



# How to use flamegraphs to find performance problems

# About me



# Structure for the first half

- ▶ Background
- ▶ How to find slow pages
- ▶ How to investigate why they are slow

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# Why we care about performance

- ▶ Better user experience
- ▶ Customer-facing pages: affects conversion rate
- ▶ Easiest way to measure this is to measure the drop-out rate in your sales funnel.

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# Server costs

- ▶ Slow code in heavily used areas of a site = higher server costs.



# Scaling

- Makes scaling under peak load more difficult

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# Why do we need to profile apps?



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# Why do we need to profile apps?

- ▶ Realistic view of what's causing slowness
- ▶ Intuition can fail

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# Why do we need to profile apps?

- ▶ Realistic view of what's causing slowness
- ▶ Intuition can fail
- ▶ Unlikely to catch slowness in code review

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# Profilers

- What is a profiler

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# Profilers

- ▶ What is a profiler
- ▶ Common Ruby profilers

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# How to find performance problems

- ▶ Start by prioritising, then:

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# How to find performance problems

- ▶ Start by prioritising, then:
- ▶ Follow an elimination process to find cause of slow code

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# How to find performance problems

- ▶ Start by prioritising, then:
- ▶ Follow an elimination process to find cause of slow code
- ▶ Measure results of any code change

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# How to find performance problems

- ▶ Start by prioritising, then:
- ▶ Follow an elimination process to find cause of slow code
- ▶ Measure results of any code change
- ▶ Raise a PR and test in production

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# Prioritising areas to speed up

- ▶ What pages are both heavily used and slow

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# Prioritising areas to speed up

- ▶ What pages are both heavily used and slow
- ▶ Of these, what would be the impact of speeding these up

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# Prioritising areas to speed up

- ▶ What pages are both heavily used and slow
- ▶ Of these, what would be the impact of speeding these up
- ▶ Context of the business you're in
- ▶ Homepage / Conversion funnel / Landing pages / Payments

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# Prioritising areas to speed up

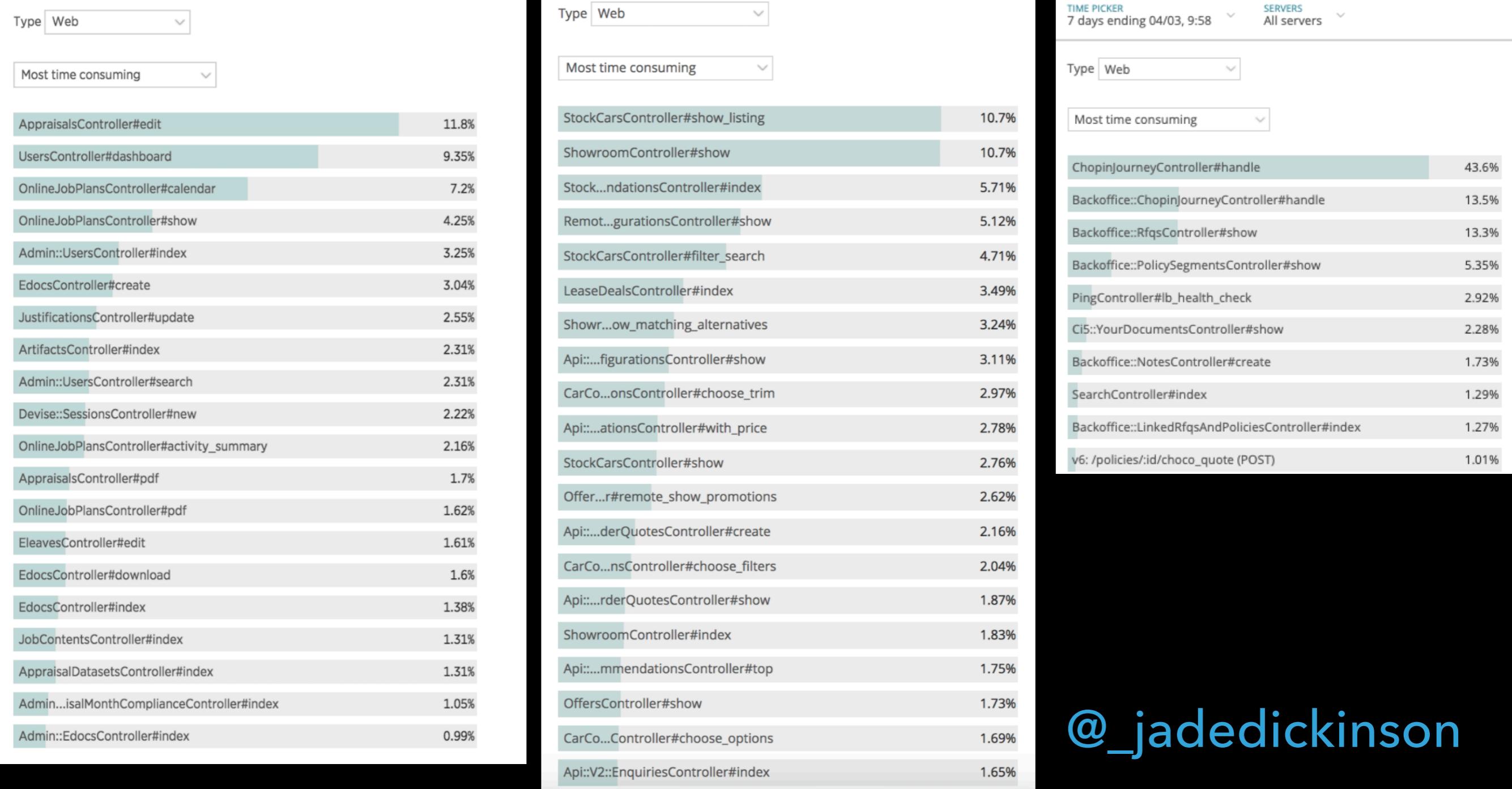
- ▶ What pages are both heavily used and slow
- ▶ Of these, what would be the impact of speeding these up
- ▶ Context of the business you're in
- ▶ Homepage / Conversion funnel / Landing pages / Payments
- ▶ Customer base

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# Put together an ordered list

- ▶ Look at real results for real users

# Examples



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# Pick your starting point

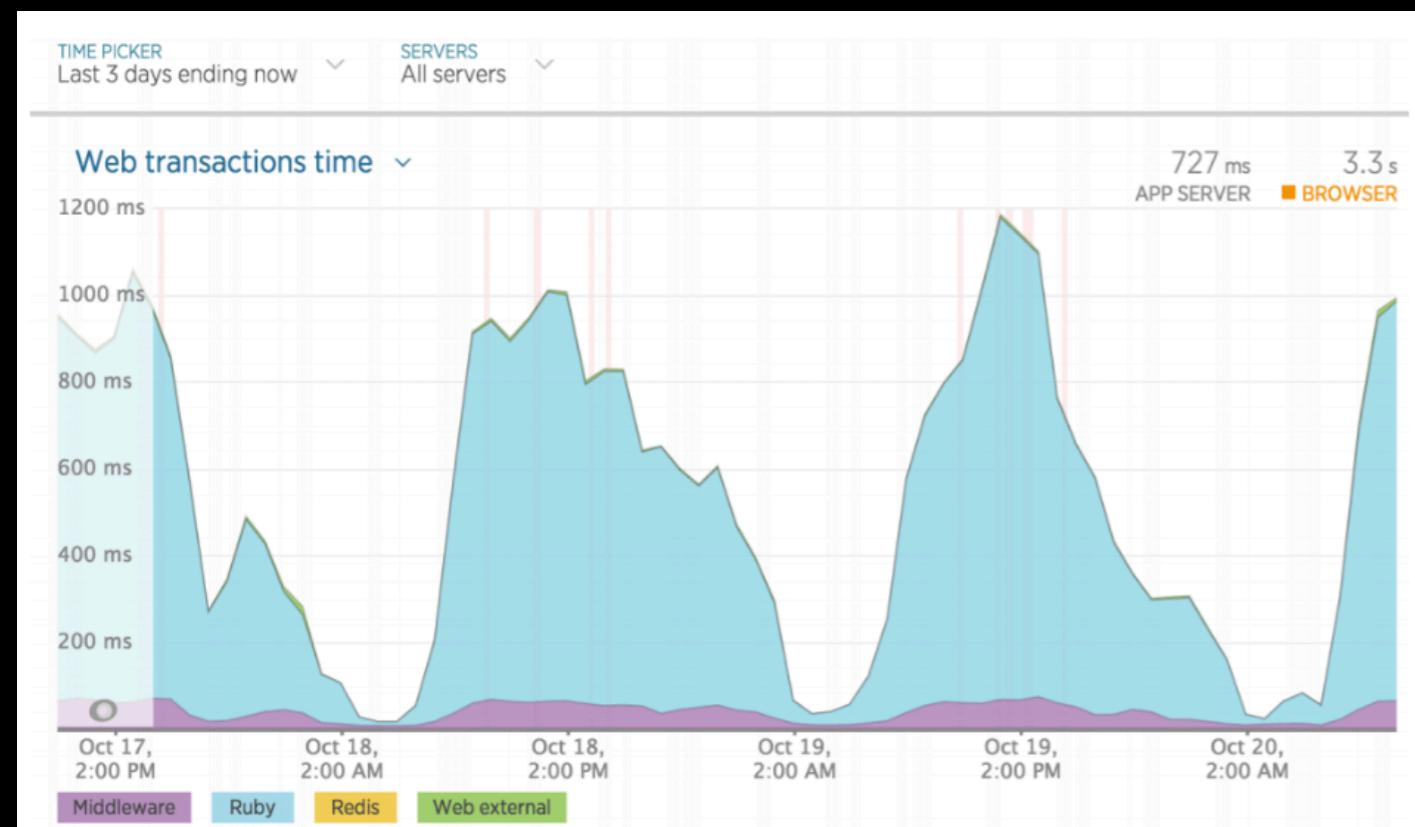
- ▶ Highest impact on product
- ▶ Consider architecture where relevant

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# Elimination process

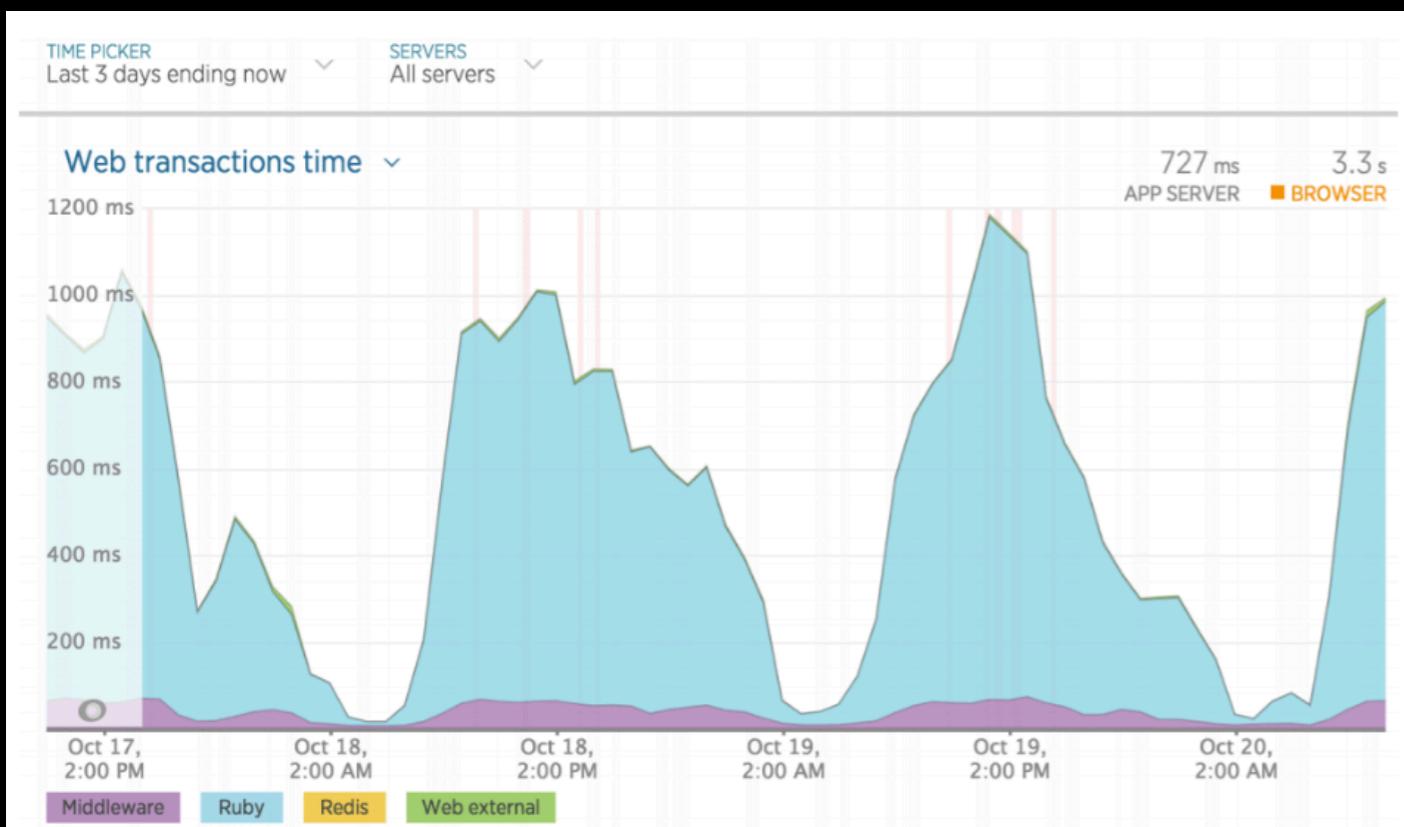
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# Elimination process



