“We died when we started writing this album,” say Sorry, preparing to release *COSPLAY*, their third studio album, set for release on 7th November on Domino. But if Sorry did, indeed, die before a note had been recorded, before a single word had even been jotted down, who the hell are this bunch now masquerading as Sorry? Who has donned the Sorry outfits so convincingly? Who is it that has recorded *COSPLAY*, this album that first meticulously erases and then extravagantly redraws the perimeters of what a contemporary rock’n’roll band can achieve? Welcome to the world of *COSPLAY*, where anyone can be anyone, past or present, real or imaginary, dead or alive.

With *COSPLAY*, Sorry don’t preoccupy themselves with satisfying the criteria of what a genre is supposed to sound like, nor do they play by the well-established rules and formulae of the trade. *COSPLAY* sees Sorry unapologetically diving headfirst into the well of inspiration and emerging reborn in a world of limitless creativity. What happens if you imagine the world’s most recognisable cartoon character as a shadowy player in a sultry siren call (‘Waxwing’)? How would the clarion call of Dayton, Ohio’s finest lo-fi scuzz-poppers, Guided By Voices, fit into a twitchy number about celebrity seediness (‘Jetplane’)? What if a meditation on Boltzmann’s entropy formula could be soundtracked by a heavy-hitting rock tune (‘Today Might Be The Hit’)? It’s all waiting for you on *COSPLAY*.

Sorry say, “*We are lost in time, we don’t have details to grab onto, nothing lasts forever. We just wear things from the past as they are the only thing to hold onto. We are all in an act of Cosplaying something that doesn’t exist*”.

The first track to be finished from the batch of songs that eventually became *COSPLAY* was the album closer, ‘JIVE’. It was unlike anything they had recorded to date: dramatic synth lines over pounding drums, a dance hit for the half-dead. Its completion also functioned as a proof of concept; this is the direction that Sorry were going to take for their next record. It was urgent and mesmerising, driven by an incessant vocal: “*I wanna jive tonight / I wanna swing my hips*.” This was music that synthesised over seventy years of recorded music – one of the legacies of the digital age in which Sorry grew up – and emerged as something entirely fresh and modern.

*COSPLAY* is filled to the brim with references from pop culture, little nods here and there to the world that Sorry have constructed and inhabit. Sorry don’t dress up as their icons, they address them in their songs. ‘Waxwing’ imagines a Mickey Mouse that lurks in the shadows of your brain, always there but never present. Guided By Voices’ iconic call to arms, “*Hot Freaks*”, bookends ‘Jetplane’, a track about A-List sleaze. ‘In The Dark’ references the Japanese author Yukio Mishima, who died by seppuku and whose books Lorenz and O’Bryen shared while recording *COSPLAY*. ‘Candle’ is a nod to Bob Dylan’s ‘Blowing In The Wind’, a reaction to the world’s brief but intense Timothée Chalamet-fuelled Dylan craze.

Sorry also look within for inspiration just as much as they look at the world around them. And this is where the world of *COSPLAY* really begins to sharpen into something extraordinary, pitting those contemporary cultural observations against knowing introspections. For instance, the “*hold me*” sample at the beginning of ‘Echoes’ is lifted from the vocals of one of O’Bryen’s earliest SoundCloud uploads, while ‘JIVE’ first found life as a much-loved demo on Lorenz’s own SoundCloud profile. It is clear that Sorry strive proudly to look forwards yet they always keep one eye on their past; some things are too important to be forgotten.

Nor is Sorry’s recording process a linear one. A number of songs on *COSPLAY* first came together at the studio that O’Bryen and Lorenz share, with the resulting demos’ samples and quirks being integrated into the final recorded track. Other songs were recorded primarily with the band and then taken back to their studio to undergo their signature sampling process. Many of the album’s tracks were bounced around a number of studios, picking up melodies, samples and harmonies that ultimately lie buried within the final tracks like hidden treasure: the cascading vocal manipulation on ‘Into The Dark’, the pulsing keyboard part in the chorus of ‘Echoes’, the screams at the end of ‘Magic’. *COSPLAY* is made up of these little jewels, plundered from different brains and moments in time, and brought together to form something that sparkles.

