



# CPU Architecture Overview

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# Objectives

- Performance tricks of a modern CPU
  - Pipelining
  - Branch Prediction
  - Superscalar
  - Out-of-Order (OoO) Execution
  - Memory Hierarchy
  - Vector Operations
  - SMT
  - Multicore

# What is a CPU anyways?

- Execute instructions
- Now so much more
  - Interface to main memory (DRAM)
  - I/O functionality
- Composed of transistors

# Instructions

- Examples: arithmetic, memory, control flow

**add** r3, r4 -> r4

**load** [r4] -> r7

**jz** end

- Given a compiled program, minimize

$$\frac{\text{cycles}}{\text{instruction}} \times \frac{\text{seconds}}{\text{cycle}}$$

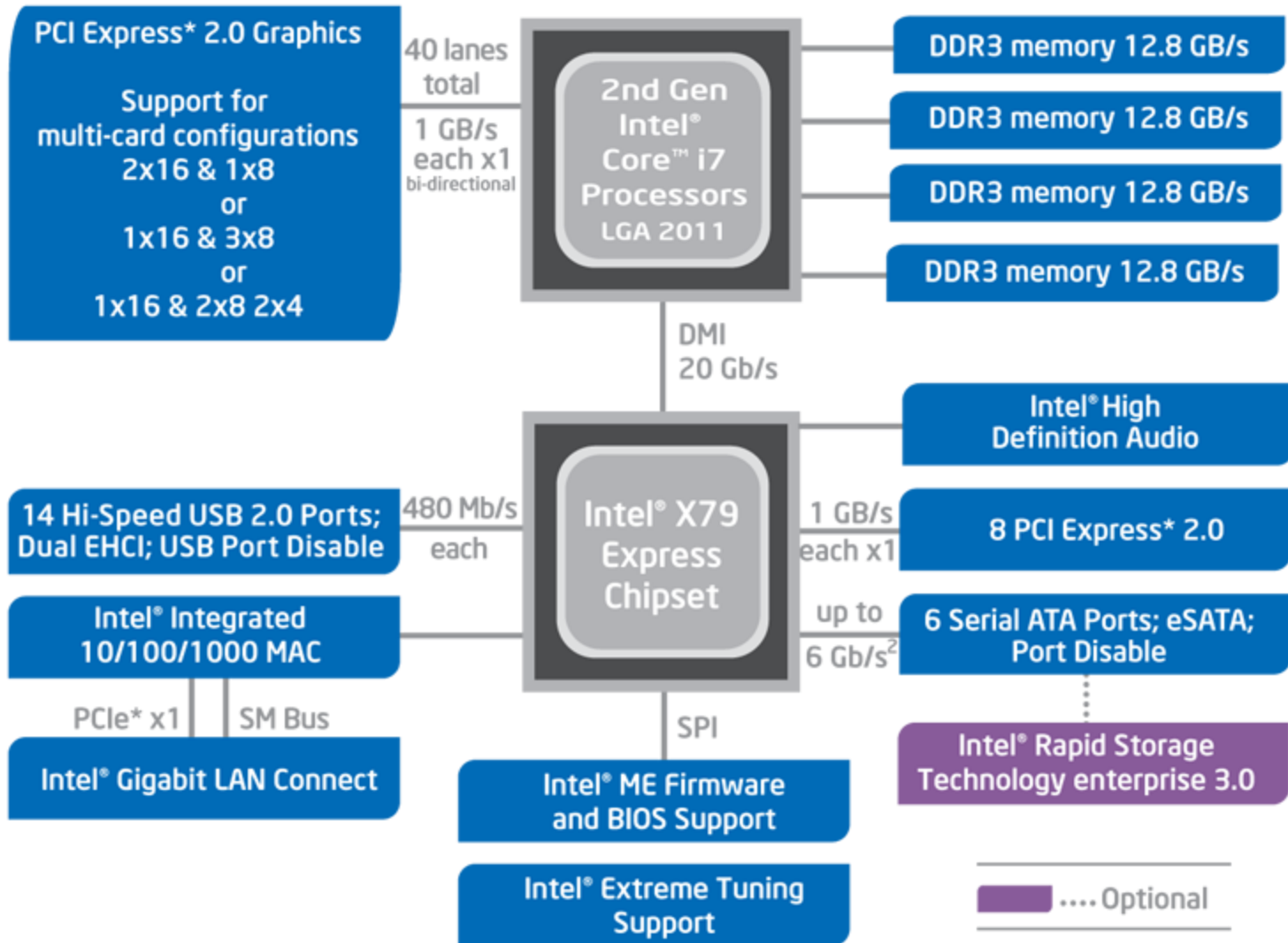
- CPI (cycles per instruction) & clock period
- Reducing one term may increase the other

# Desktop Programs

- Lightly threaded
- Lots of branches
- Lots of memory accesses

	<code>vim</code>	<code>ls</code>
Conditional branches	13.6%	12.5%
Memory accesses	45.7%	45.7%
Vector instructions	1.1%	0.2%

