Explaining EXPLAIN:

A Deep Dive into EXPLAIN Plans

SF PgDay | 2020.01.21 | Richard Yen

About Me

- Support Engineer at EnterpriseDB
- Previously a DBA and Web Developer
- Been using PostgreSQL since v. 7.4 (I'll let you do the math)

Why is my query slow?

Let me EXPLAIN!

Tells you what the query planner chose to do

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- Tells you which step(s) took the most time

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- Gives you statistics on how the query was executed

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- Won't take into account stuff happening outside the database
- Won't account for external environmental factors (i.e., network latency)

How does it work?

- Table/Index Statistics
 - Stored in pg_statistic (don't look there)
 - Can be viewable by looking pg_stats (for the adventurous)
 - Refreshed with ANALYZE (not to be confused with EXPLAIN ANALYZE)
- Configuration
 - enable_* parameters
 - *_cost parameters

Config parameters

- Cost Parameters
 - cpu_index_tuple_cost
 - cpu_operator_cost
 - cpu_tuple_cost
 - jit_above_cost *
 - jit_inline_above_cost *
 - jit_optimize_above_cost *
 - parallel_setup_cost *
 - parallel_tuple_cost *
 - random_page_cost
 - seq_page_cost

- Join Parameters
 - enable_bitmapscan
 - enable_gathermerge
 - enable_hashjoin
 - enable_mergejoin
 - enable_nestloop
 - enable_partitionwise_join

- Scan Parameters
 - enable_indexonlyscan
 - enable_indexscan
 - enable_seqscan
 - enable_tidscan

- Other Parameters
 - enable_hashagg
 - enable_parallel_append
 - enable_parallel_hash
 - enable_partition_pruning
 - enable_partitionwise_aggregate
 - enable_material
 - enable_sort

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SELECT *
  FROM pg_settings
WHERE name LIKE '%cost'
  OR name LIKE 'enable%';
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A Simple Example

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Cost Calculation

```
Nested Loop (cost=0.00..4141.00 rows=99999 width=461)

Join Filter: (a.bid = b.bid)

-> Seq Scan on pgbench_branches b (cost=0.00..1.01 rows=1 width=364)

-> Seq Scan on pgbench_accounts a (cost=0.00..2890.00 rows=99999 width=97)
```

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  -> Seq Scan on pgbench_branches b (cost=0.00..1.01 rows=1 width=364)
  -> Seq Scan on pgbench_accounts a (cost=0.00..2890.00 rows=99999 width=97)
cost = ( #blocks * seq_page_cost ) + ( #records * cpu_tuple_cost ) + ( #records * cpu_filter_cost )
postgres=# select pg_relation_size('pgbench_accounts');
 pg_relation_size
         13434880
                          (8kB, typical OS)
           = 8192
block_size
                          (relation_size / block_size)
#blocks
                = 1640
                = 100000
#records
                          (default)
seq_page_cost
                          (default)
cpu_tuple_cost = 0.01
cpu_filter_cost = 0.0025 (default)
cost = (1640 * 1) + (1000000 * 0.01) + (1000000 * 0.0025) = 2890
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A Simple Example (w/ ANALYZE)

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postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts a JOIN pgbench_branches b ON (a.bid=b.bid) WHERE
a.aid < 100000;
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Nested Loop (cost=0.00..4141.00 rows=99999 width=461) (actual time=0.039..56.582 rows=99999 loops=1)
  Join Filter: (a.bid = b.bid)
   -> Seq Scan on pgbench_branches b (cost=0.00..1.01 rows=1 width=364) (actual time=0.025..0.026 rows=1
loops=1)
  -> Seq Scan on pgbench_accounts a (cost=0.00..2890.00 rows=99999 width=97) (actual time=0.008..25.752
rows=99999 loops=1)
        Filter: (aid < 100000)
        Rows Removed by Filter: 1
Planning Time: 0.306 ms
 Execution Time: 61.031 ms
(8 rows)
```

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A Simple Example (w/ ANALYZE & BUFFERS)

