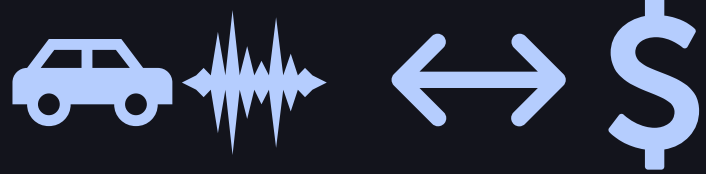


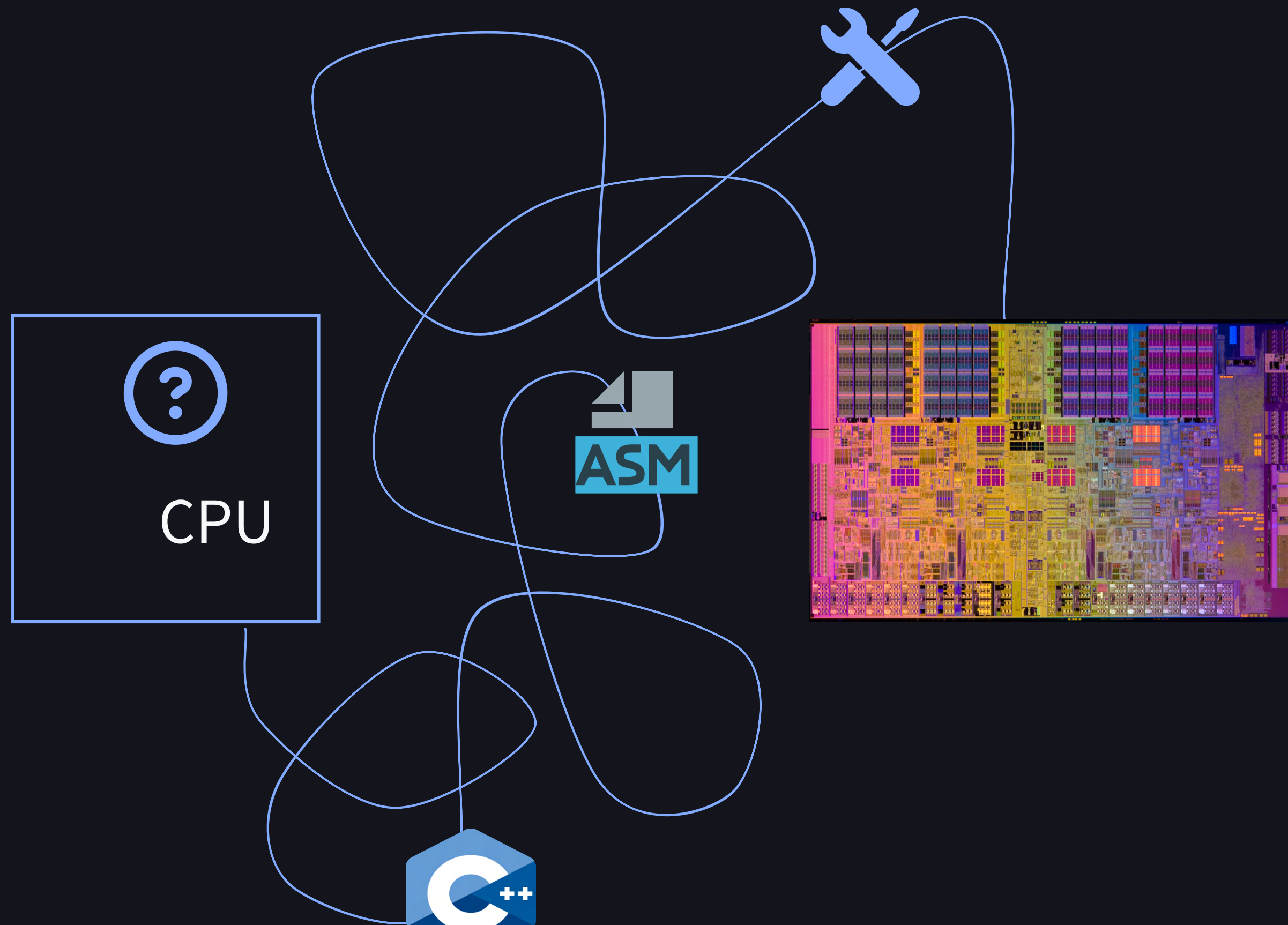
C++ as a Microscope Into Hardware

Linus Boehm





+ x86-64





```
int fun() {
    return 0;
}
```

```
g++ -g -c -O1 return_zero.cpp # -g:debug info, -c:no main, -O1:optimize
xxd -b return_zero.o          # -b:binary dump
```

```
>> 00000000: 01111111 01000101 01001100 01000110 00000010 00000001 .ELF..
00000006: 00000001 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 .....
0000000c: 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000001 00000000 .....
00000012: 00111110 00000000 00000001 00000000 00000000 00000000 >.....
00000018: 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 .....
0000001e: 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 .....
00000024: 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 10000000 00000101 .....
0000002a: 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 .....
00000030: 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 01000000 00000000 ....@.
00000036: 00000000 00000000 00000000 00000000 01000000 00000000 ....@.
```

fetch → decode → execute



```
int fun() {  
    return 0;  
}
```

```
g++ -g -c -O1 return_zero.cpp # -g:debug info, -c:no main, -O1:optimize  
objdump -d -C -Mintel return_zero.o # -d:disassemble,-Mintel:intel syntax
```



```
>> return_zero.o:      file format elf64-x86-64
```

```
Disassembly of section .text:
```

```
0000000000000000 <fun()>:
```

0:	b8 00 00 00 00	mov	eax,0x0
5:	c3	ret	

fetch → decode → execute

Registers / Instructions

```
int many_args(int, int, int, int,
              int, int, int num7) {
    return num7;
}
```



```
////////// -01
<many_args(int, int, int, int, int, int, int)>:
8b 44 24 08      mov     eax,DWORD PTR [rsp+0x8]
c3              ret
```

ASM

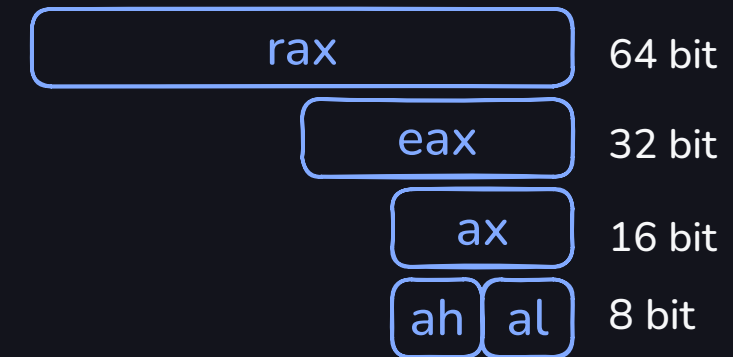
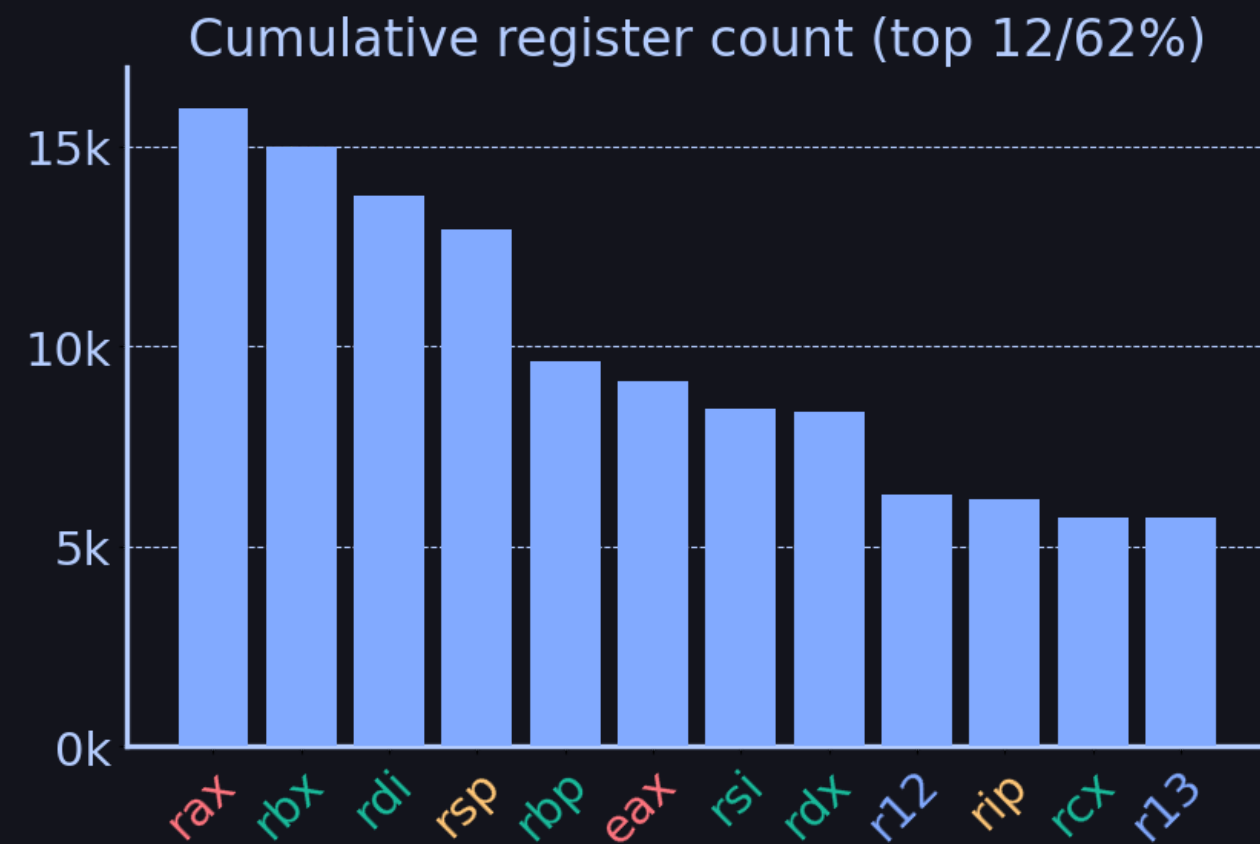
- Variable instruction length ([Combined Intel 64 Manuals](#))
- `eax`/`rax`: return register (32/64 bit)
- Volatile/caller owned
- `rdi`, `rsi`, ... : function arguments
- Calling convention: [System V AMD64 ABI](#)
- Memory operands `mov eax,DWORD PTR [rsp+0x8]`
- Questions
 - How many instructions/registers are there?
 - What are common ones?

