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Blues as Cultural Resistance: Representing Black Strugglethrough Music in *Sinners 2025*

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A B S T R A C T

This study investigates the role of blues music in Sinners, directed by Ryan Coogler, as a form of cultural resistance against racial oppression during the Jim Crow era. It adopts Tricia Rose's theory of Cultural Resistance and applies a qualitative interpretive method within the broader framework of Cultural Studies. The analysis focuses on how blues operates beyond its function as background music and instead serves as a narrative and ideological device that shapes meaning and representation. The findings identify three interrelated dimensions. First, blues functions as a medium of political expression that articulates the lived experiences and collective memory of Black communities. Second, the film presents a clear politics of sound and space, particularly in locations such as juke joints, where music becomes a site of negotiation, control, and resistance. These spaces are not neutral; they structure who can speak, perform, and be heard. Third, the narrative highlights an ongoing struggle to reclaim identity and cultural ownership in the face of appropriation and commodification. Blues emerges as both a cultural resource and a contested terrain shaped by unequal power relations. Overall, the study demonstrates that blues in Sinners operates as a hidden transcript, a form of symbolic protection, and a site of cultural contestation. These roles reveal both the resilience and the vulnerability of Black expressive culture under systemic oppression. This research contributes to film studies, sound studies, and cultural studies by emphasizing how material and spatial conditions influence practices of resistance and cultural production.

Keywords: *Blues Music, Jim Crow Era, Film Analysis, Cultural Resistance, Sinners (2025), African-American Culture, Sound and Space, Black Identity, Identity Reclamation,Segregation*

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INTRODUCTION

Music has long been a form of cultural expression and social resistance for Black communities in the United States. Historically, music has served not only as entertainment but also as a means of articulating or describing collective experiences, suffering, and hopes amid oppressive structures. As (Gilroy, 1993) Explains, the tradition of black music is part of Black Atlantic Culture, which unites aesthetic and political dimensions, creating a space where music becomes a means to negotiate identity and to resist racial domination. One of the most potent forms of music in this tradition is the BLUES. The Blues genre originated in the southern United States among African Americans in the early 20th Century. (Wald, 2010) The blues, as a cultural record of African-American life that reflects the social conditions of black communities, was born out of a legacy of slavery and segregation. It is a fusion of religious music and farm-field work songs, combined with English, Irish, and Scottish lyrical traditions.

Every lyric, vocal, and instrumental style in these songs expresses the melancholy and longing of African Americans who suffered slavery and segregation for more than 200 years in the United States.

As a basic form of African-American musical expression that has long served as entertainment, the Blues also acts as a powerful tool for cultural resistance and conveying the struggles of African Americans. This dual role is particularly evident in the film Sinners (2025), where the Blues tradition finds contemporary expression through the strategic use of Blues music as a narrative tool and ideological framework. Building on this, (Neal, 2018) Refers to

Blues as a form of "cultural expression of survival," a symbolic strategy used by black people to assert their existence and humanity within an oppressive system. Furthermore, Blues lyrics often contain double meanings, outwardly describing sadness or loss, but inwardly expressing resistance and hope for freedom. Finally, through melancholic lyrics and rhythmic improvisation, Blues transforms sadness into strength, presenting the struggle for freedom and dignity in a racially divided society.

The Jim Crow era occurred between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries, when racial segregation laws were enforced in the southern United States. Jim Crow laws regulated the social separation between black and white citizens in various aspects of life, such as education and transportation. During this period, Black communities faced threats of violence from racist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. As stated by (Grant, 2025), the legacy of Jim Crow shaped racial inequalities in wealth, education, criminal justice, and access to resources. Cultural expressions, such as Blues music, became a way for the black community to maintain their identity, despite the many structural challenges they faced. emphasizes that "structural racism prevents African Americans from gaining equal access to resources, which is an important context in understanding how Blues developed as a response to oppression.

