

Blu-Ray Review: Ken Burns Returns to National Pastime With ‘Baseball: The Tenth Inning’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 11, 2010 - 7:50pm

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CHICAGO – Steroids, interleague play, expanded playoffs, the Red Sox finally winning, McGwire vs. Sosa, Bonds vs. the world, the strike, the influx of Hispanic players, The Yankees, The Braves, and, of course, the continued futility of the Cubs — the last two decades of baseball have been two of the most notable in the history of this timeless sport. It only makes sense that the great documentarian Ken Burns would update his 18.5-hour opus about the sport with “Baseball: The Tenth Inning,” now available on Blu-ray and DVD.



Blu-Ray Rating: **4.0/5.0**

As Burns says in one of the special features on “The Tenth Inning,” baseball accompanies our national narrative. It is a prism for society. It mirrors our priorities — good and bad. And so he felt a need to update his original PBS mini-series “Baseball” with another four hours — two for the top of the tenth and two for the bottom of the tenth. And, as he says after writing narration in the original that said “The Red Sox would never win another World Series,” — “We’ve done this update because the Red Sox won the World Series in 2004.”

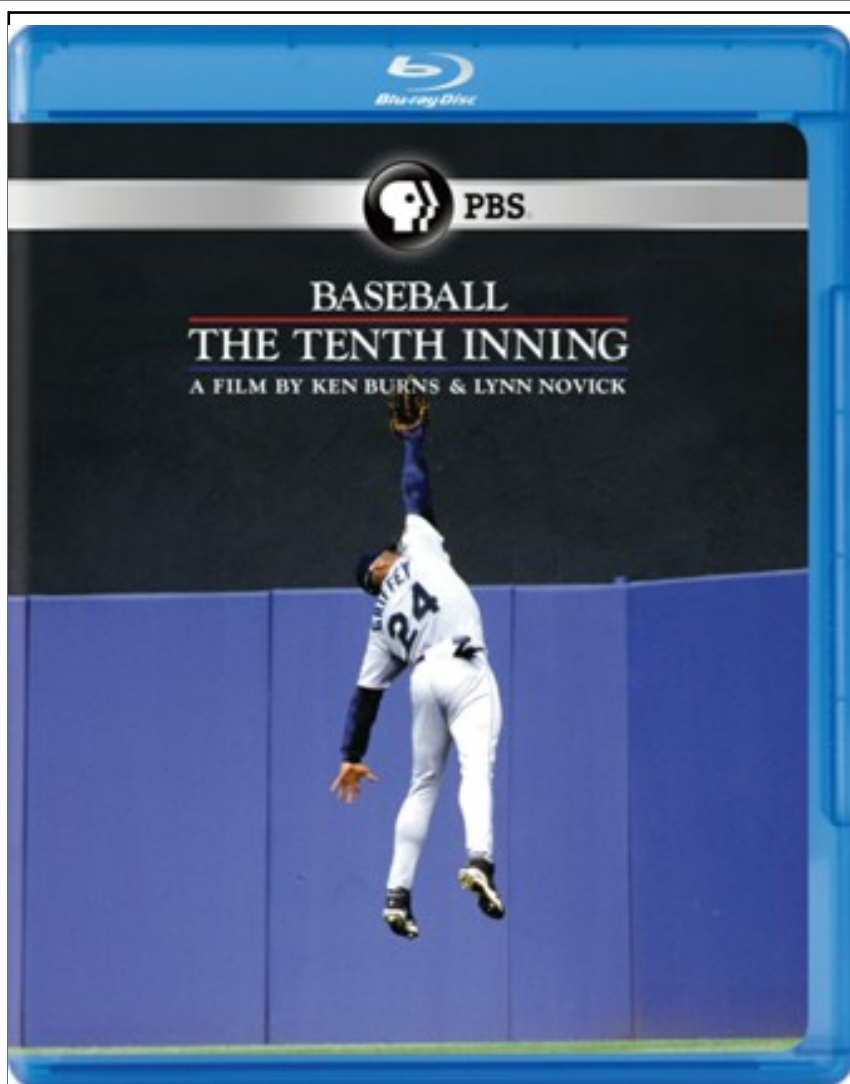


Baseball: The Tenth Inning was released on Blu-ray and DVD on October 5th, 2010

Photo credit: PBS/Paramount

Honestly, the last eighteen years of baseball have been so remarkably filled with stories from the strike to steroids to the dominance of power hitters that, if anything, four hours isn’t nearly enough for the last two decades of activity. You could do four hours on steroids alone. Consequently, “The Tenth Inning” sometimes feels a little hurried. The pacing doesn’t feel quite as perfect as it did in the larger package. I

love spending a large amount of time with Joe Torre about his first World Series with the Yankees but I would love that more if I didn't feel like other stories were being truncated. It could be merely because I'm such a gigantic baseball fan, but "The Tenth Inning" doesn't seem nearly long enough.



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Photo credit: PBS/Paramount

For the record, Bob Costas, George Will, Doris Kearns-Goodwin, Tom Verducci, Marcus Breton, Joe Torre, Pedro Martinez, Ichiro Suzuki, Keith Olberman, Chris Rock, and many more offer interviews about the major stories of the last two decades timed to narration by the great Keith David. In case you're concerned that "The Tenth Inning" is all about steroids, that's not even close to the case. In fact, I would argue that Burns somewhat glosses over the issue. "Baseball: The Tenth Inning" is a love letter to the sport and they don't ignore steroids but they also don't go after the players who used them too strongly, even arguing that cheating has always been a part of the sport and that anyone would take a drug if it would make them millions of dollars. Yes and no.

The point is that you need to go into "Baseball: The Tenth Inning" with the awareness that it is an ode to the sport more than a dissection of it. It continues to present the national pastime as more than just a sport. Baseball is history, commentary, and a reflection of society. If you agree with such idolization of the sport and people that play it then you will likely adore "Baseball: The Tenth Inning." It is incredibly well-made, entertaining, and, as with all Burns, brilliantly structured.

The HD video on "The Tenth Inning" looks better than you might expect for a PBS documentary. It's pretty great. The special features are interesting. A twenty-minute interview with Burns and producer/writer Lynn Novick is pretty informative and additional scenes and interview outtakes are fun side dishes to the full meal.

"Baseball: The Tenth Inning" was released by PBS/Paramount on October 5th, 2010 on Blu-ray and DVD.



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