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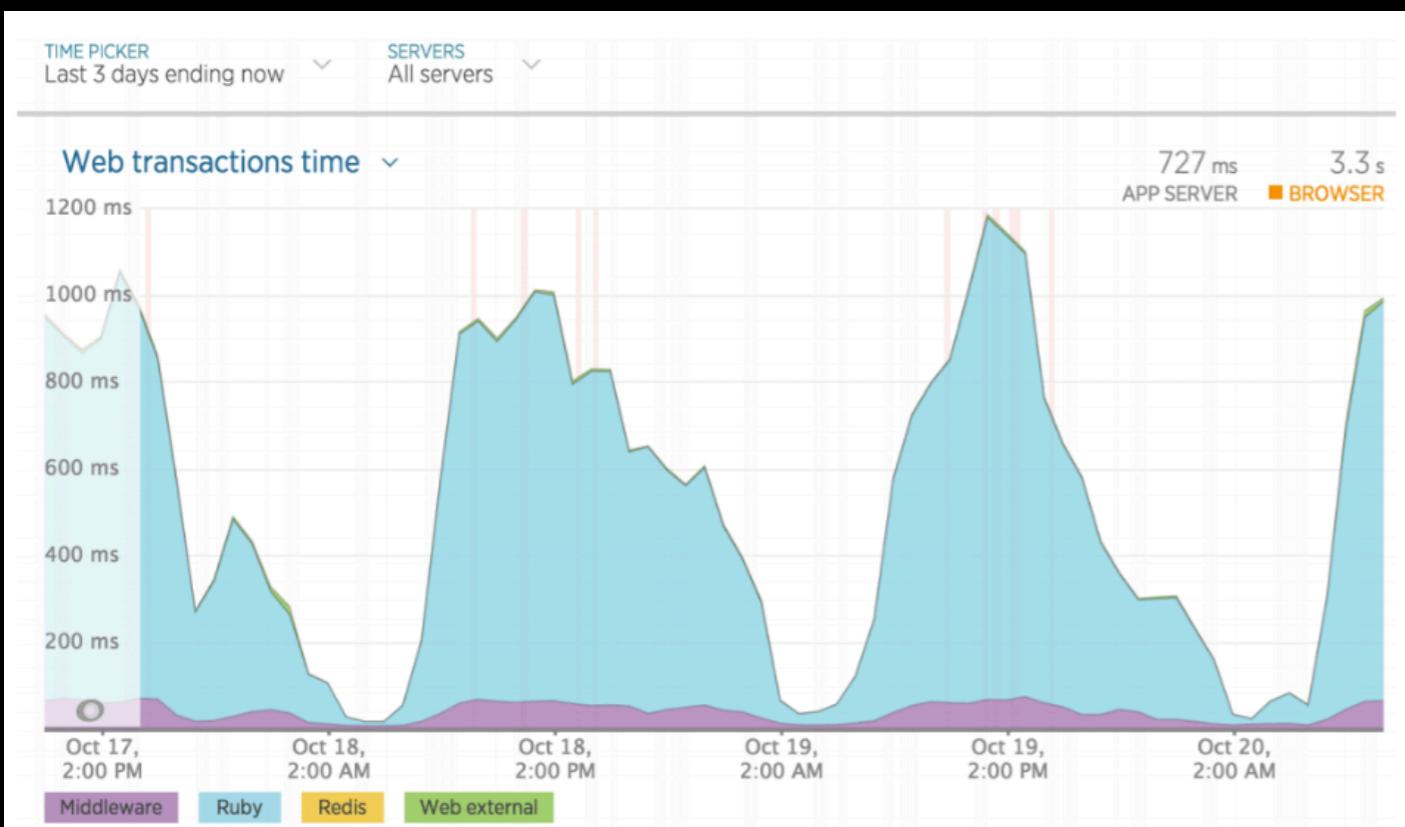
# Elimination process



▶ Is it the  
frontend?

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# Elimination process



- ▶ Is it the frontend?
- ▶ Is it the backend?
- ▶ Where in the backend?

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# EXERCISE 1

<http://localhost:3000>

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# Rack-mini-profiler

Chopin Backoffice

localhost on Wed, 13 May 2020 12:24:53 GMT

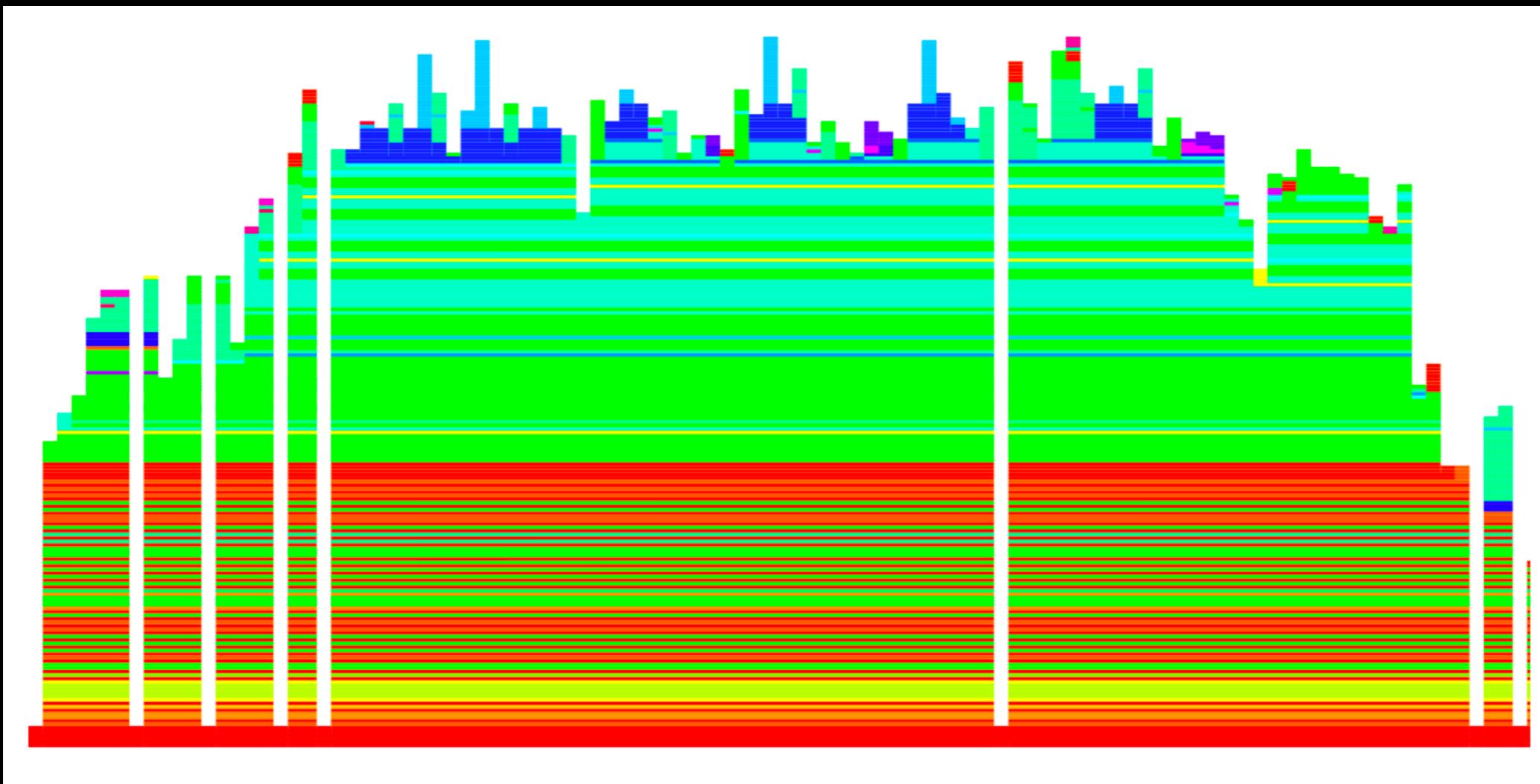
	duration (ms)	from start (ms)	query time (ms)	sql
GET http://localhost:3000/backoffice/policies	38.7	+0.0		
Executing action: index	105.0	+38.0	7	28.1
Rendering: policies/index.html.haml	9.4	+118.2	1	1.6
Rendering: backoffice/_navigation.html.haml	16.9	+148.2		
Rendering: backoffice/_menu.html.haml	11.1	+152.4		
Rendering: menu/_rfqs.html.haml	2.1	+156.9		
Rendering: backoffice/_menu.html.haml	9.0	+170.9		
Rendering: backoffice/_menu.html.haml	8.3	+182.9		
Rendering: backoffice/_menu.html.haml	7.7	+194.4		
Rendering: backoffice/_menu.html.haml	7.4	+204.9		
Rendering: backoffice/_menu.html.haml	7.5	+214.7		
Rendering: backoffice/_search_form.html.haml	3.2	+224.8		

share more show time with children 12.5 % in sql

Policy No Transaction Date Risk Postcode Firs

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# The flamegraph



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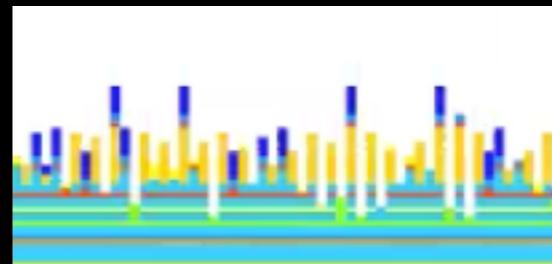
# EXERCISE 2

<http://localhost:3000/cohorts?pp=flamegraph>

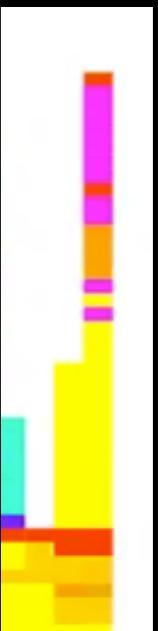
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# Patterns to look for in a flamegraph