The film Sinners (2025) is set in 1932 in Mississippi, during the Jim Crow era, which marked the height of racial discrimination in the southern United States. This era was defined by strict social segregation, economic inequality, and cinematic violence against black communities. In this film, blues music serves as a way for the black community to express their anger, sadness, and hope amid racism. Juke Joints, as safe places or bars where blues is played, become safe spaces for them to enjoy freedom, even if only temporarily, and sites far from the threat of white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan. The film Sinners, directed by Ryan Coogler, not only features Blues as a cultural backdrop but also shows it as a symbol of resistance against oppressive power. Ryan Coogler's vision uses Blues to strengthen the story and message that represent the collective struggle of the black community.

Previous studies have consistently emphasized the role of African American music as a form of cultural resistance. (Abdullah, 2009) highlights music as a crucial instrument for empowerment and social justice, while (Sajche, 2016) connects musical expression with migration, community formation, and survival under Jim Crow oppression. In addition, (Baya, 2020) demonstrates how contemporary genres such as rap extend the resistance tradition established by Blues and jazz, indicating the continuity of African American musical resistance across historical periods. Despite these contributions, existing scholarship tends to examine music as a general cultural practice rather than analyzing how Blues operates specifically within cinematic representations. In particular, limited attention has been given to the role of Blues as a narrative and ideological element in films set during the Jim Crow era, such as Sinners (2025). This gap highlights the need for a more focused analysis of how Blues functions not only as an auditory element but also as a critical medium of cultural resistance within visual storytelling.

Thus, this study aims to examine the role of blues music in the film Sinners (2025) as a form of cultural resistance against oppressive social and racial structures during the Jim Crow era, using Tricia Rose's Cultural Resistance theory. The main issue to be discussed is how blues music functions not only as an artistic expression but also as a symbolic tool to assert identity, challenge racial stereotypes, and create a space of freedom for the Black community amid historical injustice. The representation of blues music in the film Sinners (2025) is analyzed as a means of reflecting and reinforcing cultural resistance to racial domination in the United States during the Jim Crow era.

METHOD

This study applies a qualitative method with an interpretive approach to investigate the social and cultural meanings reflected in the film Sinners (2025). The choice of this method is based on the main objective, which is not to measure phenomena quantitatively, but to interpret the meanings, ideologies, and power dynamics formed through audio-visual

representations. As explained by (Creswell & Poth, 2016), qualitative research emphasizes the meaning of human experiences in specific social and historical contexts. In this case, this approach is applied to examine the role of blues music as a form of cultural resistance by the black community against racial oppression during the Jim Crow era.
The main framework of this research relies on the Cultural Studies approach, introduced by (Williams, 1977), in which culture is viewed as "a whole way of life." From this perspective, films are not only considered as mere entertainment products, but as cultural texts that represent and negotiate power, identity, and practices of resistance. This Cultural Studies approach allows us to identify dominant, residual, and emerging cultural elements in the representation of blues music as both an artistic expression and ideological resistance for the black community.

To support this perspective, this study uses film analysis as its main method, positioning film as a text that can be critically examined. Following the view (Adi, 2011), films are treated like literary texts, as stated by (Jinks, 1971), that the power of literature is linguistic, and not direct, whereas films have imagistic and immediate power. Films allow for an in-depth reading of intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements include narrative structure, characters, themes, symbols, and visual elements, while extrinsic elements include social, cultural, and historical contexts, particularly the conditions of racial segregation during the Jim Crow era. This approach emphasizes the film Sinners as a culturally significant work laden with ideological meaning, not merely popular entertainment. Through narrative analysis, it explores oppression, identity, and resistance, focusing on the connection between plot development and the function of music in moments that depict the film's critical role as a collective expression, historical memory, and cultural resilience. In addition, non-narrative analysis is used to reveal meanings in the film that are not explicitly conveyed in the story, which can be seen in the composition of images, camera angles, lighting, colors, and visual elements such as costumes and body gestures. All of these elements are understood as a cinematic language that shapes perspectives, emotions, and power relations in the film. Selected scenes are further analyzed to show how visual representations reinforce the construction of oppression, vulnerability, and resistance within the Black community. As a key theoretical foundation, this study refers to the theory of Cultural Resistance proposed by (Rose, 1994), which highlights that the musical expressions of black community's function as a symbolic practice of resistance against oppressive power structures. In this context, the theory is used to interpret the blues music in Sinners as a political medium that represents identity, collective memory, and the struggle against racial domination. By combining Cultural Studies approaches, film analysis, narrative and non-narrative analysis, and Cultural Resistance theory, this study forms a comprehensive methodological framework for examining blues music as a form of cultural resistance in the film Sinners (2025).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section explores how the film Sinners (2025) depicts blues music and its visual elements as a form of cultural resistance against racial oppression during the Jim Crow era. In examining this representation, we rely primarily on Tricia Rose's theory of Cultural Resistance, supported by Raymond Williams' Cultural Studies approach (Williams, 1977), which views culture as "the whole way of life." Through this lens, the film is not merely an aesthetic work, but a cultural text that records and negotiates the social experiences of black communities in the United States.

