Few artists embody boundless creativity quite like Lindsey Stirling. Not only a multi-award-winning musician known for her genre-bending virtuosity on electronic violin, she’s endlessly dazzled audiences with her extraordinary talents as a dancer—an element she brings to the stage as part of her spectacular live show, touring with a stunning frequency and continually selling out iconic venues all around the world. Also a *New York Times* bestselling author (and creator of her own comic book), the platinum-selling star felt compelled to push her boundaries even further for her seventh full-length effort, ultimately embracing a whole new level of freedom in her songwriting. A visionary meditation on inner wisdom, personal strength, and the ever-shifting nature of identity, *Duality* arrives as Stirling’s most sonically daring and emotionally complex album to date.

“For a long time I was trying to limit this album to a specific sound, but finally I decided to stop containing myself—and that’s when I started writing the songs that I loved the most,” says Stirling. “Over time I realized that those songs were coming from two very distinct parts of me in terms of their sound, which made me think about how we all have multiple sides of ourselves that we can choose to share with the world. I ended up creating what feels like two different albums in one, but at the same time it’s all completely me.”

Made with producers/co-writers like Graham Muron (Thirty Seconds to Mars, Skrillex) and Lucky West (Walk the Moon, Dreamers), *Duality* encompasses a dozen songs showcasing Stirling’s refined musicality and gift for sculpting deeply expressive melodies. But while the album’s first half centers on a grandiose and elaborately composed sound informed by Celtic music and other global influences, its latter half leans toward a boldly original form of left-of-center pop. A profoundly imaginative songwriter whose past work includes such high-concept albums as 2019’s *Artemis*—a No. 1 on Billboard’s Top Dance/Electronic Albums chart—Stirling makes brilliant use of each sonic setting by exploring intricate questions of intuition and truth. “I called this album *Duality* because I’m so intrigued by the idea that we’re all so multifaceted, and that sometimes those different sides of us are in direct conflict with each other,” she says. “One moment we feel brave and powerful, and then very quickly we feel small and insecure. It all comes down to asking yourself, ‘Which part do you want to nurture? Which part will end up serving you best?’”

Although Stirling recorded most of *Duality*’s violin parts on her own at her home studio, her songwriting process brought her to such far-flung cities as Stockholm and Paris. “I knew I wanted to try something new, and traveling to other countries and getting into writing rooms with strangers really helped to crack me open,” says Stirling. After a period of struggling to hone in on her vision for the LP, she experienced a breakthrough with a track called “Untamed”: a thrillingly majestic piece matching her mesmerizing violin work with ferocious guitar riffs, bombastic rhythms, and sudden bursts of otherworldly vocals. “‘Untamed’ was the first song in about a year that made me feel alive as I was writing it,” Stirling recalls. “It started with me saying, ‘Let’s write fairy music, let’s do something wild and free and Celtic and rock,’ and it went in a much more cinematic direction than my music typically does. It felt so exciting to me, and helped me find the sound for the first half of the album.”

Partly inspired by Glennon Doyle’s philosophically rooted memoir of the same name, “Untamed” soon catalyzed the writing of *Duality*’s opening track, the stormy but exhilarating “Evil Twin.” “We were playing around with some of the pizzicato notes from ‘Untamed’ and tuned them down so that it created a darker sound—almost like an evil twin of that song,” says Stirling, referring to the plucking technique she frequently incorporates into her music. “As I was writing I was thinking about the concept of duality, and how sometimes we have to fight to overcome the parts that don’t serve us.” In shining a light on the more shadowy aspects our being, Stirling dreamed up an exquisitely frenetic track whose whirlwind energy builds to a formidable drop at the chorus. With its dizzying back-and-forth between bright and dark, chaos and control, “Evil Twin” makes for a potent introduction to *Duality*’s infinitely shapeshifting soundscape.

Produced by her frequent collaborator Mako (a musician/songwriter/producer whose credits include co-producing many top-selling releases from video-game giant Riot Games) and co-written with Steve Mazzaro (a composer who’s worked closely with the legendary Hans Zimmer to arrange and produce the music for the Oscar winner’s world tours), “Eye Of The Untold Her” offers up a glorious epic both mystical in its undercurrent and visceral in impact. “With ‘Eye Of The Untold Her’ I was trying to convey what it feels like when we’re going through hard times and we start to doubt ourselves, and part of us wants to give up,” she says. “The message is that if we stop listening to the opinions and judgments of others and look inward to our deepest truth, we can find what we need to keep going.” Opening on a spellbinding arrangement of fluttering piano and soulful violin, “Eye Of The Untold Her” soon escalates to a pulse-pounding frenzy—then bursts into its explosive and wildly cathartic chorus. “I wanted the chorus to create the feeling of overcoming a great struggle, as if it’s saying, ‘You did it. You’re free,’” Stirling points out. “I hope it reminds everyone that struggle is what makes us great, and leads us toward the best version of ourselves.”

After kicking off with “The Scarlett Queen” (the haunting counterpart to “Evil Twin”), *Duality*’s second half shifts into the strutting rhythms and luminous textures of “Inner Gold”—a pop-tinged twist on “Eye Of The Untold Her.” “All of the songs line up from one side of the album to the other,” Stirling explains. “In the case of ‘Eye Of The Untold Her’ and ‘Inner Gold,’ both are about trusting that inner voice but sonically they’re very different.” Featuring the gorgeously strange vocals of alt-pop artist Royal & the Serpent, “Inner Gold” tells the tale of suffering through deception and emerging with a renewed sense of self-reliance. “I wrote that song as a promise to myself that I’d never ignore my gut again, because our hearts and souls know so much more than our minds ever could,” says Stirling, who penned “Inner Gold” after the end of a three-year relationship. “I loved having Royal sing on it because it ties into the whole idea of duality—I’m a bit of a sparkly-pixie type, and she’s this very unique artist with a cool edge to everything she does.”

Another song revealing her pop sensibilities, “Survive” finds Walk off the Earth vocalist Sarah Blackwood joining Stirling for a sublime interpolation of Gloria Gaynor’s disco classic “I Will Survive.” With its sleek beats and unstoppable grooves, the soul-stirring anthem channels a mood of joyful abandon thanks in large part to Stirling’s lush and vibrant violin melodies and Blackwood’s fierce yet full-hearted vocal performance. “I definitely wrote several sad songs after my breakup, but with ‘Survive’ I wanted to write a song of empowerment,” Stirling says. “As devastating as it was to go through that experience, I trusted that I would be okay someday. It was a matter of telling myself, ‘I’ve been through hard things before, and I know that I’m going to put in the work and the time to get back to a good place again.’”

In creating such an expansive body of work, Stirling mined inspiration from her reading of illuminating books like *The Way of Integrity* by sociologist Martha Beck. “In the book Beck writes about how the outside world tells us what we should believe and what we should do with our lives, and how that can disconnect us from our own beliefs and desires,” says Stirling. “I’ve always felt that we’re all magical beings with so much spirit and potential, but we live in a world of expectations and rules that often makes us feel so constrained. I hope that in some way these songs help people to feel free and empowered and more connected to their truest selves. I’d love to remind everyone that even though the world tries to tame us, that magic is always there within you.”