



# *The* Mascot

*The story of an old man's search for his true identity  
and how a Jewish orphan became a poster boy for the Nazi ideal*



# The Mascot

**Writers/Producers** Mark Kurzem, Lina Caneva  
**Director** Lina Caneva  
**Duration** 55 minutes  
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*For most of his life, Alex Kurzem harboured a secret...*

As a five-year-old Russian orphan in World War Two, he had been found by Latvian soldiers, made their mascot and given a new name and birthdate. But Alex was actually a Jew, kept alive by those who were exterminating his people. With his real identity hidden, he became a poster boy for the Nazi ideal and was taken into a Latvian family, who later immigrated to Australia.

For 50 years, Alex lived a quiet, suburban life in Melbourne. After a stint as an elephant boy in Wirth's Circus, he married, had three sons and worked as an electrician. He never revealed his secret, even to his wife and children. Then, in 1996, a series of events changed his decision to take his secret to the grave.

All he remembered of his origins were two words: "Koidanov" and "Panok". They would lead him on a quest back to eastern Europe with his son, filmmaker Mark Kurzem. There, he rediscovered his past and found a host of relatives he never suspected he had. Back in Australia, however, his revelations would be met with surprise, even denial, and raise difficult and emotional questions.

**The Mascot** is the story of Alex's search for his true history and the unexpected impact that had on his family, community and himself.