

# DOWNBEAT

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## Editors' Picks

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BY ED ENRIGHT

### **Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol & Whatsnext?, *Resolution* (DÜNYA)**

Turkish-American composer and multi-instrumentalist Mehmet Ali Sanlıkol immersed himself in the music and culture of his native country in preparing the material for *Resolution*. Although the album features compositions created within a framework of Middle Eastern modes and rhythms, it also swings with strong jazz undercurrents and touches on a variety of popular genres associated with modern Western music. As a follow-up to 2014's *What's Next?*, which primarily explored compositions Sanlıkol wrote between the years 1996 and 2000, *Resolution* reveals a broadminded artist whose recent pursuit of fresh material has significantly honed his vision. The presence of marquee guest artists Anat Cohen (clarinet), Dave Liebman (soprano saxophone), Tiger Okoshi (trumpet) and Antonio Sanchez (drums) helps bring Sanlıkol's powerful multicultural statement into even sharper focus, as each is featured on ambitious pieces written to their personal strengths. Indeed, over the course of nine tracks, including the three-track *Concerto For Soprano Saxophone And Jazz Orchestra In C* and the two-track *Niyaz Suite*, it becomes clear that Sanlıkol didn't bring these high-level players onboard merely to blow. His pluralist Whatsnext? ensemble thrives on flexibility, genre-shifting at the drop of a hat and morphing from a large jazz orchestra into a combo-oriented configuration as needed. In addition to conducting, Sanlıkol contributes serious piano, haunting vocals, harpsichord, clavinet, Middle Eastern strings/winds/percussion and the Continuum Fingerboard, a keyless synthesizer that gives him access to a world of microtones. Despite all its sophistication, the music on *Resolution* is delightfully accessible thanks to Istanbul-born Sanlıkol's earnest and eager pursuit of the threads that connect the traditional music of his homeland with American jazz, funk and r&b. In the mind's eye, it conjures images of a modern big band in performance at Turkey's centuries-old Topkapi Palace. An active ethnomusicologist, Sanlıkol (who holds an undergraduate degree from Berklee College of Music and a master's and a doctorate from New England Conservatory of Music) is a fellow at Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. He is also the president of DÜNYA, the Boston-based musicians collective and independent record label that presents contemporary music influenced by Turkish traditions.