# After Three Consecutive German No. 1s, ZATAP Brings Its Chart-Eligible Smart Media Albums to the US and Canada

*Germany's success with NFC-enabled releases offers music companies and artists a blueprint for generating physical sales, fan data, and long-term engagement*

ZURICH, SWITZERLAND, September 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- ZATAP, the technology platform transforming physical products into interactive fan experiences, will bring Billboard and Luminate's new chart-eligible Smart Media Album format to the United States and Canada following a landmark run of three consecutive No. 1 albums powered by ZATAP formats in Germany.

> Germany has shown what is possible when labels treat smart formats as part of the core album strategy rather than an experimental merchandise add-on"
>
> *David Geisser, CEO & Co-Founder*

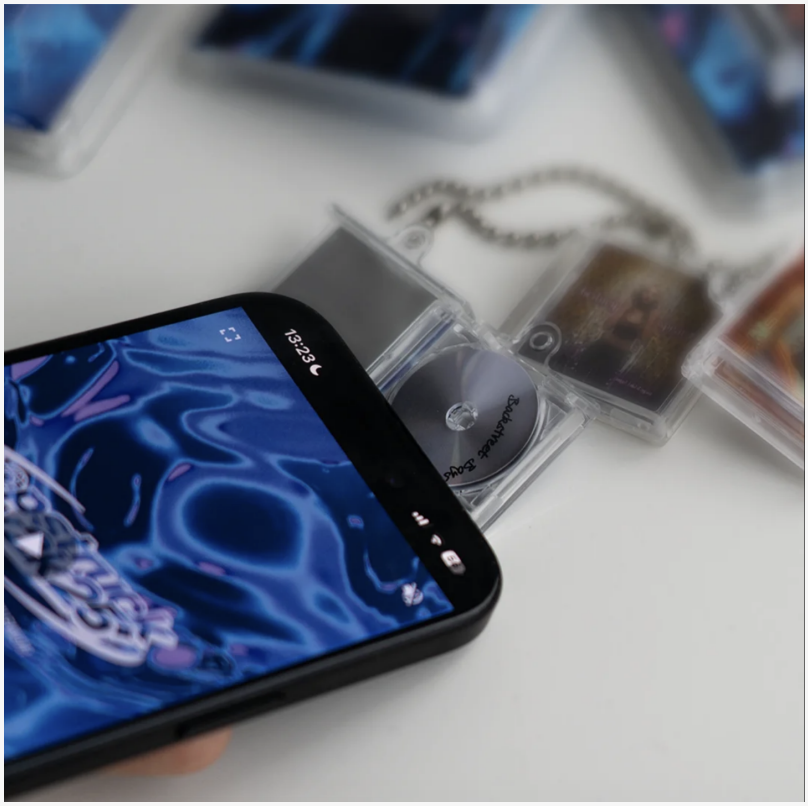
Germany is the world's fifth-largest recorded music market and its third-largest for physical products, and has emerged as an early proving ground for connected physical music. Its labels and chart authorities moved quickly to recognize formats that combine a paid collectible with secure digital album access, exclusive content and direct fan engagement.

These albums powered by ZATAP formats have now demonstrated that the model can support chart performance, while creating value beyond the initial sale, and can be an integral part in a release playbook.

Beginning October 2, Luminate will track approved Smart Media Albums alongside vinyl, CDs, cassettes and other physical products in the US and Canada. The move marks the first time Luminate has introduced a new tracked physical music format since the CD.

"The ways fans experience and collect music are evolving, and Billboard's charts must evolve as well," Silvio Pietroluongo, executive vice president of charts and data partnerships at Billboard, said in the publication's announcement. "Recognizing eligible Smart Media Albums allows our rankings to be more inclusive of music-focused technologies while preserving the standards and integrity that guide our chart methodology."

While Smart Media Albums represent a new category in North America, Germany has already demonstrated their commercial and creative potential. Electric Callboy's TANZNEID (Sony Music Entertainment Germany), reezy's RAHEEM (Sony Music Entertainment Germany) and Montez's So ist das mit dem Glück (Universal Music Group Central Europe) reached No. 1 on Germany's Official Albums Chart in three successive weeks.



From a simple tap of the phone on this mini-CD, the fan accesses the linked experience

Campaigns can use different ZATAP-powered NFC formats, showing how connected physical products can be adapted to an artist's audience and creative world.

Electric Callboy's €13.99 NFC Fancard gave fans mobile access to the complete album alongside exclusive videos, Polaroids, a mini-game, a band quiz, newsletter registration and a digital fan pass for Apple Wallet and Google Wallet.

reezy's €35 "Raheem Battlepass" transformed an NFC card into a Pokémon-inspired mobile game, connecting the album to an interactive digital world built around the music.

Montez used a Mini CD that fans could purchase before the music was available. The album and bonus tracks unlocked later, creating a "sell now, unlock later" structure that allowed the campaign to build revenue and demand ahead of release.

Together, the three consecutive No. 1s offer one of the clearest commercial validations yet for connected physical music in a major market.

"Germany has shown what is possible when labels treat smart formats as part of the core album strategy rather than an experimental merchandise add-on," said David Geisser, founder and CEO of ZATAP. "These campaigns delivered chart impact while giving fans richer experiences and giving labels a direct, permissioned relationship with the people purchasing the music. The US and Canada can now build on a model that has already proven itself."

ZATAP's Smart Media Albums use secure NFC technology to connect fans directly to a digital album experience. Fans tap the physical product with a smartphone to unlock the album,

artwork, lyrics, videos, artist messages, games and other declared bonus content. No app, account, password or redemption code is required.

Approved Billboard ZATAP formats include Mini CDs (two sizes), Mini Cassettes, Mini Vinyl, Collector Cards, credit-card-format PVC Cards and the Music Tile, an acrylic square containing an NFC tag. Each incorporates an encrypted NTAG 424 DNA chip that generates a unique encrypted URL with every tap. Access therefore depends on possession of the physical product, helping protect the content against unauthorized sharing and duplication.

ZATAP supports projects from concept through production, including experiential activations, product development, secure NFC and CRM integrations, digital-experience creation, and push notification features.

Germany provided the proof of concept: three different artists, three different creative approaches and three consecutive No. 1 albums. Now, this success offers labels, management companies and independent artists a US and Canada blueprint for making physical music more valuable, measurable and enduring.

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