

MISS SAIGON (Prince Edward Theatre, West End)

By **Mark Taha** - Aug 23, 2015



11
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It makes a change to be reviewing a long-running show rather than a preview. Boublil and Schönberg gave us *Les Miserables* before updating Puccini's *Madam Butterfly* to the 1970s with this show, set in Saigon, Atlanta and Bangkok, and starting just before the fall of the first. The show opens with *The Heat Is On* performed by the Company. The Engineer, a kind of South Vietnamese Delboy, is still running his brothel as the crunch comes nearer and he's trying to get himself a US visa. New girl Kim, a virgin up from the country, and US Marine guard, Chris fall for each other, and marry in haste, in spite of her boyfriend's objections.

Three years later they both failed to get out in time. The Engineer's spent the years in a "reeducation" camp, Kim's on her own, her ex is now a commissar who wants him to find her, or else. He does, problem is that Chris left her with a *Bui Doi*, a GI baby, and there's

racism as well as Communism! Kim and the Engineer manage to escape to Thailand – he’s back at his old trade with her as a bar girl.

Meanwhile, Chris is now married to an American girl but still having nightmares. His old Marine buddy John is running a rescue service for *Bui Doi* (this number was loudly applauded) and tracks down Kim. Chris and Ellen go out to Thailand, meet Kim, her and Chris’ son Tang, and an Engineer still desperate to live *The American Dream* – there’s a flashback number, *Kim’s Nightmare*, dealing with the fall of Saigon. To avoid spoilers. I’ll just say some have the ending they want and I hope someone else did.

The show’s choreography is overwhelming and the dancing magnificent. The only drawback is that you won’t come out singing any of the songs, I didn’t, anyway. I can’t fault the score but there are no “stand on their own” numbers.

11
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