► Big horizontal section same colour



► Hedgehog spikes

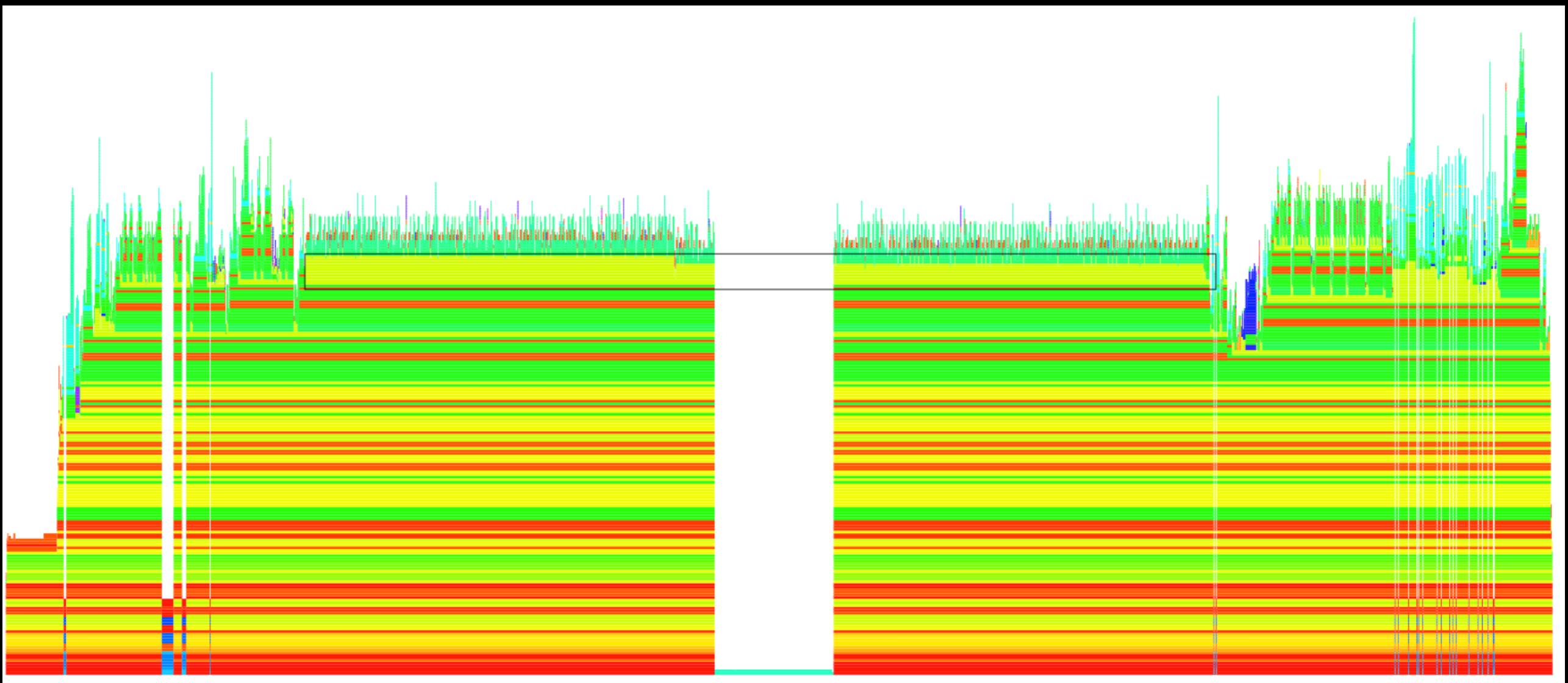


► Random peak in a different colour

► Chunk cut out of the flamegraph

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# Example



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# EXERCISE 3

<http://localhost:3000/enclosures?pp=flamegraph>

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# EXERCISE 4

<http://localhost:3000/animals?pp=flamegraph>

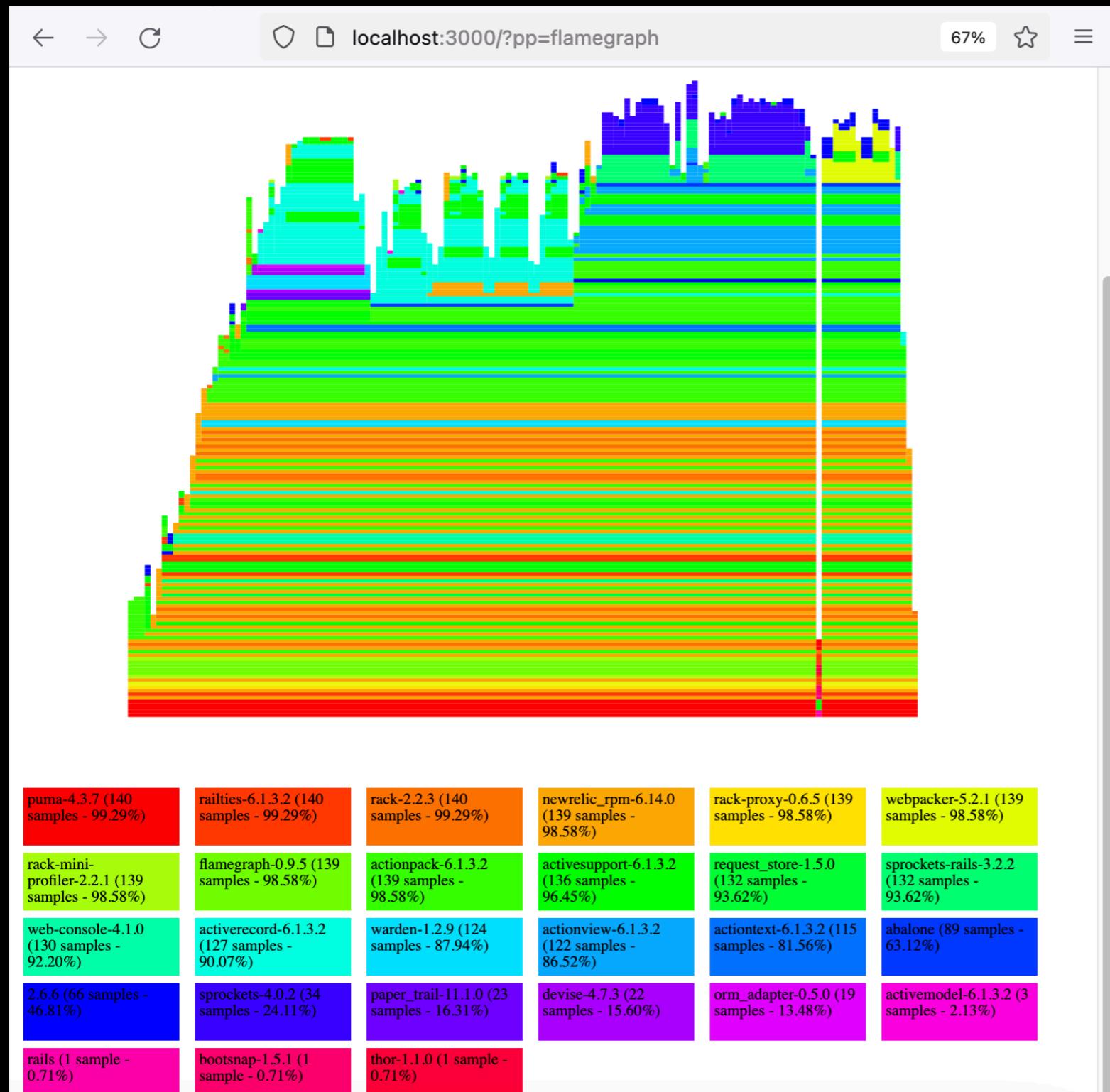
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# EXERCISE 5

<http://localhost:3000/?pp=flamegraph>

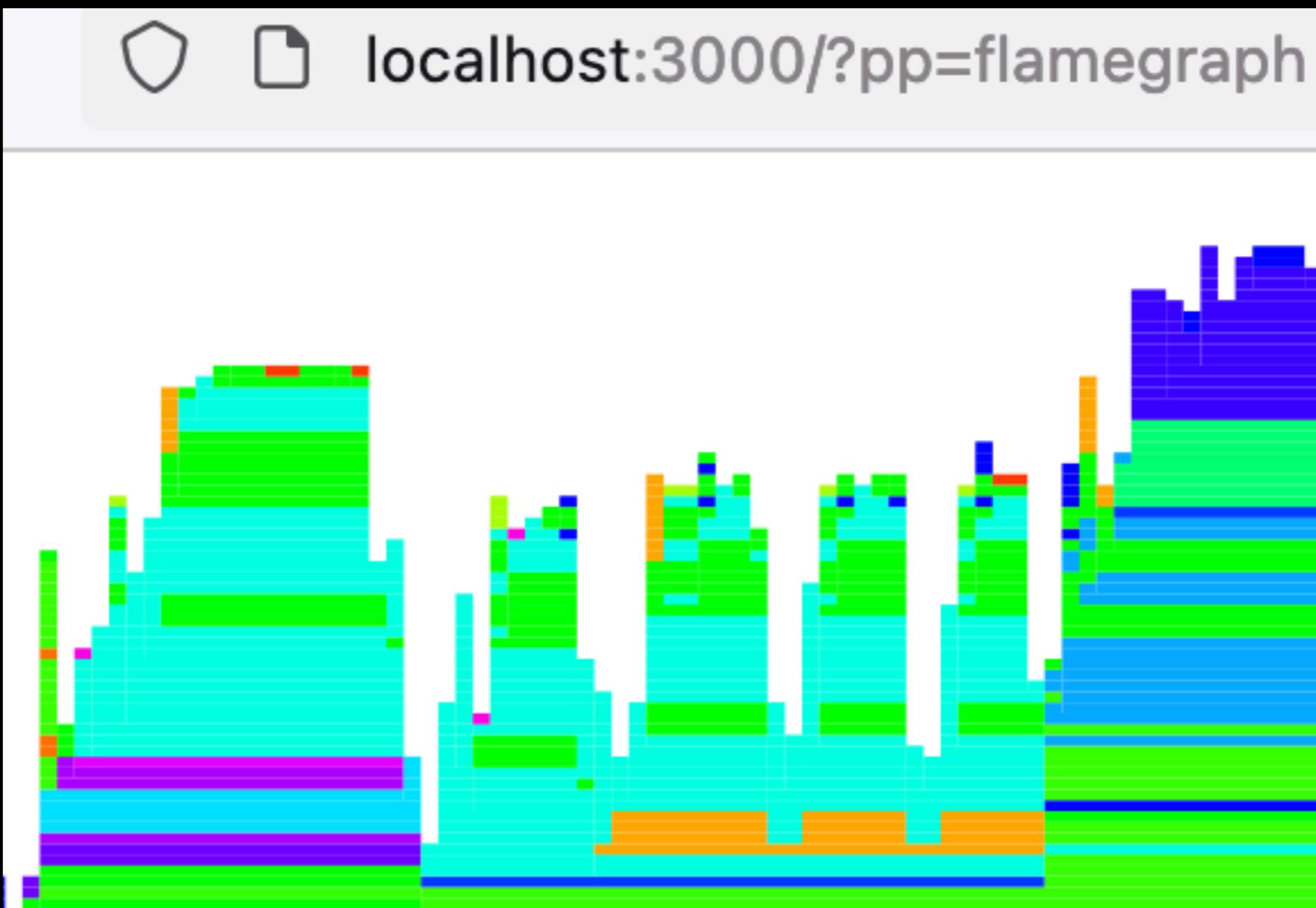
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# EXERCISE 5



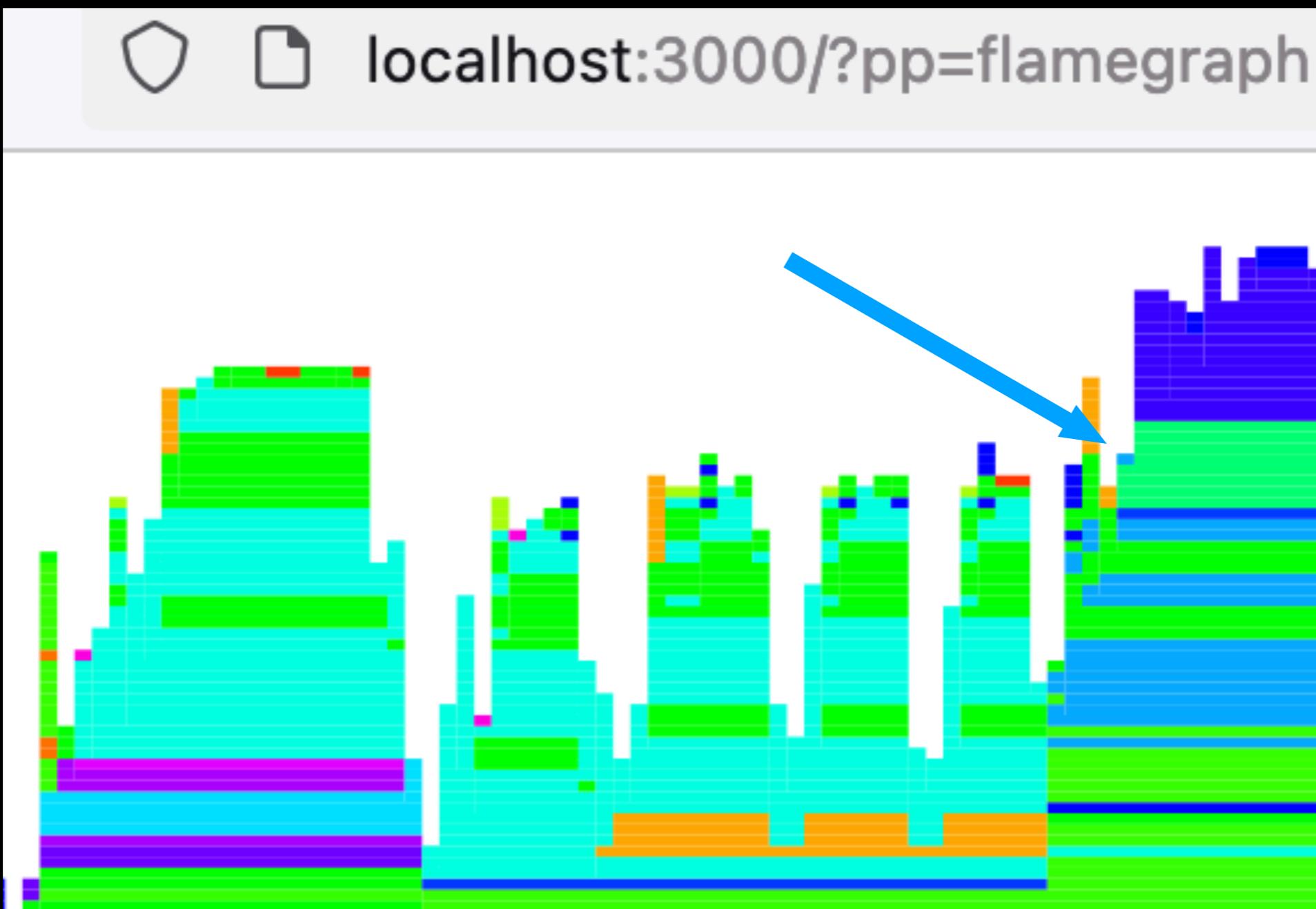
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# EXERCISE 5



