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BLUE END

(DOCU - SWITZERLAND)

An eXtra Film production. Produced by Kaspar Kasics. (International sales: First Hand Films, Zurich.)

Directed, written by Kaspar Kasics. Camera (color), Pierre Menel; editor, Kasics; music, Mich Gerber. Reviewed at Locarno Film Festival (Critics' Week), Aug. 10, 2000. English dialogue. Running time: 83 MIN.

A bizarre, at times morbid look at the ever-popular subject of capital punishment in America, "Blue End" by Swiss documaker Kaspar Kasics examines the case of murderer Joseph Paul Jernigan, executed in Huntsville, Texas, in 1993. His body was donated to science and sliced into 2-millimeter sections after his death. Scanned and digitized into a computer model, he achieved posthumous fame and "immortality" as the Visible Human Project, a favorite Internet site for anatomy students. Shot entirely in American English, docu may well attract U.S. cable interest.

Pic shifts back and forth between interviews with Jernigan's anguished relatives (particularly moving are the comments of his older brother Bob), lawyers and judges who debate the American justice system, and the Colorado U. scientist who did the slicing. The mix of social, judicial, scientific and human points of view on this man-turned-virtual mummy forces the viewer to make some very uncomfortable connections and makes for intriguing, if far from pleasant, viewing. Print screened in Locarno's Critics' Week had explanatory German titles beneath the interviewees' names.

— Deborah Young