```
postgres=# EXPLAIN (BUFFERS, ANALYZE) SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts a JOIN pgbench_branches b ON (a.bid=b.bid) WHERE a.aid
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Nested Loop (cost=0.00..4141.00 rows=99999 width=461) (actual time=0.039..56.582 rows=99999 loops=1)
  Join Filter: (a.bid = b.bid)
  Buffers: shared hit=3 read=1638
   -> Seq Scan on pgbench_branches b (cost=0.00..1.01 rows=1 width=364) (actual time=0.025..0.026 rows=1 loops=1)
       Buffers: shared hit=1
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A Simple Example (with more rows)

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postgres=# INSERT INTO pgbench_branches (bid, bbalance, filler) VALUES (generate_series(2,100000),1,'');
INSERT 0 99999
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts a JOIN pgbench_branches b ON (a.bid=b.bid) WHERE a.aid < 100000;
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INSERT 0 99999
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts a JOIN pgbench_branches b ON (a.bid=b.bid) WHERE a.aid < 100000;
                                                             QUERY PLAN
 Hash Join (cost=1676.90..4830.08 rows=99999 width=461) (actual time=147.289..229.678 rows=99999 loops=1)
  Hash Cond: (a.bid = b.bid)
   -> Seq Scan on pgbench_accounts a (cost=0.00..2890.00 rows=99999 width=97) (actual time=0.020..26.903 rows=99999
loops=1)
         Filter: (aid < 100000)
         Rows Removed by Filter: 1
   -> Hash (cost=1656.40..1656.40 rows=1640 width=364) (actual time=63.742..63.743 rows=100000 loops=1)
         Buckets: 32768 (originally 2048) Batches: 4 (originally 1) Memory Usage: 3841kB
         -> Seq Scan on pgbench_branches b (cost=0.00..1656.40 rows=1640 width=364) (actual time=0.014..22.897
rows=100000 loops=1)
 Planning Time: 0.278 ms
 Execution Time: 234.480 ms
(10 rows)
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A Simple Example (seeking less rows)

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                                                      QUERY PLAN
Merge Join (cost=14.60..16.13 rows=99 width=194) (actual time=0.094..0.130 rows=99 loops=1)
  Merge Cond: (b.bid = a.bid)
   -> Index Scan using pgbench_branches_pkey on pgbench_branches b (cost=0.29..4247.29 rows=100000 width=97) (actual
time=0.013..0.014 rows=2 loops=1)
   -> Sort (cost=14.31..14.55 rows=99 width=97) (actual time=0.071..0.079 rows=99 loops=1)
         Sort Key: a.bid
         Sort Method: quicksort Memory: 38kB
         -> Index Scan using pgbench_accounts_pkey on pgbench_accounts a (cost=0.29..11.03 rows=99 width=97) (actual
time=0.010..0.033 rows=99 loops=1)
              Index Cond: (aid < 100)</pre>
Planning Time: 0.931 ms
Execution Time: 0.205 ms
(10 rows)
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- Merge Join
 - Zipper-operation on _sorted_ data sets
 - Good for large tables
 - High startup cost if additional sort is required
- Hash Join
 - Build hash of inner table values, scan outer table for matches
 - Only usable for equality conditions
 - High startup cost, but fast execution