/usr/bin/gcc registers

```
# disassemble gcc
objdump -d /usr/bin/gcc
```



```
» total registers: 186k
```



- rax** Return
- rbp** Base pointer
- rip** Instruction pointer
- rsp** Stack pointer
- rflags** Flags register (Carry, sign, ...)

Function calling convention

- rdi** **rsi** **rdx** **rcx** **r8** **r9**

Scratch/volatile/callee owned

- rax** **rcx** **rdi** **rdx** **rsi** **r8** **r9** **r10** **r11**

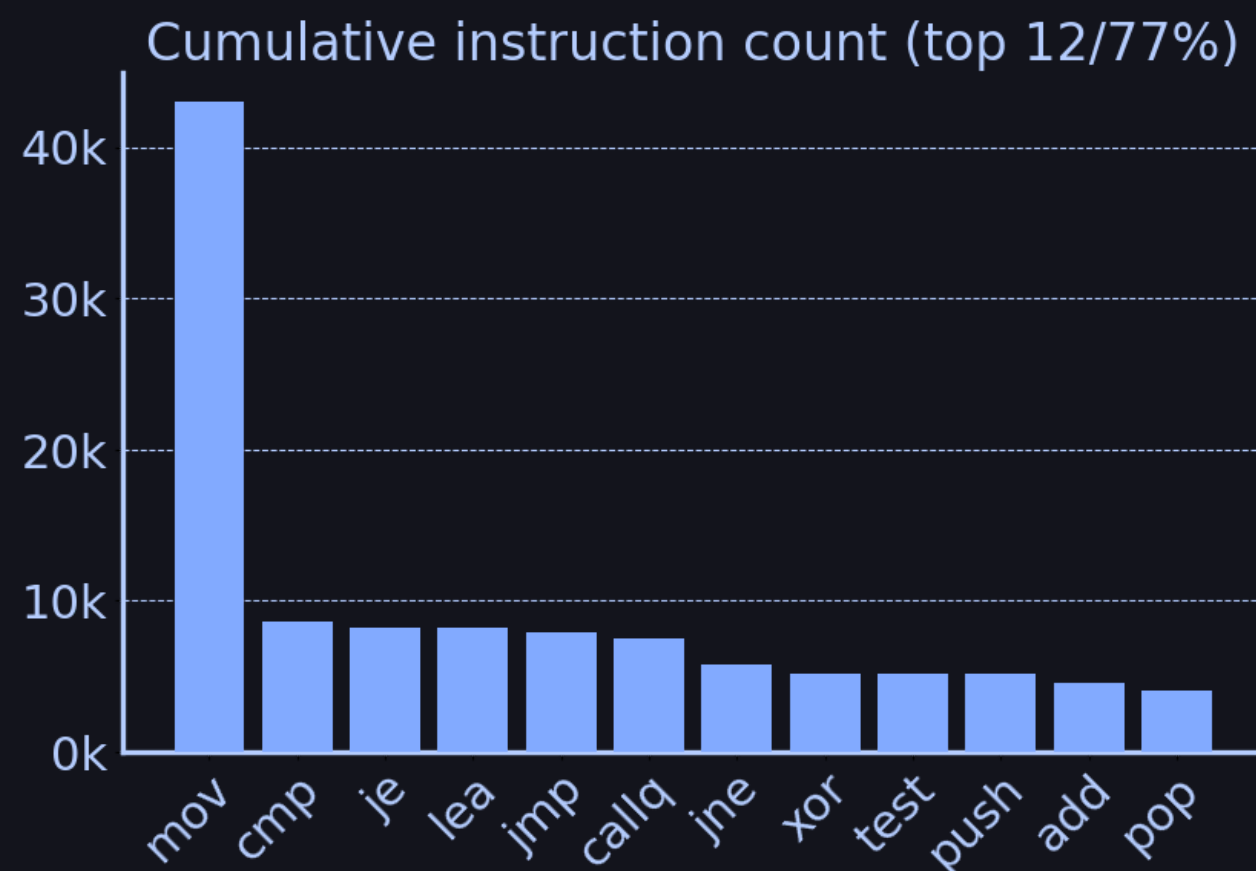
Caller owned (restored by callee)

- rbx** **rbp** **r12** **r13** **r14** **r15**

/usr/bin/gcc instructions

```
# disassemble gcc
objdump -d /usr/bin/gcc
```

```
>> total instructions: 146k
distinct instructions: 161
```



- `mov` : copy data (e.g. into registers for processing)
- `cmp` : compare numbers (if statements, loops)
- `je` : jump if previous comp values were equal (loops)
- `lea` : fancy way of doing arithmetic (adding)
- `callq` : function call
- `jmpq` : unconditional jump
- `jne` : jump not equal
- `xor` : xor (e.g. to null out registers)
- `test` : ANDs operands and updates flags
- `push` : pushes value on stack, stack management
- `add` : adds two values
- `pop` : pops value from stack, stack management

the x86 instruction set is [...] overcomplicated, and
redundantly redundant.

[...] it remains Turing-complete when reduced to just
one instruction.

— Stephen Dolan, University of Cambridge, 2013 — [mov](#) is Turing-complete

movfuscator

find_primes.c:

```
1 #include <stdio.h>
2
3 #define size 8190
4 #define sizepl 8191
5 char flags[sizepl];
6
7 int main() {
8     int i, prime, k, count, iter;
9     for (iter = 1; iter <= 100; iter++) {
10         count = 0;
11         for (i = 0; i <= size; i++)
12             flags[i] = 1;
13         for (i = 0; i <= size; i++) {
14             if (flags[i]) {
15                 prime = i + i + 3;
16                 k = i + prime;
17                 while (k <= size) {
18                     flags[k] = 0;
19                     k += prime;
20                 }
21                 count = count + 1;
22             }
23         }
24     }
25     printf("found %d primes", count);
26 }
```



Overview

The M/o/Vfuscator (short 'o', sounds like 'move') is a tool that takes C code and converts it into assembly code using only 'mov' instructions. Arithmetic, comparisons, and other operations are performed through mov operations; there is no non-mov cheating.

<https://github.com/xoreaxeaxeax/movfuscator>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byte_Sieve

The basic effects of the process can be seen in [overview](#), which illustrates compiling a simple prime number function with gcc and the M/o/Vfuscator.

movfuscator

```
movcc ./find_primes.c -o find_primes_mov
objdump -Mintel -d ./find_primes_mov
```



```
000 mov     eax,DWORD PTR [ecx*4+0x83f8160]
001 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f8194
002 mov     DWORD PTR [eax],edx
003 mov     DWORD PTR ds:0x83f8164,0x804f048
004 mov     eax,DWORD PTR [ecx*4+0x83f8160]
005 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f8198
006 mov     DWORD PTR [eax],edx
007 mov     DWORD PTR ds:0x83f8164,0x804f050
008 mov     eax,DWORD PTR [ecx*4+0x83f8160]
009 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f819c
010 mov     DWORD PTR [eax],edx
011 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f81a0
012 mov     DWORD PTR [eax+0x4],edx
013 mov     DWORD PTR ds:0x83f8164,0x804f058
014 mov     eax,DWORD PTR [ecx*4+0x83f8160]
015 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f81a4
```

ASM

```
gcc ./find_primes.c -o find_primes_gcc
objdump -Mintel -d ./find_primes_gcc
```



```
1  .LC0:
2      .string "found %d primes"
3  main:
4      sub     rsp, 8
5      mov     r9d, 100
6      mov     edi, OFFSET FLAT:flags+8191
7      jmp     .L2
8  .L5:
9      add     r8d, 1
10 .L4:
11     add     rsi, 1
12     add     rcx, 3
13     add     rdx, 2
14     cmp     rcx, 24576
15     je      .L13
16 .L7:
```

ASM

movfuscator

```
movcc ./find_primes.c -o find_primes_mov
objdump -Mintel -d ./find_primes_mov
```

```
000 mov     eax,DWORD PTR [ecx*4+0x83f8160]
001 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f8194
002 mov     DWORD PTR [eax],edx
003 mov     DWORD PTR ds:0x83f8164,0x804f048
004 mov     eax,DWORD PTR [ecx*4+0x83f8160]
005 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f8198
006 mov     DWORD PTR [eax],edx
007 mov     DWORD PTR ds:0x83f8164,0x804f050
008 mov     eax,DWORD PTR [ecx*4+0x83f8160]
009 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f819c
010 mov     DWORD PTR [eax],edx
011 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f81a0
012 mov     DWORD PTR [eax+0x4],edx
013 mov     DWORD PTR ds:0x83f8164,0x804f058
014 mov     eax,DWORD PTR [ecx*4+0x83f8160]
015 mov     edx,DWORD PTR ds:0x85f81a4
```

ASM



fetch → decode → execute

Toolbox Digression #1

- `objdump`: disassemble binary into assembly
- `perf` (`perf list` for available counters)

```
perf stat -e duration_time,cpu-migrations:u,instructions,cycles:u ls
```

>_

» Performance counter stats for 'ls':

1490843	ns	duration_time:u		
0		cpu-migrations:u		
1031098		instructions:u	#	1.06 insn per cycle
971675		cycles:u		

0.001490843 seconds time elapsed

0.000000000 seconds user

0.001473000 seconds sys

movfuscator — perf

```
$ perf stat -e instructions,duration_time ./find_primes_mov
```



```
Performance counter stats for './find_primes_mov':
```

```
8,896,386,311      instructions:u
6,819,887,233 ns   duration_time:u
```

F.A.Q.

- Q: Why did you make this? A: I thought it would be funny.
- `find_primes.c`: `movcc` version uses **800x** instructions; **2,500x** slower than `gcc` version.
- The mov-only DOOM renders approximately one frame every **7 hours**.