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# EXERCISE 5



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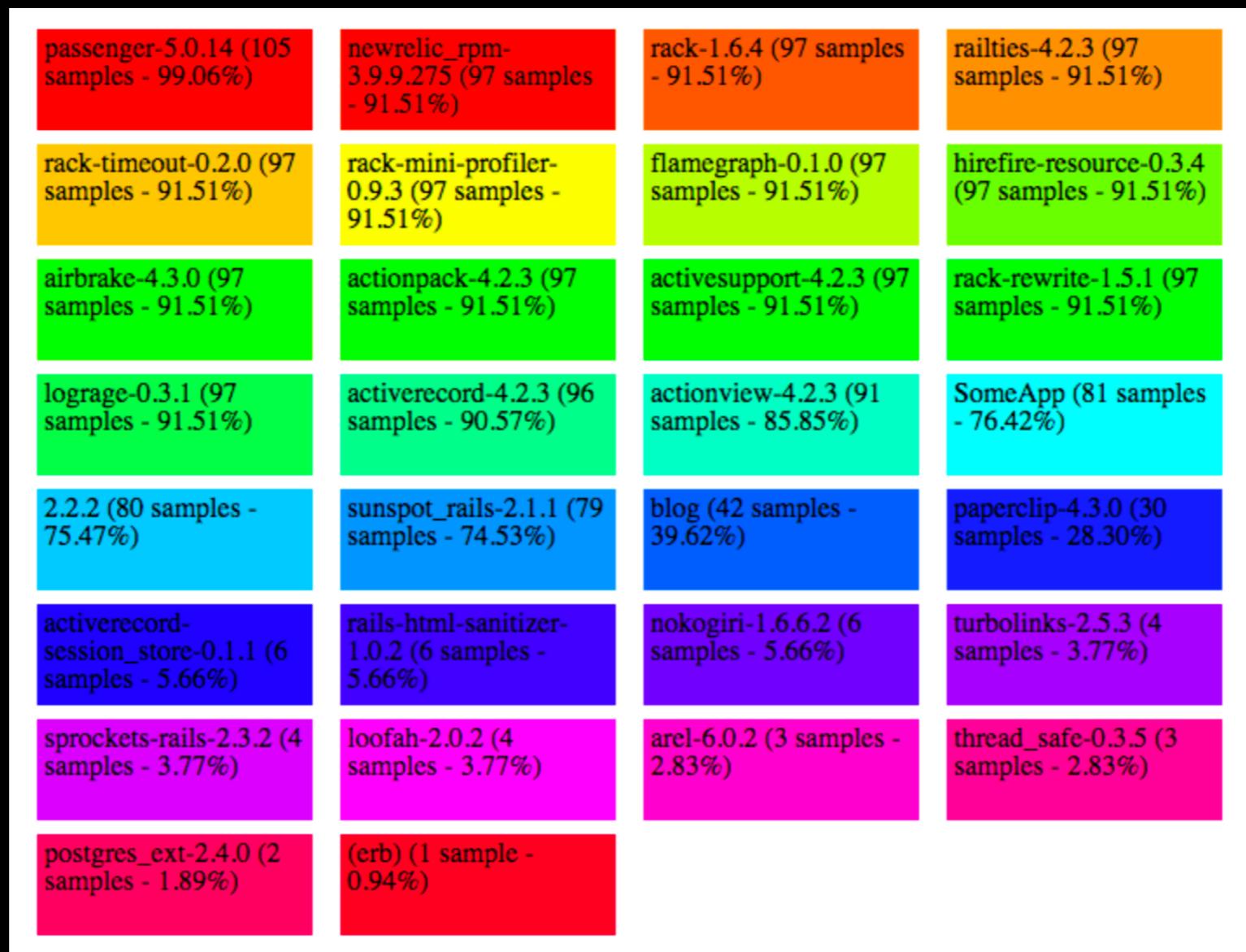
# Seeing stack traces from an individual frame

## Frame Info

/Users/Jade.Dickinson/projects/chopin/app/models/vertical.rb:15:in `Vertical#questionnaire'	(1048 samples - 34.30%)
/Users/Jade.Dickinson/projects/chopin/app/models/rfq.rb:1473:in `Rfq#questionnaire'	(1124 samples - 36.79%)
/Users/Jade.Dickinson/projects/chopin/app/helpers/backoffice/rfqs_helper.rb:28:in `Backoffice::RfqsHelper#select_sof_questions'	(1127 samples - 36.89%)
/Users/Jade.Dickinson/projects/chopin/app/helpers/backoffice/rfqs_helper.rb:20:in `Backoffice::RfqsHelper#sof_answers_in_questionnaire_order'	(504 samples - 16.50%)
/Users/Jade.Dickinson/projects/chopin/app/helpers/backoffice/rfqs_helper.rb:20:in `Backoffice::RfqsHelper#sof_answers_in_questionnaire_order'	(504 samples - 16.50%)
/Users/Jade.Dickinson/projects/chopin/app/presenters/backoffice/base_rfq_presenter.rb:226:in `Backoffice::BaseRfqPresenter#all_sof_answers'	(504 samples - 16.50%)
/Users/Jade.Dickinson/projects/chopin/app/presenters/backoffice/base_rfq_presenter.rb:78:in `Backoffice::BaseRfqPresenter#rfq_details'	(1130 samples - 36.99%)
/Users/Jade.Dickinson/projects/chopin/app/views/backoffice/rfqs/_rfq_details_table.html.haml::in `ActionView::CompiledTemplates#_app_views_backoffice_rfqs_rfq_details_table_html_haml_1517135409571939764_70110887633100'	(1143 samples - 37.41%)
... actionview-5.2.4.1/lib/action_view/template.rb:156:in `ActionView::Template#render'	(2034 samples - 66.58%)
... activesupport-5.2.4.1/lib/active_support/notifications.rb:166:in `#<#x00007f87f70a1370>.instrument'	(2080 samples - 68.09%)
... actionview-5.2.4.1/lib/action_view/template.rb:353:in `ActionView::Template#instrument_render_template'	(2034 samples - 66.58%)
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... actionview-5.2.4.1/lib/action_view/renderer/partial_renderer.rb:332:in `ActionView::PartialRenderer#render_partial'	(1875 samples - 61.37%)
... actionview-5.2.4.1/lib/action_view/renderer/abstract_renderer.rb:40:in `ActionView::AbstractRenderer#instrument'	(1977 samples - 64.71%)
... activesupport-5.2.4.1/lib/active_support/notifications.rb:166:in `#<#x00007f87f70a1370>.instrument'	(2080 samples - 68.09%)
... activesupport-5.2.4.1/lib/active_support/notifications/instrumenter.rb:19:in `ActiveSupport::Notifications::Instrumenter#instrument'	(2080 samples - 68.09%)
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... actionview-5.2.4.1/lib/action_view/renderer/partial_renderer.rb:297:in `ActionView::PartialRenderer#render'	(1901 samples - 62.23%)

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# The flamegraph - time spent



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# Investigating further

app > models >  rfq.rb

```
1511
1512     def questionnaire
1513     |     vertical.questionnaire(web_rfq.merge({ Site: site }))
1514   end
```

app > models >  vertical.rb

```
14
15  def questionnaire(answers={}, to_merge={})
16  |   answer_set = answers.merge(to_merge)
17  |   site = { "site" => answer_set.fetch("site", "simplybusiness") }
```

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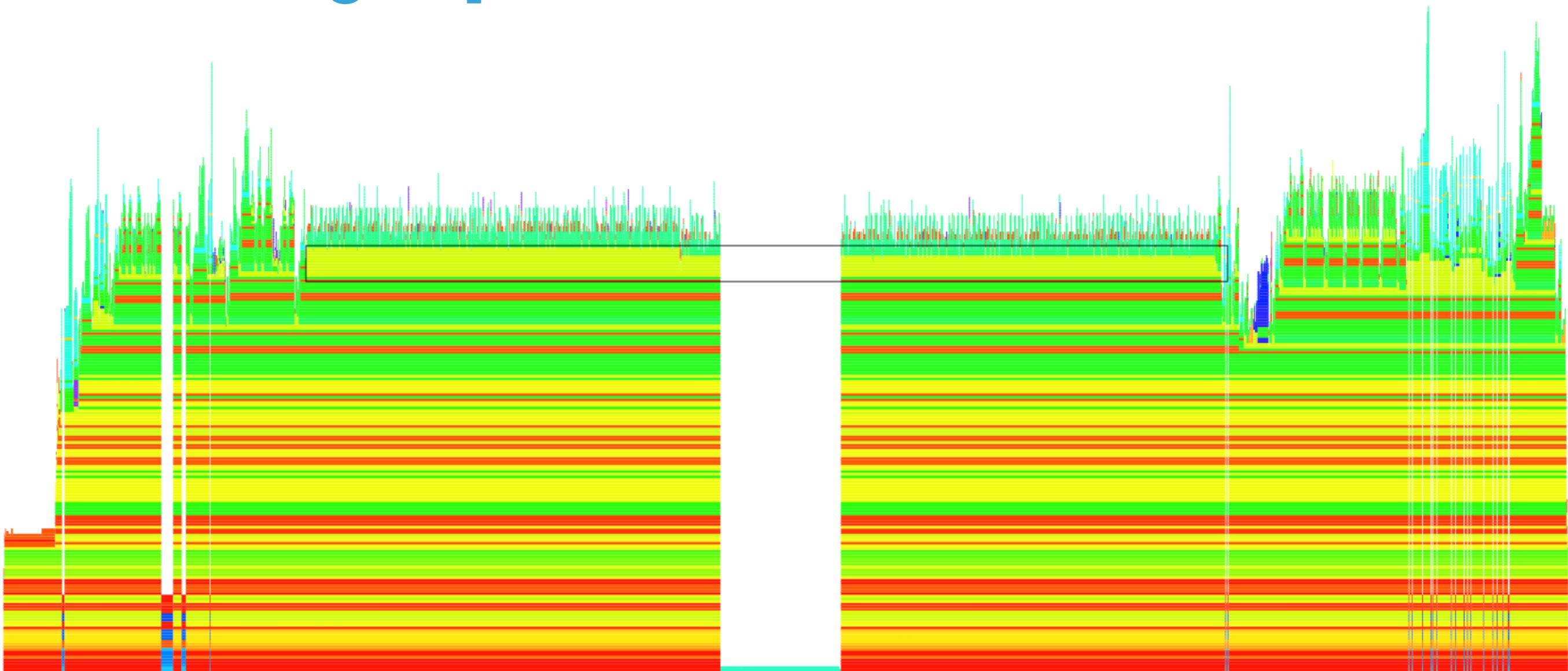
# Avoiding these unnecessary calls

app > models >  rfq.rb

```
1511
1512     def questionnaire
1513         @questionnaire ||= vertical.questionnaire(web_rfq.merge({ Site: site }))
1514     end
```

