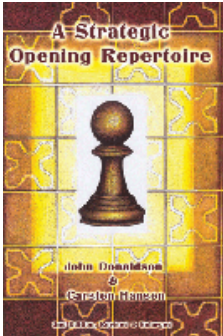




COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Rating Chart

- ♦ – A poor book
- ♦♦ – Not very good
- ♦♦♦ – A useful book
- ♦♦♦♦ – A good book
- ♦♦♦♦♦ – An excellent book

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Reviewed this month:

*The Black Lion,
2nd Edition*
by Jerry van Rekom & Leo Jansen

*Scandinavian Defense,
The Dynamic 3...Qd6,
2nd Edition*
by Michael Melts

*Pirc Alert!,
2nd Edition*
by Lev Alburt & Alexander Chernin

*Starting Out: The Sicilian,
2nd Edition*
by John Emms

Chess Informant, Vol. 104
by Zdenko Krnic (Ed.)

En Passant

*The ABC of Chess Openings,
2nd Edition (DVD)*
by Andrew Martin

*The ABC of the Ruy Lopez,
2nd Edition (DVD)*
by Andrew Martin

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Seconds Please

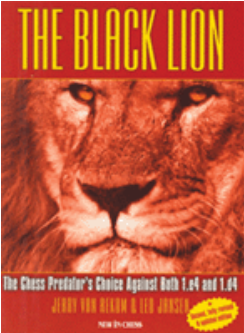
This month we will look at five second editions; however, the approaches to writing them are very different: some are completely rewritten, some have a small amount of new material, and in one case hardly anything of significance has changed. In addition, we will also look at the latest *Chess Informant*, which has been changed quite a bit compared to earlier volumes.

The Black Lion, 2nd Edition by Jerry van Rekom & Leo Jansen, New In Chess 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 280pp., \$27.95

It is rare for a second edition to have less material than the first, but that appears to be the case here. The book that I reviewed in my [June 2002](#) column had sixty-seven more pages than this edition. However, a cleaner layout with less white space and tighter editing, as well as fewer diagrams could be part of the reason. This is likely the result of a change of publisher.

The material in this edition is divided as follows:

- Introduction (2 pages)
- Foreword to the second edition (4 pages)
- The Cub (20 pages)
- The Lion's Den: 3...Nbd7 4 f4 e5 (36 pages)
- The Lion's Claw: 3...Nbd7 4 Nf3 e5 (40 pages)
- The Lion's Roar: 3...Nbd7 4 Nf3 e5 5 Bc4 (58 pages)
- The Lion's Yawn: 3...e5 (46 pages)
- The Lion's Mouth: 3...Nbd7 Anti-Lion System (39 pages)
- Index of Players (13 pages)
- New In Chess Code System (1 page)
- Index of Variations (6 pages)




Much has changed since the publication of the first edition. For one, the title of the book has been modified from *The Lion, The Black Weapon* to its present incarnation (apparently because there is now a White Lion

too). The material has been updated, but there is still an element of amateurish fanaticism in the writing and the selection of the material. For instance, in the introduction, the authors give a standard theoretical move, 6...0-0 in the Philidor, a question mark, which is ridiculous even if it contradicts the direction the authors want to take the book. The Black Lion, by the way, is a version of the Philidor.

With regards to the authors, Leo Jansen plays very well in many of the games, even against strong opposition, but I have been unable to find out his rating. Co-author van Rekom is currently rated below 2000 according to the FIDE website, so we are talking about enthusiastic amateurs. However, despite my reservations regarding their playing strength, the authors make the most of strong computer engines and they are backed up by a strong editorial team at New In Chess.

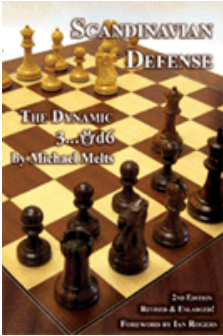
The book is an enjoyable read and a definite improvement over the previous edition. I recommend it to anyone who plays the Philidor or what the authors call the Lion's Yawn: 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 e5. The book has its flaws, but its good nevertheless.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *The Black Lion*
by Jerry van Rekom & Leo Jansen

Scandinavian Defense, The Dynamic 3...Qd6, 2nd Edition by Michael Melts, Russell Enterprises 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 301pp., \$29.95

When I reviewed the first edition of this book in my [January 2002](#) column, I expressed surprise that it was even possible to fill 214 pages on this rarely played variation. Since then, the popularity of this line has absolutely exploded, so I'm not so surprised that this edition fills 301 pages.