Recap — Binary

- ELF file spec
- Instruction encoding
- Calling convention
- Tools: `objdump`, `perf`
- Instructions
- Registers
- `mov eax, DWORD PTR [rsp+8]` (relative to stack pointer)
- `mov eax, DWORD PTR [rsi]` (any memory address)



Memory Layout

```

1 #include <algorithm>
2 #include <string>
3 #include <vector>
4
5 int global = 10;
6 void foo() {}
7
8 int main(int argc, char** argv) {
9     int stack1;
10    int stack2;
11    int* heap1 = new int();
12    int* heap2 = new int();
13
14    std::vector<std::pair<std::string, void*>> items;
15    items.emplace_back("globals", reinterpret_cast<void*>(&global));
16    items.emplace_back("functions", reinterpret_cast<void*>(&foo));
17
18    items.emplace_back("stack1", reinterpret_cast<void*>(&stack1));
19    items.emplace_back("stack2", reinterpret_cast<void*>(&stack2));
20    items.emplace_back("heap1", reinterpret_cast<void*>(heap1));
21    items.emplace_back("heap2", reinterpret_cast<void*>(heap2));
22
23    items.emplace_back("command line args", reinterpret_cast<void*>(argv));
24    items.emplace_back("environment variables", getenv("HOME"));
25
26    std::ranges::sort(items, std::greater<>{},
27                      [](const auto& p) { return p.second; });
28    for (const auto& [name, ptr] : items) {
29        printf("%-25s %p\n", name.c_str(), ptr);
30    }
31 }

```



```

>> environment variables    0x7ffc56785fe8
    command line args      0x7ffc567844b8
    stack1                  0x7ffc5678434c
    stack2                  0x7ffc56784348
    heap2                   0x18f5e2d0
    heap1                   0x18f5e2b0
    globals                 0x406058
    functions                0x4011a6

```

Questions

- What if two programs use the same memory address?
- Where do heap and stack meet?

Memory — addresses



```
1 #include <stdio.h>
2 #include <atomic>
3 #include <chrono>
4 #include <thread>
5
6 std::atomic<int> num = 40;
7
8 int main() {
9     ++num;
10    std::this_thread::sleep_for(
11        std::chrono::seconds(1));
12    printf("addr: %p, val: %d\n",
13        &num, num);
14 }
```

```
./globals_loc & ./globals_loc
```

```
>> addr: 0x602034, val: 41
    addr: 0x602034, val: 41
```

- Memory addresses aren't real
- OS maintains table for address translation
- TLB (translation lookaside buffer) caches recent translations

Memory — Stack



```
1 #include <iostream>
2
3 static constexpr auto ONE_MiB = (1U << 20U);
4 struct OneMiB { char data[ONE_MiB]; };
5
6 void measureStackSize(OneMiB* first_addr) {
7     OneMiB local_var;
8     const auto diff = first_addr - &local_var;
9     std::cout << "stack size: " << diff
10         << " MiB" << std::endl;
11     measureStackSize(first_addr); // recurse
12 }
13
14 int main() {
15     OneMiB first;
16     measureStackSize(&first);
17     return 0;
18 }
```

```
» stack size: 1 MiB
stack size: 2 MiB
stack size: 3 MiB
stack size: 4 MiB
stack size: 5 MiB
stack size: 6 MiB
Segmentation fault (core dumped)
```

Memory — Heap

```

1  #include <cassert>
2  #include <iostream>
3
4  static constexpr auto ONE_GiB = (1U << 30U);
5  struct OneGiB { char data[ONE_GiB]; };
6
7  int main() {
8      OneGiB *curr_addr;
9
10     for (int cnt = 0;; ++cnt) {
11         try {
12             curr_addr = new OneGiB;
13         } catch (const std::bad_alloc &e) {
14             std::cout << "malloc failed after: "
15                     << cnt << " GiB" << std::endl;
16             break;
17         }
18     }
19 }

```



» malloc failed after: 131070 GiB

htop:

CPU	VIRT	CPU%	MEM%	TIME+	Command
3	127T	0.0	0.4	0:00.98	./heap_limit

Question

- What happens when we use the memory?

Memory — Mapping time + perf stat



```

1 static constexpr auto ONE_GiB = (1U << 30U);
2 struct OneGiB { char data[ONE_GiB]; };
3
4 int main() {
5     OneGiB* curr_addr;
6
7     for (int cnt = 0; cnt < 30; ++cnt) {
8         curr_addr = new OneGiB;
9     }
10 }

```



```

g++ -O3 heap_no_write.cpp -o heap_no_write
sudo perf stat -e duration_time ./heap_no_write

```

```

>> 0.001664263 seconds time elapsed

```



```

sudo perf stat -e page-faults ./heap_no_write

```

```

>> 126 page-faults

```



```

1 static constexpr auto ONE_GiB = (1U << 30U);
2 struct OneGiB { char data[ONE_GiB]; };
3
4 int main() {
5     OneGiB* curr_addr;
6
7     for (int cnt = 0; cnt < 30; ++cnt) {
8         curr_addr = new OneGiB{}; // value init
9     }
10 }

```



```

g++ -O3 heap_write.cpp -o heap_write
sudo perf stat -e duration_time ./heap_write

```

```

>> 19.227826577 seconds time elapsed

```



```

sudo perf stat -e page-faults ./heap_write

```

```

>> 7.864.447 page-faults

```

Toolbox Digression #2

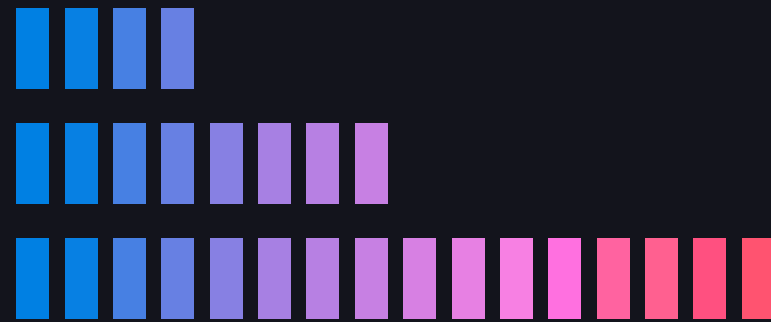
- `tsc` — time stamp counter

```
1 struct ProfileScope {
2     ProfileScope() {
3         tsc_start_ = __rdtsc();
4     }
5     ~ProfileScope() {
6         const uint64_t elapsed = __rdtsc() - tsc_start_;
7         std::cout << elapsed << std::endl;
8     }
9     uint64_t tsc_start_;
10 };
```

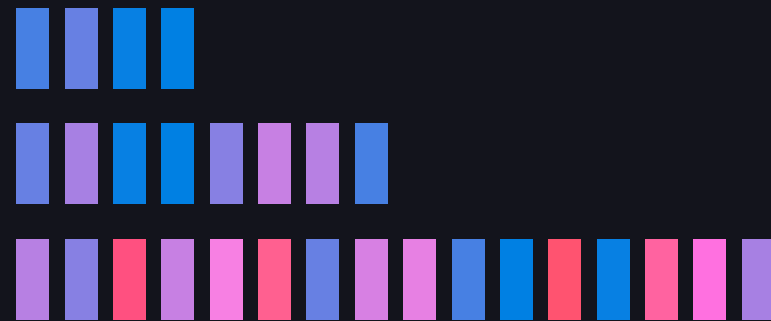
[Memory — Demo]

Memory — measurment patterns

Sequential, `f(range)`:



Random, `f(range)`:



Stride, `f(stride)`:



Toolbox Digression #3

- Google Benchmark
 - Benchmarking library
 - Statistical analysis



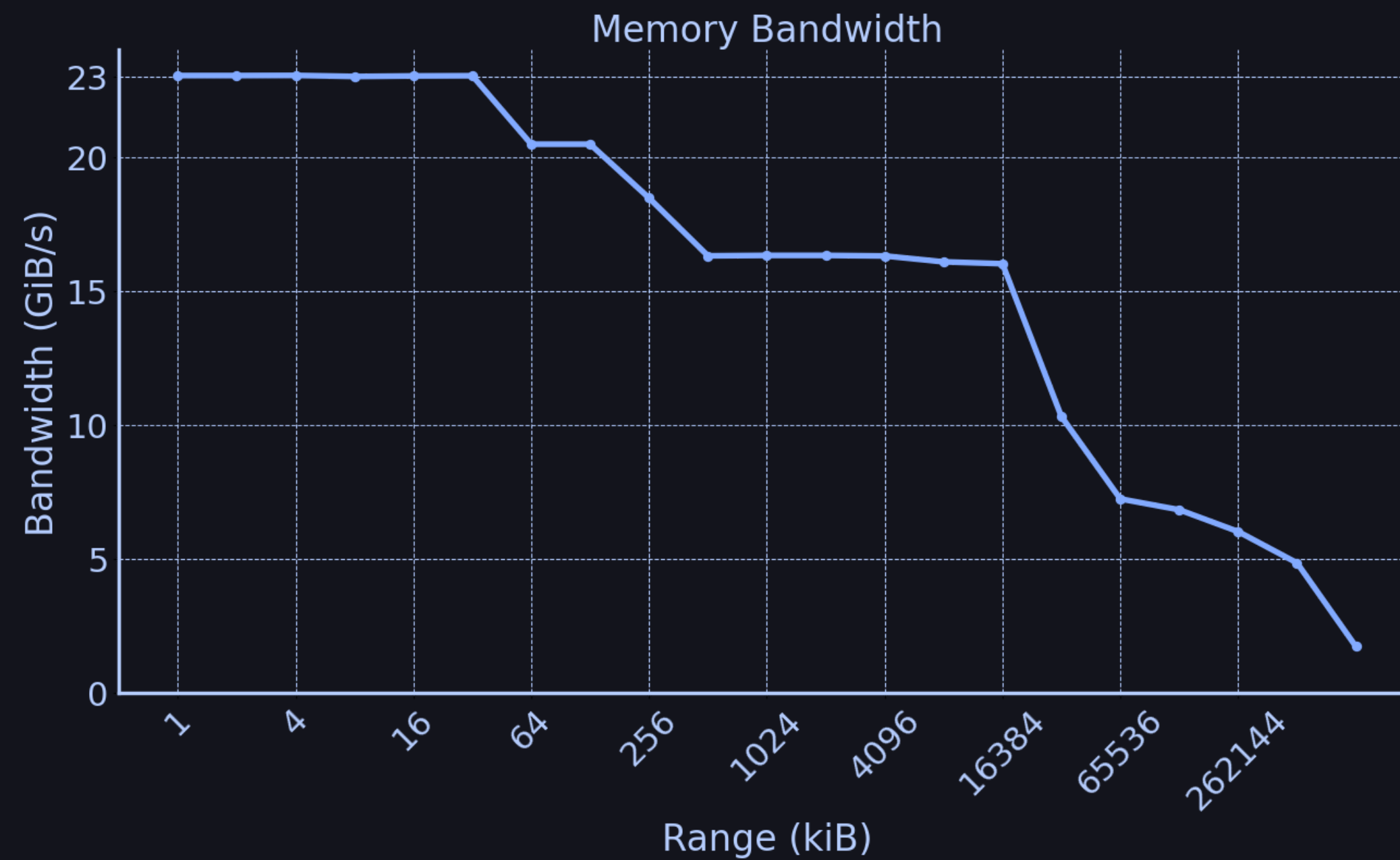
```
#include <benchmark/benchmark.h>

static void BM_SomeFunction(benchmark::State& state) {
    for (auto _ : state) {
        // test code
    }
}

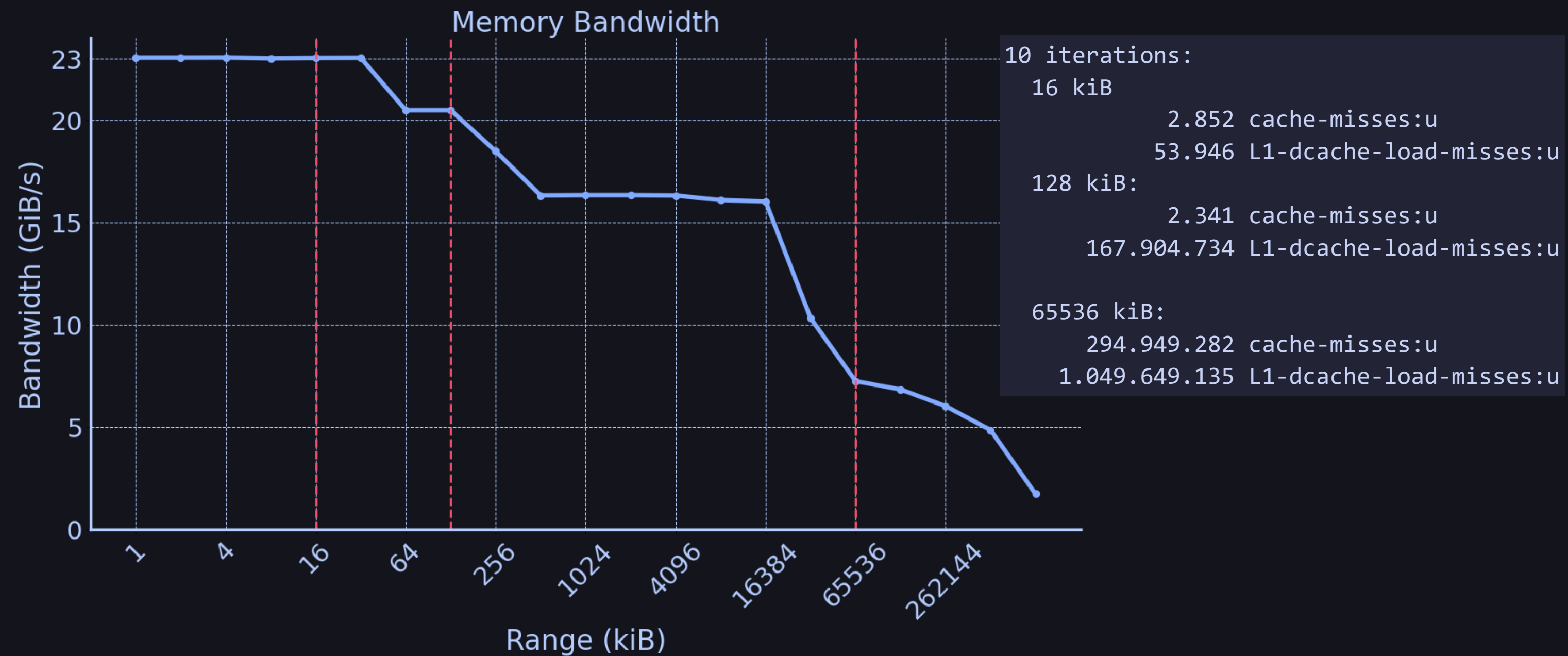
BENCHMARK(BM_SomeFunction); // register test
BENCHMARK_MAIN();
```

Memory — sequential write [DEMO]