Scan Improvements

```
postgres=# UPDATE pgbench_accounts SET bid = aid;
UPDATE 100000
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts WHERE bid = 1;
                                                     QUERY PLAN
 Seq Scan on pgbench_accounts (cost=0.00..5778.24 rows=199939 width=97) (actual time=19.322..45.161 rows=1 loops=1)
   Filter: (bid = 1)
   Rows Removed by Filter: 99999
 Planning Time: 0.101 ms
 Execution Time: 45.191 ms
(5 rows)
postgres=# CREATE INDEX pgba_bid_idx ON pgbench_accounts (bid);
CREATE INDEX
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts WHERE bid = 1;
                                                     QUERY PLAN
 Index Scan using pgba_bid_idx on pgbench_accounts (cost=0.29..8.31 rows=1 width=97) (actual time=0.076..0.077 rows=1 loops=1)
   Index Cond: (bid = 1)
 Planning Time: 0.312 ms
 Execution Time: 0.119 ms
(4 rows)
```

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   Index Cond: (bid = 1)
 Planning Time:
 Execution Time
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(4 rows)
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The Fastest Scan

```
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts where aid < 1000;
                                                            QUERY PLAN
 Index Scan using pgbench_accounts_pkey on pgbench_accounts (cost=0.43..47.87 rows=939 width=97) (actual time=0.371..0.721
rows=999 loops=1)
   Index Cond: (aid < 1000)</pre>
 Planning Time: 0.226 ms
 Execution Time: 0.815 ms
(4 rows)
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT aid FROM pgbench_accounts where aid < 1000;
                                                            QUERY PLAN
 Index Only Scan using pgbench_accounts_pkey on pgbench_accounts (cost=0.43..28.87 rows=939 width=4) (actual time=0.022..0.169
rows=999 loops=1)
   Index Cond: (aid < 1000)</pre>
   Heap Fetches: 0
 Planning Time: 0.161 ms
 Execution Time: 0.237 ms
(5 rows)
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(5 rows)
```

Index Scan Costs

```
postgres=# show random_page_cost;
random_page_cost
(1 row)
postgres=# EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts WHERE aid < 1000;</pre>
                                              QUERY PLAN
 Index Scan using pgbench_accounts_pkey on pgbench_accounts (cost=0.29..50.30 rows=1029 width=97)
  Index Cond: (aid < 1000)</pre>
(2 rows
postgres=# SET random_page_cost = 100;
postgres=# EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts WHERE aid < 1000;</pre>
                                               QUERY PLAN
Index Scan using pgbench_accounts_pkey on pgbench_accounts (cost=0.29..434.30 rows=1029 width=97)
  Index Cond: (aid < 1000)</pre>
(2 rows)
postgres=# SET random_page_cost = 1000;
postgres=# EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts WHERE aid < 1000;</pre>
                               QUERY PLAN
 Seq Scan on pgbench_accounts (cost=0.00..2890.00 rows=1029 width=97)
   Filter: (aid < 1000)
(2 rows)
```

Scan Types

- Sequential Scan
 - Scan the whole table
- Index Scan
 - Scan all/some rows in index; look up rows in heap
 - Causes random seek
- Index Only Scan
 - Scan all/some rows in index; no need to look up rows in heap
- Bitmap Heap Scan
 - Scan index, building a bitmap of pages to visit; look up only relevant pages in heap for rows

Bad statistics

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Bad Statistics

```
$ pgbench -T 300 && psql
postgres=# CREATE INDEX foo ON pgbench_history (aid);
CREATE INDEX
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_history WHERE aid < 100;</pre>
                                                      QUERY PLAN
 Seq Scan on pgbench_history (cost=0.00..2346.00 rows=35360 width=50) (actual time=0.221..22.912 rows=170 loops=1)
   Filter: (aid < 100)
   Rows Removed by Filter: 159911
 Planning Time: 0.610 ms
 Execution Time: 24.292 ms
(6 rows)
postgres=# ANALYZE;
ANALYZE
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_history WHERE aid < 100;</pre>
                                                          QUERY PLAN
 Index Scan using foo on pgbench_history (cost=0.42..579.09 rows=153 width=50) (actual time=0.017..1.918 rows=170 loops=1)
   Index Cond: (aid < 100)</pre>
 Planning Time: 0.167 ms
 Execution Time: 3.507 ms
(5 rows)
```