Profiled with `psrun` on ENIAC



<sup>1</sup>Theoretical maximum bandwidth

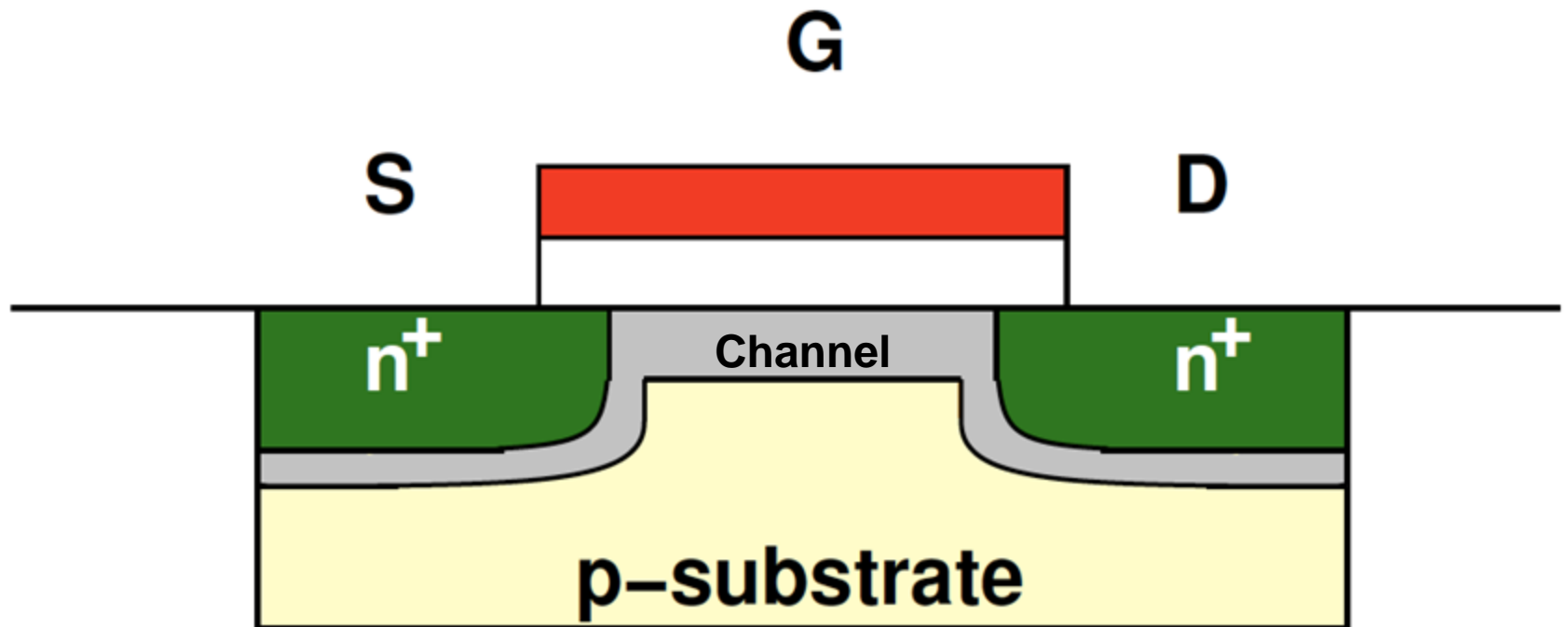
<sup>2</sup>All SATA ports capable of 3 Gb/s. 2 ports capable of 6 Gb/s.

Intel® X79 Express Chipset Block Diagram

Source: [intel.com](http://intel.com)

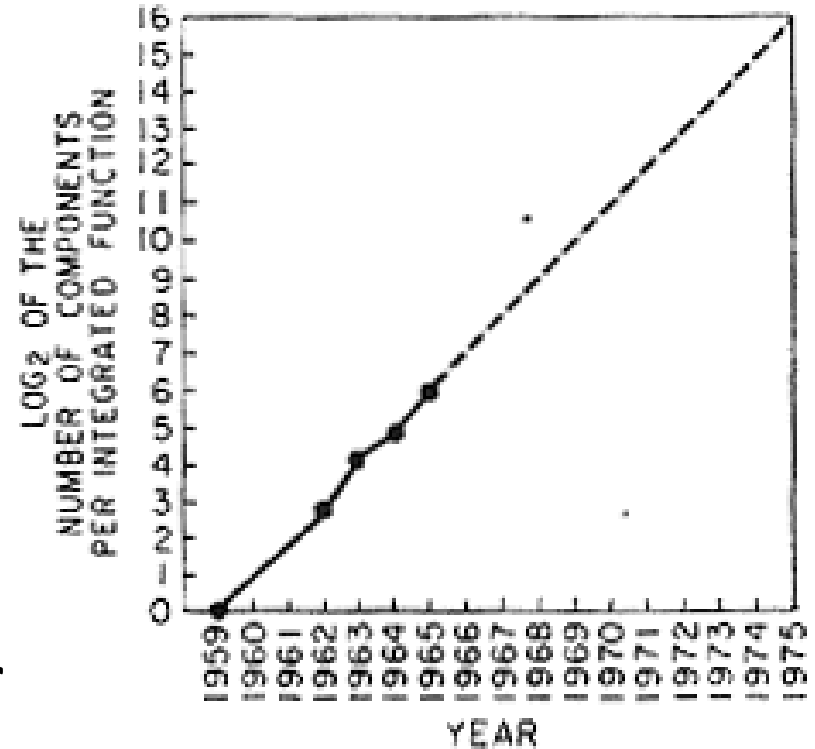
# What is a Transistor?

- Approximation: a voltage-controlled switch
- Typical channel lengths (for 2012): 22-32nm