Through this lens, the film is not merely an aesthetic work, but a cultural text that records and negotiates the social experiences of black communities in the United States. Guided by (Rose, 1994) theory of cultural resistance, this analysis explores how blues functions in Sinners (2025) across three interconnected dimensions: first, as a form of cultural resistance in which blues serves as a medium of political expression and symbolic defiance; second, through the politics of sound and space, where venues like juke joints and segregated settings become sites of both autonomy and vulnerability; and third, as a means of reclaiming identity

and narrative, allowing black characters to assert agency and resist cultural appropriation. Each dimension is examined through pivotal scenes in the film, revealing how blues operates not as mere background music, but as a narrative and ideological force that articulates struggle, solidarity, and survival.These three concepts form the basis of this analysis to understand the use of blues music in the film Sinners (2025). Here, blues is not just background music, but a crucial thematic element that emphasizes the struggle and resilience of the Black community in the face of key scenes in the film that depict this form of resistance:

Blues as a Cultural Resistance:

Delta Slim and the Prison Work Song (Scene 29:10–29:16)

Figure 1. Delta Slim Tells the Enslaved Men to Raise Their Heads

The blues represent a cultural expression deeply embedded in African American historical experience, particularly in relation to slavery, forced labor, and racial segregation. In Sinners (2025), blues are mobilized not simply as musical accompaniment but as a socially and politically charged medium through which Black characters voice collective endurance and historical trauma. The film emphasizes blues as a coded form of expression, enabling subtle resistance that operates beneath systems of surveillance and domination (Peretti, 2008). This coded resistance is foregrounded in the prison labor sequence, where Black detainees sing blues while performing compulsory work. Historically rooted in field hollers and work songs, such practices functioned less as explicit protest than as strategies of emotional survival and communal bonding under extreme exploitation (Peretti, 2008). Delta Slim's role in this scene extends beyond performance he embodies a continuity of Black historical struggle. His exhortation, "Hold your heads up," links the legacy of enslavement to the contemporary realities of racialized incarceration, positioning music as a moral intervention that sustains dignity and collective resilience (Callahan, 2022).

(Rose, 1994) theory of cultural resistance, together with (Scott, 1990) notion of hidden transcripts, provides a critical lens for interpreting this scene. While the blues performance appears compliant within the disciplinary logic of the prison, it operates internally as a concealed oppositional practice. Collective singing transforms forced labor into a shared sonic space where prisoners affirm belonging, agency, and identity despite institutional repression (Southern, 1997).

The prison scene thus illustrates (Perry & Perry, 2022) concept of sonic liberation, in which communal musical participation enables moments of freedom within oppressive systems of control. Through blues, the prisoners temporarily transcend the spatial and psychological constraints imposed by incarceration, reinforcing solidarity and reclaiming agency systematically denied by the prison regime (Gussow, 2020). By situating blues as a covert sonic practice embedded within authoritarian structures, Sinners confirms the arguments advanced by Rose and Scott, revealing how Black music functions as a vehicle for dignity, collective memory, and resistant consciousness. Ultimately, the film frames blues not merely as an artifact of survival but as an active social force that continually shapes Black identity under conditions of systemic racial violence.

Sammie's Performance Observed by the KKK Vampires (Scene 59:15)

Figure 2. Sammie sings "I Lied to You" as the KKK vampire watches with fascination from outside

In this scene represent the juke joint as a fragile alternative cultural space, where blues facilitates Black communal solidarity while remaining threatened by white supremacy, in line with the politics of space and voice articulated by ((Rose, 1994). Sinners constructs a visual and sonic dialectic between the warmth of cultural expression inside the juke joint and the threat of death outside, positioning the space not merely as a backdrop, but as a socio-political arena where identity, collective exhaustion, and cultural resistance are expressed through music. From the outset, this scene makes the conceptual claim that space and sound are inseparable in the practice of social resistance, reinforced by the contrast between the orange-red light, cigarette smoke, and free movement of bodies inside, and the cold exterior and enemies outside its walls.

