddad Calvin in an effort to find out what's happened to Webb and clear the debt. Chaos ensues.

There's plenty of death within these pages, but the book is a smooth-flowing light-hearted romp. There aren't many 86 year olds kicking ass and taking names in crime fiction these days, so Calvin is a wonderful creation. There's no real description of him that I can remember and I pictured him as more a wiry scrapper than an Eastwood figure. As befitting a book about a driving family, there is plenty of action and car chases to go with the laughs.

"The hardest working man in crime fiction" has done it again and I'm looking forward to reading the prequel and the eventual third entry in this series.

Steph Post says

One of the best crime novels I've read this year. Fast, fun and brilliantly crafted. I will definitely be checking out the prequel.

David Nemeth says

Eric Beetner's *Rumrunners* (280 Steps) accomplished two firsts for me: this is the first book I've read by Beetner and the first book I've read from the publisher, 280 Steps. This was followed quickly by the fact that I will be reading more books by Beetner and 280 Steps in the near future.

Rumrunners opens with an old man at a donut counter where Calvin McGraw gets into an argument with the hipster-donut-slinger about electric cars.

“What’s wrong with electric cars?”

Calvin rolled his eyes. He wanted to sit and watch his cars in silence. Longing and regret about the past was a solitary hobby.

“Nothing other than everything. They’re fuckin’ stupid.”

“I happen to drive a Prius.”

“Of course you do.” Calvin swiveled on his stool. He wasn’t sure if the skinny guy was being bold because Calvin’s age made him feel safe, but he was sure the guy had no clue who he was dealing with.

The hipster didn’t and, as *Rumrunners* progresses, neither does anyone else who encounters the McGraws.

Beetner’s novel is the story of two Iowa crime families, the Stanelys who are trying run Iowa City, and the McGraws who do the Stanely’s smuggling. These two multi-generational families square off between lies and betrayal, as the McGraws have to stay ahead of the threats and bullets of the Stanleys using the only thing they know, good old Detroit-made cars. *Rumrunners* is a great American road drama filled with speed, drugs, murder and treachery. The prequel, *Leadfoot*, comes out tomorrow and I’ll be reading it.

Rory Costello says

Eric Beetner really commands his material here. He excels at maintaining momentum -- if you like real car chases (with classic vehicles) and fights (especially with improvised weapons at hand), you've got 'em galore in *Rumrunners*. But what makes this story really work is the characters he creates: the McGraw family in particular, led by beer-guzzling 86-year-old patriarch Calvin, who refuses to recognize the passage of time. This is just a whole lot of fun.