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(5 rows)
```

VACUUM and ANALYZE often!

autovacuum will help you with that

CREATE STATISTICS (v. 10+)

```
CREATE STATISTICS [ IF NOT EXISTS ] statistics_name
     [ ( statistics_kind [, ... ] ) ]
    ON column_name, column_name [, ...]
    FROM table_name
```

Insufficient Memory Allocation

```
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_history WHERE delta < 0 ORDER BY delta;
                                                         OUERY PLAN
 Sort (cost=12225.68..12424.74 rows=79623 width=50) (actual time=1187.391..1763.319 rows=79875 loops=1)
  Sort Key: delta
  Sort Method: external merge Disk: 2664kB
  -> Seq Scan on pgbench_history (cost=0.00..3021.01 rows=79623 width=50) (actual time=0.023..593.128 rows=79875 loops=1)
         Filter: (delta < 0)</pre>
         Rows Removed by Filter: 80206
Planning Time: 0.082 ms
Execution Time: 2312.374 ms
(8 rows)
postgres=# SHOW work_mem ;
work_mem
(1 row)
postgres=# SET work_mem = '16 MB';
SET
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_history WHERE delta < 0 ORDER BY delta;
                                                         QUERY PLAN
Sort (cost=9502.68..9701.74 rows=79623 width=50) (actual time=1128.871..1662.322 rows=79875 loops=1)
  Sort Key: delta
  Sort Method: quicksort Memory: 9313kB
  -> Seq Scan on pgbench_history (cost=0.00..3021.01 rows=79623 width=50) (actual time=0.021..569.691 rows=79875 loops=1)
         Filter: (delta < 0)</pre>
         Rows Removed by Filter: 80206
Planning Time: 0.083 ms
Execution Time: 2187.715 ms
(8 rows)
```

Insufficient Memory Allocation

```
postgres=# EXPLAIN ANALYZE SELECT * FROM pgbench_history WHERE delta < 0 ORDER BY delta;
                                                         OUERY PLAN
 Sort (cost=12225.68..12424.74 rows=79623 width=50) (actual time=1187.391..1763.319 rows=79875 loops=1)
  Sort Key: de ...
  Sort Method: external merge Disk: 2664kB
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         Filter: (delta < 0)</pre>
         Rows Removed by Filter: 80206
Planning Time: 0.083 ms
Execution Time: 2187.715 ms
(8 rows)
```

Index Definition Mismatch

```
postgres=# CREATE INDEX fillertext_idx ON pgbench_history (aid, substring(filler,1,1));
postgres=# EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM pgbench_history WHERE aid = 10000 AND left(filler,1) = 'b';
                             QUERY PLAN
 Bitmap Heap Scan on pgbench_history (cost=4.44..12.26 rows=1 width=47)
  Recheck Cond: (aid = 10000)
  Filter: ("left"((filler)::text, 1) = 'b'::text)
  Heap Blocks: exact=2
   -> Bitmap Index Scan on fillertext_idx (cost=0.00..4.43 rows=2 width=0)
        Index Cond: (aid = 10000)
(6 rows)
postgres=# EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM pgbench_history WHERE aid = 10000 AND substring(lower(filler),1,1) = 'b';
                             QUERY PLAN
 Bitmap Heap Scan on pgbench_history (cost=4.44..12.26 rows=1 width=47)
  Recheck Cond: (aid = 10000)
  Filter: ("substring"(lower((filler)::text), 1, 1) = 'b'::text)
  Heap Blocks: exact=2
      Bitmap Index Scan on fillertext_idx (cost=0.00..4.43 rows=2 width=0)
         Index Cond: (aid = 10000)
(6 rows)
```

Index Definition Mismatch

```
postgres=# EXPLAIN SELECT * FROM pgbench_history WHERE aid = 100000 AND substring(filler,1,1) = 'b';
                                  QUERY PLAN
 Index Scan using fillertext_idx on pgbench_history (cost=0.42..8.44 rows=1 width=47)
   Index Cond: ((aid = 10000) AND ("substring"((filler)::text, 1, 1) = 'b'::text))
(2 rows)
```

Join order

- Join order
- Prepared Statements

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 - PREPARE foo AS SELECT * FROM pgbench_accounts WHERE aid = \$1;

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- from_collapse_limit/join_collapse_limit
- ORM!