Within this space, Sammie functions as the center of sonic and emotional energy, with close-ups of his guitar playing and facial expressions highlighting the blues as a codified mode of expression. Lyrics about suffering and deception operate as a performative strategy under Jim Crow, allowing traumatic experiences of racial violence to be expressed indirectly for self-protection, as (Rose, 1994) argues that black music has historically done. The appearance of fire inside the juke joint visually reinforces this claim, symbolizing collective energy and pent-up anger, while also signifying the vulnerability of a cultural space that is always on the brink of destruction. The warmth of the interior contrasts with the cold darkness outside, where KKK members, depicted as vampires, observe from a distance, representing the logic of cultural vampirism and confirming (Nordquist, 2013) argument that autonomous spaces of resistance are never free from surveillance and threat.

Sammie's performance functions as a sonic shield (Redmond, 2018), protecting the community through collective sound, a dynamic that aligns with (Weheliye, 2020) view of sonic practices as sites of subjectivity formation outside of full domination. However, by keeping the KKK vampires at the doorstep rather than letting them in, the film critiques the concept of security itself, revealing that threats to Black cultural spaces often emerge through surveillance, psychological pressure, and latent violence rather than direct attacks. The space's sustainability is therefore temporary, dependent on the repetition of sound performances, with fire symbolizing both resistance and uncertainty. In this way, the scene not only affirms Rose's theory of alternative cultural spaces but also clarifies his main claim that under Jim Crow racial terror, Black cultural resistance through music is performative, codified, and sonic, persisting under the shadow of destruction rather than through frontal confrontation.

The Politics of Sound and Space:

Hogwood as KKK Leader and Owner of the Juke Joint Building (1:41:58 –1:42:02)

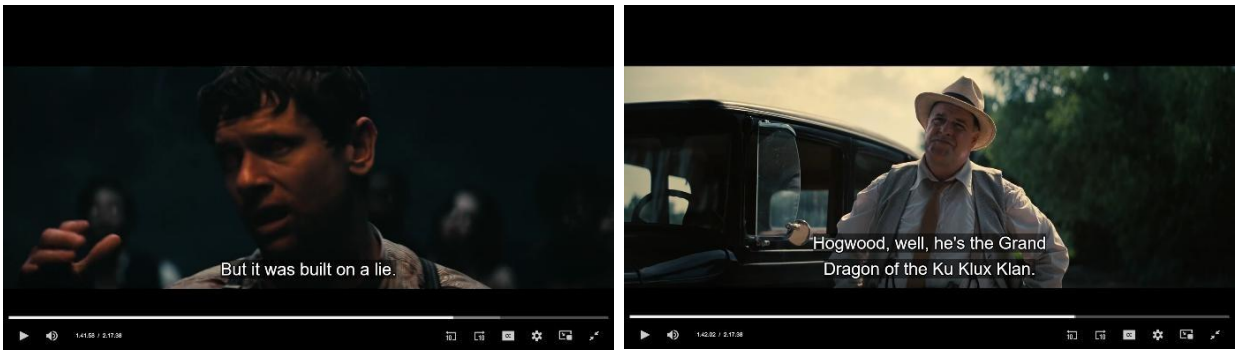

Figure 3. Hogwood as KKK Leader and Building Owner

This scene marks a critical rupture in the film's narrative, where the promise of safety and possibility associated with the Juke Joint begins to unravel. Remmick's statement, "But it was built on a lie," operates as more than a moment of personal revelation; it articulates the film's broader critique of property, ownership, and cultural space within a racial capitalist system. From this point onward, the film redirects attention from the emotional intimacy created inside the Juke Joint to the structural conditions that govern its existence. The medium shot of Hogwood revealed as both landowner and Ku Klux Klan leader standing before the isolated building visually establishes this shift. The surrounding darkness and subdued lighting render the space fragile and exposed, transforming what was once a vibrant site of Black communal life into a structure on the verge of disappearance. Hogwood's centered, immobile presence signals the authority of ownership, while the cut to the restrained reactions of Smoke, Stack, and others captures a collective recognition of these underlying power relations.