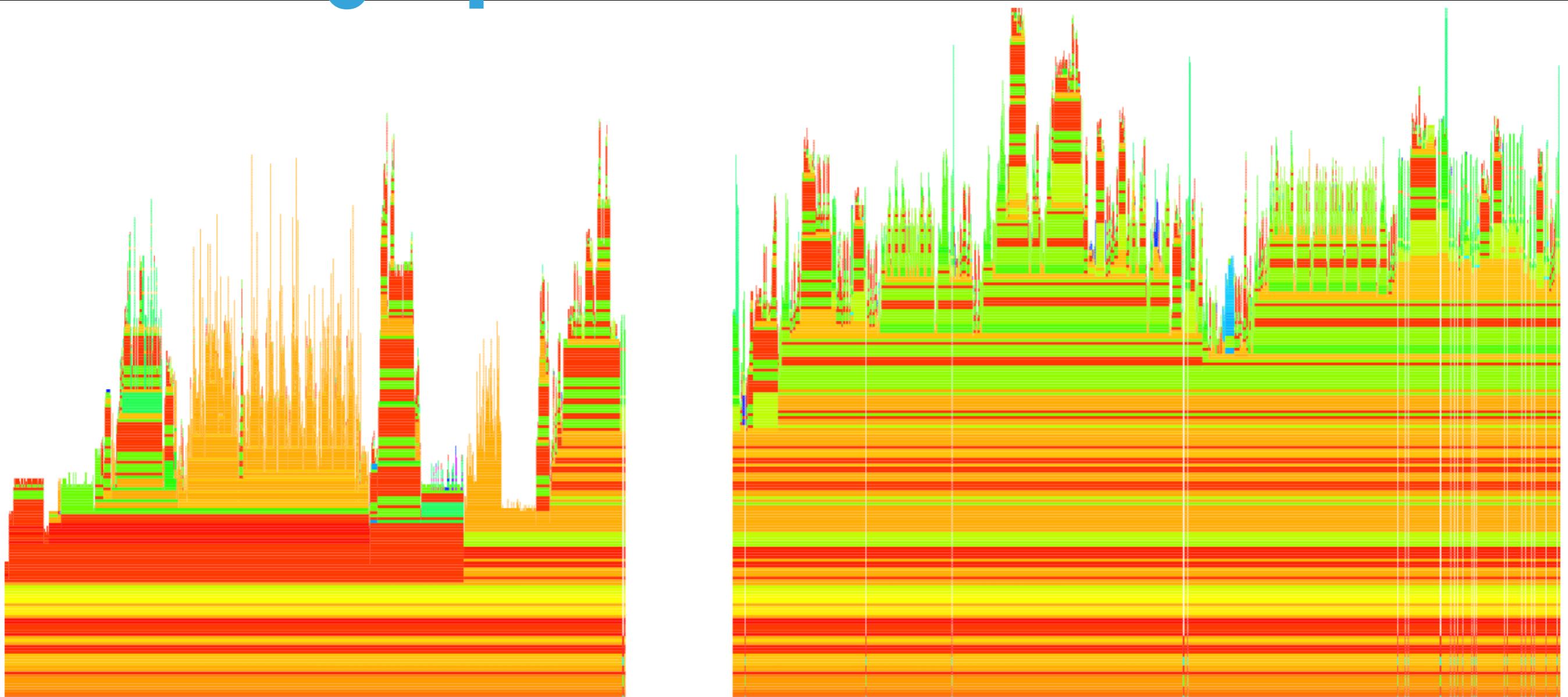
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# Flamegraph before



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# Flamegraph after



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# Benchmarking results

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# Benchmarking results

**ab -t 30 -H 'host: localhost' -H 'Cookie: http://127.0.0.1:3000/**

**Before**

**Finished 29 requests**

**Time taken for tests: 30.627 seconds**

**Requests per second: 0.95 [#/sec]  
(mean)**

**Time per request: 1056.108 [ms]  
(mean)**

**After**

**Finished 51 requests**

**Time taken for tests: 30.573 seconds**

**Requests per second: 1.67 [#/sec]  
(mean)**

**Time per request: 599.467 [ms]  
(mean)**

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# SECOND HALF

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# Structure for the second half

- ▶ Adapting your approach
- ▶ Beyond getting your PR into prod
- ▶ Deep dive on flamegraphs



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# Adapting to what stage your product is in



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# Adapting to what stage your product is in

- ▶ Early stage
- ▶ Rapid growth stage
- ▶ Growth has stabilised



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# Early stage

- ▶ Finding product-market fit
- ▶ Less likely to have slow pages
- ▶ Hold this advantage



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# Rapid growth stage

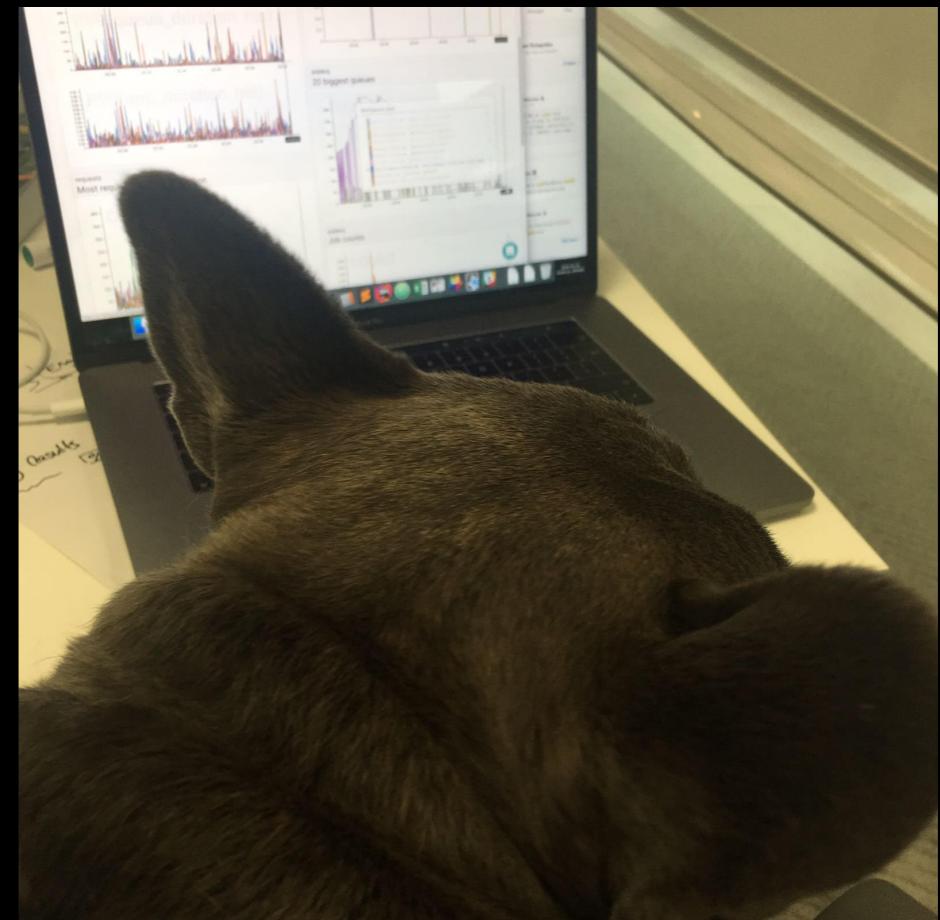
- ▶ Losing the sale
- ▶ “The site is down”
- ▶ “It takes ages to load”
- ▶ Start thinking about site reliability



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# Site reliability on one slide

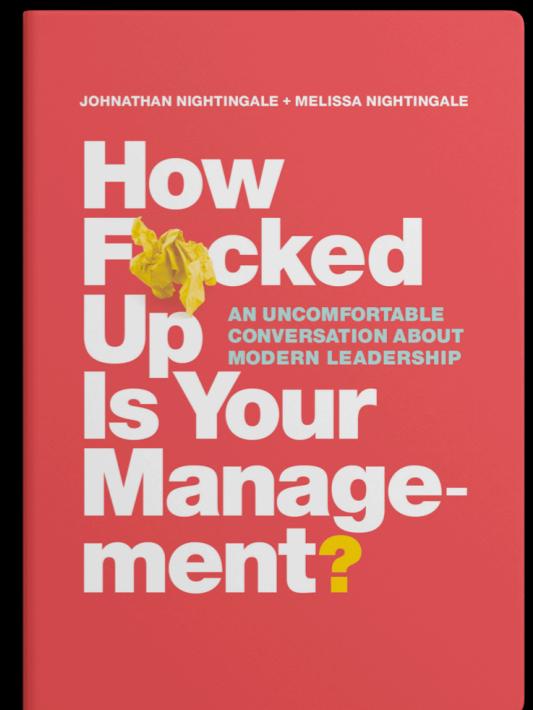
- ▶ Availability: keeping the site up
- ▶ Response times: keeping the site fast
- ▶ Proactive work: perf optimisation, plan for scale
- ▶ Reactive work e.g. major incident response
- ▶ Performance targets aka SLOs



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# Growth has stabilised

- ▶ Research the competition
- ▶ Drive growth through optimisation
- ▶ Bring down your server costs



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# Pushing on



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# Pushing on

- ▶ Marginal gains

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# Pushing on

- ▶ Marginal gains
- ▶ Bringing your team along with you



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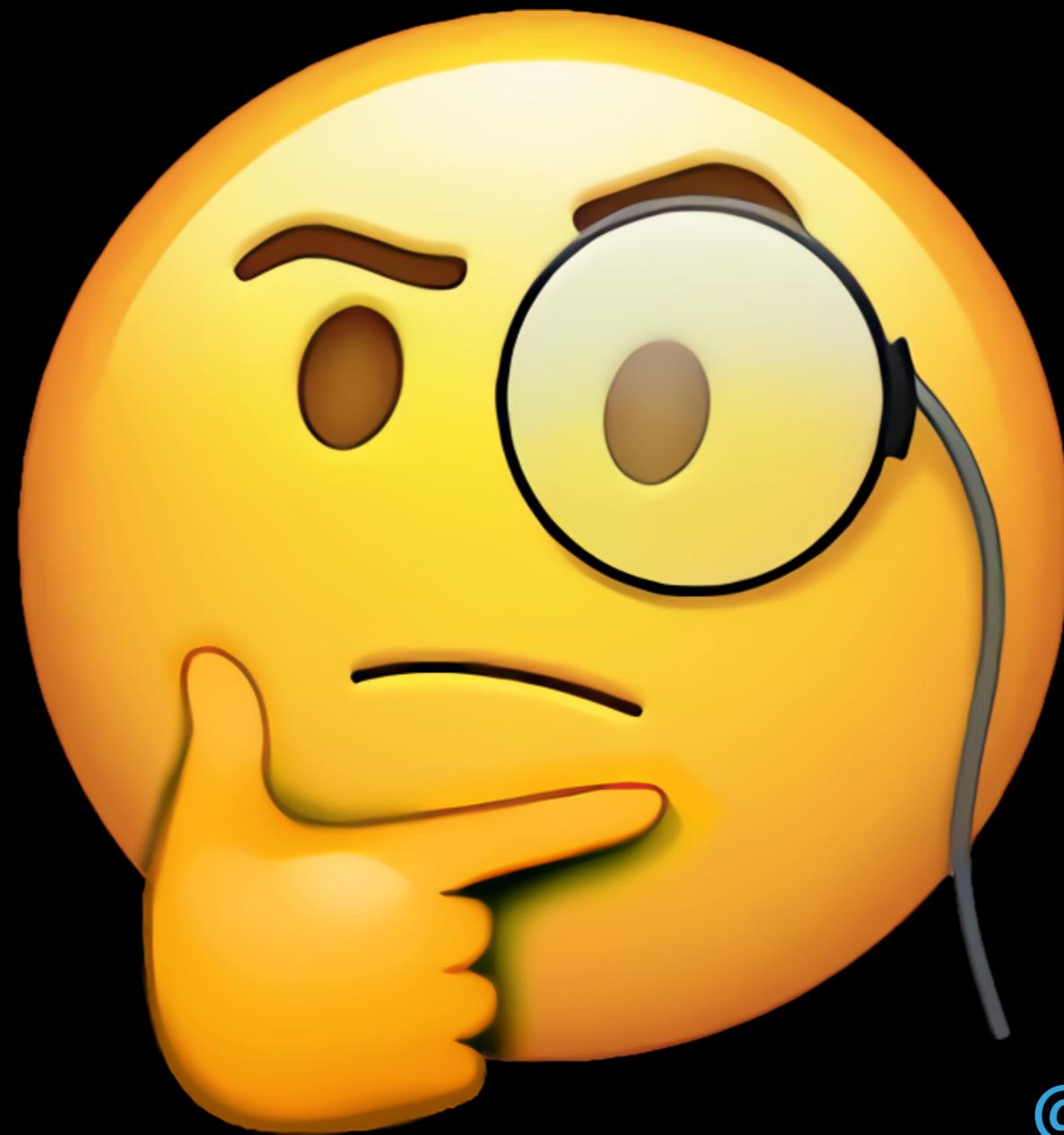
# All about flamegraphs

- ▶ Why do we need flamegraphs?
- ▶ How they were invented
- ▶ Alternatives for visualising profiles
- ▶ Profiling your own apps



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# Why do we need flamegraphs?



