ii7, ii$^{\varnothing}$7, and their inversions

Basic info:

Like the fourth above the bass in the cadential 6/4, the seventh in ii7 goes back to earlier dissonance treatment, the stricter procedures of species counterpoint. So – like the seventh in V7 it must resolve down by step, but like the fourth in the cadential 6/4 it must also be prepared – by common tone or by step from above.

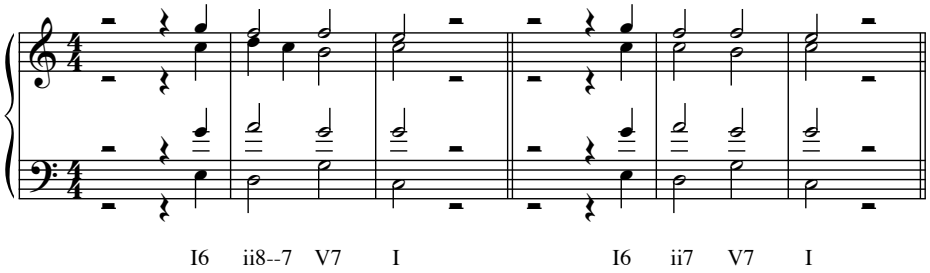
It is a PD chord, and in terms of chord sequences it is used just as the ii triad is.

In major keys ii7 is minor minor; in minor keys it is half diminished. As a half diminished chord, the seventh effectively softens the dissonant triad between root and fifth, and so ii7 is used in all inversions in both major and minor. (Recall that ii$^{\circ}$ in minor is only used in first inversion…)

The chord is usually complete so there are no doublings. There is just one exception discussed below.

Melodic origin:

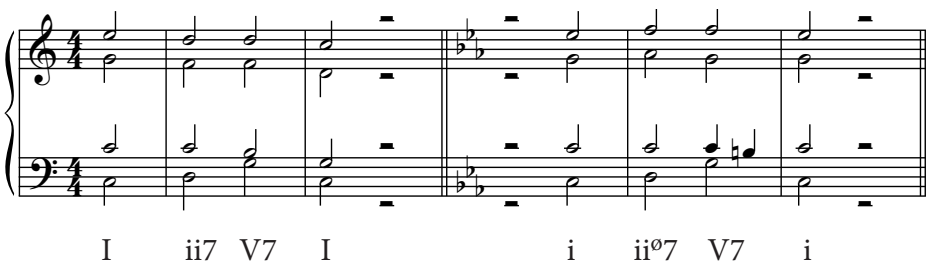
Like the seventh in V7, the seventh in ii7 arose as a passing tone or a suspension, as seen below.



Root position:

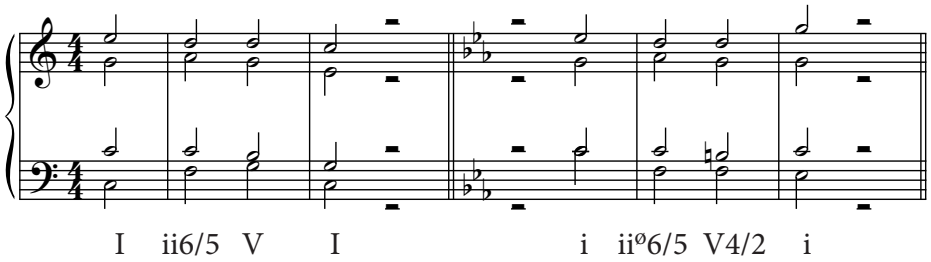
In major ii7 functions just as ii does; in minor it functions the same way, but note that this is a new possibility, because ii$^{\circ}$ is not used in root position.

In the cases shown above, ii7 was complete. In the major mode it is permissible to omit the fifth and double either the root or the third; this is to avoid fifths coming from I or I6. In minor, the "parallel fifth" is fine because P5-d5 is always acceptable (unlike the reverse).



First inversion:

ii6/5 and ii$^{\varnothing}$6/5 function in the same ways that ii6 and ii$^{\circ}$6 do.

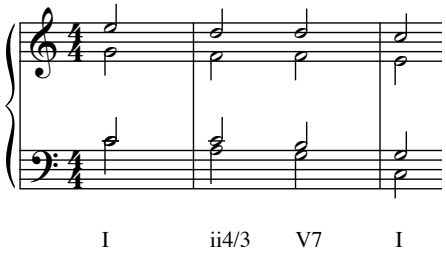


Second inversion:

As a triad, ii6/4 is an embellishing chord (probably a passing 6/4, possibly a neighboring 6/4) and ii$^{\circ}$6/4 is not used.

ii4/3 and ii$^{\varnothing}$4/3 function as PD chords, and they always lead to V or V7 in root position.

4/3 is the least common inversion of ii7.



Third inversion:

ii4/2 and ii$^{\varnothing}$4/2 are used very frequently, almost always in the idiom I-ii4/2-V6(5)-I. This idiom is used especially at the start of a phrase (and often at the start of a movement); it presents a complete cycle of harmonic functions, but because of the weak inversions it is clear that this is a nested cycle of harmonic function that simply serves to expand the tonic.

ii4/2 is almost always found in this idiom because of the restrictions on the seventh, which in this case is in the bass.