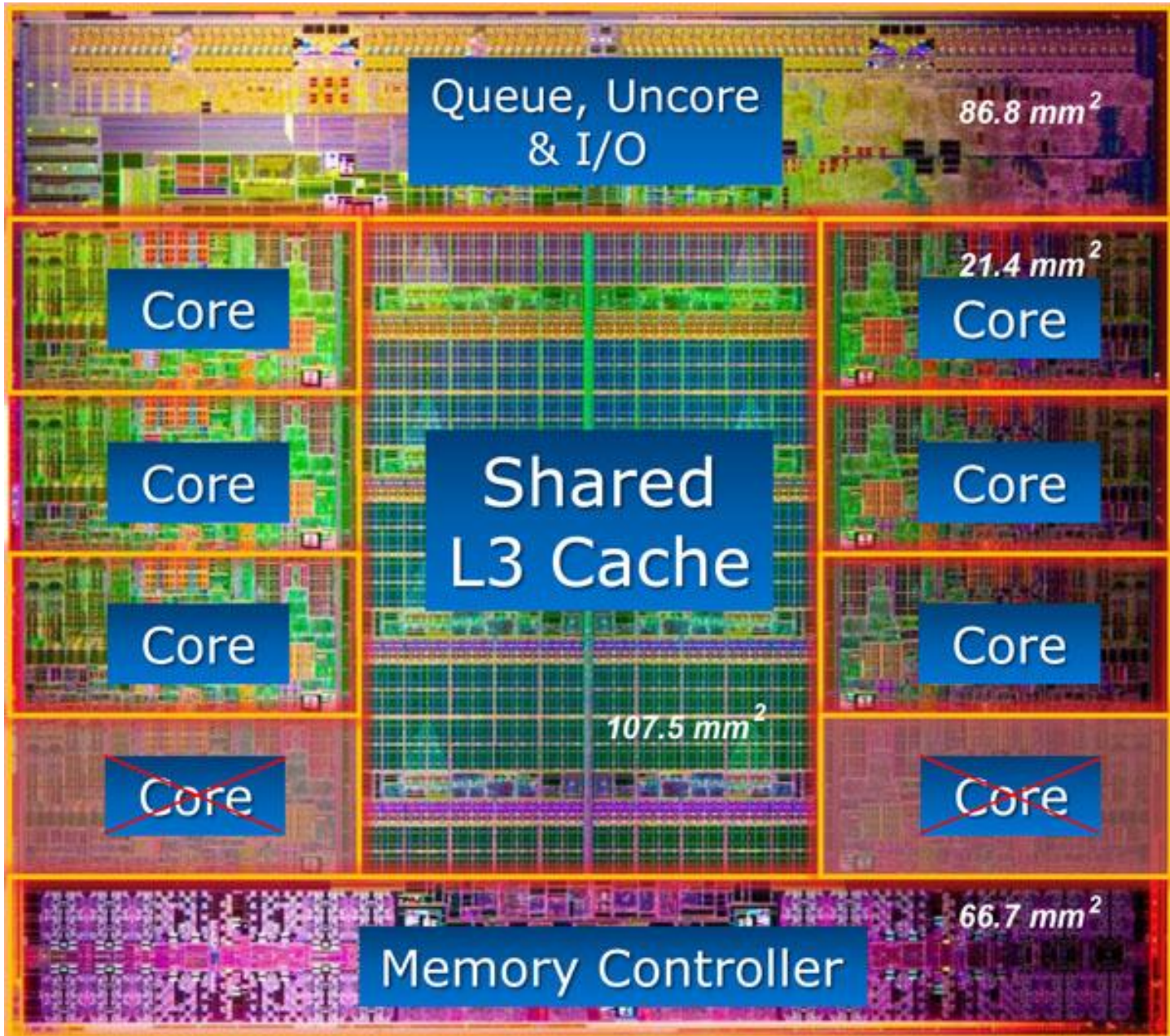


# Moore's Law

- “The complexity for minimum component costs has increased at a rate of roughly a factor of two per year”
- Self-fulfilling prophecy