The material is divided as follows:

- Forewords and Prefaces (6 pages)
- Others (2 pages)
- Introduction (4 page)
- Part I: Information for Club Chess Players (32 pages)
- Part II: 3 Nc3 Qd6 4 d4 Nf6 5 Bc4 (47 pages)
- Part III: 3 Nc3 Qd6 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 (137 pages)
- Part IV: Fifth Move Alternatives for White after 3 Nc3 Qd6 4 d4 Nf6 (39 pages)
- Part V: Fourth Move Alternatives for Black after 3 Nc3 Qd6 4 d4 (8 pages)
- Part VI: Fourth Move Alternatives for White after 3 Nc3 Qd6 (19 pages)
- Index of Variations (2 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (1 page)
- Bibliography (1 page)

As an example of how comprehensive this update is, there is only one main game that remains from the first edition, the rest are new. Furthermore, because of the surge in popularity, the names of the players in the main games are rather more recognizable in this edition. In the foreword to the second edition, Australian grandmaster Ian Rogers writes: “No doubt there will be lines found in coming years to test Black in the 3...Qd6 Scandinavian. However Melts’ serious study of a serious opening shows that at the moment not much need scare Black. Easy to play and theoretically sound – how many openings can boast that?”

One way that this book is similar to the first edition is that the author still seems to be trying to convince us that the opening is for real; however, we now know that it is, so he can stop trying. The material is also presented in the same way, with very little prose or narrative, just reams of game fragments and analysis, almost exclusively evaluated by Informant-style symbols, which doesn't make for very interesting reading.

As with the first edition, the abundance of original material will take the theory of this variation a great step further. If you play this line with black, or 1 e4 for white, you should certainly invest in this book.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Scandinavian Defense, The Dynamic 3...Qd6*
by Michael Melts

Pirc Alert! A Complete Defense Against 1.e4, 2nd Edition by Lev Alburt & Alexander Chernin, CIRC 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 446pp., \$34.95

In my [March 2001](#) column, I gave this book a very good review. In fact, I was pretty excited about it. The question here is whether the 2009 edition is as good.



First, let's look at the table of contents:

- Part I: About This Book, by GM Lev Alburt (3 chapters – 20 pages)
- Part II: General Themes and Ideas, by GM Alex Chernin (10 chapters – 182 pages)
- Part III: Theoretical Variations, by Chernin & Alburt
- Introduction (3 pages)
- Section One: Introduction: White Strives for e4-e5 (3 chapters – 84 pages)
- Section Two: Introduction: White Concentrates on His Center (3 chapters - 62 pages)
- Section Three: Introduction: Macho on the Kingside (2 chapters – 44 pages)
- Section Four: Introduction: White Plays a “Hybrid” System (1 chapter – 14 pages)
- Section Five: Introduction: White Avoids 3 Nc3 (2 chapters – 23 pages)
- Conclusion (1 page)
- Index of Games (2 pages)
- Table of Variations (4 pages)

If you compare the above with the first edition, you will find that the distribution is identical! This caused me some concern, so I checked the index of games, which references *all* the games quoted in the book. I found the only difference between the first and the second edition is a piece of analysis from James Vigus and fourteen new games. Furthermore, all other game references are on the same page numbers as in the first edition. Remarkably little has changed.

On page 3 in “Note to the 2nd Edition,” Lev Alburt writes “But even when updating Part III, which deals with current theory, I tried to preserve Alex’s masterpiece; thus, my comments are usually in brackets.” Thus, it would seem that Alburt updated the theoretical part without Chernin’s involvement and he didn’t change any recommendations, he just added a total of fifteen references across 227 pages; that is less than *one* change per every ten pages. In my opinion this does not constitute a “2nd Edition, Revised and Updated” as proclaimed on the cover.

With so few changes in the book, you would think that the additions are quite important. Therefore, I decided to take a look at each of them.