This visual arrangement directly reflects (G Lipsitz, 2007) claim that control over space and property is central to the reproduction of white supremacy. Although the Juke Joint functions as an alternative space for Black cultural resistance (Rose, 1994), the scene exposes a fundamental contradiction: culturally autonomous spaces remain materially dependent on dominant power structures. In doing so, the film challenges any romantic notion of cultural refuge by demonstrating that the security generated through music and performance is structurally unstable. This insight echoes (Squires, 2002) argument that counterpublic enclaves are inherently vulnerable due to systemic inequalities in ownership and access to resources.

At the same time, the scene complicates (Rose, 1994) theory of spatial resistance. While Rose emphasizes the transformative potential of alternative cultural sites, Sinners foregrounds the limits of resistance that operates solely at the level of expression. By emphasizing ownership and legality, the film aligns with (G Lipsitz, 2007) assertion that space itself is a contested political arena. Resistance, therefore, is shown to be not only sonic but also material, dependent on control over land and resources. The film ultimately extends Rose's framework by embedding cultural resistance within the constraints of racial capitalism, underscoring that without material autonomy, cultural freedom remains provisional and constantly under threat.

Spatial Segregation under Jim Crow Laws (22:12)

Figure 4. Segregation at Jim Crow Stations

The train station scene in Sinners (2025) serves as a foundational moment for understanding the film's politics of space, revealing how racial violence is embedded within everyday spatial organization. By situating this scene before the appearance of blues music or the Juke Joint, the film emphasizes that cultural resistance arises as a response to pre-existing spatial repression. The scene's rigid visual order normalizes segregation, presenting white supremacy not through overt brutality but through routine spatial distribution. The prominent "TICKETS — WHITE ONLY" sign functions as an institutional declaration of racial authority, while the wide, static framing renders the station a visual map of hierarchy: white bodies are aligned with light, openness, and mobility, whereas Black bodies are relegated to darkness, peripheral framing, and visual obstruction.

This configuration directly reflects (G Lipsitz, 2007) notion of racialized geography, in which space is structured to preserve dominant power relations. As (McKittrick, 2020)) explains, such spatial practices discipline the body by shaping where one can move, wait, or exist. From (Williams, 1977) Cultural Studies framework, the scene illustrates segregation as a lived social formation rather than a mere legal restriction, transforming Jim Crow laws into embodied everyday experience. The station's association with modernity and progress thus becomes ironic, as it operates instead as a site of routine racial discipline.

Within this framework, the scene provides the conceptual groundwork for (Rose, 1994) theory of voice and alternative space. Systematically excluded from mainstream public arenas, Black communities cultivate elective spaces for expression and collective identity. The stark contrast between the orderly yet exclusionary station and the informal yet communal Juke Joint clarifies the latter's political significance as a spatial response to racial exclusion. However, the film resists romanticizing these alternative spaces. By juxtaposing the station with the threatened Juke Joint and the presence of the KKK, Sinners demonstrates that such spaces remain entangled within broader regimes of power. Thus, the station scene functions not only as historical exposition but as a structural explanation for both the necessity and precarity of blues- based spatial resistance.

Reclaiming Identity and Narrative through Music:

Cultural Appropriation and Discursive Resistance (30:37 – 30:39)

Figure 5. "White People Like Blues Music, They Just Do Not Like the People Who Make It."

This brief but significant scene shows Delta Slim in an intimate medium close-up with

a blurred background and soft lighting that emphasizes his tense, reflective, and experienced expression. Cinematically, this choice creates a space for personal and political recognition, drawing the audience to confront Delta Slim's critical statement: "White people like blues music, but they don't like the people who make it." Instead of energetic blues, the film uses slow and somber acoustic guitar accompaniment rooted in the Delta blues tradition, serving as a sonic memory that connects the statement to the history of slavery and forced labor visualized in the previous scene. Therefore, this scene consciously bridges historical experience with critical reflection in the present.