- What do we do with our transistor budget?



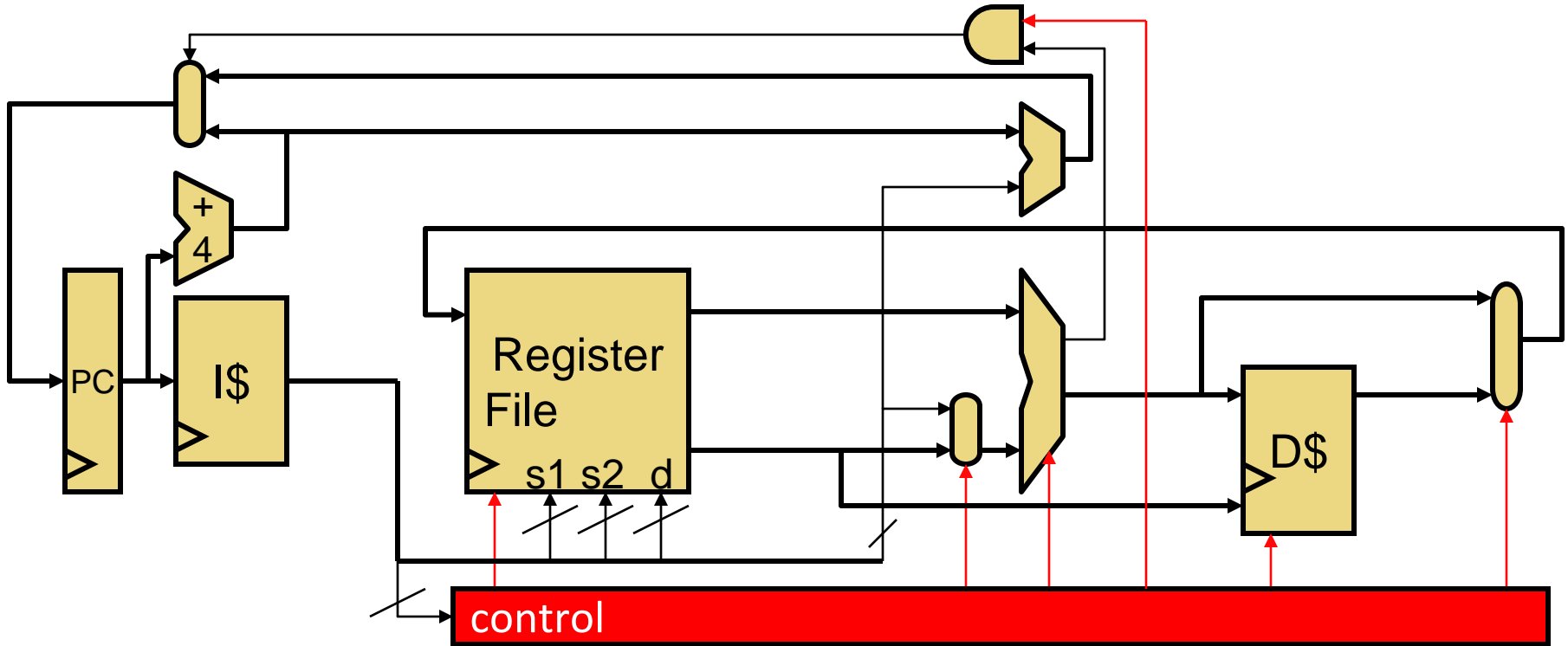




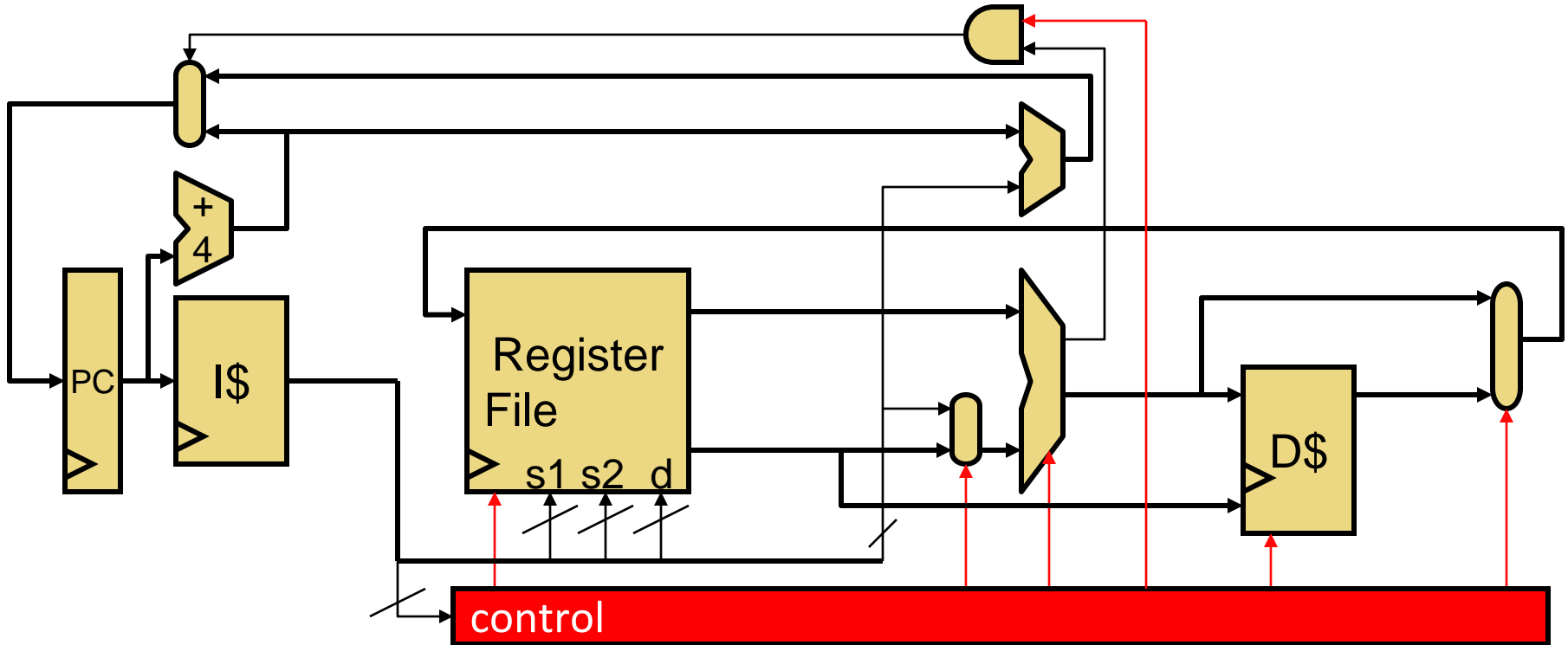
Intel Core i7 3960X (Codename Sandy Bridge-E) – 2.27B transistors, Total Size 435mm<sup>2</sup>

