

ON THE COVER

BASEBALL: THE TENTH INNING

A FILM BY KEN BURNS & LYNN NOVICK

If you are a Ken Burns fan, you're in luck! Not only does his most recent film, *The Tenth Inning* – an update to his 1994 series *Baseball* – air this month (tpt2: September 28 & 29, 7pm), but during his recent trip to the Twin Cities, he also gave tpt Magazine an in-depth interview. Editor Lorena Duarte asked Mr. Burns about his love for baseball, his future projects and what motivates and inspires him.

tpt: This is the first time you've revisited a topic; what prompted you to make *The Tenth Inning*?

KB: We never intended to do a sequel to the series. But it was realizing that these last two decades have been the most consequential in baseball history, dealing with the strike and steroids, dealing with the rise and influence of Latin players and Asian players. It's been an incredibly productive time.

tpt: What is it about baseball that fascinates you?

KB: We like to think of American history as a series of presidential administrations punctuated by wars, but you learn very little there. If you cover baseball, you find out about those administrations ... the wars ... but you also get to deal with race, with tensions between labor and management, you get to deal with the exclusion of women, you get to deal with the nature of heroes and villains and fools in this society, popular culture and advertising, the growth and decay and rebirth of cities as we build new ball parks, immigration and assimilation, these are all themes that get caught up in baseball.

tpt: This is probably an impossible question, but among your many films, do you have a favorite?

KB: It's like picking your babies. I'm fortunate enough to work with public television so I'm able to make the films that I want to make. I hope they each reflect the best of me and of that time when I was making them. Duke Ellington ... said it best, when he was asked which was his most important composition, he said, "The one I'm working on right now."



Ken Burns at Target Field



tpt: Speaking of which, what is your next project?

KB: Next fall, we'll have a three-part, six hour history of Prohibition. The year after that, we'll have an at least two-part, at least four-hour look at the Dustbowl, still the largest man-made ecological disaster. The year after that we'll have two films, one on the Central Park jogger case in which five Black and Hispanic kids were charged with a crime they didn't commit, and then later on a major series – to equal in size, or greater than *The National Parks* – on the history of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, that's in 2013. Then in 2015 we'll have another massive series on the history of Vietnam, timed to the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon. And we're working on developing another biography, perhaps on Jackie Robinson or Martin Luther King or Ernest Hemmingway and also preparing another massive series on the history of country music.

tpt: Why take on so much?

To try and unite this incredibly fractured country. Everyone is red state or blue state, North, South, East, West, black, white, brown – we always note the distinctions rather than what we share in common. And all my films have tried to speak to not to one particular group, but to everybody.

tpt: How do you bridge those gaps?

KB: Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the great, late historian, was fond of saying that we suffer today from too much “pluribus” and not enough “unum.” My job, for the last 35 years, has about unum. That is, to speak to everybody, to find a way in which words and images and stories can unite. To remind people that they possess –that is to say share – a past. And that no matter what your apparent differences of sex or race

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or geography or political or sexual orientation, 99 percent of us want the same things for our kids. And that too often, in our media culture we promote those people who are the bomb throwers, who get to scream “fire” in a crowded theater ... but it is not enough to just shake our heads, we have to do something about it. And I have tried to dedicate my professional life to being an alternative to that.

tpt: You're well loved here in the Twin Cities, any final words for your Minnesota fans?

KB: I was blown away 20 years ago by a quote I heard from Tyrone Guthrie and he said, “We are looking for ideas large enough to be afraid of again.” I heard that, I typed it up and I put it on my office wall. I see it every day when I go in, and I think about it. I've tried in my own work to do that and I think that's in some ways the mission of **tpt**, to expand people's horizons and to serve everyone.

2 Tuesday & Wednesday, September 28 & 29, 7pm