The close-up scenes in this scene are confrontational and self-revealing, forcing the audience to face Delta Slim's emotions, which are not explosive, but rather a deep disappointment, bitter awareness, and moral authority born from life experience. Theoretically, his statement functions as a form of discursive resistance that highlights the paradox of cultural appropriation, namely the dominant practice of consumption that separates aesthetic products from the communities and histories that gave birth to them. This logic aligns with the concept of displacement acoustemology, in which sound is released from its socio-historical context and reduced to an aesthetic experience that can be consumed without ethical involvement. This scene explicitly rejects this logic by asserting that blues is not a neutral object, but an extension of the identity, collective memory, and historical experience of the Black community. In line with Guthrie's view that 'Black Indians produce sustained historical and cultural identities which reinforce Afro-indigeneity to overcome oppressive conditions' (Guthrie, 2016), this underscores the importance of cultural context in shaping the identities and experiences expressed in the music.

This reading reinforces (Rose, 1994) argument that Black cultural production has always been an arena of struggle over meaning and identity amid dominant attempts to neutralize or depoliticize it. In this context, Delta Slim's statement is not merely descriptive, but performs theoretical work by rejecting the construction of blues as universal and apolitical "American" music, while reclaiming it within the socio- historical framework of the Black community. Music, as Rose understands it, functions as a symbolic space for reaffirming Black humanity and experience. Therefore, this scene represents the practice of cultural reclamation through discursive speech that returns blues to its community of origin. Consequently, this scene exemplifies how discursive and sonic resistance operates at the level of meaning rather than material transformation, complementing the film's broader argument that Black cultural struggle is waged through the control of narrative and memory.

Furthermore, this scene operationalizes (Fiske, 2010) theory of cultural economics in a racial context, which distinguishes between the circulation of meaning and affection in the cultural economy of the community and the logic of commodification in the market economy. Delta Slim's statement reveals this tension: blues is consumed as a financial commodity by white audiences, while its social value, history of suffering, and community bonds are ignored. The placement of this scene after the visualization of forced labor and before the escalation of conflict affirms that Sinners not only diagnoses cultural appropriation but also displays Black resistance through everyday discursive practices. In other words, the resistance here is sonic and symbolic, not physical, through the affirmation of meaning and the claim to cultural narratives. This scene ultimately functions as a meta-commentary on the film in positioning blues not as a passive aesthetic object, but as a cultural subject that speaks, remembers, and demands recognition of its community's history and humanity.

Control and Commodification of Black Music (1:52:09 - 1:53:40)