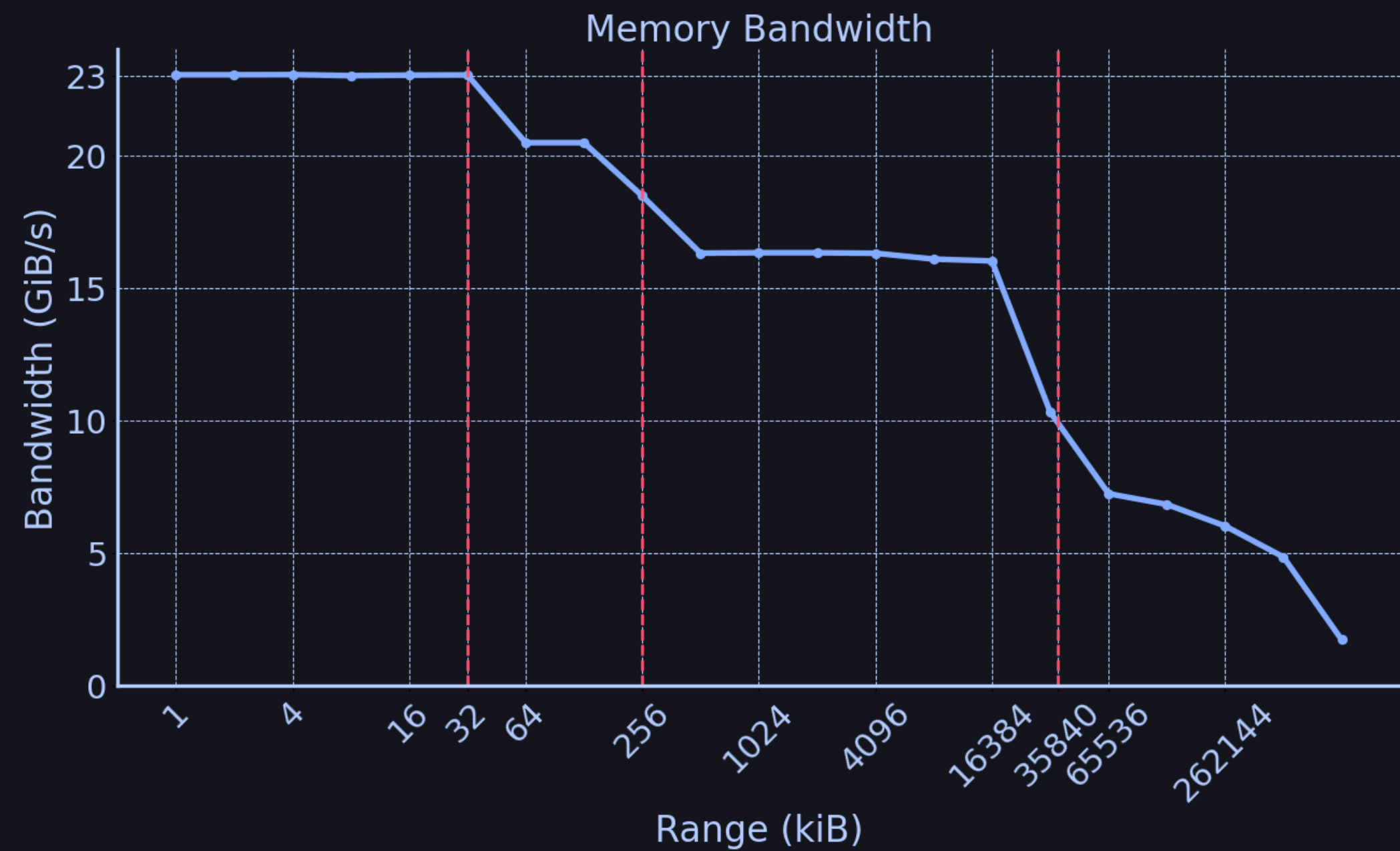
Memory — sequential write



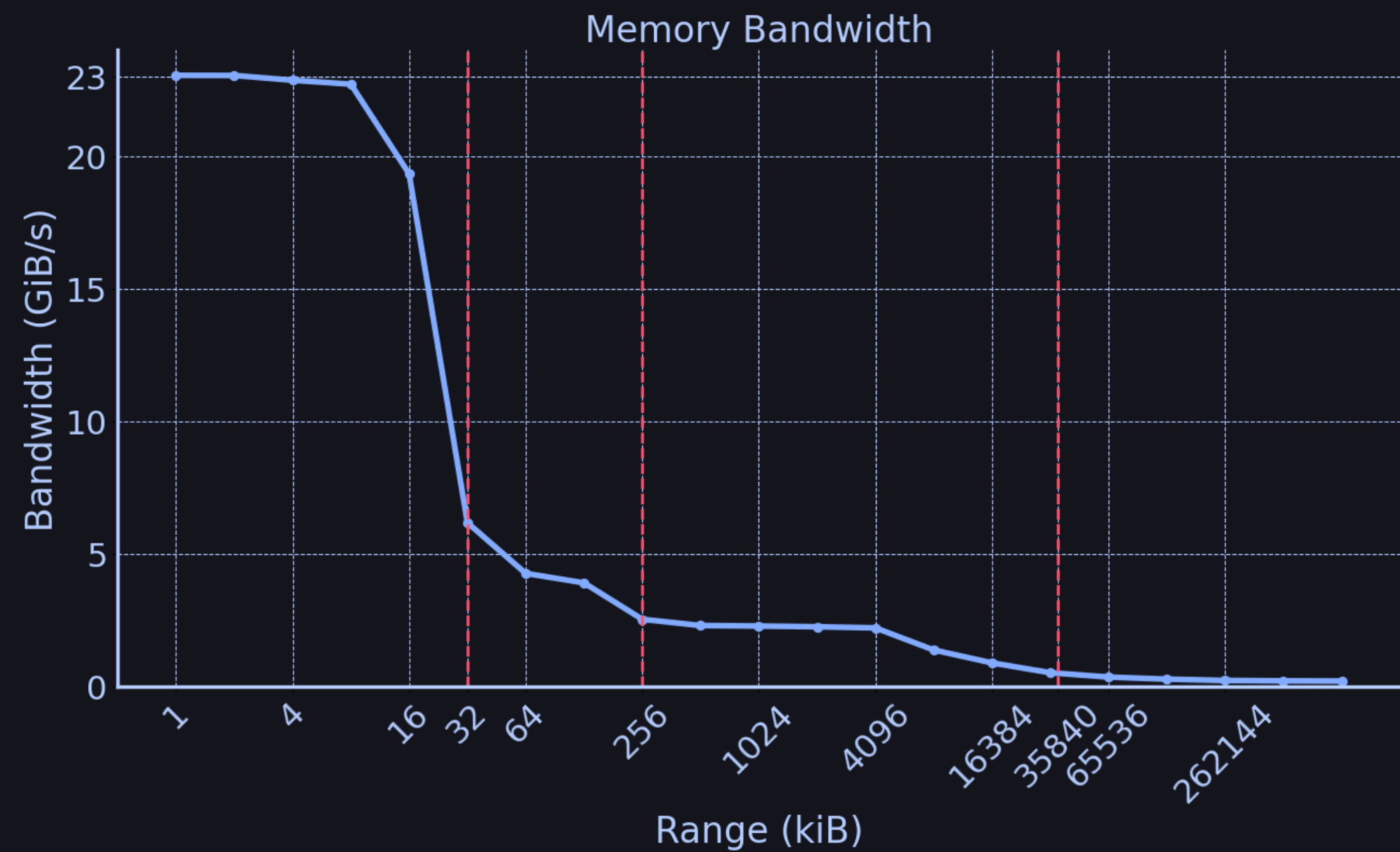
Memory — sequential write



Memory — sequential write

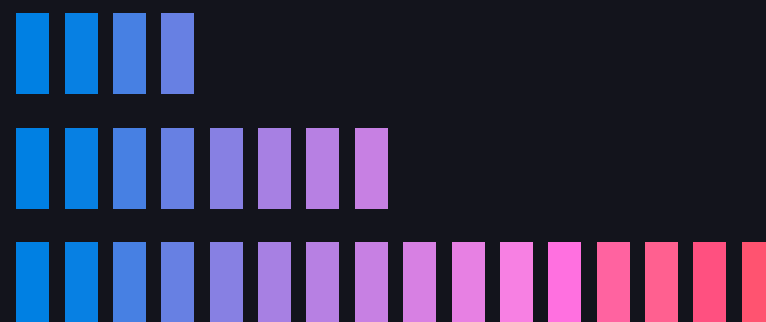


Memory — random write

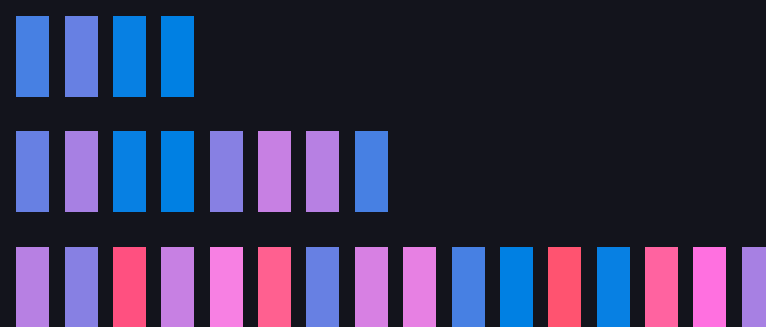


Cache — strided copy

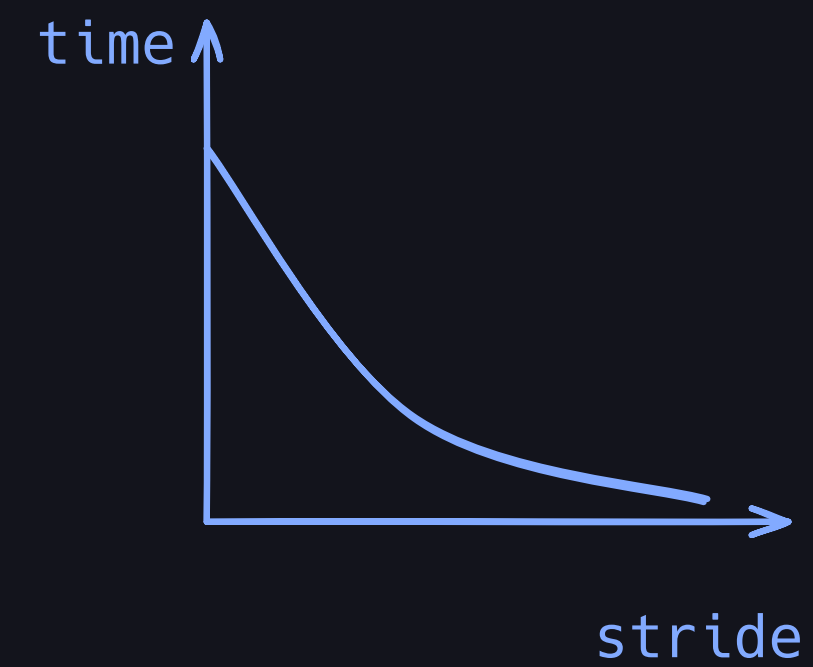
Sequential, `f(range)`:



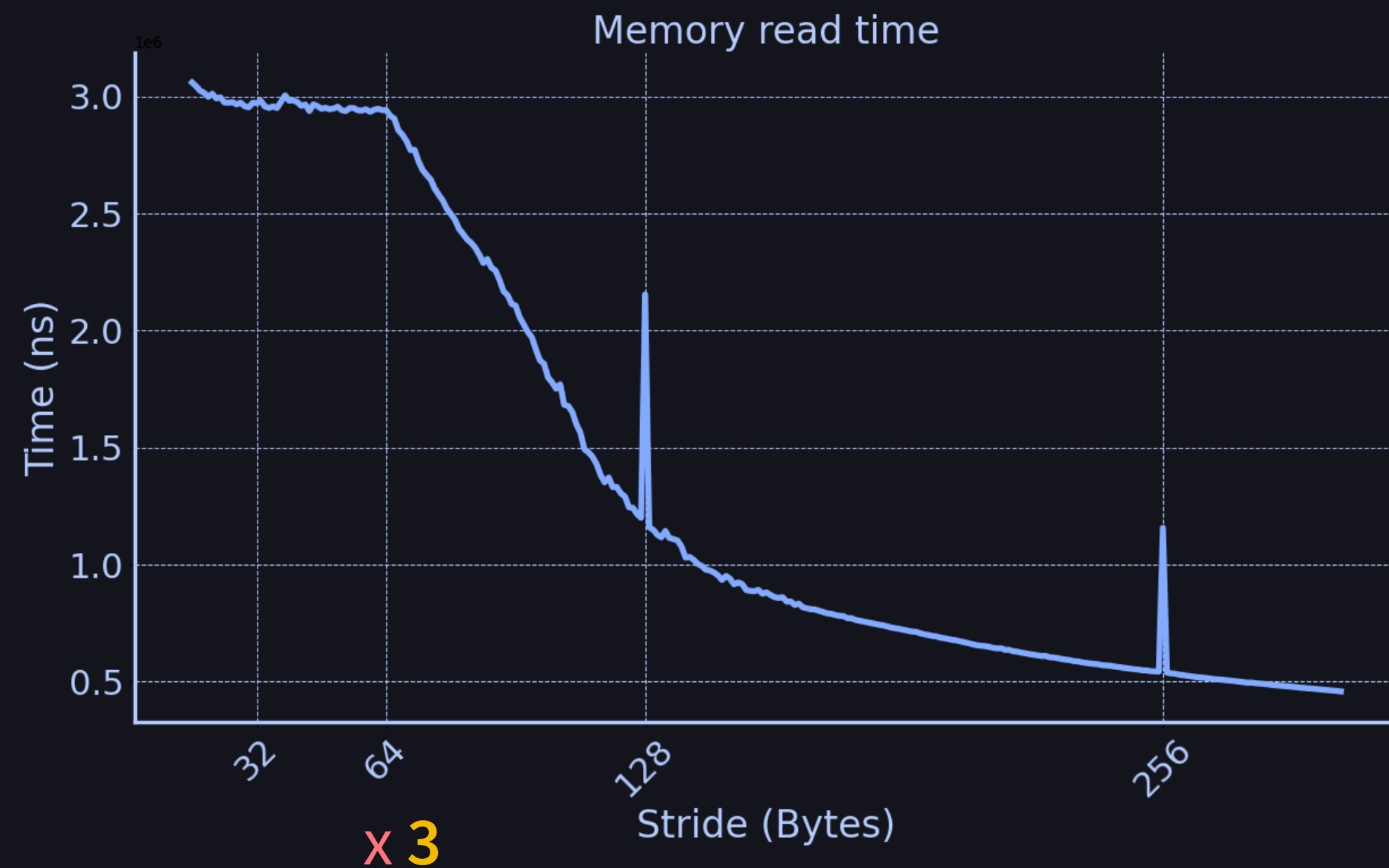
Random, `f(range)`:



Stride, `f(stride)`:



Memory — strided copy



Stride: 1 byte



Stride: 2 bytes



Stride: 3 bytes



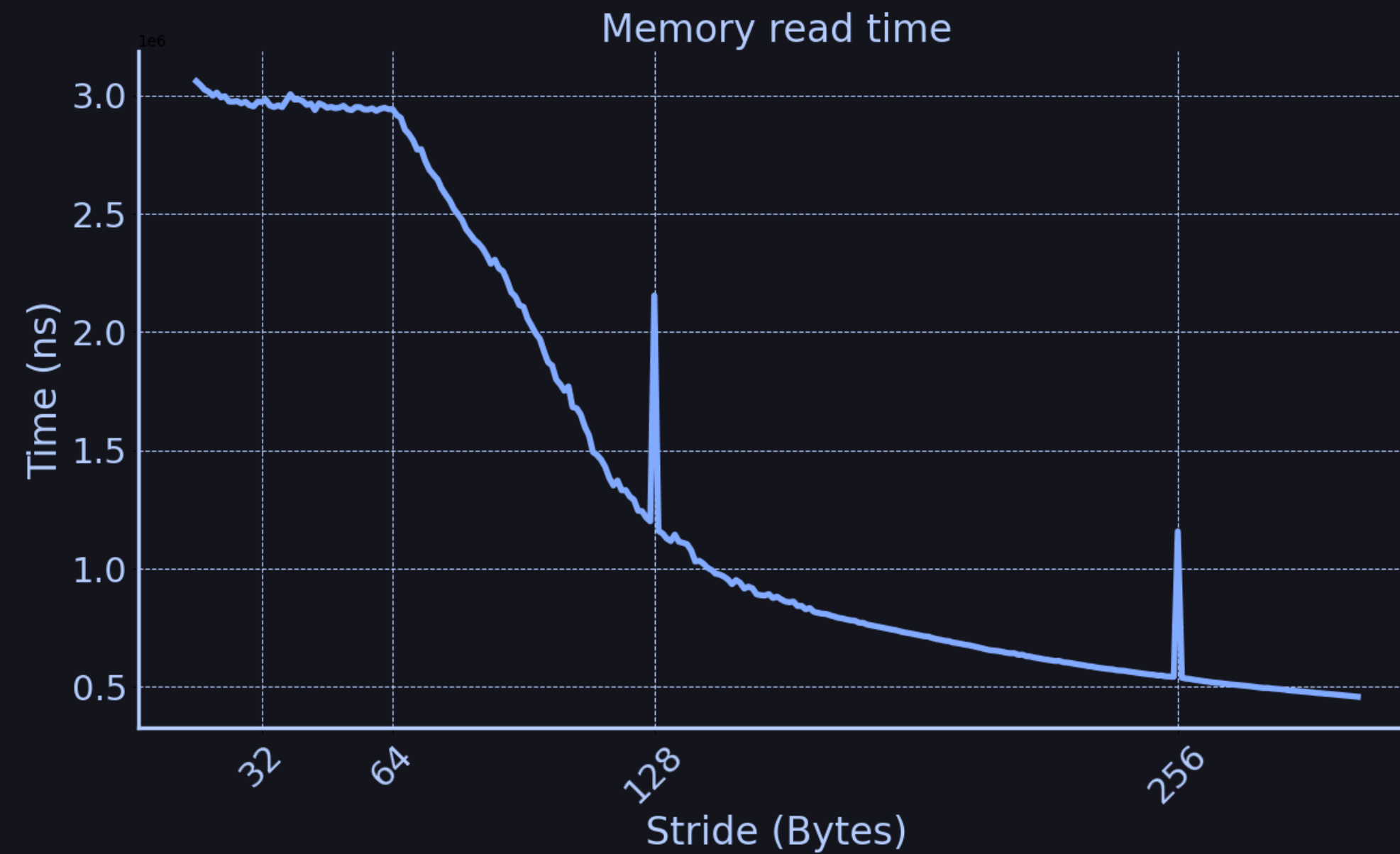
Stride: 4 bytes



Stride: 5 bytes



Memory — strided copy



L1	set 1	set 2	...	set N
way 1	---	---	...	---
...	...	...	...	...
way M	---	---	...	---

$$\text{cache_sz} = \text{cache_line_sz} \cdot \text{\#ways} \cdot \text{\#sets}$$

#ways = associativity

Address: xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx 00111010 01101010 00001110 01000110 01110100 01xxxxxx

16 bits: ignored

6 bits: cache line

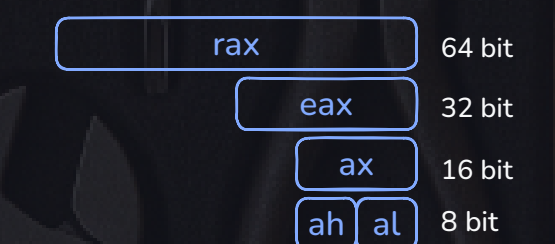
set index bits

Recap — Memory

- Memory layout & heap/stack
- Virtual memory (paging, TLB)
- Data Caching
 - Cache levels (L1, L2, L3)
 - Cache lines
 - Prefetching
 - Cache associativity
- Tools: `htop`, `tsc`, `google benchmark`

Toolbox Digression #4

- **nasm** (assembler)
 - Call assembly from C++
 - Exact control over executed code



rax Return
rbp Base pointer
rip Instruction pointer
rsp Stack pointer
rflags Flags register (Carry, sign, ...)

Function calling convention

rdi **rsi** **rdx** **rcx** **r8** **r9**

Scratch/volatile/callee owned

rax **rcx** **rdi** **rdx** **rsi** **r8** **r9** **r10** **r11**

Caller owned (restored by callee)

rbx **rbp** **r12** **r13** **r14** **r15**

```
enable_language(ASM_NASM)
set(CMAKE_ASM_NASM_FLAGS "-f elf64")
add_executable(addExample)
target_sources(addExample PRIVATE
               add_example.cpp add_example.asm)
```

```
global add
section .text
```

add:

```
    mov rax, rdi ; copy first argument into rax
    add rax, rsi ; add second argument
    ret
```

```
#include <cstdint>
#include <iostream>
```

```
extern "C" int64_t add(int64_t a, int64_t b);
```

```
int main() {
    int64_t result = add(10, 20);
    std::cout << "Result: " << result << std::endl;
    return 0;
}
```

CPU — frontend / backend

add	add loop	nop	nop loop	9 byte nop	9 byte nop loop
ASM_add: %rep 100000 add rax, 9 %endrep ret	ASM_add_loop: .loop: add rax, 9 dec rdi jnz .loop ret	ASM_nop: %rep 100000 nop %endrep ret	ASM_nop_loop: .loop: nop dec rdi jnz .loop ret	ASM_nop_long: %rep 100000 nop_9_byte %endrep ret	ASM_nop_long_loop: .loop: nop_9_byte dec rdi jnz .loop ret

	add	add_loop	nop	nop_loop	nop_9B	nop_9B_loop
time (µs)	32	32	8	32	51	32
instructions (k)	101	301	101	301	101	301
uops_issued.any (k)	101	201	101	201	101	201
uops_executed.core (k)	101	201	1	101	1	101
icache.misses	55	8	1	7	10.897	7

fetch → decode → ~~execute~~ → execute

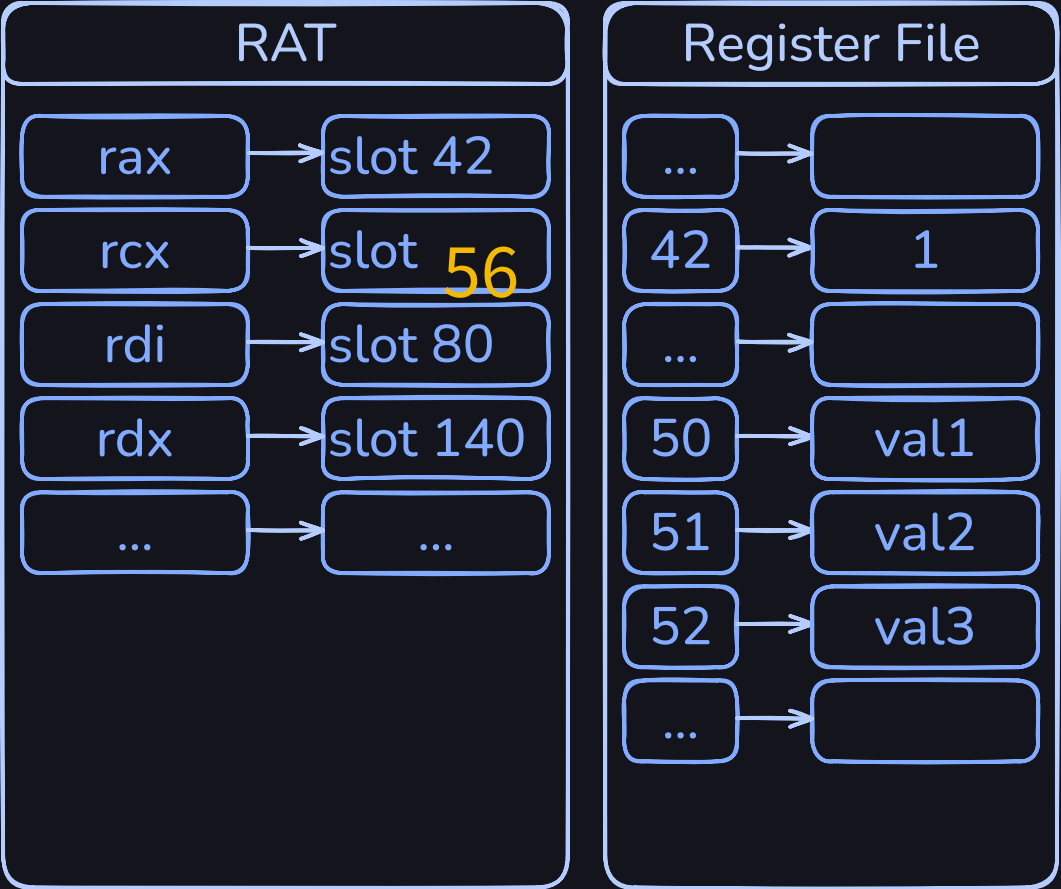
[Branch Prediction — Demo]

[Registers — Demo]