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# Why do we need flamegraphs?

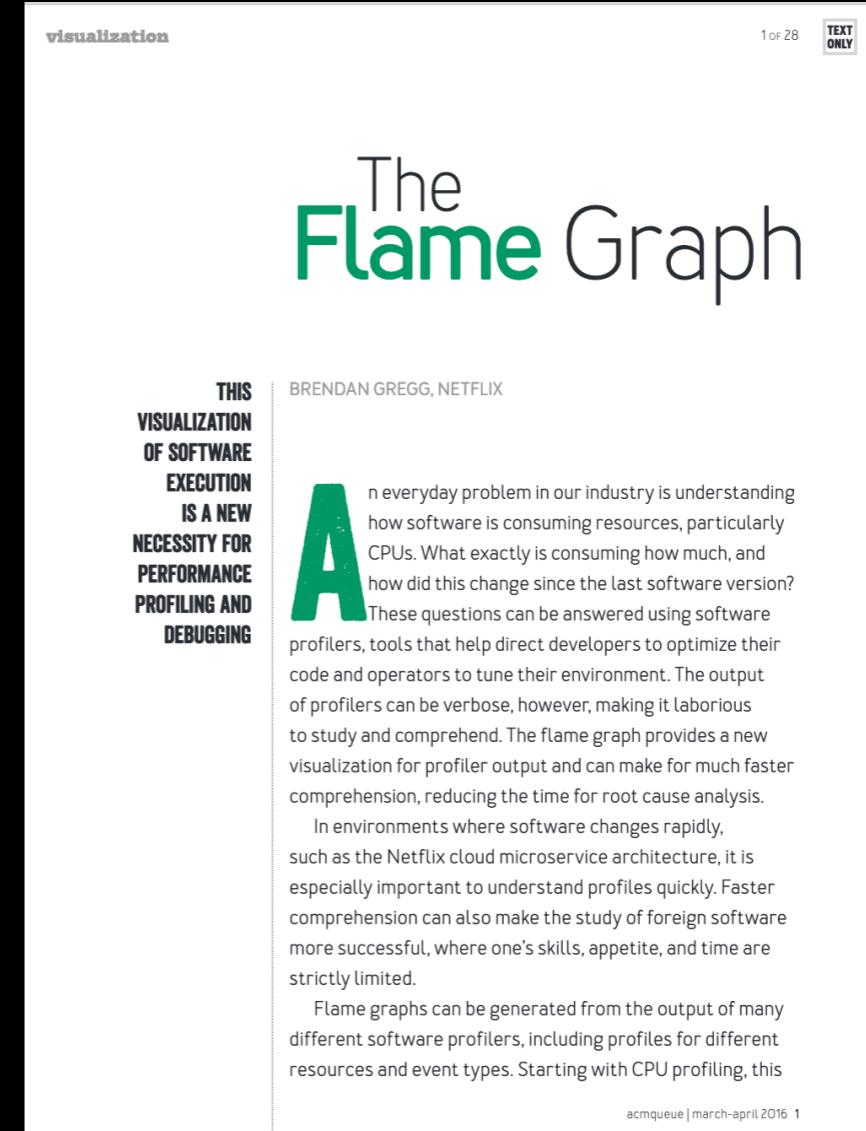
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... actionview-5.2.4.1/lib/action_view/renderer/partial_renderer.rb:297:in `ActionView::PartialRenderer#render'	(1901 samples - 62.23%)

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# How they were invented

► Queue vol. 14  
no.2, 2016 -  
<https://queue.acm.org/detail.cfm?id=2927301>

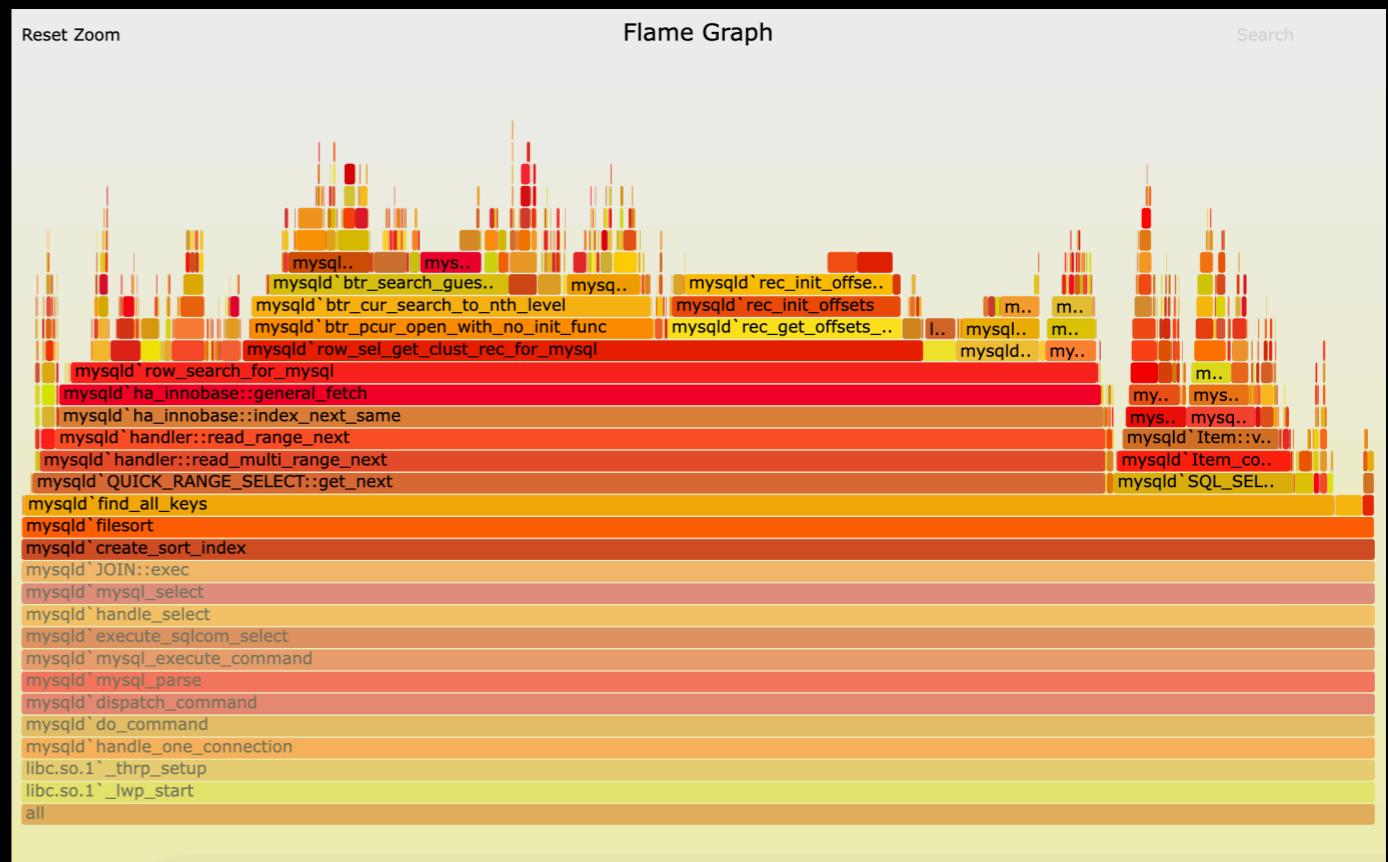


The screenshot shows a magazine-style article. At the top left is a small thumbnail labeled 'visualization'. At the top right are '1 of 28' and a 'TEXT ONLY' button. The title 'The Flame Graph' is prominently displayed in large, bold, green and grey text. Below the title, the author's name 'BRENDAN GREGG, NETFLIX' is in small grey text. A vertical sidebar on the left contains the text: 'THIS VISUALIZATION OF SOFTWARE EXECUTION IS A NEW NECESSITY FOR PERFORMANCE PROFILING AND DEBUGGING'. The main content area starts with a large green letter 'A' and the text: 'n everyday problem in our industry is understanding how software is consuming resources, particularly CPUs. What exactly is consuming how much, and how did this change since the last software version?'. It continues to explain how flame graphs help with this analysis. At the bottom right of the main content area, there is a small note: 'acmqueue | march-april 2016 1'.

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# Alternatives for visualising profiles

► Profiles sorted alphabetically



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# Alternatives for visualising profiles

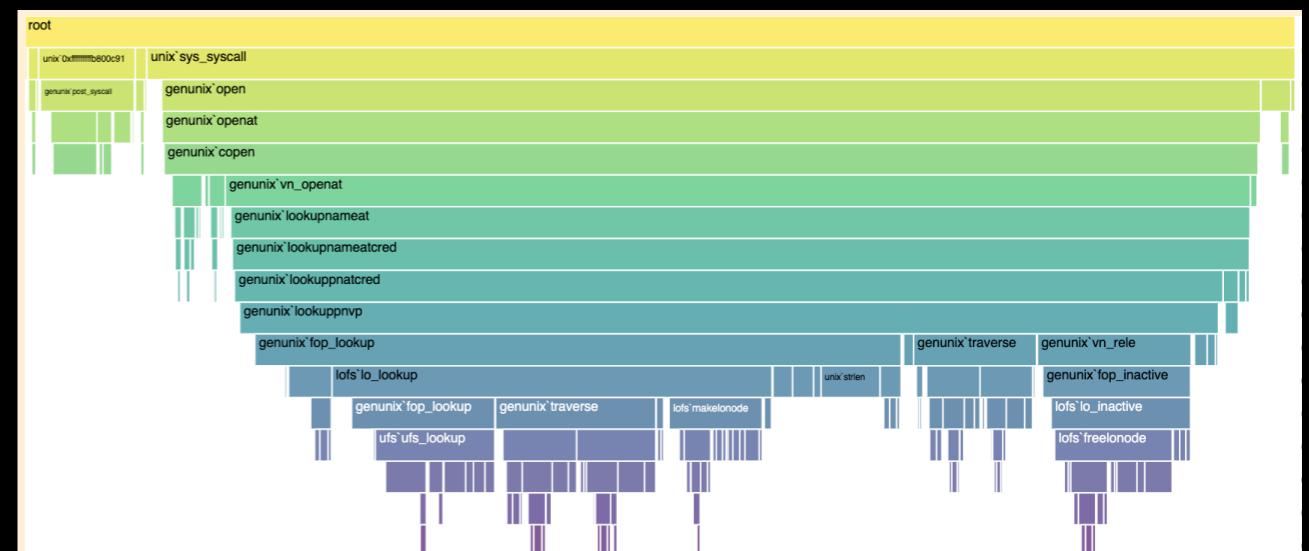
- ▶ Profiles sorted alphabetically
- ▶ Sunburst charts



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# Alternatives for visualising profiles