1) Antonio-Maltese, the addition is interesting and deserves attention, but is far from analyzed properly: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Bg5 Bg7 5.f4 h6, and now Alburt offers “6.Bxf6 Bxf6 7.e5 Bg7 8.Qf3 gave White good attacking chances after 8...0-0 9 0-0-0 in Antonio-Maltese, 2005. But Black can spoil White’s chances by playing 8...dxe5 9 dxe5 c6 or even the sharp, topical 8...c5.” This is hardly exhaustive analysis, so I gave it further look: 8...c5 [In my opinion 8...dxe5 9.dxe5 c6 isn’t as critical, since White can claim an advantage with 10 Bc4 followed by Nge2] 9.Bb5 + Nd7 10.dxc5 dxe5 11.0-0-0 [11.Nge2 a6 12.Ba4 0-0 13.Rd1 (13.b4 a5 14.a3 e4! is clearly better for Black) 13...Qc7 14.b4 Nf6 with a comfortable game for Black] 11...a6 12.Ba4 [12.c6 axb5 13.cxb7 Rb8 14.bxc8Q Qxc8; 12.Bxd7+ Bxd7 13.Nd5 (13.Qxb7 Rb8 14.Qa7 Ra8 15.Qb7 Rb8=) 13...Bc6 14.Nf6+ Bxf6 15.Rxd8+ Rxd8 16.Qf2 exf4 17.Nf3 0-0, and Black has excellent compensation for the queen] 12...Qc7 13.Qe3!? [13.c6 bxc6 14.Qxc6 Qxc6 15.Bxc6 Ra7 16.fxe5 Bxe5 17.Nd5 Bd6 18.Nf3 0-0=] 13...e6!, and Black is doing fine.

2) Czebe-Chernin – a good, relevant example even if it is only found two pages after where the entire partial games should have been inserted, I guess to avoid changing the typeset of the following two pages.

3) Jacobs-Frumkin – the example isn’t even best play according to Alburt, so I’m not sure why the game is quoted.

4) Jovanovic-Tseshkovsky – This partial game is given at the end of chapter 18 under the header “Updating a Classical Line.” Alburt writes, “In this chapter, some of our 2001 recommendations are no longer valid, especially ...d6-d5 on the sixth or seventh move. Additionally Perelshteyn’s ideas in Line A (p.329), while not refuting Black’s play, must be dealt with. Here is promising alternative idea for Black: 6...a6 7 a4 Nc6 (or 7...a5 8 Be2 Nc6 9 0-0 Nb4 10 Nd2 e5, Jovanovic-Tseshkovsky, 2005).” When going over the above comments, it strikes me that if so many things appear to be wrong, why not re-write that part

of the chapter, but it remains more or less the same, though with inserts of why the given lines don't work any longer. Furthermore, the Perelshteyn idea he mentions appears to have been dealt with in that quote.

5) Karjakin-Mamedyarov – While an interesting idea, the line is neither analyzed nor part of the recommended repertoire, so why even mention it.

6) Litshitz-Zendrowski – is actually Lifshitz-Zendrowski and is attached with a quote from Vigus's book, *The Pirc in Black and White*, "looks good for White," but nothing is suggested to improve on the line for Black or really deviate from it, unless you want to skip way back in the coverage in that particular chapter.

7) Luther-Beliavsky – good example, a main game in Vigus's book, but here only a snippet is covered.

8) Motwani-McNab – another good example, which was also a main game in Vigus's book.

9) Nepomniachtchi-Volokitin – is a relevant new example. According to the index, it can be found on p.443, but this should read p.343.

10) Perelshteyn-Benjamin – the Perelshteyn idea mentioned in item four above.

11) Rublevsky-Kamsky – an irrelevant example that adds nothing to the presentation.

12) Tirard-M.Gurevich – another irrelevant example.

13) Trivino-Peralto – this is also mentioned by Vigus, and is in fact an example of Black following one of the recommendations from the first edition.

14) A piece of analysis by Vigus to which Alburt offers nothing to counter it for Black, and therefore the line as a whole doesn't work for Black. This should have prompted some re-writing, but this wasn't done.

15) Volcu-Dragomirescu – an inconsequential game reference that neither adds nor detracts from the presentation.

In addition to the above examples, there are several comments and pieces of analysis made by Alburt that clearly originate from Vigus's book, but are given without attribution. As a theoretical source, this book shows signs that ninety-five percent of it was written eight years ago and that is a shame. If you bought the first edition, *do not* buy this edition, it will be an utter waste of money. However, because of the very lengthy introduction, and the explanation of typical ideas and plans, I find this book to be better than average as a whole.

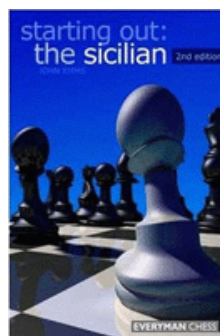
My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦

Order Pirc Alert!

by Lev Alburt & Alexander Chernin

Starting Out: The Sicilian, 2nd Edition by John Emms, Everyman Chess 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 303pp., \$25.95

This book exemplifies the fact that you can take everything that is good in the first edition, which was reviewed in my [July 2002](#) column, and then add a whole bunch of new material to make it even better. The first edition of this book suffered a bit from page restrictions, but Emms managed reasonably well. Here, there is a greater number of pages and the text is more compact, so there is more material on each page as well.