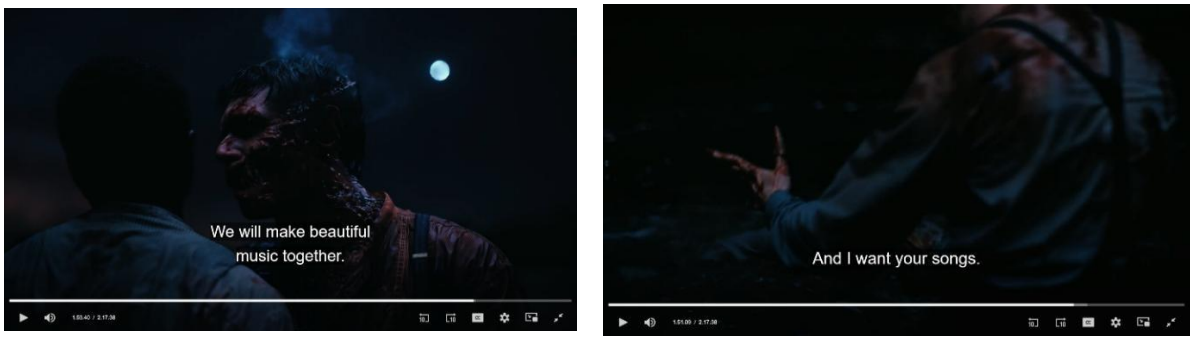

Figure 6. Remmick is Targeting Sammie

This climatic fight shows the major conflict in Sinners between music as a way to get back your individuality and music as a tool that can be used and taken over. This scene shows the fight between freedom and commercialization through shot/reverse- shot scenes between Remmick and Sammie. Remmick's pale figure is lit up by cold blue-white light, while Sammie stays wrapped in warm red tones even though the juke joint around him is destroyed. The damaged juke joint symbolizes Black culture on the brink of appropriation, while Remmick's aspiration to "own" Sammie's voice, articulated through phrases like "we'll make beautiful music together", clearly illustrates the blues as a translatable spiritual asset. This paradigm clearly embodies spires notion of cultural vampirism, where in dominant groups appreciate creativity and meaning from minority cultures for their own sustenance, there by dissociating cultural expression from its historical foundations of pain, solidarity and resistance. This moment simultaneously complicates (Rose, 1994) assertion that Black music serves as a medium for the reclamation of obscured history and identity. Sinners validates music as an alternative repository of Black experience, it also reveals the fragility of this domain within a racial-capitalist framework that regards culture as commodifiable and exploitable property. Remmick's fixation shows how cultural value may be taken advantage of, which could turn the blues into a "dead archive" managed by people who aren't from the area. However, the scene makes explicit that while Black music retains its capacity for resistance and historical reclamation, it remains structurally vulnerable to appropriation when detached from communal control and material power. Sammie's resistance, manifested via fear, wrath, and determination in his physical presence, validates the subject's agency in opposition to exploitative powers, so maintaining the dialectic between domination and resistance. By showing that Remmick was an Irish immigrant whose community too suffered from colonial oppression, the movie makes it clear that historical pain does not justify taking over another group's culture. Instead, it stresses the need of understanding power relations in context. In the end, this fight puts the blues in the middle of a political battle where the goal is not only to create cultural expression but also to protect its ownership, meaning, and social context. This supports the study's main point that Black music is still a place of resistance and vulnerability under systems of appropriation and control.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Ryan Coogler's *Sinners* (2025) employs blues not merely as a period soundtrack, but as a dynamic cinematic language through which the Black experience under Jim Crow is articulated, contested, and remembered. Through a framework grounded in Tricia Rose's theory of cultural resistance, the film reveals how music operates as a multifaceted tool of survival, solidarity, and subversion within a landscape of racial terror. The analysis of key scenes solidifies and critically expands Rose's theoretical triad. Delta Slim's prison work song exemplifies music as a "hidden transcript" and a medium of direct cultural resistance, transforming a space of brutal discipline into one of fleeting sonic solidarity. Yet, its setting in a rural penitentiary challenges the urban focus of Rose's original work, demonstrating that resistance can crystallize even in the most totalizing institutions. Sammie's

performance in the Juke Joint, under the vampiric gaze of the KKK, vividly illustrates the "politics of sound and space." It affirms the juke joint as a vital counter-space while tragically revealing its permeability and perpetual siege, thus complicating the notion of a truly safe cultural haven. Finally, the revelation of Hogwood's ownership of the Juke Joint property and Remmick's desire to commodify Sammie's voice critically interrogates Rose's concept of reclaiming identity. These scenes underscore that cultural reclamation is an ongoing struggle not only against symbolic erasure but against the material and economic structures racial capitalism and cultural vampirism that seek to appropriate and drain Black expressive culture of its lived context and political meaning.The implications of this analysis extend across several academic domains. For film studies, *Sinners* serves as a compelling case study in how music and mise-en-scène can be wielded as narrative and ideological tools, encouraging more nuanced analyses of sonic landscapes in historical cinema. For sound studies, the film highlights the "sonic shield" as both a protective communal practice and a vulnerable artifact, urging further inquiry into thegeopolitics of listening and the racialized boundaries of sonic space. Most significantly, for theories of cultural resistance, this study argues for a more materially grounded framework. It suggests that future work must account not only for the symbolic power of cultural expression but also for the legal, economic, and spatial constraints that condition its production, ownership, and endurance. In conclusion, *Sinners* (2025) resonates as more than ahistorical drama; it is a meta commentary on the role of art in the Black freedom struggle. Thefilm posits that blues is both weapon and wound, a source of immense resilience and a site ofprofound vulnerability. Ultimately, it reminds us that while music can momentarily liberate the spirit, enduring freedom requires a sustained contestation over the very spaces, stories, and sounds that define a people's right to exist and echo through history.

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