```
postgres=# \d mytable
                   Table "public.mytable"
Column I
                                      | Collation | Nullable | Default
                     Type
                                                  | not null |
col_a
       | numeric
                                                  I not null I
col_b
         numeric
         character varying(128)
col1
         character varying(512)
col2
         character varying(128)
col3
         timestamp without time zone I
col4
         character varying(128)
col5
postgres=# EXPLAIN (ANALYZE, BUFFERS) UPDATE mytable SET col1 = 'A', col2 = 'text', (...) WHERE col_a = '3443949' AND col_b =
'2222696';
                                                     QUERY PLAN
Update on mytable (cost=0.43..8.45 rows=1 width=1364) (actual time=0.167..0.167 rows=0 loops=1)
  Buffers: shared hit=10
  -> Index Scan using "mytable_idx" on mytable (cost=0.43..8.45 rows=1 width=1364) (actual time=0.074..0.074 rows=1 loops=1)
        Index Cond: ((mytable.col_a = '3443949'::numeric) AND (mytable.col_b = '2222696'::numeric))
        Buffers: shared hit=4
Planning time: 0.480 ms
Execution time: 0.252 ms
(8 rows)
```

```
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                  Table "public.mytable"
Column I
                                     | Collation | Nullable | Default
                    Type
                                                 | not null |
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       | numeric
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        Buffers: shared hit=4
Planning time: 0.480 ms
                                                    40.922 ms ????
Execution time: 0.252 ms
(8 rows)
```

```
postgres=# \d mytable
                   Table "public.mytable"
Column I
                                       Collation | Nullable | Default
                     Type
        numeric
                                                   not null |
 col_a
                                                   not null
 col_b
          numeric
 col1
         character varying(128)
         character varying(512)
 col2
         character varying(128)
 col3
         timestamp without time zone I
 col4
         character varying(128)
 col5
duration: 40.922 ms statement: EXPLAIN (ANALYZE, BUFFERS) UPDATE mytable SET col1 = 'A', col2 = 'text', (...) WHERE col_a =
'3443949' AND col_b = '2222696';
Update on mytable (cost=0.00..89304.06 rows=83 width=1364) (actual time=889.070..889.070 rows=0 loops=1)
 -> Seq Scan on mytable (cost=0.00..89304.06 rows=83 width=1364) (actual time=847.736..850.867 rows=1 loops=1)
       Filter: (((mytable.col_a)::double precision = '3443949'::double precision) AND ((mytable.col_b)::double precision =
'2222696'::double precision))
       Rows Removed by Filter: 3336167
```

```
postgres=# \d mytable
                   Table "public.mytable"
Column I
                                        Collation | Nullable | Default
                     Type
        l numeric
                                                    not null |
col_a
                                                    not null
col_b
         numeric
col1
        l character varying(128)
         character varying(512)
col2
        l character varying(128)
col3
        l timestamp without time zone I
col4
         character varying(128)
col5
```

40.922 ms !!!!

```
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col4
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                                                   _93_wid+b_1364) (actual time_847.736..850.867 rows=1 loops=1)
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```

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- Can do EXPLAIN ANALYZE (and BUFFERS, FORMAT, etc.)