Source: [www.lostcircuits.com](http://www.lostcircuits.com)

# A Simple CPU Core

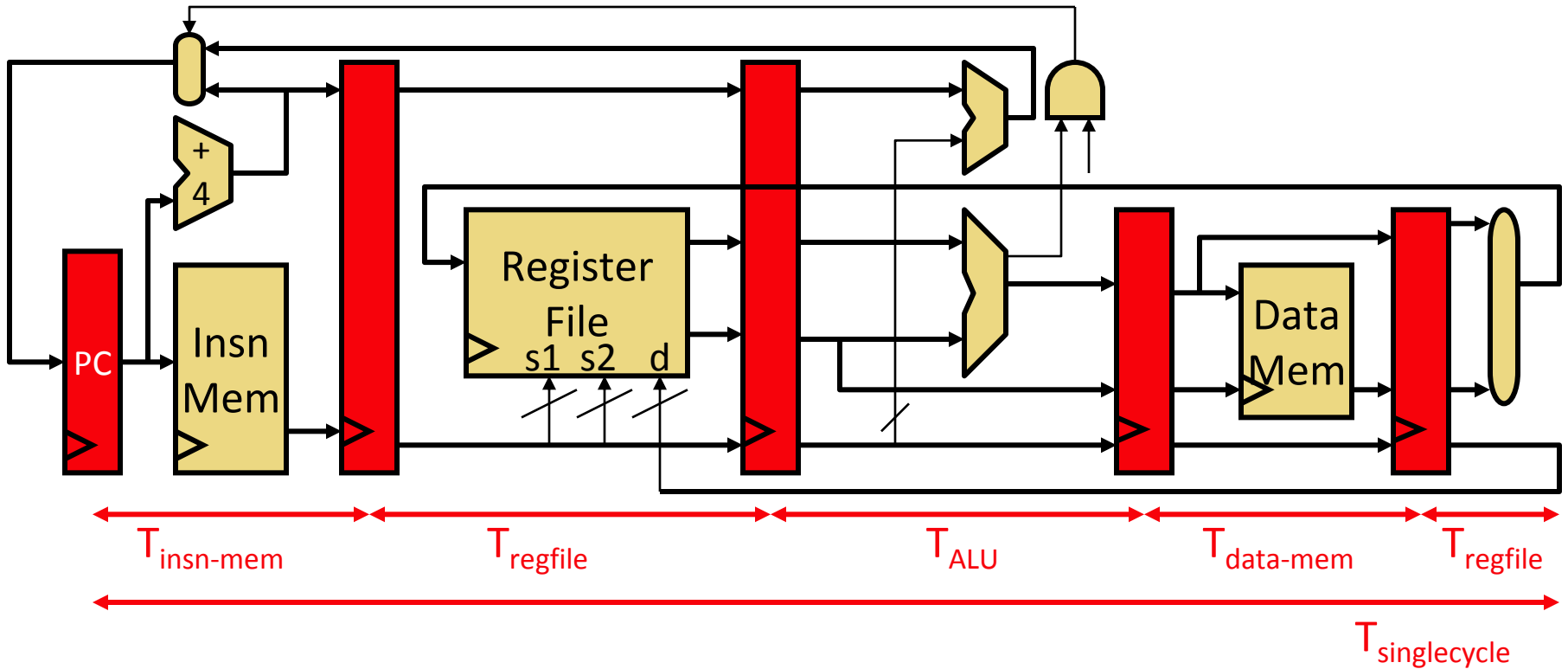


# A Simple CPU Core



Fetch → Decode → Execute → Memory → Writeback

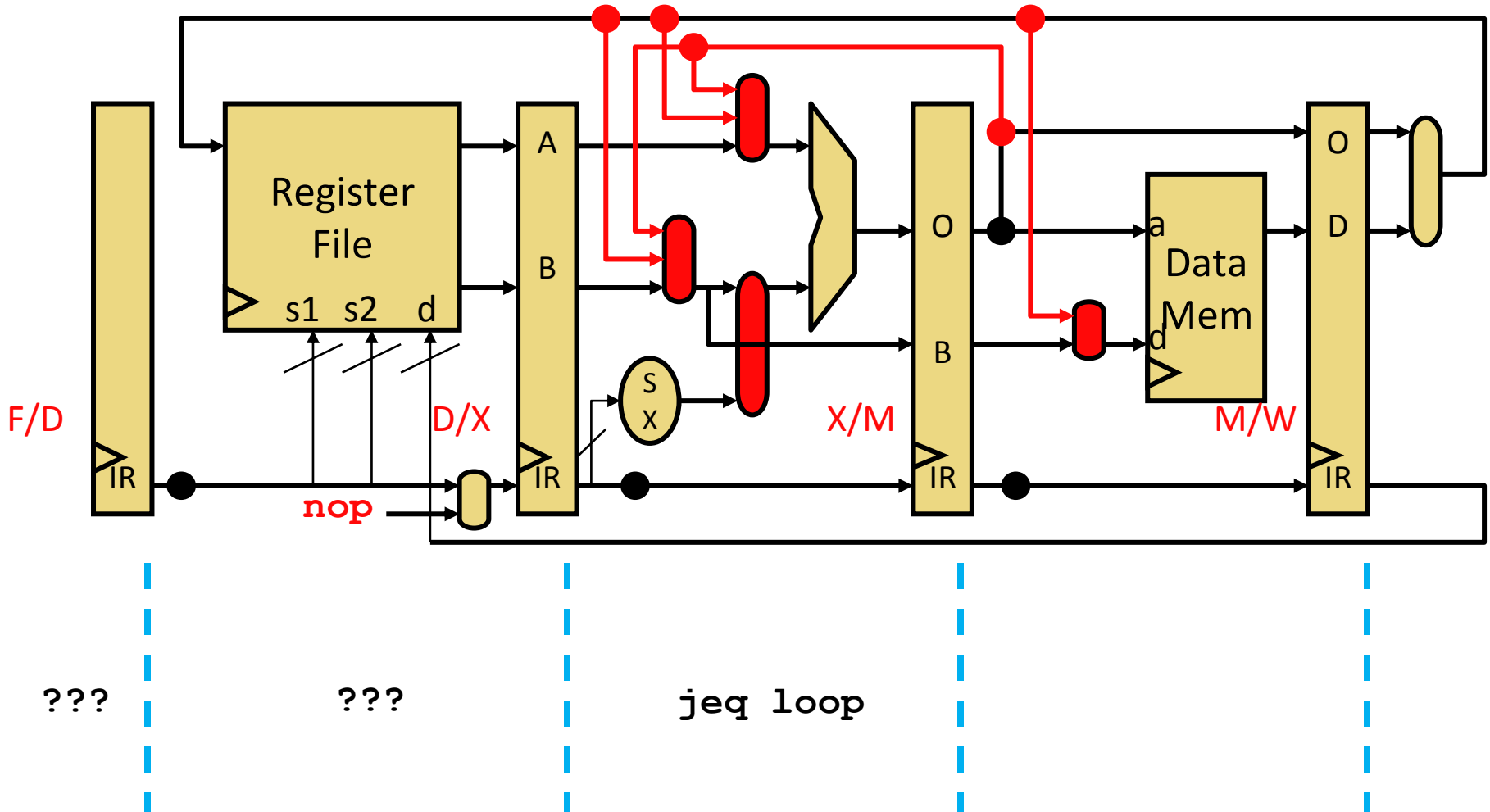
# Pipelining



# Pipelining

- Capitalize on instruction-level parallelism (ILP)
  - + Significantly reduced clock period
  - Slight latency & area increase (pipeline latches)
  - ? Dependent instructions
  - ? Branches
- Alleged Pipeline Lengths:
  - Core 2: 14 stages
  - Pentium 4 (Prescott): > 20 stages
  - Sandy Bridge: in between

# Branches



# Branch Prediction

- Guess what instruction comes next
- Based off branch history
- Example: two-level predictor with global history
  - Maintain history table of all outcomes for M successive branches
  - Compare with past N results (history register)
  - Sandy Bridge employs 32-bit history register

# Branch Prediction

- + Modern predictors > 90% accuracy
  - Raise performance *and* energy efficiency (why?)
- Area increase
- Potential fetch stage latency increase



# Another option: Predication

- Replace branches with conditional instructions

```
; if (r1==0) r3=r2
```

```
cmoveq r1, r2 -> r3
```