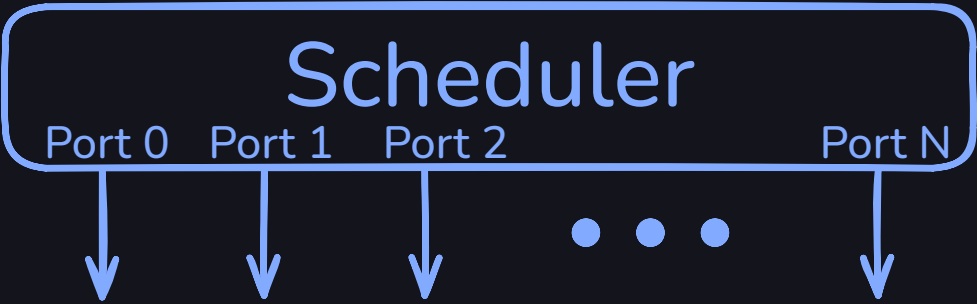
Registers

```
ASM_add:
    %rep 4000
    add rcx, 1    ; rcx += 1
%endrep
ret

ASM_mov_add:
    mov rax, 1
    %rep 4000
    mov rcx, rax ; rcx = rax
    add rcx, 1   ; rcx += 1
%endrep
ret
```



instruction	dest	op1	op2
...	-	-	-
mov rcx, rax	s51	s42	-
add rcx, 1	s52	s51	1
mov rcx, rax	s53	s42	-
add rcx, 1	s54	s53	1
mov rcx, rax	s55	s42	-
add rcx, 1	s56	s55	1
...	-	-	-



Branch prediction

L1 I-Cache I-TLB

Decode

μ-op Cache

μ-op Queue

RAT

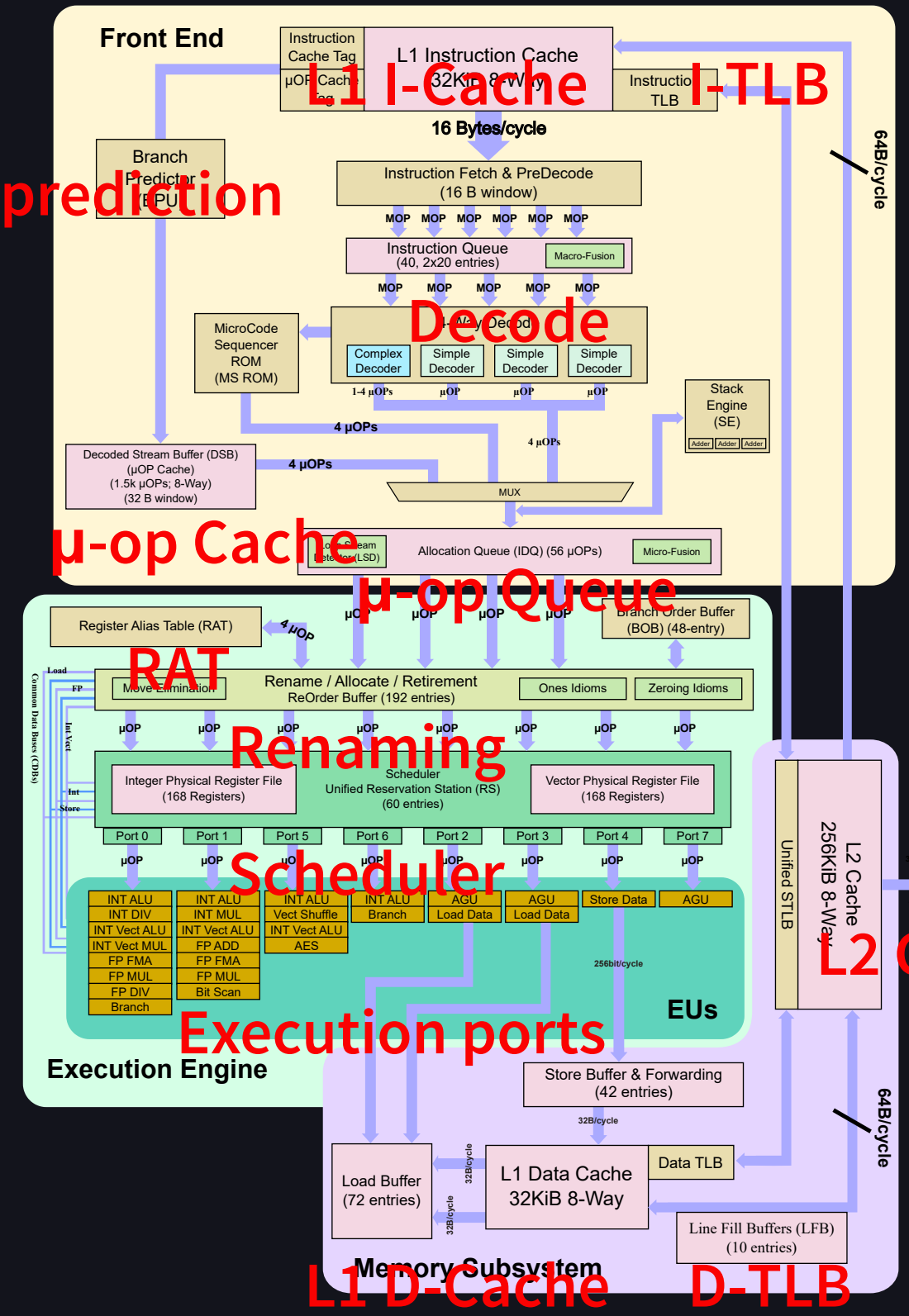
Renaming

Scheduler

Execution ports

L2 Cache

L1 D-Cache D-TLB



Sorted vector

- maintain sorted `vector<T>`, support insert/remove/update element

```
sorted_values_.push_back(new_val);  
std::sort(sorted_values_.begin(), sorted_values_.end());
```



- Test: `1'000'000` elements, `1'000` inserts: **46s**



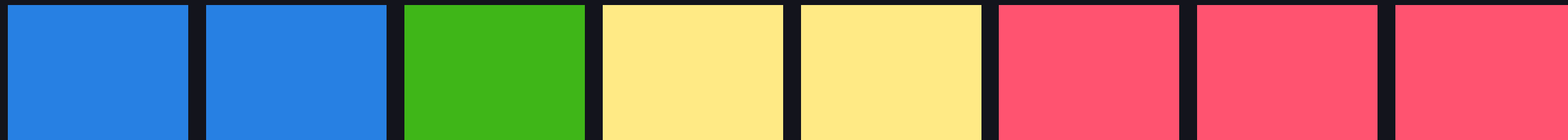
Sorted vector

- maintain sorted `vector<T>`, support insert/remove/update element

```
sorted_values_.push_back(new_val);  
std::sort(sorted_values_.begin(), sorted_values_.end());
```



- Test: `1'000'000` elements, `1'000` inserts: **46s**



```
auto it = std::lower_bound(sorted_values_.begin(), sorted_values_.end(), new_val);  
sorted_values_.insert(it, new_val);
```



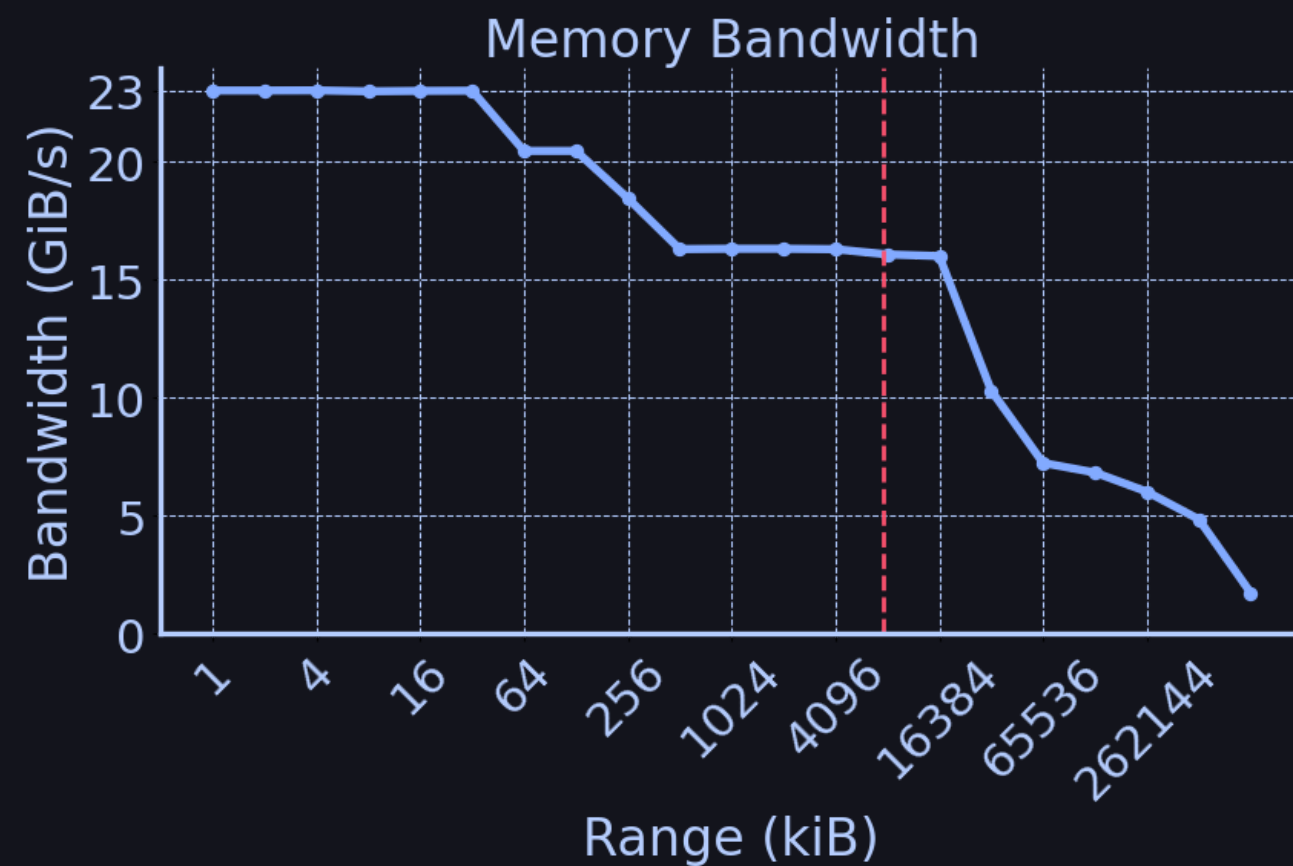
Sorted vector

- maintain sorted `vector<T>`, support insert/remove/update element

```
sorted_values_.push_back(new_val);
std::sort(sorted_values_.begin(), sorted_values_.end());
```