- ▶ Profiles sorted alphabetically
- ▶ Sunburst charts
- ▶ Icicle charts



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# Back to flamegraphs

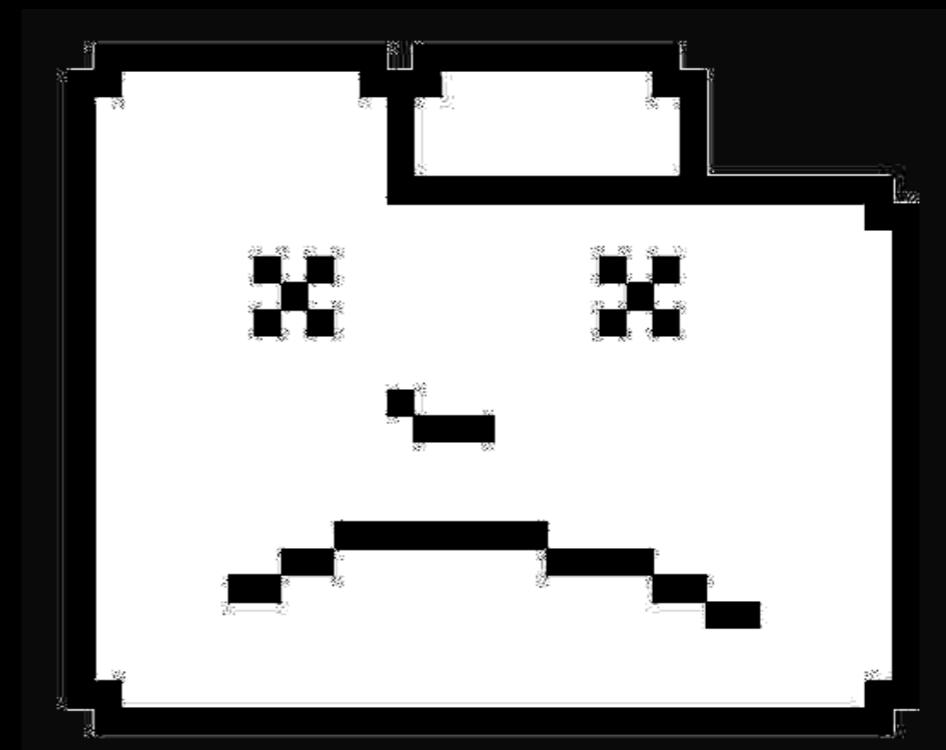
► Speedscope



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# Back to flamegraphs

- ▶ Speedscope
- ▶ Why did rack-mini-profiler need a new renderer



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# EXERCISE 6

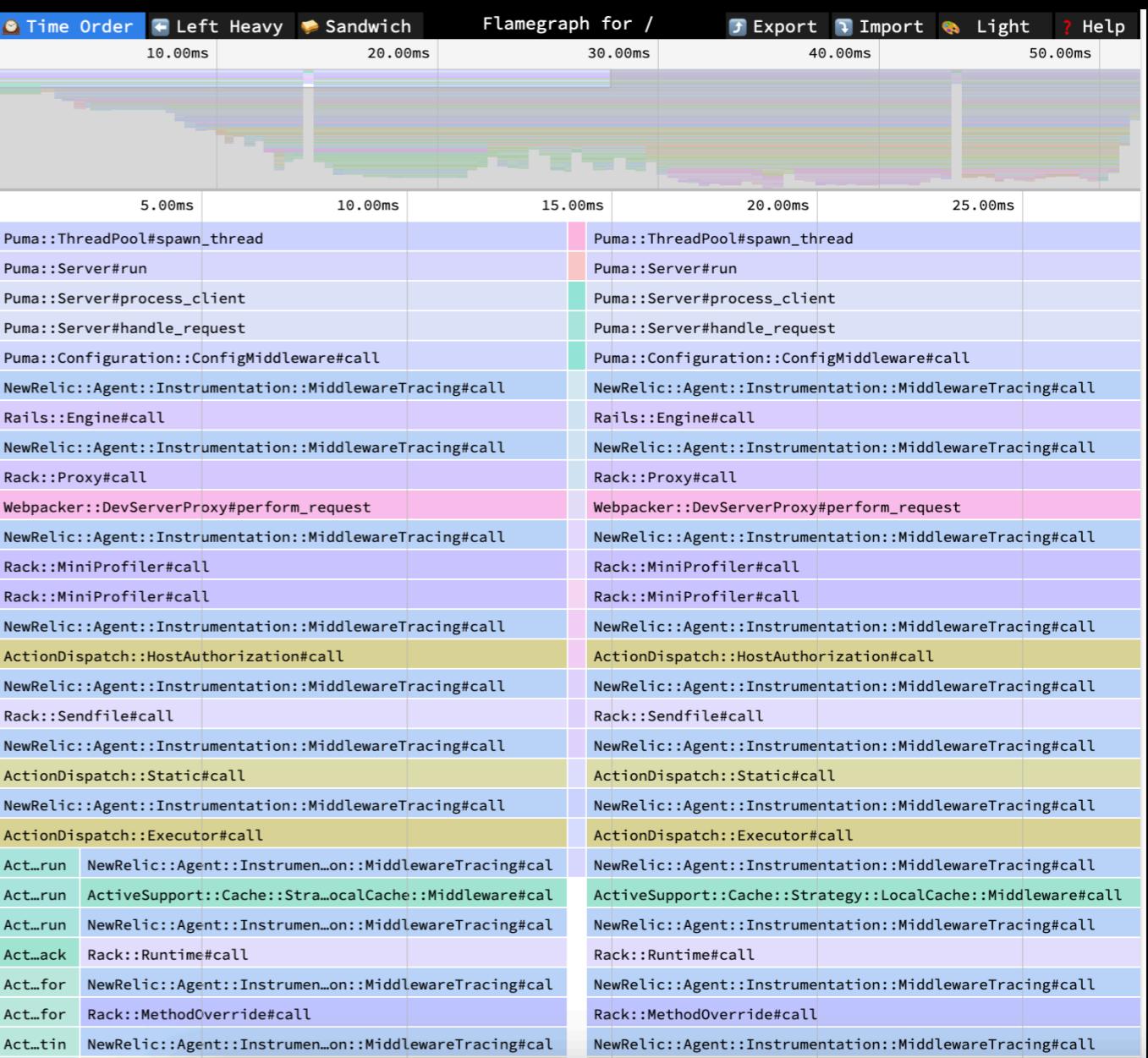
```
$ Control C  
$ git checkout speedscope-renderer  
$ bundle install  
$ bundle exec rails server
```

Go to <http://localhost:3000/?pp=flamegraph>

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# Speedscope

► Performant for  
larger profiles

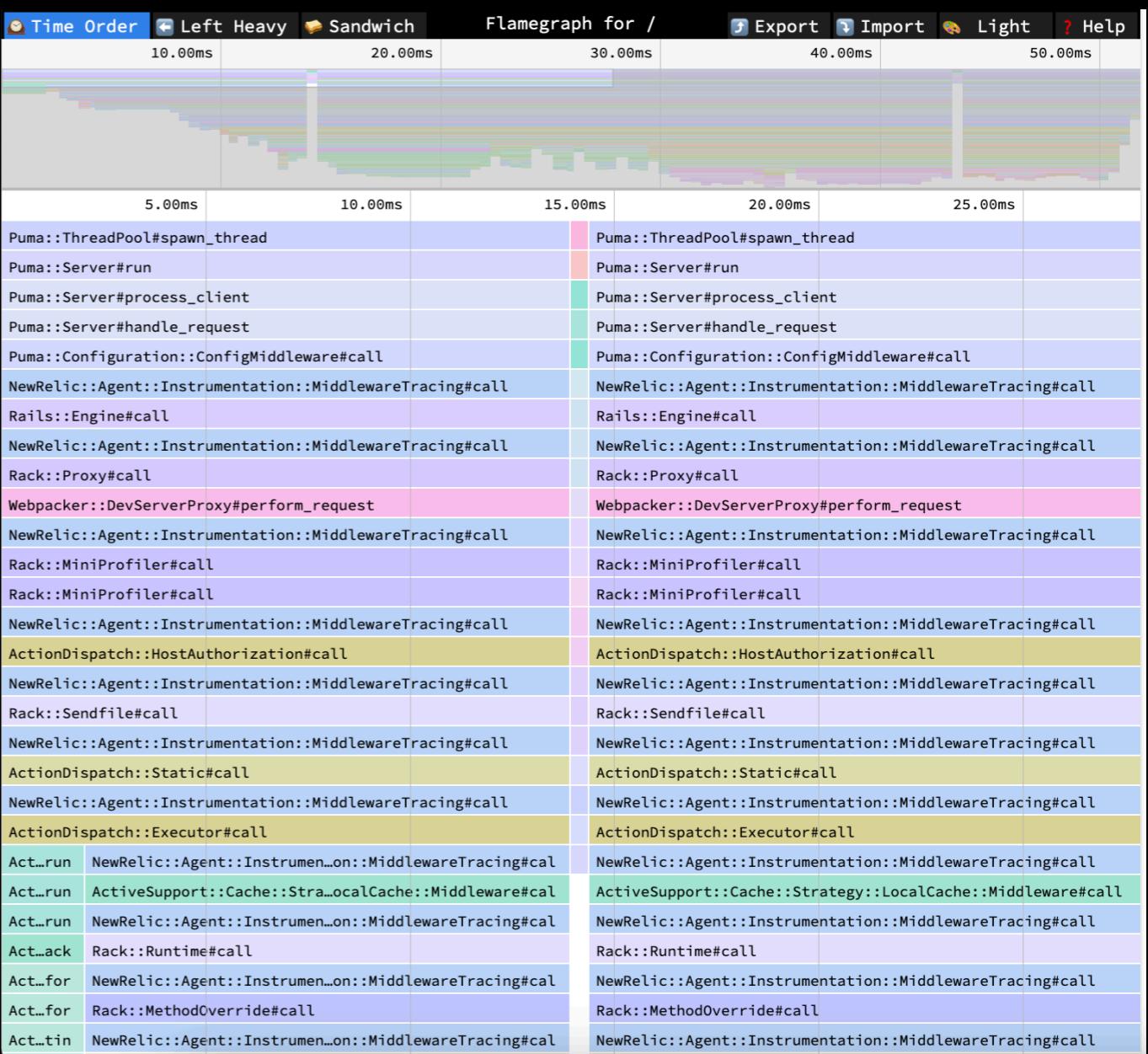


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# Speedscope

► Performant for  
larger profiles

► Icicle layout



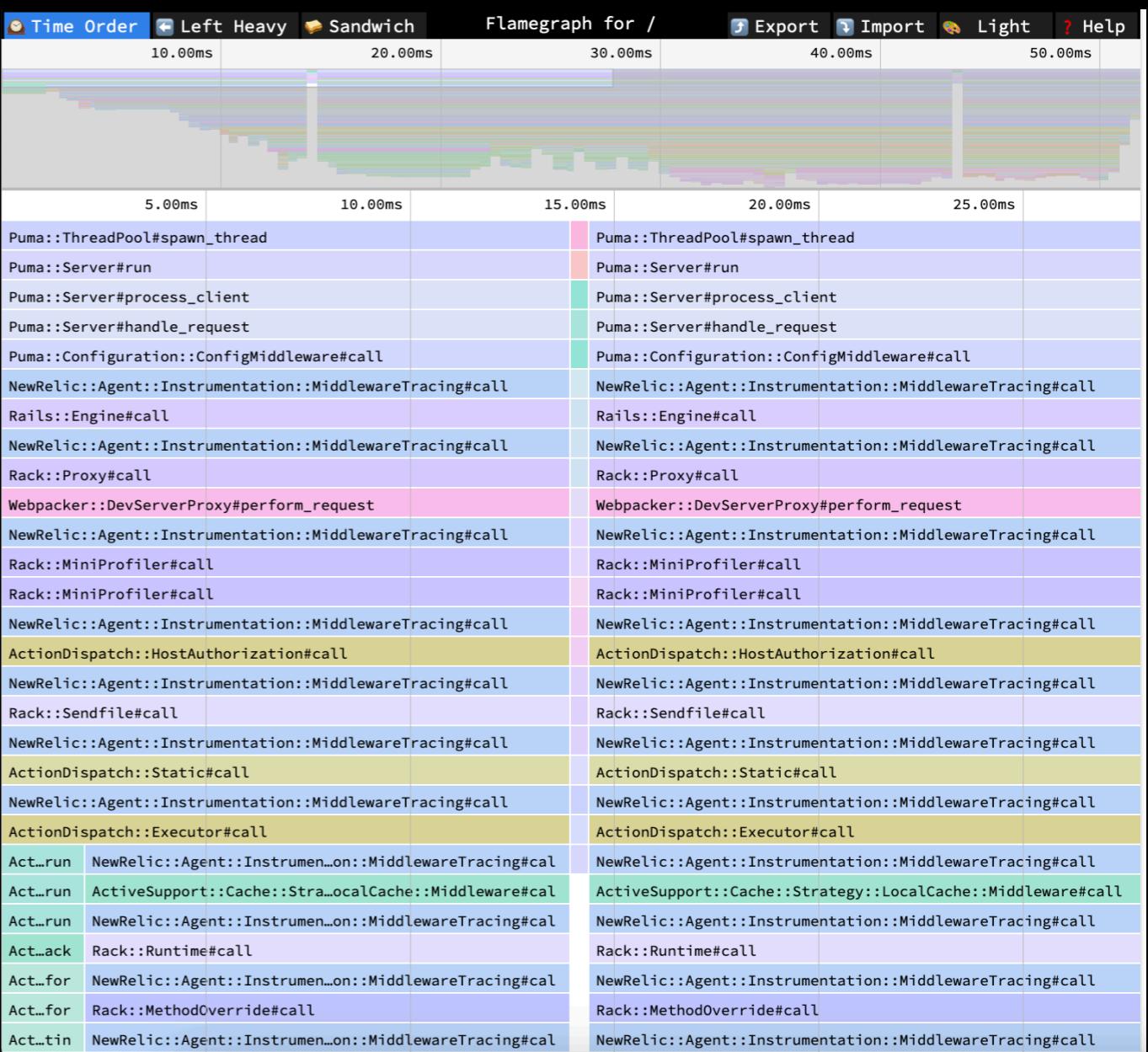
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# Speedscope