*COSPLAY* was recorded across a number of studios with a cohort of different co-producers, engineers and mixers. Dan Carey lends his production skills, alongside O’Bryen and Lorenz, to eight of the album’s eleven tracks. It was decided that five tracks needed the mixing touch of legendary hip hop mixer Neal H. Pogue whereas the other six were taken on by Marta Salogni.

This requisitioning of the band’s favourite moments from music and popular culture, combined with a readiness to experiment to find the right sound, gives *COSPLAY* a deep, multi-layered feel. The music is urgent and instantly gratifying, yet also full of odd subtleties that only reveal themselves over time. This is classic songwriting refracted through a 21st century prism; the offspring of the digital age rewriting the rules.

A true multimedia outfit these days, the band have fully embraced the devouring and processing of popular culture as part of the band’s identity. The band’s beefed up live show features distinctive samples triggered by synth and programming wizard Marco Pini, who forms the rest of the band alongside Campbell Baum (bass) and Lincoln Barrett (drums). These samples are quirky, often humorous, extracts that function as little windows into Sorry’s world. These are the foundations of the band’s identity and, by extension, *COSPLAY*.

Another key feature to the Sorry narrative is their visual identity, expressed through the band’s videos that Lorenz directs herself alongside another childhood friend, Flo Webb, under the director moniker FLASHA. The band have released a string of singles ahead of the album, each serving to reinforce their lore. The video for ‘Waxwing’ depicts warped versions of Disney’s favourite son as a participant in a seductive dance. In ‘Jetplane’, we see dancers wearing masks that are crude representations of celebrity faces. The ‘JIVE’ video deals with the terrifying, awe-inspiring development that is artificial intelligence; its contribution to a creeping cultural laziness pitted against its undeniably awesome power. *“Our visuals are vital to the world Sorry: they fit into the idea of COSPLAY where we flip iconic and cultural symbols on their heads to demonstrate the humorous and dark sides lurking beneath them*.” says Lorenz.

The inspiration behind ‘Echoes’, the first track on *COSPLAY,* came from a poetry night Asha would often attend. The story of a little boy shouting into the void “*echo, echo, echo/ I love you echo*”, recounted by one of the performers, became the genesis for the album-opener. Built around the crystalline alt-pop hook of Lorenz’s breathless vocals (“*I love you echo / echo echo echo*”), delivered at breakneck speed like a mantra to live and die by, the track becomes a love song to “*echo*”, that is the sensation of being something or someone caught between two people. “*You don’t know if you’re calling for them or you*,” explains Lorenz. ‘Today Might Be The Hit’ marries the unfortunate life of Ludwig Boltzmann, whose entropy formula was dismissed in his lifetime and later immortalised on his gravestone, with a full-on guitar and drums number that sits squarely in the garage rock tradition. ‘Life In This Body’, one of the album’s quieter moments, deals with the sensation of being torn between one’s desire to free oneself from the longstanding relationships one has built and a recognition of the love one has for the people involved, every single version of them; this uncertainty delivered through O’Bryen’s delicate vocals.

Sorry played their biggest shows to date when they supported Fontaines DC on their UK and Ireland arena tour in the final few weeks of 2024. Playing massive rooms in front of thousands of people necessitated a scaling up of the band’s sound, a new reckoning of what they could achieve. This ambition has, no doubt, bled into *COSPLAY*, bringing with it a new-found confidence as to who Sorry are and could be. Fresh off the back of a triumphant Glastonbury set, they are about to embark on another arena tour, this time with indie legends, The Maccabees, ahead of an appearance at End Of The Road to round off the summer.

We know already that Sorry died when they started writing *COSPLAY*. Whoever these imposters are cosplaying as Sorry, they are certainly doing it their own way. Sorry are dead. Long live Sorry.