- + Avoids branch predictor

- Avoids area penalty, misprediction penalty

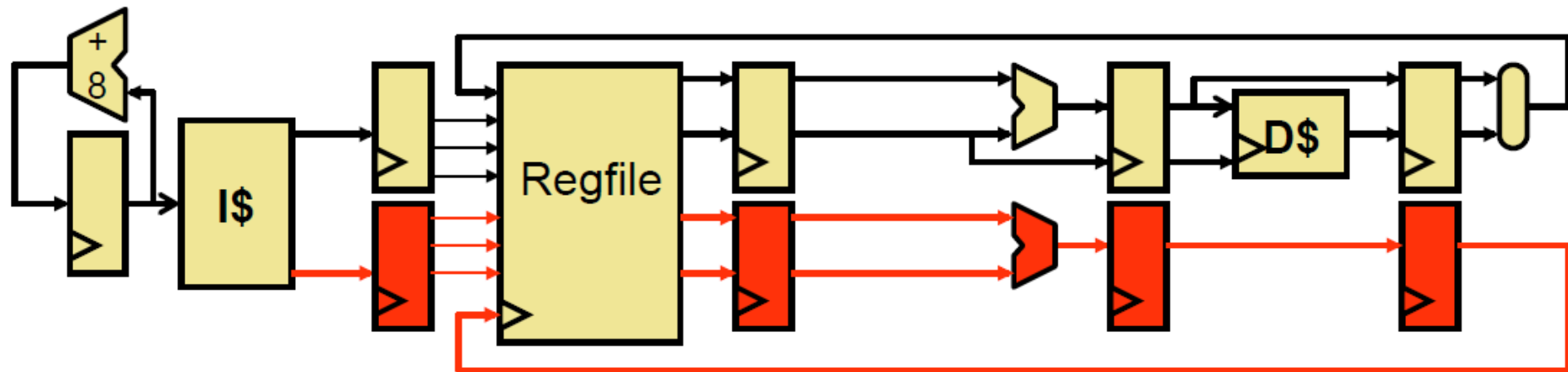
- Avoids branch predictor

- Introduces unnecessary `nop` if predictable branch

- GPUs also use predication

# Improving IPC

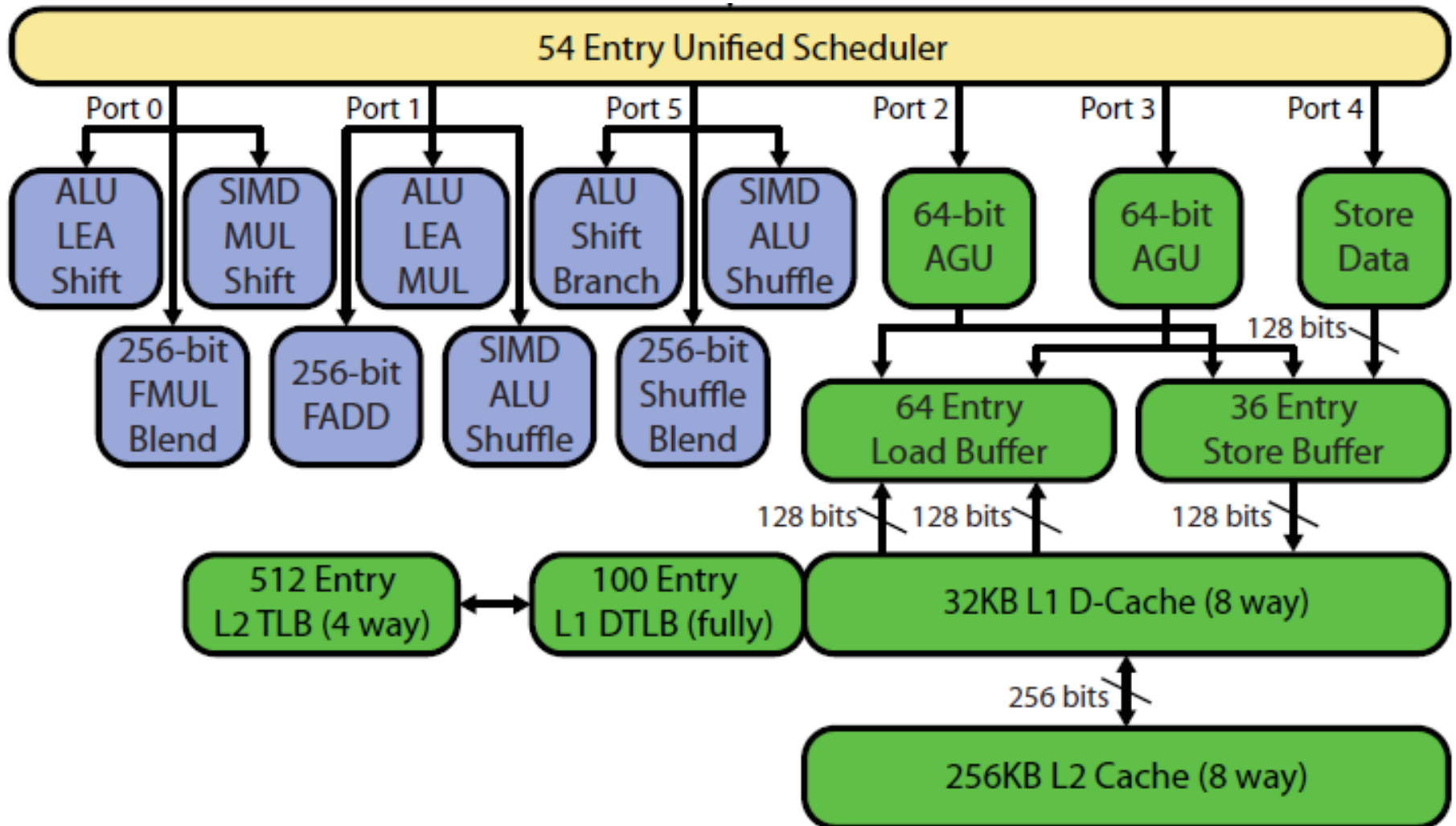
- IPC (instructions/cycle) bottlenecked at 1 instruction / clock
- Superscalar – increase pipeline width



# Superscalar

- + Peak IPC now at  $N$  (for  $N$ -way superscalar)
  - Branching and scheduling impede this
  - Need some more tricks to get closer to peak (next)
- Area increase
  - Doubling execution resources
  - Bypass network grows at  $N^2$
  - Need more register & memory bandwidth

# Superscalar in Sandy Bridge



# Scheduling

- Consider instructions:

`xor` r1, r2 -> r3

`add` r3, r4 -> r4

`sub` r5, r2 -> r3

`addi` r3, 1 -> r1

- `xor` and `add` are dependent (Read-After-Write, RAW)
- `sub` and `addi` are dependent (RAW)
- `xor` and `sub` are *not* (Write-After-Write, WAW)

# Register Renaming

- How about this instead:

**xor** p1, p2 -> p6

**add** p6, p4 -> p7

**sub** p5, p2 -> p8

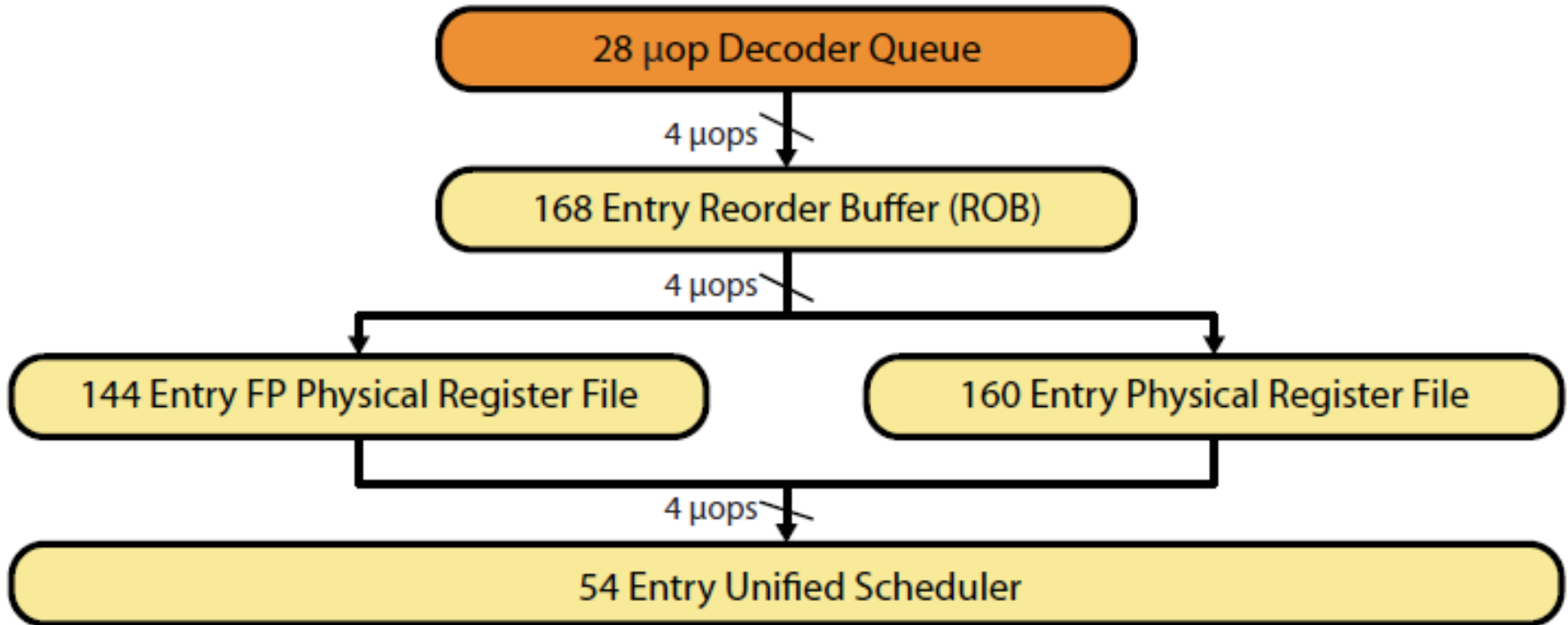
**addi** p8, 1 -> p9

- `xor` and `sub` can now execute in parallel

# Out-of-Order Execution

- Reordering instructions to maximize throughput
- Fetch → Decode → Rename → Dispatch → Issue  
→ Register-Read → Execute → Memory →  
Writeback → Commit
- Reorder Buffer (ROB)
  - Keeps track of status for in-flight instructions
- Physical Register File (PRF)
- Issue Queue/Scheduler
  - Chooses next instruction(s) to execute

# OoO in Sandy Bridge





# Out-of-Order Execution

- + Brings IPC much closer to ideal
- Area increase
- Energy increase
- Modern Desktop/Mobile In-order CPUs
  - Intel Atom
  - ARM Cortex-A8 (Apple A4, TI OMAP 3)
  - Qualcomm Scorpion
- Modern Desktop/Mobile OoO CPUs
  - Intel Pentium Pro and onwards
  - ARM Cortex-A9 (Apple A5, NV Tegra 2/3, TI OMAP 4)
  - Qualcomm Krait

# Memory Hierarchy

- Memory: the larger it gets, the slower it gets
- Rough numbers:

	Latency	Bandwidth	Size
SRAM (L1, L2, L3)	1-2ns	200GBps	1-20MB
DRAM (memory)	70ns	20GBps	1-20GB
Flash (disk)	70-90 $\mu$ s	200MBps	100-1000GB
HDD (disk)	10ms	1-150MBps	500-3000GB

SRAM & DRAM latency, and DRAM bandwidth for Sandy Bridge from [Lostcircuits](#)

Flash and HDD latencies from [AnandTech](#)

Flash and HDD bandwidth from AnandTech [Bench](#)

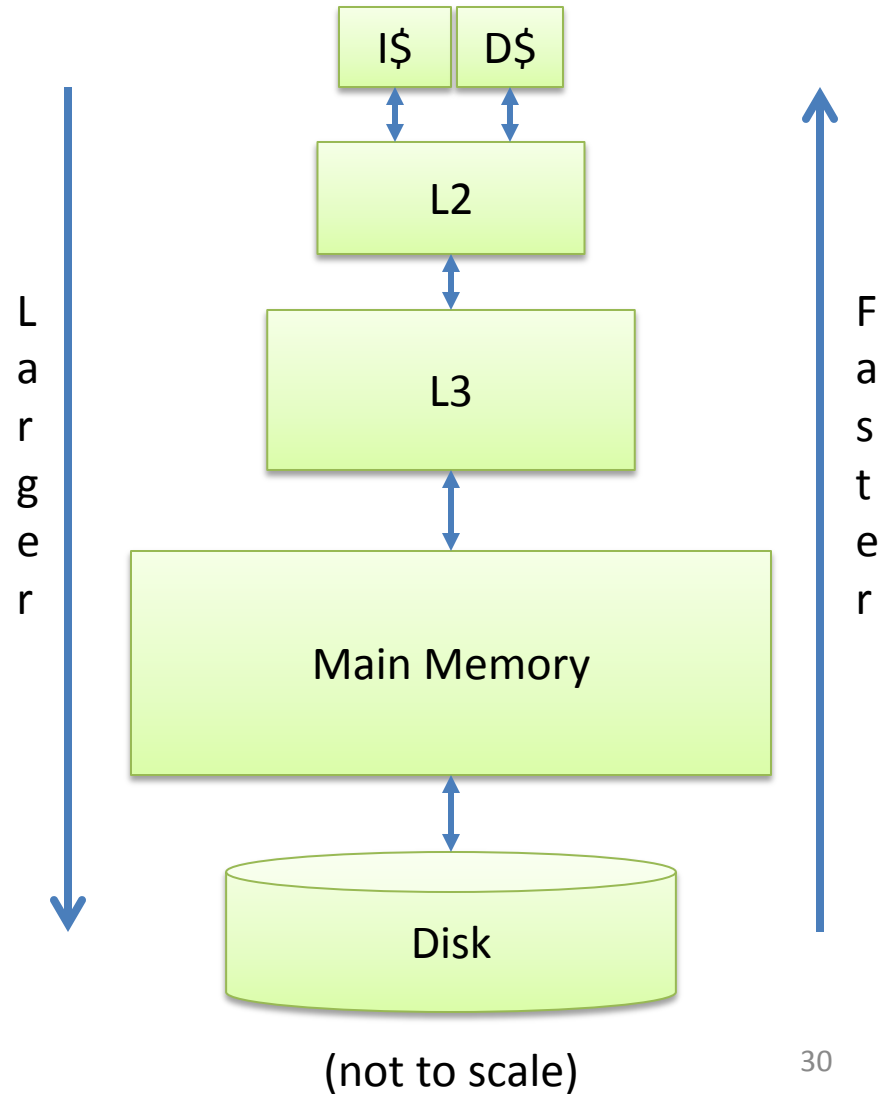
SRAM bandwidth guesstimated.