The material is divided as follows:


- Introduction (4 pages)
- The Dragon Variation (35 pages)
- The Najdorf Variation (49 pages)
- The Scheveningen Variation (28 pages)
- The Sveshnikov Variation (23 pages)
- The Classical Variation (30 pages)
- Other Open Sicilians (46 pages)
- Bb5 Systems (23 pages)
- The c3 Sicilian (24 pages)
- Other Lines (26 pages)
- Solution to Exercises (2 pages)
- Index of Variations (6 pages)

- Index of Complete Games (3 pages)

About the second edition Emms writes, “First of all I should stress that this is still a Starting Out book, and as such I hope it will appeal to a similar audience to those who read the first edition published in 2002. However, in this second edition I have taken the opportunity to cover the Sicilian more deeply, expanding on both the ideas and the theory, and widening the coverage to include new developments (one example is the Dragadorf Variation, see game 5) as well as less common lines which didn’t make the first edition. So in effect, as well as Starting Out, there is also a degree of ‘following on’. I’ve updated and expanded both the section introductions and the illustrative games from the first edition. I’ve also added over 20 new games, virtually all of which were played in the new millennium. In general, I’ve chosen the games to illustrate some of the more entertaining and instructive Sicilian battles over the years, not always necessarily those which reflect the current state of theory (this task is sometimes confined to the notes of games and section introductions). All in all, the additions and amendments have resulted in a considerably bigger book, one that’s almost twice the size (in number of words) of the first edition.”

I find Emms to be one of the best chess book authors these days. In my opinion, he has taken what was a rather good book to begin with and made it absolutely excellent. The material touches all the right areas, the annotations and introductions are well-written, the examples well-selected, and, with the expansion of the number of pages, Emms covers everything that is relevant in a book of this type.

For players who are beginning to learn about openings and want a good overview of the many lines that constitute the Sicilian complex, this book is *the* answer. The target audience is as high as 1900 and even stronger players can use some of the examples to enhance their understanding of particular lines. This is a great book.

My assessment of this book: 

Starting Out: The Sicilian
by John Emms

Chess Informant, Vol. 104 by Zdenko Krnic (Ed.), Sahovski Informator 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 325pp., \$27.95

The content of *Chess Informant* is typically divided as follows:

- Contributors (2 pages)
- The Ten Best Games of the Preceding Volume (2 pages)
- The Ten Most Important Theoretical Novelties of the Preceding Volume (4 pages)
- System of Signs (3 pages)
- Classification of Openings (7 pages)
- A (14 + 13 pages)
- B (19 + 24 pages)
- C (15 + 14 pages)
- D (28 + 20 pages)
- E (11 + 12 pages)
- Index of Players (8 pages)
- Index of Commentators (1 page)
- Combinations (4 pages)
- Endings (6 pages)
- Studies (3 pages)
- Tournaments (16 pages)
- Modern Chess Theory (60 pages)
- The Best of Chess Informant – Khalifman (26 pages)
- Chess Informant Information (8 pages)



When I began reading through the pages of the latest volume, I quickly discovered several changes. For instance, on page twenty-one, I found the header “FIDE Ratings World Top 52 Players – October 2008.” Turning to the next page I saw that section “A” also had the heading “2791-2670.” As I put two and two together, it dawned on me that in all the games at least one of the players were from the aforementioned list on page twenty-one. It is only after 152 games (or fragments) that there is an introduction by Aleksandar Matanovic:


“It was a long time ago, I had given a new volume of Chess Informant, with 748 annotated games, to Bobby Fischer. He not only surveyed all of them, but also noted who had annotated the games well and who had not. He said: ‘I will annotate my games myself in the future to show how it should be done.’”

“It has not always been the way it is not – the ‘royal game’ has become the ‘game of millions.’ A database of 3.8 million games appeared; games played today are on the internet within hours; and we are flooded with valuable and mundane achievements. How can we manage all this? Which games deserve attention? Whom should we trust? An avalanche of names and surnames! Leading chess player enrich chess games, point to promising openings, refer to openings ‘written off’ with concealed possibilities, discover new ideas. Fischer never followed or studied everything, but would pick and choose carefully. And it has always been like that – from time immemorial.

“When Chess Informant appeared 43 years ago, it adapted to the needs of chess players of the time. Volume 104 of Chess Informant continues the tradition. A selection of games of the top 52 players from the FIDE rating list (October 2008) is the core content of Volume 104. Of course, it is not only the games of these 52 leading players that contribute to the game of chess. There are also many games of other players who were or will be among the top players, as well as fragments which bring important theoretical novelties, interesting and instructive combinations as well as endings, all saved from obscurity in volume 104. For that is Chess Informant – a collection of everything that contributes to the development of the games of chess!”