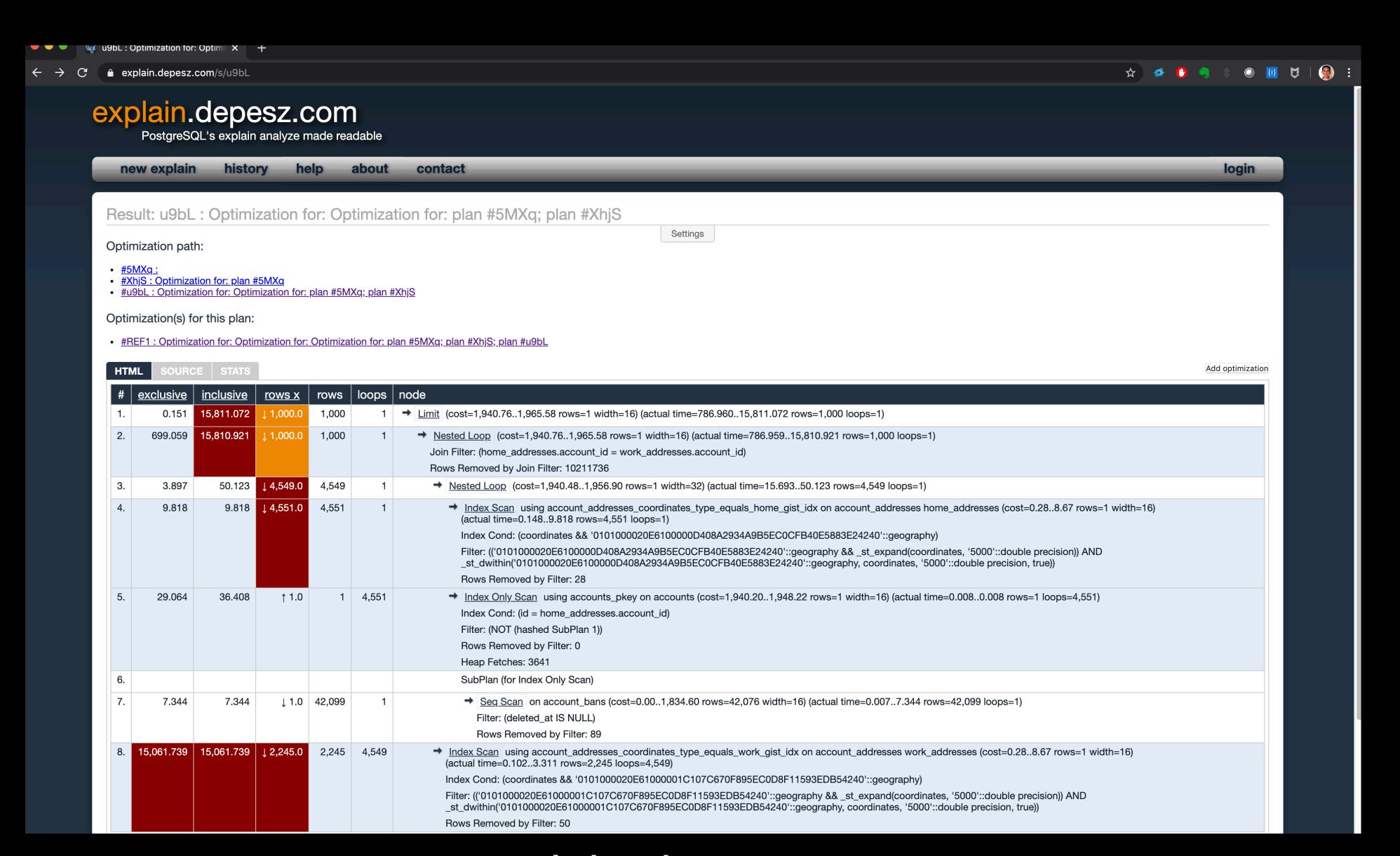
- Prints EXPLAIN plans to your log
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