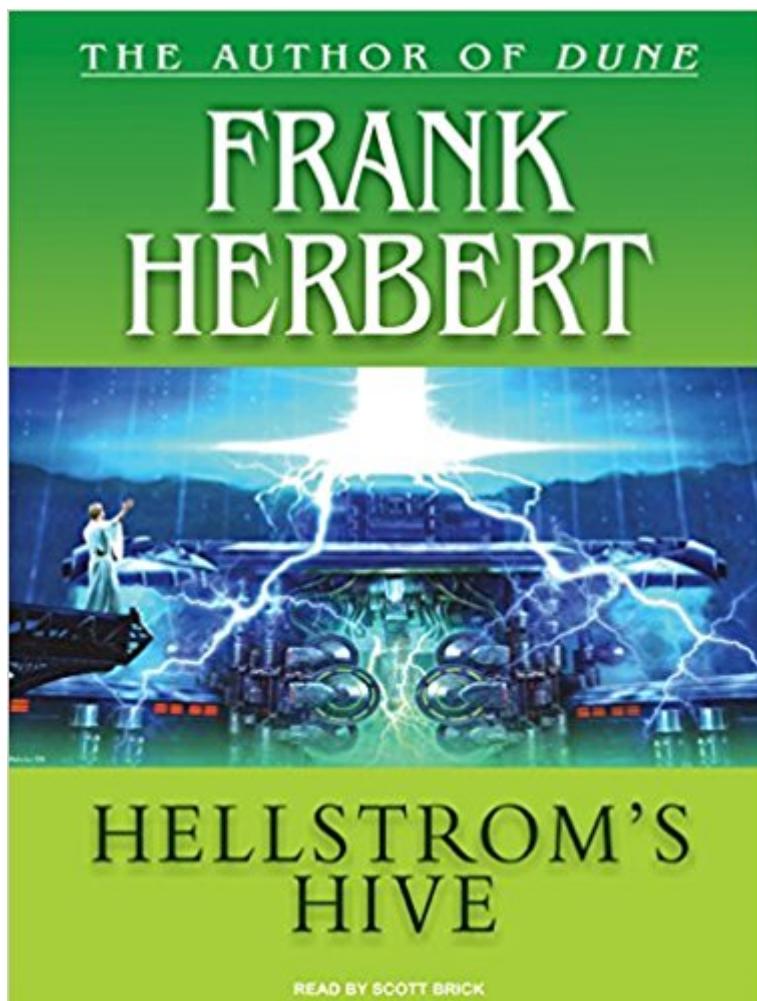


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Hellstrom's Hive



Synopsis

America is a police state, and it is about to be threatened by the most hellish enemy in the world: insects. When the Agency discovered that Dr. Hellstrom's Project 40 was a cover for a secret laboratory, a special team of agents was immediately dispatched to discover its true purpose and its weaknesses— it could not be allowed to continue. What they discovered was a nightmare more horrific and hideous than even their paranoid government minds could devise. First published in Galaxy magazine in 1973 as "Project 40," Frank Herbert's vivid imagination and brilliant view of nature and ecology have never been more evident than in this classic of science fiction.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. A classic of modern science fiction, Herbert's tale of insects threatening to destroy the Orwellian state that was once America is a vivid and imaginative tale sure to please longtime fans and newcomers alike. Scott Brick's reading is straightforward, but bears a weighty tone that helps to create a stern, almost sedated atmosphere. Once the insects invade, however, Brick never ceases to up the ante and terrify his audience. The characters are rich and wonderfully realized; Dr. Hellstrom himself is exceptionally interpreted. Although written in 1973, Herbert's chilling tale still holds firm and Brick is aware of this. While overacting would have been easy and possibly even acceptable, Brick's understated reading makes this a fantastic experience. A Tor paperback. (May) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"[Narrator Scott] Brick never ceases to up the ante and terrify his audience. The characters are rich

and wonderfully realized.... Brick's understated reading makes this a fantastic experience."

---Publishers Weekly Starred Audio Review

This first thing to know, if you read this book, is that it is helpful--though not necessary--to first watch the film *The Hellstrom Chronicle*. This is an Oscar winning documentary film made in 1971 about insects, but it borrows the trappings of a horror movie. The film proposes that eventually insects will replace humans as the dominant form of life on earth. It is narrated by fictional entomologist, Dr. Nils Hellstrom (portrayed by actor Lawrence Pressman.) After the success of the film, Frank Herbert appropriated the character of Nils Hellstrom and constructed an elaborate back-story that forms the basis of the book. Hellstrom is shown not only to be a documentary film-maker, but also the leader of a secret community of humans that have chosen to pattern their society after social insects. They do this believing their choice will eventually be the salvation of the human race, and that the "wild outsider" human society will eventually self destruct. For centuries the Hive has existed in secret, waiting for the day it will inherit the earth. The plot revolves around a secret government agency that discovers evidence linking Hellstrom to a powerful weapon. Attempting to learn more, the agency sends spies to Hellstrom's farm, ignorant of the human hive that it conceals. Eventually the two groups come into conflict. In my opinion, this is Herbert's best work outside his *Dune* novels. He does several interesting things with the story. The Hive can be viewed as a surrogate for any insular group that rejects conventional society. It has various characteristics of a separatist religious group (the Amish for instance, though there is certainly no other similarity between the Amish and the Hive), of a "free love" hippie commune (more popular in 1972 than today), or of a communist "nest" that aroused paranoia in the 1950's. Indeed, the use of genetic and chemical manipulation by the Hive is somewhat akin to the old communist desire to create a "new socialist man." This comparison doesn't hold as much power today with the Cold War far behind us, but with the new paranoia surrounding the possibility of "radical terrorists" living among us, it is telling how the paranoia continues by finding new targets to focus on. And so--far from becoming dated--Hellstrom's Hive is proving to have a timeless relevance. Another clever thing is the way Herbert sets the Hive in contrast to the Agency. While the Hive has many disgusting and repulsive practices, so too does the Agency--even though it is supposed to represent "the good guys," and "normal humanity." While the Hive is inhuman in many ways, its extreme choices are shown to have a foundation of compassion and concern for its collective members. The Hive is ultimately working toward human survival, even though its means may be disgusting. Meanwhile, the Agency is occupied by ruthless bureaucrats that forcibly draft people into its service and is no better than a mafia dedicated to extortion and

thievery. It sacrifices its own members--not to achieve a collective good--but to serve selfish and secret agendas of those higher in the chain of command. The Hive's morality may be starkly alien, but it has a morality, as opposed to the amoral Agency. The result is that you end up rooting for the Hive, despite all its repulsive practices.

One of my favorites from Herbert.

This was one of the books I remember getting from a book club years ago. I really couldn't even remember what it was about. Just that I really liked it. After all these years I finally found it again and bought one for my brother, too.

A masterpiece.. as good as Dune

Read many many ago and enjoyed it again. It moves quick and has an engaging story. Wish there was a sequel.

A bit dated now but an interesting (if somewhat unlikely) premise that was well developed and very well written. Well paced, well developed characters, good build-up in the action.

I've read it before. Just as gripping the second time. Herbert is a master of Sci Fi and this speculative story about hive minds applied to human beings is no exception.

A lot of Herbert's themes you see in Dune are touched on in Hellstrom's Hive. Although a little dated, still a good read

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