► Performant for larger profiles

► Icicle layout

► Other options



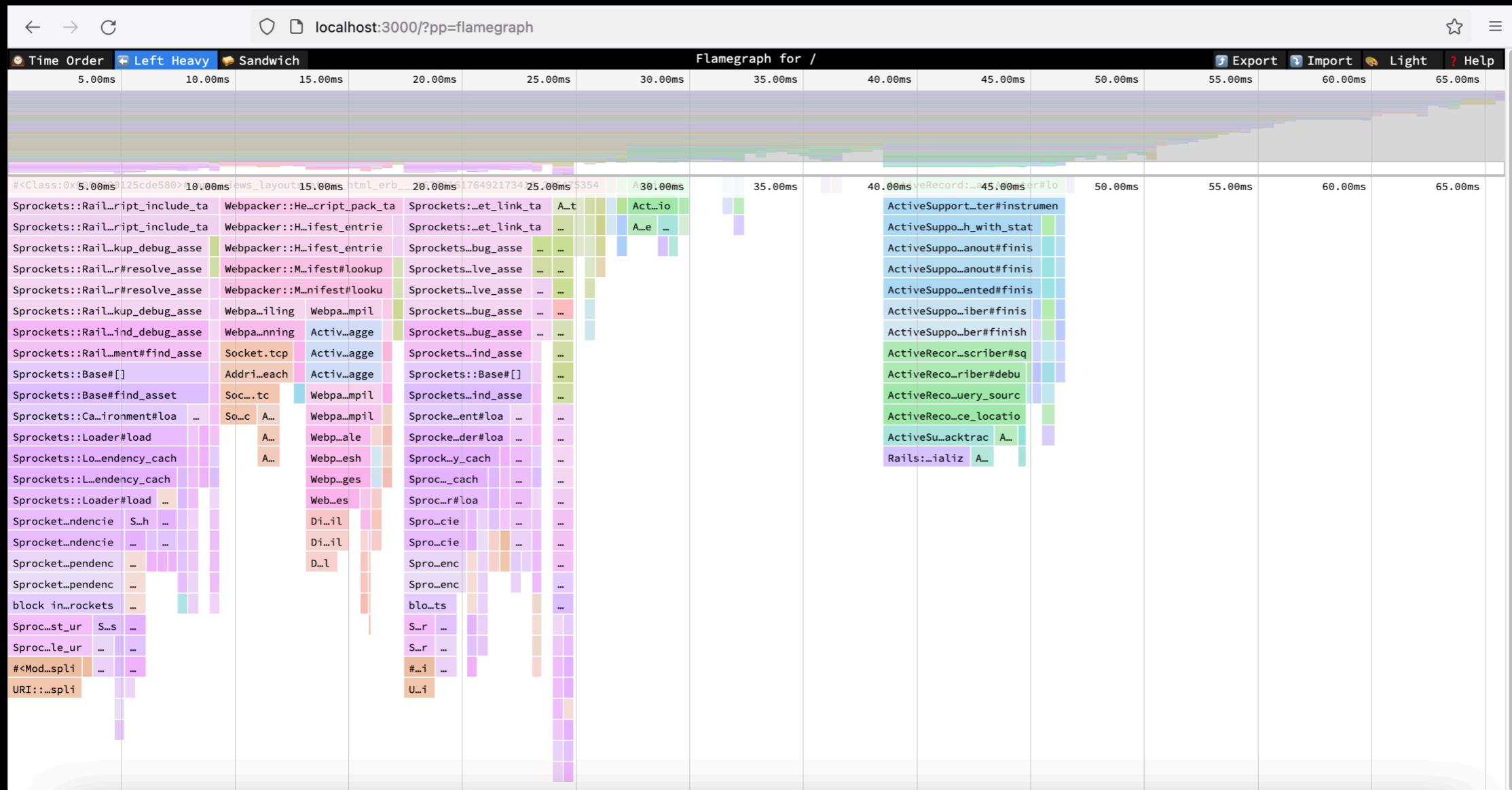
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# Additional options in Speedscope

- ▶ Left Heavy
- ▶ Sandwich
- ▶ Export and import

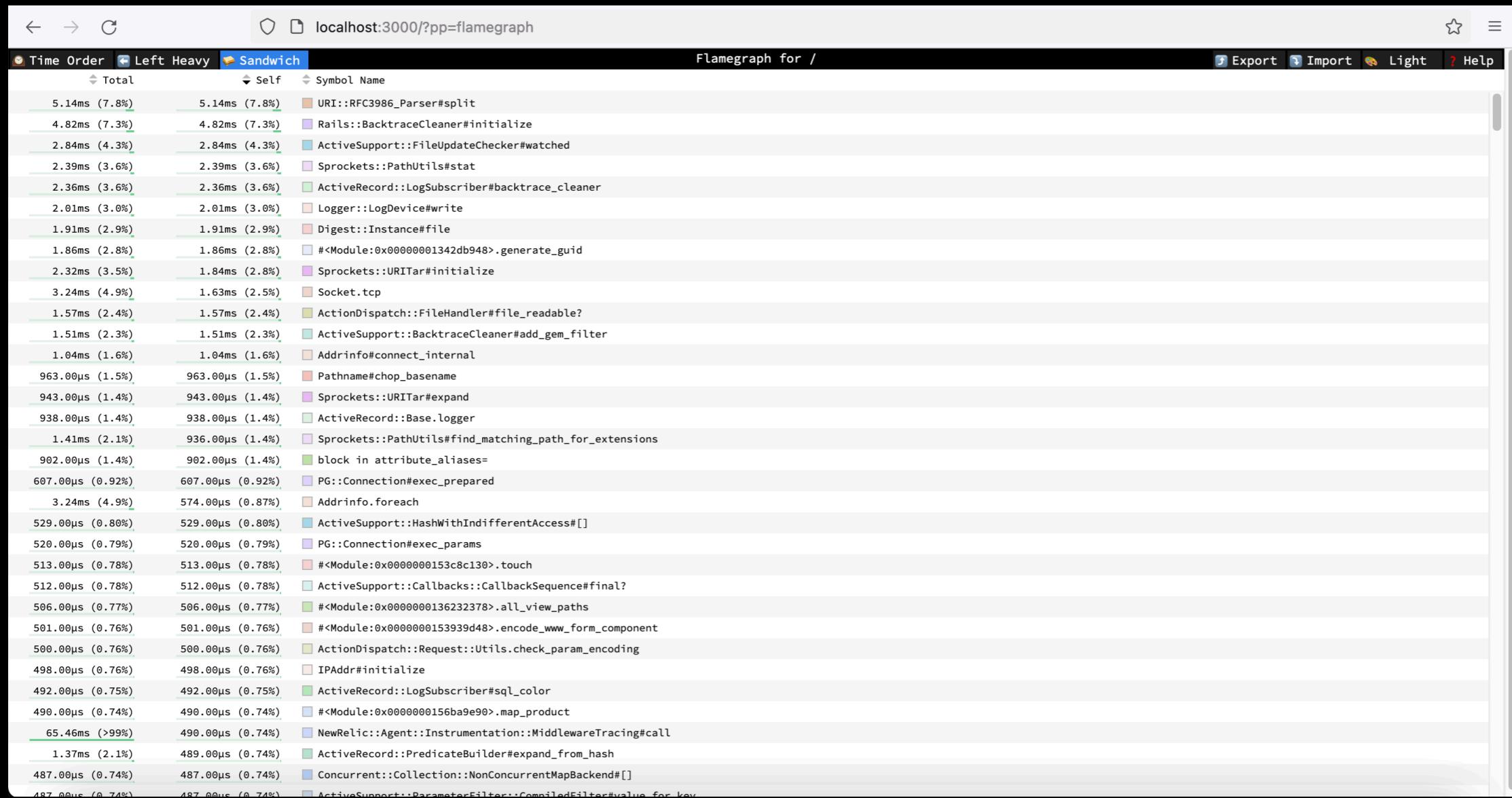
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# Left heavy



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# Sandwich



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# Export and import

JSONLint - The JSON Validator

Try the New Pro    More Developer Tools

```
1 {  
2   "exporter": "speedscope@1.12.1",  
3   "name": "Flamegraph for /",  
4   "activeProfileIndex": 0,  
5   "$schema": "https://www.speedscope.app/file-format-schema.json",  
6   "shared": {  
7     "frames": [{  
8       "name": "Puma::ThreadPool#spawn_thread",  
9       "file": "/opt/homebrew/Cellar/rbenv/1.1.2/versions/2.6.6/lib/ruby/gems/2.6.0/gems/puma-4.3.7/lib/puma/  
10      "line": 86  
11    }, {  
12      "name": "Puma::Server#run",  
13      "file": "/opt/homebrew/Cellar/rbenv/1.1.2/versions/2.6.6/lib/ruby/gems/2.6.0/gems/puma-4.3.7/lib/puma/  
14      "line": 282  
15    }, {  
16      "name": "Puma::Server#process_client",  
17      "file": "/opt/homebrew/Cellar/rbenv/1.1.2/versions/2.6.6/lib/ruby/gems/2.6.0/gems/puma-4.3.7/lib/puma/  
18    }]
```

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# EXERCISE 7

**Play around with Speedscope and take a look at the options.**

**Try the Left Heavy and Sandwich views**

**Try exporting a profile to JSON.**

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# Recap

- ▶ Reasons we care about performance
- ▶ How to prioritise and rule out other causes
- ▶ Reading flamegraphs
- ▶ Changing some code to speed it up
- ▶ Getting that change into production
- ▶ Adapting to what stage your work is in
- ▶ Speedscope visualiser and where it's most useful

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# FINAL EXERCISE

**Install rack-mini-profiler in your application**

[https://github.com/JadeDickinson/rubyconf\\_2021\\_flamegraphs#installation-of-rack-mini-profiler-with-default-speedscope-renderer-for-your-own-project](https://github.com/JadeDickinson/rubyconf_2021_flamegraphs#installation-of-rack-mini-profiler-with-default-speedscope-renderer-for-your-own-project)

**Go through the steps we've talked about**

**Can you find something to speed up?**

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# REFERENCES

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- Julia Evans:
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  - <https://jvns.ca/blog/2016/02/10/have-high-expectations-for-computers/>
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- Pat Shaughnessy: <http://patshaughnessy.net/> & Ruby Under a Microscope
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# REFERENCES CONTINUED

- Profilers:
  - <https://github.com/MiniProfiler/rack-mini-profiler>
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  - Rubyprof: <https://ruby-prof.github.io/>
  - rbspy: <https://rbspy.github.io/>
  - <https://azukidigital.com/blog/2015/json-rack-mini-profiler/>
- Java: <https://www.brendangregg.com/flamegraphs.html> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D53T1Ejig1Q>
- Python: <https://eng.uber.com/pyflame-python-profiler/>
- Node.js: <https://nodejs.org/en/docs/guides/diagnostics-flamegraph/>
- Elm: <https://blog.swmansion.com/hunting-js-memory-leaks-in-react-native-apps-bd73807d0fde>
- React: <https://shakacode.gitbooks.io/react-on-rails/content/> and <https://youtu.be/xsSnOQynTHs>
- React Native: <https://blog.swmansion.com/hunting-js-memory-leaks-in-react-native-apps-bd73807d0fde>
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# EVEN MORE REFERENCES

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- <https://queue.acm.org/detail.cfm?id=2927301>
- <https://github.com/brendangregg/FlameGraph>
- <https://www.usenix.org/conference/lisa10/visualizations-performance-analysis-and-more>
- <https://www.usenix.org/legacy/events/lisa10/tech/slides/gregg.pdf>
- <https://github.com/SamSaffron/flamegraph>
- <https://samsaffron.com/archive/2013/03/19/flame-graphs-in-ruby-miniprofiler>
- Speedscope:
  - <http://jamie-wong.com/post/speedscope/>
  - <https://www.speedscope.app/>
  - <https://github.com/jlfwong/speedscope#usage>
  - <https://johnysswlab.com/speedscope-visualize-what-your-program-is-doing-and-where-it-is-spending-time/>
  - <https://hacks.mozilla.org/2018/11/cross-language-performance-profile-exploration-with-speedscope/>

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# THANK YOU

- ▶ @\_jadedickinson on Twitter,  
[jadedickinson.com](http://jadedickinson.com)
- ▶ Want to hear from you after - what did you find, did you speed anything up?



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