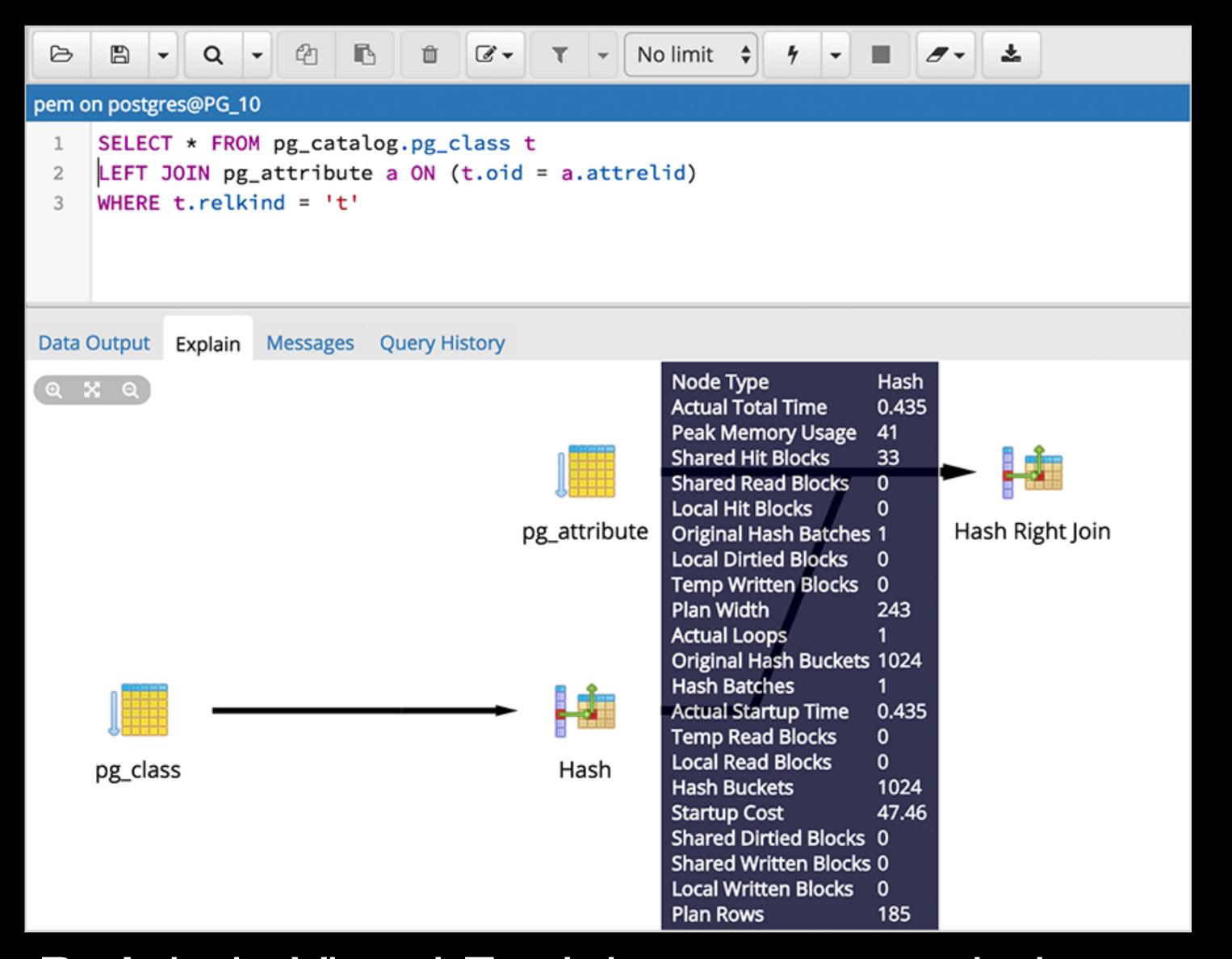
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- Creates addition I/O on disk

