

The film, which was released in September to celebrate the 60th anniversary of China's Communist revolution, was said to have surpassed *Transformers 2: Revenge of the Fallen* as the highest grossing film in China.

Its distributor, China Film Group, celebrated an estimated Rmb419 million box office take, squeezing past *Transformers* Rmb400 million haul.

Critics believe the country needs to establish an independent box office tracker, similar to the set-up in other countries.

Currently ticket sales are relayed to the media by the film companies themselves. So there is plenty of opportunity for mischief.

"Companies that inflate box office figures mislead the public. This is a very shortsighted way of marketing," warns Mao Yu, vice president of SFB. "In the long run, it will damage not only the companies' reputation, but also the entire industry."

But don't expect the dirty dealing to stop anytime soon, especially as we will shortly be entering peak season for movie releases.

Some 40 domestic and foreign movies will make their debuts in the pre-Lunar New Year period, Xinhua reports. December to early February is the busiest period for the mainland's box office with takings last year of Rmb1.5 billion (a third of the annual total).

Photo essay: 150 million workers

Seibert's photographs capture the realities of migrant life

Readers will recall that in WiC6 we cited the old axiom that you should never judge a book by its cover.

Photo Source: Andreas Seibert

A selection of photographs by Andreas Seibert



Two migrant rural workers at night in the 'special economic zone' of Shenzhen (2002)



Mr Li, 60, and Mr Chen, 63, migrant rural workers from Anhui Province, are dwarfed by construction in Shanghai's Pudong district (2008)



Mrs Chen, 74, looks after her five-year-old grandson. The boy's parents are migrant rural workers in the city. (Shilian, Sichuan Province, 2006)



The vast majority of migrant rural workers travel home by train during Chinese New Year, on journeys that can last two days. (Guangzhou, 2002)



Mr Liang, 42, on his way to the shower at Anyuan coal mine. (Datong, Shanxi Province, 2008)

We were reviewing *Factory Girls*; an impressively researched book by Leslie Chang, which tells the stories of the young migrants who flock to factories from the countryside to sew together your running shoes and assemble your mobile phone.

Factory Girls' only shortcoming was a rather bland cover image that did little to entice anyone to pick it up.

But where Chang provided the words, now (finally) Andreas Seibert has provided a worthy set of images to accompany them.

The Swiss photographer has just published *From Somewhere to Nowhere: China's Internal Migrants*. For the last six years he has been visiting China's big cities and taking photos of migrant workers – or to use their official name *min gong* or 'people's workers'.

The earthy and often bleak shots of these labourers – whose numbers match the combined populations of Germany and France – is the perfect visual accompaniment to *Factory Girls'* earlier insights.

Tokyo-based Seibert – who takes pictures for magazines such as *Newsweek* and *Fortune* – says he began the project because he wanted to “understand a little better the historical change China is going through.”

As he points out, if you want to comprehend what a “capitalist revolution with Chinese characteristics” looks like, the floating migrant population is a pretty good place to start looking.

“It is these workers who keep China's economy running and growing,” says the photographer.

We have reproduced five of Seibert's images as a taster. The book – which contains 316 pages of photographs – offers a new insight into the lives of China's migrant labourers and contrasts their dynamism and their poverty. ■