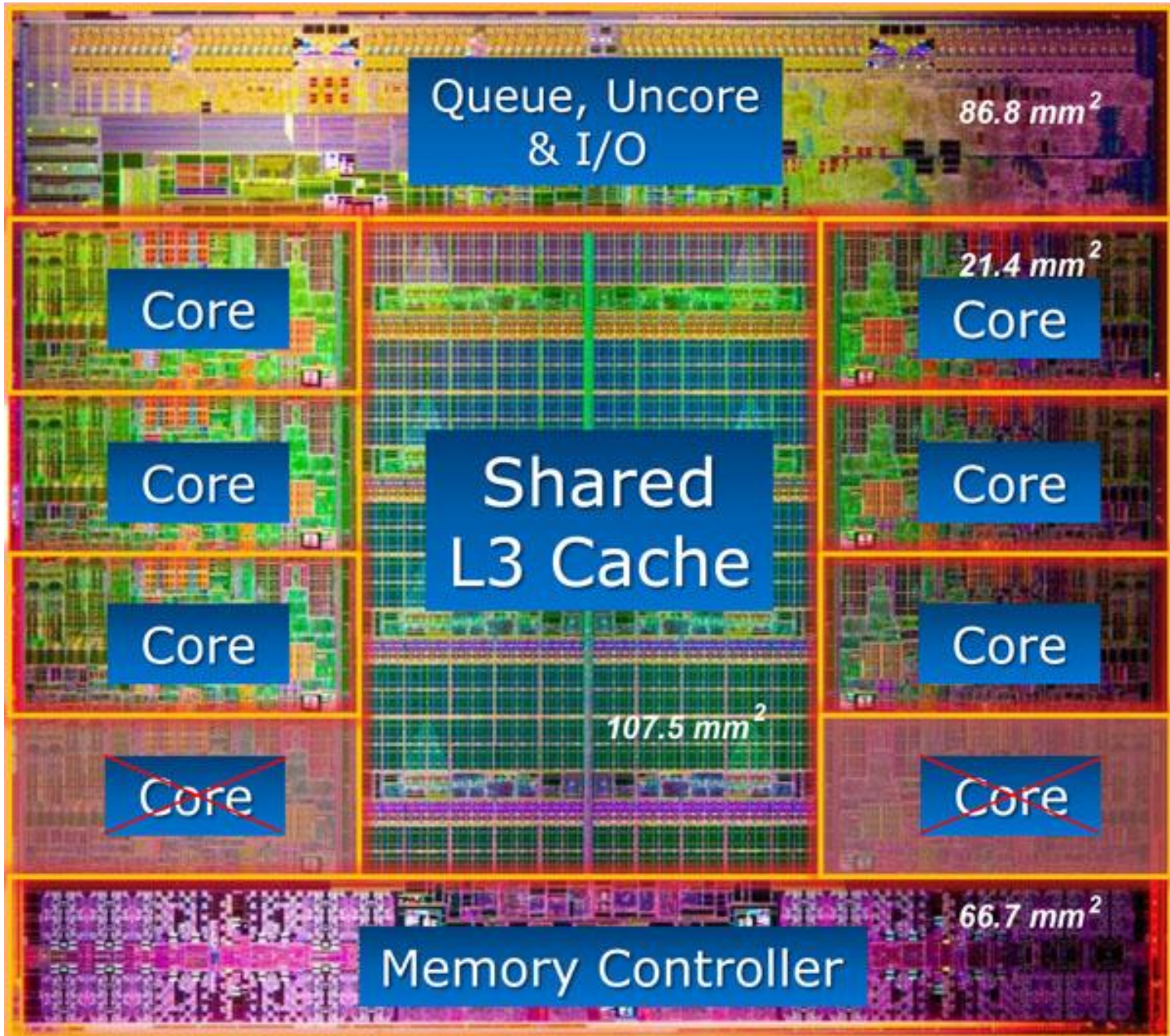
# Caching

- Keep data you need close
- Exploit:
  - Temporal locality
    - Chunk just used likely to be used again soon
  - Spatial locality
    - Next chunk to use is likely close to previous

# Cache Hierarchy

- Hardware-managed
  - L1 Instruction/Data caches
  - L2 unified cache
  - L3 unified cache
- Software-managed
  - Main memory
  - Disk





Intel Core i7 3960X – 15MB L3 (25% of die). 4-channel Memory Controller, 51.2GB/s total

Source: [www.lostcircuits.com](http://www.lostcircuits.com)

# Some Memory Hierarchy Design Choices

- Banking
  - Avoid multi-porting
- Coherency
- Memory Controller
  - Multiple channels for bandwidth

# Parallelism in the CPU

- Covered Instruction-Level (ILP) extraction
  - Superscalar
  - Out-of-order
- Data-Level Parallelism (DLP)
  - Vectors
- Thread-Level Parallelism (TLP)
  - Simultaneous Multithreading (SMT)
  - Multicore

# Vectors Motivation

```
for (int i = 0; i < N; i++)  
    A[i] = B[i] + C[i];
```



# CPU Data-level Parallelism

- Single Instruction Multiple Data (SIMD)
  - Let's make the execution unit (ALU) really wide
  - Let's make the registers really wide too

```
for (int i = 0; i < N; i += 4) {  
    // in parallel  
    A[i] = B[i] + C[i];  
    A[i+1] = B[i+1] + C[i+1];  
    A[i+2] = B[i+2] + C[i+2];  
    A[i+3] = B[i+3] + C[i+3];  
}
```

# Vector Operations in x86

- SSE2
  - 4-wide packed float and packed integer instructions
  - Intel Pentium 4 onwards
  - AMD Athlon 64 onwards
- AVX
  - 8-wide packed float and packed integer instructions
  - Intel Sandy Bridge
  - AMD Bulldozer

# Thread-Level Parallelism

- Thread Composition
  - Instruction streams
  - Private PC, registers, stack
  - Shared globals, heap
- Created and destroyed by programmer
- Scheduled by programmer or by OS

# Simultaneous Multithreading

- Instructions can be issued from multiple threads
- Requires partitioning of ROB, other buffers
- + Minimal hardware duplication
- + More scheduling freedom for OoO
- Cache and execution resource contention can reduce single-threaded performance

# Multicore

- Replicate full pipeline
- Sandy Bridge-E: 6 cores
- + Full cores, no resource sharing other than last-level cache
- + Easier way to take advantage of Moore's Law
- Utilization

# Locks, Coherence, and Consistency

- **Problem:** multiple threads reading/writing to same data
- A solution: Locks
  - Implement with test-and-set, load-link/store-conditional instructions
- **Problem:** Who has the correct data?
- A solution: cache coherency protocol
- **Problem:** What is the correct data?
- A solution: memory consistency model

# Conclusions

- CPU optimized for sequential programming
  - Pipelines, branch prediction, superscalar, OoO
  - Reduce execution time with high clock speeds and high utilization
- Slow memory is a constant problem
- Parallelism
  - Sandy Bridge-E great for 6-12 active threads
  - How about 12,000?

# References

- Milo Martin, Penn CIS501 Fall 2011  
<http://www.seas.upenn.edu/~cis501>
- David Kanter, “Intel's Sandy Bridge Microarchitecture.” 9/25/10.  
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- Agner Fog, “The microarchitecture of Intel, AMD and VIA CPUs.” 6/8/2011.  
<http://www.agner.org/optimize/microarchitecture.pdf>



# Bibliography

- Classic Jon Stokes' articles introducing basic CPU [architecture](#), pipelining ([1](#), [2](#)), and [Moore's Law](#)
- CMOV discussion on Mozilla [mailing list](#)
- Herb Sutter, "The Free Lunch Is Over: A Fundamental Turn Toward Concurrency in Software." [link](#)