

Sam Rivers □ – Fuchsia Swing Song (1964)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Fuchsia Swing Song* 6:03 2 *Downstairs Blues Upstairs* 5:33 3 *Cyclic Episode* 6:58 4 *Luminous Monolith* 6:32 5 *Beatrice* 6:14 6 *Ellipsis* 7:43 7 *Luminous Monolith (Alternate Take)* 6:39 8 *Downstairs Blues Upstairs (First Alternate Take)* 8:10 9 *Downstairs Blues Upstairs (Second Alternate Take)* 7:47 10 *Downstairs Blues Upstairs (Third Alternate Take)* 7:47
Sam Rivers - Tenor Saxophone, Composed By Jaki Byard – Piano Ron Carter – Bass
Tony Williams – Drums

Recorded in 1964 immediately after leaving the Miles Davis Quintet, Sam Rivers' *Fuchsia Swing Song* is one of the more auspicious debuts the label released in the mid-'60s. Rivers was a seasoned session player (his excellent work on Larry Young's *Into Somethin'* is a case in point), and a former member of Herb Pomeroy's Big Band before he went out with Davis. By the time of his debut, Rivers had been deep under the influence of Coltrane and Coleman, but wasn't willing to give up the blues. Hence the sound on *Fuchsia Swing Song* is that of an artist at once self-assured and in transition. Using a rhythm section that included Tony Williams (whose *Life Time* he had guested on), pianist Jaki Byard, and bassist Ron Carter, Rivers took the hard bop and blues of his roots and poured them through the avant-garde collander. The title, opening track is a case in point. Rivers opens with an angular figure that is quickly translated by the band into sweeping, bopping blues. Rivers legato is lightning quick and his phrasing touches upon Coleman Hawkins, Sonny Rollins, Coleman, and Coltrane, but his embouchure is his own. He strikes the balance and then takes off on both sides of the aisle. Byard's builds in minor key, rhythmic figures just behind the tenor. "Downstairs Blues Upstairs" sounds, initially anyway, like it might have come out of the Davis book so deep is its blue root. But courtesy of Byard and Williams, Rivers goes to the left after only four choruses, moving onto the ledge a bit at a time, running knotty arpeggios through the center of the melody and increasingly bending his notes into succeeding intervals while shifting keys and times signatures, but he never goes completely over the ledge. The most difficult cut on the date is "Luminous Monolith," showcases a swing-like figure introducing the melody. Eight bars in, the syncopation of the rhythm sections begins to stutter step around the time, as Byard makes harmonic adjustments with dense chords for Rivers to play off. This is a highly recommended date. Other than on 1965's *Contours*, Rivers never played quite like this again. ---Thom Jurek,

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