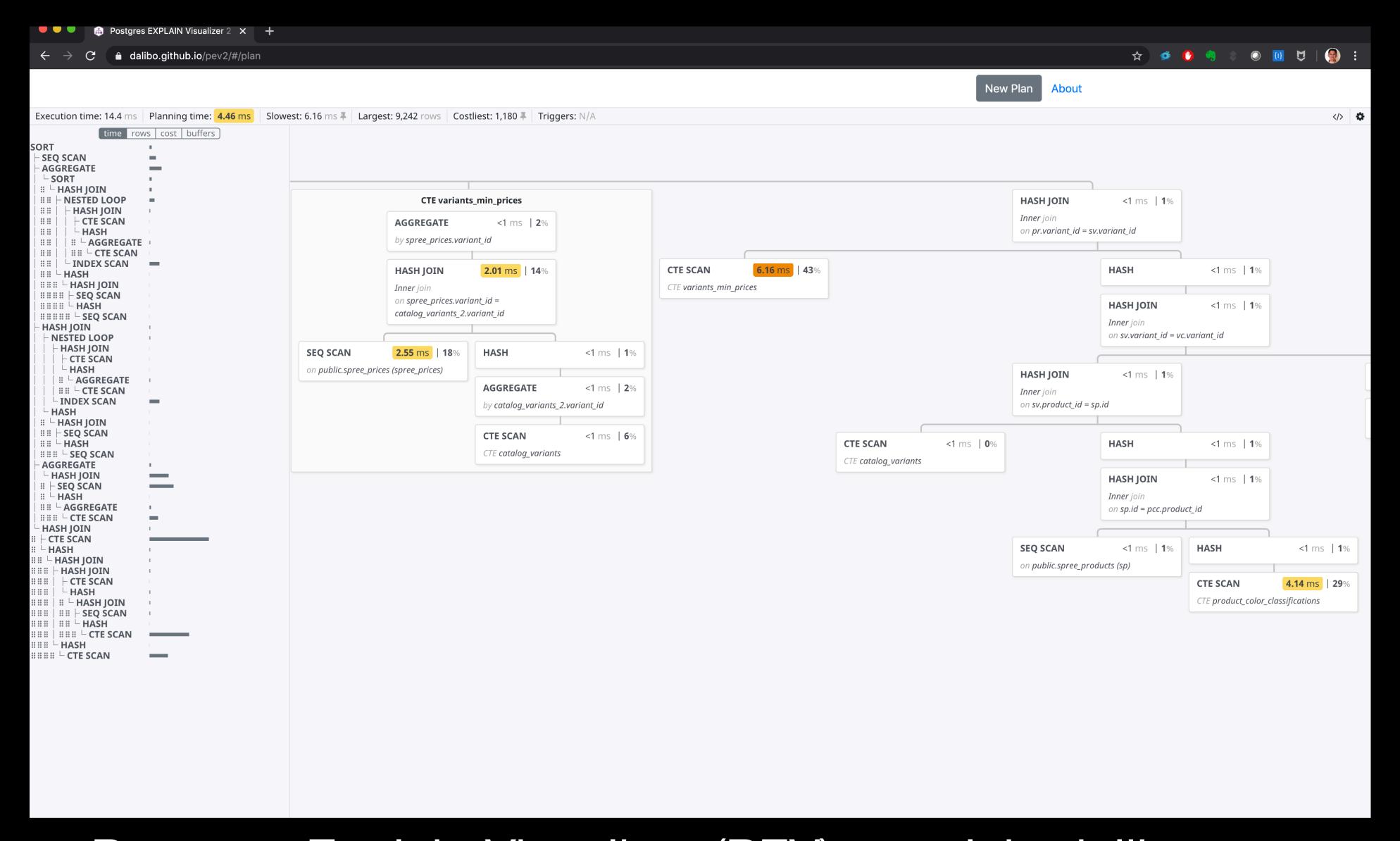
Some More Tools







PgAdmin Visual Explain - www.pgadmin.org



Postgres Explain Visualizer (PEV) - explain.dalibo.com

Questions?