This sounds like self-important chatter to me. It neither explains nor justifies the separation of the material in two different sections, nor does it tell us how they reached the decision to make the cut at the top fifty-two players, or why this introduction is in the middle of the book. Why is it suddenly necessary to divide the material in two sections? If it is the Internet, as he seems to suggest, then they seem a little slow to catch on to this development. The instant distribution and access of games has been going on for quite some time. It appears as if the publisher and editors of this renowned publication have seen their distribution dwindling and, in an attempt to make it more relevant, they have changed one of the few things that didn’t need changing. In my opinion, the key problem at Chess Informant is that the strongest players don’t annotate their games as they once did. Of the 152 games and fragments in the first section of this issue about one third are annotated by the editorial staff. In comparison, of 714 complete games in Volume 56 *none* were annotated by the editorial staff.

However, on a more positive note, you will find annotations by (in alphabetical order) Anand, Bologan, Bu Xiangzhi, Dominguez, Dreev, Gelfand, Ivanchuk, Kramnik, Rublevsky, Sasikiran, Svidler, and Tiviakov. Moreover, the editors have begun including surveys of topical lines. In the sixty-page section called “Modern Chess Theory,” they offer 47(!) pages of coverage on the Sveshnikov Variation [B33], and to their credit they even reference games that have never been published in *Chess Informant*. Furthermore, there are articles on the Caro-Kann Advance [B12] as well as the Slav lines [D12] and [D17]. The inclusion of the theoretical articles is great, but more needs to be done if this chess institution is to remain relevant.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Chess Informant, Vol. 104*
by Zdenko Krnic (Ed.)

The ABC of Chess Openings, 2nd Edition (DVD) by Andrew Martin,
ChessBase GmbH 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Running time 6 h
24 m, \$36.95

The first edition of this DVD was originally reviewed in the [July 2005](#) column. I’m not familiar with any other DVD that has seen a second edition, so this speaks volumes for Andrew Martin’s popularity as a presenter on these products. This second edition features an additional seventy-five minutes of footage, including repertoire suggestions.


My estimation of this product is quite similar to that of the original edition. While Martin’s presentation is pleasant, light-hearted, and entertaining, the publisher’s promotional claims are absolutely absurd. For example, they write that “strong and even very strong players will enjoy the investigations into some excellent modern novelties.” This is of course complete nonsense.

While the new repertoire suggestions make the DVD even more attractive to beginning or intermediate players, the presentations are very superficial in the context of the openings as a whole. For instance, in the first new



segment under repertoire suggestions, Martin has chosen the beautiful game Short-Fridman to showcase the Bishop’s Opening. The starting moves were 1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Nf6 3 d3 Nc6 4 Nf3, and Black played 4…h6. Martin mentions 4…Be7 and 4…Bc5, but fails to mention that with White’s fourth move, the game transposed to a Two Knights Defense, and if Black had played 4…Bc5, he could have forced a transposition to an Italian Game.

This DVD will provide plenty of chess entertainment for the money, but offers very limited knowledge or information in return. The target audience of this product is up to a rating of around 1500.

My assessment of this DVD: 

[Order](#) *The ABC of Chess Openings*
by Andrew Martin

The ABC of the Ruy Lopez, 2nd Edition (DVD) by Andrew Martin,
ChessBase GmbH 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$34.95

The first edition of this DVD was also originally reviewed in the [July 2005](#) column. I found this to be the better of the two DVDs reviewed this month. Not only is it more relevant, it also goes into more detail, as it is focused on only one opening complex. In comparison with the first edition of this DVD, there are an additional seven segments: three are on the Berlin Defense, one is on the Schliemann Defense, one on the Gajewski Variation, one on the Steinitz Variation (or so they write, but it is the Deferred Steinitz Variation), and there is an ‘Outro’ segment.



If you are interested in this product, I highly recommend you read my original review of the first edition as it gives a good picture of what you can expect from it. Of the new segments, the ones on the Berlin Defense are the most insightful. Martin clearly explains some of the main features of the variation in a way that the target audience, players rated up to around 1700, will be able to understand and appreciate. Nevertheless, the first game he has chosen is rather awful, with the much lower-rated black player exhibiting a rather limited understanding of the variation. The segments on the Schliemann and Gajewski are less relevant and do not really cover anything in depth or touch upon the best play from both sides.

Beginning and intermediate players who are considering taking up the Ruy Lopez as white could well appreciate this DVD. For anyone rated above 1700, the material will largely be simplistic, even if Martin is an entertaining presenter.

My assessment of this DVD: 

The ABC of the Ruy Lopez
by Andrew Martin