- Test: `1'000'000` elements, `1'000` inserts: **46s**



```
nr_moves = 1000000 / 2 * 1000

bw_gbyte_s = 16
bw_int64_s = (bw_gbyte_s << 30) / 8
expected_ms = int(nr_moves / bw_int64_s * 1e3)

print(f"expected duration: {expected_ms}ms")
```



» expected duration: 232ms

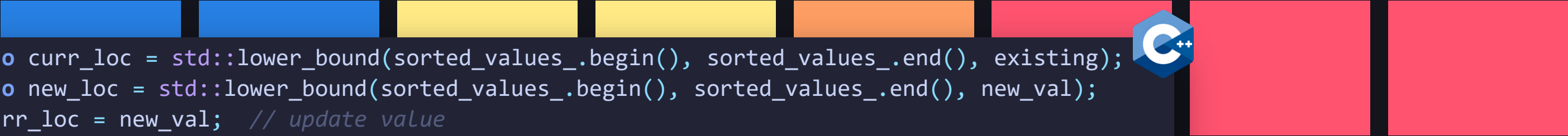
Sorted vector

- maintain sorted `vector<T>`, support insert/remove/update element
- test with: `1'000'000` elements, `1'000` events
- **Insert** (`std::lower_bound + insert`): **204ms** (calculated: **232ms**)
- **Remove** (`std::lower_bound + erase`): **208ms**
- **Update** (`remove + insert`): **427ms**



Sorted vector

- maintain sorted `vector<T>`, support insert/remove/update element
- test with: `1'000'000` elements, `1'000` events
- **Insert** (`std::lower_bound + insert`): **204ms** (calculated: **232ms**)
- **Remove** (`std::lower_bound + erase`): **208ms**
- **Update** (`remove + insert`): **427ms**



```

auto curr_loc = std::lower_bound(sorted_values_.begin(), sorted_values_.end(), existing);
auto new_loc = std::lower_bound(sorted_values_.begin(), sorted_values_.end(), new_val);
*curr_loc = new_val; // update value

if ((curr_loc == new_loc) || ((curr_loc + 1) == new_loc)) { continue; } // same location

auto start = std::min(curr_loc, new_loc);
auto end = std::max(curr_loc + 1, new_loc);
auto mid = (new_loc < curr_loc) ? curr_loc : curr_loc + 1;
std::rotate(start, mid, end);
  
```

Sorted vector

- maintain sorted `vector<T>`, support insert/remove/update element
- test with: `1'000'000` elements, `1'000` events
- **Insert** (`std::lower_bound + insert`): **204ms** (calculated: **232ms**)
- **Remove** (`std::lower_bound + erase`): **208ms**
- **Update** (`remove + insert`): **427ms**
- **Update** (`2x std::lower_bound + std::rotate`): **141ms**

Memory Usage Python

- sum all quantities

```
things = get_things(5)  
quantities = [thing.qty_ for thing in things]  
print(sum(quantities))
```



→ mem usage: 9MB

```
things = get_things(10000000)  
quantities = [thing.qty_ for thing in things]  
print(sum(quantities))
```

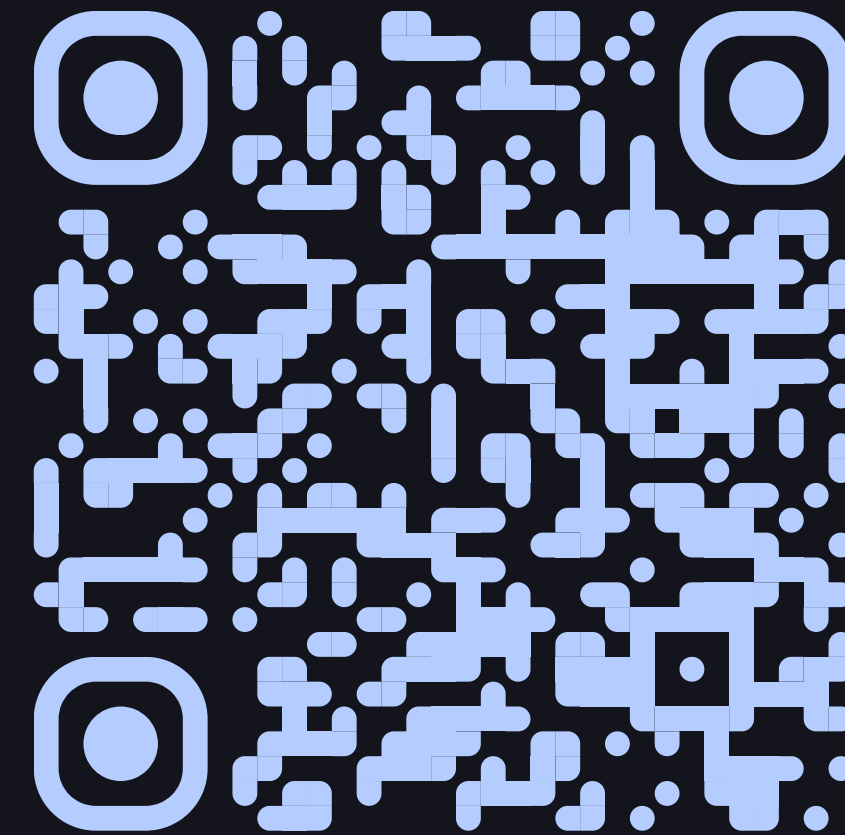
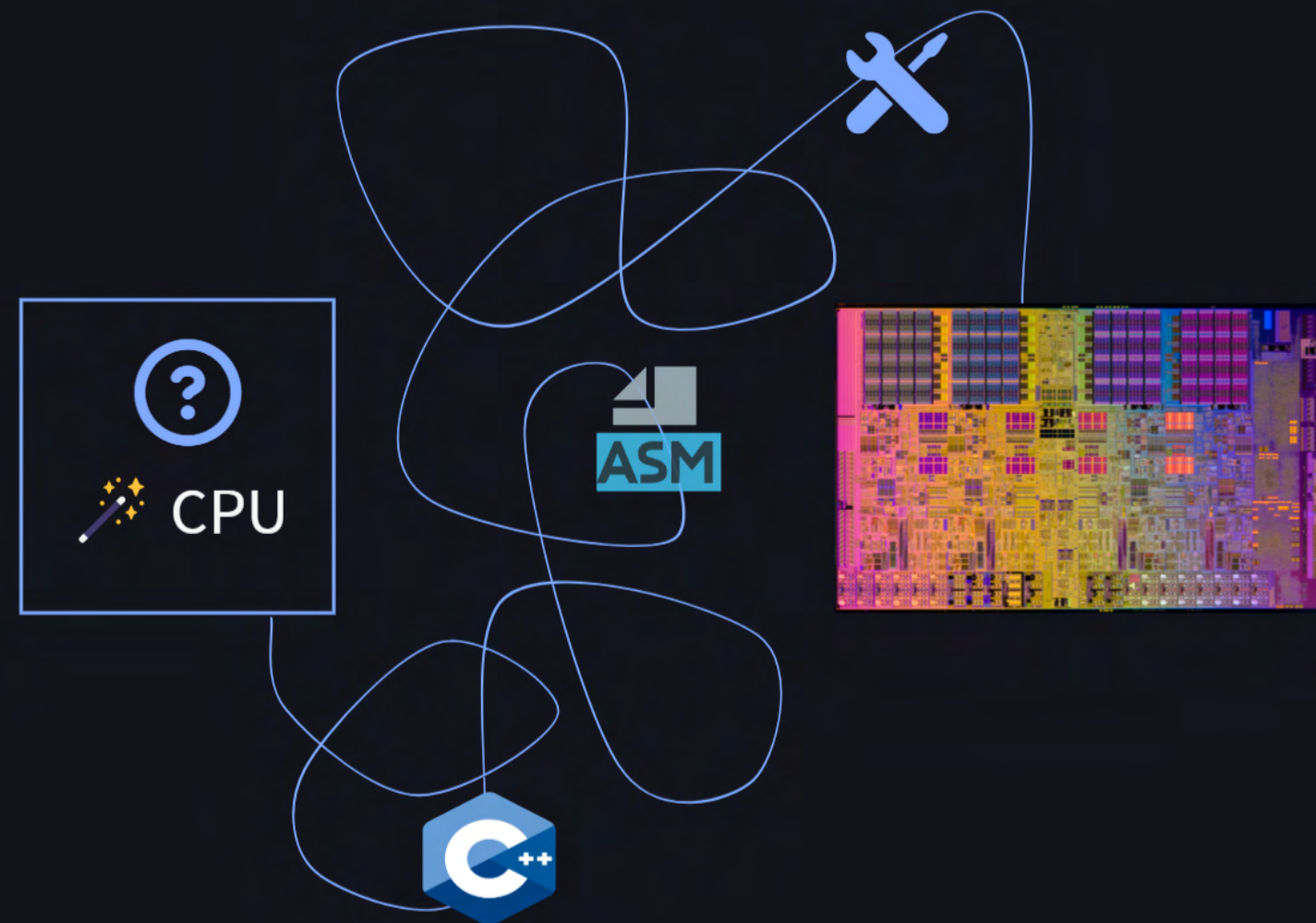


→ mem usage: 404MB

```
things = get_things(10000000)  
quantities = (thing.qty_ for thing in things)  
print(sum(quantities))
```



→ mem usage: 9MB



github.com/linusboehm/perf_stuff/

🔧 : `objdump` , `perf` , `htop` , `rdtsc` , `google benchmark` , `nasm` , `llvm-mca` ,
`compiler-explorer` , `beman exemplar`